

Summary

The study is a monograph on the history of the Jewish community in the interwar period in Międzyrzec Podlaski. All aspects of its activity were analyzed: apart from outlining the history of Jewish settlement in the city, the demographic structure, the functioning of the Jewish religious community and religious life, the nature of economic activity, the activities of political parties with particular emphasis on the activity of in the field of local government, the specificity and activity of the Jewish workers' movement, education, participation in cultural, educational and sports associations.

The main aim of the dissertation is an attempt to show the multidimensional and multifaceted existence of Jews from Międzyrzec Podlaski by outlining their activities on all levels of life. The detailed purposes of the dissertation include an attempt to show the relations taking place within the Jewish community, relations between individual Jewish parties during parliamentary and local elections, and their impact on the development and nature of the Jewish professional movement. Moreover, the specific goal is to outline the specificity of the impact of the broadly understood economic environment on the activity of Jewish political groups and the functioning of the Jewish community in Międzyrzec.

The leading research assumption of the dissertation is the position that the Jewish community of Międzyrzec Podlaski in the interwar period was subject to constant social interactions, the determinants of which were primarily: legislation on national minorities during the Second Polish Republic, the multitude of political trends, the activity of state organs towards Jews and the Polish relations in the city, which in a special way determined the activities of the City Council.

In order to achieve the above goals, the following research theses were verified: the Jewish population of Międzyrzec Podlaski in the interwar period, constituting the majority of the total number of inhabitants, was an inseparable and inalienable element of the city's social structure; the Jewish community of Międzyrzec was characterized by a lack of homogeneity in the socio-political field; representatives of the Jewish population, depending on their political sympathies, organized themselves into socio-political, economic, cultural and professional structures that took various forms; the brushmaking industry in the interwar period significantly influenced the development and specificity of the activity of Jewish political parties and trade unions; Jewish trade unions existing in the city, associating representatives of specific professional groups, created favorable conditions for the disguised political activity of left-wing political groups; the scope of activities of Jewish political parties went far beyond typical

political activities. One of its important elements was activity in the field of culture and education. In this context, this element requires a detailed examination, as it is structurally related to the socio-political processes taking place in Międzyrzec during the Second Polish Republic. In the interwar period, the political activity of Jews, and in particular its dimension in the local government field, met with firm contracting and fighting the initiatives of Jewish political parties by the authorities of local state administration structures.

The chronological scope of the dissertation covers the period of the existence of the Second Republic of Poland from the moment Poland regained independence in November 1918. The above chronological limit was exceeded solely in order to present the genesis of the presence of the Jewish community in the city, dating back to the 16th century. The second turning point is the date of the outbreak of World War II on 1 September 1939. The military operations interrupted the actual existence of the Second Polish Republic, at the same time causing significant changes in the specificity of the living conditions of citizens under German occupation, in particular the living conditions of the Jewish minority, which was the main target of persecution and anti-national policy on the part of the occupant, and finally its extermination.

A number of research methods were used to implement the research problem, due to the complex dimension of the research carried out. In order to present the specificity of the existence of Jews in Międzyrzec before 1918, a traditional analysis of historical and political science sources was used, thanks to which the sequences of events that marked the most important historical moments of the settlement of Jews in Poland and in Międzyrzec Podlaski were recreated. Directly connected with it was the use of elements of the geographical method, thanks to which the influence of geographical conditions on the specificity and other determinants of Jewish settlement in Międzyrzec over the centuries was diagnosed. The method indirectly correlated with the genetic method is the systemic method, which was used to determine the connections between the Jewish population of Międzyrzec and the surroundings and external factors. In the context of demographic issues, socio-professional and national structure, issues related to the economic activities of Jews from Międzyrzec and political issues, it was necessary to apply elements of the statistical method. This made it possible to define certain phenomena in quantitative categories, which, due to the characteristics of the dissertation, made it possible to specify selected aspects, supplementing the missing qualitative data. In order to define the legal framework covering the activities of the Jewish minority in the interwar period, it was necessary to use elements of the institutional and legal method. An analysis of legal acts, and in particular of the documentation produced by the central legislative authorities, state administration and local self-government bodies, it's necessary to describe the

functioning of the Jewish religious community in Międzyrzec and the Jewish community in the city. Another method that was used in the doctoral dissertation was the comparative method. Thanks to it, certain phenomena occurring in the Jewish community of Międzyrzec were confronted with those occurring in other communities, in particular in nearby Radzyń Podlaski, important mainly due to the fact that it was the headquarters of powiat authorities. The events observed in the two remaining and, at the same time, the only settlements in the Radzyń county (*powiat*), i.e. Komarówka and Wołyń, were confronted to a lesser extent. These localities, due to the size of their Jewish communities, did not constitute a valid field for comparative studies with the Międzyrzec community.

The work is divided into 6 chapters. The first chapter is an attempt to introduce and present the determinants of Jewish settlement in Poland from the earliest times to the outbreak of the Great War. Particular emphasis was placed on presenting the most important historical moments that influenced the settlement process and the legal situation of the Jewish population. This chapter also presents the genesis of the Jewish settlement in Międzyrzec, showing the changing demographic structure of Międzyrzec Jews from the beginning of the community's existence to the years immediately preceding the period that was the appropriate framework for the doctoral dissertation.

The next chapter is an attempt to show the genesis of the Międzyrzec Jewish community from its beginnings to the time preceding the time limits specified in the dissertation. In this chapter, the emphasis is placed on an attempt to reconstruct the property status of the community, with particular emphasis on the real estate under its management. In addition, the focus and description of the relations within the community itself at the turn of the 18th and 19th centuries were polarized due to the emergence of new religious trends, including Hasidism.

The third chapter presents a comprehensive picture of the economic situation of the Jews of Międzyrzec. As part of this chapter, three subchapters have been outlined, presenting respectively: a commercial, craft and industrial network with a particular focus on the Szczecin industry characteristic for Międzyrzec and cooperative organizations, including institutions with banking and credit specificity.

The next chapter deals with political life. The tendencies and political currents present in the life of individual social strata of the local Jewish population are shown. The activity of individual political parties was adequately presented, including those with the most numerous group of supporters: socialist, Zionist, as well as camps associating a much smaller number of adherents, i.e. communists, and Orthodox Jews on the opposite pole.

The activity of Jews in the Międzyrzec Town Council is presented in a separate chapter. This state of the matter is dictated by the relatively good condition of preservation of the source documentation, including the protocols of the Council meetings from 1927-1939, when Jews actually had an influence on the city's governance. The chapter presents the specificity of Polish-Jewish relations prevailing in local government institutions, which to some extent reflected the relations between two communities in the city. Polish-Jewish relations are generally signaled and discussed on the occasion of the characteristics of individual aspects of the social and political life of the Jewish population in the multi-ethnic urban organism that Międzyrzec was in the interwar period.

The last chapter is an attempt to present a picture of the cultural and educational life of Jews in Międzyrzec. It discusses the issues of Jewish education, the functioning of cultural organizations and charitable institutions. Unfortunately, due to deficiencies in the source material, these issues were described in a manner adequate to the level of the preserved archival documentation and supplemented with a few studies and memories.

The dissertation finishes with a summary in which an attempt was made to summarize the data cited in individual chapters. The work is provided with annexes and a list of sources.