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A Picture of the Piotrków Province in Jan Bloch's 1886 Reports

The “Jewish Issue” in the Activities of Jan Gottlieb Bloch

Much has been written about the place and role of the Jewish population in the life of the 19th century Congress Kingdom of Poland. What is stressed in particular is its participation in economic activity, in commercial transformations and in many other fields. However, it is worth noting that there was also a period of pointed discussion concerning matters Jewish in which representatives of various social groupings were engaged. According to Artur Eisenbach it was especially the nobility and the bourgeoisie who nurtured a greater concern regarding their level and activity of the few, but increasingly influential, Jewish intelligentsia and bourgeoisie, rather than with the general increase in the number of Jews themselves within the Congress Kingdom of Poland¹.

Someone who also expressed an opinion was Jan Gottlieb Bloch, a Warsaw banker and industrialist, a railway entrepreneur and a high-level business activist, not only in Poland, but also in Europe and who was active in all spheres in communal life². He was the co-founder of many financial institutions within the Kingdom – the Bank Handlowy in Warsaw and the City of Warsaw Credit Society. He served as the long-term president of the Warsaw Stock Exchange. He founded the first Bureau of Statistics in Poland. For the railway investments in the institutions he managed, Bloch established teams of experts, consisting of engineers and technicians, who dealt with the collection and analysis of statistical data regarding the economic situation in the Kingdom relating to agriculture, transport and finance³.

He was born on 24th June 1836 in Radom, one of nine children, to Fryderyka Gdala (nee Neumark) and Selim (Szulim) Bloch⁴. His upbringing in a Jewish family influenced Bloch's later interest in the situation of the Jewish population within the Congress Kingdom of Poland and, despite the fact that, in 1851, he changed religion from Jewish to Calvinist, he remained connected to the culture and traditions of his ancestors⁵. Some researchers into Bloch's biography state that he underwent a religious metamorphosis twice. Apparently, at the age of twenty (1856), he also changed religions, becoming a Catholic. In this regard, his biographers (including Ryszard Kołodziejczyk) refer to the testimony of Sergiusz Witte, Finance Minister and future Prime Minister of Russia and, in the earlier years, to that of a Bloch subordinate during the period when he was active in the Tsarist South-West Railways.

It is worth adding here that the Russian government was positively placed towards Bloch and his activities in developing the railways. It ennobled him, granting him a Distinct Ogończyk Coat-of-Arms. According to some authors, the favour of the Tsarist authorities

¹ A. Eisenbach, *Kwestia równouprawnienia Żydów w Królestwie Polskim*, Warsaw 1972, pp. 262–263.

² R. Kołodziejczyk, *Burżuazja polska w XIX i XX wieku. Szkice historyczne*, Warsaw 1979, p. 193.

³ I. Ihnatowicz, *Burżuazja warszawska*, Warsaw 1972, pp. 144–145.

⁴ Idem, *Jan Bloch (1836–1902). Szkic do portretu „króla polskich kolei”*, Warsaw 1983, p. 30.

⁵ Ibidem, p. 36.

almost enabled him to become Russian Treasurer. However, his Jewish origins proved to be a hindrance, despite the fact that he was a convert. He had publicly advocated for Jewish equality, something which was adversely perceived by the Russian authorities⁶. The *Polski słownik judaistyczny (Polish Judaic Dictionary)* also considers Bloch to be a Catholic⁷. The date of his change to Roman Catholicism remains unclear.

In his book, T. Jeske-Choiński states that “Bloch Jan, aged twenty, a clerk in the Radom Town Hall, the son of Selim Bloch, dyer, and Gdala Neumark”, changed his religion in 1836⁸. However, this date is unlikely, as Bloch, at the time he became a Calvinist, would have to have been two-years-old. However, the rest of Bloch’s biographical description coincides with information which can be found in his other biographies. Therefore, it is most likely that Jeske-Choiński’s description is that of Jan Gottlib Bloch. However, the situation is not entirely clear and is one of the mysteries of Bloch’s life story. In deciding to move away from the faith of his ancestors, he shared the same fate as many of the Polish-Jewish intelligentsia and bourgeoisie, whose change of religion enabled a thorough transformation of social status and provided them with greater possibilities of activity⁹.

In order to better understand Jan Bloch’s active work towards improving the situation of the Jewish population, it is worthwhile to point how it was formed during that period. In the first half of the 19th century, the Polish and Jewish communities, which inhabited the territory of the Congress Kingdom of Poland, lived in separate enclaves and contact between them was mainly of an economic nature. Jews were mainly engaged in trade and as intermediaries. They were active in industry, but without civil or civic rights. They remained the only group to be formally and legally handicapped¹⁰. Separated only on the basis of religion, Jews remained isolated from Polish society and numerous legal restrictions made it impossible for them to participate in community life within the Kingdom. The way out of “the ghetto”, as already mentioned, was “assimilation” by changing religion. A Jew, who changed religion, was exposed to a hostile attitude from his own community. Those, who decided upon conversion, sought the possibility of assimilation and merging into the local community. Moves to assimilate Jews gathered strength in the second half of the century. At that time, on the initiative of Aleksander Wielkopolski, the future head of the Kingdom’s civil government, work began to change legislation aimed at granting equal rights to Jews. It came into effect in 1862, at a time when rebellious activity was intensifying. It was then that there was a significant, but short-lived, tightening of relations between both communities¹¹.

At the end of the 1870’s and the beginning of the 1880’s, the situation changed for the worse. On the one hand, antisemitism grew within Polish society, intensified by the prevalence of anti-Jewish stereotypes and prejudices. An additional factor was the influx of Jews into the Kingdom. These were “Litvaks”, Jews coming from territories incorporated into Russian Empire and then deported from there due to restrictions, at that time, on the Jewish population in provinces bordering the Kingdom¹².

⁶ M. Fuks, *Żydzi w Warszawie. Życie codzienne. Wydarzenia. Ludzie*, Poznań 1992, p. 128.

⁷ *Polski słownik judaistyczny. Dzieje. Kultura. Religia. Ludzie*, Vol. I, by Z. Borzymińska, R. Żebrowski, Warsaw 2003, p. 204 (called: Bloch Jan Bogumił).

⁸ T. Jeske-Choiński, *Neofici polscy. Materiały historyczne*, Warsaw 1904, p. 122. 129

⁹ A. Hertz, *Żydzi w kulturze polskiej*, Warsaw 1988, p. 123, see also: A. Jagodzińska, *Pomiędzy. Akulturacja Żydów Warszawy w drugiej połowie XIX wieku*, Wrocław 2008.

¹⁰ A. Eisenbach, op. cit., p. 34.

¹¹ A. Żor, *Figle historii*, Toruń 2005, p. 227; on the subject of the situation of the Jews in the Congress Kingdom of Poland in the 19th century, see also: A. Cała, *Asymilacja Żydów w Królestwie Polskim (1864–1897): postawy, konflikty, stereotypy*, Warsaw 1989; G. Borkowska, M. Rudkowska (ed.), *Kwestia żydowska w XIX wieku: spory o tożsamość Polaków*, Warsaw 2004.

¹² R. Kołodziejczyk, op. cit., p. 170.

Until the 1863 uprising, migration of Russian Jews into the Kingdom was not significant. This was influenced by administrative difficulties and the limited possibilities for settlement. However, the far-reaching Wielopolski reforms and equal rights for Jews, the administrative facilitation of settlement and, above all, the establishment of new industrial centres in Warsaw and Łódź, all made the Kingdom a more attractive proposition as a migration destination¹³. It is worth noting here, as J. Nalewajko-Kulikov also points out, that in the second half of the 19th century, despite the territorial proximity, there was a strong sense of separateness between Polish and Russian Jews. This was a result of, above all, their differing legal positions. The increased migration into the Kingdom turned Warsaw into “a melting-pot of Jews”, in which the “Litvaks”, Jews from Ukraine and Kurland and “Greater Russians” became polonised – that is, they became Polish Jews¹⁴.

On the other hand, one can notice a weakening in the assimilation trend, while proto-Zionist attitudes intensified within the Jewish community. An additional issue was the growing of antisemitic tendencies which intensified, especially following the assassination of Tsar Aleksander II in 1881, which gave rise to anti-Jewish pogroms in the Empire and which also crossed into the territory of the Kingdom. One of the most well-known pogroms of the Jewish population in the Kingdom took place in Warsaw in 1881. Although it was harshly condemned by almost the entire Warsaw press, it only went to confirm the anti-Jewish mood of society¹⁵.

At the same time, Tsar Aleksander III took the “temporary decision”, dated 3rd/15th May 1882, in which he imposed new restrictions upon the Russian Empire’s Jewish population, especially on their settlement in towns and villages and on their acquisition and leasing of goods. And, even though it was not introduced into the Congress Kingdom, it did have an impact on the situation of the Jewish population in this area, as there was a move to unify all legislation against the Jews in the Russian Empire and in the Congress Kingdom of Poland. In order to review the entire, existing legislation in the Empire regarding the Jews, a committee was established and named after its chairman – the Phalen Commission¹⁶.

The Creation of the Stock Exchange Committee Memorandum

At that time, Jan Bloch initiated a wide-ranging campaign, the aim of which was to collect statistical data on the numbers and distribution of the Jewish population. The main point of his research was to analyse Jewish activity in trade, industry and craft production, as well as to display the harm which would be caused to the economic situation of the Kingdom by the introduction of anti-Jewish legislation¹⁷.

Bloch was able to gather adequate statistical data due to his ability to access the archives of various authorities and offices. In 1879, he obtained permission to create a Bureau of Statistics. The Bureau, together with the library established next to it, had the task of gathering information on the state and the development of the Polish Kingdom’s economy¹⁸.

¹³ F. Guesnet, „Litwacy”i „Ostjuden” (*Żydzi ze Wschodu*). *Migracje i stereotypy*, [w:] E. Traba, R. Traba (red.), *Tematy żydowskie*, Olsztyn 1999, p. 75.

¹⁴ J. Nalewajko-Kulikov, *Mówić we własnym imieniu. Prasa jidyszowa a tworzenie żydowskiej tożsamości narodowej (do 1918 roku)*, Warsaw 2016, pp. 58–59.

¹⁵ M. Domagalska, *Zatrute ziarno. Proza antysemicka na lamach „Roli” (1883–1912)*, Warsaw 2015, p. 28.

¹⁶ A. Eisenbach, *Z dziejów ludności żydowskiej w Polsce w XVII i XIX wieku*, Warsaw 1983, p. 254.

¹⁷ A. Peretz, *Finansjera warszawska (1870–1925)*. (*Z osobistych wspomnień*), Warsaw 1926, p. 92.

¹⁸ A. Eisenbach, *Z dziejów ludności*, p. 255.

Based on the collected material, Bloch took the initiative and made a presentation to the Pahlen Commission on the Jewish issue and its impact on the development of the Kingdom. In 1885, together with Henryk Natanson, he prepared a memorandum on the rights of the Jewish population. In addition, the Warsaw Stock Exchange Committee appealed to the Governor-General for permission to submit explanations regarding this matter¹⁹. The authorities agreed and the Committee prepared answers to three specific questions regarding the role of Jews in the Kingdom's economic development. This was presented in the form of a memorandum and was signed (as evidenced in a letter from Aleksander Kraushar to Jozef Ignacy Kraszewski dated 2nd August 1886) by Jan Bloch, Henryk, Ludwik and Kazimierz Natanson, Stanisław Krzemiński and Aleksander Kraushar²⁰.

Bloch's extensive contacts enabled him to mark the memorandum for the attention of Aleksander III himself, on whose orders the process of extending the May resolution to the area of the Kingdom was halted until all the issues raised in the document had been analysed. The document text was confidential, but it got into the press and was reprinted in the pages of various magazines – often inaccurately and incompletely. This caused a heated discussion, especially amongst those who were unwilling to give equal rights to Jews. The entire Jewish community found itself the target of severe criticism²¹. The disclosure of the memorandum on the pages of the conservative *Niwa* magazine²² resulted in the perpetuation of the old negative stereotypes of a Jew. According to the editor of the magazine, Jews were a destructive element and their scattering throughout towns and villages had a detrimental effect on the local population who were exposed, for example, to the Jewish "aversion to work, their lack of any sense of duty, their idleness, deception and exploitation"²³. The paper harshly attacked the authors of the memorandum, accusing them of propagating an "apology for Jewry" and of proclaiming the view that the only economic force in the Kingdom were the Jews, thereby discriminating against their fellow Poles²⁴.

A heated argument broke out in the pages of the national press following the publishing of the document in *Niwa*. The antisemitic mood was also supported in *Rola*, a magazine founded in 1882 by Jan Jeleński, where all the misfortunes faced by Poles were perceived as being caused by the activities of the Jewish community²⁵. It suggested that Jews be banned from activity in the Kingdom's economic life, that trading with them be boycotted and also that "a spirit of self-defence be awakened within Polish society against the Jewish flood, that all honest family businesses be supported and that, in every case, the principle of equity be fought for and that facts should be called for what they are"²⁶. *Rola* represented the extreme views of the Polish petty bourgeoisie, who saw the Jewish community as a serious competitor in the field of business²⁷.

At this point, it is worth quoting some of the statements from *Kraj*, which pointed out that the text of the memorandum, as quoted on the pages of *Niwa*, were only excerpts and

¹⁹ R. Kołodziejczyk, op. cit., p. 173.

²⁰ W. Ziomek, *Udział przedsiębiorstw żydowskich w przemyśle włókienniczym Łodzi w latach 1860–1914*, „Acta Universitatis Lodzianis”, Folia Historica 63/1988, p. 97.

²¹ R. Kołodziejczyk, op. cit., p. 176.

²² Niepełny tekst memoriału opublikowano w artykule pt. „*Nie tędy droga. Memoriał Warszawskiego Komitetu Gieldowego w sprawie żydowskiej*”, „*Niwa: dwutygodnik naukowy, literacki i artystyczny*” 1886, R. 15, Vol. 29, No. 276.

²³ A. Eisenbach, *Z dziejów ludności*, p. 257.

²⁴ T.R. Weeks, *The Stock Exchange Memorandum Controversy of 1885–1886*, [in:] idem, *From Assimilation to Antisemitism. The Jewish Questions in Poland 1850–1914*, Northern Illinois 2006, pp. 96–99.

²⁵ A. Żor, ibidem, p. 265. See also: M. Domagalska, op. cit., pp. 28–29.

²⁶ A. Jaszczuk, *Spór pozytywistów z konserwatystami o przyszłość Polski 1864–1903*, Warsaw 1986, p. 206.

²⁷ E. Mazur, G. Pawlak, *Bogactwo w służbie społeczeństwa*, [in:] A. Żora (ed.), *Kapalista, pacyfista, filantrop. Jan Bloch (1836–1902)*, Warsaw 2014, pp. 140–141.

were presented in a biased manner. In July 1886, Ludwig Straszewski, Warsaw correspondent of *Kraj*, wrote an extensive article in which he argued that, at that time, Jews constituted a majority of the bourgeoisie and that the planned extension of the 1882 Act to the territory of the Kingdom, and restricting Jewish rights, would have a negative impact on the economic life of the entire country²⁸. He wrote:

We do not claim that the Jews are the only lever of industry, but they are very important to economic development. They are of prime importance. Since, at the moment, there are no other dangers, the Stock Exchange Committee was under no obligation to discuss or raise any, but - which it also did - as clearly as possible, we indicate the important position of the Jews in our economic life²⁹.

Moreover, *Kraj* noted that the Committee did not demand extending the prerogatives of the Jewish population as a reward for their contribution to the Kingdom's economic development and only defended the rights already granted to them, the planned restriction of which would significantly weaken the positive effects of Jewish activity³⁰.

The full text of the memorandum under discussion, entitled *Do Warszawskiej Komisji dla zbadania kwestii żydowskiej (To the Warsaw Commission to Investigate the Jewish Issue)*, consisted of an introduction outlining the role of the Stock Exchange Committee and the reason for it making a statement on the "Jewish issue", as well as three sub-sections answering the questions:

- What were the consequences of the 1862 revelation about the Jews?
- What is the relationship between the Jewish issue and the state of trade and industry?
- How do mortgage entries exert an influence on the Warsaw Stock Exchange?

As emphasised by the memorandum's authors, the Stock Exchange Committee discussed the "Jewish issue" because "the question of the legal status of Jews in our country has a particularly important significance for commercial, industrial and agricultural relations, which has no greater comparison in the Empire"³¹. The original of the memorandum is preserved in the National Library's collection and was also published, in full, by A. Eisenbach³².

It is worth noting here that the aforementioned document, dated 24th May/5th June 1862, considered the Jewish population as equal in civil and public rights. It permitted them to move freely between cities and villages and allowed them to acquire real estate property³³. In this context, the most important is Article 3 which said that:

In all the cities of the Kingdom of Poland, Jews may acquire ownership of title to houses and all other real estate. Limitations on this, arising from the Royal provisions, dated 21st (31st) July 1821, and others, are revoked³⁴.

²⁸ A. Eisenbach, *Z dziejów ludności*, p. 259.

²⁹ W. Ziomek, op. cit., p. 99.

³⁰ L. Straszewicz, *Jeszcze słowo w sprawie memoriału warszawsk. komitetu giełdowego*, "Kraj", No. 29, dated 20th July (1st August) 1886, p. 5.

³¹ *Memoriał dot. praw przysługujących Żydom w Królestwie Polskim*, the 1886 original manuscript preserved in the collection of the Manuscript Department of the National Library in Warsaw, Ref. BN 8352 IV.

³² A. Eisenbach, *Z dziejów ludności*, pp. 262–280.

³³ A. Eisenbach, *Kwestia równouprawnienia*, pp. 540–541.

³⁴ W. Ziomek, op. cit., p. 95.

In the light of the Commission's responses, the influence of the document on the development of the Kingdom of Poland was profound. Attention was paid to ethics in doing business – Jews, being able to act legally, did not need to resort to usury and exploitation. Most real estate wealth had found itself in the hands of Jews, which raised its value and increased competition in the real estate market. In addition, it was pointed out that Jews established factories and invested capital into processing enterprises. Due to this, the domestic production of raw materials increased and financial institutions had emerged which granted mortgage loans for the purchase of real estate, so that they could better secure their interests³⁵. As the authors of the memorandum note:

*Without the involvement of this movable capital, as represented by the Jews, neither farm nor forestry, neither factories nor industrial plants neither means of transport nor public works in general, neither craft or petty trade, could operate*³⁶.

However, some negative effects were noted. Opening the road for Jewish capitalists to acquire property at a rapid pace triggered a sharp increase in real estate prices. The effect of speculation on apartments resulted in their growth, disproportionate to the increase in the urban population. However, in its summary of responses, the Committee notes that any abolition of rights, granted to Jews, would have negative consequences for the entire country, especially in the areas of trade and industry, because ...

*... poverty amongst one large class of the population must inevitably have a harmful impact on the well-being of the whole of society*³⁷.

In response to the second question, the Committee emphasises that, due to the capital which they possess, almost all wholesale and retail trade, internal and external, is almost exclusively in the hands of the Jewish populace. Jews also serve as intermediaries, agents between rural merchants and buyers of goods in the cities and in industrial plants who could not do without small items and household goods. Also stressed was their activity and usefulness in horticultural crops, the the transport of goods and in the felling and timber trade³⁸. Also noted was their negative impact on the economic life of the Kingdom through usury and selling of alcohol. The Stock Exchange Committee stressed, however, that historical conditions had forced Jews to deal in what was forbidden to Christians. Hence, the 1862 restriction on their rights would see their return to these infamous activities. In addition, it was noted that the abolition of the right for Jews to purchase title to real estate would cause a rapid influx of Germans who would fill the resultant gap and export their profits, as opposed to Jews who made their profits from business activity³⁹.

In response to the final question, the memorandum recalled the role of the Warsaw Stock Exchange as a reflection of the financial conditions and the entire industrial and commercial activity in the Kingdom. So, introducing any restrictions, even upon one category of buyers, would reduce confidence in the security of real estate and would undermine the basis for mortgage lending. A loan, based on a mortgage agreement, gives Jews the opportunity to help farmers not only from their own funds, but also from capital entrusted to them by third parties. Blocking them from purchasing assets, which secure these loans, would

³⁵ A. Eisenbach, *Z dziejów ludności*, pp. 266–267.

³⁶ *Ibidem*, pp. 266–267.

³⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 269.

³⁸ *Ibidem*, pp. 272–274.

³⁹ *Ibidem*, s. 276–277.

discourage people from engaging in this type of transaction, which would not only harm capitalists, but also landowners⁴⁰.

A Picture of the Piotrków Province in the Light of the Stock Exchange Committee Data

This Congress Kingdom of Poland province was established in 1867, with its capitol in Piotrków Trybunalski. It was created from sections of the former Warsaw, Kalisz and Kielce Provinces. As written in the well-known lexicon:

*Within the area of the Congress Kingdom of Poland, it was a long, but narrow, stretching from the north-east to the south-west, between the Kalisz Province in the west to Radom and Kalisz in the east*⁴¹.

Within its area, the province took in the much-industrialised Będziński, Częstochowski, Noworadomski and Łódzki Districts. Industrial development in this area was favoured by the convenient location and the presence of natural resources, including coal, iron ore and zinc. Erratic stone used in the construction of roads, residences and industrial buildings was readily available. The forests were rich in firewood and building materials and transport conditions were easy⁴². The construction and commissioning of the Warsaw-Vienna Railway in this area, in 1846, accelerated this process and the development of industry, in turn, contributed to a growth in agricultural production. The stimulus in this instance was the ease of selling agricultural products in numerous prosperous and affluent cities. The resultant effect of the above were increases in the number of residents which, from 620,000 in 1866, grew to 706,606 in 1874. By 1886, it had reached 927,791 (including foreigners, that number was 958,000.)⁴³.

A picture of the character of the province can be obtained by reading material from the Stock Exchange Committee which, in developing the memorandum material, had collected detailed, statistical data regarding the population of the Polish Kingdom, its structures and manifestations of economic activity – divided into provinces. It is worth noting here that this document was developed in 1886⁴⁴ (presenting the status as at 01/01/1885), and explains the relationship between equal rights for Jews in 1862 and the change in the economic situation in some areas of the Kingdom.

According to data from the Bloch Commission, in 1885, the Piotrkow Province had 906,914 residents, 111,149 being Jews, representing 12.2% of the total population⁴⁵. By comparison, *Słownik geograficzny Królestwa Polskiego*, as at 01/01/1886, gives the number of people as 927,761, 110,376 being Jews, representing 11.9%⁴⁶ (Table 1), while data from the Piotrków Province authorities for a slightly later period – 1889 – provides a figure of

⁴⁰ Ibidem, pp. 279–280.

⁴¹ B. Chlebowski, W. Walewski, F. Sulimierski (ed.), *Słownik geograficzny Królestwa Polskiego i innych krajów słowiańskich*, Vol. 8, Warsaw 1887, p. 202.

⁴² J. Mizgalski, *Realizacja polityki inkorporacyjnej przez carat w XIX i pierwszych latach XX wieku (na przykładzie guberni piotrkowskiej)*, „Історичний архів. Наукові студії” 13, 2014, p. 71.

⁴³ *Słownik geograficzny Królestwa*, p. 204.

⁴⁴ Various sources (e.g. I. Schiper, A. Tartakower, A. Haffka (ed.), *Żydzi w Polsce Odrodzonej. Działalność społeczna, gospodarcza, oświatowa i kulturalna*, II, Warszawa 1916, p. 447) give the date of the document as 1887/1888, however the signatures of J. Bloch and H. Natanson, under the text of the memorandum submitted to the governmental commission, appear dated 5th/18th March 1886.

⁴⁵ A. Eisenbach, *Z dziejów ludności*, p. 282.

⁴⁶ *Słownik geograficzny Królestwa*, p. 202.

1,003,531, with 122,530 being Jews, representing 12.21% of the total population⁴⁷, as shown in Table 2.

Table 1. Piotrków Province Population According to Religion (01/01/1886)

Population According to Religion		Percentage of Total
Catholics	699,709	75.42%
Orthodox Christians	1,495	0.16%
Protestants	114,903	12.38%
Other Christian religions	1,277	0.14%
Jews	110,376	11.90%
Totals:	927,760	100.00%

Source: Opracowanie na podstawie: *Słownik geograficzny Królestwa Polskiego i innych krajów słowiańskich*, vol. 8, ed. B. Chlebowski, W. Walewski, F. Sulimierski, Warsaw 1887, p. 205.

Table 2. Piotrków Province Population According to Religion

District	Orthodox	Catholics	Lutherans et al	Jews	Totals
Piotrków	397	115,378	18,487	17,673	151,935
Noworadom	85	114,571	1,265	11,911	130,832
Częstochowa	338	116,222	1,257	16,150	133,967
Będziń	112	121,465	237	12,923	134,737
Łask	62	81,284	19,143	11,703	112,192
Łódź	350	87,804	58,629	27,693	174,476
Brzeźnicki	128	59,767	18,296	15,506	93,697
Rawski	85	58,925	3,714	8,971	71,695
Totals:	1,557	755,416	124,028	122,530	1,003,531

Source: *Obzor Petrokovskoj Guberni za 1889 God*, Petrokov 1890, p. 14.

This data indicates a very dynamic demographic development of this region over the last twenty years of the 19th century. Table 3 shows, in more detail, the areas in which the Jewish population was concentrated.

Table 3. Piotrków Province Population Distribution

Piotrków Province	No. of cities, settlements, villages	Population in 1885		% Jews
		Total	Jews	
Cities	11	160,441	57,610	35.9%
Settlements	40	97,039	36,410	37.5%
Villages		133,017	17,129	5.1%
Villages with ni Jews		516,420	0	0.0%
Totals:		906,914	111,149	12.2%

⁴⁷*Obzor Petrokovskoj Guberni za 1889 God*, Petrokov 1890, p. 14.

Source: A. Eisenbach, *Z dziejów ludności żydowskiej w Polsce w XVIII i XIX wieku*, Warsaw 1983, p. 284.

As is clear from the data, about 85% of the Jewish population lived in the cities and settlements, where they constituted over one-third of the total population. Only a small percentage decided to settle in the villages, due to the fact that ...

*... village properties (...) do not represent such a favourable location for capital, and require a level of knowledge about local conditions for the running of a farm, requiring a level of passion and even tradition, all of which Jews did not possess and, over twenty five years, could not develop*⁴⁸.

However, as mentioned several times in the memorandum, if a Jew already had a farm in the countryside, he would run it with the same diligence as a Christian farmer. The Bloch Committee material also included information collected by the *Towarzystwo Kredytowe Ziemskie* regarding the condition of properties belonging to Jews, divided by province (Table 4). As can be seen below, 51.5% of all Jewish farms in the Kingdom were in a very good, good or satisfactory condition, while that level in the Piotrków Province was 55.8%.

Table 4. The state of farms belonging to the Jewish population

Provinces	Number of owners	Number of properties	Area in morg	Condition of property								
				Very good	Good	Quite good, could improve	Average	Bad	Very bad, neglected	Vacant lots	Leased to peasants	Unknown
Warszawska	52	57	48,417	5	21	1	27	1	1	-	-	1
Kaliska	35	37	34,269	1	14	-	5	4	-	2	-	11
Radomska	28	26	14,638	1	-	10	12	1	-	2	-	-
Kielecka	38	34	35,775	-	16	-	10	4	-	-	4	-
Lubelska	20	19	16,670	-	1	-	3	5	3	5	-	2
Siedlecka	31	23	34,146	-	9	12	-	1	-	-	-	1
Płocka	22	36	55,268	7	18	-	6	-	2	3	-	-
Suwalska	53	45	37,299	4	16	-	15	10	-	-	-	-
Łomżyńska	16	16	17,041	-	8	-	5	2	-	1	-	-
Piotrkowska	56	43	40,058	1	12	11	6	6	4	4	-	-
Totals:	351	336	336,581 ⁴⁹	19	115	34	89	34	9	17	4	15

Source: J. Bloch, *Ziemia i jej oddłużenie w Królestwie Polskim*, Warsaw 1892, s. 128.

⁴⁸ *Do Warszawskiej Komisji dla zbadania kwestii żydowskiej*, [in:] A. Eisenbach, *Z dziejów ludności*, p. 266.

⁴⁹ As Bloch explains in his book, the difference in the amount of property owned by Jews, as indicated in the book, compared to data contained in the memorandum, arises from the fact that, for the purposes of the book, the data related only to farms indebted to the *Towarzystwo Kredytowy* (Credit Society), and not all Jewish-owned properties, for more J. Bloch, *Ziemia i jej oddłużenie w Królestwie Polskim*, Warsaw 1892, p. 128.

The Committee's findings also allow the Jewish population to be grouped according to their main sources of income, as illustrated in Table 5. It is worth adding here that the figures contained in that table refer to all the Kingdom's provinces, with the exception of Warsaw⁵⁰.

Table 5. The structure of the Jewish population in the Piotrków Province, according to sources of income⁵¹

Group	Total in the Polish Kingdom	Total in the Piotrków Province	%
First Guild Merchants (wholesale)	91	21	23.0%
Second Guild Merchants (retail)	2,433	354	14.5%
Traders and stallholders	36,923	5,909	16.0%
Industrialists and entrepreneurs (not including distillery and brewery owners)	1,309	209	15.9%
Craftsmen and hired labourers in craft and industry	37,410	5,944	15.8%
Farmers and agricultural workers (owners of small farms, farm workers)	4,514	471	10.4%
Landowners (farms, estates, settlements, as well as small estates within settlements)	2,642	266	10.0%
Tenants of various settlements, estates, mills, ponds, wayside inns and other	324	9	2.7%
Professions (doctors, paramedics, artists, others)	942	176	18.7%
Others (intermediaries, taverners, innkeepers, owners of distilleries and breweries, salaried workers, hired workers, servants, people without a specified occupation)	110,575	6,614	5.9%
Totals:	197,163	19,973	10.1%

Source: A. Eisenbach, *Z dziejów ludności żydowskiej w Polsce w XVIII i XIX wieku*, Warsaw 1983, pp. 287–288.

As can be seen from the above, the Jewish population of the Piotrków Province were mainly engaged in trade and industry. It is also worth adding that their largest contribution was in the development of wholesale trade and acting as intermediaries/agents. Jews dealt mainly in the purchase of the greater amount of local products (grains, timber and spirits) and in sales abroad and, thanks to their knowledge of the principles involved in trade, they were able to obtain better prices for these goods and were able to offer landowners better prices for these goods. With regard to retail trade, Jews specialised as intermediaries between small farms and manufacturing industry. They purchased village items which, on their own, did not represent any real value (rags, kitchen bones, iron and broken glass) and then sold them on, in larger quantities, to industrial plants⁵².

Jews were also well-represented in the free professions. Within the Jewish community, activities relating to religion and religious education were particularly respected

⁵⁰ It is not clear why Warsaw was excluded from the population structure statistics. Perhaps the Stock Exchange Committee kept separate statistics for the city.

⁵¹ As indicated from the document, it related to the heads of Jewish families. The Commission assumed that, on average, a Jewish family consisted of five people. So, in 1884, there were 190,194 families in the Kingdom (excluding Warsaw, hence an average of 950,970 individuals.

⁵² *Do Warszawskiej Komisji*, p. 273.

(rabbis, assistant rabbis and teachers). The number of clerks was rather small (employed mainly in private businesses and offices). However, interestingly, the percentage of teachers was higher than in the Christian community. Medical professions (doctors, paramedics, barber-surgeons, midwives) were a long tradition amongst Jews. In the second half of the 19th century, the Kingdom of Poland was dominated by an expansion in the number of Jewish intelligentsia – namely officials primarily employed in “private enterprise”, teachers and those in the free professions⁵³.

The *Słownik geograficzny Królestwa Polskiego (The Geographical Dictionary of the Polish Kingdom)* states that, in 1885, 87 doctors resided in the Province – 24 working in government and 63 in private practice. In addition, there were 9 veterinarians, 22 paramedics, 114 midwives and 54 pharmacists⁵⁴. Unfortunately, it is not known how many of them were Jewish. Interestingly, while the largest grouping in the Kingdom belonged to the “Others” category, namely people working in fields with the smallest recognition (e.g. wayside innkeepers, hired workers, itinerant workers, servants – up to 56% of the Jewish population), in the Piotrków Province they comprised less than 6% of all Jews.

Occupations requiring a level of manual labour were the lowest in the social hierarchy, the more so since employees from the “working class” came from the lowest social strata and rarely had the opportunity to gain any in-depth religious education, something which was so valued by the Jewish population⁵⁵.

The Province was one of the most economically developed in the Polish Kingdom. Its Będzin and Łódź Districts lay in the most industrialised of Polish areas. Thanks to Łódź, the cotton industry dominated in the Province. (Table 6 indicates the Jewish population’s involvement in it.) As a result, a drapery industry developed in Tomaszów. “Zagłębie Dąbrowskie”, in the Będzin District was a major centre for mining and for steel mills, benefitting from its rich coal deposits. The Jewish population’s to the industrialisation process of the Province was not insignificant.

Table 6. Jewish involvement in the Łódź textile industry in 1884

Type	Value of production			Number employed		
	In Łódź	Jewish businesses	%	In Łódź	Jewish businesses	%
Cotton	30,056	5,396	17.9	10 183	2,593	25.4
Wool	19,969	4,412	31.5	5 929	1,516	25.5
Flax, jute, hemp	5,355	-	-	337	-	-
Silk	695	85	12.2	720	100	13.8
Mixed	2,880	725	25.1	1 194	403	33.7
Totals:	48,135	10,618	22.0	18 363	4,612	25.1

Source: W. Ziomek, *Udział przedsiębiorstw żydowskich w przemyśle włókienniczym Łodzi w latach 1860–1914*, „Acta Universitatis Lodziensis”, Folia Historica 63/1988, p. 107.

⁵³ A. Cała, H. Węgrzynek, G. Zalewska (red.), *Historia i kultura Żydów polskich. Słownik*, Warszawa 2000, s. 322 (look for: the occupational structure of the Jewish population)

⁵⁴ *Słownik geograficzny Królestwa*, p. 207.

⁵⁵ *Historia i kultura*, p. 322.

From Bloch's material, we know that, in 1885, of the 1,281 Jewish owned or leased industrial plant and factories in the Polish Kingdom, 202 were located in the Piotrków Province, which employed 10,479 people (Table 7). Dominant among them were weaving factoris, tanneries, oil mills and mills. The weaving and spinning industry alone was one of the main sources of livelihood in the Łódź District and in the city of Łódź. In terms of industry and manufacturing, the Province led the way in the Polish Kingdom. The main trade in the Province was for the materials needed for the factories and for the goods they produced. Small agriculture and craft prevailed only in areas devoid of industries and factories⁵⁶.

Retails shops were mostly in Jewish hands. In Piotrków itself, according to the figures for the last quarter of the 19th century, of the 600 people engaged in trade, as many as 82% were Jews, 14% were Catholic and the remaining 4% belonged to other religions⁵⁷.

Table 7. Industrial plants owned or leased by Jews according to Province

Province	No. of factories and plants	Value in rubles		Number of employees		
		Industrial sites	Annual production	Total	Among them	
					Christians	Jews
Warszawska	94	3,339,325	3,235,373	2,200	2,187	13
Kaliska	108	680,020	1,480,540	802	786	16
Piotrkowska	202	8,163,242	15,718,669	10,479	10,467	12
Radomska	86	711,910	1,253,510	695	672	23
Kielecka	90	423,950	697,574	380	378	2
Lubelska	103	371,035	885,135	861	844	17
Siedlecka	188	577,660	960,602	718	698	20
Płocka	115	420,015	797,606	715	701	14
Łomżyńska	118	225,275	430,577	385	372	13
Suwalska	115	450,939	390,390	423	415	8
Razem:	1,219	15,363,371	25,849,976	17,658	17,520	138
Leased by Jews:	62	-	284,590	231	224	7
Total in the Polish Kingdom:	1,281	15,363,371	26,134,566	17,889	17,744	145

Source: A. Eisenbach, *Z dziejów ludności żydowskiej w Polsce w XVIII i XIX wieku*, Warsaw 1983, p. 291.

Within the material gathered by the Stock Exchange Committee was also interesting information about urban real estate and rural manor estates owned by Jews. They were divided into two categories – buildings (including residential and farm buildings) and land (landed estates)⁵⁸. These details are present in Tables 8 and 9.

⁵⁶ *Słownik geograficzny Królestwa*, p. 206.

⁵⁷ M. Feinkind, *Dzieje Żydów w Piotrkowie i okolicy od najdawniejszych czasów do chwili obecnej*, Piotrkow 1930, pp. 26–27.

⁵⁸ A. Eisenbach, *Z dziejów ludności*, p. 299.

Table 8. Buildings belonging to Jews according to Province

Province	Buildings	
	Number	Value for fire insurance (in rubles)
Warszawska	4,102	6,013,666
Kaliska	2,891	4,687,397
Piotrkowska	4,938	8,180,948
Radomska	4,921	4,260,014
Kielecka	3,451	2,802,228
Lubelska	6,391	5,265,216
Siedlecka	4,836	4,990,583
Płocka	2,705	3,485,986
Łomżyńska	4,805	3,806,926
Suwalska	7,059	4,783,703
Totals in the Kingdom of Poland:	46,099	48,276,667

Source: A. Eisenbach, *Z dziejów ludności żydowskiej w Polsce w XVIII i XIX wieku*, Warsaw 1983, p. 298.

Table 9. Land ownership by Jews according to Province

Province	Area of Land Holdings (in morgs)				
	Totals in the Kingdom of Poland	Jewish ownership			
		Total	Manor estates	Small estates (homesteads, colonies, small farms)	Small properties (farms and land intended for building and vegetable cultivation)
Warszawska	2,353,627	66,152	62,259	2,360	1,533
Kaliska	1,920,160	52,378	49,024	1,003	2,351
Piotrkowska	2,015,977	61,247	55,099	2,341	3,807
Radomska	1,853,914	39,442	26,540	9,117	3,785
Kielecka	1,673,597	54,130	47,478	3,113	3,539
Lubelska	2,739,667	32,772	28,278	1,087	3,407
Siedlecka	2,425,349	51,563	47,246	1,592	2,725
Płocka	1,843,549	41,150	36,329	2,309	2,512
Łomżyńska	1,732,421	25,881	19,243	2,162	4,476
Suwalska	2,043,331	75,815	51,362	5,315	19,138
Total in the Polish Kingdom:	20,601,592	500,530	422,858	30,399	47,273

Source: A. Eisenbach, *Z dziejów ludności żydowskiej w Polsce w XVIII i XIX wieku*, Warsaw 1983, p. 300.

From the above compilations, it appears that the Piotrków Province did not grow significantly in terms of the number of buildings owned by Jews. However, the value of these buildings, based on fire insurance values, was the highest in the entire Kingdom. As far as the ownership of landed property is concerned, the Piotrków Province stood out, after Warsaw, with a large area of land (89%), namely large farms which became possible due to the

granting of property rights to peasants in the Kingdom and thanks also the granting, to Jews, the right to own property in 1862.

Information about the Piotrków Province, which can be gained from reading the Stock Exchange Committee material, corresponds to the overall image of the Province as can be found in current literature on the subject. It confirms that it was the most industrialised and richest province in the Kingdom, which was influenced by the Łódź textile industry district, the Częstochowa industrial region and Zagłębie Dąbrowskie. This was of great importance for the economic possibilities for the Jewish population living in the region. The Stock Exchange Committee Memorandum, itself, was an attempt to characterise the position of the Jewish population and its economic and social activity within the Polish Kingdom, based on detailed statistical material and a huge amount of factual data. Its creation is significant because it provides extremely interesting material for research into the economic situation in the Polish Kingdom in the last quarter of the 19th century. The statistics prepared by the Stock Exchange Committee probably constitute the only detailed and comprehensive picture of the Polish Kingdom which has been preserved of that period. And, although today, Bloch's works only have historical value, they can certainly be included in the less-than-rich 19th century economic thoughts.

This paper is an attempt to present an image of the Piotrków Province, with economic specifics, in the light of material collected by the Stock Exchange Committee, which becomes more complete when we compare data from Bloch's Committee with previously known material regarding this area and showing the role played by the Jewish population in the province's development.