

Summary

The newspapers in Piotrków between 1918-1939

In the interwar period in Piotrków Trybunalski there appeared (calculating one-day-newspapers) about one hundred titles. (According to the author's calculations there were 77 periodicals and 26 one-day-newspapers, without taking into consideration the letters the printing of which is uncertain). Parts of titles could not be found; most likely not have survived in the collections of Polish libraries. It applies mostly to the newspapers of short-term issue which were published at low cost.

The list of publishers and editors of Piotrków newspapers and magazines (including the one-day-newspapers) contains about 170 names. Some of them are virtually unknown; the names are uncertain, not to mention the years of life. Taking into account those about whom we have some information, one can conclude that press publishers from Piotrków can be placed between the age range of 21 to 50 years old. Probably a statistical representative of the group at the time of taking an office was nearly 34 years old. A bigger age range occurred among editors who probably were between 18 to 55 years old. Again probably a statistical editor was 32 years old. The editors were almost exclusively men (although there were some female journalists, columnists and poets in Piotrków who published in local newspapers). In youth magazines the involvement of girls was visible.

Many texts were anonymous therefore we do not know the names of all those who wrote for Piotrków newspapers. During the interwar period the professionalization of journalism and journalistic writing took place. People who made their living by working in mass media appeared at that time in Piotrków. It did not concern all editors, publishers, journalists and columnists. For some of them it was only an incidental form of activity, and writing was used by them professionally in other realms. One can easily notice that most often they were teachers, though there were also lawyers, self-employed people (including the owners of the largest Piotrków printing presses) as well as physical labourers. In case of political newspapers editorial work was associated generally with public activity. Editors and journalists representing socialist or ND (National Democracy) press occupied the seats in the city council, they also occupied important positions in political parties and organizations connected with them.

It was possible to discuss the contents of periodicals and views presented in them mainly on the basis of the preserved press, to a lesser extent, discussion is based on acts, occasionally

also it is based on reviews published in other journals. The variety of titles indicated a revival and activity in the information market of the town. In addition to general information journals and political periodicals there also appeared literary, satirical, cooperative periodicals dedicated to intellectual pastimes, and even advertising.

The youth newspapers were of specific nature. Some of them were associated with a particular school (mostly high schools), the others were edited in interschool groups. They discussed mostly the issues of school life, from time to time they hosted literary issues (both in the form of sketches on the Polish and foreign literature, and independent literary efforts - poetry and prose – taken up by young people) and problems connected with general culture. The publishing activity of the youth was originated as early as during the World War I. It is worth emphasizing that during the first year of independence, the youth magazine titles accounted for the majority of the press in Piotrków. However, this did not foredoom their impact - published in small editions they were appreciated in limited school environment and among scouts. They varied in terms of volume, technical quality of accomplishment, frequency of appearance. Some of them were closed down after one or several issues, others were published for several years. All of them are today a living testimony to the patriotic feelings of young people and social and literary concerns.

Most of Piotrków periodicals were weeklies. The only daily newspaper published in Piotrków before 1924 was “Dziennik Narodowy” reaching back in history to 1915. Later on “Dzień” and “Głos Trybunalski” were published. Soon “Dzień Trybunalski” went into decline and since 1929 the next dailies were published - henceforth every year at least 3 to 5 years dailies were published. As far as publishing of dailies is concerned the most successful seems to have been years 1930 (7 dailies) and 1938 (6 dailies). It was difficult to preserve such a large number of newspapers on a relatively limited market. Some of them were ephemeral. A permanent place on the Piotrków publishing market was occupied by “Dziennik Narodowy” and surpassing him later in popularity “Głos Trybunalski”. The following titles survived only a few years: “ABC Ziemi Piotrkowskiej”, “Dziennik Piotrkowski” and “Robotnik Piotrkowski”; the outbreak of World War II an end to the last two brought.

“One-day-newspapers” were also characteristic for this period. Some of them were occasional publications connected with anniversaries, congresses and other events. They were supposed to be a kind of souvenir for participants or their role was to depict the achievements and activity of particular organization, especially if it could not afford to issue a newspapers regularly. Among their editors there were the Polish Scouting Association, Youth Organization of Worker University Association, the Camp of Great Poland, the Piotrków

Academic Circle and the Volunteer Fire Brigade. Some one-day-newspapers were strictly political, and their layout reminded daily newspapers – for instance, radically left-wing (including communism oriented papers) Polish and Jewish publications. There were finally “one-day-newspapers” which, for formal reasons, predated issuing of the magazine with the same (or similar) title. An irregular satirical magazine “Kopniaki” was published in the form of a “one-day-newspapers” (at least five times within two years).

The press of the discussed period only partially reflected the political and social life of Piotrków. It is not uncommon that certain political sympathies of citizens make them readers of newspapers published by a particular party or following the ideas of the party. Nevertheless, that is not always the case - it was also evident in the interwar period.

The support of Piotrków dwellers for the Polish Socialist Party did not automatically mean an increase in demand for the left-wing press. The weeklies issued in the 1920s, i.e. “Sztandar Pracy” and “Szklarz” frequently faced financial difficulties leading to longer breaks in issuing some newspapers and, finally, to closing it. Permanent press could not be replaced by the “one-day-newspapers” and bulletins issued between 1926-1928 and 1932 by the socialist youth of Youth Organization of Worker University Association. The left-wing journals like “Piotrkowska Gazeta Codzienna” and “Express Codzienny” issued before the parliamentary elections in 1930 were popular but could not withstand the pressure of the state administration harassing them with confiscation. Only in the second half of the 1930s “Robotnik Piotrkowski” strengthened its position (which was in fact a mutation) and it was issued to the outbreak of World War II.

Among the right-wing periodicals the strongest position was occupied by “Gazeta Piotrkowska” (1921-1923) and “ABC Ziemi Piotrkowskiej” (1929-1933), although they were not sustained for more than a few years at the local publishing market; representing extremely nationalist position “Piotrkowska Gazeta Narodowa” and “Tygodnik Narodowy” proved ephemeral. It can be, therefore, concluded that, even in case of the right-wing political body, the support to the National Party did not mean the popularity of the newspapers of the local national camp. Nevertheless, the right-wing newspapers were more popular and they were issued in bigger towns, mainly in Warsaw.

The Sanation organizations issued their press in Piotrków from more or less mid-30s. It seems that they were not very popular, so usually they were issued for a short period.

The most popular were the general periodicals, providing current news from the country and the world. They were impartial as far as politics was concerned; actually they had the nature of the center-right-wing, and after the May Coup d’État – they supported the Sanation.

They attracted the readers with varied contents, mostly sensation. They stayed popular regardless of the political likings of Piotrków dwellers. It particularly concerned voting for municipal councilors as in the parliamentary elections Piotrków was a part of a larger electoral district covering Piotrków and Brzeziny counties.

The differentiation of Piotrków press reflected the ethnic structure of the population. Several thousand Jewish minority published a dozen or so of newspapers (including several “one-day-newspapers”). They expressed the views of various Jewish political parties. Most of them turned out to be ephemeral, only a Zionist “Unzer Tsaytung” and the Bund “Pietrkower Weker” appeared for most of the interwar period. Almost all Jewish newspapers published in Piotrków were printed in Yiddish. Other minorities (e.g. the Russians and the Germans) did not publish in Piotrków their press; if necessary their representatives gave their opinion in Polish magazines. Only the press published in 1921 by the interned Ukrainian soldiers was of ephemeral nature. After the liquidation of the camp not many Ukrainians who stayed in Piotrków integrated quickly with Polish society without creating an organized group.

It must be said that the readership of printed press in Piotrków was not impressive – circulation was small ranging from a few hundred to 3000 copies (even smaller was the circulation of youth and school periodicals). All the newspapers, except for “Głos Trybunalski” (trying various activities to improve its position in the market) struggled with financial difficulties.

Piotrków press was read also in the neighboring villages. Some titles, especially related to the peasant movement (“Tygodnik Ludowy”, “Obrona Ludu”) were addressed to the rural population.

It was difficult for Piotrków newspapers to compete with the press giants representing big towns. The choice of products offered by newsstands shows that large-city newspapers were more popular in Piotrków. In order to survive local newspapers were forced to merge with the journals from Warsaw (rarely from Katowice and Łódź). Since 1929 the mutations of “ABC”, “Kurier Polski” or “Ostatnie Wiadomości” were issued. They were complemented by local chronicle and news functioning under the local titles. Since 1934 the only independent daily newspaper was “Ilustrowany Głos Trybunalski”. After its last issue published by the end of March 1938 all local newspapers were mutations.

Daniel Waszocha