The Sense of Belonging in Russian-ruled Poland:

A. Hartglas and the Jewish Community in Warsaw

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Introduction

This presentation will focus on several aspects of “Polish imperial characters” from the end of the nineteenth century to the 1930s. The Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth was once a multi-ethnic political body until the Partitions of Poland at the end of the eighteenth century. If we share Jane Burbank’s terminology¹, we can call the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth an eastern European empire. This is why the reconstruction of the Polish state in 1919 forced the former “multi-ethnic” society on a path towards a deep and radical transformation. As a result, the main political concepts changed their significations rapidly. How did people envisage the word “Pole (to be a Pole),” “Commonwealth,” or “homeland” before and after the independence of Poland? By focusing on the changing meanings of these concepts, we will find a serious gap between the imagined “new state” and the reality of interwar Poland. In other words, the multi-ethnic society, which was composed of not only Poles but also Ukrainians (Ruthenians), Jews, and other minorities, could not transform itself into an “ideal nation-state for Poles” at once. To some extent, this unresolved gap—the hidden imperial characters—led to the critical situation of the Polish state.

after the 1930s. Several aspects of Polish imperial characters are articulated in parallel with the nation-making process. Here, I will consider the following three periods.

I. Imperial Practice in Reality

The Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (from the fourteenth century to the Partitions of Poland) was an “old type” of multi-ethnic empire. Not only political power, but also the Polish language or culture dominated the expanded territory and the various inhabitants there.

II. Lost Empire in Nostalgia

After the Partitions of Poland, the political elites called the Szlachta tried to regain their independence by force several times. The most fatal insurrection was the January Uprising in 1863-64 against the Russian Empire. With their defeat in the last uprising, the Polish elites lost their power and some of them emigrated to the West, mainly to France. Interestingly, however, their self-definition as an empire in the glorious past was exaggerated in exile, far from the reality under Russian rule. In this

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case, multi-ethnicity was recollected positively, because it was an essential element of a noble and tolerant society\textsuperscript{6}.

**III. Abortive National Integration**

After the independence of Poland in 1919, its multi-ethnic society faced practical tasks, which the Polish state was supposed to resolve by itself. In this circumstance, the Polish national movement tried to reorient the new state into a nation-state; on the other hand, there still remained minorities who tried to conserve the diversity of society even in the nationalist era.

To analyze the origins of the frozen situation in 1930s, I focus on the third period, the beginning of the twentieth century. And the most important case study concerns the Jewish problem, which was a touchstone for the stability of the newborn Poland at that time. There is an abundance of examples in Jewish political activities; this is why I focus on a very restrictive case, a life of one Zionist. This Zionist, Apolinary Hartglas\textsuperscript{7}, was active among the Jewish community in Warsaw, the metropolis of Russian-ruled Poland and later the capital of the independent state. Examining his attitudes towards Russian rule and toward Polish society gives us an example of the unsolved gap in interwar Poland.


1) Traces of a Multi-ethnicity

How did the Jewish people express their view about life in Poland? We can find a clue in place names, which are related to the Jewish inhabitants. For example, in Warsaw, there were several streets that bequeath their Jewish origins to us: Jewish Street (ul. Żydowska) appeared on the map of Warsaw in the first part of the fifteenth century. Jewish Street was also called Abraham Street (ul. Abrahamowska) in the seventeenth century.

Jewish Street or Abraham Street is a direct indication of who lived there. In contrast with such direct expression, the name of a settlement for Jewish merchants in Warsaw, Nowa Jerozolima (New Jerusalem), is an example of symbolic naming. The settlement, New Jerusalem, was built at the end of the eighteenth century and was dismantled after only two years. Giving a name related to the Holy Places to their home place meant they accepted their life in their given place (even in the diaspora). In other words, by calling their own home “Jerusalem” or “Palestine,” they might positively analogize their habitation with the Holy Places.

2) Hartglas, a Man on the Border

Apolinary Hartglas was born in Russian-ruled Poland in the town of Biała Podlaska, which is situated 160 kilometres east of Warsaw and 60

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9 Marian Fuks, Żydzi w Warszawie: życie codzienne, wydarzenia, ludzie (Poznań, 2010), s. 56; Kwiryna Handke, Słownik nazewnictwa Warszawy (Warszawa, 1998), s. 58, s. 235; Jarosław Osowski, Warszawa i jej ulice: o pochodzeniu nazw (Warszawa, 2003), s. 54.
10 Osowski, Warszawa i jej ulice, s. 88; Handke, Słownik nazewnictwa Warszawy, s. 146.
kilometres east of Siedlce\textsuperscript{12}. In this town, about 60 percent of the population were Jewish (65 percent in 1931)\textsuperscript{13}. Their community in the town had grown rapidly in the latter half of the nineteenth century.

His parents were very secular and were assimilated Jewish people, which was not typical in this town. Most of the Jews there were religious, so-called \textit{Litwaks}. In contrast, Hartglas's and his family lived in a very Polish way: they spoke the Polish language, dressed in a secular Polish style, celebrated Easter Day, and so on.

Their son, Apolinary was born in 1883, twenty years after the January Uprising (1863-64). Hartglas was about twenty years younger than Roman Dmowski (1864-1939), the leader of the National Democratic movement. The National Democratic movement was growing into a nationalistic defiance movement at the time. This means that when Dmowski began to be active in the illegal political movement, Hartglas was just becoming interested in the Polish Question and political affairs.

When Hartglas was a student at the gymnasium in Biała Podlaska, he was a devoted subscriber to \textit{Przegląd Wszechpolski} (\textit{All Polish Review}), the National Democrats’ newspaper. In other words, young Hartglas was somehow amused by nationalistic articles. According to his memoirs, it was normal at that time; his friends also admired the \textit{All Polish Review}\textsuperscript{14}. He was

\textsuperscript{12} P. Deromi(Popowski), “Siedlce—syjonistyczne miasto” w Monika Adamczyk-Garbowska, Adam Kopciowski, Andrzej Trzciński reds., \textit{Księgi pamięci gmin żydowskich: tam był kiedyś mój dom...} (Lublin, 2009), s. 110.
\textsuperscript{13} August Grabski, “Biała Podlaska” w Jerzy Tomaszewski i Andrzej Żbikowski reds., \textit{Żydzi w Polsce: Dzieje i Kultura: Leksykon} (Warszawa, 2001), s. 39.
\textsuperscript{14} Władysław Bulhak, \textit{Dmowski-Rosja a kwestia Polska: u źródeł orientacji rosyjskiej obozu narodowego 1886-1908} (Warszawa, 2000), s. 73.
so influenced by the National Democratic ideology that he was even “antisemitic” until he entered Warsaw University\(^\text{15}\).

Meanwhile, the first Conference of Zionists was held in Basel, Switzerland, in 1897. At this conference, the World Zionist Organization was founded. However, Hartglas was not yet aware of the birth of the Zionist movement. He started to study law at Warsaw University in 1903 (up to 1905). After his fascination with Polish nationalism, he did not join the Zionist movement straightaway\(^\text{16}\). And there was also the language barrier: Hartglas was not proficient in the Yiddish language. It was hard for him to keep up with discussions about Zionism in Yiddish.

The problem of language symbolized a certain distance between Hartglas and his Zionist friends. The distance between Hartglas and his compatriots remained even after he became a Zionist. During the ten years before the First World War (1904-14), the mainstream of Polish Zionists emigrated from Poland to Palestine. This wave of emigration is called the “Second Aliyah.” It is said that about thirty or forty thousand people emigrated during the “Second Aliyah.” David Ben-Gurion was one of them. However, Hartglas decided to remain in Poland.

There are several reasons why he chose to do so. Firstly, he was a lawyer. Indeed, he had a difficult time because of his Zionism, but his career was relatively successful. He was trusted by his non-Jewish clients\(^\text{17}\). If he had

\[^{15}\text{Hartglas, Na pograniczu…, s. 35, 45.}\]

\[^{16}\text{Hartglas, Na pograniczu…, s. 50.}\]

left the Polish legal structure, it would have meant losing his social status.

Secondly, his native tongue was Polish, not Yiddish or Hebrew. This was a conscious decision. We should be careful about this point. It is said that he specially learned the Yiddish language for *Hajnt*, the most popular Yiddish newspaper. At the beginning of the twentieth century, much of the Jewish press was founded in Warsaw and other cities. However, most of them were closed soon after their foundation. *Hajnt* was one of the most successful papers; it existed up to 1939. In fact, Hartglas contributed over 290 articles to *Hajnt* and other Yiddish papers. So his Yiddish must have been up to a certain level. However, he underlined his weaknesses in the Yiddish language in his memoirs. This shows us that he had a strong attachment to the Polish language and life in Poland\(^\text{18}\). There is one particular episode indicating this fact. After the independence of Poland, Hartglas stood for the assembly of the Sejm. He was required to give a speech in Yiddish for the Jewish audience. He tried but could not make himself understood. Finally, he restarted his speech in Polish\(^\text{19}\). This episode shows his pride as a Polish speaker.

Thirdly, and more importantly, Hartglas’s Zionism was different from the so-called mainstream. According to his Zionism, the final cause was to build a Jewish state in Palestine. On the other hand, he put a premium on life in the diaspora. At least for Hartglas, “diaspora” was a synonym for life in Poland. In this respect, his Zionism was no ordinary Zionism. In 1906, he

\(^\text{18}\) Paweł Fijalkowski, “Hartglas Maksymilian Apolinary” w Marzena Wieczorek i Witold Sienkiewicz red., *Żydzi Polscy: historie niezwykłe* (Warszawa, 2010), s. 111-112.

\(^\text{19}\) Hartglas, *Na pograniczu...* s. 203.
published a brochure entitled *Terytorium a naród (Territory and Nation)*. We can find the basic structure of his future vision for Poland in this work. It was very different from the “Polish nation-state”-making discourse.

**Głos Żydowski (1906)**

*Territory and Nation* was first published as a series of articles in the journal *Głos Żydowski (Jewish Voice)* in June 1906. It is said that the *Jewish Voice* was the first Zionist journal published in the Polish language. The editor-in-chief was a lifelong friend of Hartglas, Isaak Gruenbaum. Hartglas joined as a writer and editor. The contents were mainly about the situation of Jewish people in the Russian Empire and other diaspora countries. There were also reports about pogroms or illustrations of victims of pogroms.

The first issue of the *Jewish Voice* was published in February 1906, and the final issue, in November of the same year. As I said, some newspapers were very short-lived. Most of them had financial problems, but sometimes it was because of prohibition by Russian policy.

The *Jewish Voice* was also under financial pressure. Moreover, articles on pogroms irritated the Russian authorities. After the pogroms in Białystok and Siedlce (1906), Hartglas contributed reports to the *Jewish Voice*. He blamed the Russian government for the pogroms, and it is said that these

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20 Hartglas, *Na pograniczu...*, s. 87.
reports were the direct cause of the closure of this newspaper.

As a result, this newspaper existed only for ten months, but contained some interesting articles. One of them was Hartglas’s *Terytorium a naród*. This article was published as a serial, and later reprinted as a brochure. The brochure was translated into Russian and published in Odessa. We will take a look at a summary of the first edition.

*Terytorium a naród* (1906)

In *Territory and Nation*, Hartglas suggests that every nation should have its own territory. However, it was not a suggestion of an exclusive nation state. According to his idea, every state has one majority nationality and other minority groups. These minority groups also have their own mother states, where they are the majority. And in these states, minorities should be accorded equal rights.

For example, in state A, there are three groups: nationalities A, B, and C. In state A, nationality A has the largest population and is the majority. At the same time, minority groups B and C are also guaranteed equal political rights because they are supported by their compatriots. For example, the countrymen of state B support the minority nationality B in state A; and in state B, nationality B is the majority.

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22 Apolinary Hartglas, „Terytorjum a naród (Ciąg dalszy),” *Głos Żydowski*, nr 16, 11 maja 1906r, s. 202-203; Hartglas, „Terytorjum a naród (Ciąg dalszy),” *Głos Żydowski*, nr 17, 18 maja 1906r, s. 218-220; Hartglas, „Terytorjum a naród (Dokończenie),” *Głos Żydowski*, nr 18, 25 maja 1906r, s. 229-230.

23 A. Gartglias (Гартгляс), Территория и нация, Перевод с польского А. Зайденман (СПб, 1907).

In this way, Hartglas imagined an international order. It was not the nation-state system, but a multi-national order. Territory A belongs to nationality A, but state A consists of many nationalities. People should work not only for their nationality, but also for their state.

According to his Zionism, the definitive goal was to build a Jewish state in Palestine. However, he valued life in the diaspora, that is, in Poland.

3) The Image of “Homeland” after Immigration

The outbreak of war forced him to leave Poland in December 1939.

After his emigration to Palestine, Hartglas published a brochure entitled “Poznaj ten kraj” (“Find this country”) in 1944. This work outlines his methods of reconstructing his homeland.

In this pamphlet, Hartglas suggested that every nation should have its own territory. In his case, for Jewish people, he insisted that colonization in Palestine was essential. However, it was not a suggestion of a new Israeli state, but rather a reconstruction of his “homeland” in Palestine. At the beginning of the text, he explains the plan and results of Jewish settlement after the Second Aliyah. It seems a normal report on settlements. However, he then unexpectedly begins to superimpose his recollections of Poland on the actual circumstances in Palestine. One way or another, he tries to find similarity between the Polish climate and new colonies, where young Polish Jews cultivate “normal” apples, strawberries, and potatoes despite the Middle Eastern climate.

25 Apolinary Hartglas, Poznaj ten kraj: do żołnierza polskiego (Jerozolima, 1944).
In this way, Hartglas imagined a reconstruction of his country far from Warsaw, in Israel. If we look back at the reality at the turn of the century, we can ignore his view. However, it could be interpreted as an alternative plan to the exclusivist nation state model.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I would like to raise a few points.

At the end of the Second World War, the Jewish community in Warsaw was profoundly shattered. After the war, Jewish people started to leave Poland especially in the 1960s. Many went to other European countries, the U.S., Canada, and Israel. Faced with this new situation in Israel, they never forgot their homeland in the diaspora.

In the diaspora, Zionists, including Hartglas, were destined for their old “promised land,” Palestine. However, on his arrival in the “promised land,” he tried to regain his “Poland”—the diasporic land. The meaning of “homeland” and diaspora is yet to be fully elucidated.

In Hartglas’s case, he shared an anti-Russian Empire mentality with the Polish society at least until the middle of the third period, before the Second World War. Indeed, he lost his newspaper by Russian policy as mentioned above. His sense of belonging was still partly reconcilable with the Polish nationalist movement. In other words, Russian rule put a lid on potential ethnic conflicts between the Polish national movement and other minorities under suppression by the Russian government.

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26 Jan Karski, *Story of a secret state* (Boston, 1944).
Around the end of the First World War, however, the Russian “lid” was removed. Then, Polish imperial characters could not find right place in the new Polish state in the interwar period. Thus, various nationalisms began to develop in their own ways.