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German regional politician Paul Hirsch in history reversals

Abstract. Paul Hirsch was born when Bismarck sought to unite Germany by all means – by ‘iron and blood’. In the era of Kaiser's Germany, he could receive a university degree, with a solid profile in the field of journalism, to participate actively in the activity of the Social Democratic Party of Germany and to have a successful career as a city councilor in Charlottenburg and Berlin. The glory hour for Hirsch as a politician and a statesman came after the November Revolution of 1918 in Germany. Being head of the highest body of executive power in Prussia in the crucial period for his fatherland, he tried to solve the equation with many unknowns. However, on 30 January 1933 there came a day of ‘political Chernobyl’ in Germany. The National Socialists who came on that day to power did everything to alienate the German Jews from the society. The Jew Paul Hirsch fully experienced that fate. He lived in the racist ‘Third Reich’ for seven years and passed away in huge financial struggles. The article shows in detail how each of these four eras in the German history is reflected in Paul Hirsch’s fate.

Keywords: burgomaster, Germany, city councilor, deputy, Jew, journalism, Landtag, Paul Hirsch, prime minister, Prussia, the Social Democratic Party of Germany

Introduction

In historical Germanic studies, there is clearly a lack of research on the life and work of representatives of the Jewish segment of the German regional political elite. In this article, for the first time, a scientifically based attempt has been made to systematically reconstruct the political biography of one of their representatives, Paul Hirsch. His political career embraced four eras of the German history and was connected with the key German region – Prussia. Hirsch was also head of the supreme executive body there and a parliamentarian on a land level, as well as the city councilor and vice-burgomaster, then burgomaster and an active figure of the SPD Land organization. In the Soviet and post-Soviet historiography, the political biography of Paul Hirsch was not specifically investigated. What do we have in this respect today?

The Belarusian scientist O.G. Subbotin mentions P. Hirsch several times, whilst analyzing the Prussian-German dualism in the period when the first German republic existed¹. There are references to P. Hirsch in the dissertation of the famous Russian historian and specialist in Germanic studies T.V. Evdokimova, who mentioned him twice². The first instance refers to covering the attitude of the German and Prussian authorities to the Kapp Putsch. The second one is expressed in the following original statement: “The Prussian government of the Social Democrat P. Hirsch made further existence of Prussia dependent on another Lands”³. The article about Hirsch in Russian Cyclopedia turns out to be superficial and in fact purely informational. Besides, it contains some expressions that might raise questions. As an example, how correctly it is to call Hirsch ‘Mayor of Dortmund’⁴. He was the burgomaster of Dortmund. In German historiography, there is more information about Hirsch. Let us refer to the article written by Renate Karnowsky. The use of the city archive of Dortmund enabled her to cover in detail Hirsch’s activity as the burgomaster of this city⁵. Next comes the article by Klaus Malettke, which is also worth mentioning. Its scientific value is the coverage of Hirsch’s activities in the Landtag of Prussia⁶. There is an article about Hirsch in German Wikipedia. It is also informative; however, it turns out to be better than the one in Russian Cyclopedia⁷. And this is perhaps all that can be found in the historiography.

The author of this article offers his own version of Paul Hirsch’s political biography with full understanding that it is unlikely that he will be able to dot the i’s and cross the t’s. Some facts from his biography still need to be thoroughly investigated by contemporary researchers.

For today, in the western historical science there is low interest in politicians who are under ‘the first level’ in rank. The genre of biography, when a personality was placed in the center of the historical process, seems to be experiencing hard times. Multifaceted research projects with vague worldview trends dominate, which can be

¹ Subbotin O.G. *Transformation of the Weimar Model of Federalism in Germany (November 1918 – February 1934)*: Doc. Dis. in Historical Sciences. Minsk, 2015, pp. 70–76.

² Evdokimova T.V. *Transformation of the Ruling Political Elite of Weimar Germany (based on the example of the Reich chancellors and composition of their cabinets.)*: Doc. Dis. in Historical Sciences. Volgograd, 2012.

³ Evdokimova T.V. Op. cit. P. 116.

⁴ Paul Hirsch. *Cyclopedia*. URL: cyclowiki.org/wiki/Пауль_Хирш. Date of access: 31.01.2017.

⁵ Karnowsky R. *Paul Hirsch in Biographien bedeutender Dortmunder, Menschen in, aus und für Dortmund, herausgegeben von Hans Bohrmann, Verlag des Historischen Vereins Dortmund*, 1994, s. 41–43.

⁶ Malettke K. Hirsch Paul. *Neue Deutsche Biographie (NDB)*. Band 9, Duncker & Humblot, Berlin, 1972, s. 76–78.

⁷ Paul Hirsch. *Wikipedia*. 2017. Available at: https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paul_Hirsch. Date of access: 08.02.2017.

explained by the legacy of ‘postmodernism’. The author, being aware of the complexity of the research, used both general scientific and special historical methods. Approved theoretical and methodological tools have helped in a through study of a wide range of sources, with the publications of Paul Hirsch in the center⁸. They contain his conceptual approaches to the most important problems as well as his contributions at various levels. Verbatim records of the Prussian Landtag meetings were actively used⁹. Reference books were also involved¹⁰. They can be grouped into chronicles, biographical information and statistical collections.

⁸ Hirsch P. *Aufgaben der deutschen Gemeindepolitik nach dem Kriege*. Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften. Berlin 1917. 172 s.; Hirsch P. *Das kommunale Wahlrecht (mit Hugo Lindemann)*, Buchhandlung Vorwärts. Berlin, 1905. 117 s.; Hirsch P. *Das Kommunalprogramm der Sozialdemokratie Preußens*. Buchhandlung Vorwärts. Berlin, 1911. 111 s.; Hirsch P. *Der preußische Landtag. Handbuch für Sozialdemokratische Landtagswähler*. Buchhandlung Vorwärts, Berlin 1913. 112 s.; Hirsch P. *Der Weg der Sozialdemokratie zur Macht in Preußen*. Stolberg Verlag, Berlin, 1929. 276 s.; Hirsch P. *Die Knebelung der Arbeiterklasse durch die preußische Junkerpartei*. Berlin, 1899. 141 s.; Hirsch P. *Die Sozialdemokratie im Wahlkreise Teltow-Beskow-Storkow-Charlottenburg*, 5. Aufl., Berlin, 1913. 111 s.; Hirsch P. *Die soziale Gesetzgebung im 19. Jahrhundert*. Berlin, 1902. 104 s.; Hirsch P. *Die Verfassung des Freistaates Preußen vom 30.11.1920*. Berlin, 1921. 109 s.; Hirsch P. *Gemeindepolitik. Erläuterungen zum Görlitzer Programm*. Dietz Nachf., Berlin, 1922. 100 s.; Hirsch P. *Gemeindesozialismus. Eine Kursusdisposition*. Berlin, 1924. 111 s.; Hirsch P. *Gesetz über die Bildung einer neuen Stadtgemeinde Berlin*. Vom 27. April 1920. Mit Einleitung und Erläuterungen. Buchhandlung Vorwärts, Berlin, 1920. 127 s.; Hirsch P. *Groß-Dortmund. Die Heimat. Monatsschrift für Land, Kunst und Volk in Westfalen und am Niederrhein, Zeitschrift des Westfälischen Heimatbundes*. 10. Jg, Juni 1928, s. 162 ff. 13; Hirsch P. *Jastrow als Politiker. Sozial-politische Studien, Festgabe für Ignaz Jastrow zum 70. Geburtstag, hrsg. von Carl Clodius*, Berlin, 1929, s. 65–76; Hirsch P. *Kampf gegen die Arbeiterkoalitionen*. Berlin, 1899. 141 s.; Hirsch P. *Kommentar zu den kommunalpolitischen Richtlinien der Sozialdemokratischen Partei Deutschlands*. Berlin, 1929. 145 s.; Hirsch P. *Kommunale Kriegsfürsorge*. Berlin, 1916. 154 s.; Hirsch P. *Kommunale Wohnungspolitik*. Berlin, 1906. 124 s.; Hirsch P. *Sozialdemokratische Gemeindepolitik*. Berlin, 1905. 232 s.; Hirsch P. *Sozialismus ist Arbeit. An die deutschen Arbeiter. Ein Aufruf der Regierung (mit Otto Braun und Emil Barth)*. Berlin, 1919. 184 s.; Hirsch P. *Unter dem elendsten aller Wahlssysteme*. Berlin, 1906. 129 s.; Hirsch P. *Verbrechen und Prostitution als soziale Krankheitserscheinungen*. Berlin 1897. 200 s.; Hirsch P. *Was bedeutet der Weg zum Sozialismus?* Berlin, 1919. 123 s.; Hirsch P. *25 Jahre sozialdemokratischer Arbeit in der Gemeinde*. Berlin, 1908. 212 s.

⁹ Stenographische Berichte des Preußischen Hauses der Abgeordneten, 21. Legislaturperiode. 1908/9, Berlin, 1909. Stenographische Berichte über die Verhandlungen des Preußischen Hauses der Abgeordneten ab 21. Legislaturperiode, 1908/9. Berlin, 1909. S. 89 ff.

¹⁰ Anger Werner T. *Juden im politischen Leben der Revolutionszeit*. Werner E. Mosse (Hg.), *Deutsches Judentum in Krieg und Revolution 1916–1923*. Tübingen 1971, s. 196–239. Braun Lilly *Memoiren einer Sozialistin*. Berlin, 1956, Bd. III. 128 s.; Brockhaus *Handbuch des Wissens in vier Banden*. Leipzig, 1921, s. 87. ff. 2.; Erdmann Karl Dietrich. *Die Geschichte der Weimarer Republik als Problem der Wissenschaft. Vierteljahreshefte für Zeitgeschichte*. 3, 1955, s. 1–19. *Hamburger Ernest. Juden im öffentlichen Leben Deutschlands. Regierungsmitglieder Ernest, Beamte und Parlamentarier in der monarchistischen Zeit 1848–1918*. Tübingen, 1968. 435 s. *Lexikon deutsch-jüdischer Autoren. Band 11*. Saur, München, 2002, s. 393–397. Osterroth F. *Biographisches Lexikon des Sozialismus*, Bd. I: Verstorbene Persönlichkeiten, Hannover, 1960, s. 11 f. Osterroth F.

Hirsch's biography is considered against the background of the social and political processes in Germany in the first third of the 20th century¹¹. Such an approach, as it seems to us, is required to illustrate and understand the specific features of Paul Hirsch's state and political activities.

Main text

Paul Hirsch was born on 17 November 1868 in Prenzlau in the family of the trader Nathan Hirsch. He was born when Bismarck sought to unite Germany by 'iron and blood' (*Eisen und Blut*). Although the family moved to Berlin, when Paul was only a child, there were varied links to Prenzlau – family ties in the first place, so that later Paul Hirsch's daughters felt like natives there and after many years could remember "the incredibly beautiful city with magnificent surroundings". The wife of Paul Hirsch, Lucia Jacobi, came from Pasewalk; her sister Selma was married to a physician highly respected in Prenzlau, a health councilor Dr. Waldemar Ehrlich. The brother of the Jacobi sisters, Ludwig, also lived there; and Paul's uncle and cousin were intendants of Julius Jacobi's expedition firm.

Thus, it is also not surprising that Paul Hirsch, being prime minister of Prussia, showed a keen interest in the local political relations, with regards to the fact that Prenzlau – his hometown and his native district – influenced this appointment as head of the district administration.

In Berlin, Paul Hirsch first attended a private school, and then in 1879-88 – moved to Gymnasium zum Grauen Kloster, the famous old school of knowledge, where such figures as Schadow, Schinkel, Jahn and Bismarck studied.

His mother, a widow with many children, did not want her son to remain there until he received his secondary education, but the headmaster persuaded her. His main argument was as follows: the boy has bright intellect, he will be useful¹².

Schuster Dieter; Chronik der deutschen Sozialdemokratie, Bd. I, Hannover, 1963, s. 112; Schröder Wilhelm Heinz: *Sozialdemokratische Parlamentarier in den deutschen Reichs- und Landtagen 1867–1933*. Biographien, Chronik und Wahldokumentation. Ein Handbuch. Düsseldorf, 1995. 458 s.

¹¹ Erger J. *Der Kapp-Luttwitz-Putsch. Ein Beitrag zur deutschen Innenpolitik 1919/20*. Hrsg. von der Kommission für Geschichte des Parlamentarismus und der politischen Parteien. Düsseldorf, 1967. 454 s.; Fischart J. (d.i. Erich Dombrowski) *Das alte und das neue System. Neue Folge: Die Männer der Übergangszeit*. Berlin, 1920. 346 s.; Hannover Heinrich und Elisabeth *Politische Justiz 1918–1955*. Hamburg, 1966, s. 243. Herlemann B. *Kommunalpolitik der KPD im Ruhrgebiet 1924–1933*. Wuppertal, 1977. 134 s.; Luntowski Gustav, *Kleine Geschichte des Rates der Stadt Dortmund*, Dortmund, 1970, 165 s.; Wittmayer L. *Die Weimarer Reichsverfassung*. Neudr. der Ausgabe Tübingen 1922. Aalen: Scientia, 1974. 478 s.; Zaska E. *Der föderative Gedanke in der Weimarer Reichsverfassung und deren Revision nach föderalistischen Gesichtspunkten*. Jena, 1925. 78 s.; Zorn Ph. *Die deutsche Reichsverfassung*. 2. Aufl. Leipzig: Quelle & Meyer, 1913. 128 s.

¹² Hirsch P. *Was bedeutet der Weg zum Sozialismus?* Berlin, 1919, s. 13–43.

After completion of his secondary education in 1888, Paul Hirsch studied at the University of Berlin. He studied medicine for several terms. But afterwards he switched to political economy, and his diploma was devoted exactly to this subject. Since he did not receive any money from his mother, he had to earn his living. The work as a stenographer in the Landtag and his writing activity helped greatly. He wrote textbooks on stenography and articles in specialized stenographic journals, and since 1896-97 he had been presenting works on criminological issues. In his first book, ‘Crime and Prostitution as Manifestations of Social Diseases’, he argued with the concept of ‘innate criminals’ and proved the importance of economic, family and school relations with regards to the origins and progression of criminal behavior or prostitution, with the help of statistical and scientific materials and practical examples that he observed in the courtroom. This very first extensive work of Paul Hirsch traced a great deal of human and social sensitivity and strongly advocated standing up for justice, which were caused by the extreme poverty of wide segments of the population. To clarify the scale of the need for Berlin alone, the following statistics might be useful: 8,622 of male population were doomed in 1894 due to their poverty and 2,711 men due to homelessness. 9,251 beggars and 8,072 homeless people were subjected to police arrest. The number of prostitutes was difficult to calculate; it was many thousands¹³. Wretchedness of the housing was horrifying, which was mentioned by Hirsch in several works and was convincingly shown in the paintings of the artist Heinrich Zille¹⁴.

He disputed these problems not only theoretically in books, but also in practice. “The willingness of social assistance was his constant credo, and he also engaged his family to help”,¹⁵ his daughter recalled. Not only Hirsch himself contributed to charity for many years, but that was also true of his wife and his daughters. They worked in youth-care either on a voluntary basis or as their main job. Perhaps, it is possible to reasonably assume that one of the motives for joining the SPD, which Hirsch did in the 1890s, was a strong sensitivity to ‘social sores’. His activities as a stenographer of the Landtag played a role as well. He could directly and intensively observe the Prussian politics and ‘sharpen’ his political consciousness, which perhaps led him to the decision to be active in the SPD himself¹⁶.

It should also be mentioned that Hirsch played a prominent role in the students’ movement in the 1890s, being influenced by Christoph Moritz von Egidy and Georg

¹³ Hirsch P. *Verbrechen und Prostitution als soziale Krankheitserscheinungen*. Berlin, 1897, s. 65, 69, 76, 98.

¹⁴ Hirsch P. *Das Kommunalprogramm der Sozialdemokratie Preußens*. Buchhandlung Vorwärts, Berlin, 1911, s. 56–98.

¹⁵ Hamburger E. *Juden im öffentlichen Leben Deutschlands. Regierungsmitglieder Ernest, Beamte und Parlamentarier in der monarchistischen Zeit 1848–1918*. Tübingen, 1968, s. 123.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

von Pitziki, who defined the cultural and critical trends. These became ingrained in Hirsch's worldview. Unfortunately, both thinkers are completely forgotten today, though Egidy's works were widely distributed in the first place at the time. Thanks to journalistic creations and organizations such as the German Society for Ethical Culture, they sought to renew religious and moral values and influenced the peace movement¹⁷.

Hirsch himself attested to the fact that in the 1890s he belonged to Leo Arons's circle, where workers, traders, and students of higher educational institutions gathered for informal discussions on political issues. Leo Arons was a prominent physicist, also known for his own inventions. The scientist got into serious trouble for his sympathy for the SPD. Based on the law that was passed on this occasion, the Prussian government in 1900 deprived him of the qualification of a privat-docent. And this happened even though the university offered to appoint him as a professor, considering his undeniable scientific contributions. In Aron's circle, Hirsch also got acquainted with the social politician and privat-docent in political economy Ignaz Jastrow. Politically, Jastrow stood closer to the liberals. His program, which above all included struggle for universal suffrage and social reforms, was described by him as 'social liberal'. Hirsch later wrote that in Aron's circle, he took many initiatives specifically from Jastrow; these were important to him in his work in the Prussian parliament and in the following activity as prime minister. In fact, the main lines of Hirsch's policy were also those of Jastrow's policy: the struggle for an electoral and social reform¹⁸.

But what could also be Hirsch's motive for joining the SPD was too much of his personal courage, since the legalization of the SPD in 1890 meant by no means that it was politically and socially accepted at the time. It was seriously defeated and slandered. Those who recognized it were expelled from the bourgeois society immediately.

Paul Hirsch as a journalist and writer was, at least to a lesser extent, dependent on the external pressure. Though he later left his work as a writer, unlike his political activity he was still in theory developing and describing the problems of practical politics in his numerous articles and books. Currently, only seven independent titles of the books in question are known, which Hirsch either wrote or published.

The most important milestone in Hirsch's political career happened to be in 1900, when he became city councilor in Charlottenburg. At that time, it was an independent city and was much larger than the current urban district of Berlin, Charlottenburg.

¹⁷ Wegscheider H. *Weite Welt im engen Spiegel. Erinnerungen. Geleitwort und Anmerkungen von Susanne Suhr*. Berlin, 1953, s. 345–367.

¹⁸ Hirsch P. *Jastrow als Politiker*, in: *Sozial-politische Studien, Festgabe für Ignaz Jastrow zum 70. Geburtstag*. Berlin, 1929, s. 65–76.

Along with a highly effective activity as a member of the Landtag of Prussia in 1908–32, Hirsch manifested himself as an outstanding specialist in the field of communal politics. For a quarter of a century (in 1900–21 as city councilor and in 1921–25 as deputy burgomaster of Charlottenburg), he devoted himself to communal politics in Berlin and was initiating the communal reorganization and creation of Greater Berlin. Later, he ended his political career in 1925–32 as burgomaster of Dortmund, and at that point he put forward an administrative-territorial reform again. At the same time, he wrote and published his fundamental works about social-democratic work in the community and constantly collaborated with several communal and political journals¹⁹. By the time when Paul Hirsch joined the SPD, its position in the Land and communities was determined primarily by the discriminatory provisions of the electoral law that prevented the poor from participation and expressing their political will. Yet as Bismarck put it: “Prussia has the most miserable electoral system of all”²⁰. There were three classes exercising electoral rights. The weight of votes was directly dependent on tax revenues. What did it lead to? As an example, in the elections to the Landtag in 1903, the Social Democrats won 311,000 votes but did not receive a single mandate. And this was at the time when the Conservatives, having received only 13,000 more votes, that is 324,000 in total, warranted 143 mandates for the party. It is not surprising that under such an electoral system, less than a quarter of eligible voters went to the elections. With regards to this situation, the SPD decided at its Cologne Congress not to participate in the elections to the Landtag of Prussia; whereby all party members had to restrain from the elections²¹.

This decision caused heated discussions in Arons’s circle. Arons supported participation in the elections. Hirsch shared his opinion. Later, he argued in favor of his position in the ‘Guidelines for the Participation of Social Democrats in the Elections to the Landtag’: “Prussia has become a foreign land for the Social Democrats, and no one welcomed proletarian non-participation like the dominant reaction did”²². At the parliamentary rostrum, he stated that the social democracy had underestimated the possibilities of the Landtag of Prussia, and that there was no better way to wake the masses to overcome Prussia’s political backwardness than participating in the elections. With such views, Hirsch was completely isolated in the Berlin party organization. It continued until the SPD congress decided in favor of obligatory participation in elections to all *Landtage* in Mainz in 1900. However, Hirsch’s hopes for ‘unforeseen opportunities’ of the three-class voting rights at the high turnout were implemented only partially in the long run.

¹⁹ Hirsch P. *Gemeindesozialismus. Eine Kursus Disposition*. Berlin, 1924. 111 s.

²⁰ Hirsch P. *Unter den elendesten alten Wahlsystemen*. Berlin, 1906, s. 78.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Hirsch P. *Der preußische Landtag. Handbuch für Sozialdemokratische Landtagswähler. Buchhandlung Vorwärts*. Berlin, 1913, s. 78.

The results of the elections to the Landtag in terms of the mandates received for the SPD were as follows: in 1908 there were seven mandates, whereas in 1913 there were ten mandates. It goes without saying that this was a positive fact. On the other hand, the limits of Hirsch's strategy could be clearly traced in this respect, as the SPD received only these few mandates, though it became the strongest party of Prussia with 23.87 % of votes. On the contrary, the Centre Party received 104 mandates with 19.91 % of votes, whereas the conservatives received as many as 152 mandates with only 14.15 % of votes. Also, it should be noted that due to the parliamentary struggle, it was impossible to liquidate the three-class electoral system. It remained in force – which might seem surprising by the modern standards – until October 1918 and disappeared only as the result of Germany's military defeat; whereby the overwhelming majority of deputies in the Landtag of Prussia resisted any reform until the very last moment²³.

The faction of the social democrats demonstrated tremendous activity. It reacted to all the issues discussed in the Landtag. The members of the faction had to act under the conditions of open hostility on part of the absolute majority of deputies, who were trying to create big obstacles for them. The faction of the social democrats took rough with the smooth.

Since 1911, Paul Hirsch was chairman of the faction, as he was 'the most intelligent and the quietest', 'the most prudent and the most cool-blooded' and therefore became the 'recognized leader' of the group. It goes without saying that one might say that Hirsch knew the basics of parliamentary work due to his professional activities, and that is why no one else could be considered for the post. One should add his brilliant abilities to integrate things, which had to be constantly shown to maintain the equilibrium and for a prompt resolution of disputes between the right-wing and left-wing trends in the faction. Paul Hirsch tried to prevent the split of the group especially in the first years of the war, where the threat of such a split arose due to the issue of German military intentions. Hirsch's achievement of bitter compromises was interpreted by some comrades as his manifestation of weakness and indecisiveness. Finally, it became no longer possible to build bridges between the divergent positions, for example, between such political figures as Karl Liebknecht and Otto Braun. There were unbridgeable political gaps between these two figures. Paul Hirsch finally admitted his belonging to the right wing of the faction after he was convinced that it was this wing that held the right views on the issues related to the assessment of Germany's military intentions and its readiness for peace. Nevertheless, the split occurred. The left-wing social democrats formed their own faction, with most of them

²³ Hirsch P. *Der Weg der Sozialdemokratie zur Macht in Preußen*. Stolberg Verlag. Berlin, 1929, s. 167–168.

changing the party spirit over time, joining the Independent Social Democratic Party of Germany (the USPD).

The leading role in Prussian politics was inevitably assigned to Hirsch as the leader of the majority group in the SPD, when the latter came to power due to the revolution of November 1918. He was, of course, extremely modest and did not strive to be in the foreground and occupy senior posts. In Hirsch's memoirs about these events, his political worldview is quite distinct: "The social democrats assumed the governmental responsibility on 12 November 1918 at 11 am. We – apart from me there were Heinrich Stroebel, Eugen Ernst, Adolph Hoffmann and Otto Braun – told the vice-president of the Cabinet of Germany on behalf of the executive committee of the Council of Workers and Soldiers that we were authorized to assume public administration of Prussia, however met no resistance. Herr Dr. Friedberg admitted that the actual power was in the hands of the Executive Committee of the Council, and he had to come to terms with the fact. He considered he completed his activity in that post and left the civil service"²⁴. In Hirsch's memoirs, nothing is said about the stress and anxiety of those days in November; rather, certain satisfaction was felt that the 'transfer of political power' took place in peace and order. Hirsch was already authorized on 9 November by Ebert and the Interior Minister of Prussia to maintain 'peace and order' in Greater Berlin – an unusual 'revolutionary' mission. Based on the model of the Council of the People's Deputies, the Prussian revolutionary government was led by three representatives from the USPD and three representatives from the SPD. Paul Hirsch kept his leadership until 25 March 1919, together with his functions in the state ministry (as prime minister) and the Federal Ministry of the Interior. It should be also mentioned that the internal contradictions between the two political trends in the labor movement were too great for the government to remain in its place for a long time. Per Hirsch, the main difference was as follows. The SPD of the majority representatives believed that the political reorganization of Prussia was to be specified mainly during the work of the legislative assembly. 'Independents' were aiming towards immediate political and economic transformation, without waiting for any convocation of the legislative assembly²⁵.

How can the main lines of Hirsch's policy whilst being prime minister of Prussia be described now? First, he had the aspiration to lay the constitutional foundation as soon as possible with regards to qualitatively new realities, to create prerequisites for convocation of the legislative land assembly, the task of which would be "to create new people's Prussia from the wreckage of the old Junker Prussia" and "give this

²⁴ Werner Angress T. *Juden im politischen Leben der Revolutionszeit. Werner E. Mosse (Hg.), Deutsches Judentum in Krieg und Revolution 1916–1923*. Tübingen, 1971, s. 196–197.

²⁵ Osterroth F. *Biographisches Lexikon des Sozialismus*. Bd. I: Verstorbene Persönlichkeiten, Hannover, 1960, s. 11 f.

Prussia a solid state reform”. Thus, strictly speaking, Hirsch was thinking using fundamental state and legal categories and explicitly linked his political behavior with the principles of self-determination and freedom.

He fought for democratic suffrage for many years in the previous years of his life. At the point when it had been achieved, he was ready with certainty to defend free expression of people’s will through elections, but also to resist the attacks of radical groups in his own or close-standing parties. After the representatives of the party were finally elected in Reich in 1912 and in Prussia in 1913, the leadership of the SPD of the majority representatives did not want to make any fundamental changes without their prior legitimization due to the will of the voters. For this purpose – to contribute to free expression of the will of voters as much as possible – the SPD was even ready to refuse the advantage of the moment that it possessed due to the revolutionary movement whilst carrying out such events. The social democratic leadership felt more like a ‘bankruptcy supervisor’ of the old system, who would leave their political ideas regarding their goals aside until their mandate was legitimately represented by the people.

In accordance with these principles, first, the measures were taken that made possible such an expression of political will with overcoming vestiges of the past. By the end of December 1918, an order was issued to carry out elections to the Legislative Assembly of Prussia. It was elected on 26 January 1919, that is a week after the elections to the National Constituent Assembly. In the same way, the communal and district bodies that had not been formed based on free elections were dissolved. Their new elections per the democratic suffrage became possible. Orders for confiscation of family possessions, abolition of disciplinary sanctions imposed before 9 November 1918 and the possibility of suspending politically influenced civil servants supplemented the work of the government.

The head of the government welcomed the deputies of the Prussian Legislative Assembly with the following enthusiastic words: “The old Prussia is now gone forever. There will be new Prussia... and no power in the world will be able to destroy the great achievements of the revolution... You will face the monumental challenge of creating this new Prussia... The tasks of Prussia are not yet solved... In the old days, the Reich was constrained by force... It should serve as the spirit of freedom, order and work of the German nation and its future peaceful greatness. Old Prussia is dead; all hail the new Prussia!”²⁶

What were the social transformations that the social democracy constantly proclaimed and that its supporters expected from it?

²⁶ Hirsch P. *Der Weg der Sozialdemokratie zur Macht in Preußen*. Stolberg Verlag. Berlin, 1929, s. 214.

Let us refer to the appeal of the Prussian government on 13 November 1919 as a specific example. One cannot find the word ‘revolution’ there. The word ‘socialism’ occurs only once, and in connection that has nothing to do with property relations. However, there was a demand for “socialization of the large industrial and agricultural enterprises suitable for it”, but it was formulated vaguely and had no real relevance.

This program can hardly be considered socialistic. The requirements were mainly directed towards creation of political democracy, educational reforms and similar activities but were not aimed at transforming the economy. Surprisingly, the ‘independents’ officially shared this program, in which the position of the SPD of the majority representatives dominated.

Soon in 1921, the new work of Paul Hirsch regarding the political goals of his party was published. In it, the politician and the statesman makes distinctions between the daily struggle for improving the position of the working class through legislation and its ultimate goal: overcoming class contradictions by eliminating classes as such.

Of course, while he saw no other option rather than to meet the burning demands, Hirsch, in his political speeches and statements, still pointed out the catastrophic situation with food supplies, the needs of the masses, especially in the cities and the urgent necessity to restore the economy. Guided by his deep sense of social responsibility, he wanted to save people from the ongoing sufferings, and this desire determined politics above all, as well as treatment of monarchically-minded employees.

But on the other hand, the rejection of any activities on socialization in the highly-industrial centers in the west of Prussia or with regards to the land reform in several parts of East Prussia heavily saturated with large landed estates, did not necessarily improve the economic prerequisites. At least in the industrial region of North Rhine-Westphalia, the frustration of the working class with the lack of socialization in the mines, as well as by further political development in general, led to strikes or passive denial; whereby part of the working class became alienated from the social democracy and the republic.

Another solution to this question was out of question for Hirsch not only because of his understanding of the constitution and legitimation. Trade unions, the imperial congress of councils, the Council of the People's Deputies had so far refused socialization which could only be applied uniformly for the whole Reich. Finally, it was hardly possible to carry on in terms of foreign policy, primarily due to the powerful French resistance. Another fact that came to light upon the outcome of the elections to the National Assembly and to the Landtag of Prussia should be added here. The proper conclusion would look as follows: the demands for socialization did not find

support of the majority, since the SPD and the USPD in Prussia remained in the minority with 36.3 and 7.4 % of the votes respectively; i.e. the opponents of socialization had an unambiguous minority. As it can be seen, the politically motivated refusal of socialization seemed to be correct also on authoritative and political grounds, since it was impossible to perform such an activity of fundamental significance without the support of the majority²⁷.

Hirsch's policy can be evaluated in the sense of the above-mentioned Jastrow's definition as a social liberal policy. It was liberal because of the indispensable respect for constitutionality and legal statehood, whereas it was social because of its strong emphasis on the components of state charity, as they were manifested in the plan to introduce the ministry of public aid into the regional government structure; in passing laws on labor protection, in improving the housing and settlement spheres, the school sector and many others, where owing to small steps, the position of people's segment that felt defectiveness of their interests should improve. This policy was formed on a broad consensus and – which was necessary due to the weakness of the left-winged – on a compromise with the bourgeois parties. This was the way for the social democracy of the West to follow World War II.

The aim pursued by Hirsch – “raising the living standards of the classes in financial need and not just of the working class” – was achieved partially under the conditions when ‘order and safety’ prevailed in the region. That is why Hirsch saw the greatest of danger coming from the extreme left-winged, who wanted to “continue to engage in the revolution”. For him, these forces were “criminal minority, violently operating and fully incapable in the real political sense”, which plunged the nation into chaos with its conception of the general political strike. Hirsch saw the ‘historical mission’ of his party in prevention of this. The constitution passed owing to the revolution had to be strictly observed. To ensure this, Hirsch relied on the solid authority of his government and was ready to take risks into account. When president of the Berlin police, a member of the USPD Emil Eichhorn no longer recognized the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Prussia as a legally effective body after members of the USPD left the Prussian government, Hirsch ordered to dismiss Eichhorn and provoked street fighting in Berlin in January 1919²⁸.

Finally, was it possible to avoid the civil war, and what principal alternatives to German and Prussian politics existed at that time? This is a question that has been discussed by the German scientists to the present day. For a long time, the following statement dominated in the historiography, that in the revolution of 1918-19, there was a clear alternative: a social revolution in alliance with the forces striving for pro-

²⁷ Osterroth F. *Biographisches Lexikon des Sozialismus*. Bd. I: Verstorbene Persönlichkeiten, Hannover, 1960, s. 11.

²⁸ Rosenberg A. *Geschichte der Weimarer Republik*. Frankfurt, 1961. 16. Aufl. 1974, s. 9.

letarian dictatorship or a parliamentary republic in alliance with conservative forces such as the old officer corpus. Over time, this statement was substantially modified, but it corresponded to the point of view held at that time by Hirsch and the entire leadership of the SPD in the Reich and Prussia. Hirsch saw the social democracy as a performer of tough but inevitable historical necessity. He attested to the fact that it was difficult for the Prussian government to have to reject the workers' demands for better wages "considering the entire state"²⁹. The politician and statesman admitted: "We realized that the fury of masses, who were deceived in their hopes, was directed against their brothers in class with double or even triple strength. But neither threats nor reproaches could or should prevent us from fulfilling our duty. We did not have any love to favor the masses"³⁰. The last sentence does not contain 'contempt' for the masses but implies idealistic and strictly objective understanding of his own political role by Paul Hirsch.

Gustav Noske later 'with satisfaction' recalled that Hirsch was his associate who did not yield to the hysterical kindheartedness of some people and courageously participated in the process of restoring order to the extent possible in Prussia and the Reich. And the facts that are in the possession of the author of this article, suggest the following: Hirsch, perhaps, evaluated the events of that time somewhat differently than Noske. He saw a 'tragedy' in the military support of the government by Kaiser's officers, and a 'catastrophe' – in the case of Eichhorn and the January fights. He maintained that the social democracy should have been responsible for ensuring that Germany remained as united Reich. To raise the German economy and the well-being of the German people, the reaction would unite against the social democracy and defeat it.

Here, a pessimistic and critical note in Hirsch's reflections clearly appears to be the main one. He also gives a proper evaluation of the politically right-winged forces in Germany. A conclusion can be drawn from this that the revolutionary governments in German Reich and in Prussia strived as quickly as possible to ensure the democratic achievements and to limit the power of the monarchical forces. The main flaw of both the Council of the People's Deputies and the government of Hirsch was repeatedly criticized. The meaning of this overlook was that it was not possible to lay a solid basis for parliamentary democracy through any political control or consistent personnel policy in the Reichswehr, justice, management, socialization of heavy industry and agrarian reform in the German East. Of course, it is impossible to ignore the fact that Hirsch overestimated the sense of duty and loyalty on part of old civil servants.

²⁹ Erdmann K.D. Die Geschichte der Weimarer Republik als Problem der Wissenschaft. *Vierteljahreshefte für Zeitgeschichte*. 3. 1955, s. 4.

³⁰ Erdmann K.D. Die Geschichte der Weimarer Republik als Problem der Wissenschaft. *Vierteljahreshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 3. 1955, s. 6.

In addition, the complex state machine had to continue its work. This could not be achieved by getting rid of the old pool of civil servants immediately, whereby both experience and competence were on their side. In fact, the absolute majority of these people thought in terms of a bygone era³¹.

We should also mention some important problems that Hirsch had to resolve being prime minister of Prussia. First, the Treaty of Versailles, in which no concessions were made for Hirsch and other members of his government. After all, per this treaty Prussia was the most disadvantaged of all Germanic states. It seemed impossible to Hirsch; the prime minister also felt severely disadvantaged in his perception of justice and national feelings. Hirsch believed that the peace was made not from the perspective of consent and justice but that the enemy imposed that peace from the position of strength forced the German people to sign death-warrant. He predicted that due to such a treaty there would be no calm, and rivers of blood and tears will pour. Thus, Hirsch thought unambiguously nationally but not nationalistically. He also did not find any understanding with the supporters signing the Treaty of Versailles. But at the same time, he had 'Prussian' mental model in mind, not in the sense of 'Prussia of the past', but in the sense of a 'free state' of Prussia. The politician and statesman stood solid against the attempts to split Prussia or to divide it into parts as suggested by the 'father of the Weimar Constitution' Hugo Preuss. Preuss's plans corresponded to the traditional demand of the social democracy to eliminate the individual German states and create a united republic. In the first days of the revolution, the following influential bodies – the Executive Council of the imperial government and the Council of the People's Deputies – clearly hesitated to give an unambiguous answer to the following question: Should we establish sovereignty and supremacy of the Prussian leadership and thereby prejudge the existence of Prussia as an independent state? Therefore, Hirsch's government was formed three days later than the new imperial government, that is on 12 November 1918³².

Hirsch's reaction to the intention to reorganize the Reich was tactically skilful: according to the social-democratic tradition, he immediately announced readiness in principle to transform Prussia into a fully democratic part of the united people's republic. On the other hand, he insistently warned against the negative consequences of fragmentation of Prussia into incompetent and lifeless tiny formations. It is difficult to evaluate to what extent the transfer to the united people's republic was generally conceived as a real alternative, since Hirsch was able to make this concession safe. The fact was that he linked it with the condition that the Southern Germany states would be equally ready for this; which, as is known, was out of a

³¹ Rosenberg A. *Geschichte der Weimarer Republik*. Frankfurt, 1961, 16. Aufl, 1974, s. 57.

³² Rosenberg A. *Geschichte der Weimarer Republik*. Frankfurt, 1961, 16. Aufl, 1974, s. 202–203.

place. “While Prussia, which embarked on a path of uncompromising struggle against the monarchical legacy of the Hohenzollerns, identified itself with a stronghold of democracy and national unity, the Bavarian political elite openly sympathized with the monarchist ideas and vigorously defended its regional interests”³³.

In the struggle for the unity of the Prussian state, the government stood against any separatist movements. They were radical on the borders of the states in the Rhineland, the Northern March and Upper Silesia. “Moderate forms of separatism developed in the province of East Prussia, which at the suggestion of the chairman A. Winnig (the SPD), sought financial, economic and trade preferences, ‘exclusive’ administrative autonomy and legalization of self-defense units”³⁴. The government pursued the aim to ensure territorial integrity of the Prussian state and to prevent its fragmentation. The fact that this had not been achieved in certain areas was not their fault but rather a consequence of the Treaty of Versailles, against which the government fought so hard.

As the federal ministry of the interior, just a couple of days after holding the appointment, the head of the government initiated Berlin unification together with all surrounding towns and communities to create Greater Berlin. The goal was achieved, and Hirsch went down in history as ‘the father of Greater Berlin’.

The putsch of monarchist forces led by Kapp and Lüttwitz in March 1920 cost Hirsch and many other members of the Prussian government their posts, e.g. the minister of interior and minister of finance Südekum. The basis of the Social Democratic Party reproached them for taking too many reciprocal steps towards the putschists. Hirsch was reproached that his government was negotiating with the putschists. Hirsch strongly rejected this. It goes without saying, there were contacts but not negotiations between the putschists and vice-chancellor Schiffer, who represented the German Democratic Party. Hirsch’s government also stayed in touch with these contacts. The motives of Hirsch’s government were as follows: to avoid completely unnecessary bloodshed, dangerous consequences of either spread or continuation of the general strike, and namely: the colossal economic damage and, above all, radicalization of the workers. Hirsch tried to obtain the resignation of Kapp, and in the question of amnesty for the participants he was ready for some reciprocal moves, but no more than that. Finally, remaining faithful to historical truth, we should not keep silent about the fact that it was Hirsch who urgently advised the government of Bauer and Reich president Ebert to stay in Berlin and not flee before the putsch³⁵.

³³Subbotin O.G. Op. cit, p. 70.

³⁴Subbotin O.G. Op. cit, p. 71.

³⁵Erger J. *Der Kapp-Lüttwitz-Putsch. Ein Beitrag zur deutschen Innenpolitik 1919/20*. Hrsg. von der Kommission für Geschichte des Parlamentarismus und der politischen Parteien. Düsseldorf, 1967, s. 347–349.

After resigning as prime minister, Hirsch worked for almost a year as state secretary in the ministry of charity and then returned to communal politics as deputy burgomaster of Charlottenburg. Also, it is worthwhile mentioning that the retired government members refused their pension.

Hirsch's successor as prime minister was Otto Braun, who had been minister of agriculture prior to his new post. He adopted his predecessor's program in his government manifesto and assured that he would carry it out with all his power. This proved that the problems of Hirsch's government did not follow from their own conceptual weakness but were objectively substantiated in the situation.

The final stage of Paul Hirsch's political career saw a seven-year activity as the burgomaster of Dortmund, being the content side of his politics. With no intense competition, he was invited to this post as a well-known specialist in the communal politics and of course considering his experience of creating Greater Berlin. It can be stated unambiguously that it was a difficult step for him to go to an unfamiliar city, which, first due to the occupation of Ruhr, had to fight the most serious social problems. As an example, the unemployment rate had come close to 90%. Hirsch was elected as burgomaster on 22 July 1925. The SPD, the NPD, the KPD and the NSKOV voted for him. While the KPD only agreed to an extending compromise, as it – per its own statement – had to prove to the workers that a social democrat could not be workers' representative. The NSKOV voted in principle, eagerly supporting the relevant candidate, because Hirsch as vice-burgomaster of Charlottenburg constantly showed a great concern for disabled veterans of war. The united right-wing parties and the Centre Party, on the other hand, raised objections to Hirsch's election, because in their opinion, the tense financial situation of the city did not allow to have another member of the magistrate who would receive a salary; and Hirsch, as a member of the Landtag, would spend too much time in Berlin.

The communal territorial reform, which Hirsch considered the priority, was carried out by him in close connection with chief burgomaster Dr. Ernst Eichhoff. Why was it necessary to hurry with the reform? The territory, which economically formed a unity, could not be split politically into different regions. A city-planning perspective should be added to this, since due to the inclusion of rural communities into that of the city, many promising developments became possible. In 1928, the urban community of Dortmund included 22 rural communities, resulting in the growth of the city population from 325,000 to more than 500,000; and in area it became the second largest in Germany³⁶.

As a deputy of the Landtag and former prime minister of Prussia, he used his extensive ties with the Prussian government to solve the tasks, which the city leadership

³⁶ Hirsch P. Groß-Dortmund. *Die Heimat. Monatsschrift für Land, Kunst und Volk in Westfalen und am Niederrhein, Zeitschrift des Westfälischen Heimatbundes*. 10. Jg, Juni 1928, s. 162 ff. 13.

faced. The residents of Dortmund knew it and evaluated the policy positively. Owing to Hirsch, the Pedagogy Academy, the Institute of Industrial Physiology and a low vision clinic appeared in Dortmund. He could help in extremely difficult situations, when during the world economic crisis it was very difficult to collect money for charity, or when there was a threat of closing a theater. As the second burgomaster, he was responsible for all arts and science institutions, libraries, theaters, transport department, press department, statistical office and automatic telephone exchange. The employees admired his efficiency, calmness and modesty in communication.

Hirsch's activity in Dortmund was to end in November 1933, when he reached the age of 65. But a year earlier, on 1 November 1932, he claimed his state pension. Severe health problems were the main reason for this. It is quite possible that the growing national socialism and wide-spreading anti-Semitic public sentiments also affected this decision³⁷.

On 30 January 1933, 'political Chernobyl' broke out in Germany. 'Zoological' anti-Semites led by Hitler came to power. The Jew Hirsch fully experienced the same drama that his compatriots had experienced under the domination of the national socialists. The Jews were the lowest race for them, whose place would be on the outskirts of the society. On 1 August 1940, Hirsch passed away in a truly catastrophic financial situation³⁸.

Conclusion

The name of Paul Hirsch occupies an extremely important place in the history of the German regional political elite. He built a solid profile in history reversals. His amazing political flair, powerful intellect, outstanding oratorical gift, phenomenal efficiency and constant desire to abate to moral standards in politics through thick and thin put him among the regional politicians and statesmen demanded most in the German society.

As the first prime minister of Prussia after the November Revolution of 1918, he actively participated in the creation of new Prussia. Though the ambitious goal set by the revolutionaries "to transform Prussia from the most politically backward state into the freest and most progressive state in the world" during his period in power was implemented only partially, and after 1933 he had to experience how the "great democratic achievements of the Revolution" that he considered unshakeable, were easily eliminated; it must nevertheless be recognized that his idea of new 'people's Prussia' was the only real project feasible for the future of this state. If those notions and goals were fully implemented at that time, the historical catastrophe would not have broken

³⁷ Luntowski G. *Kleine Geschichte des Rates der Stadt Dortmund*. Dortmund, 1970, s. 55.

³⁸ Braun L. *Memoiren einer Sozialistin*. Berlin, 1956. Bd. III, s. 89.

out, the consequence of which among other things was the demise of the Prussian state.

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