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The Warsaw Jewish Association for the Protection of Women and its Activity between 1904 and 1914. Why did it fail?¹

In May of 1905, the inhabitants of Warsaw were witnesses of an unprecedented outbreak of social opposition to prostitution. For several days, Jewish workers and artisans were demolishing brothels and attacking procurers and white-slave dealers. The gathered crowd believed that the violent way of fighting against the organizers of prostitution was the right one. As one of the rioters confessed to a Jewish newspaper: „The Association for the Protection of Women so beautifully babbles, but does nothing! We will not talk, we will take actions, and we will do everything that has to be done”².

It seems that the ineffectiveness of welfare organizations, such as the Association for the Protection of Women, was one of the reasons for the Pimp Pogrom, as the events in May of 1905 were immediately labeled. Therefore, it is worth taking a closer look at the only Jewish initiative in Russian Poland at that time fighting with prostitution and white slavery, the Warsaw Jewish Association for the Protection of Women; and to find out the reasons for its failure.

Historical Background

In the second half of the nineteenth century, the population of Russian Poland observed with concern the growth of prostitution and the intensification of trafficking in women. The striking visibility of prostitutes on the streets and the recurrent news on women’s abductions performed by white slave dealers greatly bothered Polish society. Christian Poles blamed the Russian occupants on facilitating the demoralization of Polish nation and accused the Jews of corrupting the Poles through prostitution and pornography.³ It was a widespread belief that Jewish men controlled the majori-

¹ Praca naukowa finansowana ze środków budżetowych na naukę w latach 2015-2019 jako projekt badawczy w ramach programu pod nazwą „Diamentowy Grant”. Niniejszy artykuł opiera się częściowo na mojej pracy magisterskiej „Jews’ Participation in White Slavery and Prostitution as was Reflected in Hebrew Press Between the years 1880 and 1914”, Wydział Orientalistyczny, Uniwersytet Warszawski 2016.

² *Ha-Sha’aruriya bi-rkhovot Varsha*, „Ha-Tsefirah”, 28.05.1905, no. 99, p. 2. All the translations from Hebrew, Yiddish, and Polish are mine.

³ W. Zaleski, *Prostytucja powojenna w Warszawie*, Warszawa 1927, p. 22, 77. K. Stauter-Halsted, N. Wingfield, *The Construction of Sexual Deviance in Late Imperial Eastern Europe*, „Journal of the History of Sexuality”, 2011, vol. 20, no. 2, p. 219. K. Stauter-Halsted, *Moral Panic and the Prostitute in Partitioned Poland: Middle-Class Respectability in Defense of the Modern Nation*, „Slavic Review”, 2009, vol. 68, no. 3, p. 578-579.

ty of the local brothels, dominated the international traffic in women, and the Jewish women were over-proportionally represented in the commercial sex industry⁴. To illustrate, hostile toward Jews journal „Niwa Polska” claimed in 1901:

Probably we do not have to prove that Jews are the worst and the most abominable vehicles of immorality among us – it suffices to take an evening walk around the streets of Warsaw, look through the names of brothel keepers or to listen to the court proceedings on trade in [human] flesh⁵.

Christian Poles and Polish Jews tended to approach the issue of prostitution as of a mainly Jewish problem. In 1874, Warsaw-based Jewish newspaper „Izraelita,” representing the capital’s Polonized circles, concluded with concern that even two-thirds of the city’s prostitutes were Jewish:

In the lower classes of ours, especially in Warsaw, the moral decay is shamefully spreading. The Warsaw’s prostitution is recruited mainly from this class [...]. For the overall number of prostitutes in Warsaw, more than two-thirds are Jewesses. Not once we paid attention to this sad phenomenon. To explain this abnormality, we showed that whereas the public prostitution is more spread among Jewesses, there is less domestic [moral] decay, covered by the mantle of discretion⁶.

In the following years, the issue of prostitution and white slavery covered hundreds of newspapers’ pages in the Russian Poland. The journalists lamented on the spread of prostitution, reported on disappearances of young women who were allegedly abducted and taken to brothels. The commercial sex and the vice related were seen as social malaise and described as moral gangrene, cholera, and plague⁷.

While the Polish and Hebrew press broadly discussed the issue of prostitution and white slavery in the Russian Poland, until the beginning of the twentieth century, the public did not mobilize to fight against that social malaise. Instead, the religious institutions dominated the welfare initiatives directed at prostitutes. In the second half of the nineteenth century, religious congregations established several institutions helping prostitutes and other needy women.⁸ One of them was the Asylum of the Holy Mary, known widely as the Magdalenes, situated at Żytnia Street in Warsaw. It was founded in 1853 by a group of female philanthropists, among others Aleksandra Petrovova and countess Aleksandra Potocka, but managed by the Magdalene

⁴ K. Stauter-Halsted, *The Devil’s Chain. Prostitution and Social Control in Partitioned Poland*, Ithaca-London 2015, p. 169-172.

⁵ *Rachunki*, „Niwa,” 29.09/12.10.1901, no. 41, p. 647.

⁶ *W sprawie ubogich dziewcząt*, „Izraelita,” 25.10/6.11.1874, no. 43, p. 343.

⁷ K. Stauter-Halsted, *The Devil’s Chain*, p. 177.

⁸ A. Böldyrew, *Spółczesność Królestwa Polskiego wobec patologii społecznych w latach 1864-1914*, Łódź 2016, p. 177.

Sisters. Work and prayer laid at the base of resocialization process. The observers did not support the religious methods used in the asylum and harshly criticized the nuns for their attitudes toward former prostitutes⁹.

The year 1899 marks a turning point in the organized fight against regulated prostitution and white slavery in Russian Poland. That year, Polish delegates from three partitions participated in the first International Congress on the White Slave Trade held in London. With the embarrassment, they noted that there had been not even one Polish organization established specifically for the fight against traffic in women¹⁰.

Within a year, Polish intellectuals interested in the fight against regulated prostitution established Abolitionist Society (Polskie Towarzystwo Abolicjonistyczne). By far it was the only organization representing the secular anti-prostitution movement in the Russian partition. Among its members were known physicists, such as Leon Wernic, and publicists Salomon Posner, Antoni Wyslouch, and Teodora Męczkowska. The Congress on the White Slave Trade echoed in the rest Russia as well. In 1900, princess Yevgenya Maximilyanovna Oldenburg founded first in the Russian Empire association for the protection of women.¹¹ Contrary to the institutions hitherto managed by nuns, the newly established Association was run by physicians, lawyers, social workers, and female volunteers. The Petersburg-based Russian Society for the Protection of Women paved the way to the women organizations fighting against prostitution in the Russian Empire, including the Russian Poland's territories. The Russian Jewish public warmly received the news about the new organization, but found it quickly insufficient to make a significant change:

We have to remember that the center of the „women question” on our [Jewish] side, as it was described above, is not in the capital because the number of Jews and Jewesses is insignificant there. [The organization like this should be, therefore, established] in Warsaw, Odessa, and Vilnius because the branches [of the association] can do something big there. Hence, it is vital that our public figures appeal to Russians to receive permission to open branches of the association for the protection of women in the aforementioned cities¹².

In a short period of time, this call for the establishment of counterpart organizations in other cities of Russian Empire was met with positive responses from the ac-

⁹ Ibidem, p. 179.

¹⁰ K. Stauter-Halsted, *The Devil's Chain*, p. 206.

¹¹ L. Bernstein, *Sonia's Daughters. Prostitutes and Their Regulation in Imperial Russia*, Berkeley - Los Angeles - London 1995, p. 176

¹² *Le-Takanot b'not Israel*, „Ha-Melits,” 29.05.1902, no. 109, p. 1. This quote has been used in my previous article A. Jakubczak, *The Issue of Jews' Participation in White Slavery and Prostitution as Reflected in Hebrew Press at the Turn of the 19th and the 20th Centuries*, „Kwartalnik Historii Żydów”, nr 2 (262), 2017, p. 29 - 45.

tivists and the Russian authorities. Within a year, Warsaw welcomed its first Association for the Protection of Women. In December 1901, Polish elites led by count Gustaw Przeździecki founded Warsaw Christian Association for the Protection of Women (ChAPW). In 1903, the Committee of Evangelic Female Guardians joined the Association by forming a separate section directed at Evangelic women in need¹³. The goals of the ChAPW was to „protect girls and women from a [moral] downfall and assisting the fallen women [sic] in their return to an honest way of living”¹⁴. To achieve that, the Association operated in several departments providing employment, professional training, financial assistance, asylum.

The Warsaw Jewish Association for the Protection of Women

Although the Polish Jewish observers received with enthusiasm the newly established Association for the Protection of Women, they soon discovered that the Association would not alleviate the plight of Jewish women in need¹⁵. The strictly Christian character of the ChAPW precluded the involvement of Jewish volunteers and the religious teachings used in the prostitutes’ rehabilitation deterred Jewish women seeking help from welfare organizations. Besides, the prejudiced attitudes of the ChAPW toward Jewish population hindered future cooperation between Christian and Jewish Poles in the Russian Poland¹⁶.

The lack of help directed at Jewish women in need and prostitutes concerned not only Jewish observers but also occupied the minds of Polish observers who believed that Jewish women needed social assistance as the Christians had received:

It is yet a fact, based on the everyday observation, that among the fallen women there is a certain number of Jewesses, which did not exist thirty or forty years ago. Moreover, the more Christians find protection and avoid the tragic plight of a prostitute, the more Jewesses, left without protection, will join the ranks of Venera¹⁷.

Less sympathetic to the plight of Jewish prostitutes, pointed the Jewish involvement in the sex trade and blamed the passiveness of Jewish population on its increase – „It is impossible not to notice the horrifying participation of Jews in this awful thing.

¹³ VII Międzynarodowy Kongres Komitetów Walki z handlem kobietami i dziećmi. Sprawozdanie Polskiego Komitetu i Organizacji Społecznych w Polsce, Warszawa 1930, p. 53

¹⁴ Ustawa Warszawskiego Chrześcijańskiego Towarzystwa Ochrony Kobiet, Warszawa 1902, p. 3.

¹⁵ Yediyot Mekomiyot, „Ha-Tsofe,” 2.03.1904, no. 353, p. 145.

¹⁶ The conflict between ChAPW and Jewish Associations for the Protection of Women intensified especially in the interwar period. Cf P. Goldyn, *Jewish Associations for the Protection of Women in Poland in years 1918-1939*, „Studia Judaica”, 2008, no. 2, p. 318-320.

¹⁷ *Echa warszawskie*, „Przegląd tygodniowy życia społecznego, literatury i sztuk pięknych,” 31.07/13.08.1904, no. 33, p. 390.

Seeing that instinctively appears the question – what do this circle do to solve this problem? It has to be admitted that so far they did not do a lot¹⁸.

From 1903, the Warsaw's Jews sought to organize a Jewish counterpart to the ChAPW. Finally, in mid-1904, after dispatching a request to Russian General-Governor, they received consent to open a Jewish branch of the Association for the Protection of Women¹⁹. The initiative to establish the Jewish Association for the Protection of Women (JAPW) came from aforementioned Stanisław Salomon Posner who had been already involved in other anti-prostitution ventures. Doctor Henryk Nussbaum²⁰ sat at the head of the board consisted of the Warsaw's assimilated Jewish elite: physicists, publicists, communal activists, and their wives. The first board was composed of: Mrs. S. Groszlik²¹, Mrs. Paulina Dickstein²², Helena Heryng, the wife of Zygmunt Heryng²³, wife of Leon Ettinger, wife of doctor Huzarski, wife of Edward Natanson²⁴, doctor Samuel Goldflam²⁵, doctor Izaak Cylkow²⁶, Ludwik Bergson²⁷, doctor Natanson, Ignacy Berenstein, Poznański, and Józef Kernbaum^{28 29}.

The JAPW adopted the goals and the structure of the Christian counterpart and operated in separate departments: employment agency, 'Hearth,' relief office, guardianship department, and asylum. Soon, the organization joined the Christian initiative of railway missions, and Jewish women were also present on the main railway stations in Warsaw. In the first year of its existence, the JAPW was the most active as an employment agency. It received about 350 work demands from unemployed Jewesses but was able to provide only 144 job places. Except for finding employment for women, usually as factory workers or domestic servants, the organization offered apprenticeships and loans. In the 'Hearth' of the JAPW, the illiterate former prostitutes were taught to write and read³⁰. At the request of parents, the organization contacted

¹⁸ Ed[ward] Chwalewik, *Z ekonomii społecznej*, „Przegląd tygodniowy życia społecznego, literatury i sztuk pięknych,” 13/27.06.1903, no. 26, p. 310.

¹⁹ *Yediyot Mekomiyot*, „Ha-Tsofe,” 20.05.1904, no. 416, p. 511.

²⁰ Henryk Nussbaum – (1849-1937) publicist, neurologist, and philosopher of medicine.

²¹ Probably she was the wife of Izrael Leon Groszlik (? -1904) who was publicist, *maskil*, communal activist, secretary of the Jewish Community Council in Warsaw.

²² Paulina Dickstein – (1861-1928) nee Natanson, wife of Samuel Dickstein who was mathematician, historian, and pedagogue.

²³ Zygmunt Heryng – (1854-1931) economist, socialist, and social activist.

²⁴ Edward Natanson – (1861-1940) industrialist and banker. Together with Leopold Kronenberg, Maurycy Poznański and Stanisław Rotward he was on the committee of building Warsaw Polytechnique.

²⁵ Samuel Goldflam – (1852-1932) neurologist and physician. He contributed to the establishment of Information Bureau for Jewish Emigrants, as well as the creation of Jewish Psychiatric Hospital in Otwock.

²⁶ Izaak Cylkow – (1841-1908) rabbi, preacher, and Bible translator. He supported the Polish-Jewish understanding and the Jewish participation in Polish life.

²⁷ Ludwik Bergson – (1863-1940) entrepreneur, philanthropist, and social activist. He was a son of Michał Bergson – the president of Jewish Community of Warsaw.

²⁸ Józef Kernbaum – (1856-1939) industrialist, supporter of Polish culture, patron of the Warsaw Learned Society. He was also a member of Jewish Community Council of Warsaw.

²⁹ *Ochrona kobiet żydowskiech*, „Kurier Polski,” 20.07/2.08.1906, no. 209, p. 1.

³⁰ *Ibidem*.

parallel associations in Berlin, London, and Saint Petersburg, to find missing girls³¹. The attempts of the Association to dissuade women from prostitution were not successful. In 1908, out of 22 fallen women who stayed in the asylum, only 7 (meaning less than one-third) kept the jobs offered by the organization. The rest of the women either returned to prostitution or remained in the asylum³².

The Jewish population showed minimal interest in the creation and further activity of the Warsaw JAPW. Despite the great importance of the problem which was Jewish prostitution and white slavery, repeatedly underlined in the Hebrew press, the society did not assist the newly-established organization in fighting with those negative phenomena. „Izraelita” claimed that the association failed in gaining the support of the society because:

The formation of the [Jewish] Association [for the Protection of Women] came at the time of Russian-Japanese war and the beginning of its activity at the awakening freedom movement distracting all of the more active social powers from the slow evolutionary work and directing them to the political arena³³.

However, since „Izraelita” and the members of JAPW alike represented the integrationist camp, one may assume that the journalist strived to justify the incapacity of gaining social support by the external factors. The readers and the contributors of this newspaper were yet among the members or a few donators of the JAPW who probably firmly believed in its mission. Therefore, to find the actual reasons for the organization’s failure one should look for the opinions about the organization expressed by other Jewish milieus that did not show their support to the Association. The loudest voice of complaint on the organization was heard during the infamous events in Warsaw in May 1905.

The Pimp Pogrom – an Evanescent Mobilization of a Broader Public

On the eve of Revolution of 1905, the crowd dominated by Jewish workers of Warsaw waged war against the city’s underworld who controlled local brothels and terrorized the inhabitants of the Jewish Warsaw’s quarter. For almost six days, between the 24th and the 30th of May, Jewish workers were destroying bordellos and beating their owners, pimps, and white slave dealers. As a result, more than a hundred bordellos were demolished, and many pimps left Warsaw for good³⁴.

³¹ Ibidem.

³² *Warszawskie Żydowskie Towarzystwo Ochrony Kobiet*, „Kurier Warszawski,” 10.07.1909, no. 188, p. 5.

³³ *Żydowskie Instytucje filantropijno-społeczne w Polsce. III Warszawskie Żydowskie Towarzystwo Ochrony Kobiet*, „Izraelita,” 5.08.1910, no. 16, p. 5.

³⁴ More on the Pimp Pogrom, see: A. Jakubczak, *Pogrom Domów Publicznych w Warszawie 1905*, University of Warsaw 2017 [master thesis].

Several separate factors contributed to this outburst of violence against Jewish prostitution and white slavery in the Russian Poland. One of them was the omnipresence of the trafficking in women and prostitution on the streets of Warsaw incited the hatred against Jewish underworld. In the months preceding the events, the procurers and their associates started to behave with unsupportable panache, kidnapping women in broad daylight as well as terrorizing the workers and craftsman³⁵. The incident that allegedly provoked that eruption of violence was another abduction of working-class women³⁶.

The dominant response of the Jewish public was supportive. The newspapers explained that the workers' actions were fully justified in not needed³⁷. „The revenge on the traffickers of women and all the bordellos' keepers done by the Jews was very useful” – praised one of the Hebrew newspapers' correspondent³⁸. The rioters not only cleared the streets from pimps and brothels but also affected the public and the Russian authorities bringing their attention to the problem of prostitution.

The disturbances contributed to the rise of the public concern about the problem of prostitution and white slavery. As aforementioned, though the Polish observers lamented on the spread of prostitution in Warsaw, the Associations for the Protection of Women had been isolated in their mission and had not received significant support from the general public. The bloody fight against the organizers of the prostitution witnessed by Warsaw inhabitants brought to the scene the problem of prostitution. Thanks to the Pimp pogrom, the program of the social organizations helping the fallen women, such as Warsaw JAPW, came to the fore of social attention³⁹. JAPW saw that as auspicious circumstances and resolved to take this as an opportunity to promote its program among the broader Jewish public:

Our society was too moderate and easy going to let this moral gangrene flourish in the low strata [of society] by turning away from it with disgust and abhorrence toward the 'happy sun' and the innocence which sometimes is hypocritical. The press discussed the significance of this disgrace more than once, but the echo of these admonitions was too weak [...]. The consequences of prostitution are so much more profound and more harmful to people than one can imagine. Its immense danger lies not only in the humiliation of human dignity and the deprivation of souls, but also in

³⁵ H. Mendel, *Memoir of a Jewish Revolutionary*, Winchester 1989, p. 35–36. *Ha-Mehuma be-Varsha*, „Ha-Mitspe,” 2.06.1905, no. 22, p. 6.

³⁶ *Krwawy sąd doraźny*, „Kurier Warszawski,” 25.05.1905, no. 143, p. 7.

³⁷ On the responses to the Pimp Pogrom in the Hebrew press see: A. Jakubczak, *Pogrom alfonsów w Warszawie 1905 r. w świetle prasy żydowskiej*, „Studia Judaica”, 2015, no. 2, p. 338–357.

³⁸ *Makat ha-Zima*, „Ha-Mitspe,” 9.06.1905, no. 23, p. 5.

³⁹ *Żydowskie Instytucje*, p. 5.

the fact that it is spreading physical diseases, not at all less severe than tuberculosis, or even such epidemics as cholera or the plague⁴⁰.

After the Pimp Pogrom, the prostitutes whose homes had been demolished came to the JAPW to seek help and support. The asylum of the JAPW filled with more than forty prostitutes⁴¹. Due to a deficiency in space at the JAPW's asylum, some of the women received accommodation from Jewish workers who had generously offered their homes⁴². The working-class families became involved in the fight against prostitution and white slavery in Warsaw, and their opposition was not temporary and limited to the clashes between workers and pimps. For the first time, the Jewish lower-classes showed their support of the JAPW's mission and assisted in finding shelter for the former prostitutes. The JAPW, in turn, provided financial aid to the families who had decided on hosting former prostitutes under their roofs. The asylum of the JAPW also filled with the women who had lost their homes in the Pogrom of the Pimps and desired to leave the profession of a prostitute.

Nevertheless, the interest in the mission of Warsaw JAPW and the involvement of the working-class in the venture was only evanescent. Other positive consequences of the Pimps Pogrom, such as a decline in bordellos and pimps' number, disappeared as well⁴³. The society's interest in the problem abated and the JAPW was again isolated in its mission. Already in the next year, the Association started to struggle with severe financial difficulties. Due to the lack of funds, the organization was forced to move its asylum from Wilanowska Street to a smaller place at Śliska Street, where the rent was lower⁴⁴.

On the eve of the World War I, the JAPW was still in the difficult financial situation. However, unuttered by these hardships the Association kept functioning and even expanded its activity. The war and the new political reality brought new challenges to the JAPW that continued to fulfill its mission until the outbreak of the World War II⁴⁵.

Reasons for Warsaw JAPW's Failure

Although there was, undoubtedly, high demand for an institution with the goals of helping the women „in danger” and combating white slavery, the Jewish public did not show much support for this venture. In consequence, the JAPW struggled with se-

⁴⁰ *Od Warszawskiego Żydowskiego Towarzystwa Ochrony Kobiet*, „Izraelita,” 1.06.1905, no. 21, p. 242. This quote has been used in my previous articles A Jakubczak, *Pogrom Alfonsów...* and A Jakubczak, *The Issue of Jews' participation...*

⁴¹ S. Wersteinowa, *Z tragizmów życia*, „Prawda,” 30.03.1907, no. 13, p. 145.

⁴² *Be-tfutsot Israel: Be-Artsenu: Varsha*, „Ha-Isefira,” 4.06.1905, no. 293, p. 3.

⁴³ D., „Co inni piszą:” *Uzasadnione skargi*, „Słowo,” 23.07./6.08.1905, no. 166, p. 1.

⁴⁴ *Żydowskie Instytucje*, p. 5.

⁴⁵ On the activities of the organization in the period 1918-1939 see: Goldyn, p. 311-322.

vere financial difficulties in the course of its entire existence. Many contemporary commentators believed that external factors, such as the indifference of the society and lack of governmental support, contributed to the failure of the JAPW's program⁴⁶. Others explained that the mission of the Warsaw Associations for the Protection of Women was not successful because they had not engaged other organizations, such as provincial or state organs, social associations, and religious leaders. The organizations should have cooperated on local, regional, and national levels as the women had been already trapped in the snares of prostitution even before arriving in Warsaw⁴⁷.

The religious divisions within the abolitionist movement were also considered as the vital factors of the Societies' failure in their mission. Contrary to the situation in Russian Poland, in Vienna, and Galicia the organizations fighting against prostitution and white slavery were not divided according to religious affiliation⁴⁸. Jews and Christians combined forces and worked side by side to assist women in need. The religious character of Warsaw's institutions impeded the possible partnership. Moreover, in the result of religious divisions and the underrepresentation of JAPW in the railway stations, the Jewish women in need not always received the assistance they had required. The religious affiliation did separate not only the organizations' volunteers but also the organizations with the targeted women. ChAPW reluctantly assisted Jewish women, even when JAPW was apparently not able to address the needs of all Jews who asked for help⁴⁹.

It is plausible that all these factors played a role in the failure of the JAPW's program. Nevertheless, I would locate the fundamental reasons for the failed mission of the Association in its very deficient character. From the very beginning, the JAPW due to its elitist nature was not able to fulfill its mission. As aforementioned, the founders of the Association were the most respected figures of the Jewish higher strata: physicians, lawyers, bankers, other intellectuals and their wives. Moreover, all of them belonged to the milieu that aspired to be rather part of Polish society and its culture than the Jewish one. Therefore, it seems that B. Zomakher, the author of Yiddish pamphlet regarding the connection between Jews and white slavery, made an accurate point on the discrepancy between the JAPW milieu and the targeted women from the working-class. On the eve of First World War, he described the JAPW as the most lifeless Jewish welfare organization in Warsaw. The Association's passivity and the reasons for it, Zomacher explained as follows:

⁴⁶ *Żydowskie Instytucje*, p. 6.

⁴⁷ W. Zaleski, p. 24.

⁴⁸ K. Stauter-Hasted, *The Devil's Chain*, p. 209.

⁴⁹ *Wiadomości*, „Czystość,” 1.08.1908, no. 3, p. 48.

It is not surprising [that the JAPW is lifeless], since it is absent on the Jewish street and it does not know what is happening in the Jewish world [...] The women who come (or suppose to come) to the broader circles of the [Jewish] society are not able to say a word in Yiddish, and instead they speak only Polish or Russian⁵⁰.

Class and cultural differences between the members of JAPW and the targeted women underlined the failure of the organization's program. The Associations for the Protection of Women were not familiar with the problems of working-class and migrating women and, thus, were not able to help them adequately. To improve the railway missions of the ChAPW and JAPW, a journalist of „Kurier Polski” recommended to „engage in the protection of traveling women representatives of the common folk who know better the urban perils and can more vigorously deal with scums lurking at the female newcomers”⁵¹.

The assimilated Jewish intellectuals did not comprehend the situation of working-class women in general and prostitutes in particular. Majority of the women who engaged in prostitution did so voluntarily, out of economic necessity. Underemployment and low-wages forced women to enter prostitution. The JAPW employment agency offered them positions of seamstresses or domestic servants they had escaped or tried to avoid⁵². Loans and cheap meals provided by JAPW could, in fact, alleviate the economic hardship and the plight of women, but only temporarily. In the long run, the Association was not able to improve the socio-economic situation of working-class women.

Moreover, the many-years' tenure of Henryk Nussbaum as the organization's president, widened the gap between the Polonized members of the JAPW and the women who needed their assistance. Nussbaum acted against directing more action toward the Yiddish speaking audience. The organization was more focused on receiving financial support from the higher social strata, and therefore it preserved its Polish-language, integrationist character⁵³. In result, the JAPW was not able to reach the women from the working-class who were „in danger” of entering prostitution or in financial need. The lack of organization's interest in reaching the women from lower-classes and understanding them to suggest that the JAPW had been perhaps created not to deal with prostitution and other problems of the Jewish lower classes. The reaction of the Polonized Jewish circles of Warsaw to the Pimp Pogrom illuminates

⁵⁰ B. Zomakher, *Froyen handel un prostitutsye*, Varshe 1914, p. 11.

⁵¹ *Towarzystwo Ochrony Kobiet*, „Kurier Polski,” 31.05.1908, no. 150, p. 4.

⁵² Majority of prostitutes in Russian Poland were former servants and seamstresses. See: J. Sikorska-Kulesza, *Zło tolerowane: Prostyucja w Królestwie Polskim w XIX wieku*, Warszawa 2004, p. 141

⁵³ *Towarzystwo Ochrony Kobiet...*, p. 4.

on their real attitude toward Jewish prostitution and trafficking and may explain the passiveness of the organization as well as the failure of its mission.

The assimilationist Jewish elites of Warsaw reacted critically to the Pimp Pogrom and were the only Jewish circle not supporting the rioters in their anti-prostitution actions. Heretofore „Izraelita,” the assimilationist newspaper representing the group above, had passed almost in silence the growth of prostitution and white slavery among Jews, but the Jewish participation in the riots demanded some response⁵⁴. The group reacted more similarly to the Polish observers than to the Jewish ones⁵⁵. Whereas the contributors to the Hebrew newspapers unanimously praised the actions of the workers, „Izraelita” condemned them for being brutal and against the letter of the law. Apparently, the violent behavior of Jewish workers threatened the reputation of the assimilationist circles who had already tried to hide, by passing in silence, other improper Jewish behaviors – such as prostitution or white slavery. The Polonized Jewish milieu was afraid that such an open fight against Jewish pimps would reveal the scope of the Jewish prostitution and white slavery. Since these circles were the only Jewish group not discussing the problem of prostitution and trafficking openly, we may assume that they tried to silence the issue not to incite anti-Semitic accusations⁵⁶. Other acculturated Jewish elites, for instance in Germany, struggled with a similar dilemma⁵⁷. On the one hand, they wondered whether acknowledging the existence of Jewish prostitution and white slavery and openly fighting it would not back

⁵⁴ The only article on Jewish prostitution published in „Izraelita” is aforementioned, *W sprawie ubogich dziewcząt*, „Izraelita,” 25.10./6.11.1874, p. 343. Also the anthology of „Izraelita” – „Izraelita” 1866-1915. *Wybór źródeł*, Kraków-Budapeszt 2015 by A. Jagodzińska and M. Wodziński demonstrates that the issue of prostitution or white slavery was not in the focus of that newspaper. To compare the scope of the interest in Jewish prostitution and trafficking and the debate on it see: A. Jakubczak, *The Jews' Participation in White Slavery and Prostitution as was Reflected in Hebrew Press between the years 1880 and 1914*, master thesis, University of Warsaw 2016.

⁵⁵ Polish press was reporting on the Pimp Pogrom for several days. Its sensational articles provided many details on the crowd destroying the brothels, their opponents, and the results of their actions. The dominant response of the Polish observers was condemnation of the workers actions. Except for single voices extolling the workers' fight against immorality, the Polish commentators considered the Pimp Pogrom as a political action organized by socialist circles of Warsaw, not necessarily having moral incentives. Contrary to that, the Jewish press presented the events in a less sensational tone and rather looked for explanation of the Pimp Pogrom. Moreover, the Jewish commentators almost unanimously commended the participants of the Pimp Pogrom and viewed the events as the moral crusade and the revenge on the elements of Jewish society that had been taking advantage of the workers and their women. More on the Polish reactions, see: J. Sikorska-Kulesza, „Sądy doraźne” nad prostytutką w Warszawie w maju 1905 roku w świetle prasy, „Rocznik Warszawski”, t. XXXV, 2007, p. 111-127. To compare with Jewish reactions, see: A. Jakubczak, „Pogrom alfonsów” w Warszawie 1905 r. w świetle prasy żydowskiej, „Studia Judaica” 2015, 2 (18), p. 338-357.

⁵⁶ Also rabbis of Eastern Europe had been reluctant to admit the existence of widespread Jewish prostitution and white slavery. Several rabbinic figures from Galicia and Lithuania called the rabbis for action in the Hebrew press in late nineteenth century. The rabbis begun to tackle the issue concurrently to the integrationists' circles. In 1903, religious leaders of Eastern European and German Jewry joined the German Jewish activists in a conference organized in Lviv for the purpose of mobilizing the fight against white slavery. More on the rabbis' responses to white slavery and prostitution see: A. Jakubczak, *Jews' Participation in White Slavery and Prostitution as was Reflected in Hebrew Press between the Years 1880s and 1914*, master thesis, University of Warsaw 2016, p. 40-41.

⁵⁷ M. Kaplan, *Prostitution, Morality Crusades and Feminism: German-Jewish Feminists and the Campaign Against White Slavery*, „Women's Studies International Forum,” 1982, vol. 5, no. 6, p. 622.

up the anti-Semitic accusations of Jewish immorality. On the other hand, ignoring the problem and not fighting it could also fuel anti-Semitic propaganda⁵⁸.

It seems that the Polonized Jewish elites of Warsaw found a golden mean that would satisfy the surrounding Polish society and, hence, protect their reputation. They decided not to discuss excessively the issue of Jewish prostitution and white slavery in their press platform, accessible to the Polish Christian public that would confirm the anti-Semitic accusation of conspicuous Jewish involvement in the commercial sex industry. Concurrently, they founded JAPW based on the same grounds as the Christian counterpart venture. The establishment of the Association was not the response to the Jewish society's needs but to the Polish Christian expectations from Polonized Jewish elites – it supposed to prove the Jewish participation in the national undertaking of society's moral improvement.

Conclusions

The Warsaw Jewish Association for the Protection of Women emerged in the response of rising social concern over the growth of prostitution and white slavery but did not answer the needs of the Jewish society. The Jewish assimilated circles that organized the Association did not understand the needs of women they targeted. The methods used by JAPW to achieve its goal of protecting the women from prostitution were unsuitable to the socio-economic situation of the working-class. This incomprehension of Jewish working-class and the problem of prostitution, together with the cultural and linguistic differences between JAPW and the women interested in its assistance, hindered the success of the Association's program.

This study of JAPW and the critique it received also provides interesting insights about Polish-Jewish relations and the internal divisions within Jewish society of Russian Partition. As demonstrated, although Christian and Jewish Poles shared their concerns over the increasing number of prostitutes, the religious prejudices proved to be stronger than the common mission. The assimilated Jewish circles of Warsaw were rejected both by the surrounding Polish society and the majority of Jewish society represented by the working-class.

⁵⁸ Ibidem.

Warszawskie Żydowskie Towarzystwo Ochrony Kobiet i jego działalność w latach 1904-1914. Dlaczego się nie udało?

Artykuł omawia genezę i początki działalności pierwszego na ziemiach polskich Żydowskiego Stowarzyszenia na Rzecz Ochrony Kobiet, założonego w Warszawie w roku 1904. Choć społeczność żydowska zmagano się z rosnącym zjawiskiem prostytucji i handlu kobietami, Stowarzyszenie nie otrzymało wsparcia ani nie doczekało się oznak zainteresowania ze strony żydowskiej opinii publicznej. W rzeczywistości, organizacja była szeroko krytykowana, a jej niezdolność do rozwiązania problemu „białego niewolnictwa” była jedną z przyczyn wybuchu przemocy ulicznej w Warszawie w 1905 r., tzw. pogromu sutenerów. Autorka starała się ustalić, dlaczego organizacja była krytykowana i zmarginalizowana w żydowskim życiu społecznym, a także odpowiedzieć na pytanie, co doprowadziło do ostatecznej porażki jej misji.