

Relations between the Bund and the Polish Socialist Party from a micro-historical perspective: Tarnów in the interwar period

Agnieszka Wiercholska*

Institute for East European Studies, Freie Universität Berlin, Berlin, Germany

This article examines how and why the Bund and the Polish Socialist Party (PPS) cooperated on the local level in Tarnów in the interwar period. Besides the ideological rapprochement of the two parties, there was an intrinsic logic to the relations between the Bund and the PPS in Tarnów, which may be measured in the successes *oyf der yidisher gas* (such as common protest actions on the streets) and in municipal institutions, and in the contact between both local leaders and their outlooks. The relations of the party members in daily life and everyday encounters generate new insights from a micro-historical perspective. The fact that working together yielded real outcomes and that some changes were palpable in daily life encouraged further collaboration. Particular attention is devoted to work in a joint Socialist Club within the city council of Tarnów between 1934 and 1939 and to the trials and successes of this club.

Keywords: Bund; PPS; Tarnów; Adam Ciołkosz; micro-history; May Day parades; Jews in municipal council; Józef Piłsudski; BBWR (Bezpartyjny Blok Współpracy z Rządem); Poland; Polish–Jewish history

When considering relations between the Bund and the Polish Socialist Party (PPS), historians have analysed first and foremost ideological differences, and antagonisms, but have also examined influences and eventual rapprochements.¹ The respective standpoints of the two parties towards urgent political and ideological questions, their integration within wider national and international contexts and organisations (such as the Labour and Socialist International), their respective understandings of “nationality,” and the implications of these understandings for the agendas of both parties have all been the focus of attention. We thus have a good foundation from which to examine relations between the Bund and the PPS from a different standpoint – a micro-historical perspective. This paper takes a bottom-up point of view and asks what the relations between these two parties and between the local leaders of these parties were like on a municipal stage. Our example is a midsized city in Western Galicia – Tarnów – which, in the Second Polish Republic, was on the country’s periphery.² The micro-historical perspective not only allows us to look at dominating discourses and ideologies and the ways they broke in on the local level, but can also shed light on matters specific to the locality, on regional distinctions, everyday encounters, and on individuals whose lives lead us to question seemingly fixed categories. Everyday life and the reality that individuals had to face at work, at home, and on the streets required,

*Email: a.wiercholska@fu-berlin.de

after all, specific strategies of action and practice. Besides the ideological implications, there was an intrinsic logic to the relations between the Bund and the PPS in Tarnów, which may be measured in the successes *oyf der yidisher gas* (lit. “on the Jewish street” or “in Jewish society”) and in municipal institutions, and in the contact between local leaders and between their outlooks. The aim of this approach is to generate new insights that are hard to see when looking from a top-down direction or from the “centre” rather than from the periphery.

According to Abraham Brumberg, Bund–PPS relations were characterised by “intermittent friction, mutual suspicion and occasional collaboration alternating with repeated failures.”³ Both the Bund and the PPS played a prominent role in Tarnów from the mid 1920s. In this case, cooperation between the two parties was rather successful, and both parties benefited from it. The questions that arise, therefore, are “Why did the local branches of these parties apparently work well together?” and “How does this rapprochement reflect general tendencies within Poland in the second half of the 1930s?”

The Bund in Tarnów

“Young Bundists but old socialists” – these words of Henryk Erlich were inscribed in the memory of the young Bundist from Tarnów Aron Sporn.⁴ The Jewish Social-Democratic Party in Galicia (ŻPSD) fused with the Polish Bund in 1920.⁵ In the same year, a local group of the Bund was founded in Tarnów. The newly established Tarnów Bund, however, built on the work of Tarnów’s ŻPSD, which had been in existence for quite some time before the merger took place.⁶ The ŻPSD was created in 1905 and one of the founding fathers in Tarnów – Joshua Landau – stresses in his memoirs what an inspiring and lasting impression the writings of the Bund made on him.⁷ The young tailor David Batist – later to become one of the leaders of the Tarnów Bund – was very engaged in local aid, especially during the First World War, when many women remained alone with their children and didn’t get any help from elsewhere.⁸ Relations between the ŻPSD and the Polish Social Democratic Party of Galicia and Upper Silesia (PPSD) in Tarnów were initially marked by conflict.⁹ Conflicts mostly revolved around the question of whether or not Jews could be considered a nationality.¹⁰ In the interwar period, differences between Tarnów’s PPS (which occupied the place on the political spectrum which had earlier been occupied by the PPSD) and Tarnów’s Bund (which in turn occupied the political position that had earlier been occupied by the ŻPSD) gradually diminished, and the parties began to work together. Their achievements consolidated their cooperation.

In the interwar period the local group of the Bund did not engage only or strictly in political activities. As elsewhere, the Bund in Tarnów also engaged in cultural and educational work. Local branches of the Bundist youth organisation *Tsukunft*, of the Bundist children’s organisation SKIF (Sotsyalistischer Kinder Farband), and of the Bundist sports movement *Morgnshtern* were all created, as were a theatre section, a women’s organisation, *arbeyter-heyemen*, libraries, and summer camps for the young.¹¹

Oyf der yidisher gas

“Walking through Tarnów’s main alleys or rich quarters,” wrote Eliezer Wurzel in a *yizker bukh* devoted to Tarnów, “one could get the impression that all Jews in town were rich tradespeople, real estate owners or lawyers – because that’s what was most

eye-catching at first glance. But if one only took the trouble to walk down to the damp basement dwellings ... situated in the quarter of Grabuvke or *oyf der yidisher gas* you could see ... all the misery and hardship ... These homes in dire straits breathed the air of struggle; the struggle for a new life, for human rights and for existence came from there."¹² Eliezer Wurzel has given the best description of the importance attributed to the *yidische gas* in Tarnów. The fight of the Bundists was not limited to local institutions; rather, it derived its strength from everyday actions. Public space was one of the most important fields of action for the workers and parties that interacted here with one another and fought for their interests. *Di gas* (and not only *di yidische gas*) was a space in which relations between the Bund and the PPS were fashioned. Success in the street subsequently legitimated the pursuit of public offices by Bund and PPS members.

May Day parades were the cornerstone of the cooperation between the Bund and the PPS. The first joint parade in Tarnów took place as early as 1924. In Warsaw, on the other hand, the first joint May Day parade took place in 1928.¹³ The reason why the PPS and the Bund along with other workers' organisations joined ranks in Tarnów in 1924 is, most probably, the traumatic events of the preceding November. During a workers' demonstration five people were killed by the armed forces.¹⁴ The funeral mobilised the masses and the prominent PPS member Adam Ciołkosz, who was from Tarnów, gave the funeral eulogy. This event welded together the workers' organisations. The following May Day, the Bund, the PPS, and trade unions (all together 28 organisations) held a joint parade.¹⁵ The Bund and the PPS commemorated the tragic events of 1923 by marching together to the cemetery. They did so once again in November 1937 on the fifteenth anniversary of the killings.¹⁶

The aforementioned Adam Ciołkosz, a brilliant speaker and charismatic figure, won respect and popularity among Tarnów's workers. His father, a teacher in the gymnasium and a city council deputy, had been a prominent figure and a PPS member in Tarnów. In 1928 Adam Ciołkosz became the first PPS deputy from Tarnów to the Polish Sejm. His election indicated and fostered a rise of popularity for the local PPS. Adam Ciołkosz definitely was an integrating figure and probably one of the reasons why the PPS and the Bund worked together so well on the local level. Within the PPS in Poland, Ciołkosz advocated on behalf of closer work with the socialist parties of the national minorities.¹⁷ Perhaps because Ciołkosz was so respected and popular, there were, on the local level, no ideological obstacles in the leadership of the PPS to strengthening ties with the Bund.

A few weeks after the Sejm elections in which Ciołkosz obtained a seat, on 1 May 1928, the local newspaper noted, "the first socialist deputy of Tarnów gave a speech. The Bundists ... joined the parade of the PPS; around 2000 people marched together with a workers' orchestra in the front row."¹⁸ The number of participants in joint parades rose over time. In the second half of the 1930s around 6000 workers marched in May Day parades.¹⁹ Representatives of both the PPS and the Bund spoke to the assembled masses on those occasions. The Tarnow Bundists disseminated posters in town calling to take part in May Day demonstrations and announcing that the Bundists will join ranks with the Polish workers (see figure 1). A Jewish newspaper noted the following numbers for 1 May 1937; 3000 people from the PPS, 2500 Bundists, and 500 others,²⁰ mostly from the Left Poalei Zion (but also from Poalei Zion Hitachdut) and trade unions. Further joint demonstrations took place in 1938 and 1939 with orchestras and guest speakers (see figures 2 and 3).

Besides the May Day parades, joint protest actions became an important mainstay for the two parties. The first joint workers' assembly that I know of took place in

**חברים! חברטעם!
ארבעטער! ארבעטערנים!**



די גאנצע וועלט געפינט זיך ווי אויף א ווילסאן. נאך טויזנטער און אונדזערע ראיגע
נישט געווען אויף אמוזבער ווי היינט. דער פאשיוס האט דורך זיין אייגענדיאליטישע רויבערדיפארטיש
און סדרדיגע באוואסונגסגעזעצן דערפירט צו טרחות. אויף די זאמלן פון די אביסינישע מדברות ניט
דער אימארינישער פאשיוס א רעגנדיגן ביישפיל, וואס ער גרייט צו פאר דער וועלט. דויטשלאנד איז
פארוואנדלט געווארן אין און גרויסן טייטשערישן לאגער. אויפן זיינען מירד דעקנט ספרד דאס געשיפענס
פון טרחות. דער יאפאנישער טייטשערישן גרייט צו א אנפאר אויפן ראסןפארבאנד. ווען די פערטער
העג מיט ארע ארע געשריבענע טראקטאטן דאס ארויסגעוויזן אר אומגעריכטיגן — בלייבט אבער די
אינזליגע פירונגסנווארטיגע דאס איז דער סאציאליסטישער ארבעטערדיקטאט.

דער ארבעטערדיקטאט איז זיך באוויסן דאס ספרט זיך א קאפ אויף לעבן און טוט פאר דער צוקונפט פון דער מענטשהייט. מיר קענען פאר פירן זיך. פאר סאך
צאלער גערעכטקייט. פאר פערקער פארברודערונג. מיר די שווערסטע בארינגענע וואספ דאס באוויסן פון די סאטן. און טראגעדיע. וואס דער פאשיוס דערשיינט
אין טיילן ברוט די רייזע פון ארבעטערקראם אנטשיידן דאך נייע מוחות וועלכע מיר וויסער גרויך דעם קאפ קעגן פאשיוס. אין ישאנען אז שוין אנטשלאגן געווארן די אטאקע פון
דער טראקטע. דאס פראנצויזישע פאלט דאס אנטשעלט דעם פארזאפטישן פון די שווארצע מוחות. אבער אז וואס איז גרייט זיך דער ארבעטערקראם צו נייע סאטן אנטער די
אומפאלישע רויטע פענער.

אין אגרויסן פון די סאציאליסטישער פארמאסטידעטיגקייט וועלכע דאסעט אויף אונז אין צייטן פון גרויסע ענדערונגען וואס טוען אונז מיר זיך שטעלן אבער ווי און אונזער
די אויסגעוויסענע פענער פון בענע, מיר צו מאנעסטערן.

קעגן סאציאליזם. קעגן מלחמה צו גרויסע וועלט!
קעגן פאשיוס. קעגן אנטשעטישן!
פאר פירן זיך אין ארבעט פאר אלע!
פארן סאציאליזם. פאר שלום און פערקער פארברודערונג!

פרייטאג דעם 1 מאי 1936 א זינער 8:30 פרי קומט פאר אויפן פון היין לואוסטא 42 א

פאלקס-פארזאמלונג

ארויסטוען וועט דער חבר דר. אינגאנצן אלעקסאנדראוויטש פון קראקע
נאך דער פארזאמלונג פארטרעט זיך א

דעמאנסטראציע-צוג

וועלכע וועט זיך אנטהאלטן אין צוג פון די פילישע ערבטער.

זאל לעבן דער סאציאליזם! זאל לעבן א ארבעטער און פויערס רעווענע!
זאל לעבן דער 1 מאי!

טארנאווער האמיטעט פון „בונד“ יוגנט-בונד „צוקונפט“
צענטראלראט פון די פראפ. קלאספארטייען

Nakładown „Bonda” w Tarnowie Druk I. Engelberga w Tarnowie

Figure 1. Tarnów, May Day 1936. Poster, issued by the Tarnów Committee of the Bund, the Bundist youth organisation, and the trade union movement, calling on workers to take part in a May Day demonstration in Tarnów, 1936. © State Archives, Tarnów, Poland.



Figure 2. May Day demonstration in Tamów, 1938. The orchestra is led by Comrade Ayzenbakh. © Archives of the YIVO (Yidisher Visnshaftlekher Institut - Yiddish Scientific Institute) Institute for Jewish Research, New York.



Figure 3 Tamów, May Day 1938 tailors' group. Another view of the May Day demonstration in Tamów, 1938. The back of the photograph notes, "The Tailors Group is marching." © Archives of the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, New York.

December 1929. Bundists, PPS members, and trade union members passed a resolution that was to be presented to the municipal council by a delegation. One hundred and fifty people followed the chosen delegates and gathered in front of the building of the municipal council. Ciołkosz and the Bund leader, Batist, were among them. Some individuals forced their way up to the Mayor's office to present him with their demands.²¹ The street exerted pressure upon local authorities via the joint forces of the Bund and the PPS.²² This demonstration was effective and the workers obtained at least some of their goals.²³ The following year demonstrations before the municipal council continued with up to 400 people.²⁴

The streets of Tarnów also witnessed other joint actions of the Bund and the PPS. Ciołkosz gave a speech to a Bundist assembly. Jewish workers showed solidarity with non-Jewish workers on a hunger strike in February 1937.²⁵ When, a short time after, the Jews of Tarnów organised a protest on the anniversary of the pogrom in Przytyk, non-Jewish workers expressed solidarity.²⁶ In October 1937, 2500 workers went on strike, protesting against the "ghetto benches." Once again, the PPS showed its solidarity.²⁷ One of the most popular actions of Ciołkosz and Batist was their reaction to a demonstration of women before the seat of the city president in 1939. Some of the women fainted during the demonstration due to malnutrition. When the President showed no interest whatsoever in their fate, Batist and Ciołkosz, who at that time were deputies of the municipal council, convinced the President to provide them with an advance on their salaries and distributed their money to the women.²⁸ Such actions made these socialist leaders very popular.

The popularity of the Bund and the improvement of relations with the PPS in the second half of the 1930s were linked to the political situation throughout Poland. The rapprochement of the two parties during that period was not particular to Tarnów. We can trace a similar phenomenon on the macro level and in other cities. The rise of antisemitism – which was also bitterly felt in Tarnów, especially in 1937 – the overall shift to the right of political parties in Poland, and the nationalistic discourse evident during the period in question are the reasons most often cited by historians for the convergence of the two parties.²⁹ Nevertheless, political trends did not foster a positive relationship automatically. While the Tarnów groups joined ranks on 1 May in the latter half of the 1930s (as they had already done for years before that period), activists in other cities decided not to do so: "At the beginning of April [1937] the PPS Executive Committee issued a directive calling for processions 'together with the parties of the national minorities where possible.' This was interpreted by members of local party organisations as a green light to arrange May Day parades without the Bund; this occurred in Lublin and Kielce."³⁰ One of the reasons, as Antony Polonsky puts it, was that the PPS worried that a common parade with Jewish parties might frighten off potential supporters from, for example, the Peasant Party.

Bund and PPS in the local institutions: the municipal council

The municipal council is a particular field of action for political work. The agenda is commonly characterised by specific goals concerning the city, such as construction plans, public transportation, the condition of public streets, and other local issues. And yet, especially for the workers' parties, communal politics offered scope for shaping local realities – at times even more so than on the national level. After the coup of May 1926 communal political work became increasingly important for

democratic forces – as a sort of rivalry to state power and a “stronghold for democracy,” in which relatively autonomous self-administration was still possible.³¹ During the free elections to the Polish Sejm the Bund did not win any seats. It boycotted the Sejm elections of 1935 and 1938, as did the PPS. Therefore, according to Gertrud Pickhan, the municipal councils could play a “compensating substitutional function.”³² The Bund leadership favoured cooperation with the PPS on the local stage. In the municipal elections of 1934 the Bund and the PPS formed electoral alliances in 32 cities.³³ For the PPS leadership, on the other hand, the work within municipal councils could form a bonding tie among different ethnic groups. The PPS leader Adam Pragier described the municipal council as follows: “It’s an institution that unites the citizens on the grounds of common interests in their neighbourhood, of matters concerning everyone, in order to work for common good.”³⁴ And how did the situation evolve on the municipal stage of Tarnów?

Regulations for municipal council elections were not standardised in the Second Polish Republic until 1933. The reforms instituted at that time were already marked by the authoritarian spirit of the later April constitution of 1935, and yet, in the region of our interest, the portion of Poland which had formerly been part of Austria–Hungary, it made possible the first democratic elections in the area. In the area that had been part of Galicia, the electoral rules from 1866, which linked the right to vote to property ownership, remained in effect in the years immediately following the establishment of an independent Polish state. In 1918, representatives of the PPS and trade unions were coopted onto the municipal council of Tarnów but, with that exception, the councillors who had been elected in 1912 were in office until 1929 (except in the years 1924–6, when an appointed commission ruled the town). The first democratic municipal elections took place in Tarnów only in December 1933. City council elections of 1933/4 in Poland were said to have been heavily manipulated. Nevertheless, for Tarnów these elections were, in many ways, a first. For the first time, for example, the Bund obtained seats in the city council. In the wake of these elections, the Bund and the PPS formed a strong opposition within the council, with 17 out of 40 seats (12 deputies from the PPS and five from the Bund).³⁵ In 1934 these parties created a Socialist Club within the council, headed by Lidia Ciołkosz, the wife of Adam Ciołkosz and the first woman representative in the municipal council. In its programme the Socialist Club stressed that it would represent the “masses” regardless of their religion or nationality. “With all our forces, we will fight all manifestations of nationalism and antisemitism.”³⁶

The municipal elections of 1933 created a very clear (im)balance of power in Tarnów. Two clubs were formed in the municipal council: the oppositional Socialist Club and the Nonpartisan Bloc for Cooperation with the Government (BBWR), which held 23 out of 40 seats. Although the latter was composed of very diverse individuals and groups, it was held together by support for Piłsudski’s Sanacja regime, which was in power on the national level. The Jewish members of the BBWR were mainly Aguda members and orthodox Jews. Tarnów’s Zionists, although traditionally a very strong group in town, did not participate in this municipal election. They initially aimed at joining the ranks of the BBWR by creating a “Jewish BBWR” but were divided politically from the Aguda, were therefore unable to actualise their initial plan, and ultimately decided not to create a list of their own for the elections.

The Bund and the PPS collaborated well in the city council during the five years following the municipal election of 1933. The Bundist Aron Sporn, who was at that time a deputy in the council, remembers, “In the 5 years that the city council was in

power, the Jewish deputies of the middle class did not support the Bund a single time, even though some of our proposals concerned Jewish social and cultural institutions. Our only ally was the PPS.”³⁷ From sources like the protocols of the city council sessions and newspaper coverage we can in fact trace a very stable and smooth cooperation within the Socialist Club. We don’t have any internal sources that would show what was discussed behind the scenes. However, the main political differences in the council clearly lay not inside the Socialist Club but rather between that Club and its political adversaries – the Sanacja camp. The strong demarcation between the two political camps enforced the integrative potential within the respective clubs.

The work of the Socialist Club in Tarnów can be divided into three phases: a first phase of a hopeless but fervent opposition to the majority of the council, a second phase when a shift of power constellations after the death of Piłsudski was palpable, and a third phase following the breakup of the BBWR, during which the Socialist Club could push through some of its initiatives. When the day of the first city council session after the elections of 1933 arrived, the members of the Socialist Club met solemnly in front of the “workers’ house” and jointly went to the city hall followed by their adherents, who were soon dispersed by the police.³⁸ Within the council the two political blocs – the Socialist Club and the Sanacja camp – fought a harsh battle. The major point of conflict was the budget, because the socialist deputies charged the Sanacja bloc with neglecting the social, financial, and structural needs of the workers and thus with discriminating against their interests.³⁹ The Socialist Club defended and voiced the concerns first and foremost of the workers, the unemployed, the homeless, and the poor. The Socialist Club repeatedly raised the question of the remuneration of workers employed in municipal facilities. They especially fought for the rights of Jewish workers who were not permitted to work in municipal institutions in numbers consistent with the Jewish proportion of the population, and against the eviction of poor families from their homes or of merchants from their stores. The Club undertook efforts to get funding in order to build low-cost housing. But all the efforts of the Socialist Club were blocked by the majority. Discussion of motions made by the socialists was not permitted. The socialist deputies were silenced or excluded from meetings.

When, in March 1935, the PPS deputy Ludwik Huppert demanded that more Jewish workers be employed by municipal institutions, the Vice-President of the city, Zygmunt Szaja Silbiger, leader of the Orthodox Jews, carelessly maintained that Jewish workers didn’t care to work anyway. The Bund leader Batist attempted to protest against such discriminatory statements but was soon excluded from the city council session at which he tried to do so.⁴⁰ This example shows clearly that ethnic or ethno-national boundaries or cleavages were at that time not necessarily the dominant factor of camp-building within the council. Throughout the work of the Socialist Club within the council, the PPS remained a fervent opponent of antisemitism and not only supported the Bund in its claims but also saw it as its own task to attack all manifestations of national chauvinism, and did so without exception. As Batist repeatedly voiced in city council sessions, the dividing line was not nationality but class: “The proletariat and the poor on one side – and the bourgeoisie and reaction on the other.” And yet, Batist continued, antisemitism in Tarnów could not be concealed and had to be on the council’s agenda. The PPS took a similar stance, although it also attacked – at least initially – the Jewish bourgeoisie.

These attacks were harshly criticised by the local Zionist newspaper *Tygodnik Żydowski* [Jewish weekly] as PPS antisemitism. The Zionist organ covered the city

council. Although the Bund was their adversary in *kehile* elections, and there were no Zionists in the city council from 1933 to 1939, the Zionists admitted in their paper that the Bund was the only movement that represented Jewish interests within the council. And – we can add – the Bund was able to advocate on behalf of its agenda because it was supported by the PPS.

After the death of Piłsudski in May 1935, the BBWR camp began to disintegrate. The repercussions of national politics were also felt in Tarnów. In October 1935 the BBWR was dissolved; the local BBWR club within Tarnów's city council lost its "political backbone."⁴¹ It was still organised as a club for economic work, but the grouping, which had, in any event, been very loose and had only been held together by support for Piłsudski's regime, didn't survive the harsh attacks of the Socialist Club for very long. A major conflict arose around the aforementioned Vice-President Silbiger. For a number of reasons, the Socialist Club saw him as an adversary from the start of its work in the council. In March 1936, when discussing the budget for the following year, the Socialist Club seized the chance to destabilise the majority by demanding Silbiger's dismissal. The case had enough explosive force to break up the majority club. The Jewish deputies of the former BBWR created a Jewish Club. Some other members of the former BBWR also left the ranks of what had been the majority grouping. The balance of power within the municipal council, therefore, changed completely after June 1936. The former BBWR and the Socialist Club held the same number of seats in the council from that point in time and were dependent on mutual cooperation or on lobbying the remaining factions and individuals. The third phase of the work of the Socialist Club began. During this phase, the Club succeeded in having some of its resolutions passed by the council. Among other things, the Club prevented the eviction of Jewish merchants from the main square, obtained funding for low-cost housing, and repeatedly attacked antisemitic violence and discrimination in Tarnów. Unlike the first phase of the work of the Socialist Club within the council, during which the socialists were not permitted to discuss resolutions that they proposed, during the third period they were allowed to do so. The President of the municipality himself needed the support of the Socialist Club, since he had lost his own majority within the council.

In 1937 we thus witness a paradoxical situation. The PPS and the Bund of Tarnów had a number of successes within the city council. They became a force that the other groups had to take seriously. Their demands were respected, and some city council members from other clubs even voted for their motions. At the same time, in Poland as a whole, right-wing movements gained strength during this period. Antisemitism was increasingly *salonfähig* and part of the dominant political discourse. In other cities, the PPS organised May Day parades in 1937 without the Bund because it feared that joint parades with Jewish parties might frighten off potential supporters. In Tarnów, a local group of OZON (Obóz Zjednoczenia Narodowego - Camp of National Unity) was formed, and, also, for the first time, a local group of National Democrats was established. Neither movement, newly formed on the local level, was represented within the city council. Nevertheless, antisemitic assaults were bitterly felt in Tarnów; antisemitic flyers were spread in a quantity never seen before, and Jews were attacked in town with knives. One school tried to introduce ghetto benches for its students.⁴² The PPS and the Bund repeatedly placed the problem of antisemitism on the council's agenda and demanded explanations from those responsible. Yet, even this successful work could not prevent a nationalistic Polish discourse from breaking out on the local level.

When, in March 1939, municipal elections were once again held in Tarnów, the parties that ran were almost completely different than those that had run in the previous election. While during the election campaign of 1933 the parties were divided along political lines and were ethnically mixed, in 1939 the new parties were almost all ethnically homogeneous. The old *Sanacja* club was practically non-existent. Instead, the Polish Christian Union was created. Its political slogans were purely nationalistic: “We have the duty to fight for the Polish face of Tarnów.”⁴³ The Union aimed at unifying all ethnically Polish parties although these differed greatly in their political agendas. Nevertheless, the Polish Christian Union invited the National Democrats and the PPS to join their ranks. Both refused. In March 1939 a programmatic approach to politics seemed to be put aside in favour of ethno-nationalistic ideologies. Most of the Jewish parties formed a Jewish Bloc, arguing that only a common Jewish Bloc could represent Jewish interests. The only parties that did not endorse this ethnically split approach were the PPS and the Bund, whose aim was to continue the work of the Socialist Club. Indeed, during the election campaign of 1939, the Bund and the PPS seemed to be the only parties that had a political programme that went beyond nationalistic slogans.

That year the Bund and the PPS obtained the majority of seats in the city council, 23 out of 40 seats. They had run separate lists but had done so while promising to form a joint club within the council in the wake of the elections.⁴⁴ The Bund gained two more seats (and thus held seven seats within the council) and the PPS won 16. The results of the other parties were as follows: the National Democrats only won two seats, the Polish Christian Union 10 seats, and the United Jewish Group (mostly Zionists) five seats.⁴⁵ However, the council was obstructed by adversaries of the socialists and the first sessions took place only on 3 July 1939, four months after the election.⁴⁶ It is thus difficult to make out any substantial changes made by the socialist majority or the effects of this majority in the extremely short period between the new council’s first sessions and the outbreak of the Second World War.

The fact that the Bund did well in specific municipal elections in 1938 and 1939 is not a new finding. The same result is evident in elections to other city councils in Poland in those years.⁴⁷ But in Cracow and Lwów the Bund was either weak or not represented at all after the local elections. Antony Polonsky explains this phenomenon by stating that the Bund was never particularly strong in Galicia.⁴⁸ Tarnów was different in this respect from other cities in Galicia, although we cannot state that the Bund was a major force in Tarnów with seven out of 40 seats. But still, in 1939 the Bund obtained 58% of the votes for Jewish parties in Tarnów. The reason it did so may have been its good relationship with the PPS. Jewish voters in Tarnów may well have considered, in 1939, that voting for the Bund might lead to a socialist majority in the city council, and might well have taken into account that the Socialist Club had some achievements to its credit.

Local Specifics: the reasons for the good cooperation in Tarnów

Historians have stressed the differences between the Bund and the PPS, but they have also attested to the “ideological evolution” of both parties during the Second Republic. As Piotr Wróbel writes: “Both the PPS and the Bund needed several decades to comprehend that they had more common interests than conflicts of interest ... Both parties made a large step towards Polish–Jewish rapprochement and cooperation.”⁴⁹ Historians differ as to when this change began.⁵⁰ Gertrud Pickhan characterised the gradual

movement of both parties towards one another from the late 1920s as taking place in large part in accord with the principle of two steps forward and one step back.⁵¹ In fact, in 1929 Adam Ciołkosz noted in the organ *Nasza Walka* [Our fight] that the times in which the PPS mainly concentrated on Polish independence and the Bund was still under the spell of the Russian Revolution were definitely over.⁵² The leader of the PPS, Mieszysław Niedziałkowski, spoke at the Bund's party conference in 1929 and Henryk Ehrlich addressed at the PPS party conference in 1931. In 1930 the Bund joined the Labour and Socialist International, of which the PPS was already a member.⁵³ However, in 1929 the parliamentary centre-left opposition to the Sanacja regime was formed, the so-called "Centrolew," in which the PPS initially worked closely together with the Polish Peasant Party, with the National Worker's Party (NPR), and with the Christian Democrats. The Bund disapproved of the Centrolew and didn't join its ranks during the parliamentary elections of 1930. Moreover, internal quarrels within the PPS caused arguments between the Bund and the PPS in the first half of the 1930s.⁵⁴

Nevertheless, historical research has established that "the period 1936–1939 forms a distinct chapter in the relations between the PPS and Bund."⁵⁵ In 1937, for example, the PPS finally accepted into the party's programme the minorities' demand for national cultural autonomy.

Tarnów's Bund–PPS history follows the overall tendency of Bund–PPS relations. In the case of Tarnów, however, cooperation between the two parties was at its closest from the point, in 1933–4, when the parties formed a Socialist Club in the municipal council. That is to say: the tendency to work closely together began earlier than 1936. Also, the joint May Day demonstration in 1924 took place earlier than in Warsaw, for example, and at the end of the 1920s the local parties organised common demonstrations and protests. I would like to sketch the main reasons why that was so and some insights derived from this case study.

1. *The everyday experience oyf der gas*

The local population had already had the experience – since the end of the 1920s – of successful joint actions in the streets and had recognised how, via such actions, they could exert pressure on those in power. It was not mutual cooperation within the council that brought the parties together, but the other way around. Joint actions turned out to be a success. In the wake of such actions, both parties attracted voters. This, in turn, eventually led to securing public offices.

Examining history at a local level has the advantage of considering the party base, which gives us a bottom-up perspective. Everyday life in Tarnów required specific strategies of action. In other words, cooperation often was not a question of ideology. It was, rather, about such matters as obtaining more funds for the workers, the unemployed, or the homeless. It was not about grand politics but about getting a job, getting bread or money. The experience of actually achieving something with joint forces was – at the local level – fundamental for the workers and for both parties. Daily experience and strategies were most crucial for cooperation.

2. *Formative personalities*

Another reason for the good cooperation between the PPS and the Bund in Tarnów surely must be the influence of individuals like Adam Ciołkosz. He represented a

specific wing of his party, which aimed at a stronger cooperation with the socialist parties of the national minorities in Poland. Since he was the most prominent and influential local PPS leader, there were no ideological boundaries to overcome between the local leadership of the PPS and the Bund. In addition, the Ciołkosz family and the leader of the local Bund, Batist, apparently had very good personal relations.⁵⁶ On the other hand, it may have also been the experience of the successful work of the PPS and the Bund on the local level, the common demonstrations *oyf der gas* as well as the good cooperation within the city council, that led Adam Ciołkosz to his convictions about the need for closer cooperation of the Polish Socialists and the minorities' socialist parties on the national level.

Another formative personality of the local PPS was Maurycy Hutter, a photographer, who relentlessly advocated on behalf of workers, the unemployed, and the poor. He became one of the most popular socialists in town. In municipal elections, he twice obtained a higher number of votes than any other candidate.⁵⁷ He was said to be popular among the Jewish and the non-Jewish workers. Hutter was also the head of the Jewish craftsmen's union *Yad Charuzim* and was their candidate for the *kehile* elections. Beyond that, he was the head of the progressive Temple community and could be seen in the Temple on the High Holidays. In Tarnów's *yizker bukh* he is described both as being "Jewish at heart" and as having "a socialist conscience."⁵⁸ Nevertheless, he was decidedly a member of the PPS (not of a Jewish political party). When, in 1905, the ŻPSD was founded, Hutter was its resolute adversary. He saw no need for a separate Jewish socialist party. Unfortunately, we have no information on his standpoint towards the Bund. But in the 1930s Hutter was part of the Socialist Club within the city council and he stayed a member of the PPS until the end of his days.⁵⁹ The existence of individuals like Hutter leads us to question seemingly fixed categories. The PPS was not a party made up solely of Poles and of exceptionally acculturated Jews. Hutter became one of the leading figures of the PPS in Tarnów and was – as head of *Yad Charuzim*, and as head of the Temple community (the latter of which caused some arguments within the PPS) – apparently very conscious of his Jewishness. And yet, he decidedly did not want to be part of a separate Jewish socialist party. The personalities mentioned here show that the PPS of Tarnów integrated multiple identification trajectories, and advocated close collaboration with the socialist parties of the minorities living in Poland – and, in the case at hand, with the Bund. That may have made cooperation with the Bund easier than elsewhere in Poland. Personal contacts and experiences may also help to explain why the parties worked well together on the local level.

3. *Rethinking majority–minority relations*

PPS–Bund relations in the Second Republic are justly interpreted as the relationship of a socialist party of the majority and of a minority. This is certainly also true for Tarnów. Yet, we must keep in mind that on the local level the categories "majority" and "minority" must be defined differently than in Polish society as a whole. Almost half of the population of Tarnów was Jewish and that also meant that the fight for potential voters looked different in Tarnów than it did on the national level. To be sure, the Bund always gained many fewer votes than the PPS. In the municipal council of Tarnów the Bund remained the smaller "sister" of the PPS.

But in a town like Tarnów we must ask anew who actually made up the majority and who made up a minority. The relations between Jews and non-Jews were a matter of

everyday life in all social and political spheres, and in political terms they were never split in the way the electoral campaign of 1939 might lead some to believe. That is not only a retrospective view, but was already questioned by the PPS before the beginning of the Second World War. When, in 1939, the Polish Christian Union in Tarnów started their election campaign for the municipal council, they were ridiculed by PPS members and by the Jewish press. The same people who began to attack Jews had worked closely with Jews just a few years before – and that was well known in Tarnów. The same people who voiced nationalistic slogans in 1939 had fought together with Jews for common interests in the same parties, had had economic relations with Jews, and were even members of the same societies.⁶⁰ Suddenly becoming anti-Jewish seemed not to be very authentic, but rather opportunistic – an attempt to jump onto the bandwagon created by a political shift to the right on the national scale. But such a shift – which revealed the nationalists' inconsistencies – was not always credible for the Tarnovian population. The consistency of the politics of the Socialist Club, on the other hand, might have been another reason to vote again for that constellation.

We also have to keep in mind the specific situation within the municipal council itself. There were no Zionists in the city council from 1933 to 1939. The Jews within the BBWR were very weak and most of the time voted according to party discipline. The Bund was thus the only party to represent Jewish interests, especially at the end of the 1930s when Jews in Poland were discriminated against in almost all spheres – and the Bundists were supported by the local PPS in their demands.

4. Antisemitism within the PPS base

Another controversial topic among historians is the question of antisemitism in the PPS party base. Abraham Brumberg once asked if the good cooperation between the leaders of the Bund and of the PPS in the second half of the 1930s was not merely wishful thinking on the part of these leaders, workers' antisemitism being the major obstacle to such cooperation. But party base antisemitism seems not to have been a major problem in Tarnów.⁶¹ We have proof of the solidarity of non-Jewish workers with the Jews (as evidenced by Przytyk memorials and protests against ghetto benches). The Socialist Club in the city council decidedly fought against antisemitism. And there was no gap between the socialist politicians of the council and the rank-and-file members of the party. Most of the deputies (except for the Ciołkosz family) were workers, tailors, petty tradesman, or unemployed. They were doing politics in their spare time. The political activists thus came from among those whom they were representing. The reasons for the lack of manifest antisemitism within the PPS base may have been the following.

Prominent figures within the Tarnów PPS were Jews – for example Hutter, the most popular PPS leader, or Lidia Ciołkosz, who came from an acculturated Jewish family. In Tarnów, it thus seemed inconsistent to act in an antisemitic manner (in intra-party matters) and at the same time support the PPS. Rather, anti-Jewish slogans were used by PPS adversaries to attack the party – and by the PPS itself to attack its enemies.

Antisemitism spread rapidly in Tarnów, especially in the period from 1937, and showed its violent face. Attacks on Jews or Jewish property came from the youth associated with the *Endecja* (National Democrats). The same youngsters who broke the windows of Jewish shops attacked PPS members and even tried to shoot one of them.⁶² PPS workers fought a battle against *Endecja* adherents on the streets of Tarnów. This may be one of the reasons why workers close to the PPS did not want

to use the slogans of their adversaries. A PPS youth group in Tarnów issued a flyer condemning the National Democrats and their antisemitic mottoes: “And now these youngsters [from the National Democracy] want to rule? They want to solve all the problems in Poland by disseminating the slogan ‘Beat the Jew’?! Don’t let them fool you that pogroms will improve our fate.”⁶³ Of course, this flyer issued by PPS youth may be evidence not only of the determination of the PPS to defy all antisemitic slogans put forth by the party’s adversaries but also of the need to take action against antisemitism – possibly even within its own ranks. The evidence I have gathered to date is not sufficient to demonstrate definitively that there was no trace of antisemitism within the PPS base in Tarnów.

Conclusion

At the end of my article I would like to plead for a stronger integration of regional contexts and case studies. Doing so puts everyday life and individuals at the centre of attention, and our understandings of “majority” and “minority” may in some cases be reversed from the meanings that they have on the macro scale. This approach also questions structural patterns and asks what was different on the micro level and why.

The PPS and the Bund of Tarnów cooperated successfully with each other during the interwar era, in a region – Galicia – in which the Bund had not traditionally played an outstanding role.⁶⁴ Specific local phenomena, such as good personal contacts, and palpable successes (that is: common protest actions on the street as well as work in the city council) contributed to the favourable interaction of the two parties. The experience that working together yielded real, positive outcomes and that some changes had become palpable in daily life encouraged further collaboration. Ideological differences between the two parties, on the other hand, seemed not to play a major role on the local level, although joint efforts on the national scale surely had a positive impact on the local community. Some of the proposals of the Bund and the PPS could be pushed through in the municipal council. The good local relationship between these parties became manifest after the elections of 1939, as a result of which the Socialist Club gained the majority of seats in the city council. The impact of this socialist majority in a Galician town cannot be assessed, however, because the period during which it existed was far too brief: its history was brutally interrupted by the outbreak of the Second World War.

“We are the last generation for whom the *Algemeiner yidisher arbeter-bund* in Poland was a reality in the daily life of the workers,” wrote Adam Ciołkosz retrospectively in the Yiddish organ *Unzer tsayt* in 1972.⁶⁵ In his article he refuted Johnpoll’s thesis as to the futility of the Bund’s politics. Indeed, Ciołkosz underscores the significance and enduring impact of both parties – if not necessarily in country-wide arenas, than in other contexts, one of which was their work in municipal councils.

Notes on contributor

Agnieszka Wierzcholska is a research fellow at the Institute for East European Studies, Freie Universität Berlin. Agnieszka’s main academic interest lies in producing a convincing narrative of the multinational history of Poland and in developing the necessary methodological concepts. Key aspects of her research are Polish–Jewish relations and Jewish life in Poland in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, in history as well as in collective memory. Her PhD project focuses on the relations between Jews and non-Jews in Poland from a micro-historical perspective: the case of Tarnów, 1918–56. She received her master’s degree in history, communication

science, and French literature at the Freie Universität Berlin, after having spent a year at the École normale supérieure in Paris. Her master's thesis on "The Yiddish Press in Paris in the 1920s and 1930s" was given an award by the Jury of the Polish Ambassador's Prize.

Notes

1. Wróbel, "From Conflict to Cooperation," 155–71; Zimmerman, "The Influence of the 'Polish Question' on the Bund's National Program," 28–45; Polonsky, "The Bund in Polish Political Life," 166–97.
2. Tarnów is in Western Galicia, approximately 80 kilometres east of Krakow. On 1 June 1936, Tarnów had 53,230 inhabitants of whom 52% were Catholic, 47% Jewish, and 1% other. Archiwum Państwowe w Tarnowie [State Archives in Tarnów] (APT) 1: Akta miasta Tarnowa: Zarząd miejski w Tarnowie [Documents of the town of Tarnów, municipality of Tarnów] (ZMT) 44: Ewidencja ludności [census], 33. Other minorities were so small in number that they can be neglected in this case study.
3. Brumberg, "The Bund and the Polish Socialist Party in the Late 1930s," 75.
4. Sporn, "Der algemeyner yidisher arbeyter-bund," 647.
5. See also Kuhn, "The Jewish Social Democratic Party of Galicia and the Bund," 133–54.
6. Landau, "Yidishe sotsialistishe partay," 632–40.
7. *Ibid.*, 634.
8. *Ibid.*, 642.
9. *Ibid.*
10. *Ibid.*, 643.
11. Sporn, "Der algemeyner yidisher arbeyter-bund," 658–63.
12. Wurzel, "Funem yidishn arbeyter kampf in tarne," 667–8.
13. Pickhan, "*Gegen den Strom*," 338–49.
14. Friszke, *Adam Ciołkosz*, 49–52. Potępa counted seven dead workers. Potępa, *Tarnów międzywojenny*, 33.
15. Potępa, *Tarnów międzywojenny*, 39.
16. *Tygodnik Żydowski*, 12 November 1937.
17. Friszke, *Adam Ciołkosz*, 82–4.
18. *Hasło*, cited in Potępa, *Tarnów międzywojenny*, 71.
19. Potępa, *Tarnów międzywojenny*, 137.
20. *Tygodnik Żydowski*, 7 May 1937, 4.
21. APT, district attorney cases, PT32, case U 152/30.
22. "W poniedziałek w godzinach południowych udał się tłum bezrobotnych z posłem Ciołkoszem i Batistem na czele pod ratusz, gdzie gwizdaniem i krzykiem domagał się pracy. Pan poseł Ciołkosz z Batistem oraz kilkudziesięcioma robotnikami wtargnęli do burmistrza dr Skowrońskiego żądając dla bezrobotnych pracy i zasiłków ... Poczem udali się panowie delegaci i zebrani pod ratuszem do starostwa ... Jak się dowiadujemy tłum bundystów z p. Ciołkoszem i Batistem na czele zachowywali się bardzo agresywnie, poturbowali woźnego, który bronił im wstępu do burmistrza oraz śpiewali na sali Czerwony Sztandar. Przybycie policji udaremniło dalsze ekscesy" [Monday around noon a crowd of jobless gathered in front of the town hall, with deputy Ciołkosz and Batist in front row. Accompanied by whistles and yelling the crowd demanded work. Deputy Ciołkosz and Batist along with some several dozen workers forced their way into the office of Mayor Dr Skowroński and requested work and welfare payments for the jobless ... Afterwards the delegates and the gathered crowd went towards the local government ... As we have heard, the Bundist crowd with Ciołkosz and Batist at the spearhead acted very aggressively, they've hurt a janitor, who tried to prevent the crowd from entering the Mayor's office. They have sung the "Red Banner" in the hall. The police baffled further excesses]. *Hasło*, cited in Potępa, *Tarnów międzywojenny*, 87.
23. Potępa, *Tarnów międzywojenny*, 91.
24. APT, district attorney cases, PT 34, case U 594/30.
25. APT, district attorney cases, PT 122 I Ds 110/37 (February 1937)
26. Sporn, "Der algemeyner yidisher arbeyter-bund," 655.
27. Potępa, *Tarnów międzywojenny*, 149.
28. *Tygodnik Żydowski*, 20 May 1939.

29. APT, district attorney cases PT 109–10; *Tygodnik Żydowski*, 17 February 1939.
30. Polonsky, “The Bund in Polish Political Life,” 189.
31. See also Sidor, *Samorząd terytorialny*, 77.
32. Pickhan, “*Gegen den Strom*”, 354.
33. *Ibid.*, 369.
34. “To jest instytucja, która obywateli łączy ze sobą na podstawie interesów swego sąsiedztwa i na podstawie bliskich sobie spraw, aby dla swego wspólnego dobra pracować” [This is an institution that unites the citizens on the grounds of common interests of their neighbourhood and on the grounds of related issues]. Cited in Sidor, *Samorząd terytorialny*, 78.
35. Potępa, *Tarnów międzywojenny*, 112.
36. “W przeciwstawieniu do nieszczerzej i obłudnej przyjaźni wyborczej ugrupowań burżuazyjnych polskich i żydowskich, radni socjalistyczni polscy i żydowscy utworzyli wspólny klub, który solidarnie walczyć będzie o zaspokojenie gospodarczych, społecznych i kulturalnych potrzeb tak polskich jak i żydowskich mas ludowych. Podkreślając prawo do pracy robotników żydowskich w przedsiębiorstwach gminnych, wszelkimi siłami przeciwstawiać się będziemy wszystkim objawom nacjonalizmu i antysemityzmu” [In contrast to the insincere and hypocritical electoral friendship of the Polish and Jewish middle class, the socialist councillors – Polish and Jewish – have formed a common club, that will fight in solidarity to satisfy the economic, social, and cultural needs of the Polish and Jewish masses. We stress the right of Jewish workers to get jobs in the community enterprises. With all our forces, we will fight all manifestations of nationalism and antisemitism]. Deklaracja Klubu radnych socjalistycznych [Declaration of the Club of Socialist Councillors], 5 July 1934, APT: 1: Zarząd miasta Tarnowa 2, 195–7.
37. Sporn, “*Der algemeyner yidisher arbeyter-bund*,” 653.
38. *Tygodnik Żydowski*, 18 May 1934.
39. Protocols of the city council sessions, session on 24 October 1934: APT, 1: Akta miejskie, ZMT 1; see also Potępa, *Tarnów międzywojenny*, 119–21.
40. APT, Rada Miejska, protocol of the city council session on 27 March 1935, *Tygodnik Żydowski*, 29 March 1935.
41. *Tygodnik Żydowski*, 15 October 1937.
42. *Ibid.*
43. Agitation pamphlet of the Polish Christian Union, cited in *Tygodnik Żydowski*, 27 January 1939.
44. There was only one district in which the Bund and the PPS competed against each other: APT, ZMT 39 wybory: I 8 a – 2/39.
45. APT, ZMT 39 wybory: I 8 a – 2/39.
46. *Hasło*, 14 July 1939, for more information about the work of the Bund in the municipal council, see Sporn, “*Der algemeyner yidisher arbeyter-bund*,” 656–7.
47. Pickhan, “*Gegen den Strom*”, 352–72; Polonsky, “The Bund in Polish Political Life,” 191.
48. In Warsaw 62% of the votes for Jewish parties were obtained by the Bund. Polonsky, “The Bund in Polish Political Life,” 191–3.
49. Wróbel, “From Conflict to Cooperation,” 167.
50. Antony Polonsky views 1930, when the Bund entered the Labour and Social International, as an important date. Polonsky, “The Bund in Polish Political Life,” 174.
51. Pickhan, “*Gegen den Strom*”, 329.
52. Quoted in *ibid.*, 329.
53. See also Kessler, “The Bund and the Labour and Socialist International,” 183–96.
54. See also Pickhan, “*Gegen den Strom*”, 332–3. For the impact of the Centrolew for Bund–PPS relations see Polonsky, “The Bund in Polish Political Life,” 174–5.
55. Brumberg, “The Bund and the Polish Socialist Party,” 83.
56. Ciołkosz, *Spojrzenie wstecz*, 79.
57. Potępa, *Tarnów międzywojenny*, 112.
58. Chomet, “Maurycy Hutter,” 785–8.
59. Hutter perished during the Second World War (Chomet, “Maurycy Hutter,” 788).
60. Leaflet of the PPS, cited in *Hasło*, 24 February 1939.
61. See also the memoir of Lidia Ciołkosz, *Spojrzenie wstecz*, 79.
62. On the case of Eugeniusz Sit see APT, district attorney cases, PT 121, case 1475/37.

63. "I teraz ci paniczykowie [z endecji] chcą rządzić? Chcą rozwiązać wszelkie kwestie w Polsce hasłem 'Bij Żyda'?! Nie dajcie się zepchnąć na manowce złudy, iż pogrom ulży naszej doli." District attorney cases APT 33/97/PT 140 case Ids 221/38.
64. See also Pickhan, "Gegen den Strom"; Wierzbieniec, "Lwów, Przemyśl, Rzeszów," 255–72.
65. "Mir zaynen der letster dor far velkhn der algemeyner yidisher arbeter bund in poyln iz geven a realitet fun tog-teglekhn arbeterlebn." Ciołkosz, "Der 'bund' in poyln in di yorn 1917–1943," 66.

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