

**“A quarter of a century of struggle” of the *Rola* weekly.
“The great alliance” against the Jews.**

by *Maciej Moszyński*

Abstract

In 1883, a new Polish weekly magazine, 'Rola', gathered around itself a group of journalists and writers who tried to overstep the liberal-conservative scheme of the political scene in the Kingdom of Poland. The founder of the periodical, Jan Jeleński and his colleagues did not hesitate to admit that their goal was to formulate a unified and convincing programme which would include social, economical, cultural and political elements. The journalists viewed these issues through their prejudice against Jews. This article focuses on the role of the weekly as a tool in the formation of the modern political antisemitic movement in the Kingdom of Poland. It shows which stereotypes were used by the authors of 'Rola', and particularly to what degree they were influenced by European anti-Jewish thought. This problem will be shown based on the analysis of the Polish self-image and the antisemitic image of the Jews.

“Quarter of a century of struggle” is the title of the commemorative book published in Warsaw in 1910. The intent of its authors was to document the history of the *Rola* weekly published in Warsaw; as well as to commemorate the achievements of its founder and long term editor, Jan Jeleński, who died the year before ¹. Publications of this type usually focus on paying homage to the achievements of one prominent figure, and commemorating related events. In case of the work in question, however, the reader received not only the ‘commemorative book’ but also a clear and thorough ideological message. Although the focus of “A quarter of a century of struggle” was on the hagiographic description of Jeleński’s life and an idyllic representation of the history of *Rola*, its main aim was, first and foremost, to familiarise the reader with the views presented in the magazine and the worldview of its authors. Certain tendencies represented in *Rola* have naturally evolved, but the viewpoint had remained unchanged for its whole publishing life. The decisively most important element is present in the title of this article. The authors of *Rola* thought of the word ‘struggle’ as a keyword. It was present on the pages of the weekly from its first edition to the last issue, and served as a starting point

¹ In the introduction, the publisher of the commemorative book discloses the original intent of the authors of *Rola*, which changed after Jeleński’s death: “The book was intended as a unique and highly original work, documenting a quarter of a century of struggle for the liberation of Poland and the Polish soul from under Judaic oppression; a document embracing thousands of letters, memos, notes compiled by the initiator and leader of the struggle, based on his own experiences, memories and pain.” *Ćwierćwiecze walki. Księga pamiątkowa „Roli”* (Warszawa, 1910), V.

for many other statements. All of those statements could be subsumed under one general thought: the struggle against Jews and their influence on the society of the Kingdom of Poland. *Rola* can be described as the first Polish magazine with clear antisemitic sentiments. From the day *Rola* was first published, Jeleński and his colleagues did not hesitate to admit that their goal was to formulate a unified and convincing programme which would include social, economical, cultural and political elements. The journalists viewed these issues through their prejudice against Jews. They dubbed themselves anti-Semites² and were seen as such by their contemporaries.³

It should be noted that, from the moment it was coined in the late seventies of the nineteenth century, the understanding of the notion 'antisemitism' differed for the representatives of opposing social environments, who propagated or opposed the idea. What is more, research conducted on the phenomenon of antisemitism up until the middle of the twentieth century clearly shows that aversion to Jews, often dubbed 'modern', became relatively quickly integrated into the world of politics.⁴ For those who harbored prejudice against Jews antisemitism became a readily identifiable cause for various socio-economic phenomena emerging parallel to nineteenth century development. As a notion it had significant explanatory power. The possibility to provide simple solutions in an increasingly complicated world was an additional advantage. Antisemitism entered politics particularly in the area of Central Europe, consequently spreading into the Kingdom of Poland. As a topic it is also becoming increasingly popular among researchers.⁵

2 In one of his leaflets published after his death, Jeleński wrote about the effects of the many years of his endeavor: "I would just like to concede that the type of antisemitism that *Rola* took upon itself to spread turned out to bear positive results, truly beneficial for Polish society." Jan Mrówka [Jan Jeleński], *Co to jest antysemityzm i jak go chrześcijanin katolik rozumieć powinien?*, (Warszawa, 1910), 27.

3 That *Rola* expressed antisemitic sentiments was a prevalent opinion, regardless of the political orientation of the speaker. Ludwik Kulczycki, a socialist, reminisced: "When discussing the new movements in our society in mid-80s one cannot omit the antisemitic movement, represented by the *Rola* weekly published by Jan Jeleński." Ludwik Kulczycki, "Dokoła mego życia. Cz. I: Lata dziecięce i młodość do połowy 1893 roku," Biblioteka Narodowa w Warszawie (Rps BN II 6384), 114. In the mid-80s of the 19th Century Antoni Zaleski, a conservative journalist hostile towards *Rola* stated: "The Anti-semitic movement today is popular in all places, and particularly here caused this mediocre periodical to gather an impressive number of subscribers." Baronowa XYZ [Antoni Zaleski], *Towarzystwo warszawskie. Listy do przyjaciółki*, vol. II (Kraków: nakł. Księgarni J. K. Zupańskiego i K. J. Heumanna, 1889), 146.

4 See Paul Massing, *Rehearsal for Destruction. A Study of political anti-semitism in imperial Germany*, (New York: Harper, 1949); Peter Pulzer, *The Rise of Political Anti-Semitism in Germany and Austria*, (New York: Wiley, 1964).

5 See Frank Golczewski, *Polnisch-jüdische Beziehungen 1881–1922. Eine Studie zur Geschichte des Antisemitismus in Osteuropa*, (Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1981); *Antisemitism and its opponents in Modern Poland*, ed. Robert Blobaum, (Ithaca-London: Cornell University Press, 2005); Theodore R. Weeks, *From Assimilation to Antisemitism: The "Jewish Question" in Poland, 1850-1914*, (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2006).

Taking these factors into account the present article will focus in the characterization of the *Rola* weekly and its programme in terms of politics. I will concentrate on three main issues posed by this problem. First, providing a general characteristics of the magazine and the circle of persons concentrated around it, which comprised of journalists and readers alike. Second, identification of the key elements of the political programme formulated by the magazine; particularly as put forward by the founder of *Rola*, Jan Jeleński. Finally, the description of elements which were crucial in establishing the special role that *Rola* played among other periodicals published at that time in the Kingdom of Poland.

Jeleński's journal was published in Warsaw between 1883 and 1912, that is for three decades.⁶ Considering the instability and specifics of operation of the Congress Kingdom press market, the periodical undoubtedly enjoyed a long life. The operation of the national censorship system was one of the key problems, an annoying reminder of the Tsar's self-imposed rule in the country. For the majority of time during which *Rola* was published the press was completely under state preventive control, much more restrictive in Warsaw than in, for example, Petersburg.⁷ The press system in Congress Poland was, naturally, a consequence of the socio-political order in the Tsardom. As a result public life underwent extensive deformation. Whoever engaged in social, political or cultural activities had to attach equally large weight to the factual side of their message as to its acceptability to the organ which assessed their "ideological correctness."⁸ This directly influenced the clarity of press language; it was also the reason certain topics were discussed and others consciously avoided. As a consequence of these exceptional circumstances the press in the Kingdom of Poland developed a special role in society. The social reality of Tsar's Russia was one with limited civil rights and freedoms. The press filled the resulting void in public life. The role of legal political parties was assumed by publishers and non-governmental organisations. Any emerging political, social or literary movement aimed to infiltrate society via the press. This relation was not limited to readers in Warsaw but spreading onto the communities of intelligentsia in smaller provincial centres.⁹

6 The death of Jan Jeleński in April 1909 was a landmark event for the development of 'Rola'. From that moment onwards his son Szczepan, who was a recurring contributor for the magazine from the beginning of the century, became its editor in chief. The situation continued until 1912. At that time young Jeleński discontinued 'Rola' and went to Rome so as to pursue theological studies; see: Aleksander Rogalski, "Szczepan Jeleński," *Polski Słownik Biograficzny [PSB]*, vol. 11, (Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy Imienia Ossolińskich, 1964-65,) 145-146.

7 Marek Tobera, "Cenzura czasopism w Królestwie Polskim na przełomie XIX i XX wieku," *Przegląd Historyczny*, vol. LXXX (1989): 46.

8 Henryk Bałabuch, "Pozycja redaktora odpowiedzialnego w Królestwie Polskim w końcu XIX w.," *Kwartalnik Historii Prasy Polskiej*, vol. XXXII (1993): 21.

9 Tobera, "Cenzura czasopism," 63-67. For more about the reception of the Warsaw community opinions in other areas of the Kingdom of Poland see (ex. Kielce Governorate):

During this period *Rola* managed to keep up the circulation at a relatively constant level, similar to that of leading national weeklies.¹⁰ Jan Jeleński, the founder of the periodical, controlled its establishment process on each step as editor in chief and publisher. A significant number of articles published in *Rola* was authored by him. The thematic range of the periodical was relatively wide. First and foremost, *Rola* featured articles on “social, economical and literary matters.”¹¹ The layout and structure of respective thematic sections was adapted to these topics. The editorial and topical article were crucial elements of each issue. Notes, social and economical analyses as well as commentaries on broadly understood cultural life were often part of the content, provided that they were convergent with the profile of the weekly. The ideological message that *Rola* propagated in its editorials was supported by the literary pieces published. These were mostly short stories and novels, on rarer occasions also pieces of poetry. They were characterized by a simplistic plot and schematic character portrayal, as the writing was meant to resonate with a wide variety of readers, usually without literary sophistication.¹² On certain occasions, specifically during the 1905-1907 revolution and in the Russian Duma election period, additional pages (so-called “people extras”) were added to issues of *Rola*. These extras aimed at increasing the awareness of the lowest social strata regarding the threat posed by the programme enemies identified by *Rola*.¹³

One important factor in the development of the programme was the choice of authors who wrote for the periodical. The previously mentioned “commemorative book” contains a list of prominent journalists who published in *Rola*, who were jointly called “brothers in arms.” One quarter of the 130

Danuta Adamczyk, “Prasa jako narzędzie oddziaływania warszawskich środowisk opiniotwórczych i politycznych na prowincję w II połowie XIX i początkach XX wieku,” *Kwartalnik Historii Prasy Polskiej*, vol. XXIX (1990): 71-82.

10 The circulation of *Rola* in the decade between 1906 and 1915 was estimated at 2400-3000. See Zenon Kmiecik, “Wydawnictwa periodyczne w Królestwie Polskim w latach 1868-1904,” *Rocznik Historii Czasopiśmiennictwa Polskiego*, vol. IV (1965): 145-157; Jerzy Myśliński, “Nakłady prasy w Warszawie w latach 1905-1906,” *Kwartalnik Historii Prasy Polskiej*, vol. XX (1981): 122.

11 This fact was underscored in the announcements of the periodicals published in Warsaw press at the end of 1882, for example in the conservative daily ‘Wiek’; see *Wiek*, No. 232, October 5/17, 1882, 4.

12 For more on this topic see Małgorzata Domagalska, “Kreacja bohaterów żydowskich w antysemitycznej prozie na łamach *Roli*,” *Żydzi i judaizm we współczesnych badaniach polskich*, vol. IV (Kraków: Polska Akademia Umiejętności, 2008), 377-390; eadem, “Zabawa w chowanego. Antoni Skrzynecki wobec Żydów,” *Kwestia żydowska w XIX wieku. Spory o tożsamość Polaków*, eds. Grażyna Borkowska and Magdalena Rudkowska, (Warszawa: Cyklady, 2004), 309-318.

13 It is worth mentioning such articles from 1906 as “Whose advice to follow during Duma elections and whom to choose,” “Don’t vote for Jews and non-believers,” “Farmers defend yourselves in advance from the socialists,” “Don’t beat the Jews, but don’t let yourselves be beaten,” “Attention, fellow land owners, for evil people are plotting against you,” “How the Germans and Jews brought us socialism.”

people listed were clergymen.¹⁴ Among them Kazimierz Niedziałkowski, the bishop of the *Łucko-żytomierskie* bishopric and Justyn Pranajtis, known for providing expert testimony for the Russian Ministry of Justice during the 1913 trial of Mendel Bejlis in Kiev in which he insisted that Jews committed ritualistic murders.¹⁵ *Rola* collaborated with a number of priests who wrote for other periodicals published in the Kingdom of Poland, including those of religious nature. One of those journalist priests was Jan Gnatowski who later became the editor of 'Przegląd Katolicki' ('Catholic Review'), an unofficial organ of the Warsaw curia¹⁶. The remaining authors were secular journalists and writers, both regular contributors and occasional collaborators. Among those published most frequently one needs to mention Teodor Jeske-Choiński, Klemens Junosza-Szaniawski, Ludomir Prószyński and Antoni Skrzynecki. All of them contributed to other journals as well.

But what the editors of *Rola* were particularly proud of were its readers. The impact of subscribers on the shape of its programme was carefully underscored, as well as their contribution to the establishment of an informal 'friends of *Rola*' group. The 'commemorative book' says:

"Undoubtedly, every ideological body needs to have proponents and opponents, as well as people indifferent to its message [...]. But also in this respect 'Rola' was an exception [...]. Separated [...] both by the left wing and the right of Warsaw journalism, it had either sworn enemies or trusted friends. [...] If an opponent, after a period of reading 'Rola' they found in cafeterias or borrowed from acquaintances, became a subscriber this alone made them an ally or, as they were called a 'rolarz'. The notion caught on relatively quickly and provided a detailed definition of the adopted social programme."¹⁷

The 'rolarze' group was intended as a means of real support in the struggle for the implementation of the programme. Many of the articles referred to the strong bond between the periodical and its friends. Ostensibly, this bond was exemplified by the amount of letters from readers and their visits in the *Rola* editorial office located in Jeleński's private lodgings. *Rola* attached great weight to the opinion of the 'rolarze' community. Consequently, members were often welcome to publish on its pages and their ideological integration was ensured

14 *Ćwierćwiecze walki*, 94-104.

15 Bolesław Kumor, "Justyn Pranajtis," *PSB*, vol. 28, 348-349. Between 1893 - 1894 Pranajtis published a series of articles in 'Rola' pertinent to his work "Christianus in Talmude Iudaeorum." For echoes of the Mendel Bejlis process in press relations from the Kingdom of Poland, see Jolanta Żyndul, "Bejlisy, czyli polska reakcja na proces kijowski," *Kwartalnik Historii Żydów* 4 (2009): 397-410.

16 Karol Lewicki, "Jan Gnatowski," *PSB*, vol. 8, 139-140.

17 *Ćwierćwiecze walki*, 68.

by a number of organized meetings and debates between journalists and faithful readers.¹⁸

In the second part of this article I would like to focus on factors influencing the political landscape in the Kingdom of Poland in the thirty year period before World War I. First, there was a lack of officially condoned political activity and limitations on public discourse imposed by tsarist censorship. The liberalization of this state of affairs happened only after the 1905-1907 revolution. The characteristic circumstances under which official and unofficial political life proceeded in the Kingdom of Poland were visible also in the influence of socio-economical and cultural phenomena. The population explosion, and the parallel processes of urbanisation and industrialisation during the second half of the nineteenth century re-established Kingdom of Poland as the most economically developed province in Russia. Another important development in that period was the advancement of emancipation processes. Emancipation was embraced particularly by those communities which, up to that moment, did not have the right of self-determination with regard to their social and economical activities in the existing system, that is Jews and peasants. The latter participated in the economical life of the Kingdom to a much larger extent than the Christian peasantry and yet, until the formal emancipation in 1862, they had to face many legal limitations.¹⁹ These processes drew the attention of the rest of society and became the topic of many public statements, as well as debates between representatives of different sociopolitical environments. At the same time, the Kingdom of Poland was considered a typical example of actual (or often imagined) peripheries of civilisation. Western Europe was at that time identified as the centre of civilisation by local elites.²⁰ This state of affairs influenced the character of the debate taking place in public printed media. The widening rift between the old and the new was followed by a surge in hope or anxiety was an additional factor.²¹

18 Ibid., XXIII. Although the editorial board of 'Rola' saw 'rolarze' as an exceptional community unprecedented in the Kingdom of Poland, another Warsaw-based weekly published at that time (since 1886), the radically antiliberal 'Głos' had its own group of staunch supporters, the 'głosowicze'. 'Głos' was also evolving toward antisemitism, see Maciej Moszyński, "Volksfreunde und Judenfeinde. Die Wochenzeitung *Głos* (1886–1894) und die Anfänge des modernen Antisemitismus in Kongresspolen," *Medaon – Magazin für jüdisches Leben in Forschung und Bildung* 5 (2011): 1-18.

19 See Artur Eisenbach, *Kwestia równouprawnienia Żydów w Królestwie Polskim*, (Warszawa: Książka i Wiedza, 1972).

20 Jerzy Jedlicki, *Jakiej cywilizacji Polacy potrzebują. Studia z dziejów idei i wyobraźni XIX wieku*, (Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1988), 289-295.

21 It needs to be noted that although the nineteenth and twentieth centuries put forward a single modernisation paradigm, the phenomenon of modernity is currently interpreted in the context of the variety of changes taking place see Tomasz Kizwalter, "Modernizacja z polskiej perspektywy: wiek XIX," *Drogi do nowoczesności. Idea modernizacji w polskiej myśli politycznej*, ed. Jacek Kłoczkowski and Michał Szuldrzyński, (Kraków: Ośrodek Myśli Politycznej, 2006), 48;

When *Rola* began to be published the political stage in the Kingdom of Poland seemed relatively ordered. The division ran between the liberal-positivists²² and conservatists. With time, however, new trends started to gain momentum with socialism and nationalism at the forefront. At the turn of the century there was an increasingly important rift between the independence and conciliatory movements.²³ In the early eighties of the nineteenth century, however, the liberalism-conservatism dichotomy seemed to be entrenched in society. Both sides published magazines presenting their arguments shaped in the course of the previous decade. Discussions taking place between those two camps were limited to the rather strict circle of the sociocultural elites and, therefore, did not usually go beyond a certain generally acceptable norm. Jan Jeleński was familiar with the topic of this debate, as he aspired to be admitted into the positivist movement in the 1870s himself.

The person of the future founder of *Rola* deserves further investigation for two reasons. Firstly, he was an important factor in the establishment of the weekly and the ideas proliferated on its pages. On the other hand, Jeleński's life was parallel to that of many other members of the 1840s generation descending from impecunious noble families. Those people devoid of perspectives for economical prosperity which would allow them to stay in the countryside were forced to relocate to the cities (particularly to Warsaw and Łódź) and seek employment to work for a living.²⁴ Jeleński was one of those particularly experienced by life. The lack of financial means made it impossible for him to get educated beyond a very basic level and he had to resort to self-education.²⁵

Marek Pąkciński, *Konserwatyzm na rozdrożu. „Młodzi konserwatyści” warszawscy wobec ideowych dylematów schyłku XIX wieku*, (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo IBL, 1994), 6.

22 On the specificity of Polish positivist ideology, as a philosophy, ideology and worldview, and as a literary tendency, see Janusz Maciejewski, “Miejsce pozytywizmu polskiego w XIX wiecznej formacji kulturowej,” *Pozytywizm. Język epoki*, eds. Grażyna Borkowska and Janusz Maciejewski, (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo IBL, 2001), 23.

23 See Andrzej Szwarc, *Od Wielopolskiego do Stronnictwa Polityki Realnej. Zwolennicy ugody z Rosją, ich poglądy i próby działalności politycznej (1864-1905)*, (Warszawa: Warszawska Oficyna Wydawnicza “Gryf,” 1996), 260- .

24 A similar route was taken by a *Rola* collaborator Klemens Junosza-Szaniawski in his youth. The liberal journalist Aleksander Świętochowski referenced these experiences in a review to one of his novels: “Among contemporary Polish authors discussing the deadly influence and destructive activities of Jews the most eminent position was undoubtedly assumed by Klemens Junosza. He achieved this notable position due to his remarkable storytelling ability and exceptional knowledge of life.” Poseł Prawdy, “Liberum veto,” *Prawda* 39 (1893), 463. For more information regarding Szaniawski's writing, see Anna Ochwat, “Bolesław Prus i Klemens Junosza-Szaniawski,” *Bolesław Prus. Pisarz. Publicysta. Myśliciel*, eds. Maria Woźniakiewicz-Dziadosz and Stanisław Fita, (Lublin: Wydawnictwo UMCS, 2003), 261-275; Anna Wereszczyńska, “Niezrównany monografista Żydów. Krytyka o Klemensie Junoszy-Szaniawskim,” *Zeszyty Naukowe WSHE*, vol. XVII (2005): 67-92.

25 In a letter to Józef Ignacy Kraszewski Jeleński wrote: “In my first youth I was taught to read and write only. I learned on my own after that [...]”. Korespondencja J. I. Kraszewskiego, Biblioteka Jagiellońska w Krakowie (B. Jag. 6508/IV, vol. 45, 1863-1887), 143.

In the following years commentators frequently referred to his these inadequacies.²⁶ The desire to compensate for this long accumulated frustration, and his conviction that he was constantly the subject of attacks from adversaries²⁷ was clearly visible in Jeleński's prose later. Having relocated to Warsaw and acquired the position of a telegraphist, the future founder of *Rola* focused on furthering his education. At the same time he witnessed the birth of the positivist movement in the Kingdom of Poland. Jeleński was not indifferent to both the notion of 'organic work' formulated by the young generation of positivists and the cult of science among them. By the early 1870s he managed to publish some articles in journals appreciating the new progressive ideology. He was interested particularly in the topic of economy and self-education. When writing on the latter topic he drew generously from the ideas of Józef Supiński, one of the canonical authors of that generation.²⁸ First and foremost, Jeleński was fascinated by the Polish translation of the work of Samuel Smiles, a Scottish author whose book entitled "Self-help"²⁹ was instrumental in shaping the worldview of the future founder of *Rola*. In a 1873 brochure Jeleński referred to his own difficulties with acquiring knowledge and stigmatized anyone who wasted the gift of education in any way.³⁰ This pertained particularly to well-educated persons who did not use their knowledge to benefit society. The author saw them as 'social parasites.' In contrast to them there were the so called "productive society members" that is persons who "ought to search for help and support for their goals only in their own ability, consistent work, steel undefeated will; they need to believe in themselves and rely mainly upon themselves."³¹

26 Antoni Zaleski, whom I quoted earlier, referenced "Jeleński, despite his pretences is not familiar with the issues of economy, nor seemingly does he know one foreign language." Baronowa XYZ, "Towarzystwo," 147. Roman Dmowski, the leader of national democrats said that he appreciated the editor of 'Rola' managed to appropriately identify the "vivid hatred towards the Jews" present in Polish society. On the other hand, however, he did not hold the crudeness of methods in high esteem, see: Grzegorz Krzywiec, *Szowinizm po polsku. Przypadek Romana Dmowskiego (1886-1905)*, (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Neriton, 2009), 236.

27 Marian Pachucki, who collaborated with *Rola* in the years before its dawn, referenced the obsessions that Jeleński accumulated over the years: "In the home of Szczepan Jeleński I have seen a painting of his father defending himself from progressive writers attacking him with quills held in their hands [...]. Marian Pachucki, "Wspominki 1888-1919," Biblioteka Ossolineum (Rps Ossol. 14054/I), 32.

28 Krzysztof Biliński, "*Szkoła polska gospodarstwa społecznego* Józefa Supińskiego i jej recepcja w pozytywizmie," *Książka pokolenia. W kręgu lektur polskich doby postyczniowej*, eds. Ewa Paczoska and Jolanta Sztachelska, (Białystok: "Łuk," 1994), 65-77.

29 Jolanta Sztachelska, "Czytanie Smilesa," *Książka pokolenia: w kręgu lektur polskich doby postyczniowej*, eds. Ewa Paczoska; Jolanta Sztachelska, (Białystok: Wydawn. ŁUK, 1994), 78-91; see Bartłomiej Szleszyński, *Kto napisał Pomoc własną* Samuela Smilesa?, *Etyka i literatura. Pisarze polscy lat 1863-1918 w poszukiwaniu wzorców życia i sztuki*, eds. Ewa Ihnatowicz and Ewa Paczoska, (Warszawa: Wydział Polonistyki UW, 2006), 453-460.

30 Jan Jeleński, *O samopomocy w kształceniu się*, (Warszawa, 1873).

31 *Ibid.*, 12.

In his works published in the middle of the seventies, Jeleński focused primarily on two issues: economy, with special attention to economic self-organisation of society,³² and the Jews. Under an obvious influence of positivist thought, the future publisher of *Rola* formulated plans to ‘reform’ those who believed in Judaism by delegating them to work in the farming industry and preparing an education system for the unenlightened masses. Both Christians and ‘civilized’ Jews were to be involved in the implementation of the latter part of the plan.³³ Jeleński also indicated the crucial importance of Jews for the economical development of the Kingdom.³⁴ His views fit into the emancipation movement developing in the area of Poland from the end of the 18th century. Its most important tenets included the “re-stratification” and “productivisation” of the Jewish population. Yet the paternalistic and positivistic tone to Jeleński’s preachings was significantly ambivalent from the very beginning. Although he was able to identify the primary ‘sin’ of the Christian population in the country - namely the lack of solidarity that hindered economical development - it was easier for the soon-to-be editor of *Rola* to resort to pinpointing Jewish usurers as the cause. The existence of a “speculation network” was considered by the author a threat, that “systematically sucked out vital strength” out of society. In one of the articles he writes:

“As [...] any moderately prominent provincial Rotschild keeps the local nobility in his pocket, similarly any small-time usurer and shop-keeper holds the everyday existence of a number of manufacturers and factory workers tight in his exploiting fist.”³⁵

Jeleński’s views began to crystallize soon afterwards. The journalist described the economical relations in one of the provincial cities in Congress Poland as “German industry, Jewish trade.”³⁶ “We want to step over from economic powerlessness to relative power” he wrote, and identified those factors that hinders the implementation of this message. To Jeleński, one of the key obstacles was the attitude represented by Jews, particularly Chasidic Jews, this “malignant tumor, which also today spreads over the body of our Israeli peoples.”³⁷ The author failed to recognize multiple internal differences characteristic to the group harboring the strongest religious beliefs. In his work he treated this community as a homogenous mass. Jeleński did not reject

32 Jan Jeleński, *Najpilniejsze ekonomiczne potrzeby kraju*, (Warszawa, 1875).

33 Jan Jeleński, *O skierowaniu żydów ku pracy w rolnictwie*, (Warszawa, 1873).

34 See especially the brochure entitled: *Żydzi nasi wobec handlu i przemysłu*, (Warszawa, 1875), see Michał Śliwa, *Obcy czy swoi. Z dziejów poglądów na kwestię żydowską w Polsce w XIX i XX wieku*, (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Naukowe WSP, 1997), 8.

35 Jan Jeleński, “Które ze stowarzyszeń ekonomicznych najlepiej odpowiadać mogą społeczeństwu naszemu?,” *Wiek*, n. 147, December 7/29, 1873, 3.

36 Jan Jeleński, *Kalisz i jego okolica*, (Warszawa, 1875), 5.

37 *Ibid.*, 17.

positivist rhetoric. His calls for action, “civilizing” the “unenlightened fanatics” were delivered in a contemptuous manner. Referring to the “Jewish intelligentsia,” or the integrated part of the Jewish community, he underscored its positive social impact, but also criticized the group for insufficient devotion to the cause of unenlightened masses.³⁸ Writing these words Jeleński must have believed them to an extent. The brochure, which he published as a compilation of his socio-political views regarding the situation of the country, can be taken as proof.³⁹ In it, the autor reviews his opinion on the programme for the “civilizing” of Jews which he expressed up to that point. He concedes: “[...]to a large extent these reforms do not depend on the society itself. Society does not have the proper means to conduct them [...]”⁴⁰ Describing the state of economy in the Kingdom of Poland Jeleński added that “from our position today we can be delivered mainly by trade and industry, thus we would advise to take those sources of prosperity in our own hands, no less because their functioning can be adjusted to serve a greater good.”⁴¹ The notion of the exhaustion of existing socio-political measures, and the necessity to have the three vital sectors of the economy: trade, industry and commerce controlled by Poles from that moment onwards became for him a “confession of faith.” Jeleński’s specific perception of social progress, increasingly dissimilar to the positivist programme, could *de facto* already be seen. Only a comprehensive presentation of his views on the Jews, however, showed his convictions in a different light. He divided the Jewish community into three groups: plutocracy, intelligentsia and uneducated masses, and reflected:

“At the top there is social indifference striving to conquer the area of economical matters and needs; at the bottom there are backward ignorants living in isolation, to a large extent at the expense of the working classes; in the middle a growing handful of intelligentsia who, considering its beneficial activity fueled by the same spirit as the Christian community, is a healthy part of the middle classes.”⁴²

And so the activities of rich Jewish financiers, and the businesses of small-town Jewish merchants were, according to the journalist, a form of business activity hostile to the interest of the Christian population. One reason was identified as “their desire to conquer and rule single-handedly matters of utmost importance to the country,” another was the “exploitation of working classes,” particularly in rural areas.⁴³ Jeleński acknowledged the existence of a group of culturally assimilated Jews, admittedly an empty gesture. He assigned

38 Ibid.

39 Jan Jeleński, *Żydzi, Niemcy i my*, (Warszawa, 1876).

40 Ibid., 54.

41 Ibid., 4.

42 Ibid., 26.

43 Ibid., 17, 22.

a role to them in the framework of his “welfare and safety” programme for Jews. “To look after and deal with the education of unenlightened masses in cooperation with the class of progressive Jews, while remembering to secure their own economic wellbeing”⁴⁴ was, in Jeleński’s eyes, the task that stood before the Christian community. Yet the first part of this postulate was illusory from the very beginning. It was the members of Jewish intelligentsia who, in the mind of the journalist, had to take the initiative in this respect. Thus it had to assert its right to be regarded as a socially beneficial group. It was at the same time a type of ethical blackmail and Jeleński’s attempt to find out how far can he go in formulating demands towards the integrated Jews. In case of Jeleński, the statement on “securing their own economic wellbeing” sounded much more sincere. He described it as a kind of “small policy” which, in contrast to “the big policy”, which proved to be ineffective. This headline subsumed what Jeleński mentioned before, namely the activation of the Christian population in the spirit of solidarity to participate in the economic life of the country, which he also understood as a call for them to counter the negative Jewish influences.⁴⁵ One should mention briefly that although Jeleński’s attention focused at that time on the “Jewish element,” part of his programme was devoted to fighting the influence of “germanisation” in the Kingdom of Poland. The most interesting issue seems to be the difference in the assessment of both threats. If, according to him, the Jews constituted a threat, regarding the monopolisation of trade and seizure of “the source of national wealth,” the Germans were dangerous primarily due to their buying land.⁴⁶ “The struggle for land” has grown over time to become the basic theme in the programme authored by the future publisher of *Rola*.

In publications issued in the late seventies of the nineteenth century Jeleński replied to the many critical opinions, which have been appearing in the press of the Congress Kingdom since the formulation “little policy.” His reaction was very emotional, and showed a clear evolution in the objections he raised against the Jews. The columnist accused Jewish financiers of establishing, with help from the press network of economically and morally dependent applauders (“the courtiers of the Jews”).⁴⁷ Jews were, therefore, a threat reaching much farther than the economy *per se* but also encompassing the matters of widely understood civilization. Indeed, according to Jeleński, they had sufficient force at their disposal to distort reality, using their influence to manipulate public opinion. As the publicist stated: “the tactics of such bodies

44 Ibid., 61.

45 Ibid., 61-73. In this brochure the author for the first time quotes Jakub Brafman, the author of “Kniga Kahala” - a book that inspired a 19th century antisemitic movement in Europe. For more on this topic see Anke Hilbrenner, “Jakob Brafman,” *Handbuch des Antisemitismus. Judenfeindschaft in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, ed. Wolfgang Benz, vol. 2, (Berlin: De Gruyter Verlag, 2009), 97-98.

46 Ibid., 42-51.

47 Jan Jeleński, *Dworacy Żydów*, (Warszawa, 1878).

are cleverly disguised, and one needs to have intimate knowledge of these newly formed relations in journalism to be able to assess what is behind them.”⁴⁸ The need to expose enemies favorable to Jews and hidden in the ranks of both culturally assimilated and integrated Jews and Christians, as well as the belief in a Jewish conspiracy carried out through the press, made Jeleński’s views comparable to the modern antisemitic worldview. However, the journalist opposed the opinion of those of his critics who called him a “Jew-eater” [*żydożerca*] (the notion of an “antisemite” was to appear a year later in Germany). The future editor of *Rola* insisted that his “little policy” bore no relation to “Jew-eating.”⁴⁹ He considered his economic arguments completely legitimate and did not identify them with encouraging physical violence against Jews which, in his opinion, were parts of the “Jew-eater” discourse. Additionally, it needs to be mentioned that such views, equalling antisemitism with direct violence and refusing to consider other (ex. economical) forms of hostility towards the Jewish population as antisemitic are present in Polish society to this day. Jeleński’s statement clearly showed that expressions of negative attitudes toward Jews which used to constitute a part of public discourse were not suitable for inclusion in his “little policy.” As it turned out, a new word was introduced soon after that. As it was regarded as a scientific term it allowed Jeleński to solve his dilemma.

Coming back to *Rola* itself, it should be noted that in the early eighties of the nineteenth century Jeleński increasingly argued that it was necessary to introduce new quality into what was considered “ensuring one’s economic wellbeing.” In 1881 he wrote about the need for “great unanimity and organized action throughout the country.”⁵⁰ Jeleński himself did not intend to remain inactive on this issue. The following year he purchased a relatively unpopular periodical, “*Tygodnik Rolniczy*” (“Agriculture Weekly”) and changed its name to *Rola*.⁵¹ From that moment he controlled a publishing entity, which he considered necessary to attain his goals.

At the beginning of 1883, when Jeleński formulated his political program, he could not fail to address the ideological debate between the liberal-positivists and conservatives that transpired in the Kingdom of Poland. Articles in the first annual of *Rola* and described by the editors as programmatic and “pedagogical,”⁵² served to proliferate a new vision of reality. Editors attached great importance to ensuring that the articles were written in a scientific manner.⁵³ It was through those articles that readers were able to familiarise

48 Ibid., 7.

49 Ibid., 10.

50 *Wiek*, n. 234, October 7/19, 1881, 2.

51 Edmund Rabowicz, “Jan Jeleński,” *PSB*, vol. 11, 142.

52 *Ćwierćwiecze walki*, 106.

53 Teodor Jeske-Choiński, while staying in the capital of Austria-Hungary wrote in one of his letters: “Here in Vienna work is abundant; I am collecting material for new works in literary history that are unattainable in Warsaw. I am planning to conduct the main attack on liberals,

themselves with the ideological message of *Rola* and with the objectives it set for itself and its followers. In their programmatic manifesto the editors wrote:

“Using the help and influence of our publishing entity we intend to establish a force of opposition, reaching to the widest possible social circles; an alliance undertaking a persistent legal battle in the domain of economy. [...] We have often heard the argument that there needs to be a unified, extensive alliance and we agree with this idea in principle. We cannot omit that, should the vast plain of economical development be overtaken by foreign powers with no relation to the common good, inevitably the ‘one great alliance’ will be driven away from its ideals, rather than toward them. There is a tribe who harvest general failure; who find helplessness and certain weakness of character in society to be a guarantee of success for their classist aspirations. We do not know if anyone else has observed that the impact of this tribe, as powerful and extensive as we see it today, generally dates back to the time when the public was forced to immediately adapt to new working conditions and to work for a living; in addition, emancipation provided the tribe with a double set of rights - general and those of the class.”⁵⁴

The programme formulated in *Rola* has two basic aspects: positive and negative. The call for the creation of a broad social movement should, without doubt, be considered the main positive element. The belief that existing forms of political activity were completely exhausted and did not provide answers to current conditions served as a starting point for this motion. As an idea, the creation of a “single great alliance” stemmed from the necessity, as *Rola* proclaimed, to gather the widest possible social circle around a common goal. That goal was a “calm, legal and systematic defense.” Characteristically, this defense would take the form of a “struggle.” The aim was to secure the threatened “basis of economic wellbeing” of society.⁵⁵ Naturalistic themes, visible in Jeleński’s writing before, in his subsequent articles to the periodical were supplemented with views containing elements of biological determinism:

“*Rola* knows that the eradication of a ‘caste, class, ethnicity,’ etc. is simply a utopia, invented by the bourgeoisie, for whom this ‘fiction’ was necessary so as to discredit the nobility; in the hands of financiers this “fiction” became one sided having reached the purpose for which it was created. *Rola* [...] recognizes the right of inheritance, and, therefore, believes in real differences between castes, classes and ethnicities, for example, that a Jew is the

Jews and positivists but I require scientific facts for this purpose.” Korespondencja redakcyjna Walerego Przyborowskiego, Biblioteka Ossolineum (Rps Ossol. 13602/I), 156.

54 Redakcja, “Czego chcemy? (I),” *Rola* 1 (1883): 1.

55 Ibid., 2.

product of his past, and that for a long time he will remain what he has been for ages.”⁵⁶

and social Darwinism:

“Principles governing the animal kingdom have been present in human society for a long time, from the moment we discovered the need to eat, drink, sleep. [...] Such is also the age of the so called struggle for survival. Personal interest has governed human activities, and will continue to do so indefinitely.”⁵⁷

This clearly stated plan of political mobilization at the macro level was accompanied by a concrete program for socio-economic activation of these groups, which, according to *Rola*, were particularly vulnerable to the threat of “foreign and degenerative elements.” In the three decades during which *Rola* was published the notion of “little policy” formulated earlier by Jeleński evolved into concrete demands. Although they were directed to different groups of society, attempts were made to unify the messages by a number of common features. The majority of attention, particularly in the years when *Rola* was a relatively young periodical, was devoted to those of the social strata, whose life was in some way related to soil cultivation. According to *Rola* land ownership constituted the basis of social existence - its collective “I.”⁵⁸ Therefore, *Rola* primarily addressed its programme to the landowners of Congress Poland. Their main task was the struggle to maintain possession of real estate. The periodical, however, refrained from granting its unconditional approval to this social group. On the one hand, landowners were given validation as the “proper people” and “the main source of national wealth.”⁵⁹ On the other hand, the magazine did not hesitate to publicly condemn those of the landowners who “recklessly disposed of the land of their fathers” and thus “shattered the basis for the welfare of society.”⁶⁰ Looking for ways to acquaint landowners with the principles of “practical economics”, the weekly promoted, among other ideas, the establishment of landowner farming partnerships and credit societies. This would also serve a more universal purpose, namely the reviving in the descendants of noble family a old noble morality and a sense of solidarity against danger from ideological foes.⁶¹

56 Pancerny, “Na posterunku,” *Rola* 4 (1883): 9.

57 Pancerny, “Na posterunku,” *Rola* 14 (1883): 9.

58 Redakcja, “Czego chcemy? (II),” *Rola* 2 (1883): 1.

59 Pancerny, “Na posterunku,” *Rola* 13 (1883): 8.

60 Redakcja, “Czego chcemy? (II),” *Rola* 2 (1883): 1; J.J., “Jeszcze Zakłęcie,” *Rola* 15 (1883): 2.

61 Hreczkosiej, “Hreczkosiej do magnatów (I-IV),” *Rola* 26-29 (1885). Choiński wrote in a letter: “We desperately need to defeat the Jews as otherwise we will become ultimately disgusting; we desperately need to return our youth to the ideals of Polish knighthood and shape their characters - or we will decay. (...) Warsaw needs a knighthood society that will raise brave hearts and eradicate the Jewish and urban-utilitarian influences. Korespondencja redakcyjna Walerego Przyborowskiego, Biblioteka Ossolineum (Rps Ossol. 13602/I), 156-157.”

In a similar vein *Rola* communicated with the peasant population. It encouraged villagers to form co-operatives, shops and companies providing cheap mutual loans.⁶² The weekly expressed a paternalistic attitude to the peasant classes. One of the ways this manifested itself was the expectation that landowners had a duty to protect the people. With time the “little policy” programme became filled with messages intended for the urban population of the Kingdom of Poland. Particularly during the revolution in the years 1905-1907 and after its dawn *Rola* provided information regarding threats to the urban population. The periodical supported activities related to the promotion of domestic trade, industry and manufacture.⁶³

If one tried to subsume the entire positive program of *Rola* with a single word, it would have to be the notion of “organic” development of a “spirit of solidarity” in society, abundantly present in Jeleński’s former writing. For this purpose the journal intended to mobilize what was called the contemporary “silent majority.”⁶⁴ This group, for various reasons uninvolved in the dispute between liberals and conservatives in Congress Poland, was controlled by minor gentry and provincial clergy. The first step in the implementation of social “self-help” was to be taken by “rolarze”, the dedicated readers of *Rola* mentioned earlier in this article. The ultimate guarantor of success was, however, what became a recognizable feature of the program advocated in *Rola*: an unconditional alliance between all layers of society and the Catholic Church. Indeed in the magazine Catholicism had been represented as the greater good, permeating all levels of human activity. The most apparent manifestation of this idea was the constant emphasis that *Rola* put on the reconstruction of Catholic morality in society; and the assertion that the clergy plays a crucial part in the struggle against “foreign powers.” Jeleński wrote:

“My society, fooled by Judah and his legion of servants, contains a unique circle of people who, according to their strengths and possibilities, are working to save and elevate the very base of social existence: morality. That circle of people is our clergy. Only they, struggling for the greatest good for mankind against the wave of modern paganism, can protect us from complete downfall and jewification. I owe my respect to this class for two reasons: first as a Catholic, second as a small part of my community which I would

62 Jan Jeleński, “Praktyczne cele (I-VII),” *Rola* 40-49 (1884); “Sklepy polskie (Wskazówki praktyczne),” *Rola* 37 (1888): 434-436.

63 Jan Jeleński, “W sprawie rzemiosł (I-II),” *Rola* 35-36 (1884); “Co zabija rzemiosła?,” *Rola* 6 (1885): 1-2; “Protesta rzemieślników (w sprawie przyjmowania Żydów do zgromadzeń),” *Rola* 15 (1885): 1-2; 1905-6.

64 Andrzej Jaszczuk, *Spór pozytywistów z konserwatystami o przyszłość Polski 1870-1903* (Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1986), 208.

like to see delivered from sinking in judaism and the waste of demoralisation.”⁶⁵

For the purpose of analyzing the negative programme of *Rola* one needs to identify “the enemy” whose eradication was pursued by the magazine and its readers with such great determination. This enemy was, according to the “little policy” formulated by Jeleński, the Jewish population residing in the Kingdom of Poland. Jews were, according to the weekly, almost the sole source of misfortune falling on the Christian part of the population of the country. There were, indeed, especially in the early days of the magazine, frequent calls to defend the country against the deadly threat posed by the Germans. With time, however, the “Germanist threat” for the supporters of *Rola* descended into the background. If it appeared in an article, it was usually in the context of an alleged permanent alliance between “Germanism” and “Semitism.” That was the case in 1902 when Warsaw press called for a boycott of “German produce” due to attempts at germanisation going on in the Prussian partition. *Rola* considered the boycott to be insufficient unless it was followed by a boycott of goods of Jewish origin.⁶⁶ In a similar vein the weekly called for dismantling the German-Jewish cooperation during the 1905-1907 revolution.⁶⁷

The term “alliance” used in a context similar to that mentioned above, was another keyword appearing *Rola*. It represented the essence of a belief prevalent among “rolarze”, namely that Jews did not constitute a threat solely due to them being Jewish, but also because they acted in cooperation with the ideological enemies of the periodical in a more or less transparent manner - including those enemies which were initially considered “non-Jewish.” It was Jews who were supposedly behind the materialistic and nondenominational liberalism hated by the journal. As a result, attacks carried out in *Rola* against its main political opponents - the Warsaw positivists - were also attacks against their alleged jewification. The magazine sought to identify the origin of the threat as “culturally assimilated Poles of semitic faith.” Most of the articles published in *Rola* were filled with hostility towards those representatives of the Jewish community who were also the most integrated with the ethnically Polish population of the Congress Kingdom. Paradoxically, among the supporters of *Rola* orthodox Jews were considered less of a threat than their “civilized” compatriots. This was made clear from the very beginning:

“Repugnant to us, the so-called “civilized” Jew does not believe in anything but gold and corporal pleasure; we abhor this liberal platitudinarian who spews humanitarian ideas when he thinks it

65 Jan Jeleński, “Na posterunku,” *Rola* 32 (1899): 526.; see Jan Jeleński, “Z księdzem polskim – polski lud!,” *Rola* 48 (1905): 729-731.

66 Kamienny, “Na posterunku,” *Rola* 17 (1902): 261-262.

67 Kamienny, “Na posterunku,” *Rola* 9 (1905): 122-123; Kamienny, “Na posterunku,” *Rola* 14 (1905): 201-202.

favorable; we loathe any man who is plain, indifferent, living the existence of a hunting animal. You are a Jew, be one! Dearer to us is an unenlightened orthodox Jew than a civilized zero, as the former believes in something, is something, and the latter gives no guarantees. To make a profit he will sell anything, scam anyone, for he is a proponent of absolute, vile utilitarianism.”⁶⁸

This was a declaration drastically dissimilar in relation to what Jeleński preached in the early years of his journalistic endeavors. To reject the allegations appearing in the Warsaw press, *Rola* proclaimed the admissibility of assimilation for some individuals of Jewish descent, provided they were deemed suitable. This was connected with accepting their conversion to Catholicism.⁶⁹ Nevertheless, these statements were superficial as exemplified by countless articles in *Rola* in which the “neophytes” became objects of vulgar attacks.⁷⁰ *Rola* focused its attention on the threats from the “nondenominational,” “civilized” Jews and the growing number of their servile “courtiers.” This was a symptom of a broader trend, which, with greater or lesser intensity, affected the press in the Kingdom of Poland in the early eighties of the nineteenth century. At that point in time an “assimilation breakthrough” of sorts can be identified within the discourse of conservative communities. As a result, an emerging program convergence began to visibly attract *Rola* to this part of political stage in Congress Poland.⁷¹

That fact, however, did not prevent the magazine from accusing the Congress conservatives of jewification, and succumbing to the influence of the insidious Jewish plutocracy. *Rola* bemoaned the fact that “there are impostors, Pharisees, hypocrites pretending to act under the banner of conservatism,”⁷² Their publications “sponsored by Jewish merchants” were described as the “organs of the bourgeoisie,” “masked liberals, who profess utilitarianism.”⁷³ No wonder that most of the conservative press was in conflict with Jeleński’s weekly. He was accused of slander and sowing confusion in his own ranks.⁷⁴ It was questioned whether his “hateful anti-Semitic rhetoric always written in the

68 Pancerny, “Na posterunku,” *Rola* 19 (1883): 9.

69 Kamienny, “Na posterunku,” *Rola* 21 (1886): 246-247.

70 Alina Cała, *Asymilacja Żydów w Królestwie Polskim (1864-1897). Postawy. Konflikty. Stereotypy*, (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1989), 288.

71 Grzegorz Krzywiec, “Gangrena, czyli kto nam dusze zeszpecił. Obraz Żydów w prasie ziemiańskiej końca XIX wieku,” *Kwartalnik Historii Żydów* 1 (2002): 38.

72 Pancerny, “Na posterunku,” *Rola* 11 (1883): 7.

73 Pancerny, “Na posterunku,” *Rola* 25 (1883): 8.

74 Mściśław Godlewski, a conservative journalist and colleague of Jeleński’s in the seventies wrote him in a rather suggestive manner: “Had I not known you better than perhaps you know yourself I would come to the conclusion that you have fought Jews for such a long time that you have now adopted their tactics, intending to defeat them with their own main weapon: lies and slander.” *Papiery Mściśława Godlewskiego*, Biblioteka Ossolineum (Rps Ossol. 12448/II), 175.

same manner”⁷⁵ conformed to the relevant principles of conservatism. Jeleński’s opinion regarding his conservative critics can be subsumed by one of his (milder) responses:

“Unfortunately, the repeated taunts and assaults convinced me that your pride is without boundaries. You seem to think that on the conservative side of the press there should not exist any voice other than your own, and this is your cardinal mistake which, I would venture to add, public servants ought not commit.”⁷⁶

In later years, the socialist movement became the leading political enemy for *Rola*. The magazine saw it as a body manipulated by the cosmopolitan Jewish International leading to “revolutionary turmoil” destructive for the ethical and economical prosperity of the country. The stereotype of the socialist Jew, an enemy of the Polish nation,⁷⁷ was a compilation of all the previous allegations that the magazine directed against members of the Jewish population in the Kingdom of Poland. With time, there was a visible increase in the frequency with which elements of conspiracy theories were published in *Rola*. The initially local stereotypical portrayal of a network of Jewish “moneylender-spiders” preying on defenseless Christian “flies”⁷⁸ was extended to the international level. Jews, according to the magazine, not only controlled the global financial policy, but also successfully instigated wars, according to their “the more Christian blood pours down, the more gold flows into Jewish pockets” rule.⁷⁹ This dichotomous vision of the world threatened by both the Capitalist Jew and the Socialist Jew was characteristic for modern antisemitism.

The domain in which Jewish conspiracies were most successful in exerting their influence was, according to *Rola*, the global and local press market. Willingness to be corrupted by the Jews was supposedly the main feature of the press in the Kingdom of Poland. “One part of the press is simply afraid of Hebrew power, the other is held in its grasp” - as Jeleński quoted John Retcliff’s belief that newspapers serve the Jews as a tool for social incapacitation and imposition of their ideological views alien to the affected nation.⁸⁰ A prime example of this was supposed to be the press in Berlin and Vienna, repeatedly discussed in the magazine.⁸¹ As an element of the ongoing

75 Chorąży, “Sprawy bieżące,” *Niwa* 309 (1887): 781.

76 Papiery Mściława Godlewskiego, Biblioteka Ossolineum (Rps Ossol. 12448/II), 172.

77 Kamienny, “Na posterunku,” *Rola* 52 (1905): 797-798.

78 This theme was particularly visible in the novels of Antoni Skrzynecki published in *Rola*, see Domagalska, *Zabawa w chowanego*, 309-318.

79 J. J., “Wojny i żydzi,” *Rola* 11 (1904): 163.

80 J. J., “Ważna chwila,” *Rola* 10 (1883): s. 2; Jan Jeleński, “Żydzi w Prasie Warszawskiej (I),” *Rola* 9 (1883): 1.

81 For instance in a series of Jeleński’s articles: “Żydzi w Prasie Warszawskiej (I-VIII),” *Rola* 39-46 (1883); Dr. M. P., “Judaica (Dziennikarstwo wiedeńskie),” *Rola* 42-43 (1885).

struggle *Rola* took it upon itself to expose Jewish journalists and newspaper owners, whom it later accused of “speculation and press trade.” In fact, it is difficult to find an area of life in which the editors of *Rola* failed to search for pernicious Semitic influences. All forms of social activity were supposedly under Jewish threat, from socializing and cultural activities where they spread “faithlessness” and cynicism, to economic relations, which were seen as room for usury and exploitation ruinous for Christian society. The sense of constant danger present in the magazine was related to the conviction harbored by “rolarze” that the socio-economic transformation, was causing degeneration and collapse of existing values. Ludomir Prószyński put it suggestively in one of his letters to the Croatian bishop Josip J. Strossmayer:

“Sad beyond words and utterly depressing for the mind of a thinking man is the current state of the Christian world, constrained by networks of Jews and French Freemasonry, twisting in convulsions caused by the poisoned narcotic potion of modern free thinking, fed to the people by their own luminaries, worshipping the Jewish golden calf, and obeying the orders of the progressive camp leaders. This terrible decay in Christian states seemingly leads to a horrific disasters, disasters the world has never seen before - because if nations and tribes often attacked one another and shed blood to achieve certain goals, yet there used to be many inextricable knots binding together individual members of these masses, who thought of one another as brothers, and considered each other untouchable. Today, when modern free thinking holds emblems of brotherhood, national, tribal or religious in disregard; thinking they are superstitions, what will become of the cosmopolitan and faithless humanity, completely savage and obeying only the universal prerogative of survival, when the masses are overcome by the ferocious rage of an animal?”⁸²

The pessimism that emerges from these words in relation to the phenomena of modernity, and the accusations directed against the alleged perpetrators, responsible for the decay of existing – Christian – ethical principles, often appeared in the statements of representatives of the conservative in the Kingdom of Poland.⁸³ Their arguments were both universal in nature and interconnected with a mix of fear and resentment, which stemmed from their experience of local relations. Nevertheless, most conservatives found it difficult to completely dissociate from the modernizing influence brought by Western tendencies regarding culture and civilisation. An alternative, in this case, was provided by Russia. Although some were already pointing in this

82 Arhiv Hrvatske Akademije Znanosti i Umjetnosti [AHAZU], XI-A., no page numbering.

83 Pałciński, *Konserwatyzm*, 18.

direction they constituted a minority, as the political situation under the partitions was conducive to accusations of treason.⁸⁴ If, therefore, it was practically impossible to reject everything that the changes brought with them, there was still the possibility of disassociating oneself from their least acceptable results. It was not by accident that the group which evoked the strongest “anti-modernist sentiments” was “modern Jewry.” This group was the most easily recognizable symbol of foreign values, standing in opposition to the traditional model of life. It became a metaphor of modernity with all its disastrous consequences.

“Rolarze” were convinced about the crisis of modernity and inevitable fall of the “materialistic world.” Their conviction was, however, accompanied by a belief in imminent moral rebirth. Prószyński wrote on this topic:

“While my spirit is low and I feel terribly depressed, as a man, a Slav, and as a Pole, I nevertheless predict that the reign of the evil upon us is nearing its end, and that a moment is approaching when the all-powerful reaction will change everything for good, in the sense of truth, justice and charity guided by wisdom which we do not yet have. It will send a general message to the Slavs, a word of brotherhood and equality and then everything around us will change beyond recognition, and we will become what we should have been, and the rest of the Christian nations will follow our example and be reborn.”⁸⁵

Therefore, all symptoms of progressing downfall, caused by the modern “evil” were subject to the governing principle of action and reaction. After an era of “degeneration” there needed to be an era of “rebirth.” This evolutionary perception of reality was in a way a positivist inheritance for the supporters of *Rola*. Teodor Jeske-Choiński provided the most elaborate description of this process of development, from “an era of decline” to the “era of morality.” The only source of regeneration that was able to stop the disintegration of the modern world was, in his opinion, the Catholic religion.⁸⁶

The magazine identified assimilation as one of major threats. “Rolarze” thought it was an illusory process used only for the purpose of Jewish infiltration into society. Therefore the programme statement of the periodical

84 Magdalena Micińska, *Zdrada córka nocy. Pojęcie zdrady narodowej w świadomości Polaków w latach 1861-1914* (Warszawa: Wydawn. Sic!, 1998), 73-118.

85 AHAZU, XI-A.

86 For more information on Choiński’s ideas see: Zofia Mocarska-Tycowa, *Działalność krytyczno-literacka Teodora Jeske-Choińskiego wobec przełomu antypozytywistycznego*, (Warszawa-Poznań-Toruń: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1975); Maria J. Olszewska, “Teodora Jeske-Choińskiego koncepcja idealnego państwa,” *Etyka i literatura. Pisarze polscy lat 1863-1918 w poszukiwaniu wzorców życia i sztuki*, ed. Ewa Ihnatowicz and Ewa Paczoska, (Warszawa: Wydział Polonistyki UW, 2006), 199-213.

explicitly called for the activation of the Christian population in order to prevent it. The notions of “crowding out” and isolation of Jews were central elements of the programme. At first, they referred mainly to the economic life of the country, which was supposed to be freed of “foreign slavery.” In order to limit mutual contacts *Rola* demanded that the Christian part of society systematically boycott “Jewish fraudulent trade.”⁸⁷ The expulsion of foreign influences applied also to other sectors of the economy, which, in the opinion of *Rola*, required “systematic severing of all relations with the element morally and financially detrimental for our social organism.”⁸⁸ With time the call to fence off from the Jews with the “great wall of China” has been extended to the sphere of social life and social activities. The weekly saw common Christian-Jewish schools, Jews imbued with “Talmudic ethics” were allegedly spreading demoralization among the rest of the students, as a serious threat. Therefore, *Rola* engaged in a campaign aimed at reducing the number of Jewish youth in schools, in line with a similar policy implemented by the tsarist authorities.⁸⁹ “Rolarze” also stigmatized mixed marriages and the adoption of Polish-sounding names by the Jews.⁹⁰ Besides calls for isolation, from the very beginning the magazine called for the emigration of Jews from the Kingdom of Poland.⁹¹

The vision of society as a community in which there was no room for mutual Christian-Jewish relations painted by Jeleński and his collaborators was also popular in among other groups in Congress Poland, particularly those strongly drawn to the social program of the Catholic Church. At the end of the nineteenth century a Christian social self-defense program formulated by Marian Morawski, a Jesuit from Krakow, earned significant interest in certain social circles. The monk invented the concept of the so-called “a-Semitism” which, in theory, rejected antisemitism to become an effective strategy for countering Jewish solidarity with solidarity between Christians. The essence of this program was the demand to strictly isolate Jews from Christians, both professionally and in private life.⁹² Reprints of father Morawski’s publication published in the Kingdom of Poland contributed to the popularization of his views.⁹³ For “rolarze”, who fully supported his claims, it was yet another proof

87 “Z Końsko-Woli (Wzorowy czyn),” *Rola* 35 (1885): 1-2; “Najpewniejsza obrona,” *Rola* 43 (1885): 1-2. Even advertisements published in the magazine adhered to its programme: „Fully furnished store to let, only to a Christian Pole[...].” *Rola* 17 (1885): 206.

88 Jan Jeleński, “Straszne cyfry (VI),” *Rola* 39 (1887): 458.

89 “Judaica,” *Rola* 25 (1884): 297.

90 Jan Jeleński, “Polacy-Żydzi,” *Rola* 3 (1884): 25-26.

91 “Emigracja,” *Rola* 24 (1884): 1-2.

92 Krzysztof Lewalski, *Kościół chrześcijański w Królestwie Polskim wobec Żydów w latach 1855-1915* (Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, 2002), 125-126.

93 Małgorzata Domagalska, “The Linguistic Image of the Jew in *Rola* and *Niwa* Weeklies at the Turn of the 19th and 20th Century,” *Studia Judaica* 26 (2010): 316; Jaszczuk, “Spór pozytywistów,” 221-223.

of the correctness of their proclaimed policy of “self-defense against moral and material terrorism.”⁹⁴

A closer look at the program postulated in *Rola* raises the question of the place occupied by its group of collaborators and supporters on the political stage in the Kingdom of Poland. “Rolarze” themselves have tried to answer this question. A significant number of articles devoted to this subject was written by Jeske-Choiński, who was, along with Jeleński, probably the most well-known contributor to *Rola*. According to him, *Rola* provided an effective remedy to the problems of Polish conservatism. According to him it was a worldview that required significant remodeling and reformulation to be able to respond to current challenges more appropriately.⁹⁵ *Rola* as a rule tended to dissociate from the positivists, who, by definition, were imbued with “Jewish liberal” ideology. However, it also rejected the policies of “old” conservatives. On the one hand, *Rola* accused them of passivity, dullness and lack of interest in the affair of the country. On the other, that they let themselves be influenced by liberalism and prostrated before the Jewish “golden calf.” “Rolarze” have also tried to prove that it was their publication that legitimately represented the views of “true” “new age conservatism,” untainted by these flaws and based on anti-Semitism.⁹⁶ According to *Rola* its source should be sought in “the spirit of mankind.”⁹⁷ Although in late seventies Jeleński did not want to be associated with the term “Jew-eater” which he considered inappropriate, several years later he did not associate similar feelings with the term “antisemite.” Finally there was a concept not only lending credibility to his “little policy” but also broad enough to encompass a number of notions that were often contradictory. The reports from antisemitic congresses published in the journal proclaimed gladly that the fight against Jews was viewed as necessary not only by the European traditionalists, but also atheists and liberals hostile to religion.⁹⁸ Having realized that, *Rola* began to publish reprints and summaries of the works of leading members of the European antisemitic camp, whether their views in other areas (e.g., religion) were convergent to the views of “rolarze” or radically different.⁹⁹

The mere act of “rolarze” declaring themselves as representatives of “true” conservatism is not enough to conclude that this was actually the case. The

94 Kamienny, “Na posterunku,” *Rola* 5 (1903): 69.

95 Pancerny, “Na posterunku,” *Rola* 5 (1883): 8.

96 Pancerny, “Na posterunku,” *Rola* 25 (1883): 8; Pancerny, “Na posterunku,” *Rola* 26 (1883): 8; “Uzasadnienie antysemityzmu (I-III),” *Rola* 15-17 (1884); “Antysemityzm jako wyraz czasu,” *Rola* 43 (1890): 713-714.

97 Pancerny, “Na posterunku,” *Rola* 6 (1883): 7.

98 Pancerny, “Na posterunku,” *Rola* 21 (1883): 7-8; R., “Judaica,” *Rola* 24 (1883): 5-6.

99 R., “Judaica (Dühning o żydach),” *Rola* 24-27 (1883); R. Judaica (Ks. Profesor Rohling i talmud), *Rola* 34 (1883): 4-5; “Francya żydziła. Studium z historii współczesnej przez Edwarda Drumont,” *Rola* 21-52 (1886); Nemo, “Ahlwardt,” *Rola* 52 (1892): 885-886.

political programme of the journal did contain a number elements of a conservative worldview, such as defensiveness towards social and civilisation change, attaching special importance to landowners, who were thought to constitute the true “wealth” of the country, and a reverence towards the clergy. Nevertheless, along those ideas, the vision presented in *Rola* had visible traces of the liberal roots of its founders. Consequently, its programme contained ideas remarkably similar to the positivist notion of “organic work.” Despite some external similarities, the “rational development” policy endorsed in the magazine was a caricature of the original idea. Another idea adopted and distorted from the positivist discourse, in this case evolutionary theory, was the “struggle for survival,” a notion that appeared on its pages multiple times.¹⁰⁰ “Rolarze” accepted it as one of the fundamental principles governing natural phenomena, but also social relations. *Rola*, in its own words, was forced to accept this principle by cruel reality.¹⁰¹ This did not stop it from incorporating the notion of a “struggle for survival” into its own programme; an action that evoked a negative sentiment from a fraction of the clergy.¹⁰² According to *Rola*, this principle was supposed to govern social and economical life in Congress Poland, where the roles of David and Goliath were played by “rolarze” and the Jews. The journal indicated that Warsaw press constituted an important foothold in this battle. The “commemorative book” mentioned earlier in this article describes the three decades during which *Rola* was published as a series of attacks, and boycotts ending in the isolation of *Rola* by the majority of periodicals published in the capital of the Kingdom of Poland.

Another element of the political agenda of “rolarze” needs to be mentioned, one that may be considered paradoxical. Namely, that they often referred to the so called “democratic spirit”¹⁰³ which on the surface of things must have stood in opposition to the commitment to conservative ideas emphasized by the periodical. The reason for this was that *Rola* journalists gradually assimilated views characteristic for modern nationalist movements. For a prolonged period the magazine hovered between two stages of political evolution: on the one hand, it felt a certain bond with those social groups who were traditionally considered privileged (gentry); on the other, it often evoked a sense of community using the rhetoric of national discourse. *Rola* often addressed the proverbial “ordinary man”, implying that it cared about the fate of every Catholic Pole, member of the religious and national community.¹⁰⁴ This trend culminated shortly before *Rola* ceased to be published, when most of its supporters entered politics on the side of the modern national-democratic camp. *Rola* openly supported members of the

100 Pąckiński, “Konserwatyzm,” 32.

101 Pancerny, “Na posterunku,” *Rola* 25 (1883): 8.

102 Lewalski, “Kościoły chrześcijańskie,” 116.

103 *Ćwierćwiecze walki*, 106.

104 Pąckiński, “Konserwatyzm,” 10; idem, “Język konserwatystów,” *Pozytywizm. Język epoki*, ed. Grażyna Borkowska and Janusz Maciejewski, (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo IBL, 2001), 94.

National Democrats party candidates in the elections to the Russian Duma, stressing the need to unite forces in the fight against “internal enemies.”¹⁰⁵ The weekly was also willing to turn a blind eye to the fact, that the face of the National Democratic movement was criticized by the clergy for not being sufficiently “distinctly Catholic.”¹⁰⁶ Contributors to *Rola* argued they have influenced the decision of the Polish national movement to acknowledge Jews as the main enemy. “Rolarze” were also convinced that the idea of a “a single great alliance” they preached for years finally achieved nation-wide recognition.¹⁰⁷ After Jeleński’s death Teodor Jeske-Choiński commented

“Over the last fifty years Poland raised only two avowed anti-Semites: Jan Jeleński and Teodor Jeske-Choiński [...]. The former, a talented journalist, was an “instinctive” anti-Semite. [...] The latter complemented him as a theoretician of the movement. For their anti-Semitism they were condemned by “enlightened, progressive Poland” confused by the doctrine of assimilation; for over twenty years they were boycotted, called backward, enemies of progress, fools, idiots, “Black Hundreds” etc. [...] The “backwardness” of those two anti-Semites only meant that they were twenty years ahead of their peers, they have seen before what everyone sees now. [...] It was only after Lithuanian raids on Warsaw and Jewish arrogance during the last elections to the Duma in St. Petersburg [...] that nearly every member of Polish society awoke, and nearly everyone became “backward,” “enemies of progress” etc. An average Pole could have only had his eyes opened by force. [...] Roman Dmowski became the leader of the last anti-Semitic movement.”¹⁰⁸

To conclude I would like to draw the attention of the reader to several factors that made *Rola* an important voice in the public discussion conducted on the pages of Polish press. With regard to its content, Jeleński, the founder of the magazine, and his colleagues can be said to represent anti-modernisation tendencies, characteristic of peripheral social circles. This view was shared by some of their political opponents. Among them was a clearly discernible fear of losing their own identity and an inferiority complex causing the need for

105 Kamienny, “Na posterunku,” *Rola* 10 (1907): 148; “Przed wyborami,” *Rola* 41 (1912): 648-650.

106 “Kto nie jest przeciw nam z nami jest,” *Rola* 36 (1912): 563-564.

107 “Zwycięstwo idei,” *Rola* 47 (1912): 739-740; *Rola* 48 (1912): 755-756.

108 Teodor Jeske-Choiński, *Poznaj Żyda!*, (Warszawa: Kronika Rodzinna, 1912). On the other hand some members of the National Democratic movement did not dissociate themselves from the idea that there was continuation of belief. One of the letters said that Jeleński “brought the Jewish issue into the spotlight in full, so thoroughly that Roman [Dmowski - MM] added nothing, not one new word or concept”. Documents on the National League and other political organisations, after Krzywiec, “Szowinizm,” 120.

compensation. For a long time *Rola* was defined through the anti-Semitic worldview that it consistently promoted. It was the first periodical in the Kingdom of Poland to make hostility to Jews one of the flagship slogans of its program. The vision of the world presented on the pages of *Rola* was a good example of the co-existence of anti-Semitic themes from different sources. It also exemplified the process of transformation of some “old” *topoi* into “new” ones. These phenomena became increasingly clear along with the change in argumentation style of the articles: from personal observations to “second hand” anti-Jewish stereotypes. Jeleński himself was the best example of this tendency. His early work was based predominantly on personal observations regarding the Jewish people. Over the years, the editor of *Rola* with increasing consistency quoted the views of European “preachers” of antisemitism. This hostile approach to Jews was built on the “traditional,” “anti-Judaic” premises of economy and religion, but also on the more modern foundations of “anti-emancipation” and “conspiratory” ideology. *Rola* constantly relied on the authority of the church, pointing out its anti-Judaic legislation¹⁰⁹. Nevertheless, it also opposed Jewish bankers, journalists and stock market players with modern accusations. The weekly devoted particular attention to the presentation of a plethora of its great ideological predecessors, starting with Thomas Aquinas and finishing with Jeleński’s “ideological patron” Józef Supiński¹¹⁰. “Rolarze” attempted to “invent tradition”¹¹¹ of antisemitism anew, so as to increase the credibility of their postulate by quoting well-known names.

One needs to remember what constituted a distinctive feature of *Rola* in terms of form. It was the first periodical in the Kingdom of Poland to consciously employ modern methods for public discourse. It arranged “press campaigns”, focusing the attention of its readers on a particular topic throughout several yearly issues.¹¹² *Rola* did not shy away from gross simplifications and manipulation of truth. It used means of political agitation with a remarkable consistency, coming up with catchy phrases such as “give bread to one of your own.” All of these elements influenced in no small part the press in the Kingdom of Poland, and acted as a source of inspiration in later years.

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109 “Godne przypomnienia,” *Rola* 4 (1885): 37-38.

110 R., “Judaica (Antysemita przed dwustu laty),” *Rola* 30 (1883): 6-7; K. W., “Antysemita z XVI-go wieku,” *Rola* 27-29 (1889); “Antysemitizm Ś-go Tomasza z Akwinu przez H. Gayraud,” *Rola* 27-52 (1897); Szczepan Jeleński, “Józef Supiński (Z powodu setnej rocznicy urodzin),” *Rola* 12 (1904): 177-178.

111 Eric Hobsbawm, “Introduction: Inventing Traditions,” *The Invention of Tradition*, eds. Eric Hobsbawm, Terence Ranger, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 1-14.

112 Cała, “Asymilacja,” 291.

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