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Jews, Poles, and Germans in Łódź during the Great War: Hegemony via acknowledgment and/or negation of multiple cultures*

Abstract: The multi-ethnic community of Łódź had to adjust to the times of warfare and German rule. The article is mainly concerned with the German and Polish governmental practices and attitudes towards ethnic and national representation in the local government of Łódź during the Great War.

Introduction

How was the multi-ethnic and multi-cultural space shaped and reshaped during the Great War? How was its contrasting character expressed in ruling practices and policies in a period of continuous change? This paper will explore these questions, focusing on the ruling practices in Łódź during the Great War. It will argue that both the German direct rule and the subsequent Polish administration accepted the city's ethno-national and linguistic-cultural mosaic while delegitimizing it for political purposes. It will examine the occupiers' policy and that of the new Polish authorities shaped under the occupational rule. Specifically, the article will compare German and Polish governmental practices and attitudes toward multilingualism and ethno-national representation in the local government of Łódź.

In the first section, this paper will explore the effects of the practices of the German occupational regime that allowed the urban space of Łódź to be imagined as multilingual and multinational, i.e. as composed of three equal ethno-national segments (Jews, Poles and Germans). The German occupation regime intended to emphasize the triple facade of Łódź, thus legitimizing their dominance.

* This article is a revised and updated version of my article: "Ruling Practices and Multiple Cultures – Jews, Poles, and Germans in Łódź during WWI". In: *Simon Dubnow Institute Yearbook* 5, 2006, pp. 189–208.

The second section will investigate the ruling practices carried out by the elected municipal council under the hegemony of the Polish national movement. It presented the minority claims of language and cultural recognition as “separatist” and therefore illegitimate, undermining a society that promotes its independence and marches “together” towards an autonomous state.

My main claim is that the legitimization or negation of a sense of multiculturalism in Łódź was a strategy employed by the specific hegemonic force to reach its political objectives to appropriate the city space.

My claim will thus challenge a well-known thesis regarding German policy towards local ethno-national groups and will emphasize the need to examine this policy from both a central perspective and from the peripheries to gain a more nuanced picture of this complex period.

Łódź had for over a century been the centre of the textile industry in Poland. During the last quarter of the 19th Century, still under the aegis of the tsars, the city experienced years of rapid industrial development and a dynamic increase of population, together with fast and chaotic urbanization. Industry remained the most important factor in its development, but the trades and crafts concerned with it also played an important role. In a relatively short time, it became the second largest city in Poland, growing from 32,500 inhabitants in the 1860s to 314,000 in 1897¹. The exceptionally dynamic development of Łódź was the result of a number of factors including the beneficial economic policy of the Government, the immigration to the town of German weavers and entrepreneurs, the absorptive Russian markets, particularly during the three decades before the outbreak of the Great War, and the initiative of its socially heterogeneous inhabitants.

Of 314,000 residents of Łódź in 1897, about 48% (150,720) of the population were Catholic, 32% (98,700) Jewish, 18% (56,500) Protestant, and 2% (6,000) Orthodox. Around 46% spoke Polish as their mother tongue while 21% spoke German, 29% spoke Yiddish and 3% Russian or other languages². The city’s Jewish population was particularly complex. Besides Yiddish, 4,084 (4.1%) cited Polish as their mother tongue, 1,228 (1.2%) Russian, and 1 034 (1.1%) German.

1 Janczak, Julian: *Ludność Łodzi przemysłowej 1820–1914*. Uniwersytet Łódzki: Łódź 1982; Puś, Wiesław: *Żydzi w Łodzi w latach zaborów 1793–1914*. Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego: Łódź 2000, pp. 26–27.

2 Janczak, Julian: “Struktura Narodowościowa Łodzi w latach 1820–1939”. In: Puś, Wiesław/ Liszewski, Stanisław (eds.): *Dzieje Żydów w Łodzi 1820–1944, Wybrane problemy*. Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego: Łódź 1991, pp. 42–54, here 48; Janczak, Julian: “The National Structure of the Population in Łódź in the Years 1820–1939”, *Polin* 6, 1991, pp. 20–26, here 25.

In addition, many Jews employed what Itamar Even-Zohar calls a “multilingual system,” speaking different languages in different circumstances³. Likewise, the core of other religious groups shared a mother tongue (Polish or German), but the peripheries were fluid⁴.

On the eve of the Great War, the population of Łódź approximated half a million, and its multi-ethnic, multi-religious, multilingual and multicultural character was undimmed. This hybridization increased towards 1915 with the immigration and acculturation of “Poles of Mosaic faith”, Polish Evangelists, German Catholics and Russian Jews (so called “Litvaks”). Traditional, cohesive society collapsed amid the rise of exclusionary Polish, Jewish, and German nationalism. The national principle became one of vision and division, one that helped to reimagine a changing urban society, together with the boundaries and characteristics of the region and the political domain, and the principle that demanded its reorganization. By the turn of the century, and especially during the decade preceding the Great War, relations between ethnic groups were strained. The Polish national movement grew more organized, aggressive, and overtly antagonistic to Jews. In

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- 3 Bartal, Israel: “Mi-Du-Leshoniut Mesoratit le-Had-Leshoniut Leumit”, *Shvut* 15, 1992, pp. 183–194; Even-Zohar, Itamar: “Aspects of the Hebrew-Yiddish Polysystem. A Case of a Multilingual Polysystem”, *Poetics Today* 11, 1990, pp. 121–130. Shmeruk referred to this aspect of Jewish life in interwar Poland and emphasized the connections between the different languages in this multilingual polysystem. Shmeruk, Chone: “Hebrew-Yiddish-Polish. A Trilingual Jewish Culture”. In: Gutman, Yisrael et al. (eds.): *The Jews of Poland between Two World Wars*. University Press of New England: Hanover/London, 1989, pp. 285–311. See also Batsheva Ben-Amos’ insightful analysis of the multilingual diary of a young man from the Łódź ghetto, probably born immediately after the end of World War I: Ben-Amos, Batsheva: “A Multilingual Diary from the Ghetto”, *Galed* 19, 2004, pp. 51–74. The bilingualism so widespread in Jewish life was present in some measure also in non-Jewish society, cf. Radziszewska, Krystyna/ Woźniak, Krzysztof (eds.): *Pod Jednym dachem. Niemcy oraz ich polscy i żydowscy sąsiedzi w Łodzi w XIX i XX wieku/Unter einem Dach. Die Deutschen und ihre polnischen und jüdischen Nachbarn in Łódź im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*, Literatura: Łódź 2000, pp. 127, 138. On social interaction between Jews and non-Jews in nineteenth-century Łódź, cf. Guesnet, François: *Lodzer Juden im 19. Jahrhundert. Ihr Ort in einer multikulturellen Stadtgesellschaft*, Simon-Dubnow-Institut für Jüdische Geschichte und Kultur: Leipzig 1997.
- 4 Janczak, Julian: op. cit., p. 49. Almost 6% of all Protestants (i.e., more than 3,000 persons) claimed Polish as their mother tongue; 8% of all Catholics (13,000) claimed German. Janczak, Julian: “The National Structure of the Population in Łódź”, 1991, p. 22. See also: Budziarek, Marek: “Konfessionelle Koexistenz in Łódź im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert”. In: Hensel, Jürgen (ed.): *Polen, Deutsche und Juden in Łódź 182–1939, eine schwierige Nachbarschaft*. Fibre: Osnabrück 1999, pp. 269–282, especially 270–272.

addition, the clear, firm demands of the Jewish national movement in all its forms, from the workers' Bund and Poalei Tzion to the Zionists progressively enamored with autonomy, were impossible to ignore⁵.

1. German Rule

Germany's capture of Łódź from tsarist Russia on 6 December 1914 launched a new era for both the country and the city⁶. From the economic point of view, the outbreak of the First World War and the subsequent four years of German occupation put an end to the dynamic development of Łódź. After Łódź was captured by the German army, factory production practically ceased, and its disconnection from the Russian market was a severe blow for Łódź industry. Large losses were suffered from unfulfilled trade contracts with partners beyond the front and from the loss of assets in Russian banks.

Moreover, the first months of the occupation saw a lack of coal deliveries and a consequent drop in production, which was exacerbated by the German policy of requisitions, expropriations and confiscations of raw material, products and machinery. Consequently, this collapse of industry resulted in massive unemployment, and the inhabitants of the city were left with no means to live until May 1917⁷. During the war, the city was devastated, its remaining industry was destroyed and the city was depopulated: Its population numbered 342,000 at the beginning of 1918, which was about 260,000 (43%) less than before the war⁸. The ethno-religious composition had also changed: The Russian population had

5 For an excellent introduction to the rise of anti-Semitism and ethno-national tension in this period, cf. Golczewski, Frank: *Polnisch-jüdische Beziehungen 1881–1922. Eine Studie zur Geschichte des Antisemitismus in Ost-Europa*. Steiner: Wiesbaden 1981. The literature on the growth of Polish and Jewish nationalism is vast. On the rise of Polish xenophobic nationalism, cf. Porter, Brian: *When Nationalism Began to Hate. Imagining Modern Politics in Nineteenth-Century Poland*. Oxford University Press: New York/Oxford 2000. As an introduction to the rise of Jewish nationalism, cf. Frankel, Jonathan: *Prophecy and Politics. Socialism, Nationalism and the Russian Jews, 1862–1917*. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge 1981; Mendelsohn, Ezra: *On Modern Jewish Politics*. Oxford University Press: New York/Oxford 1993.

6 On the beginning of the German rule in Łódź regarding the Jewish population cf. Schuster, Frank M: *Zwischen allen Fronten. Osteuropäische Juden während des Ersten Weltkrieges (1914–1919)*. Böhlau: Köln/ Weimar/Wien 2004, pp. 265–269.

7 Puś, Wiesław: “The Development of the City of Łódź (1820–1939)”, *Polin* 6, 1991, pp. 4–19, here 13.

8 Janczak, Julian: op. cit., p. 24.

mostly been evacuated, and Polish-speaking Catholics had abandoned the city to places with more chances to survive the hunger the German occupation brought. Most of the Jewish population remained in spite of the number of Jewish refugees who had come to the city looking for shelter.

The German occupation was another political turning point. The German regime was more permissive to political life than the previous Russian regime. In the middle of 1915, the German authorities worked toward convening independent municipal councils in Łódź for practical and propagandistic reasons: Practically, they intended to relieve German personnel of local responsibility, while propagandistically, they hoped to win over the local population to a Wilhelmine empire supposedly more attentive and considerate to political claims than the czarist conqueror⁹. This strategy sought to promote German political aims, including control over the western territories of Congress Poland and its main city, Łódź¹⁰.

The ethnic composition of the local councils was debated in closed forums and local newspapers. This form of ethno-national discussion was not without precedent in the territories conquered from Russia. Shortly before the German occupation, the Russian regime had already divided the population into ethno-national groups for council elections¹¹. The reinforcement of these ethno-cultural differences by the emergence of ethno-cultural bodies engaged in the politics of identity, such as the Jewish and Polish national movements, justified this division even more. No strangers to such rhetoric, the German occupation forces themselves classified the population along these lines, viewing ethno-national divisions as natural¹². The German Jewish, mostly Zionist, leaders of the KfdO

9 Pajewski, Janusz: *Odbudowa państwa Polskiego, 1914–1918*. Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe: Warszawa 1985, p. 106.

10 Silber, Marcos: “Hukei Behirot be-Folin ha-Kongresait be-Milhemet ha-Olam ha-Rishona ve-Yitzug ha-Yehudim ba-Mosdot ha-Nivharim”. *Michael* 16, 2004, pp. 144–164.

11 Engel, David: “Ha-She’ela ha-Polanit ve-ha-Tenua ha-Tzionit. Ha-Vikuah al ha-Shilton ha-Atzmi be-Arei Folin ha-Kongresait”. *Galed* 12, 1993, pp. 66–69; Weeks, Theodore: “Nationality and Municipality. Reforming City Government in the Kingdom of Poland, 1904–1915”. *Russian History* 21, 1994, pp. 23–48; “Di Takones fun der selbst-Fervaltung in Poiln”. In: *Lodzer Folksblat*, 24.6.1916.

12 On German policy regarding this territory and its population in the beginning of the German occupation, cf. Conze, Werner: *Polnische Nation und Deutsche Politik im Ersten Weltkrieg*. Böhlau: Köln/ Graz 1958, pp. 46–105; Geiss, Imanuel: *Der polnische Grenzstreifen 1914–1918. Ein Beitrag zur deutschen Kriegszielpolitik im Ersten Weltkrieg*, Matthiesen Verlag: Lübeck/Hamburg 1960, pp. 70–90; Knebel, Jerzy: *Rząd Pruski wobec sprawy polskiej w latach 1914–1918*. Wydawnictwo Poznańskie: Poznań 1963, pp. 7–33.

On such policy in the Oberost region, cf. Liulevicius, Vejas Gabriel: *War, Land on Elbieta* Katarzyna Dzikowska, Agata G. Handley and Piotr Zawilski - 9783631806777

(Komitee für den Osten) proposed that ethno-national categories be reflected in the government institutions of the occupied territories, and championed Jewish national rights and representation in local politics¹³. The Polish leadership, for its part, demanded implementation of the national principle regarding the Polish nation. In exchange for the full recognition of Polish rights to Congress Poland, the austrophile Supreme National Committee (*Naczelny Komitet Narodowy NKN*), which represented Polish parties in Galicia and fervently supported the Central Powers, was prepared to accept German minority rights in Łódź¹⁴. The occupation forces therefore adopted ethno-national categorization in the public discourse.

Discussions revolved around the question of ethnically-designated election districts (*curiae*). The city's German and Jewish press emphasized that this system would avert the tyranny of the majority and equip minorities with the legal tools to prevent discrimination and represent their national interests¹⁵. After a well-orchestrated public debate¹⁶, a council was appointed in Łódź in July, comprising twelve Poles, members of the Catholic, Polish-speaking elite, twelve Germans from

the Eastern Front, Culture, National Identity and German Occupation in World War I, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge 2000.

- 13 On the KfdO during this stage of events, cf. Zechlin, Egmont: *Die deutsche Politik und die Juden im Ersten Weltkrieg*. Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht: Göttingen 1969, 126–143; Ticker, Jay: “Max I. Bodenheimer. Advocate of Pro-German Zionism at the Beginning of World War I”. *Jewish Social Studies* 43, 1981, pp. 11–30; Silber, Marcos: *She-Polin Ha-Hadasha Tihie Em Tova le-Hol Yaldeha: Ha-Maamatz be-Merkaz Eropa le-Hasagat Otonomia le-Yehudei Folin ha-Kongresait be-Milkhemet ha-Olam ha-Rishona* (Doctoral Thesis) Tel Aviv University: Tel Aviv 2001, pp. 36–89, 121–137.
- 14 Lemke, Heinz: *Allianz und Rivalität. Die Mittelmächte und Polen im Ersten Weltkrieg (bis zur Februarrevolution)*. Akademie-Verlag: Wien,/Köln/Graz 1977, pp. 38–99, 113–156, (in particular 154–155); Sibora, Janusz: *Narodziny Polskiej Dyplomacji u Progu Niepodległości*. Wydawnictwo Sejmowe: Warszawa 1998, pp. 11–24, 61–65.
- 15 Cf. “Jüdische Angelegenheiten – Jüdische Wahlkurien”. *Deutsche Lodzer Zeitung*, 18.6.1915.
- 16 Central Zionist Archives [subsequently referred to as CZA], A15/VIII/2a, Max Bodenheimer to Franz Oppenheimer, June 1, 1915. On German control of the local press, see: Hertz, Mieczysław: *Łódź w czasie wielkiej wojny*. Skład Główny: Księgarnia S. Seipelt: Łódź, 1933, pp. 171–178; Uger, Yeshaya: “Hindenburg Kegn ‘Haint’” [Hindenburg vs. “Haynt”]. *Haynt Yubilei Bukh* [Haynt’s Jubilee Book], Haynt Farlag: Warszawa 1928, pp. 11–12; Archiwum Narodowe w Krakowie [National Archives in Kraków, subsequently referred to as ANK], Naczelny Komitet Narodowy (subsequently referred to as NKN), 87, “Die deutsche Zensur in Łódź.”

the Protestant, German-speaking elite, and twelve Jews regardless of language¹⁷. This appointment affirmed the equality of all three groups, their rights to representation in city institutions, and their say in municipal decision-making. The decision to adopt parity representation for the three segments was presented as equal inclusion of the three ethno-national groups. With no “majority” and “minorities,” each group’s special needs would be equally protected.

This peculiar policy was not applied in the areas of Congress Poland occupied by the German army in summer 1915: Warsaw and the left bank of the Vistula. Moreover, while in Łódź they emphasized the parity of the ethnic composition of the city, they emphasized the Polish character of Warsaw. Two days after the occupation of Warsaw, the *Deutsche Lodzer Zeitung* expalined to its readers that “Warsaw is a Polish city” because “Warsaw is not as charged with national questions as Łódź”¹⁸.

This last point is important to understanding the German policy, not only examining it from the center, i.e. Warsaw and the central occupation authorities in Poland, but looking from the peripheries to the center, in this case, Łódź to Warsaw and the policy implemented there. This perspective allows the nuances of the German occupation policy to be better understood, and to create a more intricate picture.

Regarding multilingualism, the occupation forces allowed each ethno-national group to found or revive its own newspaper. Two papers were published in Yiddish: *Lodzer Togbalt* and *Lodzer Volksblat*; two in Polish: *Gazeta Łódzka* and *Nowy Kurier Łódzki*; and two in German: *Deutsche Lodzer Zeitung* and the weekly *Deutsche Post*¹⁹. These practices emphasized the equality of the groups in the common municipal domain and their equality of representation in the institutions that dealt with the daily concerns of the common public sphere; the press was also granted legitimacy to serve as a formal public sphere exclusive to each of the ethno-national segments. In other words, they formally created a common public sphere apparently attentive to the ethno-cultural complexity while permitting the existence of a separated particular public sphere.

17 CZA, A15/VIII/2a, Arthur Levi to Oppenheimer bureau, July 9, 1915; CZA, A15/VIII/7, Paritätische Behandlung der Juden in der neuen städtischen Selbstverwaltung Russisch-Polens; Hertz, Mieczysław: op. cit., p. 120; “Di zelfstfervaltung in okupirtn Poyln”. *Lodzer Folksblat*, 2.7.1915.

18 “Warschau”. *Deutsche Lodzer Zeitung*, 6.8.1915. A similar policy to that applied to Łódź was implemented in Oberost, shortly after its occupation. Cf. Liulievicius, Vejas Gabriel: op. cit., p. 115–116, 118.

19 On the press in Łódź, cf. Hertz, Mieczysław: op. cit., pp. 170–178.

As opposed to the discriminatory Russian rule, the new German administration professed formal neutrality toward ethnic groups and seemed to improve their political condition, at least nominally and relatively. Jewish national circles interpreted German liberalism as a triumph of their politics of identity. However, a study of these policies shows that they in fact delegitimized the multiple cultures they purportedly condoned.

The appointment of a local council on an ethno-national basis gave the city a semblance of a public domain composed of three segments, with each segment being perceived as uniform, different from and even inimical to the others in spite of the hybridization process described above. The German acknowledgment of multiple cultures was thus predicated as rigid and essentialist regarding group identities.

The occupation forces appointed thirty-six prominent residents of Łódź to the council, divided evenly among the city's three main ethno-national groups²⁰. This parity conferred on the Jews a degree of representation almost commensurate with their percentage of the population, in contrast to the discrimination they had hitherto suffered. Yet the German element gained disproportionate political power, arousing the wrath of the Polish community.²¹ The occupation authorities had apparently expected the Jewish and German council members to form a coalition of minorities against the Polish relative majority.

However, this reductionist Procrustean bed, which reinforced the differences *between* ethno-national segments while flattening the differences *within* them, did not stand the test of reality. Religion, so important to the German-occupation concepts of national identity, did not completely define nationality: Though the occupation forces had scrupulously selected council members from each ethno-national group, seven of the Jews "defected" to the Polish faction, and the remaining five (including three Zionists) joined the Germans²². Despite overwhelming Jewish support from Jewish representatives for Polish national claims in the appointed council, Polish national circles accused "foreign" Jews of conspiring against Poland with Jewish national aspirations being alien to the spirit of the Łódź Jewry²³. There was even talk of a "Litvak" conspiracy led by progressive

20 CZA, A15/VIII/7, Paritätische Behandlung der Juden in der neuen städtischen Selbstverwaltung Russisch-Polens; Hertz, 1933, p. 120.

21 ANK, NKN, 88, "Z życia społeczno-publicznego miasta Łodzi".

22 CZA, A15/VIII/2a, Arthur Levi to Oppenheimer bureau, July 9, 1915; ANK, *ibid.*; Hertz, Mieczysław: *op. cit.*, p. 120.

23 "W sprawie stosunków Żydów do Polaków w Łodzi". *Wiedeński Kurier*, 22.7.1915; ANK, NKN, 88, "Sprawozdanie z Łodzi." 25 September, 1915.

Galician rabbi and preacher Mordechai Ze'ev Broide²⁴. Such propaganda sought to invalidate the increasingly assertive demand for collective Jewish rights, which seemed to negate the collective Polish ones.

From the very beginning of the German occupation, the linguistic question was central. Various regulations erased the Russian language from the public sphere: Russian was banned in all municipal institutions. It was forbidden to study in or learn the language, and the use of books written in Russian in schools was illegal. Even posting an announcement on a billboard in Russian risked a fine of 5,000 rubles, a fortune in such arduous times²⁵. This linguistic molding of the municipal domain was intended principally to uproot the language of the previous regime as a means of legitimizing the introduction of German.

The German occupation authorities decreed that each segment of the population would study separately. Even before the war, there had been separate (though not exclusive) municipal schools for Catholics, Jews, Protestants, the Orthodox and Mariavites²⁶. Russian was to have been the language of instruction. Facing resistance to this regulation, however, the government permitted Polish in Catholic schools and German in Protestant ones. On the eve of the war, Polish was introduced in Jewish schools, where Hebrew was also taught. In all cases, Russian was at least a language of study²⁷. Non-municipal schools were often bilingual or

24 ANK, NKN, 88, "Z życia społeczno-publicznego miasta Łodzi." Mordechai Ze'ev Broide (1869–1950) was born in Brest Litowski, but at the age of three moved to Galicia, where he grew up; he was educated there and became an active Zionist. At the age of forty, in 1909, he moved to Łódź. Sadan, Dov (ed.): *Zikhron Mordekhai Ze'ev Broda: kovets le-zekher ha-doktor Mordekhai Ze'ev Broda*, Hasifirah hatzionit: Jerusalem 1960 (Remembrance of Mordekhai Ze'ev Broda: collection in memoriam of Mordekhai Ze'ev Broda).

25 "Russisch – verboten. Die Strassenschilder in Łódź". *Die Zeit* (Wien), 3.9.1915; "Verordnung betreffend Regelung des Schulwesens". *Deutsche Lodzer Zeitung*, 10.9.1915.

26 Podgórska, Eugenia: *Szkołnictwo elementarne w Łodzi w latach 1808–1914*. Łódzkie Towarzystwo Naukowe: Łódź 1966, pp. 142, 149.

27 Regarding the development of the language question in the municipal system during the early Twentieth Century, see, for example, Lewin, Sabina: *Prakim be-Toldot ha-Hinuch ha-Yehudi be-Folin ba-Mea ha-Tesha-Esre u-ve-Reshit ha-Mea ha-Esrin*. Tel Aviv University: Tel Aviv 1997, pp. 217–219; CZA, A15VIII 9a, Bericht über das jüdische Schulwesen in Łódź, 21 May, 1915; Hertz, Mieczysław: op. cit., pp. 183–184; ANK, NKN, 86, "Sprawa szkolna w Łodzi", 21 October, 1915.

multilingual, such as the Angelica Rothert Gymnasium (German and Polish) and the Handweker Talmud Toire (Russian, Polish, Hebrew, and German)²⁸.

Initially, the municipal council maintained the previous school system, eliminating Russian and supporting Polish²⁹. Yet the occupation forces prohibited the use of Polish in Jewish schools³⁰, based on essentialist arguments (“Jews in Poland need not be Poles, nor can they be”)³¹ as well as instrumental ones (“only 200 Jews use the Polish language”)³². Rather, Jews would study in German in selective schools³³. This was an example of the policy of selective and limited Germanization of the Jews aimed to reinforce German in the public sphere, even as the population adopting it remained outside the German ethno-national segment³⁴. It was used as a tool to deepen German dominance of the city and region while alienating its population.

Jewish and Polish teachers protested that it was impossible to teach in a language students did not understand and that they should be taught in their mother tongue (Yiddish or Polish); lively arguments attended this topic³⁵. The German superintendent of Jewish schools countered that the solution was to improve the German of the Jewish children: “If under normal circumstances there are twenty-four hours in a day, and in wartime there are twenty-eight, Jews must study German twenty-three

28 Radziszewska, Krystyna/ Woźniak, Krzysztof: op. cit., p. 127; CZA, A15VIII 9a, Bericht über das jüdische Schulwesen in Łódź, 21 May 1915.

29 ANK, NKN, 86, “Sprawa szkolna w Łodzi”.

30 CZA, A15/VIII/9a, Notizen über die Tätigkeit des Herrn Justizrat Dr. Bodenheimer in Łódź (Zum Protokoll über die Sitzung vom 11.6.15.); “Verordnung betreffend Regelung des Schulwesens”. *Deutsche Lodzer Zeitung*, 7.9.1915. See also: Schuster, Frank M.: op. cit., pp. 360f.

31 ANK, NKN, 86, “Sprawa szkolna w Łodzi”.

32 ANK, NKN, 88, “Sprawozdanie z Łodzi.” 25 September, 1915.

33 CZA, A15/VIII/2c, Moritz Sobernheim to Max Bodenheimer, 2 September, 1915; “Verordnung betreffend Regelung des Schulwesens”. *Deutsche Lodzer Zeitung*, 7.9.1915.

34 Cf. Schuster, Frank M.: “Zwischen Paralyse, Krise und Aufbruch: Die zentralpolnische Industriestadt Łódź im Übergang 1914–1918” In: Fejtová, Olga/Ledvinka, Václav/Pešek, Jiří (eds.): *Unermessliche Verluste und ihre Bewältigung: die Bevölkerung der Europäischen Großstädte und der Erste Weltkrieg/Nezměrné ztráty a jejich zvládání. Obyvatelstvo evropských velkoměst a I. světová válka*. Praha 2015, in print. I thank Frank Schuster who graciously provided me a copy of his article.

35 “Dos Lodzer Lebn. A farzamlung vegn der yidisher folks-shul”. *Lodzer Folksblat*, 9.9.1915; Hertz, 1933, p. 183; ANK, NKN, 86, “Sprawa szkolna w Łodzi.”

hours a day”³⁶. Such blatant Germanization irked the council’s Polish faction, Jews and Catholics alike, as well as Jewish nationalist leaders³⁷.

In September 1915, left-wing Jewish activists clamored for Yiddish-language schools for the Jewish population³⁸; a petition to this effect was signed by 30,000 Jews³⁹. Jewish parents also urged that Polish be taught in Jewish schools⁴⁰ and 3,000 Jews signed a contra-petition demanding schools in Polish for their children⁴¹. Though the Germans had to accept cultural-linguistic differences *within* ethno-national groups, they consecrated the boundaries *between* these groups and clung to segregated education. They preferred schools in Polish for each ethno-nationality rather than one integrative school united by language. Just before the 1916–1917 academic year, the occupation authorities promised municipal schools in Yiddish and Polish, exclusively for Jews⁴². This step was understood in the Yiddish daily press as part of a broader policy confirming that “the Jews are a different people with a peculiar, independent culture, with a particular language, or with two languages. Based on this acknowledgment, the German power in Poland recognized the Jewish nationality and strives not only to set equally civil rights but also national rights, like the Poles”⁴³.

36 ANK, NKN, 88, “Sprawozdanie z Łodzi.” 25 September, 1915.

37 ANK, NKN, 86, “Sprawa szkolna w Łodzi”; ANK, NKN, 88, “Sprawozdanie z Łodzi.” 25 September, 1915.

38 “Dos Lodzer Lebn. A farzamlung vegn der yidisher folks-shul”. *Lodzer Folksblat*, 9.9.1915.

39 ANK, NKN, 86, “Sprawa szkolna w Łodzi”; Kazdan, Chaim: *Di Geshichte fun yidishn shulvezn in umophengikn Poiln*. Mexico City 1947, pp. 52–54; Hertz, Yankl Sholem: *Di Geshichte fun Bund in Łodz*. Unzr Tzayt: New York, 1958, p. 256.

40 Hertz, Mieczysław: op. cit., p. 166.

41 YIVO Archive in New York [subsequently referred to as YIVO], RG 1400, Bund, MG2, Box 15, folder 145, Protokół posiedzenia 37-go Rady Miejskiej z dn. 29 października 1917 r.

42 “Dos Lodzer lebn. Di untterichts-shprach in di yidishe folksshuln. *Lodzer Folksblat*, 10.8.1916; “Dos Lodzer lebn. Tog notitsen: Ofn shvel fun nayem shul-yor”. *Lodzer Folksblat*, 28.8.1916. The Yiddish schools were to be run by the municipal school board, composed mainly of Polish Catholics or polonized Jews seeking to polonize the Jewish school system despite German regulations. The Folks-Bildung Farain tried unsuccessfully to enlist some of its members in the municipal commission on Jewish schools to help open Yiddish schools. “Di Farzamlung fun yidishn shul farain”. *Lodzer Folksblat*, 28.8.1916. See also: Bałaban, Majer: “Raport o żydowskich instytucjach oświatowych i religijnych na terenach Królestwa Polskiego okupowanych przez Austro-Węgry”. *Kwartalnik historii Żydów* 1, 2001, pp. 35–68, here 54.

43 “Der bankrot fun der yuidish-poylisher asimilatsye”. *Lodzer Folksblat*, 23.5.1916.

To summarise, the German occupying forces implemented a dualistic policy vis-à-vis ethno-national groups: On the one hand, the Germans acknowledged ethnic-national differences and reinforced the construction of closed societies, making movement between them difficult and even suspect. This step determined the essential and static definitions of the community and its culture, strengthening the rigid, deterministic perceptions of the individual. It facilitated selective Germanization, which had increased the need for German without absorbing all its speakers into the German ethno-national segment. This educational process ultimately produced distinct, though internally heterogeneous, ethnic blocs accustomed to German dominance within a German framework.

On the other hand, the occupation authorities had to accept lingual and/or cultural complexity within each ethno-national population, allowing it to develop a separate and particular public sphere. By emphasizing a triad of languages and ethno-national equivalent groups with definite boundaries, the German regime sought to de-Polonize Łódź and thereby promote German rule in the region, either directly by annexing the area, with or without its residents, to Germany, or by preserving it as a colonial or semi-colonial territory⁴⁴. Selective Germanization thus helped place Greater Łódź under the aegis of the Reich without necessarily including the region's non-German population. The division of the city and its inhabitants into three rigidly-defined, apparently equal sections aimed at delegitimizing its attachment to any Polish political entity likely to arise.

By its co-optive conduct of municipal affairs, its apparent tolerance of cultural pluralism, and its separation of ethno-national segments within an atmosphere of increasing nationalism and aggravation of inter-ethno-national relations, the German occupation generated relative calm and acceptance among the locals. This despite its predatory subjugation⁴⁵, expropriation of goods and means of production⁴⁶, and discriminatory budget allocation, which spread economic

44 On the annexation tendencies of the German Reich toward Poland cf. Geiss, 1960. German speaking population in Łódź petitioned for the annexation of western parts of Congress Poland (including the city of Łódź) to Germany. Cf. Kulak, Zbigniew: "Memorandum of the Germans from Łódź concerning the annexation of Polish Territories to the Reich at the Time of World War I". *Polish Western Affairs* 7, 1966, pp. 388–403.

45 Hertz, Mieczysław: op. cit., pp. 200–213.

46 Ibid., 187–191; Schuster, Frank M.: op. cit., pp. 305–309.

deprivation, hunger, crime and disease⁴⁷, resulting in an alarming increase in mortality rate⁴⁸.

2. New, Elected Local Authorities

The war lasted longer than expected. It demanded more resources than estimated and required an adjustment of the economic policy within the Reich, as well as in occupied lands. The reality of prolonged war in late 1915 and in 1916 with no clear definition on the eastern front⁴⁹, the attrition and weariness of the population in the German hinterland⁵⁰, the plunder and exhaustion of the civil population in occupied Poland⁵¹, difficulties with manpower⁵², and lack of raw materials⁵³ led to a crisis in the occupation regime⁵⁴. Its rehabilitation necessitated negotiations between occupiers and occupied.

The joint decisions of politicians and military men, Austrian and Germans alike, during the fall of 1916 gave a green light for the establishment of an “independent” Polish buffer state. Consequently, the act of the Two Emperors restituting the Polish state, was published on 5 November 1916. Its aim was to gain the Polish national movement’s heart and to take advantage of its manpower. It was, as Titus Komarnicki characterized in his classical work “an attempt to ‘buy the

47 Hertz, Mieczysław: op. cit., pp. 200–221; Schuster, Frank M.: op. cit., pp. 309–323, 349f.

48 ANK, NKN, 88, “Sprawozdanie z Łodzi”. 25 September, 1915; ANK, NKN, 89, “Śmiertelność w Łodzi, według danych Wydziału Zdrowotności publicznej”. (Apparently May 1916).

49 Stone, Norman: *The Eastern Front, 1914–1917*. Hodder & Stoughton, New York 1975, pp. 219–231, 245–263.

50 Vincent, Paul: *The Politics of Hunger: The Allied Blockade of Germany, 1915–1919*, Ohio University Press: Athens OH 1985; Herwig, Holger: *The First World War, Germany and Austria-Hungary 1914–1918*. Arnold: London 1997, pp. 283–301; Bonzon, Thierry/ Davis, Belinda: “Feeding the cities”. In: Winter, Jay/ Robert/ Jean Louis (eds.): *Capital Cities at War, Paris, London, Berlin 1914–1918*, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge UK 1997, pp. 305–341, especially 333–338.

51 Molenda, Jan: “Królestwo Polskie i Galicja, sierpień 1915–luty 1917”. In: Kormanowa, Żanna and Najdus, Walentyna (eds.): *Historia Polski*, Vol III, part III. Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe: Warsaw 1974, pp. 172–236, here pp. 172–175, 177–179, 184–194.

52 Feldman, Gerald: *Army, Industry and Labor, in Germany 1914–1918*, Oxford University Press: Oxford 1992, pp. 45–52, 150–168, 273–283.

53 Herwig, Holger: op. cit., pp. 254–256, 259–264.

54 See for example the seminal work of Fritz Fischer: *Germany’s aims in the First world War*, Chatto & Windus: London 1967, p. 327 (first Published in 1961).

Polish business cheaply”.⁵⁵ The occupational regime co-opted branches of the Polish national movement, guaranteeing them ostensible progress toward an autonomous Polish political entity. Manipulatively, they created new governmental institutions, like the Interim Council of State, that were intended to promote the restoration of a Polish state⁵⁶.

This political development led to a series of consequences in Łódź. One of which was the formation of the *Deutscher Verein für Łódź und Umgebung* to annex the region to Germany, or at least, to secure German dominance over it⁵⁷.

In this political context, Łódź elected a new municipal council in early 1917, following the process begun with the election of the Warsaw city council in spring 1916⁵⁸. In Łódź, the German regime sought to preserve the *curia* formula, which

55 Komarnicki, Titus: *Rebirth of the Polish Republic, A Study in the Diplomatic History of Europe, 1914–1920*. W. Heinemann: Melbourne-London-Toronto 1957, p. 115.

56 On the Proclamation of the 5th November and its practical aftermath cf. Grosfeld, Leon: “La Pologne dans les Plans impérialistes allemands pendant la grande guerre 1914–1918 et l’acte du 5 Novembre 1916”. In: *La Pologne au X Congrès international des Sciences Historiques à Rome*, Académie Polonaise des Sciences, Institut d’Histoire: Warszawa 1955, pp. 334–340, 34–354; Conze 1958, pp. 106–226; Grosfeld, Leon: *Polityka państw centralnych wobec sprawy polskiej w latach pierwszej wojny światowej*. Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe: Warszawa 1962, pp. 155–186; Lemke, Heinz: “Die Politik der Mittelmächte in Polen von der Novemberproklamation 1916 bis zum Zusammentritt des Provisorischen Staatsrats”. *Jahrbuch für Geschichte der UdSSR und der volksdemokratischen Länder Europas* 6, 1962, pp. 69–136; Kozłowski, Czesław: *Działalność Polityczna Koła Międzypartyjnego w Latach 1915–1918*. Książka i Wiedza: Warsaw 1967, pp. 115–127; Jarausch, Konrad: *The Enigmatic Chancellor, Bethmann Hollweg and the Hubris of Imperial Germany*. Yale University Press: New Haven and London 1973, pp. 416–420; Jerzy Holzer – Jan Molenda: *Polska w pierwszej wojnie światowej*. Wiedza Powszechna: Warsaw 1973, pp. 146–244; Lemke, 1977, pp. 321–374; Pajewski, 1985, pp. 116–138; Sukiennicki, Wiktor: *East Central Europe during World War I: From Foreign Domination to National Independence*. East European monographs: Boulder 1984, pp. 241–295.

57 Schuster, Frank, M.: 2015.

58 A huge literature exists on the municipal elections in Warsaw. Basically see the classic book written by Paul Roth: *Die politische Entwicklung in Kongreßpolen während der deutschen Okkupation*, K. F. Koehler: Leipzig 1919, pp. 35f.; see also the chapter written by Wilhelm Stein, “Die politische Entwicklung im polnischen Judentum während der Zeit der deutschen Okkupation”, in the same book, pp. 161–163. More recent works refer to the municipal elections: Silber, Marcos: op. cit., pp. 185–209; Weiser, Keith: *The Politics of Yiddish. Noiekh Prilutski and the Folkspartei in Poland, 1900–1926*. (doctoral thesis) Columbia University, New York 2001, pp. 222–252; Gilinski-Meller, Chaya: *Mifleget ha-Folkisitim [Folks-partei] be-Folin, 1915–1939*. (doctoral thesis) Bar-Ilan

benefited the German minority and could ensure it a cardinal role in the city's political life. Von Oppen, who headed the German occupation forces in the city asked: "In Łódź, which differs from nationally homogeneous Warsaw [!], would it not be appropriate [to establish] national districts that guarantee reasonable representation of the Germans and a reasonable degree [of representation] for the Jews?"⁵⁹

As Schuster notes, the German authorities sought in Łódź a counterweight to the new Polish state in formation⁶⁰. However, the Germans' new allies from the Polish national movement argued that proportional elections would accomplish the same, assuming that the Poles would gain the majority of council seats. The occupation regime agreed to partisan proportional elections similar to those in Warsaw.

The electoral system divided the 32,127 voters into six socioeconomic categories (*curia*), each electing ten representatives. The number of voters in each *curia* was unequal. For example, the sixth *curia*, for general workers, registered 17,656 voters (more than half the electorate), while the second, for major industrialists, merchants, and entrepreneurs, admitted only 568⁶¹.

Głos Żydowski, a Jewish weekly published in Piotrków, just south of Łódź but in the Austrian occupation zone and free of German censorship, characterized the elections as "on the one hand, a struggle between three ethnic groups; on the other, a political party's electoral struggle."⁶² The description was accurate. On the one hand, candidates were almost completely listed ethno-nationally, following the patterns developed previously in other cities in Congress Poland, reflecting growing tension between Jews and Poles, and the magnitude of the ethno-national

University, Ramat Gan 2004, pp. 71–96; Schuster, Frank M.: op. cit., pp. 401–405. Specifically, on the elections in Łódź cf. Silber, Marcos: op. cit., pp. 283–285; Schuster, Frank M.: op. cit., p. 403.

59 ANK, NKN, 86, "O Radę miejską wybieralną w Łodzi".

60 Schuster, Frank, M.: 2015. The ordinance was a tool used by the German authorities to limit the Polish sovereignty over the Jewish population. Cf. Silber, Marcos: "The German 'Ordinance Regarding the Organization of the Religious Jewish Community' (November 1916–1918)". *Studia Judaica* 18(1), 2015, 35–55.

61 Hertz, Mieczysław: op. cit., pp. 129–130; Walicki, Jacek: "Juden und Deutsche in der Lodzer Selbstverwaltung". In: Hensel, Jürgen (ed.): *Polen, Deutsche und Juden in Łódź 1820–1939. Eine schwierige Nachbarschaft*. Fibre: Osnabrück 1999, pp. 215–236, here 216; Hertz, Yankl Sholem: op. cit., p. 246.

62 "Wybory w Łodzi". *Głos Żydowski*, 21.1.1917.

agenda. On the other hand, each list indicated a partisan, ideological, or class inclination within each ethno-national group⁶³.

Only the German parties and political factions in Łódź formed a united electoral front, stressing internal cohesion and downplaying differences. Ironically, leaders of the “Poles of Mosaic faith” preached integration into Polish society but organized their own roster of candidates, separate from both the Polish and Jewish national lists. Despite their ideological and political proximity, ethno-national groups were separated by a deepening abyss, which reduced their chances of incorporation into the Polish electoral lists. It was a symptom of the extreme process of ethnification of the local politics during the war years which worked against the integration of Jews and Catholics into the same electoral organization. The electoral regulations deepened the divisions between ethno-national segments and emphasized internal ethno-national heterogeneity⁶⁴. The electoral process expanded the public spheres: the one common to all ethno-national segments, as well as those particular to each.

The lists successfully imposed an ethno-national agenda on the municipal agenda and captured the vast majority of votes, regardless of the social composition of the *curia*. The few votes for the list of the “Poles of Mosaic faith” show the failure of assimilation as a viable political option, as well as the failure of the minor integrative lists of Jews and non-Jews. These called for cooperation on a purely economic base, ostensibly blind to ethno-national differences⁶⁵. As a result of the electoral law, no ethnic segment achieved an absolute majority in the city council⁶⁶. Nevertheless, the Polish parties grouped in the Polish Circle attained a relative majority (twenty-six out of sixty seats, including four “Poles of Mosaic faith”). The twenty-one Jewish representatives of the Yiddishe Tzentrale

63 See, for example, YIVO, RG 28, box 12, Łódź 19, Platform fun yidishn sotzial demokratishn arbiter vahl komitet (P.Tz.); *ibid.*, Dos Platform fun yidishn sotzialdemokratishn vahl komitet.

64 “Polen”. *Neue Jüdische Monatshefte* 1, 1916, p. 207; “Der rezultat fun di vahlen in Łódź”. *Haynt*, 21.1.1917; Hertz, Mieczysław: *op. cit.*, pp. 130–133.

65 Compare the call of list 21 of the industrialists: “Do wyborców II kuryi”. *Lodzer Togblat*, 8.1.1917 with their poor results – 123 votes from a total of 518. “Di vahl campanie in Łódź”. *Lodzer Togblat*, 17.1.1917. All the remainder votes were received by other three lists, each one representing a different ethno-national segment.

66 Hertz, Mieczysław: *op. cit.*, pp. 132f.; “Wybory w Łodzi”. *Głos Żydowski*, 21.1.1917; “Der rezultat fun di vahlen in Łódź”. *Haynt*, 21.1.1917.

Wahl Komitet shaped the main opposition group, mostly supported by the eight German representatives⁶⁷.

How did the new municipal authority reconcile the multiple languages and cultures of Łódź, including the existence of particular public spheres with its own vision of Polish national hegemony? Before the first meeting of the council, Polish council members demanded exclusive recognition of the Polish language⁶⁸. In response to pressure from the German local authorities, the Polish council members applied to the Interim Council of State for assistance; they submitted a memorandum declaring that:

- 1) In so far that the issue of the Polish language as the only official language will not be favorably and conclusively arranged before the first [City] Council's meeting, 2) In so far that the mayor and its deputy will not be nominated from among Polish citizens,
- 3) In so far that the [city] chairman [...] will not be nominated from among the Polish citizens – then the Polish council city member will consider their labor as impossible⁶⁹.

The dispute was characterized as “a controversy on a vital, crucial issue, on the Polishness [Polskość] of the municipal council”⁷⁰. The Polish Circle members of the municipal council hoped to stress the “Polish” character of the municipal council. They did so by emphasizing the status of the Polish language and by keeping the most prestigious and influential functions in “Polish” (i.e. ethnically Polish) hands, regardless of their political stance. The Polish character of the city was presented as a “zero-sum game”, in which simple recognition of another official language besides Polish or keeping central functions in “non-Polish” hands were presented as a menace to the city’s “Polishness”. The proposition presented by the Polish circle aimed at a total elimination of “non-Poles” from the city’s new public arena. The Polish council faction then endeavored to exclude German and Yiddish, now constituted as minority languages, from the public sphere as a tool to enhance the Polonization of Łódź.

However, the political circumstances dictated a compromise. The Interim Council of the State understood that total exclusion of German minority and language from the political arena of a city as important as Łódź would not be accepted by the occupation regime. At the same time, alarmed by the strong opposition, the

67 Hertz, Mieczysław: op. cit., p. 134. The Jewish circle was very often supported by the two representatives of the Poalei Zion (Zionist Socialists).

68 Ibid., p. 135f.

69 Suleja, Włodzimierz: *Tymczasowa Rada Stanu*. Wydawnictwo Sejmowe: Warszawa 1998, p. 159.

70 ANK, NKN, 88, “Sprawozdanie z Łodzi”, 17 April, 1917.

occupation regime compromised: They decided to recognize Polish as the official language while declaring German as the language of communication with the occupation authorities. In addition, German Council members were authorized to deliver speeches in German⁷¹.

The exclusion of minority languages and their public spheres implied the waiver of council authority over said minorities. However, this waiver undermined not only the legitimacy of municipal institutions but their relations with those who were not Polish-speakers. Thus, it was shortlived. For example, despite the objections of Jewish council members, the municipality initially refused to publish information and announcements in the Yiddish press, thus ignoring the language and excluding it from the public sphere; this decision was based on both instrumental arguments (“all the Jews with no exception know the Polish language”)⁷² and formalistic arguments (It is not native language but the language of “newcomers”)⁷³. A group of Jewish city council members demanded that such behaviour be changed⁷⁴: Israel Lichtenstein, the Bundist representative in the municipal council argued that “since there are people who speak such a language and since it is a press in such a language with its readers, then it is the obligation of the municipal authorities to serve these citizens [...] and to find out this way to publish the municipal announcement”⁷⁵. Eventually, though, rather than relinquish its influence over tens of thousands of Yiddish readers, the council recanted. The council accepted a proposal to publish announcements in the Yiddish press, although in Polish and not in Yiddish⁷⁶. It was a sophisticated way of enforcing council authority over the Yiddish speaking minority and influencing it, without legitimating the use of the Yiddish language.

A new occasion to discuss the status of the different languages appeared in September 1917, when the responsibility for the Polish educational system was

71 Hertz, Mieczysław: op. cit., p. 136; Suleja, Włodzimierz: op. cit., pp. 159–161; Archiwum Akt Nowych, Tymczasowa Rada Stanu w Warszawie, 7, “Sprawy Samorządowe, Posiedzenia Wydziału Wykonawczego w d. 16.2.17, 5.3.17”.

72 YIVO, RG 1400, Bund, MG2, Box 15, folder 145, Protokół posiedzenia 62-go Rady Miejskiej z dnia 23 Stycznia 1918 r.

73 Ibid.

74 “Polin”. *Hatzfira*, 31.1.1918.

75 YIVO, ibid.

76 Zieliński, Konrad: “Stosunki polsko-żydowskie w Królestwie Polskim w czasie I wojny światowej (na przykładzie rad miejskich)”. *Kwartalnik Historii Żydów* 206, 2003, pp. 164–194, here: pp. 181–182; Zieliński, Konrad: *Stosunku polsko-żydowskie na ziemiach Królestwa Polskiego w czasie pierwszej wojny światowej*. Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej: Lublin 2005, p. 283.

transferred to the Interim Council of State by the German occupational forces, who in turn transferred some of the duties to local councils⁷⁷. The question of the status of the minority languages arose again, and the efforts of the Polish Circle to de-legitimize the presence of minority languages in the public sphere continued. Language and ethno-cultural issues were increasingly paramount. Claims for the recognition of German and Yiddish culture were labeled nationalist, anti-Polish, anti-state and separatist⁷⁸. The Polish Circle sought to favor the Polish language and culture, empowering the Polish ethno-cultural group and eliminating minority cultures from the public sphere. The Polish Circle insisted that independence and the construction of a Polish state required the assimilation of “backward minorities” into the constituted Polish majority. In contrast, Lichtenstein considered that “the use of the mother tongue belongs to the rights usually called holy, [...] together with other most basic human rights. In this case it is about the equality of the languages. About the right of everyone to use his own language”⁷⁹. When he stressed the connection between equal citizenship and minority language recognition in public spheres such as the municipal council, the school system or the press⁸⁰, he was strongly attacked by his opponents for doing so⁸¹.

Regarding the Yiddish speakers of Łódź, Israel Lichtenstein demanded the complete recognition of Yiddish spheres, the press or schools, as a condition for achieving complete equality for all citizens. He stressed that the limitation of such recognition means limiting their equal rights: “Above all, it is about being a citizen”. In order to enjoy its basic rights [...] “no characteristic, no other demand should be required from any citizen”⁸². He objected to the creation of a civic hierarchy based on linguistic or national adscription. He asserted that “Poland will be fortunate only when all inhabitants of this land will be such. General prosperity can be built on complete equality for all citizens, regardless of nationality and language”⁸³.

77 Konarski, Kazimierz: *Dzieje szkolnictwa w b. Królestwie Kongresowym 1915–1918*. Skł. gł. w Książnicy Polskiej w Warszawie: Warsaw 1923, pp. 1–56; Ogonowski, Jerzy: *Uprawnienia Językowe mniejszości narodowych w Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej 1918–1939*. Wydawn. Sejmowe.; Warszawa 2000, pp. 22–23.

78 YIVO, *ibid.*, Protokoł posiedzenia 37-go Rady Miejskiej z dnia 29 Października 1917 r.

79 YIVO, *ibid.*, Protokoł posiedzenia 62-go Rady Miejskiej z dnia 23 Stycznia 1918 r.

80 *Ibid.*

81 *Ibid.*

82 *Ibid.*

83 *Ibid.*

Likewise, a Protestant clergyman, August Gerhardt, denounced the Polonization of the public sphere and the de-legitimization of the minority's separate particular spheres, when discussing the issue of schooling, its budgeting and its character:

The German faction [in the Łódź city council] protests the innuendo and claims against individual council members and specific social groups as though the Germans in Łódź had anti-Polish and anti-state, separatist aspirations. [We] the German population [...], who will loyally fulfill our civic duty, do so while maintaining our right to linguistic and religious distinction. We are of the opinion that the Polish language is without doubt the national language and must be compulsory for all citizens. Knowing that a country gains strength, grows, and becomes independent only when all its citizens – regardless of belief, nationality, or status – feel free and happy, [we] the German faction will support all aspirations to preserve equal rights for all citizens of the country, without distinction of nationality and religion, [and] the attainment of religious freedom, freedom of conscience, personal freedom, and freedom of expression⁸⁴.

Discussing the local schools, Gerhardt presented language and culture as central to both individual freedom and political community. Moreover, like Lichtenstein, he clearly indicated that the public expression and institutionalization of ethno-cultural diversity was a precondition for a stable, independent and just state.

Backed by the German occupying forces, members of the council's German faction could subtly threaten without fear. They knew how to phrase their desire, shifting from simple toleration of different cultures and languages to embracing the idea of a multinational and multilingual society inclusive of all its citizens, i.e. not only demanding a superficial acceptance of the differences as a necessary evil, but promoting a true, profound respect for all citizens and their equal inclusion in the citizen's corpus regardless of their language and culture⁸⁵.

Some of the research regarding the German policy in Poland during the Great War which analyses the German policy from the perspective of Warsaw claims that after November 1916, it rejected Jewish national claims⁸⁶. But again, the perspective from Łódź shows a more nuanced reality. The attempts to marginalise minority cultures and languages in Łódź led to a renewed German-National Jewish alliance

84 Hertz, Mieczysław: op. cit., pp. 167f.

85 Ibid.

86 See, for instance, Stempin, Arkadiusz: *Próba "moralnego podboju" Polski przez Cesarstwo Niemieckie w latach I wojny światowej*. Warszawa 2014, pp. 553–580. For a different perspective cf. Silber, Marcos: *Leumiut shona, ezrkhut shava! ha-mamatz le-asagat otonomia le-yehudey polin be-milkhemet ha-olam ha-rishona*. The Zalman Shazar Center for Jewish History and Tel Aviv University Press: Tel Aviv 2014.

in local politics. Jerzy Rozenblatt, a leader of the Jewish faction, gave Gerhardt his full support. Rozenblatt demanded autonomy in issues concerning education and demanded the creation of autonomous municipal educational committees for Germans and Jews. Each population, he argued, was entitled to a school that spoke its language⁸⁷. He defined the situation thus:

The population of Poland is not homogeneous. Alongside the Polish are other nationalities, which constitute 30% of all inhabitants. [...] The Jewish nation wants to live in harmony with the Poles. *Politically, we are Polish. In our internal life, we are Jews* [...]. We demand national, cultural autonomy, that is to say, the right to self-determination in all internal matters [...] we seek not separatism but mutual understanding, working for the common good and prosperity.⁸⁸

The only way to build the Polish state, argued Lichtenstein, Gerhardt and Rozenblatt, was with the voluntary participation of all citizens, including those identified as minorities. Deferring minority rights in the name of national consolidation would likely be counterproductive. Instead, Gerhardt, Rozenblatt, Lichtenstein and their followers proposed recognition of the cultural particularity of the groups constituted as minorities. These three fractions' spokesmen demanded recognition of their separate public spheres. They also sought reinforcement of the separate public spheres and public measures. These aimed at protecting or even promoting ethno-cultural identities, by means of a just budgeting of their cultural necessities, or constructing recognized school councils for every minority⁸⁹, in order "to give everyone the possibility of a free development"⁹⁰.

In a renewed coalition, they proposed to bring the groups together within the common public sphere to express their differences, but within common institutions with a shared commitment to the larger political order loyal to the nascent Polish state. Indeed, they envisaged a political culture common to all ethno-national-linguistic-cultural segments but only if it guaranteed the basic interests of the non-dominant groups, which had encountered formal and informal discrimination as a result of their cultural differences. Their model attempted to accommodate cultural differences while encouraging interdependence.

Polish reactions ranged from open aversion to empathy for the cultural minorities disenfranchised by monolithic nation-building. Some, like J. Wolczyński of

87 *Ibid.*, p. 168.

88 "Mowa d-ra Rozenblata, prezesa frakcji żydowskiej w Łódzkiej Radzie miejskiej". *Głos Żydowski*, 1.11.1917. Emphasis in the original.

89 YIVO *ibid.*, Protokół posiedzenia 37-go Rady Miejskiej z dn. 29 Października 1917 r. "Fun Lodzer shtotrat". *Lebensfragen*, 15.12.1917.

90 "Debatn in Lodzer shtotrat vegn di yiddisher natzionale recht". *Haynt*, 16.11.1917.

the Chrześcijańska Demokracja, demanded segregationist schooling in Polish for each religious group, regardless of student body or the potential effects of discrimination. Others, like A. Rzewski of the Polska Partia Socjalistyczna, sought a uniform, nonsectarian education in Polish, regardless of the language or culture of the child who attended it⁹¹, lest separate schooling and minority rights in general arouse ethnic conflict⁹². For the sake of national consolidation, minorities were asked to renounce their claims to “minority rights” already formulated before the outbreak of the war, which were perceived as competing with the Polish ones⁹³.

I. Gralak of the Polska Partia Socjalistyczna – Lewica, a party supporting minority rights, expressed empathy for the situation faced by deprived cultural minorities in the monolithic nation-building process and agreed that small children should be taught in their mother tongue, although the school system should be standardized to prevent nationalism, and education should be in Polish from the youngest possible age⁹⁴. Gralak sincerely wished to neutralize attributive variables in order to achieve equality within the state. He recognized only the class struggle for political and economic equality, which was to represent supra-cultural and supra-ethno-national interests and culminate in assimilation into one united cultural collective. Gralak dismissed minority claims that these interests were abstract and rhetorical and served the majority. He did not realize his approach was not the only way to an equitable division of resources⁹⁵.

Even sympathizers viewed the Jewish and German politics of identity as “separatist” and therefore illegitimate, undermining society’s “united” advancement toward independence. Any group’s campaign for recognition of its particularity and its separate public sphere implied a lack of commitment to, and even alienation from, the common public sphere. This interpretation reflected the fear of the fragmentation that was endemic to the perception of the politics of identity, with “the other” endangering civil solidarity and nation-building.

91 Hertz, Mieczysław: op. cit., p. 168.

92 “Debatn in Lodzer shtodt-rat vegn di yiddishe natzionale recht”. *Haynt*, 16.11.1917.

93 Hertz, Mieczysław: *ibid.*; “Debatn in Lodzer shtodt-rat vegn di yiddishe natzionale recht”. *Haynt*, 16.11.1917. The Bibliography regarding the formulation of minority rights is huge. The monograph by Janowsky, Oscar: *The Jews and the Minority Rights (1898–1919)*. AMS Press: New York 1966, is still the basic introduction to the topic.

94 Hertz, Mieczysław: *ibid.* On the attitude of the PPS Lewica to the Jewish question and minority rights, cf. Zimmerman, Joshua: *Poles, Jews and the Politics of Nationality. The Bund and the Polish Socialist Party in Late Tsarist Russia*. The University of Wisconsin Press: Madison 2004, pp. 267–270.

95 YIVO, *ibid.*, Protokół posiedzenia 62-go Rady Miejskiej z dnia 23 Stycznia 1918 r.

The German and Jewish representatives passed resolutions demanding budgetary equality and education councils for each minority. They defended separate public spheres without forgoing the common one⁹⁶. In short, the minority groups partially advanced their agenda.

However, despite its multiple cultures, identities, and boundaries and its increasing number of particular, minority-reinforced public spheres, Łódź was not “multicultural”. Institutional acceptance of such spheres derived not from ideological accord acknowledging their benefit to society, but from political pressure. It was considered in some way a necessary evil. Furthermore, the city did not promote informal norms of power sharing or cultural tolerance.

Ostensibly, the recognition of multiple cultures empowered Jews and Germans, the most prominent minorities, to help negotiate the future of the municipal domain. Yet, these negotiations were conducted within the context of an unequal system that divided the ethno-national and cultural-linguistic segments of the population into two groups: those intended to define the essence and objectives of an ever more firmly established political entity, and those that had to adapt to these aims.

The forced recognition of a minority school system was accompanied by budgetary deprivation of Yiddish and German educational and cultural institutions, philological discussions of the jargonistic nature of Yiddish and, even more important, arguments about the linguistic future of the Jewish community supposedly marching toward Polonization. Homogeneity advocates pointed to the fluid cultural identity of Yiddish speakers as reason to deny them minority rights as well as a separate public sphere⁹⁷. However, this call, which actually was raised against the essentialisation of these identities, suggested the fluidity of these Yiddish-speaking groups and did not recall an equivalent process within itself. Thus the hegemonic group emphasized the fluid identity and self-definition of minority groups in order to de-legitimize them and make room for a standard, all-embracing Polish national-cultural identity, with an essential status of its own.

Conclusions

German and Polish authorities both legitimised and negated cultural multiplicity in Łódź in order to strengthen those in power. While the German occupying forces

96 “Fun Lodzer shtotrat”. *Lebensfragen*, 14.12.1917; “Polin”. *HaTzifra*, 29.12.1917.

97 YIVO, *ibid.*, Protokół posiedzenia 37-go Rady Miejskiej z dn. 29 Października 1917 r., Protokół posiedzenia 46-go Rady Miejskiej z dnia 22 Listopada 1917 r., Protokół posiedzenia 62-go Rady Miejskiej z dnia 23 Stycznia 1918 r.

emphasized the tri-cultural nature of Łódź in order to promote de-Polonization, the Polish national movement regarded these politics as “separatist” in order to affirm the “Polish” character of Łódź. The movement perceived multiple cultures as sabotaging national solidarity and the formation of a Polish political entity. However, given the considerable ethno-national segments of the minorities, the Polish Circle was forced to tolerate linguistically or culturally particular public spheres exclusively pertinent to the relevant linguistic or cultural minority, and was also forced to relate to it as part of the general public domain. Nevertheless, since the minorities were regarded as a necessary evil, the Polish national movement delegitimized the minorities’ presence in the common public sphere, their separate and particular spheres and their symbolic significance regarding cultural pluralism and civic equality.

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