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**The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Second Polish Republic
and the Issue of Jewish Emigration from Poland
in the Second Half of the 1930s.**

SUMMARY: In the second half of the 1930s, Polish diplomacy made efforts to solve the issue of the Jewish minority in Poland. The Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs endeavoured to make it easier for Jews to emigrate from the territory of the Second Polish Republic.

This article presents selected threads on this issue with the aim of articulating the actions taken by the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and to assess their effects.

Key words: the history of Jews in Poland, refugees, the inter-war period.

INTRODUCTION

Polish statehood, reborn after 123 years of partitioning, did not have a homogenously Polish population. The Second Polish Republic was a multicultural state, as indicated by the official results of the 1921 census. Citizens of the Polish state included:

- 69.2 % Poles,
- 14.3% Ruthenians (Ukrainians),
- 3.9 % Belarusians,
- 3.9% Germans and
- 7.9% Jews¹.

The everyday use of a mother tongue in everyday life was adopted, as a criterion for nationality, in the census conducted in the Polish state ten years later.

The published results of the census stated that, among the citizens of the Second Republic, languages used in everyday life were:

- 68.9% Polish,
- 10.1% Ukrainian,
- 3.8% Russian,
- 3.1% Belarusian,
- 0.4% Russian,
- 2.3% German, and
- 8.6% Yiddish or Hebrew².

Statistical research did not fully reflect the image of the national mosaic as was the territory of the Polish state at that time.

Many factors influenced the results of the census. They included the vague questions which were addressed to the respondents. For example, in answer to the question about their

¹ Historia Polski w liczbach, Państwo Społeczeństwo, vol. I, the Editorial Team led by Dr Franciszek Kubiczek, chief editor: Prof. Dr hab. Andrzej Jezierski, Prof. Dr hab. Andrzej Wyczański, Zakład Wydawnictw Statystycznych, Warszawa 2003, p. 382.

² Ibidem, p. 383.

mother tongue, many respondents replied with “local”. Also not taken into account were assimilated families who spoke Polish, e.g., assimilated Jewish families. The policy of the government of the time also influenced the published results,

Hence, Jolanta Żyndul states that the published data can be considered as estimates:

When the Polish state was established, there were 2.8 million Jews. The 1931 census showed that there were 3.3 million people of the Jewish faith [...] It can be estimated that 3.3 million Jews lived in Poland on the eve of the Second World War³.

Poland, after the United States and Palestine, was the country with the largest percentage of Jewish population and, after the United States, had the second largest concentration of a Jewish community in the world.

Unlike other national minorities, who lived in clusters in the “Eastern Borderlands” (Ukrainians, Belarusians, Lithuanians, etc.) and in the “Western Borderlands” (Germans), the Jewish community was spread throughout the country. The majority lived in cities and towns, mainly in the former Russian and Austro-Hungarian territories (Western and Eastern Galicia).

The Jewish population’s style of everyday life was clearly different from that of the Polish population. The religions, which had a significant influence on the formation of these cultural and linguistic differences, included Christian, Catholic, Orthodox and (in the northern, western and south-western parts of the country) Evangelical.

Apart from cultural differences, there were strong conflicts in competition over trade and problems relating to unemployment, economic crises, etc. The Jewish community was dominant, in relation to the Christian population, in employment in such areas of the economy, widely understood as industry and trade. The Jewish population was involved, to a lesser extent, in agriculture. In small cities and towns, Jews definitely dominated in service activities, craft and trade. The structure of employment and sources for livelihoods, unfavourable to Christians, were causes for disputes. The main causes for conflicts were, most often, prices and profits.

³ J. Żyndul, “II Rzeczypospolita” [in:] *Atlas Historii Żydów Polskich*, red. W. Sienkiewicz, aut. tekstów H. Zaremska [et al.], Warszawa 2010, p. 247.

Amongst many Polish political groupings, especially those on the right of the political scene, the prevailing idea was to build a nation-state on the foundation of the Catholic religion. Those, with the traditions of the Polish nation, shaped over centuries, definitely had a privileged position in the reborn Polish state.

Throughout the period between the First and Second World Wars, the conflict between national minorities and Polish right-wing national groups continued. It grew, along with the country's economic and social difficulties and the racist wave of antisemitism heated up by Nazi Germany. The problem of the Jewish minority, as articulated by many politicians and political groups in Poland, could be solved by the emigration of some of the Jews from Poland⁴.

Changes in the Responsibilities in the Council of Ministers of the Second Polish Republic for Implementing the Policy Towards the Jewish Minority

In 1935, there were significant changes in the Council of Ministers, regarding the Jewish issue. Responsibilities, regarding this question, were divided between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of the Interior. Researcher Timothy Snyder, noticing a change in the attitude of the government of the time towards the Jewish national minority in Poland, stated,

"Jews ceased to be normal citizens, whom the state was supposed to integrate and protect. They became, in a sense, foreigners – objects of global interest, whose future could be negotiated with foreign officials⁵."

Following the death of Józef Piłsudski, his successors in Polish foreign policy moved from one form of Promethean policy (which involved aiding their eastern neighbours to free themselves from Moscow) to a new Promethean policy (of supporting the Jewish people against British rule in Palestine). The popularity, to date, of the Piłsudski political groupings amongst Jewish

⁴ As J. Żyndul states: "during the twenty-year course of the inter-war period, including re-emigration, around 400,000 Jews left Poland. The largest number was taken in by the United States (165,000), those who mainly left in the early 1920s. The introduction of further immigration restrictions by the United States resulted in a decrease in the number of Jews leaving for overseas. In the 1930s, Jewish emigration to the USA did not exceed 1,000 people annually. From the mid-1920s, Palestine (120,000) became an important destination. Most people left during the "Fourth Aliyah" (1924-1926), also referred to as the "Grabski Aliyah". Other important emigration destinations still remained - Argentina (50,000), Brazil, Canada and Western Europe (20,000 each)." Ibidem, pp. 247-248.

⁵ T. Snyder, *Czarna ziemia: Holokaust jako ostrzeżenie*, Kraków 2015, p. 90.

voters in Poland, was revised. Established in 1937, the National Unification Camp (the "Ozone"), in its program, strongly articulated the concept that its goal was for 90% of Jews, in Poland, to emigrate. Snyder states that, following Piłsudski's death, most of the politicians in his grouping:

"... did not have antisemitic convictions, but they endeavoured to meet the challenge posed by the "Endecja" by adopting a hostile attitude, in its public policy, towards Jews. Thus, they betrayed the basic, moral assumption of Piłsudski's policy which stated that Poland is a state, not a race."⁶

Wiktor T. Drymmer, a close associate of the Foreign Minister Józef Beck, was responsible for the policy towards the Jewish national minority. When he took office as Director of the Consular Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs⁷ in 1933, Drymmer was a supporter of solving the Jewish issue in Poland through emigration.⁸

Up to 1935, there was a clear division – the Ministry of the Interior dealt mainly with issues concerning the Jewish population in Poland, while the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, among other things, dealt with their emigration, problems abroad and contacts with world Jewish organisations. Drymmer, disappointed with his division's poor results, proposed to Minister Beck that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs should take over the responsibilities, regarding this issue, of the Ministry of the Interior.⁹

⁶ Ibidem.

⁷ Drymmer Wiktor Tomir (Dyrektor Departamentu Konsularnego); dr Sokołowski Władysław (Zastępca Dyrektora Departamentu Konsularnego); Jaworowski Stanisław i Wyszogrodzki Tadeusz (Sekretarze Departamentu Konsularnego). *Rocznik Służby Zagranicznej Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej według stanu na 1 kwietnia 1938*, Warsaw 1938, p. 32.

⁸ J. Tomaszewski, „Niepodległa Rzeczpospolita” [in:] *Najnowsze dzieje Żydów w Polsce w zarysie (do 1950 roku)*, ed. J. Tomaszewski, by J. Adelson [et al.], Warszawa 1993, p. 167.

⁹ Years later, in his memoirs, Drymmer assessed the work of the Ministry of the Interior, on the Jewish issue, as follows: *My research on the Jewish issue in other ministries, especially the Ministry of the Interior, yielded nothing but some leaflets and alleged "research" pamphlets about the Jewish issue, most often, unfavourable towards Jews. (...) The Ministry of the Interior treated the Jewish issue only from the viewpoint of security, imposing penalties or referring more serious cases to the courts. <<The Nationalist>> students left the prisons like <<heroes>>, proudly wearing a badge on their jacket lapel – a prison plaid.* W.T. Drymmer, *W służbie Polsce*, Warszawa 1998, p. 141 and 146. He also stated that *government studies on the Jewish issue in Poland, carried out by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, unequivocally showed that there is no other solution other than the emigration of not tens, but hundreds, thousands <<of Jews>>.* Idem, *"Zagadnienia żydowskie w Polsce w latach 1935-1939"*, [in:] *Zeszyty Historyczne*, vol. 13, Paris 1968. W. Pobóg-Malinowski, *Najnowsza historia polityczna Polski 1864-1945*, vol. 2, London 1956, pp. 614-620. Confer: G. Zalewska, „Sprawa emigracji żydowskiej z polski w drugiej połowie lat trzydziestych w świetle materiałów polskiego MSZ”, [in:] *Dzieje Najnowsze*, rocznik 20 (1988), cz. 1, pp. 98-99; J. Tomaszewski, „Dobry pomysł, gorsza realizacja: Janusz Pawlak, Żydzi w dokumentach administracji państwowej w dwudziestoleciu międzywojennym (1918-1939)”, [in:] *Kwartalnik Historii Żydów*,

After obtaining Beck's agreement, Drymmer began work on the Jewish issue in three different areas of activity:

- The first area was emigration, namely working towards opening the borders for Jewish emigration through countries traditionally traversed during emigration.
- Another area of activity included studying the current situation of the Jewish population in Poland, the history of emigration and the legal position of emigrants in destination countries.
- The last and third area of activity concerned propaganda campaigns aimed at shaping public opinion regarding achievements concerning the issue of Jewish emigration.¹⁰

In the context of the discourse in Europe at that time, Polish emigration policy towards Jews can be assessed as balanced. It was a policy between Hitler's extreme racist program - that Jews must be eliminated and a practical way to achieve this goal was through emigration, and the Zionist program which claimed that Jews had the right to a state established in one of the existing colonies.

The position of both Minister Beck and Drymer favoured the carrying out of mass emigration of Jews from Europe, including Poland, and for the creation of a Jewish state in Palestine. In this, they differed from the British who, indeed, perceived positively the establishment of a Jewish state, but in some undefined, distant future. The British also considered, inter alia, the then political situation in the Middle East, which was opposed to the mass emigration of Jews to Palestine.

Drymmer delegated two members of his department's staff to carry out these tasks. He described the division of labour with the following words:

"I have turned over the majority of discussions with Jewish leaders to department head [Apoloniusz – ed: M. Mizgalska-Osowiecka] Zarychta, the studies to Dr [Jan – ed: MMO] Wagner, leaving for myself the management, decisions and informing Minister Beck about the progress of our work, talks and studies.

Warsaw 2008, No. 2 (226), p. 229; Idem, "Rząd Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej wobec emigracji Żydów (interpelacje poselskie i odpowiedzi premiera)", [in:] *Biuletyn Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego*, Warszawa październik 1994-czerwiec 1995, No. 4/94-2/95 (172-174), p. 100; *Historia Dyplomacji polskiej*, ed. P. Łossowski, Warsaw 1995, vol. 4, pp. 47-49 and 56.

¹⁰ G. Zalewska, "Sprawa emigracji żydowskiej...", p. 99; W.T. Drymmer, *W służbie Polsce...*, p. 142.

As always, in this new area of work, I have, from Minister Beck, not only valuable suggestions and advice, but also his full support and cooperation in areas to which only he has access, such as all types of international institutions, with the League of Nations at the forefront”¹¹.

The director of the Consular Department aimed to influence both the Jewish religious minority and the rest of the nation of inter-war Poland:

“As far as the activities of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was concerned, in the country, our task was to make the Polish and Jewish communities aware that we treat the issue of emigration as an important state problem that is of concern to all citizens and not, as some people wanted to present it, as an attempt to evacuate all Jews from Poland.”¹²

Drymmer noticed numerous efforts, in the Polish Sejm and Senate, aimed at achieving this end. He also valued the work undertaken by the academic community. All this did not change the fact that he saw that a great deal of work was still be done in order to change the situation and the attitude towards the issue of the emigration of Jews from Poland.¹³

The Emigration Policy Division (E.I.) of the Consular Department was divided into Studies, Migration, Colonial and Settlement. Together, in April 1938, the Emigration Policy Section employed a staff of thirteen.¹⁴ It is no coincidence that I will focus on analysing the work of the employees of the Emigration Policy Division, who closely worked together with Drymmer on the issue of Jewish emigration.

¹¹ W.T. Drymmer, *W służbie Polsce...*, p. 141 and 142.

¹² Ibidem, p. 154.

¹³ Ibidem, p. 146.

¹⁴ Dr Zarychta Apoloniusz (Head of the Department of Emigration Politics); Dr Jan Wagner i Ziętkiewicz Ignacy (Deputy Head of the Department (E. I)); Kozłowski Bolesław (Secretary ((E. I.)); Dr Wagner Jan (Head of the Studies Department in (E. I)); Paprocki Antoni and Narutowicz Stanisław (contract staff of the Studies Department in (E. I)); Ziętkiewicz Ignacy (Head of the Migration Department in E. I)); Strzałecki Tomasz (Referee of the Migration Department in (E. I)); Zieliński Józef (Head of the Colonial Department in (E. I.)); Kryj Leon (Referee of the Colonial Department in (E. I.)); Bevense Wacław (contract staff member of the Colonial Department in (E. I)); Jakubowski Zbigniew (Head of the Settlement Department in (E. I.)); Nowicki Romuald (contract staff member of the Settlement Department in (E.I)); Adamski Józef (contract staff member of the Settlement Department in (E. I)). *Rocznik Służby Zagranicznej...*, p. 32; P. Łossowski, *“Geneza niepodległości. Dyplomacja Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej”*, [in:] *Historia Dyplomacji Polskiej X-XX w.*, ed. G. Labuda and W. Michowicz, Warsaw 2002, p. 497.

The first of these is Apoloniusz Zarychta. Born in 1899, he held a doctorate of philosophy. He was a geographer, a traveller, a soldier of the Polska Organizacja Wojskowa [Polish Military Organisation], a Polish community activist and an activist in the Maritime and Colonial League. He was associated with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the years 1931-1939. From 1st July 1932, he headed the Emigration Policy Division of the Consular Department. After the September Campaign, he served in the Polish Army in the West. He then left for Brazil, from where he returned to Poland in 1960. He died twelve years later.¹⁵ Drymmer spoke both positively and critically about his subordinate.¹⁶

The second person, at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the second half of the 1930s, who made a significant contribution towards solving the Jewish issue, was the diplomat Jan Wagner. He was born in 1899 and held the title of doctor of laws. He was associated with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs from 1920, having been posted to Vienna, Berlin, Leipzig and Rio de Janeiro. From 1st December 1937, he served as deputy head of the Emigration Policy Division of the Consular Department. His publications and studies, in print, about the emigration of Jews and emigration to Palestine, have been preserved. They will be analysed later in this article.¹⁷

On 1st August 1938, another significant change was made. All cases concerning Jewish issues, being worked on by Political-Economic Department¹⁸ of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, were

¹⁵ P. Juzwa, „Indeks nazwisk”, [in:] W.T. Drymmer, *W służbie Polsce*, Warszawa 1998, p. 349, [entry:] Zarychta Apoloniusz; *Rocznik Służby Zagranicznej Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej według stanu na 1 kwietnia 1938*, Warsaw 1938, p. 240. J. Tomaszewski discovered A. Zarycht's relationship with the „Zadruga” monthly. I was unable to analyse and explore this thread in more detail on the life of the Head of (E. I.) of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. For more on this vide: J. Tomaszewski, *Preludium zagłady. Wygnanie Żydów Polskich z Niemiec w 1938 r.*, Warsaw 1998, p. 84.

¹⁶ „I especially valued the conversations with Apoloniusz Zarychta, in which was evident his extraordinary theoretical and practical knowledge, acquired during his several years of geographic and scientific travelling in South America. (...) I owe him much and learned a great deal from him in endless conversations outside the office or during hunting. Conversations with him have never been trivial and his special gift for words and his rare depth of vocabulary, made it a pleasure to listen to him. Often, however, he had a vivid imagination (...)” W.T. Drymmer, *W służbie Polsce...*, p. 196. Jan Meystowicz was equally critical of A. Zarychta's vision and concept: „an educated man, but a visionary, building concepts totally removed from reality of the state of affairs in the modern world”. J. Meystowicz, „Czas przeszły dokonany. Wspomnienia ze służby w Ministerstwie Spraw Zagranicznych w latach 1932-1939”, Warsaw 1989, p. 115.

¹⁷ P. Juzwa, „Indeks nazwisk”, [in:] W.T. Drymmer, *W służbie Polsce...*, p. 345, [entry:] Wagner Jan; *Rocznik Służby Zagranicznej...*, Warsaw 1938, p. 234.

¹⁸ This department consisted of the following sections: International, Western, Eastern, Legal and Press, and the position of an independent economy advisor. Deputy Director of the Political and Economic Department, until 1943, was Józef Alfred Potocki who, earlier, among others, held the off Counsellor of the Legation and the Polish

transferred to the Emigration Policy Division (E.I.) of the Consular Department.¹⁹ In his memoirs, Drymmer characterised the department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, under his supervision, with the following words:

*“The new section in the Department, dealing with the issue of emigration, was led by Dr. A. Zarychta. This section, comprised of several people, performed more than the work of the former Emigration Office, working not just on finding new emigration possibilities, so difficult after the 1931 world crisis, but also provided professional and legal care for new emigrants.”*²⁰

Wiktor Drymmer was consistent in seeing the emigration of the surplus population as the solution to over-population in Poland. This is evidenced by his lecture entitled *“The Ministry of Foreign Affairs’ Tasks in the Field of Emigration”*, delivered on 1st April 1935, in Academic Courses for Foreign Affairs Officials. [As he saw it,] the main reason for emigration from Poland was the over-population of the Polish countryside. He explained that, apart from Italy, Poland had the highest density of agricultural population compared to other European countries. As examples, he named Czechoslovakia, Germany, France and Denmark as countries with a low population density. He also noted that Poland a lower percentage of uncultivated land compared to other countries – comparable to Germany, but less than Denmark, France and Italy. He also rightly drew attention to the issue of tiny farms, which were not able to employ all their family members and thereby caused problems of unemployment and people without land in the Polish countryside.

He explained that neither Polish industry nor the cities in Poland were sufficiently developed such that they could absorb the excess labour force from the Polish countryside. He pointed to the complexity of possible success in applying solutions such as internal emigration, moving

Embassy in London. From 1st February 1934, Tadeusz Gwiazdowski, became Deputy Director of the Political and Economic Department of the Polish Legation in Geneva. P. Łossowski, *“Geneza niepodległości...”,* p. 497; R. Świętek, *“Potocki Józef Alfred”,* [in:] *Encyklopedia Historii Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej*, Warszawa 1999, pp. 332-333. *Rocznik Służby Zagranicznej...*, p. 28 and 185 [entry: Gwiazdowski Tadeusz].

¹⁹ *Historia Dyplomacji polskiej...*, p. 48. The Consular Department consisted of the Legal Protection Department, the Poles Abroad Department and the Department of Emigration Policy.

²⁰ W.T. Drymmer, *W służbie Polsce...*, p. 126.

people from more populated areas to less populated areas, e.g., north-eastern and north-western parts of Poland, from Polesia.²¹

Wiktor Drymmer suggested the following directions of emigration:

- Ukrainians from Poland to Argentina;
- Jews to Palestine and South American port cities;
- Poles to southern France, Brazil, Paraguay and Argentina.

He explained that such a division would not only bring benefits to those emigrants, but would also be politically and economically beneficial to Poland. As an example, he cited the benefits of having one's own intelligentsia in the United States. Wiktor Drymmer gave information about the fiasco of Polish settlement attempts in Peru and Angola.²² At the same time, in his lecture, he cautioned that:

*"If emigration is to solve the population problem, there would have to be all this excess [of unnecessary hands to work in the Polish countryside - ed. MMO] to emigrate, creating an increase in population abroad of 200,000. This is absolutely possible."*²³

According to the Director of the Consular Department, emigration could only alleviate the problem of over-crowding in agricultural districts or in other over-crowded areas. It could not, however, solve the problem definitively. He confirmed that action should be taken on many fronts. Support should also come from the state in the form of agricultural reform, redistribution of population and the expansion of cities and industry. In his lecture, he clearly articulated:

*"Poland is an emigration country and our state is faced with the necessity to emigrate."*²⁴

John Hope Simpson, the British Director of the Research Department at the Royal Institute of International Affairs (Refugee Survey), criticised the issues of Jews living within the Second Polish Republic. In a paper, published in London in July 1938, he clearly emphasised the

²¹ Idem, "Zadania Ministerstwa Spraw Zagranicznych w Dziedzinie Emigracji: wygłoszony w dniu 1 kwietnia 1935 roku na Kursach Naukowych dla urzędników służby zagranicznej przez p. T. Drymmera, Dyrektora Dep. Kons.", [S.l.: s.n., 1935], pp. 2-4.

²² Ibidem, pp. 7-10.

²³ Ibidem, p. 6.

²⁴ Ibidem, p. 5.

contribution of Polish Jews towards humanitarian aid²⁵. He also did not leave without comment the actions of the Polish government which, through emigration, were aimed at solving the Jewish issue in Poland²⁶. He believed that further Jewish emigration from Eastern Europe could be prevented. However, in his opinion, this would require governmental commitment and actual action. As an example of these activities, he mentioned Poland. He pointed out that the situation, of the time, could be changed by better agrarian reform, by more industrialisation and by expanding both domestic and foreign markets. As a reward for taking these actions, he saw an “economic rehabilitation” which would, to a large extent, lead to solving the Jewish issue.

John Hope Simpson argued that the implementation of the directions on internal social and economic policy, which he proposed, would create the possibility of, for example, the re-training of Jews in Poland and the preparation of young generations to face the changing reality²⁷. In this instance, it is impossible to deny that John Hope Simpson is correct. Overcoming the stagnation of the Polish economy could bring about positive effects for all the citizens of the Second Polish Republic – including the Jews.

In their four-volume work *Gospodarka Polski międzywojennej* [*The Inter-War Polish Economy*], Zbigniew Landau and Jerzy Tomaszewski, researchers of the economic history of the Second Polish Republic, precisely analysed the processes taking place in the Polish economy of the inter-war period, which resulted in the need for specific changes²⁸. Jerzy Tomaszewski, an expert on the history of Jews in Poland, shared Simpson’s view that changes in the structure

²⁵ “The collapse of the western flank of Eastern European Jewry, which has turned into a massive number of emigrants, may affect the stability of the rest of the Jewish population who, with difficulty, is supported through the humanitarian work of organisations such as the American Joint Distribution Committee or ORT. A large part of the funding, which allows them to function, comes from local sources – for example, from wealthy Polish Jews inside Poland, although contributions from Jews in the United States and other countries cannot be ignored”.

J. Hope Simpson, *Refugees: Preliminary Report of a Survey*, Royal Institute of International Affairs, London July 1938, p. 190.

²⁶ “The whole of Eastern European Jewry is in a precarious position and, at various times, both in Poland and in Romania, government spokespeople have suggested that steps will be taken to induce emigration as a way of solving the problem at hand”. Ibidem, pp. 190-191.

²⁷ “In Poland, for example, the provision of financial and other resources to carry out agrarian reform, to fuel the industrialisation process and to develop the domestic and foreign markets, could help the country’s economic recovery, the result of which the specific Jewish issue would be almost completely solved. If it was possible to delineate the general framework for such a national transformation, Jewry could undertake the change of its own atypical economic and social structure and train young generations with a sense of purpose, something which they now lack”. Ibidem, pp. 194-195.

²⁸ Z. Landau i J. Tomaszewski, *Gospodarka Polski międzywojennej 1918-1939*, Warsaw 1967, vol. 1, 1971, vol. 2, 1982, vol. 3, 1989, vol. 4.

of the Jewish community could be achieved by introducing changes in the structure of the Polish economy, which would affect the entire population of the Second Polish Republic²⁹.

It should be emphasised that, after Eugeniusz Kwiatkowski took over the portfolio as Minister of the Treasury in 1935, significant changes occurred which indicated the dynamic development of the economy of the Second Polish Republic. Unfortunately, [these changes] were interrupted by the outbreak of World War II.

Jan Wagner's Position on the Issue of Jewish Emigration

Some of the issues regarding the Jewish question were analysed, in 1937, by Jan Wagner (under the pseudonym "Jan Ziemiński") in his work entitled "*Problem Emigracji żydowskiej*" [*The Problem of Jewish Emigration*], published by the Warsaw Society Emigration Writers and Columnists. Wagner's theses, certainly controversial in some respects, were prepared and published for propaganda purposes.

It was not coincidental that the author included, in the publication, a selection of texts from the public appearances of such figures as Włodzimierz Żabotyński, Izaak Grynbaum, Dr. Chaim Weitzmann, Dr. Arie Tartakower, Wolfgang von Weisel³⁰, Deputy Speaker of the Polish Sejm Bogusław Miedziński, Col. Adam Koc, Col. Jan Kowalewski, Prime Minister Sławoj-Składkowski, Minister Józef Beck, etc. These carefully selected quotations from these people were intended to prove the veracity of Wagner's position. Additionally, each of these people were accompanied with short note explaining just how important their function was to society and why, in this matter, their voice was so important.

Years later, Drymmer explained that this publication was intended for members of the Foreign Affairs Committees of the Sejm and the Senate, as well as for some institutions. It was treated as top secret "*for fear of it getting into the wrong hands and it being used for antisemitic activity*".³¹

²⁹ Najnowsze dzieje Żydów w Polsce..., pp. 211-216; J. Tomaszewski, *Between the Social and the National – the Economic Situation of Polish Jewry, 1918-1939*, [in:] *Klasyki Historiografii Warszawskiej. Jerzy Tomaszewski Żydzi w II Rzeczypospolitej*, by A. Markowski and Sz. Rudnicki, Warsaw 2016, pp. 309-330.

³⁰ The leader of the New Zionist Organisation in Austria.

³¹ W.T. Drymmer, *W służbie Polsce...*, p. 152.

It should, however, be conceded that some of Wagner's ideas, about the need to change and reform the economy and structures of Polish society in the inter-war period, were also shared, in part, by contemporary, 20th century historians and researchers.³² In the publication *"Problem Emigracji żydowskiej"* [*The Problem of Jewish Emigration*], he outlined three main problems of Jews in the Second Polish Republic:

The first he describes as *"obcość"* [*"foreignness"*] – Jews enclosing themselves in both national and professional ghettos. As *"obcość"*, he also describes opposition to reforms aimed at the cultural and economic reunification of this minority with the rest of the nation. Another analysed issue was the *"excessive number of Jews"* which, according to the author, was particularly noticeable in the cities. Wagner claimed:

*"The social and professional structure of Jews in Poland bears all the hallmarks of abnormality in an agricultural country - Jews concentrate themselves in cities. In a country with undeveloped consumption, they are concentrated in trade, crafts and consumer industries."*³³

According to the author, these phenomena led to another problem – *"competition with the indigenous people"*, which, sooner or later, was inevitable. He dated the beginnings of this issue in Poland back to the 14th century. On the other hand, he dated the significant increase in this fourth of the earlier mentioned problems to the period of Polish nobility. He described it as the unhealthy economic structure of Jews in Poland. According to Wagner, all these factors came together dangerously in the contemporary reality, about which both politicians and economists raised the alarm. He saw emigration as the only solution to the Jewish issue:

"The problem stands before us in its most difficult form: the emigration of at least one million people,. New emigration destinations must be found. The necessary capital must be mobilised in the period of migration slowdowns and the freezing of capital liquidity."

He argued that this was an international issue and required the cooperation of not only Jews, but also countries which still had vacant areas for settlement. There is no doubt that, with

³² Vide: e.g. J. Tomaszewski, *"Between the Social and National – The Economic Situation of Polish Jewry 1938-1939"* [in:] idem, *Żydzi w II Rzeczypospolitej*, selection and elaboration, A. Markowski and Sz. Rudnicki, Warszawa 2016, pp 310-328; W. Roszkowski, *Historia Polski 1914-2001*, Warsaw 2002, pp. 85-87.

³³ J. Ziemiński (Jan Wagner), *Problem emigracji żydowskiej*, Warsaw 1937, p. 30.

numerous maps and tables, his publication perfectly matched the tactics chosen by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This is a tactic of gaining the broadest possible crowd of supporters of solving the Jewish issue through emigration, both in Poland and abroad.

An equally comprehensive study by Jan Wagner was published under the title *"Problem Palestyński"* [*"The Palestine Problem"*]. Drymmer mentions that Wagner was able to observe the work of Peel's committee. He also spoke with representatives of the Jewish and Arab communities in the UK-supervised mandate.³⁴ This resulted in an extremely valuable and accurate assessment of the situation.

The study's author rightly identified the main issues influencing the complexity of the Palestinian problem in the second half of the 1930s. The first was the issue of the Jewish-Arab conflict. Jan Wagner correctly assessed that, regardless of whether Palestine would become an independent state or still be directly subordinate to Great Britain, the conflict between Arabs and Jews inhibited political and economic development in the area.³⁵

In his opinion, economic factors played a secondary role in the Palestine question. It was the development of political ideas that he attributed to the role of the driving force of economic processes in Jewish Palestine. He stated, unequivocally, that Palestine was unable to solve the issue of Jewish emigration. He warned that, even if Great Britain was to abandon the plan to divide Palestine, the number of Jews admitted to this area would still be regulated by the political needs of the mandate and not by the economic needs of the Jews;

*"The maximum [number] reached in 1935 – 25,000 immigrants from Poland – is not an encouraging figure. According to calculations, Jewish emigration from Poland should amount to 100,000 annually"*³⁶.

He is right in his assessments. Peel's plan and the proposed division of the mandate in May 1937 were met with much criticism in both Poland and abroad. It became the main reason for the resumption of fighting in the Arab uprising in Palestine, which began in April 1936.³⁷

³⁴ W.T. Drymmer, *W służbie Polsce...*, p. 152.

³⁵ J. Wagner, *Problem Palestyński, odbitka z miesięcznika <<Polityka Narodów>>*, Warsaw 1938, p. 26.

³⁶ Ibidem, p. 27.

³⁷ More about the Peel Report and the Arabic uprising vide: J. Łazor, *Brama na Bliski Wschód: Polsko-palestyńskie stosunki gospodarcze w okresie międzywojennym*, Warsaw 2016, pp. 31-32; A. Patek, *Żydzi w drodze do Palestyny 1934-1944*, Kraków 2009, pp. 54-59; A. Chojnowski i J. Tomaszewski, *Izrael*, Warsaw 2001, pp. 35-38; St.E.C. Wendehorst, *British Jewry, Zionism, and the Jewish State, 1936-1956*, Oxford and New York 2012, pp. 194-198.

Wagner warned that, sooner or later, countries which were interested in the problem of emigration would have to face the issue of finding more land to be populated. These areas would complement the population and economic bases of Palestine.

The final element which he pointed out was Palestine's political dependence on Great Britain. Aptly, he described it in the following words:

*"There would be no Jewish national headquarters without the Balfour Declaration. There would be no Jewish state in the Arabian Sea without the support without the support of the British Empire. This fact must be realised when observing the Palestinian policy of various factions of world Jewry. The recently voiced desire, by the English Zionists, for Palestine to become a British dominion, was perhaps a non-political and premature act - but, nonetheless, symptomatic. It is also characteristic of the political position of Jews who cannot create their own state today – without a protector."*³⁸

Wagner confirmed his understanding of the complexity of the Palestinian problem and his support for its solution by the Polish government. As an example, he cited the declaration, dated 14th September 1937, by Minister Beck at the Council of the League of Nations and the subsequent speech by the Polish delegate to the League of Nation, Tytus Komarnicki, on 21st September 1937.³⁹

The publication of the White Book, in May 1939 in London, also turned out to be a disappointment for the hopes of the Zionists. It limited Jewish migration to Palestine, which was to be Arab in nature and, within it, Jews were to be a minority. Great Britain wished to gain favour with the strategically important Arab world. Faced with the threat of war, Great Britain feared losing its influence both amongst Arabs in the Middle East and amongst Muslims in India. After re-assessing and realising the gravity of the situation, Malcolm McDonald, Colonial Secretary of State, concluded that the publication of the White Paper should coincide with the publication of the British Guiana Refugee Commission's Report. Finally, on 17th May 1939, the White Paper was published, ten days after the publication of a report about the possibility of absorbing refugees into British Guiana, which was then a crown Colony. The League of Nations Permanent Credentials Committee did not recognise the validity of the White Paper. Protests came from Jews, Labour and the future British Prime Minister, Winston Churchill. Nevertheless, the line of action described in the White Paper remained in force until the creation of the independent State of Israel. T. Segev, *One Palestine, Complete: Jews and Arabs under the British Mandate*, London 2000, p. 435; M.R. Marrus, *The Unwanted: European Refugees in the Twentieth Century*, Oxford 1985, pp. 151-154; T.E. Endelman, *The Jews of Britain, 1956 to 2000*, London 2002, p. 213; A.J. Sherman, *Island Refuge. Britain and Refugees from the Third Reich 1933-1939*, Plymouth 1973, pp. 232-234; M. Gilbert, *Churchill. Biografia*, (tłum.) J. Kozłowski, Poznań 1991, vol. 2, pp. 631-632.

³⁸ J. Wagner, *Problem Palestyński...*, p. 27.

³⁹ Ibidem, pp. 22-23.

The Concept of Jewish Emigration According to Włodzimierz Żabotyński

In June 1936, the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs acquainted itself with a plan to evacuate Jews, which had been prepared by Włodzimierz Żabotyński. He assumed that Palestine could gradually absorb eight million Jews. The initiative was announced a few weeks later in the Polish press, which described the goal of settling, over the following ten years, 1.5 million Jews (including 750,000 from Poland) on both sides of the Jordan River.⁴⁰ Żabotyński's plan also assumed that Poland would take over, from Great Britain, the mandate in Palestine. The attaining of this goal was seen, by Żabotyński, to first begin by Poland applying to obtain a mandate in Syria, which could then be exchanged for the mandate in Palestine. According to Żabotyński, this solution made it possible to apply pressure on all the Arabs.

In 1936, Żabotyński's Zionist-Revisionist movement was popular amongst Jewish youth in Poland. It was based on paramilitary organisations. The largest of these was Bejtár [eng: Betar], a right-wing militia of Jewish youth in Poland. It took its name from the last fortification of the Bar-Kochba uprising. Member of Bejtár vowed to sacrifice their lives in the fight for the revival of the Jewish state, with a Jewish majority on both sides of the Jordan River. The Polish Legions of the First World War were a model for this paramilitary organisation. Its members practised the use of weapons, while they waited for the right moment to join the fight to achieve their goals.

The fact is that, near the end of the 1930s, the Polish government supported diplomatic efforts and provided aid to the revisionist movement in the Mandate of Palestine. Seeking alliances in the fight against socialists and communists, many Polish politicians supported the issuing of permits for paramilitary Zionist-Revisionist organisations. At the beginning of the 1930s, members of Bejtár, together with scouts and other Polish organisations, took part in annual patriotic celebrations. They were also trained militarily by Polish officers. Members of Bejtár took part in Józef Piłsudski's funeral ceremonies, riding motorcycles bearing Polish and Zionist flags.

⁴⁰ D. Kupfert Heller, *"Między obroną a atakiem: syjoniści-rewizjoniści wobec przemocy antyżydowskiej w Polsce w latach trzydziestych"*, [in:] *Kwartalnik Historii Żydów*, No. 2(258) June 2016, pp. 407-429.

In 1937, following Arab riots and a general strike in Palestine, there was a split in the Hagana⁴¹. The National Armed Organisation - *Irgun Tzvai Leumi* – commonly known as Irgun, was formed. It brought together the younger and more radical, right-wing member of the Hagana. Members of Beitar from Poland formed the core of Irgun. Through the Polish Consul in Jerusalem, Abraham Stern, one of the Irgun leaders, was a Polish agent.

In the second half of the 1930s, at the initiative of Hulanicki, Drymmer met with Stern. As a result, not only were member of Beitar trained at the training grounds in Wołyń, but so also were Irgun instructors. The training was organised, among others, by Tadeusz Pełczyński, the head of Polish intelligence until 1938. They also underwent training in the barracks in Rembertów near Warsaw. Thus, the Wołyńskie Province became the stage for the illegal emigration of Jewish revolutionaries. After their training, they made their way to the British mandate in Palestine.

At the Beitar congress in September 1938 in Warsaw, various concepts of revisionist activity were confronted. Menachem Begin strongly criticised Żabotyński's ideas. Instead of previous methods, he proposed terrorist activity to achieve political goals, both in diaspora countries and in Palestine. Timothy Snyder, in referring to Drymmer's instruction on 16th December 1938, preserved in the Hoover Institute at Stanford University in the United States, stated that the goal of Polish policy in relation to Beitar and Irgun, was that:

*"Warsaw supported these organisations so that they were ready to fight for Israeli statehood by force when the crisis comes."*⁴²

The opinions of historians are divided regarding the evaluation of the Polish government's support for the revisionist movement. Timothy Snyder suggests that they are a real reflection of the mutual admiration between the Polish government and the right-wing Zionists activist.⁴³ According to Laurence Weinbaum, relations between Polish officials, and representatives of the government, and the revisionist Zionists were primarily based upon the

⁴¹ Hagana - a Jewish paramilitary organisation active in 1920-1948 in the British mandate in Palestine. Initially, it was defensive in character. However, against the intensifying conflict with the Arabs, its activity became retaliatory. Gradually, it transformed into a military organisation. Following the end of World War II, it was involved in the illegal transfer of Jewish survivors from Europe to Palestine. After the creation of the State of Israel, it became the foundation of the emerging Israeli Defence Force.

⁴² T. Snyder, *Czarna ziemia...*, p. 112.

⁴³ Ibidem, pp. 89-112.

principle of an unstable “marriage of convenience”⁴⁴. Weinbaum’s assessment is closer to the truth regarding the relationship between the Polish government and the revisionist Zionists.

⁴⁴ L. Weinbaum, *A Marriage of Convenience: The New Zionist Organization and the Polish Government*, Boulder 1993, p. 76.

**The Problems of the Government of the Second Polish Republic
with the Implementation of the Concept of Jewish Emigration from Poland**

Without doubt, one of the most difficult issues faced by the Polish government was that of obtaining funds for emigration from Poland. The instruction, dated prior to 25th September 1937, from the Foreign Affairs Minister, to the delegation to the Assembly of the League of Nations, very explicitly recommended that they endeavour to obtain funds to finance emigration from Poland for social welfare reasons:

“There should be a clear line drawn between matters of genuine humanitarianism - as well as those which must be dealt with internationally (e.g., caring for groups of people expelled from within certain countries) – and matters with which certain societies, under the guise of humanitarianism, strive to penetrate the internal relations of individual states, modelling them to suit their own doctrinal models.

If, on the one hand, we strive for savings in the League’s budget, on the other hand, we will not move to petty savings where some social welfare expenditure (re: our emigration) may bring positive results. I therefor leave substantive matters, in this area, to your discretion.”⁴⁵

The League of Nations and the International Labour Office were indicated, in the instruction, as the bodies which should deal with the technical aspect of the financial issues relating to settlement emigration (issues of foreign exchange and the costs of transportation).

The idea of financing the projects, for the emigration of Jew from Poland, by charitable organisations was not proposed in the instruction, dated prior to 25th September 1937, by the Foreign Affairs Minister to the Assembly of the League of Nations. However, an example of the previous actions by the Polish government, regarding this concept, is a letter from the former Consul-General in Tel Aviv, Bernard Hausner, to the Consular Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, dated 11th February 1937. In it, he writes about a project to transfer around 27,000 Jewish orphans, who are under the care of CENTOS (the Central Union for the

⁴⁵ “[prior to 25th September], instrukcja ministra spraw zagranicznych dla delegacji polskiej na Zgromadzenie Ligi Narodów”, [in:] *Polskie Dokumenty Dyplomatyczne: 1937*, ed. J. S. Ciechanowski, Warsaw 2012, p. 606.

Care of Orphans in Warsaw), to Palestine. B. Hausner predicted that the implementation of this project would be through non-governmental sources:

*"Obviously, such an operation would require huge funds. The funding source is conceived as follows. In America, there is a Polish-Jewish 'landsmannschaft' in almost every city. They number almost one thousand. These groups, themselves, do not have large amounts of money. However, it will not be difficult to attract private individuals, among them, to undertake covering the costs of raising and settling individual children. I have presented my plan to various institutions and to private people – everywhere I have been met to total approval."*⁴⁶

Zarychta assessed the project as deserving support, providing that the necessary funds were raised by international social organisations. Apart from the issue of finance, one of the many obstacles to the implementation of this plan were the immigration regulations, which were in force in Palestine – admission quotas set by the British.

In the following years, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs continued to examine possibilities and to search for areas for the emigration of Polish citizens, including in Central and South America (e.g., to Ecuador, Mexico, Guatemala, Uruguay, Nicaragua, Chile, Venezuela), Palestine, Great Britain, the Middle East (e.g., Iran), Africa (e.g., Angola, North Rhodesia and Madagascar), the United States, Indochina and Canada.⁴⁷ In the Minister of Foreign Affairs' instruction to the Polish delegation to the Assembly of the League of Nations, dated before 25th September 1937, he writes about the need for Poland to have a colony amongst the international community:

⁴⁶ Ibidem, p. 205.

⁴⁷ Among other duties, the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs checked the possibility of leaving the country and search for area for the emigration of Polish citizens in the 1930, including in Central and South America (e.g., to Ecuador, Mexico, Guatemala, Uruguay, Nicaragua, Chile, Paraguay, Venezuela), Palestine, Great Britain, the Middle East (e.g., to Iran), Africa (e.g., to Angola, Mozambique, North Rhodesia and to Madagascar), the United States as well as Canada. Evidence of this is, among others, in numerous documents preserved in Polish Central Archives of Modern Records in Warsaw (AAN). Examples selected on the basis of Inventory of Records on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Warsaw from [1915-1917] 1918-1939, by E. Kołodziej, Warsaw 2000, MSZ, refs.: 3385, 9651, 9692, 9723, 9827, 10798, 9905, 9906, 9932, 9933, 9934, 9718, 9724, 9826, 9830, 9829, 9827, 9939, 9674, 9675-9677, 9681, 9682, 9723, 9729, 9760, 9761, 9756-9758. See also J. Wagner, *Problem palestyński, odbitka z miesięcznika „Polityka Narodów”*, Warsaw 1938; M. Jarnecki, *Madagaskar w polskich koncepcjach i planach kolonialnych*, [in:] *Sprawy Narodowościowe*, 2006, No. 28, pp. 89-101; Z. Trębacz, *Nie tylko Palestyna. Polskie plany emigracyjne wobec Żydów 1935-1939*, Warsaw 2018; J. Ziemiński (Jan Wagner), *Problem emigracji*

“Regarding colonies, let us stress, over and over again, the emigration and raw material needs of our country, not to mention the ways by which they may be satisfied. Firstly, you need to repeat your claims over a long period, so that people will believe in their right and, finally, begin implementing them. Since the troubled world is afraid of dynamic states and willingly negotiates with them in order to avoid loud quarrels, let us stress those moments that testify and provide the impression that we are dynamic.”⁴⁸

In 1938, the Polish authorities also negotiated the possibility of increasing immigration quotas for Poles in Australia and New Zealand.⁴⁹

However, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is repeatedly disappointed in the cooperation it received from various settlement and colonisation societies or from private individuals. An example can be, as described by Drymmer, the attempt to study the possibility of emigration to Nicaragua in 1937 and the figure of Stefan Czarnecki.⁵⁰ Drymmer’s ideas and proposals did always obtain the approval of the directors of other departments. For example, in November 1937, Stanisław Schimitzek (Administration Department Director of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs) had a negative view of his proposal to allocate funds for a “pioneering-colonial” operation – preparatory steps aimed at the giving up, to Poland, of one of the overseas colonies.⁵¹

All this proved how difficult and complex it was to find suitable land for settlement, especially from the viewpoint of a country that did not have its own overseas colonies. The implementation of this task required not only actions from inside the country, the anticipation and preparation of potential emigrants to significantly different living conditions, in the country of future settlement, from those to which they were accustomed. It also required an agreement with representatives of the authorities from the areas to which these emigrants were to be sent. Finally, it required some form of consent, for such an operation, on the part of the international community.

⁴⁸ “[przed 25 września], instrukcja ministra spraw zagranicznych..., p. 605.

⁴⁹ AAN, MSZ, ref. 9627.

⁵⁰ W.T. Drymmer, *W służbie Polsce...*, p. 153.

⁵¹ S. Schimitzek, *Drogi i bezdroża minionej epoki. Wspomnienia z lat pracy w MSZ (1920-1939)*, pp. 415-416.

In the second half of the 1930s, the Department of Political Emigration carried out intensive activity in all areas, giving hope to solving the problem. They were not always understood by the politician of the time of the Second Polish Republic. Even today, not all of the problem's researchers are aware of the complexity of the emigration of Jews from Poland in the period preceding the outbreak of World War II. Sometimes, they narrow it down to the desire of the Polish government's desire to rid itself of its citizens. An example of this is the work of Raphael Delpard, who sees Poland's attempt to gain Madagascar only as a desire for Poland to rid itself of its Jewish citizens.⁵² For example, he does not write about the social or economic problems with which the Polish state had to deal, a state which, only less than a quarter of a century earlier, had regained its independence.

A note from the Polish Ambassador's meeting on 18th January 1938, in Washington, with the President of the United States, confirms talk about the emigration of Jews from Europe. President Roosevelt was to say:

*"(...) hard times have come for the Jews, because they wish to rid themselves of them everywhere. In Germany, it was a relatively small number while, in Eastern Europe, these numbers reach millions. There, the process of assimilating Jews was not carried out, since they live in separate clusters and the Jewish population is treated as an immigrant one."*⁵³

As related by the Ambassador, he assured the President that, in the case of Polish Jews, it was only about "moving a certain, surplus population" and not about the displacement of Jews from all over Poland. The Ambassador confirmed that Roosevelt showed that he understood this. In further conversation, the President admitted that there was a great need to search for new areas of Jewish settlement. Thus, he decided that Palestine was not enough to solve the Jewish issue:

*"The President went on to say that, in his opinion, a new Palestine should be created, meaning of large Jewish settlements, be it in South America or South Africa or, in general, where there are lands suitable for settlement."*⁵⁴

⁵² R. Delpard, *La conférence de la honte. Évian, juillet 1938*, Michalon 2015, p. 172.

⁵³ „18 stycznia, list ambasadora w Waszyngtonie do ministra spraw zagranicznych o rozmowie z prezydentem Stanów Zjednoczonych”, [in:] *Polskie Dokumenty Dyplomatyczne: 1938*, ed. M. Kornat, Warsaw 2007, p. 35.

⁵⁴ Ibidem.

Three months after President Roosevelt had presented, to the Polish diplomats, his position, the program, developed by the Emigration Policy section of the Consular Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs stated:

*“For Jewish emigration, the principle of dispersal must not apply, but [it should be] territorial concentration. So long as Palestine remains unable to absorb the annual growth of the Jewish population, a ‘supplementary’ emigrant destination must be created for the Jews, providing them with the possibility of stratifying their social structure.”*⁵⁵

In an instruction, from May 1938, sent to Ambassador Jerzy Potocki regarding the conversation with President Roosevelt on the Jewish issue, the issue of Palestine was raised first. It was presented as the natural emigration destination for Jews, for both ideological and organisational reasons. This is why:

*“First of all, intervention by the American government with that of Great Britain is desirable, so that decisions on the partition of Palestine provide the proposed Jewish state with a maximum of absorption capacity, and that these decisions not be delayed.”*⁵⁶

At the same time, it was rightly signalled that, taking into account the political situation of that time, Palestine could, only to a certain extent, solve the problem of Jewish emigration. Regarding the division of Palestine which, in the opinion of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Great Britain was rightly endeavouring to achieve, the [absorption] capacity of Palestine was estimated to be no more than 40,000-50,000 people over a period of several years. A more limited capacity for Palestine was anticipated at a time when Britain would decide to maintain a “British-controlled Jewish-Arab symbiosis”.⁵⁷

The instruction highlighted Poland’s problem relating to the emigration of wealthier Jews to Palestine from Poland. As it was explained, taking into account the then prevailing foreign exchange and financial conditions in the country, the Polish government could not be interested in such a loss. The government was also not interested in exporting capital to

⁵⁵ „[przed 21 kwietnia], notatka Departamentu Konsularnego i o polityce emigracyjnej i kolonialnej”, [in:] ibidem, pp. 224-225.

⁵⁶ AAN, MSZ, ref. 9905, p. 108.

⁵⁷ Ibidem.

Palestine. It was explained that the issue of Jewish emigration from Poland was one of the emigration of the poor. It was one that weighed upon the country's economic structure.

To better illustrate it, the issue of the emigration of Jews from Poland has been compared to the issue of the emigration of farmers from Poland. The emigration of farmers was explained as the problem of the emigration of small-scale peasants, at the same time, skilfully signalling the fact of restoring Polish statehood, after 123 years of its absence from the political map of Europe.

Polska struggled with many problems, including a surplus of labour in the countryside, which was recruited mainly from amongst small-scale peasants. In principle, the main aim was to try to gain, through the American government, the support of the influential and wealthy Jewish elite in the United States for the cause of emigration. It was also emphasised that the Jewish issue in Poland could be solved mainly by the emigration of the poor, totalling around 50,000 Jews annually.

It was argued that the collaboration of American Jewish capital, with the Polish government, and "competent, Jewish, immigration organisations" could, when mobilising the required capital, facilitate the emigration of Polish Jews to Palestine and other countries.⁵⁸ Additionally, in view of the fact that the emigration needs of Jews in Poland were not satisfied by the Palestinian area, Ambassador Potocki proposed two areas of British influence that could be places for the emigration of Polish Jews.

The first were the sparsely populated areas of Arab Palestine – Trans-Jordan, the Negev (the southern desert part of Palestine) and the Sinai Peninsula. It was indicated that Jews from Poland could have a positive impact upon economic development and would thus reduce antisemitic behaviour in these lands. It was also reported that these areas were of interest to Jewish social and political organisation, in particular Zionist organisations. The solutions, proposed in the instruction, were the result, *inter alia*, of information provided in reports on the potential absorption capacity, of new populations, in the Middle East and the Sinai Peninsula.

⁵⁸ Ibidem, p. 109.

They were sent to the Emigration Policy section of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in January 1938 by the Polish Consulate in Tel Aviv and the Polish Legation in Cairo.⁵⁹

The intensive investigation of the possibility of settling Jews in the Sinai Peninsula is testified to by the fact that, in June 1938, after sending instructions to Ambassador Potocki for talks with President Roosevelt, Apoloniusz Zarychta sent a plan for the settlement to the Embassy in London. The document was sent from the Polish Legation in Cairo. The ambassador in London was asked to "examine the possibilities and attitudes in this direction amongst authoritative English agents".⁶⁰

American historian Timothy Snyder, writing about the position of the Polish government on Jewish migration, stated:

*"London had a favourable view of Jewish statehood (in the distant and undefined future), but then (at this moment) was opposed to the further mass migration of Jews [...] Warsaw was in favour of both the mass emigration of Jews from Europe and the creation of a Jewish state in Palestine. The Polish Minister of Foreign Affairs and other diplomats publicly called on the British to ease immigration restrictions and to create, as soon as possible, a central point for the Jewish people"*⁶¹.

He also pointed out that the then Polish government had a very specific vision of Palestine. It was to be an independent Jewish country, with as much area as possible, extending on both sides of the Jordan [River], with access to the Red Sea. He pointed out that, in private talks, Polish diplomats even discussed, with their British colleagues, the issue of the Egyptian Sinai Peninsula. He also stated that, for the first time, the Polish Army had offered the Hagana weapons and training in as early as 1937⁶².

The second area for the possible emigration of Jews from Poland, as indicated in the May 1938 instruction to Ambassador Potocki, were the English territories in East Africa. The emigration of Jewish craftsmen and merchants there was considered possible. It was claimed that by

⁵⁹ Ibidem, pp. 10-18 and 38-82.

⁶⁰ Ibidem, p. 90.

⁶¹ T. Snyder, *Czarna ziemia...*, pp. 94 and 95.

⁶² Ibidem, p. 95.

granting Jews larger areas [for settlement] it, would enable certain solutions on territorialism.⁶³

The third area was the continent of Australia. In this case, reference was made to the expansion of Japan southwards. Also indicated was the interest of the United States and Great Britain in the Australian continent. It was presented as an area of possible Jewish emigration from Poland, which could constitute “a dam against Japanese expansion”. A serious thesis was put forward:

*“The danger of Jewish immigration lowering the living standards of the Australian population – or the immigration of farmers from Poland in general – should not play a decisive role where much more serious interests of the Anglo-Saxon world are involved”.*⁶⁴

Polish diplomats were very critical of the Evian conference⁶⁵. Zarychta, in a note to the director of the consular Department, dated 22nd July 1938, stated:

*“The faint results of the Evian conference, set as it was against the intensity of Germany’s extermination policy towards Jews, especially in Austria, and the impasse of the Palestinian cause, highlighted the downturn and the serious decline of Jewish influence in the world. The initiative of the United States, in favour of Jews, does not contradict this thesis in any way, since Roosevelt’s action is an election manoeuvre aimed at securing Jewish votes for the Democratic Party in the election for the new president. At the same time, the Evian conference showed that resolving the issue of Jewish emigration through absorbing larger, Jewish numbers into classical immigration countries, in today’s conditions, dispersed immigration is impossible.”*⁶⁶

In a note which is preserved in [Archiwum Akt Nowych](#) [the Polish Central Archives of Modern Records], dated 14th September 1938, to Ambassador Jerzy Potocki, the tactics chosen, at the

⁶³ AAN, MSZ, ref. 9905, p. 99.

⁶⁴ Ibidem.

⁶⁵ The conference in Evian – an international conference held, in July 1938, at the initiative of President Franklin Roosevelt, in the French town of Évian-les-Bains. The aim of the meeting was to solve the problem of Jewish refugees from the Third Reich. The conference was attended by representatives of thirty-two countries and twenty-four organisations. The Polish government did not receive an invitation to attend the conference.

⁶⁶ AAN, MSZ, ref. 9906, pp. 122-123.

Evian conference, by Great Britain, its dominions and South American countries, were criticised. This tactic

“for the sake of both the Jews and the unwanted Italian and Spanish political emigrants, was aimed at the possible limitation of the sphere of activity of the Committee [MMO: established at the Evian conference], thus inhibiting President Roosevelt’s larger-scale initiative”⁶⁷.

It was suggested that the United States exert pressure on Britain to expedite a decision on Palestine and to find emigration opportunities within the Empire. After all, it was Britain, as the author of the Balfour Declaration and the Mandate of Palestine, which had the moral responsibility⁶⁸.

Under each day of Adolf Hitler’s rule, the situation of the Jewish community in Germany. On 15th September 1935, the Reichstag adopted racial laws which were announced, on the same day, at the Nazi Party conference in Nuremburg. These laws were aimed directly against national minorities, especially the Jews.

- The first law on Reich citizenship determined who was a citizen of the Reich.
- The second law, on the protection of German blood and German honour, clearly defined a barrier between the German nation and other minorities.
- The third law related to the colours and flag of the Reich. It stressed the fact of creating a new German.

Jew, Polish citizens living within the territory of the Third Reich, found themselves in a dramatic situation.

⁶⁷ Ibidem, p. 156. In a further part of the note, it was stressed that, *“the Polish government, for its part, believes that the United States government could effectively contribute to the intensification of emigration by (...) expanding the action taken on behalf of refugees from Germany and Austria, by convening a conference or the creation of an international institution aimed at finding emigration opportunities for Jews. Such a conference should deal primarily with the resettlement of voluntary emigrants, who leave their country of residence for economic reasons”*. Ibidem, p. 157.

⁶⁸ *“He has a certain moral responsibility for the fact that the hopes of Jews for their national and state existence can only be fulfilled to a very modest extent. This moral obligation also implies an obligation for Great Britain to find other settlement areas for Jews, either in dominions or in colonial Africa.”* Ibidem.

The Polish state authorities, anticipating the deportation of Jews from Germany to Poland by the Nazis, decided to act against it. On 31st March 1938, the Sejm passed an act of deprivation of citizenship.⁶⁹

On 26th October 1938, the head of the Reich's security service, Reinhard Heydrich, issued an ordinance for the immediate expulsion of all Polish Jews from Germany. On 28th and 29th October 1938, around 10,000 Jews – Polish citizens - were expelled from the Third Reich and more than 7,000 from other places. This operation went down into history as the *Polenaktion*. In the group of 17,000 Jews, there were many who no longer had any contacts with Poland and, as a result of the Act, dated 31st March 1938, they had lost their Polish citizenship.

The deportations were carried out in a brutal manner, with those deported forbidden from taking any possessions with them. On the night of 27th October, locked trains, containing deportees, arrived at the border stations in Zbąszyń, Bytom near Chojnice and Wschowa. Several thousand [deportees] were considered to be stateless. They had been deprived of their Third Reich citizenship and did not have Polish citizenship. A group of those people were forced to remain cordoned off by the German and Polish armies. Around six thousand deportees were placed, by the Polish authorities, into the former barracks in Zbąszyń. The deported Jews were helped by Jewish charitable organisations and the Polish Red Cross.

The deported Jews became the subject of international negotiation by the Polish government which, in this way, they hoped to put pressure on the Third Reich government to allow the Jews to return to Germany. This goal was not achieved. Those deported in the spring of 1939 left Zbąszyń.

On the basis of an agreement, signed in Berlin on 24th January 1939, the expelled Jews would be permitted to legally return to the Third Reich, for a specified period, in order to liquidate their businesses and to remove contents from homes and workshops, as well as to take personal belongings, including jewellery. The text of that agreement was not published, but only communicated to the relevant authorities in both countries⁷⁰.

⁶⁹ Pursuant to Article 1 of the Act, a Polish citizen was deprived of citizenship if: "a) he acted abroad to the detriment of the Polish state, or b) having been abroad for at least five years following the establishment of the Polish state and had lost contact with the Polish state, or c) being abroad, he did not return to Poland within the prescribed period at the request of a foreign office of the Republic of Poland". Law Journal No. 22, item No. 191, art. 1, p. 340.

⁷⁰ J. Tomaszewski, *Preludium zagłady...*, pp. 247-255.

At the end of 1938, the Jewish Committee for Colonisation in Poland (ŻKK) was established. The preparation of the ground, by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, for the establishment of the Committee can be traced back to the very early autumn of 1938.⁷¹ The creation and control of the activities of the ŻKK, in accordance with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' emigration policy, is linked to the failure to invite an official Polish delegation to the conference in Evian. Following this failure, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs continued the implementation of its Jewish emigration policy. However, it can be assumed that the Ministry left the negotiations, and contacts with the Evian Committee and other international organisation dealing with the emigration of Jews, to representatives of the Jewish community in Poland and to member of the ŻKK.

In retrospect, the establishment of the Jewish Committee for Colonisation, under the auspices of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, can be considered as a success in negotiating with the West. In July 1939, the help of the Evian Committee was extended to Jewish refugees, from Germany, who were staying in Poland⁷². Thus, a committee of Polish diplomats was officially allowed to take part in international discussions. However, it was too late for the tragedy of the Jewish people resulting from World War II.

Epilogue

In view of the intensifying antisemitic protests and pogroms in the 1930s, Polish state authorities were forced to take measures in order to safeguard law and order in the state. The anti-Jewish sentiment, flowing from Poland's western neighbour, did not go unnoticed by many Polish politicians and also found fertile ground within many social circles. The directions of Polish diplomacy were in line with the program adopted by the government. They were also appreciated, not only by Polish politicians and political groups, but by Jewish one also.

⁷¹ In a note, dated 14th September 1938, to Ambassador Potocki, which is a report from the Evian conference, it read: *"Contrary to the policy applied by the Third Reich, and recently by Italy, the Polish government proceeds from the premise that a similar action should be based on collaboration with Polish Jews and world Jewry. Due to the natural economic process of Jewish emigration from Poland, which is a voluntary emigration, this collaboration is necessary, both in the field of propaganda and, above all, the financial field."* AAN, MSZ, ref. 9906, p. 159.

⁷² G. Zalewska, *"Sprawa emigracji żydowskiej..."*, pp. 115-116.

In its politics, the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs endeavoured to be considered as a leading voice, internationally, regarding the issue of the emigration of Jews from Central and Eastern Europe. The adoption of this concept yielded a better position in order to negotiate with Western countries.

The Polish government's policy, aimed at the emigration of the Jewish minority from the Second Polish Republic, was clearly at odds with the goals of the West. The Western powers considered Poland to be a country with numerous social and political problems caused by national minorities. A strong social and political differentiation, within the Jewish community, also came under notice. The internal problems of the Polish state were considered, by the West, as less urgent to be solved when faced with the problem of Jews forced to flee the Third Reich.

The inclusion of the issue of the Jews from Poland in the discussions of the Evian Committee should be considered a success in negotiations with the West. Unfortunately, it took place only a few weeks before the Third Reich attacked Poland.

In the second half of the 1930s, Polish diplomatic activity was determined by:

- the complex international conditions,
- the intensifying wave of antisemitism, and
- the economic problems resulting from the Great Depression.

The Polish state, which was reviving after many years of being partitioned, was struggling with internal conflicts – social, national, demographic and others. The achievements of Polish diplomacy were only a proverbial drop in the ocean which the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs was faced with, in the context of the Jewish issue in the last years prior to the outbreak of the war.

The wave of antisemitism in Poland, which intensified in the 1930s, should not be forgotten.⁷³ Examples were not just antisemitic pogroms, but also antisemitic laws – e.g., on ritual slaughter in 1936 and on trading in religious articles in 1938.

⁷³ More on antisemitism in the Second Polish Republic, see also: J. Żyndul, "Cele akcji antyżydowskich w Polsce w latach 1935-1937", [in:] *Biuletyn Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego w Polsce*, 1992, No. 1 (161), pp. 53-64; Eadem, "Zajścia antyżydowskie w latach 1935-1937 – geografia i formy", [in:] *ibidem.*, 1991, No. 3 (159), pp. 57-70; Eadem, "Zajścia antyżydowskie w Polsce w latach 1935-1937", Warsaw 1994; A. Landau-Czajka, *W*

The frequently recurring question of whether it was possible to save, from death, a greater number of Jews can, almost eighty years after the tragedy of the Holocaust, raise many hypotheses today. Referring to facts recorded in archival documents, I wished to emphasise the professional, matter-of-fact and enormous effort of Polish diplomats, who were endeavouring to solve the “Jewish problem”.

In referring to the substantive preparation and methods of work in assessing the international and internal situation in Poland, which was carried out by staff of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, I wish to stress the disproportionate effects made to enable the emigration of Jews from Poland in the period preceding the 20th century’s next world war.

jednym stali domu... Koncepcja rozwiązania kwestii żydowskiej w publicystyce polskiej lat 1933-1939, Warsaw 1998; M. B. Markowski, J. Gapys, “Konflikty polsko-żydowskie w województwie kieleckim w latach 1935-1939”, [in:] *Biuletyn Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego w Polsce*, 1999, No. 4 (192), pp. 41-93; J. Ogonowski, *Sytuacja prawna Żydów w Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej 1918-1939*, Warsaw 2012; S. Rudnicki, *Żydzi w parlamencie II Rzeczypospolitej*, Warszawa 2004; A. Zamoiski, “Pogrom w Grodnie 7 czerwca 1935 r.”, [in:] *Pogromy Żydów na Ziemiach Polskich w XIX i XX wieku*, ed. nauk K. Kijek, A. Markowski, K. Zieliński, vol. 2, Warsaw, 2019, pp. 371-390; K. Kijek, “Pogrom, którego nie było, tragedia która przyszła w zamian. Zajścia w Odrzywole, 20-29 listopada 1935 r.”, pp. 391-408; M. Trębacz, “Pod murami Jasnej Góry”. Pogrom w Częstochowie 19-21 czerwca 1937 r., [in:] *ibidem*, pp. 409-428; Z. Trębacz, “Tłum jak oszalały pędził ulicą...”. Pogrom w Bielsku-Białej, wrzesień 1937 r., [in:] *ibidem*, pp. 429-448; N. Aleksion, “Nihil novi? Historiografią pogromów z lat 1921-1939”, [in:] *Pogromy Żydów na Ziemiach Polskich w XIX i XX wieku*, ed. nauk K. Kijek, A. Markowski, K. Zieliński, vol. 3, Warsaw, 2019, pp. 93-110; M. Szugiero, “Żydowska opinia publiczna wobec pogromów w XIX wieku i w międzywojniu”, [in:] *ibidem*, pp. 315-334; G. Krzywiec, “Narodowa Demokracja wobec pogromów i zbiorowej przemocy antyżydowskiej od odzyskania niepodległości do 1939 roku”, [in:] *ibidem*, pp. 375-392; M. Trębacz, “Polska lewica wobec antyżydowskiej przemocy lat 30. XX wieku”, [in:] *ibidem*, pp. 393-406.