

INTRODUCTION

In the second issue of *Polish-Jewish Studies* that you are reading now, we are pleased to present further findings in the field of Polish-Jewish relations and research on Jewish issues. This volume draws upon the concept adopted in the first issue of our journal, and is divided into the following sections: 'Studies,' 'Reviews/Polemics' and 'Chronicles.'

Our second issue opens with an article by Mateusz Pielka entitled 'Relations between Zionists and Supporters of Jewish Assimilation on the Polish Lands at the End of the Nineteenth and in the Early Twentieth Centuries: An Outline of the Issue.' The article deals with an issue that has recently been discussed less frequently in Poland, namely the transformations that took place on the Jewish political scene in Poland under the influence of developing Zionist ideas.

Another text by Grzegorz Berendt ('*Di ershte Daych'n*. A Picture of the German Occupation of 1915–18 in the Memories of the Polesie Jews') is devoted to the German occupation during the First World War as recalled by Polesian Jews. In the interwar period, these areas became part of Polesie province. Berendt has drawn upon a source which is familiar, but at the same time little researched because of the language barriers, namely the Jewish *yizkor* memorial books. The reality of the German occupation as seen through the eyes of the local Jews is undoubtedly an important subject of research. In the anti-Semitic atmosphere of the tsarist era and the beginning of the Great War, the Jews expected their situation to change for

the better, even placing their hope in the approaching German troops. According to Berendt, however, the occupation turned out to be a great disappointment for them both politically and economically (exploitation, plunder, etc.). The author also addresses the issue of the influence of the events of the Second World War on the image of Germans from the First World War which were encoded in the collective Jewish memory.

Mirosław Szumiło, in his article 'Jews in the Communist Movement in the Second Polish Republic 1918–38: An Outline of the Issue', summarises research into the Jewish Communists in interwar Poland, complementing them with the results of his own research into the group of 46 Jews and people of Jewish origin who belonged to the elite of the Communist party in Poland.

The subsequent texts, written by Marek Jedynak ('Jews in Partisan Units in the Home Army's Radom-Kielce District [A Contribution to the Research]') and Piotr Gontarczyk ('The Origin and Military Activity of the 'Lions,' a Partisan Unit of the Communist People's Guard, 1942–43') take us into the period of the Second World War and the partisan activities of various underground organisations. While Jedynak focuses on discussing the lack of a Jewish presence in the Home Army's units, Gontarczyk describes a Jewish partisan unit which was affiliated with the People's Guard. Using the example of the activities of the 'Lions' unit, he outlines the attitudes of the members of the Polish Workers' Party and the People's Guard; he also considers the local population's perception of the People's Guard units.

The texts by Damian Sitkiewicz ('Jews in the Mińsk Mazowiecki Poviats during the German Occupation, 1939–44. The State of Research, Research Postulates, Source Base'), Tomasz Domański ('Conversions of Jews to Catholicism in the General Government: The Example of the Diocese of Kielce'), and Roman Gieroń ('Outline of the Issue of the Aid Provided to Jews during the German Occupation of Poland in the Files of Criminal Proceedings Initiated on the Basis of the Polish Committee of National Liberation decree of 31 August 1944 in the Post-War Cracow Voivodeship') are also dedicated to the reality of life under occupation. Sitkiewicz's findings confirm the thesis that many areas of the Jewish population's war history (the experience of the Holocaust, rescue, denunciation), including in the Minsk poviat, have still not been sufficiently researched and described. Domański touches upon the little-known phenomenon of the conversion of Jews during the occupation, concluding that the phenomenon was of marginal interest among Jews in the central and southern part

of the Kielce province (the diocese of Kielce). Roman Gieroń, on the other hand, pointed to the usefulness of the trials initiated under the Polish Committee of National Liberation decree of 31 August 1944 for research on aid given to Jews by the Polish population.

The section 'Studies' ends with an article by Paweł Wieczorek, 'The War for the Stage. The Fate of the Jewish Theatre in Wrocław, 1949–68'. The author shows that the theatre not only served to maintain Jewish culture, but also acted as a meeting place which both supported the Jewish community in Wrocław and, at the same time, integrated it with the majority population. This process was interrupted by the anti-Jewish campaign of 1968.

An important part of this issue is devoted to reviews. This section includes extensive critical texts. Waldemar Grabowski shares his reflections on the work of Joshua D. Zimmerman ('The Polish Underground State and the Jews during World War II'), while Paweł Kornacki analyses the descriptions of the pogroms in Grajewo and Szczuczyn during summer 1941 as described by Sara Bender and Jeffrey Kopstein. In his review, Kornacki draws attention to the existence of sources that the above-mentioned authors did not use in their texts, and which allow the events as analysed in the Polish-Jewish context to be analysed from a different perspective. Radosław Józwiak, in turn, presents 'Some reflections on *The Last Jew from Węgrów*, the memoirs of Shraga Feivel Bielawski, as a source for researching the history of the Holocaust and Polish-Jewish relations in the Poviát of Węgrów'. His findings may prove to be an important contribution to research into the credibility of the memories of the survivors. Next, Mateusz Kubicki presents and assesses Witold Mędykowski's book *Macht Arbeit Frei? German Economic Policy and Forced Labor of Jews in the General Gouvenment, 1939–1943*, while Marcin Urynowicz devotes his text to evaluating the publication *Intimate Violence. Anti-Jewish Pogroms on the Eve of the Holocaust* by Jeffrey S. Kopstein and Jason Wittenberg. In the final review, Magdalena Semczyszyn focuses on a study by Martyna Rusiniak-Karwat entitled *Nowe Życie na zgliszczach. Bund w Polsce w latach 1944–1949* [New Life in the Ashes. The Bund in Poland in 1944–49].

The volume ends with reports published in the Chronicle section, penned by Tomasz Domański, Dorota Budzińska, and Aleksandra Bartnicka.

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