

Relations between Poland and Eretz Yisrael before 1948

■ The State of Israel did not exist from the ancient fall until the proclamation of independence on 14th May 1948. At the end of the 18th century, Russia, Prussia and Austria partitioned the First Republic of Poland, for which reason the country was erased from the political map of the world for over one hundred years. It was only in 1918 that the Second Republic of Poland was established. Nevertheless, the relations between Poland and Eretz Yisrael had been shaping long before the Jewish State became independent, and continued even when Poland became inexistent as a separate political organism. Taking into account such complicated and difficult histories, the dynamism of these contacts and their varied character related to culture, religion, economy, politics and other fields, may be surprising.

Jews came to Poland in medieval times when the country's statehood was being created. Numerous Jewish families had a longer settlement tradition in Poland than people who later accused them of foreignness. However, other tribal and ethnic groups were united by Christianity. Jews stood out from the very beginning due to their different customs and, above all, different religion. A collection of carefully obeyed traditions and beliefs made Polish Jews intermediaries to access

culture whose roots dated back to the ancient Israel. Obviously, we should not forget that the roots of Christianity are to be found in the biblical Israel as well. After having reached Europe, Christianity underwent serious changes, losing a lot from the civilization treasure house it had grown from, and adopting the achievements of European cultures at the same time. In this sense, Judaism was the most faithful reflection of cultural, geographic and political values of the ancient Middle East. We should not, however, draw too far-fetched conclusions. Although Jews found shelter from Western European pogroms in Poland at a certain time, their life here was not easy at all. Even in the Middle Ages, they were pushed off to special areas called ghettos. Obviously, they were not ghettos in the sense the word gained during the Second World War. In consequence, Poles and Jews lived next to each other, but separately. Nevertheless, Christians adopted numerous Jewish customs, but they will not be described here due to the limited scope of the paper.

Nowadays, it seems impossible to determine who the first Pole in the Holy Land was. Pilgrimage tradition is very distant, and its beginning is poorly documented. It is assumed that initially the Holy Land was visited by individual pilgrims only. In the Middle Ages, crusaders departed to Jerusalem to defend it against Muslims. Among those knights, there were also Poles. Duke Władysław II the Exile, son of Bolesław III Wrymouth probably participated in the Second Crusade (1147–1149). In 1154 duke Henry of Sandomierz, another son of Bolesław III Wrymouth, came to Jerusalem with his knights.

The participation of Polish knights in crusades was rather minor. Medieval history researchers explain it with at least several factors (Grodecki, 1923). Among them, there is the fact that at the time Christianity was poorly rooted in Poland. The idea of crusades announced by pope Urban II in 1095 at the Council of Clermont was not enthusiastically received by the Polish society (cf. Erdman, 1977; Riley-Smith, 1984, 1986, 1987; Peltz and Dudek, 2002). The structure and organisation of the knighthood in Poland were different as well. However, the most important reason for Polish knights' lack of involvement in the Middle East expeditions seems to be the fact that a more serious and real danger awaited much closer. Those were pagan peoples surrounding the borders of the young Polish state in the East and North (for instance Old Prussians, Yotvingians and Pomeranians). The papacy wanted to evangelise them. Therefore, it can be assumed that as long as the knighthood of Western and Southern Europe was entrusted tasks in the Middle East, Poles were directed to the northern-

-eastern side. Among other reasons, this can explain a rather indulgent attitude of popes to the explanations given by Polish monarchs why they were unable to participate in crusades being busy defending borders, the Christian character of the country, and converting neighbouring pagans. Leszek I the White made do with such promises only. He used this line of argumentation, although the legend is known according to which he complained that in Palestine neither he nor his knights had had access to beer and honey. Obviously, the list of decisive reasons why the Polish knighthood did not set off to the Middle East en masse is much longer. The first one was the growing Polish-German rivalry in the northern-eastern part of Europe. The second was the Tatar invasion of Poland which took place at the same time as the crusades. Both events involved great numbers of knights and resulted in considerable material losses and casualties.

After the crusades stopped, the pilgrimages to the Holy Land redeveloped on a larger scale. Poles took part in them as well. A. Korwin reports that among them, there were: Mikołaj Rusin, a burgess from Krakow (1330), Mikołaj Wierzynek accompanied by six people (1354), Bolko II, the Duke of Opole (1354), Henry V of Iron, Duke of Żagań and Głogów (1360), Władysław the White, Duke of Gniewkowo (1363), Wacisław VI, Duke of Pomerania (1392 or 1393), a group of four people: Piotr Wysz, the bishop of Krakow, Mściśław, the abbot of the Benedictine Abbey in Tyniec, and two members of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre from Miechów (1409), who went on foot to Italy, where they took a ship to Jaffa, and Bogusław X, the Duke of Pomerania (1496–1497) (Korwin, 1958, p. 58–76). The case of knight Jan Winko, who left from Krakow to Palestine in 1446, is very curious. According to Korwin: “He is the first known example of a Pole converted to Islam” (Korwin, 1958, p. 61). Apart from becoming Muslim, he went into service for the Ottoman Empire.

From the Middle Ages until the modern era, travellers to Jerusalem usually used the port in Venice. Later, Trieste became popular and the inhabitants of Central-Eastern Europe often left on ships from Constance. Venice was among the first ports for pilgrims heading to Jaffa. In 1227 doge Pietro Ziani included in his statutes legal regulations related to the transport of pilgrims (Quirini-Popławska, 1995, p. 127). Subsequent legislations elaborated on the conditions of providing services and relevant commitments of private companies. In 1442 direct control over transport to Jaffa was taken by the country, which granted time-bound licences for the purpose (Quirini-Popławska, 1995, p. 127). In the 15th and 16th centuries, pilgrimages to the Holy Land became popular among rich

Polish burgesses. They were related to extremely high costs, therefore they did not become a mass phenomenon, but only individual peregrinations. Pilgrims returned equipped with devotional items and dishes of gold, usually taken from places connected to the Biblical history. Relics were ever-popular. Various traders offered for instance alleged nails and splinters from the cross of Jesus. However, there was no need to leave Europe to be able to buy them. In the course of trade there were so many items regarded relics that their authenticity might be questionable (cf. Manikowska, 2008).

In 1507 Eretz Yisrael was visited by Anzelm Polak. In 1512 in Krakow he published the first guide to the Holy Land in Polish literature, entitled *Terrae sancte et urbis Hierusalem descriptio fratris Anselmi ordinis Minorum de observantia*, which was initially an appendix to a book by Jan of Stobnica entitled *Introductio in Ptolomei cosmographiam* (Rott, p. 115). Anzelm's work was reissued and translated to several foreign languages, which allows for an assumption that it was very popular (Rott, p. 115). The first guidebook in Polish was edited by Jan Goryński (born ca. 1535, died 1562), a Mazovian nobleman, who visited the Holy Land probably around 1560. His work was entitled *Peregrination to the Holy Land*. Mikołaj Krzysztof Radziwiłł nicknamed the Orphan (1549–1616), the entailer of Nieśwież, Grand Marshal of Lithuania (1579–1586), voivode of Vilnius voivodship (from 1604) followed in Goryński's footsteps. He is the author of "The trip to Holy Land, Syria and Egypt, 1582–1584". In Zygmunt Brocki's review of this work, we can read that "not only was it one of the most willingly read Old Polish books, but also one of the most adequate works in European travelling literature. Except for its partial editions (Russian and French), the Orphan's book had 14 editions in total (the first one from 1601), including 4 Latin and 2 German ones. At present [in 1962], Radziwiłł's relation is being published for the 15th time, which constitutes the ninth Polish edition" (Brocki, 1962, p. 257).

Referring to the subject of Polish journeys, it should be noted that in the 19th century travels to the Middle East intensified. The interest in the Holy Land was associated with a wider and romantic fascination with the Orient. In a way, Poles returned to old traditions, as the First Republic of Poland bordered Turkey and Crimean Khanate (a Turkish fiefdom). Jerusalem was visited more and more often during trips to Turkey or North Africa. Egypt with its pyramids and other monuments of the ancient civilization was also very popular. It was frequented by Polish tourists, scientists and traders. Thanks to Hubert Chudzio's research findings, we know that between 1833 and 1834 even Polish military men

visited Egypt. They wanted to come to an agreement with the Egyptian authorities and create Polish armed units on subordinate lands. This time, liberation was to come not “from the Italian land to Poland”, but from the Middle East. Obviously, the plans were not fulfilled, but having a closer look at the history described by Hubert Chudzio, it can be concluded that they were not devoid of rational reasoning, even though the author himself admits that the idea “seems to be rather naïve, or even insane nowadays” (Chudzio, 2014, p. 249). An intriguing episode is related to the figure of Adam Mickiewicz, who left for Istanbul in 1855, during the Crimean War. He wanted to create a Jewish Legion there, which, according to his idea, would fight with the Russian army. However, he did not manage to develop this initiative, as he died soon after adopting it.

In the 19th century, Eretz Yisrael was visited by such figures as Ignacy Domeyko (1802–1889) and prince Roman Stanisław Sanguszko (1800–1881), who was the initiator of saying holy masses for the homeland in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre on the 3rd of May, 1847. Prince Sanguszko’s pilgrimage to Jerusalem constituted a thanksgiving for his regained freedom. In 1831 he was exiled in Siberia for his participation in the November Uprising. After that, he was sent to Caucasia. He was kept in captivity until 1847. He founded a chalice for the Church as a testimony of his gratitude. There is an inscription: “Votum exulum Polonorum A.D. 1847” (“A gift of Polish exiles. The year of our Lord, 1847”).¹ Another prominent pilgrim was a Polish national bard, Juliusz Słowacki. He reached Jerusalem on the 13th of January, 1837.

In the second half of the 19th century, a modern Zionist movement emerged, which postulated the revival of the Jewish state. Leo Pinsker, born on the 25th of December, 1821 in the Polish city of Tomaszów, became the leading figure of the movement. The Pinskens moved to Odessa after the father, Simcha, lost a considerable part of possessions in unsuccessful business transactions. In Odessa, Simcha Pinsker began to work as a teacher of Hebrew in a Jewish secular school (Hochmann and Hochmann, 1932, p. 14–15). Meanwhile, Leo completed law studies, but could not find an interesting job. In Russia, Jews were banned from performing legal professions. He was employed as a teacher in Chişinău, however, such work was not satisfactory for him. He enrolled for medical studies and later started a medical practice. In 1856, during the Crimean War, he looked

1 <http://www.tarnow.pl/pol/Turystyka/Aktualnosci-TCI/Jerozolimska-Msza-Pro-Polonia-siega-poczatkami-XIX-wieku.-Jej-fundatorem-byl-sybirak-ksiazce-Roman-Stanislaw-Sanguszko/%28language%29/pol-PL, DOA: 29/01/2015>

after the injured and the ill. Between 1860 and 1880, he collaborated with the Russian-Jewish press. Personal experience did not shake his faith in the sense of assimilation. He postulated the Russification of Jews, as he sought a chance for their emancipation there. Contrary to his father, he was not an orthodox Jew. He did not know Hebrew well enough to conduct a conversation in that language (Hochmann and Hochmann, 1932, p. 16). His attitude was changed only in consequence of anti-Jewish pogroms in Russia and growing anti-Semitism in Western Europe. He redefined deeply his previously expressed stand, focusing on physical violence against Jews and demanding their dignity.

Pinsker became the leader of a Zionist group called the Lovers of Zion (Hebrew: Hovevei Zion) and started to organise their first Congress, summoned in Katowice. The choice was not accidental. In Russia, Zionists gatherings were legally banned. Moreover, Zionists did not feel safe there. Katowice was located in Germany, yet close to the border with the Russian Empire. The city is in the middle of the route connecting Paris and Petersburg; therefore, the location was convenient for Jews coming from all over Europe. The Congress was opened on the 6th of November, 1884. The date coincided with the 100th anniversary of Moses Montefiore's birthday. Among several dozen of discussants, there were Jews from different parts of Europe. They decided to support logistically and financially the Jewish settlement in Palestine. A mathematics professor coming from Heidelberg, Hermann Schapira, came up with the idea of creating a General Jewish Fund, which was eventually rejected (in the end, the Jewish National Fund / Hebrew: Keren Kajemeth leIsrael was established in 1901; Łętecha, 2003, p. 185–186). "The association for commemorating Moses Montefiore", a formalised extension of the Hovevei Zion movement with Leo Pinsker as president was set up. Soon after that, he experienced an opposition of orthodox Jews as one of the first Zionist leaders. He did not manage to take to himself influential Jews from Austria, Prussia, or other countries. Odessa was an obvious seat of the Lovers of Zion, as Pinsker lived and worked there. Nevertheless, he realised that from the geopolitical perspective it was the periphery of Europe. He did not find, however, adequate partners to open movement headquarters in Berlin. Finally, the second seat was established in Warsaw (Hochmann and Hochmann, 1932, p. 36–38). Unfortunately, the activists working in Warsaw did not have a good press. They were accused of improper money disposal. In consequence, the amount of donations started to fall drastically. What is more, both seats lost their control over the Lovers of Zion in Palestine. The significance of orthodox Jews,

who accused Pinsker of free thought, started to increase. Sorting out organisational issues was to take place during the subsequent Congress, which was summoned in Druskininkai (currently Lithuania). A squabble between progressive and orthodox Jews, led by rabbi Shmuel Mohilever, took place there. “The association for commemorating Mose Montefiore” was officially renamed the Hovevei Zion organisation (Hochmann and Hochmann, 1932, p. 39). In 1888 Pinsker resigned from presiding Hovevei Zion. In the same year, the Congress in Vilnius took place, where the new “Association for supporting agriculture and craft in Syria and Palestine” (Hochmann and Hochmann, 1932, p. 41) was established.

Gaining baron Rothschild’s trust was a significant political achievement of Pinsker. However, he was disgusted with the conflict accompanying the undertaking, which was still in the phase of germination. Due to his health problems, he did not live to see first concrete effects of the colonising action in Eretz Yisrael. On the other hand, he stayed uncertain whether that was the place to build the Jewish state. He took into account such locations as the USA, South America, and, above all, Argentina. He was not liked by many, being accused of low effectiveness. According to the authors of a work devoted to him: “[...] within the 8 years of his leadership of the movement after the Katowice conference, there were neither saint nor excellent actions of Pinsker. Still, they are a reflection of laborious and meticulous work of a man of advanced age in the toughest conditions” (Hochmann and Hochmann, 1932, p. 37). He died in consequence of a heart illness on the 21st of December, 1891 at the age of 62 (Hochmann and Hochmann, 1932, p. 43).

After Pinsker’s death in 1891 the initiative was to be taken by Jews from Western Europe. The new leader of the Zionist movement was Theodor Herzl, who opened the first Zionist Congress in Basel in 1897. The event in question declassified the Congress that took place in Katowice. Jews from Central-Eastern Europe, despite some differences and ambitions which separated them from their Western-European brothers, accepted the leading role of Herzl. The emigration of Polish Jews to Eretz Yisrael did not stop, and even increased, which was mainly due to the financing system organised by Herzl.

The Jewish migration to Eretz Yisrael in the 19th and 20th centuries was not a homogenous phenomenon. Several basic courses can be distinguished taking into account social, political, economic, but also psychological and emotional circumstances. The first aliyah (Hebrew: ascent) or, to be more precise, aliyah la-Arec (Hebrew: ascent to the land, i.e. to the land of Israel) dates back to 1882–

1903. It was relatively small and involved Jews escaping persecution and those who were under the influence of the emergent Zionist organisations. The second aliyah (1904–1914) was formed mainly by impoverished people looking for better living conditions. The subsequent break was a consequence of the First World War. Civilians were in danger. Numerous young Jews were mobilised to military service in the countries they inhabited. According to the calculations made by an Austrian historian, Erwin A. Schmidl, during the Great War there were between 275,000 and 400,000 Jewish soldiers fighting in the Habsburg army. Around 30,000 of them were injured or killed (Schmidl, 2014, p. 115). The third aliyah (1918–1923) was formed mainly of young activists of Zionist organisations (Hechaluc, Haszachar, Hashomer Hatzair), known as halucs (Hebrew: *haluc* – pioneer). An important impulse to leave was the end of the First World War. Many Jews had had unpleasant war experience, others decided to take advantage of the commotion which accompanied the regained independence of the Second Republic of Poland. The fourth aliyah was the period between 1924 and 1926. It gathered Jews coming mainly from the middle class. They had to leave Poland forced by the unpleasant consequences of the financial reform conducted by Władysław Grabski – the prime minister and the minister of state treasury. That is why we can often encounter the term Grabski's aliyah. The fifth aliyah (1929–1939) involved Jews escaping the growing wave of anti-Semitism in Europe. During the sixth aliyah (1945–1948) Jews who survived *Shoah* arrived. The seventh aliyah (1957–1959) took place during the relative liberalisation of the political system in Poland. Finally, the eighth Aliyah took place between 1968 and 1970. It was caused by the anti-Semitic witch-hunt related to the Six-Day War in 1967 and the events of March 1968.

Jewish emigrants and Polish pilgrims and tourists used the benefits of developing technology, such as railway, steamships, and finally planes. Travelling became cheaper and faster. It was accessed by more people. Until the outbreak of the Second World War, the land-sea trail was the most popular one. It led from the Polish lands to Constanta or to Trieste, from where the travel was continued by ship to Jaffa, and later to Haifa. A marine line connecting Poland and Palestine, used by tourists and pilgrims, operated from 1931. To commemorate its establishment, a documentary entitled *A trip to the Holy Land* was produced (Gross, 2002, p. 104). 23rd March 1934 is an important landmark here, as the Polish Travel Bureau „Orbis” Ltd. (Orbis – Polish Travel Bureau in Palestine) was registered in Palestine (Klugman, 1994, p. 57). New prospects emerged with the start

of regular flights from Poland to Eretz Yisrael. On 9th June 1936, a Polish Airlines „Lot” aircraft had its path-finding flight from Warsaw to Tel Aviv, which took three days, with stopovers in Lviv, Istanbul, Aleppo and Haifa. Regular flights started in 1937 (Klugman 1994, p. 60; cf. Łazor, 2012, p. 277–292).

Polish Jews settling in Eretz Yisrael could not satisfy many of their consumer needs there. In consequence, they often ordered the missing products from Poland. Thanks to that, export from Poland to Eretz Yisrael was growing, which encouraged the Polish government to support the Jewish emigration. Polish producers took advantage of the increased demand for a vast array of products, which was seen not only in Eretz Yisrael, but in the whole Middle East. Eretz Yisrael could serve the stronghold role in gaining new markets. Jews themselves wanted to make it the proverbial window to the world for the whole region. Tel Aviv, a city of growing demographic and economic potential, was perfect for that role. Established by Jews from various countries, having extensive contacts, using different languages. Created on the intersection of trade routes connecting Africa, Asia, Minor Asia and Europe. Using the example of European cities (London, Paris, Vienna, Leipzig, Poznań or Lviv), Jews from the Yishuv decided to organise cyclical exhibitions in Tel Aviv, which took the name of Levant Fair (Hebrew: Jerid HaMizrach).² The fair was opened for the first time in 1924, and in 1936 for the last time. Its growing popularity can be confirmed by the fact that its surface area was ever-increasing: in 1929 – 16,000 m², in 1932 – 50,000 m², in 1934 – 100,000 m². In 1932 there were 821 participants of the event coming from 23 countries, and 300 thousand visitors. The Polish-Palestinian Chamber of Commerce organised separate pavilions for Polish entrepreneurs (Szymkowiak, <http://exspace.pl/articles/show/8>). In 1934 forty companies related to over thirty businesses presented themselves in Polish pavilions. Depending on the branch of trade, visitors could familiarise themselves with, for instance, the quality of the Polish sugar, potatoes, tinned meat, plywood, parquet, wood art, bentwood furniture, plastic cloths, artificial silk, blankets, duvets, wool and cotton fabrics, wires, nails, cables and even explosives. The PKO S.A. bank opened its own stand (Szymkowiak, <http://exspace.pl/articles/show/8>). Recommending the Fair in 1934, the “Palnews” magazine informed proudly that “Poland expresses special interest for the Levant Fair and will probably compete with England for the greatest surface of the exhibition pavilions. The Polish exhibition is a small-

2 <http://izrael.org.il/fotoreportae/2202-tel-aviv-targi-1934.html>, DOA: 12/01/2015

er fair itself”.³ The central pavilion had 400 m². There was a stand of the National Export Institute and state industry, and also a special pavilion of Łódź, of 200 m² dedicated to the textile industry, and other pavilions presenting the Polish industry. In total, individual modules took 1200 m². What is more, there was free space for kiosks organised by companies exhibiting individually.⁴ Successively, import of goods from Eretz Yisrael to Poland was developing as well. It involved such products as juices and citrus fruit (mainly oranges) and olive oil.

Both Zionists and entrepreneurs involved in the Polish-Israeli trade wanted to facilitate the banking services related to their operations. In 1924 the London-based Jewish Colonial Trust bought 58% of the Łódź Deposit Bank shares, transferring them to the subordinate Anglo-Palestine Bank. It was the main Zionist bank. According to the analysis conducted by Jerzy Łazor, it handled most financial transfers to Palestine (Łazor, 2014, 199–200). Opening a branch of the Polish PeKaO Bank in Tel Aviv on 15th May 1933 was a real breakthrough moment (Klugman, 1994, p. 52). The branch handled transactions conducted by importers and exporters, but also made it easier for Jews living in Palestine to materially help their relatives in Poland. Only in 1935, the amount of transfers reached 10 million PLN.⁵ The inflow of large amounts of money to Poland could positively influence the domestic economy, but also enlarged the economic possibilities of Jews. The transfer of money from Poland to Palestine became problematic. It was due to the fact that at the time, the Polish financial market had to face the outflow of the foreign currency. In 1935, according to different estimates, between 28 and 109 million PLN was transferred to Palestine in 1935 (Łazor, 2014, p. 201). This banking activity was noticed by National Democratic Party representatives, who aimed at ceasing it. Under their influence, on 26th April 1936, a Decree of the President of the Republic of Poland was issued. The eighth article of the decree went as follows: “transferring, sending and taking abroad any financial means, regardless of the currency and amount, without adequate permission, is prohibited”.⁶ The directive was severe not only for emigrating Jews, but also for tourists wanting to visit Palestine. From that time it was

3 The Archive of New Files (Polish: Archiwum Akt Nowych, hereinafter: AAN), Ministry of Foreign Affairs, sign. 10543.

4 Ibidem.

5 AAN, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, sign. 2285.

6 8th article of the Decree of the President of the Republic of Poland issued on 26th April 1936. Journal of Laws of the Republic of Poland – 1936, No 32, entry 249.

legal to take only 19 Palestine pounds out of the country, while British consulates required a deposit of 60 pounds.⁷ The directive resulted in panic among Zionist activists, however, they were able to lead to tempering the regulations with time. It is also worth mentioning that the employees of the Tel Aviv branch of the Pekao Bank contributed to the development of the Israeli banking culture. They began to organise the “month of saving” action each October in their seat, which had been started in Poland in the 1920s. Other banks soon followed in their steps. The idea settled in Israel for good (Klugman, 1994, p. 55). The Pekao Bank existed in Tel Aviv until 2003, when it was sold to one of Israeli banks by the Italian owner after its privatisation.

1936 is a year of great importance in the periodisation of Polish-Israeli relations. It was then that the agreement between Włodzimierz Jabotynsky and the Second Republic of Poland’s authorities was made. It regarded supporting Jewish self-defence powers created in Palestine at the time. In Poland, the Zionist youth participated in para-military camps (in the summer of 1936 and 1937). Irgun soldiers and Betar members took part in military trainings in Trochenbrod in Volhynia, Podębin near Łódź and Andrychów. Among the instructors, there were officers of the pre-war intelligence service, namely the Second General Staff Unit. In November 1937, during his stay in Warsaw, Abraham Sztern settled details regarding arms transports for Irgun. The agreement with the Polish government provided for a delivery of 20 thousand rifles and 20 million bullets to Palestine. The arms were stored in a special depot located in Warsaw, in Ceglana Street. It was sent in containers equipped with an additional bottom and labelled as furniture transport. Explosive materials were sent in specially carved hatches in road construction machines (Klugman, 1997, p. 137–138). Włodzimierz Jabotynsky’s plans, who wanted to form in Poland an army able to land in Palestine and take control over it, nowadays sound sensational and improbable. He planned an army of 40 thousand soldiers. The fact that it was not just a pipe dream can be confirmed by the serious engagement of Polish military men in the project. In the spring of 1939 the Ministry of National Defence organised a three-month-long, strictly confidential training for future landing army commanders in Andrychów (Klugman, 1987, p. 139). The location was not accidental. The topography of the mountainous region of Andrychów was similar to Palestine landscapes, Galilee in particular. The participants of the course

7 „Haaretz”, No. 5103, issued on 28th April 1936, “Doar Hayom”, No. 179, issued on 28th April 1936, AAN, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, sign. 2285

were trained in mountain climbing, diversion, conspiracy, as well as guerrilla and military fights (Klugman, 1997, p. 140–141).

During the interwar period, the Polish diplomatic representation was installed in Palestine. On the 1st of January, 1923 the Consulate of the Republic of Poland was opened in Jerusalem. In 1925 it became the general consulate. In 1927 another consulate was established in Tel Aviv. In 1936 the network of Polish diplomatic seats was supplemented with an honorary vice-consulate in Haifa (Dyduch, p. 2). The outbreak of the Second World War influenced Polish-Jewish relations significantly when it comes to Eretz Yisrael. Still, the relations in question were not severed. During the war, General Consulates of the Republic of Poland operated in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, as well as PKO Bank and Branches of the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare of the Republic of Poland. What is more, the Polish Centre of Information in the East, supporting the activities of the Polish Telegraphic Agency's office in Jerusalem (issuing a bulletin entitled "The Polish Digest" in English), was established. It should also be mentioned that the Delegate of the Government of the Republic of Poland for Education and Schooling worked dynamically. Thousands of civilians and children came to Eretz Yisrael together with Anders' Army. The latter group was given the opportunity to study in several Polish schools. Polish soldiers and civilians started ambitious press activity. Thanks to them, such dailies as „Gazeta Polska” (“The Polish Newspaper”), „Żołnierze ADW” (“Soldiers of ADW”), „Ochotniczka” (“The Voluntary”), „Przez Łądy i Morza” (“Across Lands and Seas”) were issued, as well as a weekly „Orzeł Biały” (“The White Eagle”) and biweekly „W Drodze” (“On the Road”). It also cannot be forgotten that together with Anders' Army, a large group of Jews came to Eretz Yisrael. According to reliable estimations, in the group of 77 thousand soldiers commanded by Anders, who came to Iran and then continued towards Eretz Yisrael, there were about 6 thousand Jews, including over 4401 soldiers (20 women): 146 officers, 416 non-commissioned officers and 3839 privates (Levin, 2005, p. 122). Anders saved their lives, as before that they were exposed to backbreaking work in extremely difficult climatic and social conditions. It is also meaningful that there were about 3 thousand Jewish soldiers and officers who left that group to later join and significantly strengthen the ranks of Jewish fighting organizations operating in Eretz Yisrael, as they were people with military training with a lot of experience. It is assumed that at least a part of Jewish soldiers left Anders' Army with the allowance of their direct superiors. Such

a situation was negatively received by the British. Moreover, the British did not fail to take advantage of the fact that Poles had much better relations with Jews. For instance, in order to secure themselves against possible attacks of Jewish partisans, they decorated their vehicles with white and red flags.

The new chapter in the common history of Poles and Jews, Poland and Israel, started with the end of the war. On the 21st of September, 1945 Romuald Gadomski was designated the Delegate of the Government of the Republic of Poland in Palestine. He received authorisation and financial means (through the Polish embassy in Moscow) to create the General Consulate in Jerusalem and the Consulate of the Republic of Poland in Tel Aviv (Rudnicki and Silber, 2009, p. 55–56). Contrary to the intentions of the two sides expressed in post-war decades, Polish-Jewish and Polish-Israeli relations turned out to be very complicated, for instance, because of the fact that they were influenced by the political supremacy of the Soviet Union over Poland.

To conclude, it has to be stated that the relations between Poland and Eretz Yisrael began in the Middle Ages. They were developed and diversified in subsequent centuries. While in the initial centuries we can talk mainly of pilgrimages and trips of Polish tourists to Eretz Yisrael, at the beginning of the 20th century the economic exchange began. At the same time, diplomatic relations between the Polish government and Zionist leaders were established. Therefore, the general conclusion that the solid base for Polish-Israeli cooperation was created before 1948 is justified.

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Abstract

The relations between Poles and Jews date back to the Middle Ages. At that time, first documented travels of Poles, mainly knights and pilgrims, to Eretz Yisrael took place. A serious increase in the exchange between Polish lands and Eretz Yisrael occurred in the 19th century. It was due to the development of communication and different kinds of travels, for example scientific and tourist ones. Most importantly, however, it was related to the fact that Zionists entered the political scene and motivated Jews to migrate and settle in Eretz Yisrael. Greater waves of migrations of Polish Jews left for Eretz Yisrael in the first decades of the 20th century. In consequence of the proceeding realisation of the historical project of Zionists, growing cultural, economic and diplomatic exchange between Poland (The Second Republic) and Eretz Yisrael could be observed. A great basis for establishing correct diplomatic relations between Poland and independent Israel was created at the time. Unfortunately, the tragedy of the Second World War and the complicated geopolitical situation in the post-war period changed the course of events drastically and made it impossible to continue the established relation.

Key words: Travels and pilgrimages of Poles and Polish Jews to Eretz Yisrael, Leon Pinsker, Zionist Congress in Katowice, Zionism, Eretz Yisrael, Migration of Polish Jews to Eretz Yisrael, Economic exchange between Poland and Eretz Yisrael, Polish diplomats in Eretz Yisrael

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