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Regaining Independence in the Light of the Provincial Yiddish Press. November 1918 on the Pages of the „Lubliner Tugblat" Daily

Odzyskanie niepodległości w świetle prowincjalnej prasy jidysz. Listopad 1918 r. na łamach dziennika „Lubliner Tugblat"

ABSTRACT

The aim of the article is to present the attitude of the provincial Yiddish press (based on the example of the Lublin daily „Lubliner Tugblat") towards regaining independence and forming Polish statehood in November 1918. It discusses both the news content of the title newspaper (focused mainly on local events) and its opinion journalism (concerning almost exclusively national matters) separately. The daily reported on various stages of regaining independence from a strictly Jewish perspective, focusing primarily on matters

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related to security issues, collective anti-Jewish violence trundling through the country, as well as the role and place of the Jewish community in the reborn state. The newspaper's attitude to the events of November 1918 went through three distinct phases: recognition, struggle and disappointment, but the constant determinant of its narration was the conviction, taken from folkist ideology, that Jews constitute a separate nation, pursuing an independent policy, expecting from the newly formed state to ensure equal rights to them and, in the longer term, grant them national and cultural autonomy.

Key words: Regaining independence, Jews, Yiddish press, „Lubliner Tugblat", folkism

STRESZCZENIE

Celem artykułu jest przybliżenie stosunku prowincjonalnej prasy jidysz (na przykładzie lubelskiego dziennika „Lubliner Tugblat") wobec odzyskania niepodległości i kształtowania się polskiej państwowości w listopadzie 1918 r. Omówiono w nim osobno warstwę informacyjną tytułowej gazety (ukierunkowaną głównie na wydarzenia o charakterze lokalnym) oraz jej publicystykę (dotyczącą niemal wyłącznie spraw ogólnopolskich). Dziennik relacjonował poszczególne etapy odzyskiwania niepodległości z perspektywy wybitnie żydowskiej, koncentrując się przede wszystkim na sprawach związanych z kwestiami bezpieczeństwa, przetaczającą się przez kraj kolektywną przemocą antyżydowską, a także rolą i miejscem społeczności żydowskiej w odrodzonym państwie. Stosunek gazety do wydarzeń z listopada 1918 r. przeszedł trzy wyraźne fazy: rozpoznania, walki i rozczarowania, jednak stałym wyznacznikiem jej narracji było zaczerpnięte z ideologii folkistowskiej przekonanie, że Żydzi stanowią odrębny, realizujący samodzielną politykę naród, oczekujący od nowopowstałego państwa zapewnienia mu równych praw, a w dalszej perspektywie przyznania autonomii narodowo-kulturalnej.

Słowa kluczowe: Odzyskanie niepodległości, Żydzi, prasa jidysz, „Lubliner Tugblat", folkizm

Few studies have been dedicated so far to research the attitudes of Polish Jews towards the process of regaining independence by Poland in the autumn of 1918[1]. The issue has most frequently been regarded in general context and treated as a part of studies encompassing a longer-time perspective dedicated to Polish-Jewish relations[2]. Some authors, especially in the mid-war period, would to a greater or lesser degree fall under the influence of one of the two extreme visions of Jew's attitude towards a newly forming state – the black one (emphasizing their resentment motivated by various factors) and

[1] See: T. Schramm, *Żydzi wobec odradzania się państwowości polskiej*, w: *Przełomy w historii. Przełomy w historii. XVI Powszechny Zjazd Historyków Polskich, Wrocław 15–18 września 1999 roku. Pamiętnik*, t. 2, red. K. Ruchniewicz, J. Tyszkiewicz, W. Wrzesiński, Toruń 2000, s. 230–264; K. Zieliński, *Żydzi polscy a niepodległość – nadzieje i obawy*, „Res Historica" 2006, 22, s. 195–210.

[2] See: F. Golczewski, *Polnisch-Jüdische Beziehungen 1881–1922. Eine Studie zur Geschichte des Antisemitismus in Osteuropa*, Wiesbaden 1981.

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the white one (accentuating unconditional commitment to Poland, as well as participation of Jewish community representatives in national liberation fights)[3]. Although research on the problem has progressed slightly within the last few years and it has even started to be analysed with regard to various viewpoints (e.g., the Jewish left, or Jewish feminist circles[4]), so far, however, no one has paid deeper interest to the perspective characteristic of the Jewish province[5].

The press has also been an infrequent object of interest to authors investigating the problem of Jewish attitudes towards the newly formed state. Even if such studies had been undertaken, then researchers rather chose Polish press[6] or Jewish press in the Polish language[7] for their analyses. However, one should carry in mind – as Anna Landau-Czajka rightly points out – that the latter, in fear of reaction on the Polish part, was often burdened with a specific self-censorship, and its content, aimed mainly at acculturated reader strongly connected with Polishness – was characterised by vast restraint and on certain planes could present a deformed vision of reality[8]. It seems that far more representative of the actual Jewish emotions and attitudes of those times was the press issued in the Yiddish language which – what should be clearly emphasized – was still the basic means of communication within the Jewish community in Poland.

The main research problem of this article is an attempt to find an answer to the question of how provincial Jewish press in Yiddish reported and commented on the process of forming Polish statehood *in statu nascendi* – at the moment of its birth. For this purpose, I decided to conduct quantitative and qualitative analysis of the content of the Lublin

[3] A. Landau-Czajka, *Polska to nie oni. Polska i Polacy w polskojęzycznej prasie żydowskiej II Rzeczypospolitej*, Warszawa 2015, s. 68.

[4] A. Grabski, P. Grudka, *Polska i żydowska lewica wobec odzyskania przez Polskę niepodległości w 1918 roku*, w: *Żydzi i Polacy w okresie walk o niepodległość 1914–1920. Materiały z sesji towarzyszącej wystawie „Żyd, Polak, legionista 1914–1920" w Muzeum Historii Żydów Polskich*, red. H. Węgrzynek, Warszawa 2015, s. 115–133; J. Lisek, *„Tu, na tym skrzyżowaniu historii ludzkości zaczyna się rola kobiety". Polska niepodległość a działalność żydowskich feministek i poetek jidysz*, „Teksty Drugie" 2019, 3, s. 208–225.

[5] See: W. Mełamed, *Żydzi lwowscy wobec problemu niepodległości Polski (1918–1928)*, w: *Niepodległość Polski w 1918 roku a procesy państwowotwórcze w Europie Środkowo-Wschodniej*, red. Z. Mańkowski, Lublin 1996, s. 133–154.

[6] M. Mendyka, *Żydzi a niepodległość według przemyskiej prasy doby I wojny światowej*, w: *Prowincja galicyjska wokół I wojny światowej. Konteksty, porównania, przykłady*, red. T. Pudłocki, A.S. Więch, Przemyśl 2014, s. 53–67.

[7] A. Landau-Czajka, *Odrodzona Polska czy odrodzona ojczyzna? Odzyskanie niepodległości w świetle polskojęzycznej prasy żydowskiej 1918–1920*, „Dzieje Najnowsze" 2011, 43, 3, s. 61–80.

[8] *Ibidem*, s. 64.

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daily „Lubliner Tugblat", focusing on its issues published in November 1918. The news content (dedicated mainly to local issues) and opinion journalism (concerning almost solely nationwide problems in Poland) were analysed separately. Some aspects characteristic of the *Tugblat*'s content were compared with the narration of Polish newspapers issued at that time in Lublin, including „Ziemia Lubelska" and „Głos Lubelski".

The selection of „Lubliner Tugblat" as the daily newspaper most representative of the totality of the provincial press in Yiddish in the discussed period was determined by two factors. The newspaper, advertising itself as „the first Jewish daily in the territory of Austro-Hungarian occupation", did not practically have any competition from other Yiddish periodicals in the area[9]. Other daily newspapers issued in the Jewish language under German occupation in Galicia or in the territory of the former Russian partition came out almost exclusively in big cities (Warsaw, Łódź, Vilnius). In the case of few newspapers that appeared in smaller centres, their issues either did not survive at all, or were preserved only selectively, without the issues of the autumn of 1918 (this relates to e.g., „Czenstochower Tageblat" [Częstochowa Daily])[10]. It is for these reasons that „Lubliner Tugblat" remains the only provincial daily newspaper issued in the territory of the Polish lands whose majority of releases survived until the contemporary times and is available for researchers[11].

The first issue of the periodical – coming out later throughout the 20-year mid-war period – appeared on 15th January 1918, and the position of its head editor was taken by a book merchant and renowned Lublin regionalist Shlomo Borukh Nisenbaum[12]. Although the newspaper declared itself as an apolitical organ and was not formally connected with any political party, it had a clear inclination towards Jewish national concepts, including folkism respectively. Several members of the

[9] *Es vert ongenumen dos abonament oyf der ershter yidisher teglikher tsaytung in der estraykhisher okupatsye*, „Lubliner Tugblat" [hereinafter: „LT"] 15 I 1918, nr 1.

[10] See: Y. Sheyntukh, *Reshime fun tsaytungen un tsaytszriftn aroysgegebn oyf yidish in Poyln tsvishn bayde velt milkhomes*, Jerusalem 1986, passim.

[11] The only institution in the world which holds the issues of the newspaper from that year in its collection is YIVO Institute for Jewish Research in New York. Unfortunately, the complete set of issues from November 1918 was not preserved. 16 out of 24 issues from this month are available, so precisely two thirds of the whole (including – what is significant – all the weekend issues featuring extended opinion articles). However, the condition of the preserved issues is not the best – parts of the text are missing, and on some pages the font is badly printed or faded, what often considerably hinders deciphering particular articles.

[12] E. Horovitz, *„Lubliner Tugblat"*, w: *Di yidishe prese vos iz geven*, red. D. Flinker, M. Tsanin, Sz. Rozenfeld, Tel Aviv 1975, s. 346–347; A. Kopciowski, *Wos hert zich in der prowinc? Prasa żydowska na Lubelszczyźnie i jej największy dziennik „Lubliner Tugblat"*, Lublin 2015, s. 213–216.

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enterprise issuing the daily were active members of the Jewish People's Party, while its leading publicist Shaul Itskhok Stupnicki belonged to the bunch of the main theorists of folkist ideology[13]. The daily defined the circle of its readers quite broadly, endeavouring, however, in the first place to reach – as they put it – „Jewish masses", that is, the circles neglected and marginalised until then by neo-assimilative cultural elites ruling over the local Jewish community[14].

The newspaper came out six days per week except for Saturdays and Jewish holidays. The capacity of the working day issue was four pages, and of the weekend edition (Friday) – eight. Its daily circulation amounted to 4,000, thus being the largest of all Lublin newspapers at that time[15].

Although in the autumn of 1918 *Tugblat* had been in circulation for less than ten months, its founders managed to work out a clear and coherent form of communication with the readers. Bearing in mind that the newspaper is the only informative medium for many Jewish readers using the Yiddish language exclusively, they tried to provide them with a relatively broad and complete image of reality. Therefore, they reported on almost every most important news from the world, the country, the region and the city. One of the main news items present on the *Tugblat*'s pages in November 1918 was the issue connected with the formation of the independent country. Even though it had never appeared in the introductory article (most of them concerned international affairs), it still was the leading topic of several special full-page columns featured in the newspaper in the first half of the month. On the provincial level it related, among others, demilitarising of the soldiers of the occupational armies, regaining public objects by Poles, forming the new administration, and on the central level – negotiations between the main political forces in the country, programmes of the newly forming governments (Daszyński's, Moraczewski's), as well as Józef Piłsudki's further political moves[16].

Construction of this sort of news was factual in nature and generally deprived of any emotional character. In contrast with the majority of the

[13] *Stupnicki Shaul Itskhok*, w: *Leksikon fun der nayer yidisher literatur*, red. E. Oyerbakh, I. Kharlash, M. Shtarkman, t. 6, New York 1965, s. 390.

[14] A. Kopciowski, *Inteligencja żydowska na łamach prowincjonalnej prasy jidysz na przykładzie „Lubliner Tugblat" (1918–1939)*, w: *Elita narodu czy biurokratyczna kasta? Problematyka inteligencji na łamach prasy w Polsce od końca XIX stulecia do 1939 roku*, red. E. Maj, M. Wichmanowski, Lublin 2012, s. 149.

[15] *Ibidem*, s. 223, 287.

[16] *Der gang fun di geshenishen in Lublin*, „LT" 6 XI 1918, nr 229; *Tsum melukhe-krizis in Poylen*, „LT" 6 XI 1918, nr 229; *Proklamirung fun a folks-republik in Poylen*, „LT" 8 XI 1918, nr 231; *Di politishe lage*, „LT" 13 XI 1918, nr 235; *Program fun di poylishe regirung*, „LT" 22 XI 1918, nr 243.

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Polish newspapers circulated in Lublin, whose narration was oversaturated with patriotic mood and the joy of nascent independence, the tone of the news related by *Tugblat* was rather careful and reserved[17]. One could often gain an impression that the daily was distancing itself from the described events, was standing slightly aside attentively anticipating further course of events. Such reserve can be observed even if only in the aforementioned news columns, where they avoided direct national and independence rhetoric, using such terms as: *revolutsye* (revolution), *iberkerenish* (overthrow), *gang fun geshenishen* (course of events), or even *melukhe-krizis* (crisis of the state).

The daily's content, especially in the local context, was quite detailed. It was characterised by a certain dose of pragmatism and prosaism, it reported, for example, on numerous manifestations of everyday life, which escaped Polish titles in their patriotic exultation. By the end of the first week of November, the columns describing the course of the „overthrow" aside the news concerning taking over the power from the hands of the partitioner also featured the news concerning illicit trade conducted by Austro-Hungarian soldiers who in the side streets sold or exchanged military equipment for food (the newspaper even mentioned an informal price list in operation during such transactions). The inhabitants were also given a number of practical tips, e.g., how the rail, post offices and telegraph functioned[18].

In principle, the only subject area almost absolutely absent from the *Tugblat*'s pages were the fights for the borders of the newly forming state, so, precisely the topic that – especially in the second half of the month – to some extent dominated the Polish press narration (it was with the use of such texts that the aforementioned patriotic discourse manifested itself)[19]. Occasional reports about the formation of the Polish army troops or fighting in Eastern Galicia were mostly abridged and devoid of national-bent reprints from other newspapers, some of which brought to the front issues totally different from the majority of those present in the Polish titles, e.g., workers' protests against „Polish imperialism"[20].

Thus defined nationality profile of the reader also determined the hierarchy of the reported news and meant that a large part of it concerned

[17] *Wielki dzień w Lublinie*, „Głos Lubelski" 3 XI 1918, nr 303; *Ku wyzwoleniu*, „Ziemia Lubelska" [hereinafter: „ZL"] 5 XI 1918, nr 534.

[18] *Di groyse iberkerenish in Lublin*, „LT" 4 XI 1918, nr 227.

[19] See: *O Warszawę, Poznań i Lwów*, „ZL" 5 XI 1918, nr 534; *Bohaterscy obrońcy Lwowa wierzą, że Polska ich nie opuści*, „ZL" 11 XI 1918, nr 543; *Przeciw gwałtom hajdamackim*, „ZL" 16 XI 1918, nr 553.

[20] *Poylish militer*, „LT" 6 XI 1918, nr 229; *Lemberg in di hend fun Polyaken*, „LT" 20 XI 1918, nr 241; *Poylishe arbayter vegen kamf in Lemberg*, „LT" 20 XI 1918, nr 241.

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Jewish matters. Extensive and detailed news reports were provided on what Polish newspapers most often ignored, barely signalled, or presented from a different perspective, frequently unfavourable for Jews. In the first days of November, several texts described the establishment of the Jewish Soldier Council in Lublin which represented the militaries serving in the local Austro-Hungarian garrison. In addition to a precise account of the founding meeting, they focused on presenting the council's position towards the rapidly changing situation. As the daily wrote, Jewish soldiers from various parts of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy complained that they were forced to swear allegiance to Polish authorities, and threatened with various consequences if they refused, including, for instance, withholding food rations. Moreover, the council proclaimed neutrality in the Polish-Ukrainian conflict, declared its readiness to organize self-defense units in consultation with the local Jewish population, and finally expressed solidarity with the standpoint of Jewish national councils in Vienna, Lviv, and Prague, demanding that Jews be granted national autonomy. In the resolution passed during the meeting it was stated that the assembled people expected the future democratic government to recognize Jews as a separate nation, although they were at the same time aware that in the new Poland they would also be forced to „an even more intense struggle for their rights"[21].

Jewish issues were also tried to be included when describing the process of taking over power and forming the independent state. When reporting on the „revolution" in Warsaw or the „course of events in Lublin", information was provided, for example, about the situation in districts inhabited by Jews, the activity of local religious communities, or the activity of Jewish political forces and trade organizations[22].

There is no doubt, however, that the main subject areas of the newspaper's interest were issues related to the Jews' security status, aimed harassment against them. and the wave of anti-Semitic violence trundling through the country. As much as 70% of all the news on Jewish topics was devoted to these matters, which resulted in their dominance of *Tugblat*'s news content, especially clearly noticeable in the local news reports. Situations and events of this kind reported by the journal can be divided into two categories – potential threats and actual acts of violence. The former resulted from the fear of the new reality and the turmoil typical of the transition period. Disorder in the public sphere was seen as

[21] *Zikh gegrindet a yidisher soldaten-rat in Lublin*, „LT" 3 XI 1918, nr 226; *A yidishe soldaten-rat in Lublin*, „LT" 3 XI 1918, nr 226.

[22] *Der gang*; *Di geshenishen in Varshe*, „LT" 18 XI 1918, nr 239.

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a risk factor, fearing that chaotic and uncontrollable actions of the crowd could take a negative turn for Jews. This fear can be seen, for example, in the content of the columns describing the process of taking over power in Lublin, where all manifestations of destabilization of order in the city were emphasized. It was written in an alarmist tone that on Sunday morning on November 3, „Polish armed civilians" opened the prison gates and released all detainees, including „thieves, bandits and murderers" who, having disarmed the guards, scattered around the city with weapons in their hands[23]. The newspaper was also concerned about the flow of weapons from the occupation forces into civilian hands. In a blurb entitled *Forearming in the Country*, for example, it wrote about „huge masses of soldiers of foreign nationalities" who went from the provinces towards Lublin and got rid of their weapons on the way – throwing them away or selling them to peasants[24]. Right next to it, there is an account of the „interception by Polish legionnaires, armed civilians and students of senior secondary school classes" of two carriages from Vienna loaded with arms, which specified in detail how many and what kind of weapons „fell into the hands of the Poles"[25].

The scale of the threat was intensified by the publications of rumours circulating among the Lublin Jews by the newspaper. In issue from November 3, for example, there was an extensive article with a disturbing title *They Are Having the Knives Ready.* It was reported that two young Christians had ordered from Fishel Gorfinkiel's shop at 25 Nowa Street twenty „huge knives". Having received the promise of the goods' delivery in two days, both contractors went to a nearby pub, where, already considerably drunk, they were to threaten loudly that they would „slaughter all Jews" soon[26]. The blurb featured in the following issue indicated that the situation described on the previous day was only „a rumour repeated by word of mouth"[27].

Much more often than passing on unverified and false information, the daily reported on the actual incidents of persecution, the accounts of which had often been provided – in person or by correspondence – by their direct witnesses, including local correspondents of the newspaper.

Readers were informed about various manifestations of harassment, of which relatively the mildest, because not related to physical violence, forms were various types of exclusion, social ostracism or limitation of

[23] *Di groyse.*
[24] *Di derfer bevofenen zikh*, „LT" 4 XI 1918, nr 227.
[25] *Di groyse.*
[26] *Men grayt messers?*, „LT" 3 XI 1918, nr 226.
[27] *Di mayse mit di messers*, „LT" 4 XI 1918, nr 227.

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civil rights. Exactly in the middle of the month it was reported that the youth of the senior classes of the Staszic Middle School and Commercial Middle School in Lublin had passed a special resolution demanding the removal of their Jewish colleagues from the lists of students for – as it was stated – „anti-Polish attitude". As a result of this proclamation, the Jewish students of these schools were to be forcibly removed from them and sent home[28]. Five days later, in an article entitled *Kromie Yevrieyev* [Except for Jews], it was reported that, as a result of commissar order of the Provisional Government in Lubartów, only the people who would present a baptism certificate during the interview could join the people's militia in that city[29]. The November 26 issue contains a copy of the letter sent to the editorial office by the newspaper's Chełm correspondent. The government commissioner for the local district announced in it to the board of the Jewish community in Chełm that before the planned elections to the city council he had decided „in agreement with the Polish political forces" to divide all voters into four curias, including „intelligentsia, workers, the rest of the inhabitants and Jews", assigning this last group only a quarter of the seats[30].

The remaining texts informed about harassment of Jews traveling by rail (e.g., dragging them out of the trains and forcing them to perform humiliating physical work at the train station in Dęblin), unlawful detentions by monitors (e.g., in Radzyń Podlaski, eleven representatives of the local Jewish community were imprisoned without giving any reason), or financial levies imposed on entire *kehiles* (e.g., a contribution of six million kroner which, after recapturing Przemyśl from Ukrainian hands, the military authorities tried to collect from the local Jews as a „guarantee of loyalty")[31].

In the light of the above information, the tone of the article published in the journal at the end of the month, in which the aforementioned Chełm correspondent wrote about the forced conscription started in that poviat of all men aged 19–21, including Jews, should come as no surprise. Citing a number of examples of Polish soldiers' hostile behaviour towards Jews, the author going by the pseudonym Ben-Betsalel observed that „there is a strong indignation among the Jews of Chełm, because [...] at every step

[28] *Yiden veren aroys gevorfen*, „LT" 15 XI 1918, nr 237.

[29] *„Kromie Yevrieyev"*, „LT" 20 XI 1918, nr 241.

[30] *Dokumenten fun der nayer tsajt*, „LT" 26 XI 1918, nr 246.

[31] *Geshlogen un baroybt Yiden oyfn vokzal*, „LT" 18 XI 1918, nr 239; *Genumen zakladnikes in Radzin*, „LT" 20 XI 1918, nr 241; *6 milion kron fun di Yiden in Pshemishl*, „LT" 20 XI 1918, nr 241; *Obgeshaft di kontributsye fun di pshemishler Yidn*, „LT" 22 XI 1918, nr 243; *Antisemitishe hetse in Demblin*, „LT" 22 XI 1918, nr 243.

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they are discriminated against, harassed and insulted, and yet they are now forcing this 'foreign element' to provide soldiers for the Polish army"[32].

The vast majority of articles dealing with various types of acts of physical violence against Jews were characterized by a high degree of detail, and the newspaper tried to provide the readers with all the information it could obtain. The accuracy and reliability of the description most often depended on the nature of the source and the location of the reported events (for instance, all the manifestations of aggression that occurred in Lublin and its vicinity were presented quite meticulously). An example of such a mode of reporting was the daily's reaction to the events of November 17, when, under the guise of „shooting by Jews" at a people's militia patrol, police forces operating in the area of the Lublin Old Town opened fire at the Jewish quarter, and then proceeded to conduct wide-scale brutal searches for weapons allegedly hidden by Jews. The very next day, the journal contained extensive accounts of these events, which in several subsequent issues took the form of a regular, large column entitled *How the Jewish population is being robbed*. Reports of victims showing up at the editorial office were published (with their personal details and addresses), which demonstrated a list of the wrongs suffered (including beatings, death threats, robberies, arrests)[33]. Quite quickly, the newspaper also managed to unravel the circumstances of the shooting. It turned out that the shots attributed to the Jews had actually been fired by the guards from the prison in the Castle towering over the Jewish district, who were shooting „for fun" at a certain Leibl Blekhenmakher repairing the roof of one of the houses in Zamkowa Street[34].

The daily also attempted to report in a similar, detailed manner on all manifestations of collective anti-Jewish violence. As far as possible, it provided information about its causes, perpetrators, course, duration, as well as its consequences – on the number of wounded, killed, and about material losses. Sometimes the reactions of the attacked communities were also described (e.g., the mass escape of Jews from Rozwadów or the initiation of Jewish self-defense in Tarnów), or a collection of goods for the victims was launched as well (e.g., after the local peasants plundered Żmigród near Jasło)[35].

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[32] Ben-Betsalel, *A tswangs-priziv in khelemer-krayz*, „LT" 27 XI 1918, nr 247.

[33] *Geshlogen Yiden un tsugenumen skhoyre*, „LT" 18 XI 1918, nr 239; *Vi azoy di yidishe befelkerung vert beroybt*, cz. 2, „LT" 20 XI 1918, nr 241; *Vi azoy di yidishe befelkerung vert beroybt*, cz. 3, „LT" 22 XI 1918, nr 243.

[34] *Di nekhtigen shiserayen in shtodt*, „LT" 18 XI 1918, nr 239.

[35] *A pogrom oyf Yiden in Lubloml*, „LT" 10 XI 1918, nr 232; *Pogromen oyf Yiden in Galitsye*, „LT" 12 XI 1918, nr 234; *A nayer pogrom in Rozwadow*, „LT" 15 XI 1918, nr 237; *A ruf nokh hilf*,

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It is not entirely clear what criteria were used to define some of the reported events as pogroms. It seems that it was mainly decided by the authors of the articles, basing on their own judgment. This was highly subjective and depended primarily on the scale and consequences of individual cases – those considered as incidents of lesser importance (not resulting in casualties and significant damage) were called excesses (*ekstsesen*), unrests (*unruen*), and brawls (*avantures*), or anti-Semitic larks (*antisemitishe hetses*)[36]. The use of a detailed description, often based on the accounts of particular individual witnesses, was in turn a device aimed at increasing the credibility of the provided information. This, however, in some cases was unfortunately debatable. The newspaper would sometimes present a rather one-sided narration, focused solely on the anti-Semitic context and seeming not to notice other determinants of some incidents. This concerned, for example, an account bringing the course of the „terrible pogrom" in Włodawa closer to the reader. It extensively describes the attack on the city by „Polish legionnaires" arriving from Chełm, who first raked the village with machine guns, then fought a battle with „several dozen Jewish militiamen" defending it, and then carried out mass robberies and arrests among the Jewish population. Not even a word was mentioned that the background of the fights for Włodawa was primarily political (and not ethnic) and that they were connected with the takeover of power in this town by the so-called „Red Guard" and then recapturing it by the regular army. The content of the article, however, was constructed in such a way that it unequivocally implied that the whole case concerned only Jews – according to the newspaper, all the fatalities (six people), as well as all the robbed and the arrested came from this ethnic group. The mention that two days after the riots had ended, a contribution of 200,000 roubles was imposed on the Jewish community of the town also served to emphasize the ethnic context of the riots[37].

Unfortunately, it is not known whether such one-sidedness of the account and the over-exaggeration of some facts encountered here and there were intentional in character (elements of persuasive communication) and served to deliberately doctor reality (creation of anti-Jewish violence as an emotional threat motive), or whether it rather resulted from the limited possibilities of verification of the information published in the journal. There is no indication that the newspaper tried to carry out such

„LT" 26 XI 1918, nr 246; *Shreklikhe pogromen oyf Yiden in Galitsyen*, „LT" 29 XII 1918, nr 249.

[36] See: *Tsu di ekstsesen gegen Yiden in Varshe*, „LT" 4 XI 1918, nr 227.

[37] Ben-Betsalel, *A shreklikher pogrom in Vlodave*, „LT" 26 XI 1918, nr 246. See: J. Danielewicz, *Walki klasowe i narodowo-wyzwoleńcze w Polsce w latach 1918–1923*, „Acta Universitatis Nicolai Copernici. Historia" 1978, 14, s. 61.

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a process – the news was simply printed or reprinted in the form in which it was received from news agencies, other magazines, reports of witnesses, or contributors.

When specifying who the attackers were, the newspaper directly stated their nationality (most frequently Polish, occasionally Ukrainian), sometimes also refining their social group (peasants, townspeople, soldiers, legionnaires, etc.). However, in contrast to the Polish press, which most often used evaluative categorization when writing about the perpetrators of violence („dregs", „scum", or „irresponsible element"), rather general quantifiers were used, e.g., „Polish populace" (*poylishe befelkerung*), or „Polish inhabitants" (*poylishe eynvoyner*)[38].

Apart from the alleged traditional xenophobia towards Jews or material benefits, the newspaper virtually did not provide any details about the motivations of the attackers when describing the course of individual acts of violence. These can only be found in a polemic with other press titles, from which we learn, *inter alia*, that „two local anti-Semitic newspapers, „Ziemia Lubelska" and „Głos Lubelski" are conducting a shameless pogrom campaign against Jews", accusing them, among other things, of hatred towards the reborn state manifested in various ways (e.g., anti-Polish war cries chanted at Jewish rallies), harming Poland on the international arena („unfounded" accusations of a wave of anti-Semitic violence), promotion of Bolshevism, and finally, active protests against the Polish army or formations responsible for preserving order (disarming, shooting, etc.)[39].

It is worth mentioning in this context that the issues related to anti-Jewish violence were at that time basically the only plane of contact between *Tugblat* and the Polish press issued in the city. However, this was a one-way communication, limited only to the information published by the Jewish daily concerning anti-Semitic content found at the competition. The latter, however, for unknown reasons, not even once decided to exchange opinions or to react in any manner at all.

The main problems mentioned above present in the daily's news reports also found resonance in its opinion journalism. The newspaper's attitude to current socio-political events, which on the plane of simple news content was sometimes fairly enigmatic and left room for various interpretations, on the plane of opinion journalism was presented in a rather clear manner that would not rise considerable doubts.

[38] See: *Ruch antyżydowski w Kielcach*, „ZL" 19 XI 1918, nr 564.

[39] *Pogrom-provokatsye*, „LT" 18 XI 1918, nr 239; *Antisemitishe agitatsye*, „LT" 18 XI 1918, nr 239; *Der „Glos Lubelski" hoyben-on a nayem kamf*, „LT" 20 XI 1918, nr 241.

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For instance, the daily's standpoint regarding the seizure of power in the country by the Poles was explicitly expressed. In the first days of November, in an article entitled *In The Time of Confusion*, the newspaper using Stupnicki's pen declared, *inter alia*, that Jews „have nothing to do with the present chaos on the streets", do not want to „take anything away from anyone" and are not interested „either in calming, nor in annoying the crowd"[40]. Subsequently, a fairly clear division of the society was made according to nationality (Poles and Jews) and it was stated that each of these separate ethnic groups pursued different goals. The endeavors of the former were aimed at creating their own state, and those of the latter – at granting them security and civil liberties („our only desire is that we should be left in peace and allowed to live as free citizens and Jews"[41]), regardless of whether and to what extent the postulate of the Polish side would be realized. It was then stressed that „although it is difficult to remain calm and cold-blooded at the present moment", it was necessary to „be tranquil in the times of turmoil" and „maintain neutrality in the fight between various factors in the country"[42]. The political program outlined in this way – defined by Stupnicki with a word „closure" (*geshlosenkeyt*) – thus assumed a fairly consistent Jewish separatism and a lack of deeper involvement in the process of shaping Polish statehood.

A kind of breakthrough in the so formulated *désintéressement* with Polish affairs took place with the establishment of the Provisional People's Government of the Republic of Poland in Lublin. The newspaper welcomed this change positively, but apparently did not perceive it in national but in social terms. The establishment of Daszyński's cabinet was presented as a revolution, as a result of which power in the country was passed from the despised Regency Council („a conspiracy of aristocracy, exploiters, priests and anti-Semites") into the hands of the people, represented by the „new overlord"[43]. Its program was welcomed with content, the newspaper underlined, *inter alia*, the overthrow of the monarchy, the „turn towards democracy", the establishment of the republic, as well as its popular (*folkstimlikh*) and progressive character, which to a large extent correlated with the ideas promoted by the folkist movement[44]. The daily also appreciated „the declaration of religious and ethnic equality" and „recognition of Jews as outright citizens", stating, however, that although „our national rights have not yet been clearly

[40] Sh. S.[tupnicki], *In a tsayt fun a mehume*, „LT" 4 XI 1918, nr 227.
[41] *Ibidem*.
[42] *Ibidem*.
[43] Sh. S.[tupnicki], *Der ershter shrit*, „LT" 10 XI 1918, nr 232.
[44] *Ibidem*.

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formulated, we will negotiate and seek agreement with the new master"[45]. It was somewhat naively counting on the new government to arrange its relations with neighbouring countries, assuming that similar forms of government would also be established on their territories and the existing tensions „would be alleviated"[46]. According to the newspaper, „Poland should pursue a peaceful policy with both the East and the West" and „make peace with all neighbours". Only then, as was emphasized, „will it become a people's republic in full measure"[47].

Even though „Lubliner Tugblat" – as it was expressed – „welcomed the new master with all its heart", it did not, however, identify with him in any way. The new government was considered to be the result of „revolutionary aspirations of the Polish masses", of which the Jews, as a separate nation, were not part. Emphasis on this separatism can be found, among others, in congratulations addressed by the journal to „the people of Poland", including the wishes of „happiness in the first step they took and in the first word they uttered"[48].

Starting from the end of the second week of November, the newspaper's opinion journalism entered the stage of verbalizing specific expectations – formulating postulates and presenting its vision of the politics of the reborn state, as well as of the place that the Jewish community should hold in it.

In the first place, the daily questioned the idea of self-determination of nations formulated, *inter alia*, in Wilson's proclamation, claiming that it has bears clear resemblance to utopia, and if misunderstood, it could lead to an increase in nationalisms and bloodshed. The newspaper argued that self-determination based on a territorial basis – especially in Central and Eastern Europe – is impossible due to excessive mixing of nationalities and difficulties in determining the borders separating them, and any violent solutions in this matter will only plunge the world into a constant war. The accusations of implementing this type of policy – both in the internal sphere and in foreign policy as well – were formulated in an unambiguous manner against Poland: „Appetite grows with eating. The nations that have only just freed themselves from a foreign yoke already feel like ruling over others, to appropriate what is not theirs. And when they fail, they think violence is the best solution. So old papers, old bills, authentic and

[45] *Ibidem*.

[46] St.[upnicki], *Lublin un Berlin (tsu di politishe geshenishen fun di letste teg)*, „LT" 12 XI 1918, nr 234.

[47] *Ibidem*.

[48] Sh. S.[tupnicki], *Der ershter.*

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counterfeit, are taken out of the archives. There is talk of historical rights, yet self-determination of nations transforms into their enslavement"[49].

Later in the same article its author (Stupnicki) warned against the dire consequences of such actions. Referring to the example of „the pathetic end of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy", he wrote figuratively that „for the sake of their own stomachs, it should be remembered that those with exaggerated appetites who want to eat a lot and quickly, often later have digestive problems and throw up what with such haste they swallowed"[50]. He also believed that the problem of multi-ethnicity and mixing of many nations on one territory would not be solved by voluntary or forced assimilation postulated by some circles (it was too late for that), but only by the correction of the nations' right to self-determination towards „self-limitation of nations" (*zelbstbeshtrekung*) and „ethnic self-restraint" (*zelbstbehershung*). The result of this change should be „leaving people as they are" and providing them with the opportunity to decide about their own fate independently. In the conclusive paragraph of the discussed article, Stupnicki formulated a demand for granting national autonomy to minorities, *ipso facto* referring to the foundation of folkist political concepts: „Peace will only come when we replace self-determination of nations with 'self-limitation of nations' and when no one will force anyone to do anything. Europe of the future is Europe of national autonomy"[51].

Stupnicki – like Folkspartay – put forward the activities of the Central Council in Ukraine in 1917 as a worth-following example in this field, which granted the largest ethnic groups inhabiting this country broad autonomy consisting in leaving only political and administrative functions to the discretion of the central government and entrusting to the hands of individual ethnic groups all matters related to their social, cultural and economic life. According to Stupnicki, such a system „resolved all ethnic disputes"[52].

Exactly in mid-November, Stupnicki published a column entitled *Our revolution*, in which he had outlined, in the most complete way so far, the main tasks the Jewish community in Poland would have to face at the time

[49] Sh.I. Stupnicki, *Natsionale zelbstbeshtimung*, „LT" 8 XI 1918, nr 231.

[50] *Ibidem*.

[51] *Ibidem*.

[52] *Ibidem*. See: *Di ukrainishe hershaft in mizrekh-Galitsye*, „LT" 26 XI 1918, nr 246; *Oykh in Ukraina hot zikh dos ayz gerirt*, „LT" 29 XII 1918, nr 249; J. Żyndul, *Państwo w państwie? Autonomia narodowo-kulturalna w Europie Środkowowschodniej w XX wieku*, Warszawa 2000, s. 52–59; K. Weiser, *Jewish People, Yiddish Nation. Noah Prylucki and the Folkists in Poland*, Toronto 2011, s. 169–170.

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of the breakthrough. He based it largely on theses formulated by Simon Dubnov, a notable historian, creator of the concept of Jewish autonomism and „the spiritual father" of folkist ideology. In the first part of the text, Stupnicki similarly diagnosed the contemporaneous condition of the Jewish community basing on the analysis of historical process. He noted, *inter alia*, that in the face of the new reality, the Jews „stood completely defenceless and unprepared", which was to be blamed on the political passivity of the popular masses on the one hand, as well as thus resulting weakness and little causative power, and on the other hand, handing the power over the community into the hands of assimilators. Their attitude – manifesting a „faithfully submissive" approach towards the Polish majority, as well as depreciating and rejecting Jewish national values – resulted only in contempt and an increase in anti-Semitic attitudes among Poles who, according to Stupnicki: „do not treat us as people worthy of respect, for they have never seen a proud Jew, aware of his nationality, but only pedlars [*pekl Yidn*] leaning down in bows and assimilated „masters" in topper hats [*tsilinder Yidn*] smiling complaisantly"[53]. Hence, in broad circles of Polish society still prevails a conviction that Jews demand political equality at the most, but not going a step further and granting them national autonomy.

The concept of the latter was presented by Stupnicki precisely according to the models previously outlined by Dubnov. He promoted its cultural (and not territorial or political) dimension, claiming simultaneously that the basic organizational unit of Jewish self-governance around which all matters of socio-cultural nature would concentrate should be a reformed, partially secularized, and based on democratic foundations *kehile*. The task to perform by Jews who perceive their community in national terms should be the struggle for leadership in this institution, which Stupnicki described in the final words of the column as „the main objective of our present revolution"[54].

In the last two weeks of November *Tugblat*'s opinion journalism became dominated by issues related to the wave of anti-Jewish violence trundling through the country. This subject influenced the diagnosis of reality presented by the newspaper to a large extent, it also revised part of the views expressed by it so far concerning Polish-Jewish relations and the place of Jews in the reborn state. The daily, by means of Stupnicki's pen,

[53] Sh.I. Stupnicki, *Undzer revolutsye*, „LT" 15 XI 1918, nr 237.

[54] *Ibidem*. See: S. Dubnov, *Nationalism and History*, Philadelphia 1958, s. 102; J. Żyndul, *op. cit.*, s. 43–45; D.E. Fishman, *Rise of Modern Yiddish Culture*, Pittsburgh 2005, s. 62–68; K. Weiser, *op. cit.*, s. 151–152.

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argued that the source inspiration for physical violence is verbal aggression, which is widespread and organized in character, and points at Jews as at „implacable enemies of Poland"[55]. He then persuaded that inciting national feuds is not only „a crime against Jews, humanity, truth and justice", but also „an offence against Poland, against its honour, image in the world, and who knows, perhaps also against its future". The enemies of the state – in his opinion – are not Jews, but the creators and promoters of anti-Semitic propaganda, who „poison the souls of children, incite folk and dishonour the name of Poland". Despite the alarmist tone of the initial opinion journalism texts devoted to the discussion of this matter, Stupnicki was convinced that the riots would end shortly: „the retrograde forces will lose their power, and the appointed leaders at the head of the state will soon put an end to this savage, dark and criminal craft"[56].

Hope, however, quickly gave way to pessimism and disappointment. The newspaper's opinion journalism moved towards bitter reckonings and seeking those responsible for the eruption of violence. In the first place, such a reckoning was made within their own community, pointing to the Jews themselves as responsible for the success of the anti-Semitic agitation. In the article *Antisemitism – a good deal* it was observed that they constituted a numerous group of the „Jews-devouring' press" recipients. „Every Jew" – it was stated – „considers his duty to read anti-Semitic newspapers, and the more anti-Semitic a title is, the more Jewish readers it has"[57]. Not only is behaviour of this kind a sin against oneself and one's honour, but it also – as the newspaper concluded – makes anti-Jewish propaganda flourish: „anti-Semitism is a good deal, if even the Jews themselves buy it"[58]. They then focused on the actual Polish perpetrators of violence, proving, among other things, that they belonged into a long chain of persecutors who had been oppressing Jews over many centuries. Following in their footsteps, Poland – which „had not been given a chance to free itself from captivity in a noble way" – began a bloody crackdown with an imaginary enemy starting as early as the first days of independence[59]. Referring to religious terminology and comparing Jews to the so-called perpetual daily offering (*korban tamid*)[60], the readers were made familiar with popular anti-Semitic clichés (e.g., the aforementioned myth about the Jews shooting at the

[55] Sh. S.[tupnicki], *Yiden zenen soynim*, „LT" 18 XI 1918, nr 239.
[56] *Ibidem*.
[57] Sh. S.[tupnicki], *Antisemitizm – a gesheft*, „LT" 20 XI 1918, nr 241.
[58] *Ibidem*.
[59] Sh.I. Stupnicki, *Der „korbn-tomed"*, „LT" 29 XI 1918, nr 249.
[60] See: Numbers, 28: 3.

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Polish army), and then, in a bitterly mocking tone, it was shown how unfounded they were:

> 'Jews are shooting!' This cry can be heard from one end to another. The Jews are shooting and… they suffer from it themselves. Every evening, when the shadows of the night begin to envelop the city, they start shooting. And as soon as the first rays of the day appear – they start beating. Jews are shooting, Jews are beating and at the same time the same Jews are walking around with heads caked with blood, with up-beaten sides, in torn clothes...
>
> For the sins of the day they have to repent at night, for the sins of the night – at dawn, and yet new and perpetual victims for the offering are constantly searched for. They are looked for in Kielce, Lublin, Warsaw, thus far as Radzyń and Skarżysko. And, God, I wish I was wrong – they shall be found eventually.
>
> Yes, they will be found, they will find the invisible Jew who is shooting in Warsaw, Lublin, Kielce and all other corners of Poland. They will bring him to trial [...], and later he, beaten up and robbed, will be severely punished. This is what law and justice look like after the great and bloody world war and Wilson's beautiful declarations[61].

As it soon turned out, the fatalistic visions from the ending part of the above quotation were to become reality quite quickly. The news content at the turn of November and December – both in Polish titles and in *Tugblat* – was dominated by the issue of the Lviv pogrom[62]. In line with the assumptions expressed by the Jewish daily, some Polish newspapers unambiguously suggested that those responsible for the bloody riots were the Jews themselves, who due to their own attitude deserved what befell on them, or even carried out the pogrom themselves[63].

Summing up, „Lubliner Tugblat" provided quite detailed information about the events related to the process of forming the independent state in November 1918, quickly reacting to the developing situation and adapting its content accordingly. Local news dominated on the informative plane – from Lublin and its closer as well as more distant provinces, whereas its opinion journalism almost entirely concerned nationwide issues in Poland. Still, the topics on both planes were very much congenial, the daily's attention most often focused on the issues connected with the formation of Polish statehood, Jews' place in this new reality, and anti-Jewish violence. The content concerning these topics was largely consistent, and the daily pursued a clear informative strategy based on the assumption that a Jewish newspaper reader was primarily interested in Jewish matters –

[61] Sh.I. Stupnicki, *Der „korbn-tomed"*.

[62] *Di shreklikhe shkhite in Lemberg*, „LT" 29 XI 1918, nr 249; *Dos groys folks-umglik in Lemberg. 1000 yidishe harugim. 19 yidishe gasen obgebrent*, „LT" 1 XII 1918, nr 250; *Protim vegen Lemberger shkhite*, „LT" 2 XII 1918, nr 251.

[63] *Przeciw antypolskiej robocie Żydów*, „ZL" 28 XI 1918, nr 575; *Tłumienie anarchii i zbrodni w Galicji*, „ZL" 29 XI 1918, nr 577.

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hence the subsequent stages of the changes occurring in the country were presented through the prism of these issues. A constant determinant of the newspaper's narration was also the conviction that Jews constituted a separate nation, which pursued an independent policy in many respects different from the expectations and aspirations of the Polish society, while the issues connected with the latter's aspirations to independence concerned Jews insofar as they were related to the pursuit of their own national interests.

The newspaper's approach to the events of November 1918 went through three distinct phases: of recognition, struggle, and disappointment. In the first of them, the journal adopted the attitude of a careful but impartial observer, distancing itself from the described events and quite restrained in expressing its own opinions. In the second phase expectations and postulates towards the new authorities were formulated, focusing primarily on the equal status of Jews, granting them security, and, in the longer term, granting national and cultural autonomy. The third stage was characterized by growing frustration with, or even fear of the reborn state caused by successive acts of collective anti-Jewish violence.

Contrary to the daily's declarations about its political party impartiality, the political program outlined on the plane of its opinion journalism in many respects coincided with the main guidelines of folkist ideology. However, it is difficult to say to what extent the vision presented by the newspaper was a propaganda with the features of persuasive communication, and to what extent it reflected the actual moods and expectations of the Jewish community. Although in many respects *Tugblat*'s content was similar to the narration of the Jewish Polish-language press (especially the one representing the Zionist orientation), it seems that some of the postulates and demands put forward by the Lublin daily went much further and were formulated in a sharper and more uncompromising tone. In order to correctly position the significance, representativeness and impact of *Tugblat* on the map of the Jewish press of this period, a broader comparative perspective is needed, including, above all, further research on the attitudes represented and propagated by other Jewish periodicals published in Yiddish by political followers of trends other than the folkist movement. This is especially true of the most widely read and opinion-forming dailies published in large Polish cities, such as Warsaw, Łódź and Vilnius.

(translated by Zuzanna Gawrońska)

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