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MINORITIES IN LODZ'S PRESS

Nowadays media are the main source of transferring information to contemporary society, so they are creating opinions about many questions. The aim of our project is to present the attitude towards national and religious minorities. Lodz is one of the most appropriate cities for this kind of researches because of its multicultural history.

In the opinion of the majority of societies religious minorities are equivalent to national minorities. This is the reason why the authors have included in studies both of those minorities.

The main research methods that we used were: observations, questionnaires and interviews with journalists from newspapers in Lodz. All were selected upon following reasons:

“GAZETA WYBORCZA” – Because of direct connections with Institute of Tolerance by one of the journalists – Joanna Podolska, who is an active member of this organization

“DZIENNIK LODZKI” - This newspaper is one of the oldest and most popular in the city

“FAKTY I MITY” - because it rises controversies following its political and social assumption

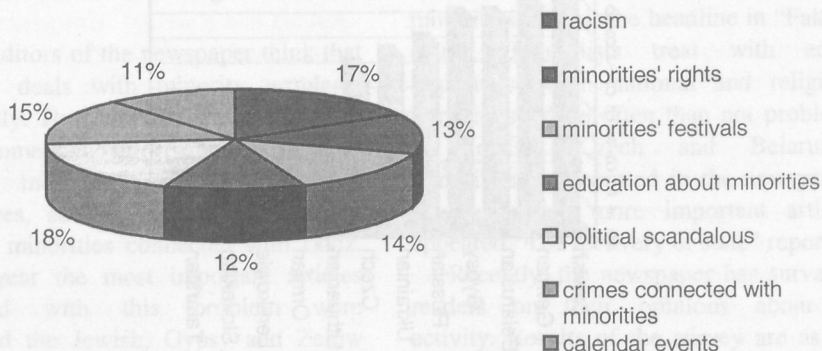
“TYGIEL KULTURY” – since it is addressed to a narrow circle of people directly interested in cultural life

The first newspaper which we would like to present is “Gazeta Wyborcza” (Electoral Newspaper). It’s one of most popular newspaper in Poland.

The editorial policy of Wyborcza, in Lodz, towards national, religious etc. minorities includes those who are directly connected with historical and modern religion of this city. Therefore among national minorities most essays and articles are about German, Jewish, Russian also Gypsy groups; and among religious organisations appear Judaism, Protestantism, Orthodox Church and Jehovah’ Witnesses. There is no hierarchic term between importance of national or religious minorities’ problems. Wyborcza assumes that both should be equally treated.

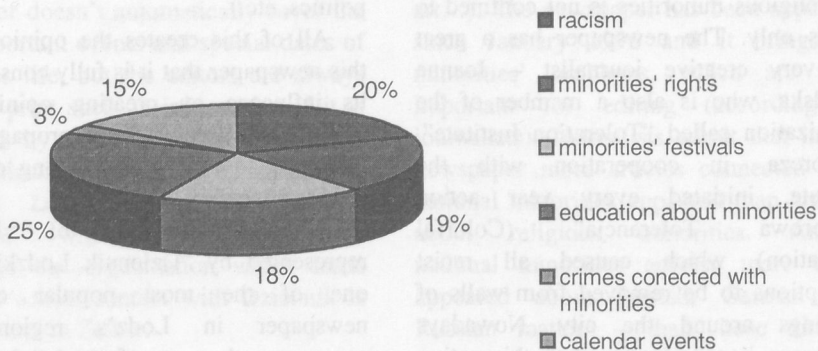
During last two years the newspaper, additionally, has created a special cycle of essays “Religious of Lodz” where among other things also were introduced present problems in the everyday life of the minorities, and ways of solving them. The most discussed subjects are those connected with events around the city like festivals, exhibitions, also acts of violence, etc.

The importance of articles' topics according to "Dziennik Lodzki" journalists



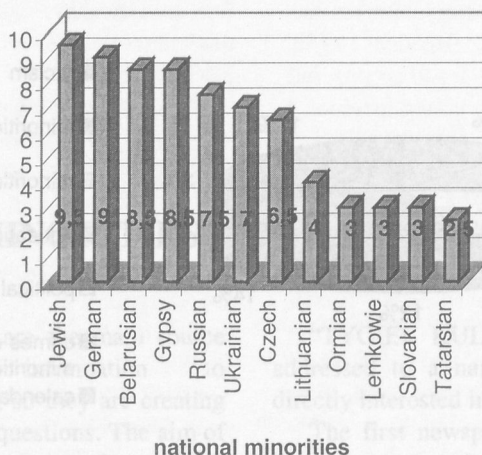
Ryc. 1. The importance of articles' topics according to "Dziennik Lodzki" journalists

The importance of articles' topics according to "Tygiel Kultury" journalists



Ryc. 2. The importance of articles' topics according to "Tygiel Kultury" journalists

The importance of ethnic minorities according to Lodz's journalists



Ryc. 3 The importance of ethnic minorities according to Lodz's journalists

General information, like educational matters relating to minorities, appears on columns of the nationwide newspaper. The activity of *Wyborcza* in relation to national and religious minorities is not confined to essays only. The newspaper has a great and very creative journalist – Joanna Podolska, who is also a member of the organization called “Toleration Institute”. *Wyborcza*, in cooperation with the Institute, initiated every year action “Kolorowa Tolerancja” (Colorful Toleration) which caused all racist inscriptions to be removed from walls of buildings around the city. Nowadays *Wyborcza* is not restrained to this action only. The newspaper is also a mediumistic patron of many minorities’ events and organizes, in the framework of an action Colorful Toleration, educational meetings, festivals, exhibitions. Moreover journalists step out in the character of Jurassic in various kinds of educational competitions, and the newspaper sponsors prizes.

Wyborcza doesn’t have experts specializing in writing about individual minorities, however they deal with this by individual themed selections (like culture, politics, etc.).

All of this creates the opinion about this newspaper that it is fully conscious of its influence on creating opinions by society, strictly engaged in propagation of tolerance and the amity among different groups of society.

A different point of view is represented by “*Dziennik Lodzki*”. It is one of the most popular common newspaper in Lodz’s region. The newspaper has no formulated special editorial policy toward national and religion minorities. None of the internal documents bring up this problem as well. The correctness of articles in this aspect is regulated by the personal approach of the individual journalists. The frequency of articles connected with national minorities is greater than the number of articles

connected with religion minorities. The editor who usually undertakes the topic connected with national minorities is Paweł Spodenkiewicz (who has among others the widest knowledge of Jewish matters).

The editors of the newspaper think that Dziennik deals with minority problems sufficiently. They emphasize that Dziennik is a commercial, informative newspaper and the most important are readers' preferences, so they dedicated the most space to minorities connected with Łódź. In this year the most important articles connected with this problem were concerned the Jewish, Gypsy and Żelów cases. Among the most important topics concerned racism and intolerance, information about festivals connected with other cultures, anniversary of historical events and crimes against minorities.

The main sources of information in this kind of articles, are personal contacts and conversations with representatives of various groups of minorities. The newspaper doesn't automatically cover the most important events and special dates of minorities life, but the editors are always ready to print such an information if it is presented by some minority. Sometimes the organizations give some information to Dziennik Łódzki about main events connected with their community. Nowadays the organization which leads the most active contact with Dziennik is the fraternity in Żelów.

„Fakty i Mity” is quite a new newspaper on Łódź's market, for it has been appearing only since 2000.

It's popular newspaper with a strict purpose that its journalists define as social – political – scandalous. Its articles mainly concern breaking the law by politicians, acts of injustice, political scandals etc.

„Fakty i Mity” brings up problems of racism, discrimination, crimes that strike minorities and dramatic events connected with them. But after all, there are scandalous political affairs involving minorities that hit the headline in „Fakty i Mity”. Journalists treat with equal importance both national and religious minorities. More often than not problems of Jewish, Czech and Belarusian minorities are reported in the newspaper. Newly among more important articles appeared „The recovery of state” report.

Recently, the newspaper has surveyed readers on their opinions about its activity. Results of the survey are as yet unknown, but seem to be positive according to leaks. The newspaper receives information and reports mainly from its readers, private persons and anonymous people.

„Tygiel Kultury” is cultural monthly addressed to a narrow circle of people who are directly connected with culture (that is like: theatre, literature, music, and art...). The newspaper has been appearing since January 1996 and it brings up minorities' problems, which are very important for editing (according to journalists). Journalists admit that in the newspaper more articles connected with national minorities appeared than articles about religious minorities. Among national minorities articles more often appeared about Jewish, German and Russian matters – than those directly connected with Łódź' history. The newspaper has no internal policy towards minorities, and internal codes regulating working on minorities.

Articles connected with minorities regarding tolerance, racism, and tragically events; most often they have an educational character too. Monthly

festivals and calendars of social events are printed.

The editor collecting the information directly cooperates with many institutes like the Historical Institute, embassies and community centers. Many writers are connected directly with this newspaper too. The editor complains about a lack of contacts with the Russian Institute in spite of many attempts to forge them.

On the basis of our research we have come to many conclusions. First we can say that the vast majority of newspapers have little internal editorial policy towards minorities, apart from *Gazeta Wyborcza*. Also all newspapers have no internal codes regulating working on minorities. Editors generate their own criteria for dealing with minorities, while journalists rely on intuition and their experience.

What is more, in spite of social homogeneity newspapers undertake the subject willingly which can be a result of multicultural history of Lodz.

The next conclusion is that despite the frequency of appearing in press individual

minorities do not affect the national and religious structure of Lodz' region.

Moreover the most often undertaken topics refer to nationalities connected with multicultural history of Lodz (Jewish, German and Russian). However the press seldom addresses its articles and essays directly to representatives of any minority perhaps because of 2,6 millions of the residents of Lodz' province only 4000 committ themself to other than Polish nationality.

According to our research some of minorities (Belarussian and Gypsy) are presented in one way, meanwhile some of them, like Jewish, in various aspects.

Furthermore among the articles about minorities those which predominate, are about the social and cultural problem issues. Political problems appear seldom apart from in "Fakty i Mity".

What is also interesting none of the newspapers checks the readers' opinions about minorities.