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1912-1914**

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To borrow from the Author's words in his application to the Council, "*... problems related to Poland's emerging civil society at the beginning of the 20th century are considered relevant to the problems of Poland's emerging civil society in the 1980s and 1990s ... many of the complex phenomena which accompanied the birth of modern Poland continue to play themselves out in the present, suggesting long-term processes that are far from complete.*" They have their counterparts in other nations in the area.



# BOYCOTT! THE POLITICS OF ANTI-SEMITISM IN POLAND, 1912-1914<sup>2</sup>

ROBERT E. BLOBAUM

## Abstract

The birth of modern Polish politics before World War I was marked, among other things, by the emergence of a new and essentially political anti-Semitism. After several decades of rapid ideological and socioeconomic evolution, the new politics of anti-Semitism loudly announced its appearance in 1912 in the form of a nationalist-led Christian boycott of Jews in Warsaw. Despite its relative failure in economic terms, the boycott opened up a permanent place for anti-Semitism in modern Polish political culture which has survived the Jewish presence in Poland by more than fifty years.

This paper examines the question of who participated in the boycott and who didn't, the extent to which it spread from Warsaw, the material losses sustained (not only by boycotted Jews, but also by boycotting Christians), the nature of Jewish response, as well as the reasons for the sudden end of the boycott in 1914.

More importantly, the boycott is analyzed within the context of a rapidly changing economy and society. The failure of liberalism in Poland to strike deep roots, despite (and because of) socioeconomic modernization, is of utmost significance. Not only did liberalism's failure pave the way for an ever increasingly frustrated national movement to propose its own "solutions" to the problems of "modernity" (including the "Jewish Question"), the abandonment of liberal and "progressive" values during the boycott assisted in delaying and distorting the development of a civil society in Poland for decades to come.

## Introduction

The birth of "modern" politics in Poland before WWI followed a familiar European pattern, including the appearance of new mass parties and organizations, the expansion of political constituencies to include traditionally underprivileged groups and women, the proliferation of voluntary associations, and the emergence of a highly politicized and sharply competitive mass circulation press. In Poland, similar to other countries in Central Europe, the age of modern mass

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<sup>2</sup>The author wishes to thank the National Endowment for the Humanities, the National Council for Eurasian and East European Research (formerly the National Council for Soviet and East European Research), and the International Research and Exchanges Board (with funds provided by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and the U.S. Department of State) for their generous support of this project.

politics was also marked by what Carl Schorske in his classic study of Vienna at the end of nineteenth century termed "politics in a new key," a politics which sought to mobilize industrial society's dispossessed and disillusioned in nationalist, separatist, and radical movements, employing a language of anger, hatred, and fear easily understood in the street.<sup>3</sup> Modern political anti-Semitism, the mobilization of long-standing ethno-religious divisions as part of a larger assault on the 19th century liberal bourgeois order, became the most strident note of the "politics in a new key" in Central Europe and ultimately its most tragic.

In the rapidly industrializing urban centers of the Kingdom of Poland, the largest part of partitioned Poland then under Russian rule, the new politics of anti-Semitism, after several decades of ideological and socioeconomic evolution, loudly announced its appearance in 1912 in the form of a nationalist-led Christian boycott of Jews in Warsaw. Spreading from Warsaw to Lodz and other cities, the boycott continued through 1913 and on into early 1914. Although honored more in the breach than in the observance, and with as much if not more violence perpetuated against boycott-breaking Christians as against the targeted Jews, the boycott had far-reaching repercussions for Polish-Jewish relations. Equally important, the boycott opened up a permanent place for the politics of anti-Semitism in modern Polish political culture, a politics that has survived the Jewish presence in Poland by fifty years.

Despite its significance as a harbinger of things to come, the boycott has not received a great deal of attention from historians.<sup>4</sup> Stephen Corrsin has capably analyzed the boycott's most immediate cause, the 1912 elections to the Russian State Duma, as well as the larger issue of Polish-Jewish "coexistence" in bi-ethnic Warsaw, but his treatment of the boycott lacks the same kind of detail and careful documentation accorded other themes.<sup>5</sup> Such documentation is necessary to determine who participated in the boycott (and who didn't), the extent to which it spread from Warsaw, the material losses sustained (not only by boycotted Jews, but also by boycotting Christians), the nature of the Jewish response, as well as the reasons for the sudden end of the boycott in early 1914. The role of the Russian governors of Poland, their initial inactivity and subsequent interventions, is far from immaterial and requires much closer examination.

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<sup>3</sup>Carl E. Schorske, *Fin-de-Siecle Vienna: Culture and Politics* (New York, 1980), 116-180.

<sup>4</sup>The most extensive treatments may be found in Samuel Hirszhorn, *Historia Zydow w Polsce od sejmku czteroletniego do wojny europejskiej (1788-1914)* (Warsaw, 1921), 309-333 and Frank Golczewski, *Polnische-judische Beziehungen: Eine Studie zur Geschichte des Antisemitismus in Osteuropa* (Wiesbaden, 1981), 106-120. In both instances, however, the boycott serves merely as an illustration of deteriorating Polish-Jewish relations, rather than as a separate and specific topic of analysis.

<sup>5</sup>Stephen D. Corrsin, "Polish-Jewish Relations before the First World War: The Case of the State Duma Elections in Warsaw," *Gal-Ed: On the History of the Jews in Poland*, 11(1989), 31-53, "The Jews, the Left, and State Duma Elections in Warsaw in 1912: Selected Sources," *Polin*, IX (1996), 45-54, and *Warsaw Before the First World War: Poles and Jews in the Third City of the Russian Empire, 1880-1914* (Boulder and New York, 1989).

Above all, however, the significance of the boycott needs to be examined within the context of a rapidly changing economy and society. The larger failure of liberalism, not only in Poland but throughout Central Europe, to guide and moderate that change rather than be swept away by it, in turn paved the way for an ever increasingly frustrated national movement to propose its own "solutions" to the problem of "modernity," which among other things was equated with the "Jewish Question." The boycott of 1912-1914 was the first, and unfortunately not the last, of its answers.

### The Setting

By 1914 Warsaw was in the process of becoming a genuine metropolis, with a population close to 900,000. Between 1864 and 1904, Warsaw's resident population trebled, reaching three-quarters of a million inhabitants. Following a period of stagnation due to revolutionary social unrest and economic depression between 1904-1910, the city's rapid growth was renewed, although not as intensively as during the peak period of the last five years of the nineteenth century.<sup>6</sup> Warsaw's economy was more diverse than that of other urban industrial centers in Russian Poland, particularly Lodz. Although the rapid expansion of metallurgical, machine-building, and textile industries drew a number of migrants from villages and shtetls, often from far afield, the artisanal trades, commerce, domestic and personal services, administration and the free professions, and transportation and communications all employed large numbers of Warsaw's "professionally active" population.

In the process of Warsaw's expansion, especially after the turn of the century, the percentage of German and Orthodox (mainly Russian) inhabitants declined relative to Poles and Jews, transforming what had been a multi-ethnic and denominational city into a more decidedly bi-ethnic one. Moreover, the proportion of Jews to Warsaw's total population increased relative to that of the Poles after the turn of the century. Warsaw became Europe's largest Jewish city at about the same time that New York became the world's largest, and for many of the same reasons. Even though by 1914 55% of the population was still Roman Catholic, compared to a Jewish share of 38%, Polish nationalists saw in Jewish growth a calamity for the "Polish capital." They tended to focus on Jewish migrants from Russia, the so-called Litwaks, who more often than their Polish peasant counterparts, arrived with families and children. To be sure there was a greater proportion of Russian-speakers among Warsaw's Jews in 1914 than recorded in the Imperial census of 1897, which was frequently

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<sup>6</sup>For a demographic history of Warsaw, see Maria Nietyksza, Ludnosc Warszawy na przełomie XIX i XX wieku (Warsaw, 1971) as well as her larger study of urbanization in the Kingdom of Poland, Rozwoj miast i aglomeracji miejsko-przemysłowych w Królestwie Polskim, 1865-1914 (Warsaw, 1986).

trotted out as evidence of a "Litwak invasion," but the main sources of growth in the Jewish population were higher fertility and lower mortality rates.<sup>7</sup>

Of course, the expansion of industry and opportunities for employment brought both Poles and Jews to Warsaw. Although "Russian" Poland was hardly a modern industrial society on the eve of World War I, overall industrial growth since its "takeoff" point in the 1870s had been impressive enough, and the value of industrial production already exceeded that of agriculture by the turn of the century. In line with the Central European experience of industrialization, the economic transformative processes occurred over a relatively short period of time and were visited on a social structure which had only recently been modified by peasant emancipation. Viewed over the long-term (in this case, the period 1870-1914) Poland's industrial growth was both rapid and intensive, but it had occurred in unusually violent fits and starts, interrupted by severe industrial crises and deep depressions which especially affected the strategically important textile industry.<sup>8</sup> Two major depressions marked the early twentieth century, from 1900-1903 and again from 1907-1910. In between these two crises, induced by globally adverse economic conditions, industrial production was disrupted by the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-1905 and the Revolution of 1905-1907.

The inability of the industrial economy, under these conditions, to absorb sufficiently the country's demographically exploding population (which had increased from 9.2 to 11.5 million between 1897 and 1907), fed a growing sense of fear and uncertainty. Particularly affected were urban artisans, whether Christians or Jews.<sup>9</sup> Increasingly unable to compete with the factory system, small producers were presented with an ever-decreasing range of alternatives. Many had already directly joined the factory labor force, though in the textile industry cheap labor counted for more than skilled labor and for many artisans, proletarianization meant a decline in social prestige. Others managed to hold onto their shops, especially in the garment industry, by contracting orders from the

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<sup>7</sup>Corrsin, *Warsaw*, 23-33. These trends would be reversed during the interwar years, as Polish growth rates outpaced Jewish, although by then the politics of anti-Semitism had already begun to march to a different and exceedingly less rational drummer. As for the "Litwaks," who came mainly from Belorus and Lithuania, their migration peaked already in the 1890s, and by the second generation and as a consequence of acculturation, they differed little from other Yiddish-speaking "Polish" Jews; see Marian Fuks, *Zydzi w Warszawie: Zycie codzienna, wydarzenia, ludzie* (Poznan, 1992), 257.

<sup>8</sup>At the turn of the century, the textile industry employed over half of the country's factory labor force and accounted for nearly half of the total value of industrial production. For more on Poland's industrialization, see *Uprzemysłowanie ziem polskich w XIX i XX wieku: Studia i materiały*, ed. Irena Pietrzak-Pawlowska (Wroclaw, 1970).

<sup>9</sup>The relative proportions of Christian and Jewish artisans varied widely in Russian Poland, depending on the type of urban environment and the nature of its industrial development. As a consequence of Warsaw's more variegated development, the professional profile of both the Christian and Jewish populations was more differentiated than in provincial centers and smaller towns. Especially east of the Vistula River, which was only indirectly affected by industrialization and where more traditional social-occupational structures remained in place, Jews dominated both "urban" and "rural" artisan trades; see Maria Nietyksza, "Drobno-mieszczanstwo a typy miast w Królestwie Polskim w koncu XIX wieku," in *Drobnomieszczanstwo XIX i XX wieku*, Vol. III, ed. Stefania Kowalska-Glikman (Warsaw, 1992), 9-31.



large textile mills and conglomerates. This was especially true of the relatively less proletarianized Jewish handicraft production. However, cottage industry was always the first to be affected by economic downturns as factories withdrew their orders with the small shops before reducing their own payrolls.

This economic squeeze on small producers thus forms an important social backdrop to the events of 1912-1914. Not surprisingly, given their relative levels of literacy, professional training, and sense of their own qualifications, unappreciated by industrial capitalism, artisans made for politically combustible material, especially in Warsaw, and had already played an important role in the revolutionary events of 1904-1907, the crucible years for the emergence of mass politics in Poland.<sup>10</sup> Having attained nothing from the socialist and revolutionary assault on the emerging industrial order, artisans, craftsmen, and shopkeepers became the main, although not the only audience, for "modern" nationalism, the twentieth century's other voice of radical response to the new world emerging out of rapid social and economic change.

That "modern" nationalism was able to make its loud voice heard throughout Central Europe had much to do with the inability of liberal movements to politically manage the social effects of economic change. Not that this was an easy task, even in Britain and France, but in Central Europe liberal movements tended to abandon their own ship, thus slowing and distorting the development of civil society. In Germany, liberals sold their visions of representative, parliamentary government for fear of social revolution in 1848 and again in the 1870s for a stake in Bismarck's Second Reich, before splintering into politically impotent factions.<sup>11</sup> In Austria, the assault on the liberal order created in the years following the institution of the Dual Monarchy resembled a revolt of sons against fathers.<sup>12</sup> In Hungary, liberal sponsorship came from within the same feudal aristocratic class that supplied its opponents.<sup>13</sup> In all these instances, and that of Poland as well, liberalism's failure in Central Europe to guide the social and economic "progress" and "modernization" which it advocated into politically ameliorated channels left it vulnerable to attack and ultimately to self-negation and defeat. Unfortunately for Central Europe's Jews, liberalism had offered the only hope

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<sup>10</sup>See my Rewolucja: Russian Poland, 1904-1907 (Ithaca and London, 1995), especially the chapter "The Transformation of Political Culture," 188-233.

<sup>11</sup>The story of liberalism's "failure" in Germany has been often told. For the 1848 revolution, Theodore S. Hamerow, Restoration, Revolution, Reaction: Economics and Politics in Germany, 1815-1871 (Princeton, 1958) remains valuable. For the period after the Franco-Prussian War, Peter Pulzer, Germany, 1870-1945: Politics, State Formation, and War (Oxford, 1997) offers one of the more recent perspectives.

<sup>12</sup>All three politicians of "the new key" profiled by Schorske in his previously cited Fin-de-Siecle Vienna, namely, Karl Lueger, Georg von Schonerer, and Theodor Herzl, came from solid liberal middle class backgrounds; see also his chapter in the same volume, "Politics and Patricide in Freud's "Interpretation of Dreams," 181-207.

<sup>13</sup>See especially Andras Gero, Modern Hungarian Society in the Making: The Unfinished Experience (Budapest, 1995).

for their integration into and acceptance by the larger society on the basis of equal rights. The crisis of liberalism, therefore, simultaneously created a crisis for the Jews.

### Liberalism in Poland

Liberalism in Poland, in the form of "Warsaw Positivism" and in contrast to its aforementioned Central European counterparts, never even enjoyed a brief ascendancy, except perhaps as an intellectual movement in the 1870s and 1880s.<sup>14</sup> Given the existence of the Russian government, Polish liberals never had an opportunity to rule in their own house, including and especially at the municipal level. Even if Polish liberalism had been afforded that opportunity, however, it did not have a solid middle class social base that could have shared and supported its optimistic vision of future social and economic progress. The entrepreneurial class in the Kingdom of Poland was, by and large, not ethnically Polish. Much of the Kingdom's industry was foreign-owned, and German, British, French, Belgian, and Italian capital had played an important role in the country's industrialization. Indigenous entrepreneurs, on the other hand, included substantially large numbers of Germans and Jews relative to their proportions in the general population. For this reason, Polish liberalism was never fully comfortable with modern industrialism, peppering its advocacy of capitalism's "ethic" (in the form of "organic work") with a critique of its social consequences. This basic incompatibility of Polish liberalism with the emerging industrial order led to inconsistent and fractious political behavior, especially during the Revolution of 1905, resulting in the movement's marginalization in Polish politics.<sup>15</sup> It would also lead, for our more immediate purposes, to the abandonment of long-standing liberal positions on Jewish assimilation and equal rights in 1912.

Before its abdication, however, Polish liberalism had provided the first bounded definition of the Polish nation, employing the "scientific" sociological and ethnographic categories typical of the era. This closed space permitted the admission of assimilated Jews, and equal rights for Jews were seen by Polish liberals as necessary to their assimilation, a "progressive" development which would bestow "civilization" and all its fruits on the "backward" Yiddish-speaking Jewish caste.<sup>16</sup> In this sense, liberal nationalism was more "integral" (i.e., integrationist) than that of the emerging Polish nationalist movement, which would become popularly known as the "Endecja" by the turn of

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<sup>14</sup>On Warsaw Positivism, see Stanislaus Blejwas, Realism in Polish Politics: Warsaw Positivism and National Survival in Nineteenth Century Poland (New Haven, 1984).

<sup>15</sup>For a more detailed discussion of Polish liberalism's inability to compete in the new arena of mass politics, see Blobaum, Rewolucja, 214-217.

<sup>16</sup>For a discussion of the rise and fall of assimilationism as a solution to the "Jewish Question," see Aleksander Hertz, The Jews in Polish Culture, Richard Lourie, trans. (Evanston, IL, 1988), 143-167.

the century.<sup>17</sup> Unfortunately for Poland's Jews, assimilated or not, it would be the Endecja and its ideological and political leaders who would leave the more consequential mark on the question of who and what constituted the Polish nation, which was part and parcel of their "solution" to the problems arising out of rapidly accelerating social and economic change.

As Brian Porter has pointed out, the Endecja's definition of the Polish nation was considerably more expansive and "utopian" than historians and commentators have granted to a movement traditionally branded as "realistic" and "sober."<sup>18</sup> In the movement's seminal texts which both appeared in 1903, namely, Roman Dmowski's "Thoughts of a Modern Pole" and Zygmunt Balicki's "National Egoism and Ethics," its principal ideologues defined the nation in transcendent terms, existing beyond the limits imposed by history, territory, and the state. Such a definition permitted a great deal of tactical flexibility, on the one hand, and the ability to envision a Poland of the future as one that could conceivably stretch from the Baltic to the Black seas, and therefore include territories which may not even include a Polish minority population, provided the nation required them for its "survival."

Although the Endecja abandoned the strict sociological and ethnographic categories of liberal nationalism (and hence, Lithuanians, Belorussians, and Ukrainians were all "potentially Polish" in the Endecja scheme of things), they did not abandon its "scientific method" entirely. Indeed, Dmowski and Balicki, both middle class university graduates, one in biology, the other in sociology, shared liberalism's "scientific rhetoric." However, in their oedipal-like revolt against Polish liberalism's staid humanitarianism and political impotency, and not unlike many of their contemporaries in other European societies, they found their main "scientific" ally in Social Darwinism. With this tool, they were not only able to exclude Jews, as a separate and "alien" nation, from the Polish national "organism," but eventually to argue that Jews, no less than Germans or Russians, were engaged with Poles in a national struggle for survival, even moreso as this struggle involved control of Poland's cities, its economy, indeed its entire future.

"Modern" Polish nationalism as expressed by the Endecja was therefore, at its intellectual roots and from the very beginning pervasively anti-Semitic. Indeed, modern Polish nationalism cannot be separated from anti-Semitism. Despite later fissures in the Endecja, especially after the 1905 revolution, anti-Semitism remained the bonding element, as evidenced by various competing components of the nationalist movement which joined forces for the boycott of 1912. That much was to be expected. Ultimately, however, it was Polish liberalism's capitulation to anti-Semitism, to

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<sup>17</sup>The popular acronym "Endecja" is taken from the Polish national movement's main political organization, the National Democratic Party, formed in 1897. However, the national movement formed a number of other educational, cultural, and political organizations among artisans, industrial workers, peasants, women, and the clergy, to name a few, all with the aim of mobilizing social support for the movement's political goals.

<sup>18</sup>See Brian A. Porter, "Who Is a Pole and Where is Poland? Territory and Nation in the Rhetoric of Polish National Democracy before 1905," *Slavic Review*, 51, 4(Winter, 1992): 639-653.

modern Polish nationalism's definition of the Jews and their role, that made the boycott a momentous watershed in Polish-Jewish relations, and in the subsequent formation of both Polish and Jewish political cultures.

### Party Politics and Anti-Semitism

The years following the 1905 revolution were difficult ones for all political organizations in Russian Poland. The socialist movement, compromised by its own failures and factionalism, not to mention its ready resort to terror and coercion, was extremely vulnerable to the repressive measures employed by the Russian government. Its ride on the revolutionary tide of 1905, whereby it utilized widespread labor unrest to form mass organizations, was followed by a precipitous post-revolutionary decline. Moreover, the presence of Jews among the leadership of the most significant socialist parties, the Polish Socialist Party (PPS) and the Social Democracy of the Kingdom of Poland and Lithuania (SDKPiL), not to mention the General Jewish Workers Union (better known as the "Bund"), had enabled the Endecja to label the socialist movement as "alien" to the "Polish" body politic and to equate its hostility to socialism with its larger "national" struggle for "Poland."<sup>19</sup>

However, the post-revolutionary period was not kind to the Endecja either. Posing as champions of Polish autonomy within the Russian empire, the Endecja swept the first two elections to the Russian State Duma in 1906 and 1907 and dominated the Kingdom's delegation to the Imperial legislature. Already in the first election, the nationalist leadership played the anti-Semitic card, in this instance not against the socialist parties which had boycotted the elections, but against the liberals of the Progressive Democratic Party who had formed an impromptu alliance with the assimilationist Jewish Electoral Committee, which itself had few ties to the mass of Yiddish-speaking Jews.<sup>20</sup> The Endecja, however, was still capable of dropping its anti-Semitic rhetoric when the occasion suited, as in 1907 when its project for Polish autonomy presented to the Duma included a provision for equal rights for the Jews, primarily in an effort to capture the support of liberal Russian Constitutional Democrats.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup>The PPS actually contained a separate Jewish organization; see Henryk Piasecki, Zydowska organizacja PPS, 1893-1907 (Wrocław, 1978). At the end of 1906, the PPS split into "Revolutionary" and "Left" factions in a dispute over the role of the party's fighting organization and its subordination to the party leadership. Behind this dispute, however, were larger issues relating to the significance of Polish independence in the party program and the party's relationship to the Russian revolutionary movement; see Anna Zarnowska, Geneza rozłamu w Polskiej Partii Socjalistycznej, 1904-1906 (Warsaw, 1965). On the SDKPiL, see Robert Blobaum, Feliks Dzierzynski and the SDKPiL: A Study of the Origins of Polish Communism (Boulder, 1984).

<sup>20</sup>Corrsin, "Polish-Jewish Relations," 37-41.

<sup>21</sup>Zygmunt Lukawski, "Rosyjskie ugrupowanie polityczne wobec sprawy autonomii Królestwa Polskiego w okresie 1905-1907," Zeszyty Naukowe Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego: Prace Historyczne, 9(1962): 154-158. Inside the Kingdom, the conservative Catholic press, reflecting the views of the episcopate, took the Polish Circle to task for its "promotion" of equal rights for Jews; see Przegląd Katolicki, nos. 40(October 3, 1907) and 42(October 17, 1907): 629-630 and 661-662, respectively.

The National Democrats failed to deliver on the promise of autonomy for the Kingdom of Poland, nor did they succeed in persuading the government to lift martial law, which had been imposed in December 1905.<sup>22</sup> Instead, their parliamentary strategies of swing-voting between the Russian government and its opposition were rewarded, following the dissolution of the Second Duma, with Prime Minister Stolypin's new electoral ordinance which drastically reduced the number of seats in the Duma allotted to the Kingdom of Poland from 37 to 12, two of which were reserved for the "Russian" population, including one of Warsaw's two seats.<sup>23</sup> Elections for the remaining "Polish" seats to the Third Duma were met with apathy and disillusionment; in Warsaw only 25% of the eligible voters cast ballots. Nevertheless, the National Democrats continued to dominate the Polish Circle in the Third Duma, which was once again led by Roman Dmowski who had won Warsaw's "Polish" seat.

The National Democrats' misfortunes continued to multiply. Dmowski's lukewarm defense of "Polish" interests in the Duma, part of a strategy of conciliation of the Russian government which the party leadership now viewed as a potential ally against the Germans in the event of war, led to internal splits and defections within the nationalist movement. During the course of the Third Duma from 1907 to 1912, the Polish Circle witnessed in relative silence the government's banning of the Polska Macierz Szkolna, a nationalist-sponsored network of private schools which had emerged from the Revolution, the state's takeover of the privately owned Warsaw-Vienna Railroad, and the separation of a newly created Chelm Province from the Kingdom of Poland. The Polish nationalist movement was thus thrown into crisis, which led to Dmowski's resignation of his Duma seat, not so much in protest of the government's actions, but to stop the bleeding within his own camp.

These developments set the stage for elections to the Fourth Duma in the autumn of 1912, which in Warsaw came to focus on the issue of equal rights for Jews. That Jewish rights became the principal issue resulted from the government's project to introduce municipal self-government, in the form of elected city councils, to the Kingdom of Poland.<sup>24</sup> The extension of municipal self-government to the Kingdom, which had existed in Russia since the Great Reform era, had long been a goal of Polish conservatives and liberals alike and was taken up by the Endecja following the

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<sup>22</sup>As I have argued elsewhere, the government's imposition of martial law at the end of 1905 not only killed all prospects for "Polish" autonomy, this was its very intent. Thus, the issue had been decided well before elections to the First Duma; see Blobaum, Rewolucja, 260-275.

<sup>23</sup>On the Polish Circle's misadventures in the Second Duma, see Zygmunt Lukawski, Kolo Polskie w rosyjskiej dumie panstwowej w latach 1906-1909 (Wroclaw, 1967), 80-123, and Edward Chmielewski, The Polish Question in the Russian State Duma (Knoxville, 1970), 36-38.

<sup>24</sup>The government's project had been introduced before the Duma in 1911. After three years of discussion in which the National Democrats in the Polish Circle clashed with Russian liberals over the "Jewish Question" at the plenary session of the Fourth Duma, the legislation was forwarded to the Council of State, which modified provisions permitting Polish to coexist alongside Russian in the future self-governing urban institutions; see Mieczyslaw Harusewicz, Za carskich czasow i po wyzwoleniu: Jan Harusewicz, Wspomnienia-Dokumenty (London, 1975), 137-139.

defeat of its larger projects for "Polish" autonomy. The government's project, however, foresaw Jewish participation in the future municipal administration relative to their proportion of the urban population, which in Warsaw rivalled that of the Poles.<sup>25</sup> The question of who would "rule" in the "Polish capital" had thus been joined, and became Dmowski's principal issue in his effort to recapture the single Warsaw seat reserved for the combined non-Russian electoral curiae.<sup>26</sup> He was challenged by Jan Kucharzewski, who was supported by a coalition of anti-Dmowski nationalists opposed to Dmowski's policy of conciliating the Russian government.<sup>27</sup>

A decade earlier, Warsaw's Jewish community would have been content to allow the Poles to fight it out among themselves and in the elections to the first three Dumas in 1906 and 1907, did not seriously contest the Poles' perceived "right" to Warsaw's Duma seats. To be sure the assimilationist Jewish Electoral Committee had supported liberal Polish candidates in these elections, but had failed to deliver the Jewish vote on their behalf, thus permitting the National Democrats and Roman Dmowski to represent Warsaw in St. Petersburg. In the intervening period, however, Jews too increasingly began to respond to the tune of "politics in a new key." The Revolution of 1905 gave birth to a Jewish mass circulation press in Warsaw, which similar to its Polish counterpart, led to a veritable explosion in the number of competing titles. The most important Yiddish-language dailies were Haynt and its chief rival, Der Moment. Though not explicitly nationalist, Haynt and Der Moment were not adverse to playing to growing Zionist sentiment in the Jewish community in their competition for subscribers.<sup>28</sup>

The Zionist movement in Warsaw also traces its origins to the revolutionary upheavals, although until the second decade of the twentieth century, it remained relatively weak in comparison

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<sup>25</sup>In 1912, Jews constituted 36% of Warsaw's total population, but 43.3% of its permanent residents; see Joanna Hensel-Liwczycowa, "Platnicy podatku gminnego Warszawskiej Gminy Starozakonnych w latach 1912-1914. Studium statystyczne," in Drobnomieszczaństwo, ed. Kowalska-Glikman, vol. II (Warsaw, 1988), 225-265.

<sup>26</sup>Voting was indirect as voters chose electoral curiae which then selected the delegates from their own ranks. Eligible voters in the general curia consisted of resident adult men who were owners of real estate or businesses; were supervisors or managers in business, paying taxes on "personal industrial occupations"; paid taxes on large apartments, or at least rented apartments "in their own names; or were a member of certain groups of government pensioners. The general curia was thus upper and middle class in composition, which in Warsaw tended to favor Jews over Poles. Adult male workers in large factories and railway workshops chose only three electors to sit among the general curia's eighty; see Corrsin, "The Warsaw State Duma Elections in 1912," 49. The strain in Polish-Jewish relations caused by National Democratic efforts in the Duma to restrict Jewish participation in the new institutions of municipal government was also noted by the Kingdom's chief police officer, General Uthof; see Archiwum Państwowe m. st. Warszawy (APW), Warszawski Wydział Ochrony (WWO) 261.

<sup>27</sup>These included the National Workers Union, the National Peasants Union, the Union of Polish Youth, as well intellectual opponents of Dmowski known as the "Fronde" and the "Secession"; Archiwum Główny Akt Dawnych (AGAD), Pomocnik General-Gubernatora Warszawskiego (PomGGW) 357 and 383. See also Harusewicz, 67-95.

<sup>28</sup>Corrsin, Warsaw, 73-77. According to the Polish Jewish journalist Bernard Singer, Haynt gave prizes in the form of a group trip to Palestine, while Der Moment promised plots in Palestine; see his Moje nalewki (Warsaw, 1959), 161-169. For a larger discussion of the history of Warsaw's Jewish press, see Marian Fuks, Prasa żydowska w Warszawie, 1821-1939 (Warsaw, 1979).

with the movement's principal centers in Lithuania and Ukraine.<sup>29</sup> This was soon to change, beginning in 1911 with the events leading to Beilis ritual murder trial in Kiev which was widely covered in Warsaw's Yiddish-language press and galvanized and temporarily united the Jewish community in a series of public protests.<sup>30</sup> As the "Beilis affair" moved towards its absurd denouement, the question of Jewish "equal rights" in Poland, raised by the proposed municipal legislation, acquired an understandable urgency. Indeed, for many Jews, only the election of a Jewish deputy to Warsaw's Duma seat would ensure a fair hearing for Jewish equality in St. Petersburg. Consequently, the assimilationist Jewish Electoral Committee failed in its promise to deliver Jewish support for the Polish liberal candidacy of Stanislaw Patek, a well known defense attorney and civil rights activist. The subsequent withdrawal of Patek's candidacy would lead the Polish liberal press, represented by the dailies Kurier Warszawski and Kurier Poranny, to join the anti-Dmowski nationalists in support of Kucharzewski as a "supraparty" envoy required by "Polish Warsaw."<sup>31</sup>

Already during the election campaign, which was marked on the Polish side by considerable voter apathy, Dmowski's supporters threatened a boycott of the Jews if their candidate suffered defeat.<sup>32</sup> However, it was Kucharzewski and his supporters who turned Dmowski's threat into reality. Although he roundly defeated Dmowski in Warsaw's Polish districts, Kucharzewski refused to support Jewish equal rights which created a dilemma of the first order for Warsaw's Jewish electors.<sup>33</sup> They agreed, after a good deal of heated debate, to support the candidacy of Eugeniusz Jagiello, a political non-entity from the left-wing of the Polish Socialist Party elected from the

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<sup>29</sup>See Ezra Mendelsohn, *Zionism in Poland: The Formative Years, 1915-1926* (New Haven, 1981), 34. Unfortunately, Mendelsohn neglects the developments of 1911-1914 which would transform Warsaw into the leading center of the Zionist movement.

<sup>30</sup>Mendel Beilis, a Jewish clerk charged with the blood libel murder of a Christian child, awaited trial for more than two years. In Warsaw, the Beilis affair inspired an unprecedented cooperation between the Bund and its left Zionist rivals, which on the first day of the Beilis trial on October 8, 1913, resulted in a series of strikes and protests. Nearly fifty were arrested on charges of "strike agitation" and "disorderly conduct", including four women who attempted to disrupt evening classes at Warsaw University. These classes were attended primarily by Jewish women and represented the first extension of higher education to women in Russian Poland; APW WWO 236 and Zarząd Oberpolicmajstra Warszawskiego (ZOW) 35; AGAD PomGGW 400 and 416.

<sup>31</sup>APW ZOW 21 as well as AGAD PomGGW 357. See also "Do wyborców Polaków!", Kurier Poranny, no. 258 (October 6, 1912): 2.

<sup>32</sup>One National Democratic election leaflet reads: "Countrymen! We swear that if the Jews win the election, we won't buy anything from them! Vote for the list supporting Roman Dmowski. Down with Kurier Warszawski, which serves Jewish interests!"; APW ZOW 21.

<sup>33</sup>Although Corrsin speaks of forty-six Jewish electors in the general curia, police reports noted forty Jewish electors, and forty-three Polish electors, the latter including the three allotted to the workers' curia. Regardless, the apathy and divisions among the Polish electorate gave the Jews the decisive role in selecting Warsaw's non-Russian envoy. See Corrsin, Warsaw, 99-101, and AGAD PomGGW 357.

workers curia who was the only Polish candidate who accepted the idea of equal rights for the Jews.<sup>34</sup> Despite renewed warnings of a boycott emanating from not only the Polish nationalist but also the liberal press, Jagiello was elected from the general curia to represent Warsaw.

### The Boycott

It took little time for the nationalist press to label Jagiello "the Jewish envoy from Warsaw"<sup>35</sup> and proclaim a boycott of the Jews. The boycott was initiated by Gazeta Poranna 2 Grosze (the "Two-Penny Morning Gazette"), a daily aimed at the Polish lower-middle classes which was founded during the course of the election campaign by the pro-Dmowski leadership. Carrying on its masthead the slogan "Swoj do swego po swoje" (Stick to your own kind), Gazeta Poranna would conduct such a vicious anti-Semitic campaign over the next eighteen months that it shocked even Russian officials, who confiscated several of its more offensive issues, fined its editors, and threatened the daily with suspension.<sup>36</sup> This allowed the more "respectable" nationalist press, led by Gazeta Warszawska (the Warsaw Gazette), to take a more moderate and less harshly anti-Semitic tone so as not to offend its targeted readership among the professional and upper middle classes.<sup>37</sup>

This did not prevent, however, the liberal press and especially Kurier Warszawski from loudly proclaiming its support for the boycott. Liberal support of the Endecja's action against the Jews also surprised the authorities, who fined the editors of Kurier Warszawski for an aggressively anti-Semitic article in the wake of the Duma elections, one of the few instances of state action taken against the daily which during its long history prided itself on "legality".<sup>38</sup> This was followed by the decision of the Main Directorate of "Kultura Polska" (Polish Culture), a liberal educational and cultural organization headed by Alexander Swietochowski and one of the presumed beacons of Polish civil society, to expel Jews from its membership. Swietochowski, whose name was synonymous with

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<sup>34</sup>Nationalist candidates were decisively defeated by the socialist bloc composed of the SDKPiL, PPS "Left" and Bund in the workers curia of both Warsaw and Lodz. In Warsaw, the socialists won 88% of the vote, and in Lodz nearly 70%, both of which represented an improvement over their performance in the 1907 Duma elections; see "Wybory w kurji robotniczej," Czerwony Sztandar, no. 189 (October, 1912): 1. However, the inability of the three parties to unite behind the candidacy of the radical sociologist, Ludwik Krzywicki, would allow Jagiello, a metal-turner whose ties to the PPS "Left" were nominal at best, to emerge from obscurity; AGAD PomGGW 357 and 381, APW ZOW 21, and Corrsin, Warsaw, 89-104.

<sup>35</sup>"Niec o panu "posle", Gazeta Poranna 2-grosze, no. 55 (November 16, 1912): 1.

<sup>36</sup>Already in November, 1912, the Warsaw Governor-General instituted a ban on the distribution of anti-Semitic appeals and brochures by Gazeta Poranna 2 grosze; APW ZOW 22. The daily accused Jews of everything from attempting to incite a pogrom to force Russian intervention in the boycott, to responsibility for the "plague of banditism"; see the following front-page articles, "Ulubiona taktyka" (January 8, 1913), "Interwencya" (February 27, 1913), and "Plaga bandytyzmu" (April 27, 1914).

<sup>37</sup>See Zenon Kmiecik, Program polityczny "Glosu Warszawskiego" (1908-1909) i "Gazety Warszawskiej" (1909-1915) (Warsaw, 1980), 192-207.

<sup>38</sup>APW ZOW 22; the offending article appeared under the title "Wytrwamy," Kurier Warszawski, no. 322 (November 20, 1912):2.



"progressive" Warsaw positivism, indeed the entire history of Polish liberalism, had long been engaged in a struggle with the socialist parties over control of the organization. Like the nationalists, who had long condemned socialism as an "alien" and "Jewish" movement, Swietochowski symbolically resigned his presidency over "Kultura" following the Duma elections to force its executive board to take action against the socialists and Jews. There followed a spate of acrimonious resignations, including those of Ludwik Kulczycki and Stanislaw Patek, which practically destroyed the organization.<sup>39</sup>

The boycott also quickly gained the support of the Catholic clergy. In the wake of the Duma elections, several priests in Warsaw called upon their flocks in homilies to boycott the Jews. Some went so far as to label any form of economic interaction with the Jews "a great sin." Still others, though they refrained from openly calling upon Catholics to participate in the boycott, included anti-Semitic references in their homilies. It was also mainly the Catholic clergy who worked to spread the boycott beyond Warsaw and especially into the countryside. This would lead the government to pressure the Roman Catholic episcopate, warning that it would remove offending priests from their parishes if they did not cease and desist in their attempts to incite Poles against Jews, which included accusations of blood libel.<sup>40</sup>

Indeed, only the conservative daily, Kurier Polski (Polish Courier), along with the illegal socialist press opposed the boycott.<sup>41</sup> The latter's position, however, was obscured by its tendency to view the boycott as a struggle between "two nationalisms" involving the Polish and Jewish bourgeoisie. To be sure, Polish socialists took the "progressives" to task for having forgotten "what had separated them from the Endeks," but this was offered more as evidence of Polish liberalism's true "bourgeois" and reactionary colors than of its anti-Semitism. Indeed, the entire anti-Semitic rhetoric of the boycott was considered a mask to hide its main goal of fortifying the nationalist bourgeoisie for its struggle with the socialist movement.<sup>42</sup> In other words, for Polish socialists, the boycott itself was not really their fight, an attitude of relative indifference which would also prevent them from actively supporting their Jewish counterparts in protesting the Beilis trial.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>39</sup>On the struggle over "Kultura", see the reports of police agents contained in AGAD PomGGW 362, 372, 394, and 409.

<sup>40</sup>APW, Warszawski Gubernialny Zarząd Zandarmerii (WGZZ) 3700; APW ZOW 22; AGAD, Kancelaria General-Gubernatora Warszawskiego (KGGW) 6474 and 9138; AGAD PomGGW 357, 390 and 391.

<sup>41</sup>On the attitude of the Kurier Polski and its editor, Ludwik Starzewicz, during the boycott, see Singer, 168.

<sup>42</sup>See the appeal of the PPS-Left, "W sprawie bojkotu ekonomicznego" (undated) contained in APW WGZZ 3656. Naprzód, the organ of the Polish Social Democratic Party in Austrian Galicia which supported the Pilsudski camp's "independence" movement, viewed the boycott as a nationalist maneuver to recover lost supporters; "Listy warszawskie," Naprzód, no. 131 (June 11, 1913):2.

<sup>43</sup>AGAD PomGGW 400 and 416. Even so, the nationalist press led by Gazeta Poranna, accused "International" Social Democracy of pushing part of the workers into strikes in support of Beilis "and tomorrow maybe to the barricades if Jewish interests require it"; see "Solidarnosc zydowska," Gazeta Poranna 2 grosze, no. 287 (October 17, 1913):1.

When all was said and done, however, the boycott consisted mainly of vitriolic anti-Semitic bluster and little else. It certainly did not acquire widespread support among the Polish population of either town or countryside, which greeted the boycott with the same apathy as it had the earlier Duma elections. To be sure, signs were posted on Christian shops, urging customers to "Buy only Among Christians" and "Buy from Your Own Kind." The posting of young ruffians in front of Jewish shops "to persuade" their conationals not to trade with Jews, on the other hand, indicates that participation in the boycott was far from voluntary. Indeed, most of the violence during the course of the boycott, according to police reports, involved Poles attempting to stop other Poles, especially from outlying regions of Warsaw Province, from dealing with Jews.<sup>44</sup> Outside Warsaw, the boycott was virtually ignored in the countryside, despite the Catholic clergy's best efforts to promote it. Industrial workers were similarly apathetic, especially in cities like Lodz, where they were preoccupied with other concerns--namely, the on-going crisis in the textile industry and the need to preserve jobs and income.<sup>45</sup>

In other words, most Poles did not see participation in the boycott to be in their economic self-interest. The Polish cooperatives and financial institutions (mainly in the form of savings and loan associations and credit unions) created during the boycott and joined with existing businesses to form the "Society for the Development of Industry, Trade, and Commerce" may have led to bankruptcies and closings among small Jewish traders and lenders, but by and large their goods and rates were priced higher than that of their Jewish competitors.<sup>46</sup> Meanwhile, the citadels of capitalism in Poland, including those owned and operated by Jewish entrepreneurs, were barely scratched. When Jewish factory-owners began to retaliate by firing Christian workers and when Jewish shops proclaimed a counter-boycott in the fall of 1913, the Polish lower classes joined the poorest elements of the Jews as the principal victims of the conflict.<sup>47</sup>

The deepening of the economic crisis for both Poles and Jews as a consequence of the boycott, and its failure to achieve any of its economic goals, led to a noticeable softening in the tone of the Polish press by the end of 1913 and, by the beginning of the new year, according to official reports, the boycott remained important "only for a relatively small part of Polish society."<sup>48</sup> The Russian government, too, played a role in containing the boycott by pressuring the clergy, restraining the press, and prosecuting shop-owners with "Buy from Your Own" signs for violation of censorship regulations and disrupting commerce. Above all, it did much to prevent the boycott from degenerating into pogroms, although localized disturbances occurred in Parzew (Siedlce Province)

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<sup>44</sup>APW ZOW 22; AGAD PomGGW 391.

<sup>45</sup>AGAD KGGW 6474.

<sup>46</sup>AGAD PomGGW 390.

<sup>47</sup>AGAD PomGGW 391.

<sup>48</sup>AGAD PomGGW 319, APW WWO 263.

and Gostynin County in Warsaw Province.<sup>49</sup> This it did not out of sympathy for the Jews, but out of a fear of major disorders in a strategic region bordering Austria and Germany with whom it would soon be at war. What it could not prevent, however, was the climate of fear that swept over Poland's Jewish community, which now felt more vulnerable than ever, whether in the streets of Warsaw, or nearer the Austrian and German frontiers.<sup>50</sup>

### Consequences of the Boycott

The real significance of the boycott was therefore not economic, but political. The politics of anti-Semitism reunited the Polish nationalist movement behind Dmowski's leadership, where it would remain until the latter's death in the mid-1930s. Polish liberalism, never enjoying genuine popular support, abandoned its "progressive" image, indeed its entire philosophical and intellectual value system, to stay alive in the rough political seas of early twentieth century Poland. In the process, it lost its soul. Polish socialist aloofness, first from the boycott, then from the Beilis trial, presaged its "splendid isolation" in relation to the "Jewish Question" during the interwar period, which would be extended more tragically to Jewish fighters in the Warsaw ghetto during the Holocaust.

Jewish nationalism also received a boost from the boycott. Betrayed by the Polish liberals, assimilationism in Jewish politics was dealt a final, devastating blow. Zionism, which had not positioned itself as a popular political alternative in Warsaw and other Polish cities before 1912, became the principal alternative, in its many variations, as a consequence of the boycott. Within a few short years after World War I, Warsaw indeed became the capital of Zionism in Europe. Its devotees included Jewish members of the Polish socialist parties, disillusioned Jewish liberals, renegade Bundists, all representatives of failed attempts at coexistence, if not integration, in the larger Polish society.

Above all, a precedent had been established. Anti-semitic politics in Poland, like elsewhere in Central Europe, had been played in the new key. It had proved itself successful to those politicians naming the tune, who now became ever more likely to demand a repeat performance. In 1922, Gabriel Narutowicz was elected to the Presidency of the Second Polish Republic with the aid of Jewish and other minority votes. Within weeks of the election of "the candidate of the Jews" (recall Jagiello as the "Jewish envoy from Warsaw), Narutowicz was assassinated by a right-wing nationalist fanatic. However, it was more than just the first freely elected Polish president who had been eliminated, rather it was a major blow aimed at the heart of interwar Poland's brief experiment with

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<sup>49</sup>APW WGZZ 3823 and AGAD PomGGW 390.

<sup>50</sup>In Piotrkow Province, which bordered both Austria and Germany, Jews were panic-stricken by thoughts of a massacre in the event of province's evacuation by Russian troops. Some Jewish families, in the wake of the boycott, had already shipped valuables to relatives in the east in anticipation of the outbreak of international hostilities; AGAD KGGW 6474.

liberal parliamentary democracy. Not surprisingly, in the ensuing crisis, marked by a boycott and other actions against the Jews, liberals were nowhere to be found. In their absence, it is also not surprising that interwar Poland's democratic experiment collapsed a mere four years later.