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Jewish education in post-war Legnica as a component of ethnic policy of the ‘People’s Poland’

SUMMARY

Ethnic policy pursued in Poland i.e. in the years 1944–1989 was characterized by the lack of a uniform approach to dealing with non-Polish residents of the state. Although its main objective was to create a nationally homogeneous society, ethnic fragmentation of the country was allowed at selected times, granting certain privileges to national minorities. Consequently, their education, which is an immanent part of the aforementioned policy, was also subject to significant modifications, among others, in organizational, ideological and programme terms.

The overriding objective of the article was to attempt to characterize education of Jewish minority in Legnica, in ethnic policy terms of the ‘People’s Poland’, including educational policy.

Key words: ethnic policy, Jewish minority, the People’s Poland, education of national minorities, Legnica

Introduction

The most important goal of this article was to attempt to characterize Jewish education in Legnica in the context of ethnic politics of the ‘People’s Poland’¹ (hereinafter referred to as People’s Poland). Placing of the research problem in this location was not accidental, as the city was an important concentration of the Jewish minority in post-war Poland. Moreover, Polish schools (primary and secondary) were some of the longest-serving educational establishments in the country.

The first part of the paper explains the issue of ethnic policy identifying selected objectives, models and its relationship with other scientific categories. In the second part, the actions

¹ ‘People’s Poland’ is an unofficial term, although a commonly used name of the country in the years 1944–1989.

taken by the state authorities towards national minorities in the years of People's Poland are characterised, including those related to the implementation of educational policy. In contrast, the third and fourth (final) excerpts present community of Legnica's Jewish and their education in the years 1945–1949 and 1950–1968.

The following research methods were used: comparative, statistical and historical, among others, using literature criticism and source analysis as exemplary research techniques. Thus, a research hypothesis was put forward, according to which the ethnic policy implemented by the state was not an invariable value, but was subject to significant evolution over the years, including both moments of the implementation of the idea of state homogeneity and acceptance of the national fragmentation of society.

Ethnic policy– preliminary assumptions

The concept of 'ethnic policy', the most widely used category today referring to state policy towards ethnically distinct groups, functions in parallel in the literature with categories such as: 'nationality policy', 'policy towards national and ethnic minorities' and 'minority policy'. The above concepts are close to each other, and the policies: 'ethnic' and 'nationality' –almost identical. However, there are slight differences between them in that the former is usually characterized by the historical aspect of the problem, while the other is contemporary². In addition, the research area of 'ethnic' policy covers a wider range of activities of the state, incorporating three elements: policy towards the titular nation³, national and ethnic minorities, as well as diaspora, while *credo* of the national policy' covers a narrower spectrum of research and focuses mainly on specific policies towards national and ethnic minorities⁴. This article considers, referring to Tomasz Browarek, that 'ethnic policy' will be the 'set of measures adopted and implemented by the state and its authorities to address issues related to the existence and functioning of national and ethnic minorities in a given state'⁵. In the author's opinion, the said actions will be conditioned by six determinants⁶, i.e.: systemic and institutional (e.g. the political system of the state and the system of institutions responsible for conducting ethnic policy); legal (e.g. the domestic legal system and international solutions implemented into it); historical and social (e.g. tradition and historical legacy), ethno demographic and geographical (e.g. nationality structure of the state and size and territorial distribution of minorities); ideological and political (e.g. the issue of national minorities in state political thought) and economic (e.g. ways in which minorities are financed by the state body).

According to Radosław Zenderowski and Jakub Pienkowski, the policy in question may be determined by three distinct goals: 'a) the acceptance of multi-ethnicity and multiculturalism finding expression in the political organisation of the state and in specific policies;

² R. Zenderowski, H. Chałupczak, W. Baluk, *Polityka etniczna: próba teoretycznej konceptualizacji* [w:] *Polityka etniczna współczesnych państw Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej*, red. R. Zenderowski, H. Chałupczak, W. Baluk, Wydawnictwo UMCS, Lublin 2015, s. 26.

³ A titular nation is a nation seeking to establish or proclaim a state and generally constituting a majority within it.

⁴ R. Zenderowski, H. Chałupczak, W. Baluk, *op. cit.*, s. 94 – 95.

⁵ T. Browarek, *Determinanty polityki etnicznej państwa polskiego po 1989 roku*, „Studia Śląskie” 2015, Tom LXXVII, s. 15.

⁶ *Ibidem*, s. 16–32.

b) the exclusion of minorities [...] from the mainstream of social, political and economic life and the prevention of their integration into the titular nation; c) the pursuit of 'ethnic completeness' (from assimilation to physical extermination and exile). This can be summarised by the slogan: Together – Beside each other – Without each other⁷. The above explanation allowed T. Browarek to indicate three different, but often overlapping, models of ethnic policy pursued by the state. These are:

1. Pluralistic – based on group equality, where the state, among other things, financially supports the activities of minorities and allows autonomy and bilingualism for regions dominated by them;

2. Integrative – individual equality of citizens is recognised, the state accepts but does not support the ethnic diversity of society and excludes additional preferences for minority representatives.

3. Segregational – The state condones the national disproportionality of its citizens, prohibits the organisational and institutional activities of minorities and restricts the civil rights of its members⁸.

Ethnic policy of People's Poland

According to the census carried out on 14 February 1946, being at the same time the first and the last census during People's Poland, to include a question on the nationality of respondents, the country was inhabited by 23 928 000 persons. Among them, 20 520 178 were Poles 2 288 300 – Germans, 399 526 – with 'other' nationality, 304.5 thousand – with undetermined affiliation, while 417.4 thousand were undergoing verification action. In the opinion of G. Janusz, the above results should be treated with limited confidence, inter alia due to the massive population migrations taking place in parallel. Moreover, underreporting of non-Polish communities was shown, whose actual numbers may have been even 1.5 million representatives, in addition to the Germans designated for deportation.⁹ In subsequent years, data on the size of minority groups was based solely on estimated information, determined by the Ministry of the Interior [Ministerstwo Spraw Wewnętrznych] (hereinafter referred to as MSW). According to the estimated information, in 1960 the country was inhabited by 459 700 persons with non-Polish ethnic origin¹⁰. In the view of L. Olejnik, those indicators were underestimated since their actual number may have been between 486 and 521 thousand people. Moreover, labile indigenous nationalities of the Upper Silesia and Warmia and Masuria region were not included, recognizing them as Poles, despite their increasingly frequent reporting of German identification¹¹.

⁷ R. Zenderowski, J. Pieńkowski, *Kwestie narodowościowe w Europie Środkowo-Wschodniej*, Tom 1, *Zagadnienia teoretyczne*, Instytut Politologii UKSW, Dom Wydawniczy Elipsa, Warszawa 2014, s. 203.

⁸ T. Browarek, *Uwarunkowania polityki etnicznej państwa polskiego po 1989 roku*, Wydawnictwo UMCS, Lublin 2018, s. 38–40.

⁹ G. Janusz, *Uytuowanie mniejszości narodowych w społeczeństwie i polityce państwa polskiego po 1945 r.* [w:] *Mniejszości narodowe w polskiej myśli politycznej w XX wieku*, red. J. Jachymek, Wydawnictwo UMCS, Lublin 1992, s. 229–230.

¹⁰ Including 165 thousand Belarussians, 22 300 Czechs and Slovaks, 11 thousand Greeks, 9 thousand Lithuanians, 3 thousand Germans, 19 thousand Russians, 200 thousand Ukrainians and 30 400 Jews.

¹¹ L. Olejnik, *Polityka narodowościowa Polski w latach 1944–1960*, Wydawnictwo UŁ, Łódź 2003, s. 63–64.

However, at the turn of the 1980s it was forecasted that the territory of the Polish state was inhabited by communities of between 900 thousand and a million of persons of a nationality different from that of Polish national identification¹².

Throughout the existence of the People's Poland, its ethnic policy was subject to significant fluctuations. In the 1940s, the real, though not exposed, institution that set the direction of state influence on the minorities was the Polish Workers' Party [Polska Partia Robotnicza] (hereinafter referred to as PPR). The Polish Committee of National Liberation [Polski Komitet Wyzwolenia Narodowego] (hereinafter referred to as PKWN), the Provisional Government [Rząd Tymczasowy] and then the Provisional Government of National Unity [Tymczasowy Rząd Jedności Narodowej]. In turn, the following institutions were the implementers of the objectives, among others, Nationality Division of the Ministry of Public Administration [Wydział Narodowościowy Ministerstwa Administracji Publicznej] (hereinafter referred to as MAP); Religious Affairs Department of MAP [Departament Wyznaniowy MAP]; Nationalities Department of the Ministry of Regained Territories [Referat Narodowościowy w Ministerstwie Ziem Odzyskanych]; Ministry of Public Security; Ministry of Foreign Affairs [Ministerstwo Bezpieczeństwa Publicznego]; Committee for Religious and National Affairs in the Legislative Assembly [Komisja Wyznaniowa i Narodowościowa w Sejmie Ustawodawczym] and the State Repatriation Office [Państwowy Urząd Repatriacyjny]. There was no single vision of nationality policy at the time because it represented a set of policies towards particular minorities. For example, in 1944 schools with Ukrainian, Belarusian and Lithuanian language of instruction began to open¹³. However, they were closed down after only a few months, as the model of Poland as a nationally homogeneous state was launched. Under population exchange agreements concluded between PKWN and the Russian Republics (Lithuanian, Belarusian and Ukrainian), deportations of non-Polish citizens of the People's Poland to the respective republics of the USSR began to be organized¹⁴. The initial voluntariness of emigration was soon abolished under pressure from the Soviet side with regard to Ukrainians who were forcibly coerced to emigrate (which was not done for the Lithuanians and Belarusians)¹⁵. After the end of the forced displacement within the borders of the state, there still remained circa 240 thousand people including 30 – 40 thousand Lemkos, who, in 1947 in cooperation with Ukrainians, were dispersed over the so-called Recovered Territories (as part of 'Vistula' action) in order to assimilate them into the Polish community¹⁶.

¹² S. Łodziński, *Polityka państwa polskiego wobec mniejszości narodowych w latach 1989–1993 (Na tle rozwiązań prawnych obowiązujących w państwach europejskich i regulacji przygotowywanych w ramach prac Rady Europy)*, Raport Nr 22, Kancelaria Sejmu Biuro Studiów i Ekspertyz, Warszawa 1994, s. 1.

¹³ L. Olejnik, op. cit., s. 17–29.

¹⁴ The departures of minorities to the USSR were to take place in parallel with the so-called, repatriation' of Poles and Jews to the new Poland and were to be completed in 1946 r.

¹⁵ J. Pisuliński, *Polska państwem jednolitym narodowo. Założenia i praktyka na przykładzie polityki wobec mniejszości ukraińskiej w latach 1944–1947 [w:] Między ideologią a socjotechniką. Kwestia mniejszości narodowych w działalności władz komunistycznych – doświadczenie polskie i środkowo-europejskie*, red. M. Semczyszyn, J. Szymyk, Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, Komisja Ścigania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu, Warszawa–Szczecin–Wrocław 2014, s. 189–195.

¹⁶ H. Chałupczak, T. Browarek, *Mniejszości narodowe w Polsce 1918–1995*, Wydawnictwo UMCS, Lublin 2000, s. 281–282.

In 1945, the Provisional Government 'legitimised' the widespread hatred towards the German population by issuing a decree on its exclusion from the Polish society¹⁷, and in the following year, mass deportations of Germans started that lasted by 1949. Approximately one million people, mostly verified as native (autochthonous) Poles, avoided the exodus, among whom the German national option crystallized in the following years and whose representatives became in the future the mainstream of emigration to the West¹⁸. Three minorities were excluded from the repressive actions taken by the state, i.e. the Czechs, the Slovaks and Jews. The first two had protector in the person of the Czechoslovak state, where a relatively large Polish minority group resided. In order to avoid the reciprocity rule being applied to it by the government in Prague, the Polish authorities avoided discriminating against the Czech and Slovak ethnic groups. However, Jews were the only non-Polish community that enjoyed the support of the 'people's government' and had a relatively wide autonomy. They had, among others, their own social, political, economic and educational organizations. PPR declared support to Holocaust survivors and advocated the fight against anti-Semitism, creating itself as a 'true defender' of minorities (in contrast to the authorities of 'sanationist Poland')¹⁹.

In the years 1948–1954 a policy based on 'proletarian internationalism' was launched against non-Polish ethnic groups, following the Soviet model of the 'class struggle'. It was supervised by Socio-administrative Bureau of the Presidium of the Council of Ministers. The focus was, inter alia, on enabling minorities to cultivate 'socialist in content and national in form' culture, integrating them into the political life of the country, as well as revitalising previously restricted minority education²⁰. At the same time, the attitude of the state towards Jewish and German minorities changed, conditioned by the events on the international arena. The former lost their existing autonomy after 1948, i.e. since the establishment of the State of Israel and the beginning of repression in the USSR and other satellite states against Jews²¹. All Jewish institutions were nationalized and/or liquidated, and the hitherto (licensed) independent Central Committee of Jews in Poland [Centralny Komitet Żydów w Polsce] (hereinafter referred to as CKŻP) was transformed into a strictly subordinate to the authorities Jewish Social and Cultural Society [Towarzystwo Społeczno-Kulturalne Żydów] (hereinafter referred to as TSKŻ). The above actions along with dismissal of people in the name of 'nationalizing the workforce', resulted in the years 1949–1951 in emigration from Poland of circa 30 thousand representatives of minorities²². In turn, measures were taken against Germans to improve their living situation, i.e. economic, social and housing situation. Moreover, three provinces, i.e. of Wrocław, Szczecin and Koszalin, kindergartens and schools with schools with a minority language as the language of instruction were created from the school year

¹⁷ A. Chodubski, *70 lat różnorodności. Mniejszości narodowe i etniczne w Polsce*, „Studia Gdańskie. Wizje i rzeczywistość” 2016, t. XIII, s. 395.

¹⁸ D. Stola, *O paradoksie masowej emigracji z państwa zamkniętego: wyjazdy do Niemiec w pierwszej połowie lat pięćdziesiątych* [w:] *Władza a społeczeństwo w PRL*, red. A. Friszke, Instytut Studiów Politycznych PAN, Warszawa 2003, s. 56–57.

¹⁹ E. Mironowicz, *Polityka narodowościowa PRL*, Białoruskie Towarzystwo Historyczne, Białystok 2000, s. 84–89.

²⁰ L. Olejnik, op. cit., s. 43–47.

²¹ W. Roszkowski, *Najnowsza historia Polski 1945–1989*, Świat Książki, Warszawa 2003, s. 204.

²² A. Cała, *Mniejszość żydowska* [w:] *Mniejszości narodowe w Polsce*, red. P. Madajczyk, Instytut Studiów Politycznych PAN, Warszawa 1998, s. 263–268.

1950/1951. This was a landmark situation, as immediately after the war education in the German language was banned²³.

Since the mid-1950s, a gradual liberalisation of the country's political system began. The changes also concerned the ethnic policy of the state, implemented from now on by, among others, Nationalities Commission of Central Committee of the Polish United Workers' Party [Komisja ds. Narodowościowych KC PZPR] (hereinafter referred to as Commission) and the Ministry of Internal Affairs [MSW]. In the wake of the 'thaw', in addition to a functioning TSKŻ, further social and cultural organisations of national minorities were created. Moreover, their funding was increased, they were allowed to publish their own press, as well as Ukrainian education was resumed. Equality of all citizens was being emphasized, regardless of their nationality. The mistakes of earlier years were pointed out and the fight against all cases of nationalism and anti-Semitism was declared²⁴. In parallel, under the agreement made between the Polish and German Red Cross, trips to the Federal Republic of Germany as part of the 'family reunification' action continued. In the years 1955–1959, national borders were left by circa 240 thousand persons, a significant proportion of whom were autochthones²⁵. The end of the decade brought about a renewed tightening of the course towards all non-Polish national groups. Societies and journal editors were ordered to strengthen basic party organisations and present the 'right' ideological face. The cultural and educational operations were to become the basic activity promoting folklore and the formation of amateur artistic groups. All organisational autonomy was liquidated and the role of 'transmission belts' was imposed on them, popularising the programme of the Polish United Workers' Party among the non-Polish citizens of the country²⁶.

In the beginning of the 1960s, mass emigration of minorities ended, the borders were sealed and the importance of nationality issues in the ethnic policy of the state gradually diminished. The activity of the created Commission ceased, minorities were subjected to close surveillance, and a real creator and at the same time – the implementer of policy towards non-Polish groups became the Ministry of Internal Affairs [MSW]²⁷. Similarly to the USSR, where public anti-Semitic speeches took place, in Poland also the 'purification' of staff in the power ministries from persons of Jewish origin was initiated²⁸. This intensified after 1967, i.e. the moment of the outbreak of the six-day war²⁹, as a result of which

²³ A. Szczepański, *Polityka etniczna realizowana w Polsce w latach 1944–1989 w stosunku do mniejszości niemieckiej* [w:] *Nauki humanistyczne – interdyscyplinarne rozważania naukowe*, red. E. Chodźko. M. Iwaniukl, Wydawnictwo Naukowe Tygiel, Lublin 2021, s. 128

²⁴ L. Olejnik, op. cit., s. 47–53. Anti-Semitism was linked, among other things, to holding Jews responsible for Stalinist repression and became the cause of mass emigration, during which, in the years 1956–58 circa 50 thousand people left.

²⁵ A. Szczepański, *Wyjazdy etnicznych i autochtonicznych przedstawicieli mniejszości niemieckiej z terenu Polski po II wojnie światowej* [w:] *Geografia historyczna jako determinanta rozwoju nauk humanistycznych*, red. M. Kulesza, Państwowa Wyższa Szkoła Zawodowa im. Witelona w Legnicy, Katedra Geografii Politycznej i Studiów Regionalnych Uniwersytet Łódzki, Legnica – Łódź 2009, s. 149.

²⁶ E. Mironowicz, op. cit., s. 149–150.

²⁷ L. Olejnik, op. cit., s. 77–58.

²⁸ W. Roszkowski, *Najnowsza historia Polski...*, s. 471–472.

²⁹ Took place on 5–10 June and as a result, Israeli troops defeated the Arab armies supported by the USSR and its satellites.

the Soviet Union and its satellite countries (including Poland) severed diplomatic relations with Israel. The climax of the anti-Jewish campaign in PRL occurred in March 1968 and as a result of which persons recognised as Jews were forced to leave the country while depriving them of Polish citizenship³⁰.

Since the 1970s, the issue of ethnic fragmentation almost entirely vanished from the public space. The thesis of 'unity' (ethnic homogeneity) of the Polish society was promoted at the time. All material evidence of presence of Lemkos and Ukrainians was removed in the south-eastern areas of the country, financial support granted to organizations was gradually decreased, and the possibility of continuing education in the minority's native language was radically limited. At the same time, in the years 1970 – 1979, mass emigration to the West was made possible for people declaring German nationality option, as a result of which over 200 people left the borders of the country, mostly representatives of the autochthonous population³¹.

During the so-called Solidarity carnival, i.e. in the years 1980 – 1981, the activity of the so far marginalized minority groups intensified. A short-term liberalization of the political system, manifested by, among others, introduction of regulated civil freedoms, limitation of censorship and reduction in supervision over the activity of organizations that was radically terminated after 13 December 1981, i.e. after the introduction of the martial law. After its abolition on 22 July 1983, it was, among others, possible to ease the attitude of the state towards the churches of minorities and to legalise the activity of Polish National Minority Students' Union Cultural Council [Ogólnopolska Rada Kultury Studentów Mniejszości Narodowych przy Zrzeszeniu Studentów Polskich]³². At the same time, diplomatic contacts with Israel were established, and the authority abandoned discrimination of Jewish society in PRL [the Peoples' Republic of Poland]. Invariably, however, the status of the German minority was refused to the autochthones, and all attempts of the establishment of their own organisations were subject to repressive actions by the state apparatus.

In April 1989, the Law on Associations was passed, enabling the formation of social organisations, including the national minorities. In June, parliamentary elections were held, the result of which determined the opening of a new chapter in ethnic policy of the state. Its assumptions were based on the principles of democracy, pluralisation and recognition of heterogeneity of the Polish society. The impact on the reorientation of the existing principles was conditioned by two events, i.e. calling into existence in August 1989 the National and Ethnic Minorities Committees in the Sejm of the 10th parliamentary term [Komisja Mniejszości Narodowych i Etnicznych w Sejmie X Kadencji] and indicating by the prime minister T. Mazowiecki in his *expose* that Poland is also the homeland for national minorities (which took place in September of the same year)³³.

³⁰ W. Roszkowski, *Najnowsza historia Polski...*, s. 517–522

³¹ A. Szczepański, *Ewolucja polityki etnicznej w Polsce w latach 1944–1989*, „Wrocławskie Studia Politologiczne” 2020, Nr 28/2020, s. 171–172.

³² H. Chałupczak, T. Browarek, *Mniejszości narodowe...*, s. 286–288.

³³ S. Łodziński, *Polityka wobec mniejszości narodowych i etnicznych w Polsce w latach 1945–2008* [w:] *Mniejszości narodowe i etniczne w Polsce po II wojnie światowej*, red. S. Dudra i B. Nitschke, Zakład Wydawniczy „Nomos”, Kraków 2010, s. 22–24.

Jewish minority in Legnica and its education in the years 1945–1949

The pre-war Jewish society in Legnica belonged to the cultural and financial elites of the city. Many of its representatives held important public positions – they were members of the municipal council assembly, official receivers, members of the municipal executive, doctors, lawyers, etc. Their position radically changed after 1933, i.e. from the moment of assumption of power by Adolf Hitler and implementation of his discriminatory policy towards minorities³⁴. As a result of the above situation, strong emigrational tendencies among circa 1.5 thousand society of Jews of Legnica intensified. They were even compounded by the events of the so-called Crystal Night³⁵. Only those too sick or poor to leave remained, so that their further fate was determined³⁶.

The year 1945 is a censorship date in the history of Legnica. It is, most of all, connected with the change of nationality of the city and commencement of migratory movements of the population on a mass scale. The citizens of the former Second Polish Republic [II RP] came in place of the displaced Germans, among whom were also Jews. In the post-war Legnica, they were employed mainly craft cooperatives and small trade³⁷. The most important among the institutions operating in the city were: the Jewish Committee reporting to CKŻP located at ul. Środkowa 11 and Jewish Religious Congregation [Żydowska Kongregacja Wyznaniowa] – ul. Grodzka 21³⁸. The first mention of the Jewish community in Legnica (this was originally the name of the city) was already in January 1946 in the records of the Provincial Jewish Committee in Dzierżoniów. It was noted at the time that there lived 470 representatives of minority, although a similar number were outside the registers of the Committee³⁹. With the commencement of repatriation from the USSR, the number of newcomers dynamically increased, whereby the number of minorities in the Lower Silesia increased six-fold, and in Legnica alone – five-fold, achieving the result of circa 4.5 thousand of Jewish settlers⁴⁰. Because children were also coming to the city, institutions that were established concentrated their activities on the provision of care to those children, i.e. orphanage, kindergarten, cheder and two primary schools.

The orphanage established in 1946 was subordinate to the Child Care Department of Central Committee of Jews in Poland [Wydział Opieki nad Dzieckiem CKŻP]. Initially, it was located at ul. św. Jadwigi 21, and then was moved to ul. Piastowska 6. From December 1947, it received additional facility at ul. Senatorska 7, which was attended by pre-school

³⁴ W. Kalski, *Liegnitz znaczy Legnica*, Atut, Legnica 1997, s. 18

³⁵ The Crystal Night Krysztalowa Noc – a series of anti-Jewish pogroms carried out in the German Reich on the night of 9 to 10 November 1938

³⁶ P. Piluk, *Chłód listopadowej nocy* [w:] „Wersja legnicka” 1999, nr 11, s. 20–21.

³⁷ T. Włodarczyk, *Z historii Żydów w regionie legnickim*, Fundacja Rojt, Warszawa 2016, s. 54.

³⁸ A. Szczepański, *Mniejszość żydowska w Legnicy 1945–1968*, „Szkice Legnickie” 2007, XXVIII, s. 159–160.

³⁹ B. Szaynok, *Ludność żydowska na Dolnym Śląsku 1945–1950*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, Wrocław 2000, s. 27.

⁴⁰ B. Szaynok, *Odbudowa życia żydowskiego w Polsce po wojnie na przykładzie osadnictwa żydowskiego na Dolnym Śląsku* [w:] *Żydzi w polskim i czeskim społeczeństwie obywatelskim*, red. J. Tomaszewski, J. Valenta, Univerzita Karlova v Praze, Praga 1999, s. 161–162

children⁴¹. The educational establishment was of a secular character (it worked on e.g. Saturdays) but at the same time such holidays like Purim and Chanuka were celebrated there. As a relatively big number of children born in the USSR came to the establishment, in addition to Polish, Russian was also used on a daily basis⁴². Children's magazines 'Świerszczyk' and 'Płomyczek' were subscribed to, shared reading of books took place (particularly popular were the fairy tales by Hans Christian Andersen), as well as checkers and dominoes were played. Efforts were made to instil the 'Cult of work' among the pupils by way of conducting carpentry and tailoring workshops, as well as growing vegetables in their own garden. 'Proper' ideological upbringing was implemented, among others, by way of preparation of commemorative events, e.g. on the occasion of birthday of Włodzimierz Lenin and anniversaries of the Red Army. At the end of 1949, so immediately prior to the nationalisation of the institution, the propaganda work intensified among the pupils 'on the foundation of Marxist ideology'⁴³.

On 1 May 1946 at ul. Jadwigi 21, a half-boarding pre-school was established, which was soon moved to ul. Złotoryjska 56 and transformed into Janusz Korczak's kindergarten. Just like the abovementioned orphanage, the kindergarten was subordinate to the Central Committee of Jews in Poland [CKŻP] and was subsidized thereby. The establishment was located in a three-storey building that was destroyed in 40% and had no gas or central heating. In 1948, the building underwent extensive renovation, as a result of which it was equipped with the said media. The position of the head was held by Karolina Barszon, who was the only one with a teaching qualification (among the five female educators). The kindergarten was attended by 92 children at the time, who were divided into five age groups. In the school year 1949/1950, the kindergarten like other Jewish institutions became nationalized and subordinate to Educational Department of the Municipal National Council [Wydział Oświaty Miejskiej Rady Narodowej]. From 1950, it functioned as Janusz Korczak's Kindergarten No. 5⁴⁴.

The building of the Jewish Religious Congregation [Żydowska Kongregacja Wyznaniowa], located at ul. Grodzka 20/21, housed an elementary religious school for the youngest pupils – cheder. In the school year 1947/1948, it was attended by 36 children in two classes (1 and 2). The teaching staff consisted of three teachers who taught, among others, Hebrew and Polish languages, mathematics, drawings, singing and physical education. After completion of cheder, children could continue education in a Polish or Jewish school with Yiddish as the language of instruction), or in a Hebrew school. In March 1949 in cheder, like in other Jewish educational establishments, inspection was carried out by Apolinary Słupski – a school sub-inspector. He pointed out significant shortcomings in the operation of the establishment, among others: the lack of pedagogical preparation of the head Zofia Szwarcberg and poor school facilities (the Congregation made only one room available),

⁴¹ B. Techmańska, *Żydowskie domy dziecka na Dolnym Śląsku prowadzone przez Centralny Komitet Żydów w Polsce (CKŻP) – zarys problematyki*, „Śląski Kwartalnik Historyczny Sobótka” 2018, Rocznik LXXIII (2018) 1, s. 88–89. Throughout the entire period of its activities, i.e. until the end of the school year 1949/1950 circa 120 children learned there.

⁴² A. Szczepański, *Oświata żydowska w powojennej Legnicy (1945–1968)*, „Biuletyn Historii Wychowania” 2013, 29, s. 107.

⁴³ B. Techmańska, *Żydowskie domy dziecka na Dolnym Śląsku...*, s. 90–92.

⁴⁴ B. Techmańska, *Żydowskie placówki przedszkolne na Dolnym Śląsku prowadzone przez Centralny Komitet Żydów w Polsce w latach 40. i 50. XX w. – zarys problematyki*, „Śląski Kwartalnik Historyczny Sobótka” 2020, Rocznik LXXV, 3, s.159–160.

which forced children to attend classes at different times of the day. The inspector called for the immediate closure of the cheder and the transfer of the children to other establishments⁴⁵.

In 1946 in a building at pl. Wolności 6, a seven-class Ch. N. Bialika's Hebrew school started its activity and was covered by the patronage of the Hechaluc Pionier organisation⁴⁶. The post was soon moved to ul. Chojnowska 46, and its teaching programme was similar to the one in Polish public schools. The exceptions were additional classes in Hebrew, history of Jews, Geography of Palestine and Bible. In 1947, it was attended by 68 pupils and seven teachers worked there⁴⁷. In March 1948, it 85 children were taught there, and in the following year – 100. The conditions of the premises were of significant concern, as there was no central heating in the building and, in addition, there was a lack of desks and teaching aids. Moreover, the audit conducted by A. Słupski revealed deficiencies and shortcomings in school documentation, as there were no logbooks, there were gaps in pupil attendance information and shortcomings in the curricula. Consequently, by analogy with the position on the cheder, the auditor recommended the closure of the facility, which took place from the school year 1949/1950⁴⁸. The position of the School District Board of Wrocław [Kuratorium Okręgu Szkolnego Wrocławskiego] with negative attitude towards Jewish religious and Zionist schools was also relevant here as in the opinion of the educational authorities those schools educated 'in an eminently nationalist spirit', without taking into account the Polish realities of the time⁴⁹.

Another institution responsible for educating Jewish youth was the I. L. Perec's Common School [Szkoła Powszechna im. I. L. Pereca]. Located at ul. Rycerska 13 that was established in November 1946. The establishment was subordinate to the Central Committee of Jews in Poland [CKŻP] therefore it was treated by the educational authorities as a private school which resulted in a lack of subsidies for its activities from the state budget⁵⁰. While in 1946 the number of pupils was 136, in the school year 1947/1948 there were already 219 pupils. The position of the head was held at that time by Beno Rachwalski, and apart from him, the teaching staff consisted of 10 teachers (of which seven had the relevant qualifications). The curriculum was not fundamentally different from public primary schools, as most subjects were shared, except for the Jewish language (Yiddish), History of Jews and the Hebrew language (conducted from the fourth grade onwards). In the school year 1948/1949 there were 289 pupils attending, and the teaching staff consisted of 13 teachers. According to the aforementioned A. Słupski, the establishment was well run, both in terms of teaching, administration and hygiene. The teaching level was very high, as well as personal culture and discipline among pupils. The fact that, in contrast to the Hebrew school, there were also 'proper' children's and youth organisations in the institution, i.e. scouts and scout troops, the Polish-Soviet Friendship Society [Towarzystwo Przyjaciół Żołnierzy i Towarzystwo Przyjaźni Polsko – Radzieckiej] was not negligible.⁵¹ A. Słupski issued a positive assessment to the establishment and recommended its

⁴⁵ A. Szczepański, *Oświata żydowska w powojennej Legnicy...*, s. 108–109.

⁴⁶ Hechaluc Pionier – Zionist Jewish organization, established in Russia in 1914. Its aim was to prepare future settlers to settle in Palestine.

⁴⁷ A. Szczepański, *Mniejszość żydowska...*, s. 163.

⁴⁸ B. Techmańska, *Szkolnictwo mniejszości narodowych w powojennej Legnicy*, „Pamięć i Przyszłość” 2014, nr 2(24), s. 45.

⁴⁹ B. Techmańska, *Szkolnictwo mniejszości narodowych na Dolnym Śląsku w latach 1945–1989*, Wydawnictwo LTW, Łomianki 2019, s. 133.

⁵⁰ A similar situation also applied to the orphanage and kindergarten patronised by CKŻP.

⁵¹ A. Szczepański, *Oświata żydowska w powojennej Legnicy...*, s. 108–109.

continued functioning, thanks to which since 1949/1950 it started its activity as (nationalized) I.L. Perec's Primary School No. 7 [Szkoła Podstawowa Nr 7 im. I.L. Pereca] with Jewish language of instruction (hereinafter referred to as SP 7)⁵².

Jewish minority in Legnica and its education in the years 1950–1968

As in the previous decade, there were two Jewish institutions in the city, i.e. Jewish congregation (commune) being a member of the Religious Union of the Mosaic Faith [Związek Religijny Wyznania Mojżeszowego]⁵³ and the Legnica branch of Jewish Social and Cultural Society [TSKŻ]. In the case of the former, a regression in activity can be observed due to the decreasing number of religious Jews. There was a point operating at the congregation, in which a ritual slaughterer performed ritual slaughter of animals and there was a butchery of kosher meat. In the mid 1950s it was only one of two operating in the Lower Silesia (after Wrocław) that offered products compliant with Judaic regulations. Unlike a religious institution in crisis, TSKŻ was thriving in the city. In January 1951, the Society was moved to ul. owo Świat 19, where a popular (not only among the Jewish residents of the city) Gerszoma Dua's Community Centre [Dom Kultury im. Gerszoma Dua]. It was home to, among others, a library, brass band, choir and amateur theatre groups (both children and young people, as well as adults). There was the biggest stage room in Legnica in the facility (with a capacity of circa 800 people), so it also hosted dance parties, concerts of the stars of the time (e.g. Niebiesko-Czarni, Czerwono-Czarni), as well as ceremonies on the occasion of national holidays were staged there⁵⁴.

Since the 1950s, education underwent significant transformations as the Jewish orphanage, Hebrew school and cheder ceased to exist. However, there still remained the kindergarten that was headed invariably by K. Barszon, thanks to whom it maintained its Jewish identity for the next few years. In the school year 1950/1951, it was attended by 138 children and the number of staff was 16 people (i.e. five form masters and 11 administrative and economic staff). The head Barszon enjoyed a special position among the municipal educational authorities, which was related to both her involvement in the didactic and organisational activities of the establishment, but also in ideological work with the pupils and staff of the kindergarten⁵⁵. Not only did she equip the establishment with appropriate teaching aids (which she often made herself), but she also made sure that the pupils were brought up 'properly' and that the staff were properly 'aware'. In order to 'shape the socialist morality of the pupils', she organised for them, among others, patriotic mornings, folk performances and dances. In turn, for form teachers and the technical staff she prepared 'political speeches', always delivered at staff meetings. Halfway through the decade, K. Barszon left work in the kindergarten and from the school year 1954/1955, a person with the name Berman became the new head. Although under her direction the establishment continued to be held in high esteem by both the educational authorities and the townspeople, it gradu-

⁵² B. Techmańska, *Szkolnictwo mniejszości narodowych w powojennej Legnicy...*, s. 46.

⁵³ The institution was established in December 1949 as a result of combining two Jewish Religious Congregation

⁵⁴ A. Szczepański, *Mniejszość żydowska...*, s. 167–169.

⁵⁵ A. Szczepański, *Oświata żydowska w powojennej Legnicy...*, s. 112.

ally lost its Jewish character. From 1 September 1955, the establishment was transferred to the Provincial Labour Union in Wrocław [Wojewódzki Związek Pracy we Wrocławiu] and received the name of Kindergarten No. 1 [Przedszkole Nr 1.]. At the same time, the care centre of the establishment was changed as the existing patron – Jewish cooperative ‘Model’ was superseded by (‘Polish’) cooperative *Spółdzielnia* ‘11 lutego’⁵⁶.

Nationalization of the primary schools at the turn of 1949 and 1950 led to a decrease in their number in the Lower Silesia from the existing 22 only 13 remained. One of them was the primary school No. 7 [SP 7] in Legnica⁵⁷. Placing establishments under state supervision, instead of the existing care from CKŻP, would mean the real end to the autonomy of the schools and their subordination to top-down ideological requirements. The curriculum was modified and adjusted to the applicable one in Polish schools. Jewish language (Yiddish) was taught already from the first class, while Polish was introduced from the second, History of Jews from the fourth class, and Hebrew from the fifth⁵⁸. Soon, as from the school year 1953/1954, due to the insufficient knowledge of Yiddish among the teachers, Polish became the only language of instruction, and Jewish was limited only to the role of one of the obligatory subjects. As the same time, all the Judaic classes were removed, including the History of Jews⁵⁹. However, it was restored since 1956, but only one hour per week⁶⁰.

In 1950, SP 7 was attended by 324 pupils and the teaching Staff consisted then of nine teachers. Among others, the Polish Scouting Association [Związek Harcerstwa Polskiego] was active here (it included 220 pupils), Association of the Polish Youth [Związek Młodzieży Polskiej], the Warsaw Circle of Reconstruction [Koło Odbudowy Warszawy], the Circle of Peace Defenders [Koło Obrońców Pokoju] and the Polish-Soviet Friendship Society [Towarzystwo Przyjaźni Polsko – Radzieckiej]. Moreover, subsequent anniversaries of the October Revolution [Rewolucja Październikowa] were celebrated, as well as, among others, Days of the Polish People’s Army [Dni Ludowego Wojska Polskiego] and the Peace Holiday [Święto Pokoju]. In the following years, the number of pupils oscillated around 300 persons, and 10 teachers, but a significant staff turnover was noticed. From the school year 1956/1957 in SP 7, Greek and Macedonian children started education, constituting over 10% of all pupils. As transports of the former citizens of the second Republic of Poland [II RP] started to arrive to the Lower Silesia at that time as part of the second repatriation from the USSR, the number of Jewish communities significantly increased in Legnica. In this situation, the number of pupils in SP 7 increased rapidly and its existing building proved to be too small. Consequently, from the year 1957/1958 the establishment was moved to a bigger facility at ul. Rewolucji Październikowej 32 (earlier and later: Senatorska). In May 1958, the number of pupils was already 508, but the estimates predicted that in September of the same year there would be more than 560. The school year 1958/1959 was inaugurated by 608 children but in view of the continuous influx of Jewish migrants, in June the school

⁵⁶ B. Techmańska, *Żydowskie placówki przedszkolne...*, s. 160–162.

⁵⁷ A. Ławniczak, T. Juchniewicz, *Edukacja mniejszości narodowych na Dolnym Śląsku*, „Rocznik Stowarzyszenia Naukowców Polaków Litwy” 2017, T. 17, s. 279–280.

⁵⁸ B. Techmańska, *Szkolnictwo dla mniejszości narodowych na Dolnym Śląsku w okresie PRL. Wybrane zagadnienia*, „Klio. Czasopismo poświęcone dziejom Polski i powszechnym” 2016, t. 38(3), s. 17–55.

⁵⁹ E. Pogorzała, *Mniejszości narodowe i etniczne polityce oświatowej państwa polskiego w latach 1944–1966*, Państwowa Wyższa Szkoła Zawodowa w Zamościu, Zamość 2009, s. 187.

⁶⁰ *Ibidem*, s. 255.

records indicated the presence of 757 pupils⁶¹. In this situation, the management of SP 7 successfully sought the approval of the Ministry of Education [Ministerstwo Oświaty] for creating additional secondary school class⁶². In the school year 1959/1960, education in the Primary School No. 7 [Szkoła Podstawowa Nr 7] and Janusza Korczak's Secondary School No. 3 [Liceum Ogólnokształcące Nr III im. Janusza Korczaka] (hereinafter referred to as III LO) which was created on the basis of the aforementioned class, was commenced by 787 pupils altogether. However, as a result of the mass exodus tendencies prevailing among the Jewish community at the time, many of its representatives (mainly newly arrived repatriates) decided to emigrate. That meant a high fluctuation among pupils of SP 7, whose number dropped in June 1960 to 483 persons. In order maintain the teaching load (full-time equivalent) in 1960/1961, a class with Ukrainian language was incorporated into Secondary School No. 3 [III LO]⁶³.

Since the early 1960s, Jewish education in Poland experienced regression due to a radically decreasing number of pupils. In the school year 1965/1966, only five primary schools were in operation (in Łódź, Szczecin, Wrocław, Legnica and Wałbrzych) and three secondary schools (in Łódź, Wrocław and Legnica). The crisis was further compounded by the educational reform introduced from the following school year onwards, under which an eight-year primary school and a four-year high school were created in place of the existing eleven-year school model. As a result, in the school year 1966/1967, no recruitment to high school classes took place nationwide, and in subsequent school year – 1967/1968 only recruitment to Jewish secondary schools was abandoned⁶⁴.

The decreasing number of pupils from SP 7 and III LO became the reason for the takeover of some of the classrooms by the Medical High School [Liceum Medyczne] that was brought into existence in 1963. In November 1964, the Primary School was attended by 80 children, and the secondary school by 59, in turn, in January 1966 – by 59 children (but there was not a single child in class one) and by 42, respectively. In subsequent years, *along with the deteriorating international situation, the authorities of Legnica no longer saw the need to maintain the establishment*⁶⁵, especially as at the end of the school year 1967/1968, both schools were attended only by 38 children. Consequently, as of 31 August 1968 there was a final liquidation of Jewish education in Legnica (and throughout Poland)⁶⁶.

In characterising Jewish education in post-war Legnica it is worth mentioning that some parents did not enrol their children in minority schools, choosing Polish establishments. Some preferred that their offspring not be identified with Jewish community, and others were guided by the high level of teaching of other schools (e.g. first and second Secondary School [I.i II Liceum Ogólnokształcące]). The fact that in the 1960s for a number of parents the factor demotivating from commencing education in SP 7 and III LO by their children was the person of the director Mendel Tannenzapf towards whom they felt a personal prejudice, was not without significance⁶⁷.

⁶¹ A. Szczepański, *Mniejszość żydowska...*, s. 171–172.

⁶² E. Pogorzała, *Mniejszości narodowe i etniczne...*, s. 272.

⁶³ A. Szczepański, *Oświata żydowska w powojennej Legnicy...*, s. 114. Since 1963 a Secondary School No. 4 [Liceum Ogólnokształcące Nr 4] with Ukrainian language of instruction.

⁶⁴ E. Pogorzała, *Mniejszości narodowe i etniczne...*, s. 325–326.

⁶⁵ B. Techmańska, *Szkolnictwo mniejszości narodowych w powojennej Legnicy...*, s. 47.

⁶⁶ A. Szczepański, *Mniejszość żydowska...*, s. 178–179.

⁶⁷ *Ibidem*, s. 173–174.

Conclusion

The overriding objective of ethnic policy implemented in Poland in the years 1944–1989 was to create a nationally homogeneous society, but at selected moments a significant evolution in the actions undertaken by the authorities is noticed. In the second half of the 1940s, basic assumption was to create an ethnically homogeneous community of citizens (Poles), which was pursued, *inter alia*, through displacement or assimilation of ‘foreign elements’. At the beginning of another decade, the homogeneity thesis was replaced by calls for the creation of a multinational set of state residents. In turn, since the mid 1950s the first symptoms of limited liberalization of the political system are noticed, whose culmination was associated with the so-called ‘thaw’ after 1956. Based on ‘licensed freedom’, socio-cultural organizations of national minorities were established, among others, they were given the opportunity to develop their own culture, as well as they were integrated into political life of the country. However, the relative autonomy did not last long as since the 1960s onwards a significant limitation of the granted freedoms and the progressive totalization of social life in the country is noticed. In the following two decades, the issue of ethnic fragmentation of the People’s Republic of Poland disappeared completely from public discourse.

Fluctuation of ethnic policy of People’s Poland was also reflected in the aspect of minority education, as reflected by the example of Jewish education. It was initially formed by private institutions (both religious and secular), with a relatively high autonomy *vis-à-vis* state authorities. Since end of the 1940s the liquidation process of independent Jewish education commenced. Religious and Hebrew centers were closed, and those and remaining under the auspices of CKŻP were nationalized. They henceforth implemented the policy of the Ministry of Education, conforming in terms of programme and ideology to its ‘only right line’. In subsequent years, as the number of pupils decreased and the position of minorities was unfavorable (subjected to harassment in the second half of the 1960s), the activity of Jewish education was successively limited, and was finally liquidated in August 1968.

Referring to the previously cited position of R. Zenderowski and J. Pieńkowski it seems appropriate to observe that an important objective of state action towards minorities (especially in the years 1944–1947 and after 1968) was their exclusion from the mainstream of life and striving for ‘ethnic completeness’ of the country. Referring to the concept of T. Browarek, it may be noted that the model of ethnic policy characteristic for People’s Poland [Polska Ludowa] was the integrative type in its coercive aspect, sometimes evolving towards a segregationist model. Thus, it will be reasonable to adopt the research hypothesis set out previously, according to which ethnic policy of the post-war Poland was an invariable value, but over the years it was subject to fluctuations covering both moments of implementation of the idea of state homogeneity and acceptance of national fragmentation.

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STRESZCZENIE

Andrzej Szczepański

**Szkolnictwo żydowskie w powojennej Legnicy
jako element polityki etnicznej Polski Ludowej**

Polityka etniczna realizowana w Polsce Ludowej, tj. w latach 1944–1989, charakteryzowała się brakiem jednolitej koncepcji postępowania wobec niepolskich mieszkańców państwa. Wprawdzie jej głównym celem było stworzenie społeczeństwa jednolitego narodowościowo, to jednak w wybranych momentach dopuszczano fragmentaryzację etniczną kraju, przyznając mniejszościom narodowym pewne przywileje. W konsekwencji ich oświata, będąca immanentną częścią wspomnianej polityki, także podlegała istotnym modyfikacjom, m.in. pod względem organizacyjnym, ideologicznym i programowym.

Nadrzędnym celem powstania artykułu było podjęcie próby charakterystyki szkolnictwa mniejszości żydowskiej w Legnicy w aspekcie polityki etnicznej Polski Ludowej, w tym jej polityki oświatowej.

Słowa kluczowe: polityka etniczna, mniejszość żydowska, Polska Rzeczpospolita Ludowa, szkolnictwo mniejszości narodowych, Legnica

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