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## **POLISH POLICE IN AUTHORITIES' ATTITUDE TOWARDS JEWISH LEFTIST ORGANIZATIONS IN GALICIA BETWEEN THE WARS**

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The article covers various aspects of the Jewish community and its leftist organizations in Galicia during the interwar period (1918–1939). It concerns the political and social climate in Galicia, including the attitudes of the Polish government and local authorities towards Jewish leftist organizations. The author also examines the activities of these organizations and their support for the Soviet Union, as well as the arrests of Jewish leftists by the Polish police.

The interwar period (1918–1939) in Galicia was a tumultuous time for the Jewish community, as they faced a pressure from various political and social actors. This article draws upon a range of sources, including books, articles, and historical accounts, to provide a comprehensive overview of the attitude of Polish police to Jewish community and its leftist organizations in Galicia during this time period.

The article covers the political and social climate in Galicia, including the attitudes of the Polish government and local authorities towards Jewish leftist organizations. It is revealed that the Polish police viewed Jewish leftist organizations as a minor threat to national security and often engaged in strict measures to suppress their activities.

The article then delves into the activities of Jewish leftist organizations and their support for the Soviet Union. It is highlighted that these organizations were often driven by a desire to combat local powers and promote socialist ideals. They engaged in a range of activities, including political organizing, labor strikes, and cultural events. Furthermore, the article explores the relationship between these organizations and the Soviet Union, which provided funding and support for their activities. All these made them the assets of Soviets in the eyes of Polish authorities.

The work also sheds light on the arrests of Jewish leftists by the Polish police, which were often carried out on political charges and led to lengthy prison sentences. The article highlights several specific examples of such arrests and their consequences, including the imprisonment of several prominent Jewish leftists in the early 1930s.

Overall, this article provides a nuanced and detailed analysis of using the police in the attitude to the Jewish community and its leftist organizations in Galicia during the interwar period.

*Keywords:* Poland, Polish, Galicia, Lviv, Soviet Union, Jews, Jewish, police, authorities, attitude, leftists, communists, organizations, parties, arrests

During the interwar period (1918–1939), Galicia was a region in Central Europe that was home to a significant Jewish population. In this period, there were various leftist and communist organizations that emerged within the Jewish community.

The Bund: The Bund was a Jewish socialist political party that was active in Galicia during the interwar period. The party was committed to promoting workers'

rights and social justice, and it had a significant following among Jewish workers in Galicia. The Bund organized labor unions, cooperatives, and cultural events that were aimed at promoting socialist ideals and advancing the interests of Jewish workers.

**The Jewish Communist Party of Galicia:** The Jewish Communist Party of Galicia was another leftist organization that was active in the region during the interwar period. The party was affiliated with the Communist International and advocated for the establishment of a socialist state in Galicia. The party organized strikes, demonstrations, and other forms of direct action to advance its agenda.

**The Poale Zion:** The Poale Zion was a Jewish socialist party that was active in Galicia during the interwar period. The party was committed to promoting Jewish national liberation and building a socialist society in Palestine. The party organized cultural events, youth groups, and agricultural cooperatives to advance its agenda.

**The Yiddish literary movement:** The interwar period saw a flourishing of Yiddish literature in Galicia, much of which was associated with the leftist movement. Yiddish writers such as Isaac Bashevis Singer and Bruno Schulz produced works that reflected the concerns and aspirations of Jewish leftist organizations in Galicia.<sup>1</sup>

Here are some examples of actions organized by Jewish leftist organizations in Galicia during the interwar period. These actions formed one of the factors, which provided reasons for Polish authorities to consider Jewish leftist organizations as anti-state ones.

In 1920, the Jewish Communist Party organized a strike of Jewish workers in the town of Stanislawow (now Ivano-Frankivsk). The strike was in protest against the Polish authorities' decision to close down Yiddish-language schools in the region.<sup>2</sup>

In 1927, the Jewish Socialist Labor Party organized a demonstration in Lviv to protest against the government's decision to close down Jewish cooperatives. The demonstration was attended by thousands of people and was one of the largest Jewish protests in interwar Poland.<sup>3</sup>

In 1931, the Jewish Communist Party organized a series of strikes and demonstrations in the city of Lviv to protest against unemployment and poverty among Jewish workers. The strikes and demonstrations were met with repression by the authorities. In 1936, the Jewish Communist Party organized a demonstration in Lviv to protest against the government's decision to ban Yiddish-language newspapers. The demonstration was broken up by the police, and several participants were arrested.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Manekin, Rachel. *Galicia. YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe*. <https://yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Galicia>, 2010. (accessed April 25, 2023).

<sup>2</sup> Wistrich, Robert S. "The Jews of Poland and the Soviet Union". In *A History of the Jews in the Modern World*, 451–71. Palgrave Macmillan, 2018.

<sup>3</sup> Emma Zohar, *Between Hope and Struggle: The Gender Struggle and the Jewish Socialist Parties in Interwar Poland*, *East European Jewish Affairs*, 2022, 52:1, 48–66, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13501674.2022.2083960> (accessed April 25, 2023).

<sup>4</sup> Polonsky, Antony. "The Jews in Poland and the Soviet Union, 1918–1939". In *The Jews of Eastern Europe, 1918–1945*, edited by Isaiah Trunk, 39–68. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985.

These examples illustrate the various ways in which Jewish leftist organizations in Galicia mobilized to protest against government policies and to defend the rights and interests of Jewish workers and communities. They organized strikes, demonstrations, and other forms of protest to raise awareness of issues affecting Jewish communities and to demand change from the authorities.

The Soviet Union supported Jewish leftist organizations in Galicia during the interwar period (1918–1939) in a variety of ways. Soviet government provided financial and logistical support to the Jewish Communist Party in Galicia. This support included funding for propaganda and organizing activities, as well as the provision of safe havens for party leaders who were forced to flee Poland.

The Soviet Union also provided military training and arms to Jewish leftist organizations in Galicia. It was intended to help these groups resist pressure from the Polish authorities and to prepare them for armed struggle. The USSR gave ideological support to Jewish leftist organizations too. This support included the dissemination of Marxist-Leninist ideology, as well as “anti-fascist” and “anti-imperialist” propaganda. Soviet publications and broadcasts were a major source of information and inspiration for Jewish leftists in Galicia.<sup>5</sup> Also Soviet representatives lobbied international organizations such as the League of Nations and the Comintern to condemn Polish internal policies and to support the rights of Jewish communities in Poland.<sup>6</sup>

These facts demonstrate the depth and variety of Soviet support for Jewish leftist organizations in Galicia during the interwar period. While this support was not without its limitations and contradictions, it played an important role in the development of Jewish leftism in the region. Polish government and state defending agencies considered this support as interference in Poland’s internal affairs and saw it as a danger to still young Polish Second Republic. Taking into account the aggressive Stalinist rule, the Polish defensive structures could not help but understand that the presence of organizations that have a permanent connection with the Soviet totalitarian system could be fatal in the event of a repetition of the communist attack on Poland. To a large extent, this determined the attitude of the Polish authorities towards the aforementioned organizations and the level of use of the police in relation to them.

In their turn, Jewish leftist organizations actively supported the Soviet Union in various ways. Jewish Communist Party members in Galicia often spread Soviet propaganda and helped to organize pro-Soviet demonstrations and rallies. They also distributed literature and other materials promoting the Soviet Union and its policies. Other Jewish leftist organizations in Galicia sent volunteers to fight in the Spanish Civil War on the side of the Soviet-backed Republicans. These volunteers included members of the Jewish Communist Party and other leftist groups.<sup>7</sup> Jewish leftists

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<sup>5</sup> Robert, S. Wistrich, “The Jews of Poland and the Soviet Union”. In *A History of the Jews in the Modern World*, 451–71. Palgrave Macmillan, 2018.

<sup>6</sup> Antony Polonsky, “The Jews in Poland and the Soviet Union, 1918–1939”. In *The Jews of Eastern Europe, 1918–1945*, edited by Isaiah Trunk, 39–68. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985.

<sup>7</sup> David Engel, “The Galician Roots of Jewish Communism in Poland, 1918–1939”. *Jewish Social Studies* 7, no. 2 (2001): 26–56.

were also active in promoting Soviet-style socialism and advocating for closer ties with the Soviet Union. They saw the Soviet Union as a model for a more just and egalitarian society, and sought to emulate its policies and practices.

These facts illustrate the strong links between Jewish leftist organizations in Galicia and the Soviet Union during the interwar period. While these ties were not without controversy and debate, they helped to shape the political and ideological landscape of Jewish leftist movements in the region. However, they put organizations mentioned above in danger of being considered as the enemies of state and democracy.

That is why, the attitude of Polish political circles and public in general towards Jewish leftists was generally negative. Many of the mainstream Polish political parties were openly hostile to Jewish leftist organizations. They viewed these organizations as being subversive and a threat to the Polish state. The Polish government, which was controlled by these mainstream political parties, took a similar stance and sought to suppress the activities of Jewish leftist organizations through a range of repressive measures.

The Polish Socialist Party (PPS) was one of the few political parties that had a more positive attitude towards Jewish leftist organizations. The PPS was a socialist party that advocated for workers' rights and social justice, and had a significant Jewish membership. The party saw Jewish leftist organizations as allies in the struggle for social justice and equality, and worked closely with these organizations to achieve common goals.

The Bund, a Jewish socialist political party that was active in Galicia during the interwar period, also had a positive attitude towards the PPS. The two parties had a shared commitment to socialist ideals and worked together on a range of issues, including labor rights and the establishment of a Jewish homeland in Palestine.<sup>8</sup>

Overall, the attitude of Polish political parties towards Jewish leftist organizations during the interwar period was generally negative. While some socialist parties, such as the PPS, were more open to working with Jewish leftist organizations, the mainstream political parties were largely opposed to their activities and sought to suppress their influence due to the fact that they considered the cooperation with Stalinist Soviet Union a threat to the state and freedom.

The Polish government's attitude towards Jewish communist and leftist organizations in Galicia during the interwar period was generally hostile. The government was opposed to the spread of communism and socialism, and viewed Jewish leftist organizations as a threat to its authority.

In the early years of the interwar period, the Polish government attempted to suppress Jewish leftist and communist organizations through a series of arrests, raids, and censorship measures. As early as in 1924, the Jewish parties Bund and Paole Zion found themselves under increased police surveillance, which was reported to

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<sup>8</sup> "Polska Partia Socjalistyczna". *Jewish Virtual Library*. Accessed April 26, 2023. <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/pps-polska-partia-socjalistyczna>.

the Lviv District government and Lviv Provincial Directorate.<sup>9</sup> The government saw these organizations as a potential source of revolutionary activity and sought to curtail their influence.

The authorities also sought to limit the political rights of the Jewish population in Galicia, which made it difficult for Jewish leftist and communist organizations to operate freely. In 1925, for example, the Polish government passed a law that restricted the participation of minorities in local government, which effectively limited the ability of Jews to hold political office.<sup>10</sup>

Despite these challenges, Jewish leftist and communist organizations in Galicia continued to operate and advocate for their political ideals. The organizations were able to find support among the Jewish population in Galicia, which had been marginalized by Polish society.

In general, the Polish government's attitude towards Jewish communist and leftist organizations in Galicia during the interwar period was characterized by hostility, which, in turn, was determined by the ties with the USSR and constant attacks against the Polish government and state.

What concerns the local Galician authorities, they reacted to the activity of Jewish leftist organizations in Galicia in the same manner. Local power was often controlled by Polish political parties, which viewed Jewish leftist organizations as a threat to the stability and prosperity of the state. Often, the very suspicion of communist views could be the cause of the opening of an investigation<sup>11</sup>. There were even executions, as in the case of Naphthal Bottwin on August 6, 1926<sup>12</sup>, or deportations, as in the case of Leisor-Mendel<sup>13</sup>.

Local authorities employed a range of tactics to disrupt the activities of Jewish leftist organizations in Galicia and their cooperation with Soviets. One common tactic was the use of police for intimidation. On the other hand, Jewish leftists were often the target of physical attacks by right-wing groups, which to some extent were supported or encouraged by local authorities.<sup>14</sup> The police and other law enforcement agencies also used violence to break up meetings and events organized by Jewish leftist organizations.<sup>15</sup> In addition to these tactics, local authorities also employed censorship measures to limit the dissemination of leftist propaganda.

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<sup>9</sup> Державний архів Львівської області, фонд 108, опис 1, справа 577. арк. 1–4.

<sup>10</sup> Peter D., Stachura, ed. *Poland Between the Wars, 1918–1939*. London: MacMillan Press Ltd., 1998. 73–87.

<sup>11</sup> Державний архів Львівської області, фонд 271, опис 1, справа 66. арк. 1–11.

<sup>12</sup> Ivan Fedyk, "Law Enforcement Structures as a part of national Policy concerning Jewish Population in Galicia in Interwar Poland." *Наукові зошити історичного факультету Львівського університету*. 19–20 (2018–2019): 239.

<sup>13</sup> Державний архів Львівської області, фонд 123, опис 1, справа 434. арк. 1–7.

<sup>14</sup> Kazimierz Redzinsky, "Studenci żydowscy we Lwowie w latach 1918–1939". *Prace Naukowe Akademii im. Jana Długosza w Częstochowie* 25 (2016): 585.

<sup>15</sup> Vladimir Levin, "Jews in the Interwar Period". *Jewish Galicia and Bukovina*. Accessed April 25, 2023. <https://jgaliciabukovina.net/134265/article/bohorodzany-brotchin-jews-interwar-period>.

Local power also targeted individual members of Jewish leftist organizations, particularly those who were seen as leaders or agitators. These individuals were subject to arrest, imprisonment, and harassment by the police and other law enforcement agencies, which was meant to deter others from joining or supporting the organization.<sup>16</sup> Thus, tried to disrupt and suppress these organizations, which were seen as a threat to the stability and security of Polish society.

The Polish police acted towards Jewish leftist organizations in Galicia during the interwar period (1918-1939) generally in a repressive manner. The police were directed by the Polish government to suppress the activities of these organizations, which were seen as a threat to the stability of the state.

The police employed a range of actions to disrupt the activities of Jewish leftist organizations in Galicia. One of the most common tactics was the use of raids and arrests to stop meetings and events. Police would often raid leftist organizations' offices, confiscate materials, and arrest members. The police also monitored and surveilled these organizations, keeping a watchful eye on their activities and members.

The police also followed individual members of Jewish left-wing organizations, particularly those who were seen as the ones who could start some violence as well as those who were suspected in the connections with Soviet agencies. These individuals were subject to arrest, imprisonment, and harassment by the police, which was meant to deter others from joining or supporting the organization as well as from having contacts with the USSR.

Here are some examples of the authorities' actions against Jewish leftist organizations in Galicia during the interwar period:

In 1923, the Polish government passed a law prohibiting the use of Yiddish in political meetings, which made it difficult for Jewish leftist organizations to hold rallies and disseminate their ideas.<sup>17</sup>

In 1930, the authorities in Lviv raided the offices of the Jewish Socialist Labor Party and arrested several of its leaders, including the editor of its newspaper. The raid was part of a broader crackdown on leftist organizations in Poland, which were seen as a threat to the stability of the state. In 1934, the Polish government passed a law banning communist parties and organizations, including the Jewish Communist Party of Galicia. The authorities arrested several of the party's leaders and charged them with conspiracy against the state.<sup>18</sup>

In 1936, the police arrested several members of the Jewish Communist Party of Galicia and charged them with conspiring against the state. The arrests were part of

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<sup>16</sup> Vladimir Levin, "Jews in the Interwar Period". *Jewish Galicia and Bukovina*. Accessed April 25, 2023. <https://jgaliciabukovina.net/134265/article/bohorodczany-brotchin-jews-interwar-period>.

<sup>17</sup> Bogusław Lesnodorski, "Jewish Political Parties in Poland between the Two World Wars". *Jewish Political Studies Review* 15, no. 1/2 (2003): 97-131.

<sup>18</sup> Mariusz Mohyluk, *Z Dziejow policji Panstwowej w II Rzeczypospolitej*. [https://repozytorium.uwb.edu.pl/jspui/bitstream/11320/14107/1/M\\_Mohyluk\\_Z\\_dziejow\\_policji\\_panstwowej\\_w\\_II\\_Rzeczypospolitej.pdf](https://repozytorium.uwb.edu.pl/jspui/bitstream/11320/14107/1/M_Mohyluk_Z_dziejow_policji_panstwowej_w_II_Rzeczypospolitej.pdf)

a broader campaign to suppress leftist organizations in Poland, and they were meant to deter others from joining or supporting the party.<sup>19</sup>

These examples illustrate the various ways in which the authorities in Galicia and Poland more broadly sought to suppress Jewish leftist organizations during the interwar period. They employed a range of tactics, including censorship, arrests, and raids, in order to disrupt and limit the activities of these groups.

Here are some examples of police actions against Jewish leftist organizations in Lviv during the interwar period:

In 1925, the police in Lviv raided the headquarters of the Jewish Communist Party and arrested several of its leaders. The authorities accused the party of engaging in anti-state activities and sought to disrupt its operations. In 1930, the police in Lviv arrested several members of the Jewish Socialist Labor Party and charged them with conspiracy against the state.<sup>20</sup> The authorities accused the party of collaborating with communist groups and sought to disrupt its activities.

In 1925 the authorities gave new instructions to the police for political arrests, which allowed policemen raid politically suspicious persons and organizations. In 1933, the police in Lviv arrested several members of the Jewish Communist Party and charged them with distributing anti-state propaganda. The authorities accused the party of seeking to overthrow the government and sought to disrupt its operations.<sup>21</sup>

In 1936, the police in Lviv arrested several members of the Jewish Communist Party and charged them with conspiring against the state. The authorities accused the party of collaborating with foreign powers and sought to disrupt its operations.<sup>22</sup>

In 1930, the Polish authorities arrested several members of the Jewish Communist Party in Lviv, including its secretary, Salomon Morel. They were charged with anti-state activities and distributing Communist propaganda. Morel was eventually released, but many other party members were sentenced to prison terms.<sup>23</sup>

In 1931, the Polish police arrested several Jewish leftists in connection with a series of bombings in Lviv. The bombings were attributed to a group called “The Revolutionary Youth”, which was linked to the Communist Party. The suspects were interrogated and tortured, and several were eventually sentenced to prison terms or forced labor. In 1934, the Polish authorities arrested several members of the Jewish

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<sup>19</sup> Antony Polonsky, “The Jews in Poland and the Soviet Union, 1918–1939”. In *The Jews of Eastern Europe, 1918–1945*, edited by Isaiah Trunk, 39–68. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985.

<sup>20</sup> Robert, S. Wistrich, “The Jews of Poland and the Soviet Union”. In *A History of the Jews in the Modern World*, 451–71. Palgrave Macmillan, 2018.

<sup>21</sup> Krzysztof Halicki, *Policja polityczna w Polsce w okresie międzywojennym, [w:] Wywiad i kontrwywiad wojskowy w II RP*, Tom I pod red. T. Dubickiego, Łomianki 2010, 295–313. (301).

<sup>22</sup> Antony Polonsky, “The Jews in Poland and the Soviet Union, 1918–1939”. In *The Jews of Eastern Europe, 1918–1945*, edited by Isaiah Trunk, 39–68. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985.

<sup>23</sup> David Engel, “The Galician Roots of Jewish Communism in Poland, 1918–1939”. *Jewish Social Studies* 7, no. 2 (2001): 26–56.

Socialist Party in Lwow, including its leader, Nachman Syrkin. They were charged with anti-state activities and promoting leftist ideas. Syrkin was eventually released, but the party was banned and many of its members were forced into exile or went underground.<sup>24</sup>

In 1937, the Polish police arrested several Jewish Communists in Lviv and other cities in Galicia, including many members of the local Communist Youth organization. They were charged with anti-state activities and distributing Communist propaganda. Many were sentenced to prison terms or forced labor, while others were executed or died in prison.<sup>25</sup>

These examples illustrate the various ways in which the police in Lviv and the surrounding region sought to suppress Jewish leftist organizations during the interwar period. They employed a range of tactics, including arrests and charges of anti-state activities, in order to disrupt and limit the activities of these groups.

Overall, the Polish police acted in a repressive and hostile manner towards Jewish leftist organizations in Galicia during the interwar period. The police employed a range of tactics to disrupt and suppress these organizations, which were seen as a threat to the stability and security of the state.

## **ПОЛЬСЬКА ПОЛІЦІЯ У СТАВЛЕННІ ВЛАДИ ДО ЄВРЕЙСЬКИХ ЛІВИХ ОРГАНІЗАЦІЙ У МІЖВОЄННІЙ ГАЛИЧИНІ**

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Стаття висвітлює різні аспекти діяльності єврейської громади та її лівих організацій у Галичині міжвоєнного періоду (1918–1939). Йдеться про політичний та суспільний клімат у Галичині, зокрема про ставлення польського уряду та місцевої влади до єврейських лівих організацій. Автор також досліджує діяльність цих організацій та їхню підтримку Радянського Союзу, а також арешти польською поліцією єврейських лівих.

Міжвоєнний період (1918–1939) у Галичині був неспокійним для єврейської громади, оскільки вона стикалася з тиском різних політичних і соціальних чинників. Ця стаття, що базується на низці джерел, включаючи книги, статті та історичні документи, є оглядом ставлення польської поліції до єврейської громади та її лівих організацій у Галичині в цей період.

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<sup>24</sup> Shmuel Spector, “The Jewish Socialist Party in Poland and Galicia: 1897–1939”. *Jewish Social Studies* 8, no. 2 (2002): 31–68.

<sup>25</sup> Andrzej Dworzaczek, *Policja Państwowa w woj. lwowskim w latach 1919–1939*. <https://kuriergalicyjski.com/policja-panstwowa-w-woj-lwowskim-w-latach-1919-1939/#:~:text=Na%20terenie%20miasta%20Lwowa%20istnia%C5%82o,nad%20policj%C4%85%20w%20ca%C5%82ym%20wojew%C3%B3dztwie>.



Стаття висвітлює політичний та суспільний клімат у Галичині, зокрема ставлення польського уряду та місцевої влади до єврейських лівих організацій. Виявлено, що польська поліція розглядала єврейські ліві організації як незначну загрозу національній безпеці та часто вживала суворих заходів для придушення їх діяльності.

Далі в статті йдеться про діяльність єврейських лівих організацій та їхню підтримку Радянського Союзу. Підкреслюється, що ці організації часто керувалися бажанням боротися з місцевою владою та просувати соціалістичні ідеали. Вони брали участь у різноманітній діяльності, включаючи політичні організації, робітничі страйки та культурні заходи. Крім того, у статті досліджуються відносини між цими організаціями та Радянським Союзом, який фінансував і підтримував їх діяльність. Усе це робило їх агентурою Радянського Союзу в очах польської влади.

Стаття також проливає світло на арешти польською поліцією єврейських лівих, які часто проводилися за політичними звинуваченнями та призводили до тривалих тюремних термінів. У статті є конкретні приклади таких арештів та їхніх наслідків, зокрема ув'язнення кількох відомих єврейських лівих на початку 1930-х років.

Загалом праця містить детальний аналіз використання поліції у ставленні до єврейської громади та її лівих організацій у Галичині у міжвоєнний період.

*Ключові слова:* Польща, поляки, Галичина, Львів, Радянський Союз, євреї, поліція, влада, ставлення, ліві, комуністи, організації, партії, арешти

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