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BETWEEN THESIS, HYPOTHESIS AND LITERARY FICTION:
THE TALE OF THE POGROM OF JEWS IN KIELCE. A REVIEW OF
JOANNA TOKARSKA-BAKIR'S BOOK *POD KLĄTWĄ. SPOŁECZNY
PORTRET POGROMU KIELECKIEGO* [UNDER THE SPELL. THE SOCIAL
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In recent years, only a few researchers have approached the subject of the pogrom of Jews on 4 July 1946 in Kielce. Apart from the two-volume study *Wokół pogromu kieleckiego*¹ and Jan Tomasz Gross's publication *Strach. Antysemityzm w Polsce tuż po wojnie*,² the Kielce pogrom has been discussed in books by Joanna Tokarska-Bakir and Marcin Zaremba. These publications mainly

¹ *Wokół pogromu kieleckiego*, vol. 1, ed. Ł. Kamiński, J. Żaryn, Warsaw 2006; vol. 2, ed. L. Bukowski, A. Jankowski, J. Żaryn, Warsaw 2008.

² J.T. Gross, *Strach. Antysemityzm w Polsce tuż po wojnie. Historia moralnej zapaści*, Cracow 2008 [English edition: J.T. Gross, *Fear. Anti-Semitism in Poland after Auschwitz. An essay... in historical interpretation*, New York 2005]. The book caused a great public debate. See among others: *Cena "Strachu". Gross w oczach historyków*, ed. R. Jankowski, Warsaw 2008; Ł. Opozda, 'Lęk przed "Strachem". Recepcja książki Jana Tomasza Grossa w środowiskach polskiej skrajnej prawicy' in *Antysemityzm, Holokaust, Auschwitz w badaniach społecznych*, ed. M. Kucia, Cracow 2011, pp. 139–167; R. Śmietanka-Kruszelnicki, 'W poszukiwaniu wartości poznawczych książki Jana Tomasza Grossa "Strach"', *Zeszyty Historyczne WiN-u* 2010, no. 32–33, pp. 837–842; *Wokół Strachu. Dyskusja o książce Jana T. Grossa*, ed. M. Gądek, Cracow 2008.

contain reflections on the psychology of prejudice, the role of stereotypes in social consciousness, and collective behaviour.³ Historians, as they cautiously formulate their opinions on the anti-Jewish incidents in Kielce,⁴ have expressed the desire for a deeper study on the circumstances and historical background of these tragic events.⁵ When analysing the course and mechanism of the Kielce pogrom on the basis of the previous literature in the field, it can be concluded that there is still a lack of answers to many questions, including the most important one: how could a pogrom lasting many hours have happened in the centre of a voivodeship city, near the seats of the institutions of force, in an area not so difficult for military units to secure?⁶ The historians who have dealt with this question, including those who have advocated the theory of provocation,⁷ were aware that the state of research is undoubtedly insufficient. The statement by Bożena Szaynok on the literature in the field should be emphasised: “The events in Kielce, the course of the pogrom and its escalation were determined by two factors: anti-Semitism and provocation, or provocation and anti-Semitism. Their presence in the materials and sources is indisputable, regardless of the question marks and doubts that still exist.”⁸ In her essay, published on the 70th anniversary of the pogrom, Szaynok assumed that “the reasons, course and scale of the pogrom were determined to the greatest extent by: anti-Semitism, hostility towards Jews, and the behaviour of the authorities; or: the behaviour of the authorities, and anti-Semitism as well as

³ J. Tokarska-Bakir, *Okrzyki pogromowe. Szkice z antropologii historycznej Polski lat 1939–1946*, Wołowiec 2012, pp. 143–176; M. Zaremba, *Wielka trwoga. Polska 1944–1947. Ludowa reakcja na kryzys*, Cracow 2012, pp. 426, 497, 504, 508, 590, 596, 601, 606–611, 619, 626, 631, 635.

⁴ B. Szaynok, ‘Tematyka pod specjalnym nadzorem (manipulacje wokół pogromu kieleckiego)’ in *Wokół historii i polityki. Studia z dziejów XIX i XX wieku dedykowane Profesorowi Wojciechowi Wrzesińskiemu w siedemdziesiątą rocznicę urodzin*, ed. S. Ciesielski, T. Kulak, K. Ruchniewicz, J. Tyszkiewicz, Toruń 2004, pp. 821–834.

⁵ See B. Szaynok, ‘Spory o pogrom kielecki’ in *Wokół pogromu kieleckiego...*, vol. 1, p. 111–129.

⁶ See R. Śmietanka-Kruszelnicki, ‘Pogrom Żydów w Kielcach 4 lipca 1946 r. Analiza możliwości badawczych’, *Arcana* 2016, no. 132, pp. 105–124.

⁷ M. Chęciński, *Poland. Communism. Nationalism. Antisemitism*, New York 1982, pp. 21–34; K. Kąkolewski, *Umarły cmentarz. Wstęp do studiów nad wyjaśnieniem przyczyn i przebiegu morderstwa na Żydach w Kielcach dnia 4 lipca 1946 roku*, Warsaw 1996 (there is much undocumented information in the book, and some events in the history of the anti-Communist Underground are inaccurate); J. Śledzianowski, *Pytania nad pogromem kieleckim*, Kielce 1998, *passim*; M.J. Chodakiewicz, *Żydzi i Polacy 1918–1955. Współistnienie – zagłada – komunizm*, Warsaw 2000, pp. 445–447.

⁸ B. Szaynok, *Tematyka pod specjalnym nadzorem...*, p. 825.

hostility towards Jews.”⁹ Joanna Tokarska-Bakir decided to approach these doubts and, after many years of research, she published *Pod klątwą. Społeczny portret pogromu kieleckiego* [Under a curse. A social portrait of the Kielce pogrom]. This work consists of two volumes. The first volume is an extensive (at over 760 pages) description of the people, events and phenomena related to the pogrom, and it has been enriched with almost 250 biographical notes and annexes. The second volume, consisting of over 800 pages, contains source materials from the Archives of the Institute of National Remembrance, the Archives of the Military Historical Bureau (the former Central Military Archive) in Warsaw, the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw, and Michał Chęciński’s private archive (accessed by courtesy of the family). The documents were divided into 13 sections, which included reports, leaflets, interrogation records, and interviews.

The first volume is divided into four parts: *Ruch* [Movement], *Kadrowanie* [Framing], *Wstrząsy zapowiadające* [The precursor shocks], and *Wstrząsy wtórne* [The aftershocks]. Each part consists of chapters – whose titles are not free from stylistic emphasis – which introduce the issues while at the same time defining the specific way of the author’s thinking. Part 1 contains chapters entitled *Głosy* [Voices], *Dowody rzeczowe* [Evidence], and *Henio i inni* [Henio and others]. The chapters of part 2 have been given impressive titles: *Autorytet* [Authority], *Władza ludowa i Żydzi* [The People’s Government and the Jews], *Raszomon* [Rashōmon], *Kanikuła* [Summer heat], *Ruchome święto* [A movable feast], *Dozorcy z placu Wolności* [The Concierges of Freedom Square], and *Pociągi* [Trains]. In part 3, the chapters represent the issues considered: *Urząd Bezpieczeństwa* [The Department of Security], *Milicja Obywatelska w Kielcach* [The Citizens’ Militia in Kielce], *Wojewoda Wiślicz-Iwańczyk i jego ludzie* [Voivode Wiślicz-Iwańczyk and his men], *Wojskowi 2. Warszawskiej Dywizji Piechoty i KBW* [The Soldiers of the 2nd Warsaw Infantry Division and the Internal Security Corps] and *Bogeyman*. Part 4 of the first volume has only one chapter *Czterdzieści lat później* [Forty years later].

At the beginning of the first volume, in the part entitled *Od autorki* [From the Author]¹⁰, Tokarska-Bakir states that “by creating a social portrait of the

⁹ *Eadem*, ‘Wciąż znaki zapytania’, *Polityka* 2016, no. 27 (3066), p. 61.

¹⁰ The publication does not contain a classic introduction with an analysis of the state of the research, source basis, etc.

pogrom,” she is responding to Krystyna Kersten’s demand that “the past should be described by means of ‘a panoramic approach, covering the sphere of individual and collective psychology, the cultural [and] political sphere.’” In Tokarska-Bakir’s opinion, historical anthropology allows such a multithreaded approach to the subject,¹¹ and that the “knowledge of the social background” will change “the perception of the Kielce pogrom, which in Polish discourse has traditionally been attributed to a provocation by the secret police.” This approach will discover “that the pogrom was caused by the weakness, not by the strength of the Communist authorities; in a certain sense, by too little and not an excessive presence of the Soviets and the UB [Department of Security]’s men on Planty Street”; however, the people who “made the Kielce pogrom possible” were employees of “Kielce’s Communist institutions.” Tokarska-Bakir further states that “they, mostly pre-war officers, policemen and lawyers, and not scum or Communist provocateurs, were the ones who made the Kielce pogrom possible.”¹² This seems to be the basic thesis the author is trying to prove in her publication, sometimes by using unconventional research methods. On the basis of the analysis of “hundreds, maybe even thousands” of personal documents (applications and CVs), in order to understand the events of 4 July 1946 in Kielce she proposes to use the term ‘plane of understanding’ in the context of social relations (the ‘middle ground’): “translated into the realities of the Kielce region of 1946, the ‘middle ground’ is a quasi-mafia system – ignorant of political divisions and often based on family ties – of an exchange of services, geared towards survival and profits from looting. This network united people from different sides of the political barricade in Kielce. Such an alliance and the desire to survive and to live is the key to understanding the Kielce pogrom and the post-war history of Poland.”¹³ Analysing the aforementioned ‘plane of understanding’ on pp. 175–177 of her

¹¹ J. Tokarska-Bakir, *Pod kłótwą. Społeczny portret pogromu kieleckiego*, vol. 1, Warsaw 2018, p. 13.

¹² *Ibidem*, p. 15.

¹³ *Ibidem*, pp. 14, 592 (and footnote no. 4 on this page). See also p. 135, in which the author discusses the “Kielce version of ‘amoral familism’” as “a tried and tested way of living under the German occupation in conditions hostile to life.” In her opinion, the citizens of Kielce “during the years of the partition and occupation, like the Sicilians, learned not to trust and disregard all written laws, especially those felt as foreign,” and “replaced them with home-grown mafia-type institutions.” The author also refers to research on the relations between Native Americans and pioneers in the American West (17th–19th century).

book, she again stresses that “the operation of such an arrangement in provincial Poland in the years 1945–1946 is essential for understanding how the Kielce pogrom could have happened.”¹⁴ In the footnote preceding this statement, citing *Atlas polskiego podziemia niepodległościowego 1944–1956* [The Atlas of the Polish Independence Underground 1944–1956], she points out that among the subjects of such an ‘agreement’ – a ‘silent coexistence’ – were the independence Underground and the Citizens’ Militia [*Milicja Obywatelska*, MO].¹⁵ The author also recognises the usefulness of research on the history of the Sicilian mafia – “it is tempting, even most superficially, to compare the situation of the island [Sicily] at the beginning of the 19th century and of Poland in the years 1945–1946” when analysing the issue of “Mafia clientelism” and in order to “familiarise oneself with the atmosphere of post-war Kielce.”¹⁶ Considering the participation of “many workers from [the] Ludwików [factory]” in the pogrom, Tokarska-Bakir believes that “although their mentality was shaped by pre-war Catholicist-nationalism,”¹⁷ it should be assumed that “the reasons for the mass involvement of Kielce’s workers in the pogrom can be found primarily in the World War II with its characteristic way of ‘mobilising resources.’” The usefulness of the sociological theory of resource mobilisation is to be tested by analysing the “biographical experience” of the employees of this Kielce factory. According to the author, “every effective group”, and she considers the ‘Ludwików workers’ as such, had to have a “reservoir of attitudes and loyalties.” These “specific loyalties and habits” were allegedly shaped by pre-war and wartime anti-Semitism, while the ‘Kielce pogrom’ proved that “in 1946 Poland, the resource of the fastest mobilisation was hostility towards Jews.”¹⁸ The analysis

¹⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 177.

¹⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 658, footnote 984. The author refers to a phrase about “the silent coexistence of the Militia and the Underground.” To see the context of this phrase, it is advisable to read the entire extract in the *Introduction*, written by Sławomir Poleszak and Rafał Wnuk (see *Atlas polskiego podziemia niepodległościowego 1944–1956*, ed. A. Jacyńska, S. Poleszak, M. Ślądka, R. Wnuk, Warsaw–Lublin 2007, p. XXVIII).

¹⁶ J. Tokarska-Bakir, *Pod kłatwą...*, vol. 1, pp. 375–376.

¹⁷ Tokarska-Bakir does not refer to the description of the political attitudes of the employees of the Ludwików Steelworks as given in the literature, which differ significantly from the phrase she used. The research draws attention to the serious influence of left-wing activists, including Communists, in the pre-war Second Republic (See *Kieleckie Zakłady Wyróbów Metalowych*, ed. J. Naumiuk, Kielce 1970, pp. 43, 47–50, 52–58, 67–72, 74–75, 98–100, 150; J. Naumiuk, *Polska Partia Robotnicza na Kielecczyźnie*, Warsaw 1976, pp. 257–259, 336, 408–409).

¹⁸ J. Tokarska-Bakir, *Pod kłatwą...*, vol. 1, p. 214.

of the social background also includes research on theories of collective violence. In the case of Kielce, the author assumes that it is appropriate to treat the problem of the pogrom as “an act of social control by which a threatened community takes justice into its own hands”. The author further states that “the Kielce pogrom would, in this sense, be an act of self-help which the society of Kielce gave to itself, having been abandoned by the state to the prey of ‘Jewish deviants.’”¹⁹ Of the two theories found in research on acts of collective violence concerning the “composition of pogrom crowds” – “the theory of the rabble, margin or ‘social scum’” and “social cross-sectional theory” – Tokarska-Bakir chose the latter. She recognised that the collected ‘evidence’ gave “priority in describing the social composition of the crowd on Planty Street” to the theory of social cross-section. The ‘evidence’ includes “cover forms of interrogation records” that “allow no doubt that there were ‘respected citizens’ on the Planty Street – outraged mothers and fathers, teachers and firefighters, clerks, craftsmen, and perhaps female defenders of the faith, since the Kielce bishop’s curia decided to trust the account of one of them.”²⁰ In conclusion, the author states that “the ideology that turned Kielce’s citizens against the Jews was anti-Semitism and faith in ritual murder, regardless of the social class from which they came. This faith connected the absent with the present – hiding Underground officers with Militia functionaries and the soldiers of ‘Żymi[e]rski’s army’ who came to Planty Street, as well as the pastors absent from Kielce with their sheep gathered there, temporarily turned into a pack of wolves.”²¹ The above quote is a classic example of combining what is real with what is possible or only imaginable.

On p. 248 of the book, there are several sentences that can be read as a summary of the author’s understanding of the studied past, a theoretical reflection on the events of 4 July 1946. This section is a type of “conceptual matrix” for analysis and inference in individual chapters:

“Researchers describe the pogrom community as a spontaneous, short-lived collective, composed of urban representatives of the middle and lower social strata, engaging in violent actions that they would never have risked as individuals. The prerequisite for such behaviour is a sense of support by the group and economic

¹⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 247.

²⁰ *Ibidem*, pp. 296–297.

²¹ *Ibidem*, p. 299.

interests for those whom they represent. The second condition is the reward – the loot and destruction of the visibility of enemies. The awareness that the forces of order either share the community’s point of view from the beginning or simply cannot resist it is also a supporting circumstance.”²²

It is difficult to clearly define Tokarska-Bakir’s attitude to the current state of research on the Kielce pogrom. The lack of any such analysis results means the reader is forced to assume the author’s opinions on the publications of other researchers dealing with the theme from particular extracts of the book’s text (or press interviews). One such evaluation concerns the second volume of the Institute of National Remembrance’s publication *Wokół pogromu kieleckiego* [On the Kielce pogrom]. This assessment is very vague and takes the form of an accusation of a return to ‘conspiracy memory.’ Tokarska-Bakir claims that

“by distancing itself in a certain sense from the results of its own investigation, the second volume of [...] *Wokół pogromu kieleckiego* [...] released in 2008 openly returned to the hypothesis of the UB conspiracy. Back in the day, this was believed by the most serious Polish historians, even Krystyna Kersten.”²³ I also searched for evidence supporting it, but after studying Chęciński’s collection, I came to the conclusion that the hypothesis of provocation has no basis.”²⁴

²² *Ibidem*, p. 248.

²³ Krystyna Kersten considered several hypotheses, including that the pogrom had been deliberately provoked, but she used different terminology: “After 50 years, despite the source materials introduced into research circulation, we are still surrounded by hypotheses. Several basic options of interpretation of the bloody events have been made. [...] 4. The pogrom was deliberately provoked, and its course was to a large extent the result of the activities of selected groups. The crowd consisted mainly of passive onlookers; several dozen people were active, if one does not count the militiamen and the military, who played an important role in the mechanism of events. [...] In the research conducted so far and the reconstruction of events based on it, it can be concluded that both in the initial phase and in the further course of events, the key role was assigned to the security forces: the officers of the UB, the MO, the military; everything that the Militia, the UB, the military did, led to a bloody tragedy” (K. Kersten, *Pogrom Żydów w Kielcach 4 lipca 1946 r.*, Warsaw 1996, pp. 5–6). See also ‘O stanie badań nad pogromem w Kielcach. Dyskusja w Żydowskim Instytucie Historycznym (12 III 1996 r.) z referatem wprowadzającym prof. Krystyny Kersten’, *Biuletyn ŻIH* 1996, no. 4, pp. 3–17. According to Kersten (p. 4), historians are now inclined towards two hypotheses: the first is that “the pogrom was a completely spontaneous, uninspired social reflex. [...] the causative factor of the violence was anti-Semitism, possibly coupled with the incompetence of the authorities responsible for security: the UB, the MO and the military”; the second says that “in the background of the pogrom there is the inspiration of the secret services, probably Soviet, which became the fuse for the explosions accumulated over centuries and saturated with new content of resentments, anti-Semitic phobias and superstitions.”

²⁴ ‘Chrystus z UB. Z Joanną Tokarską-Bakir rozmawia Dorota Wodecka’, *Książki* 2018, no. 1, p. 17. In Tokarska-Bakir’s publication *Okrzyki pogromowe...* there is no suggestion that she considers the provocation hypothesis (see pp. 143–176).

Tokarska-Bakir's negative assessment of the second volume of *Wokół pogromu kieleckiego* (she does not name any particular authors) was probably formulated on p. 248 of *Pod klątwą*: "Historians of the Kielce pogrom, who were close to the hypothesis that a Communist conspiracy lay at its source, often wrote that the uniformed forces on Planty Street had been behaving provocatively. They repeated this from the brochures of the Underground, which like the Church could not recognise its own participation in creating a pogrom atmosphere."²⁵ Regrettably the author did not decide to quote specific statements from these "historians of the Kielce pogrom."²⁶ It seems, however, that the attempts to answer the questions²⁷ asked in both volumes of *Wokół pogromu kieleckiego* will give proper place to the disavowed book in the latest historiography. It is worth adding that the verification of one of the hypotheses (as in the abovementioned case) based on the analysis of a private archive, in this case the collection of Michał Chęciński,²⁸ is to say the least surprising.

In another part of the book, Tokarska-Bakir assesses the state of research and the directions of academic research (unexplained threads, debatable problems, disputes among researchers) in a rather unusual and concise way:

"This book defends the thesis that shame also lies at the root of the Kielce pogrom mystery. In the 1946 investigation, the Communist authorities quickly found out that there was no 'external enemy' behind the pogrom. This is clearly stated in a report by a pre-war lawyer, the military prosecutor Czesław Sządrowski [actually Szpądrowski – R.Ś.-K.], in which there is not a single word about a 'conspiracy of reaction', but a great deal about the incompetence of the military, the UB and the Militia command, as well as about widespread depravity. But to reveal that wartime or post-war killers of Jews were operating in all the Communist uniformed formations, with the blessing of the Party's authorities (see chapters 11–15), was

²⁵ J. Tokarska-Bakir, *Pod klątwą ...*, vol. 1, p. 248.

²⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 692, footnote 1456. Here is the content of the footnote: "A discussion of the Underground brochures about the pogrom in the chapter 15: *Prowokacje* [Provocations]." The publications and their authors are not mentioned at all.

²⁷ For example, see R. Śmietanka-Kruszelnicki, 'Tłum na ulicy Planty – wokół niewyjaśnionych okoliczności genezy i przebiegu pogromu Żydów w Kielcach 4 lipca 1946 roku' in *Wokół pogromu kieleckiego...*, vol. 2, pp. 127–131. In this article, I drew attention to the underestimated (diminished) role of the soldiers' groups in the development of events on 4 July 1946.

²⁸ J. Tokarska-Bakir, *Pod klątwą ...*, vol. 1, pp. 503–504.

out of the question. It would mean a loss of face and an even greater alienation of the Communists from society. That is why it was decided to first reach for the thread of 'reaction', and then, for a deterrent example, to drastically punish a few pogromists, threaten the others, gradually mitigating the punishments, and then turn a blind eye to the mass emigration of Jews from Poland. And when the case goes cold, to impose a ban on any mentions of the pogrom for over half a century."²⁹

Tokarska-Bakir draws upon the report by the prosecutor Major Czesław Szpądrowski of 19 July 1946, which she probably considers to be a credible document. However, it is difficult to agree with this assessment. Prosecutor Szpądrowski described the participation of military groups in the pogrom selectively. He omitted or inaccurately presented the incursion of soldiers into the building on Planty Street, the disarming of the Jews, and the killing of Dr. Seweryn Kahane, the chairman of the Provincial Jewish Committee in Kielce. He assigned greater responsibility for the pogrom to Militia functionaries. In Szpądrowski's report, the credibility of the description of the 'escape' of Major Wasyl Markiewicz, the commander of the Kielce garrison, from Planty Street, and the behaviour of his deputy, Ensign Józef Dobkowski, is also questionable, considering the contents of other sources.³⁰ There is also no mention of the participation of the Ludwików Steelworks' employees in the second phase of the pogrom. Moreover, many people are mentioned in the report, but Antoni Pasowski, a person mentioned in the documents produced in the first days after the pogrom³¹, is absent. The above remarks make it impossible to see Prosecutor Szpądrowski's report as a reliable document showing the actual course of events of 4 July 1946 in Kielce.

²⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 192.

³⁰ Archives of the Institute of National Remembrance (*Archiwum Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej*, hereinafter AIPN), collection 'Sąd Warszawskiego Okręgu Wojskowego' [Court of the Warsaw Military District], 934/1848, Józef Dobkowski's personal file: a claim for compensation for unjustified arrest and sentence, Letter from Lt. Res. Józef Dobkowski to the Minister of National Defence of 9 June 1958, pp. 19–20: "I will not describe in detail how the investigation was conducted, or thereafter the court case, which, I do not know why, was held *in camera* [...]. The court that sentenced me accused me of inaction while I was in charge, which I strongly denied, because, at the risk of my own life during such a terrible pogrom, I saved a Jewish woman and two underage children, which was confirmed by witnesses." R. Śmietanka-Kruszelnicki, 'Tłum na ulicy Planty...', pp. 113, 116.

³¹ 'Raport prok. Czesława Szpądroskiego do naczelnego prokuratora WP', 19 July 1946 r. in J. Tokarska-Bakir, *Pod klątwą...*, vol. 2: *Dokumenty*, pp. 26–32.

In writing about the actions of the Communist authorities using the phrase “it was decided to reach “at first for the thread””, Tokarska-Bakir assumes Communist authorities acted according to a specific tactic, controlled at least part of the investigations and processes, which in fact means undermining the credibility of many documents produced in connection with the events in Kielce. This behooves the author to undertake a meticulous assessment of the value of the collected archival material.

The arguments presented for using the category of ‘shame’ to describe the ‘sources of the Kielce pogrom mystery’ are too superficial to form the start of an alternative interpretation. However, there is much to suggest that after 4 July 1946 there were people who felt fear and anxiety because of their knowledge of the course of the pogrom, including fear of an investigation in which the discovery of the truth is of little importance. Future research should better recognise the unexplained deaths (including murders and suicides) of several witnesses of the events on Planty Street.³² Tokarska-Bakir’s attitude to the historians’ research is sometimes expressed in the form of a short but explicit remark on the margins of the main argument. This is the case, for example, of the well-known extract from Hanka Alpert’s testimony of 5 July 1946. The published minutes of the interrogation of Hanka Alpert (the person present in the building at that time), include a reference to “a few soldiers” (they were then on the second floor), who “took off their uniforms and caps, and started shooting people from the block.” The people gathered around the building recognised the situation unambiguously – “Jews are shooting at them.”³³ Tokarska-Bakir’s approach to this fragment of the source is inexplicable. In footnote 71 on p. 596 we read: “Hanka Alpert’s testimony about militiamen who dressed up in civilian clothes and shot from windows (see part 2: 2.1.1.3A³⁴), usually quoted as a proof of provocation by the UB, can simply be explained as a robbery – the

³² J. Tokarska-Bakir, *Pod kłqtwą ...*, vol. 1, pp. 188, 335, 361, 662 (footnote 1019), 666 (footnote 1075), 671 (footnote 1116), 718 (footnote 1949, 1950). See also R. Śmietanka-Kruszelnicki, ‘Pogrom Żydów w Kielcach 4 lipca 1946 r. Analiza...’, pp. 109–110.

³³ R. Śmietanka-Kruszelnicki, ‘Tłum na ulicy Planty ...’, pp. 118–119. The militiamen’s activities had a great influence on the gathering of people around the building at 7 Planty Street, but the beginning of the violent anti-Jewish incidents should be connected to the arrival of the soldiers and their actions.

³⁴ J. Tokarska-Bakir, *Pod kłqtwą ...*, vol. 2, pp. 132–134.

functionaries put on clothes stolen from the victims [...].”³⁵ It is puzzling that Tokarska-Bakir treated the behaviour of the soldiers (according to Hanka Alpert, “there were a few who beat a lot, they had red bands on their caps and patches on their uniforms”), and not – as in the book’s contents – of the militiamen, as misguided evidence proving the “UB provocation.” However, in the footnote she does not indicate who, in her opinion, is the author of this hypothesis. And yet, the extract of this source’s testimony demonstrates the provocative behaviour of the soldiers, and not of the UB functionaries. It should also be noted that Hanka Alpert’s testimony should be treated as a starting point for carrying out targeted research in the military archives examining the attitude of the groups of soldiers arriving from the Kielce City Command and the military police of the 2nd Warsaw Infantry Division.

Assessing the sources that form the basis of the work becomes a serious problem. It is difficult to understand why, in the first volume of *Pod klątwą*, the sections entitled *Bibliography and sources* (pp. 496–498) and *Bibliography* (pp. 569–587) were located in two places. An incomplete list of archives, collections and archival files can be found on p. 496 in the *Bibliography and sources* section, whereas in the *Bibliography* section on p. 569, the author has indicated that “books and articles quoted in the footnotes have been taken into account; for the sake of its volume, the file reference numbers, [assembled] within the queries of *I*[nstitut] *P*[amięci] *N*[arodowej] (the Institute of National Remembrance), *W*[ojskowe] *B*[iuro] *H*[istoryczne] (the Military Historical Bureau), *Ż*[ydowski] *I*[nstitut] *H*[istoryczny] (the Jewish Historical Institute), in the state archives, and in the collections of accounts of Holocaust survivors, have been omitted.” Such an argument should not be used, especially in an academic work. More than 170 pages of Tokarska-Bakir’s book are taken up by the footnotes; however, there was no place for a dozen or so additional pages with a list of the archival resources used. This situation does not inspire confidence in the reader. It would be difficult – and unacceptable in an academic review – to analyse 2766 footnotes on 176 pages in the book’s first volume (pp. 592–768) in terms of the author’s use of archival collections from particular archives. However, it was enough to check one of the chapters

³⁵ *Eadem*, *Pod klątwą*..., vol. 1, p. 596, footnote 71.

(Chapter 7: *Kanikuła* [Summer heat], pp. 209–245, footnotes 1204–1431 on pp. 677–690) to identify serious gaps in the author’s research. It is difficult to understand why she did not research the remaining, admittedly modest, documentation of the Ludwików Steelworks’ activity which is kept in the State Archive in Kielce. Perhaps this is because the ‘query in the State Archive in Kielce’ for the purpose of this work was conducted by another person.³⁶ The demand for an analysis of the plant’s operation in 1946 requires that such research should be undertaken.³⁷ Following the above remarks, the conclusion formulated by the author that “it is precisely the participation of workers from Kielce’s factories, and not the conduct of the uniformed formations, that constitutes the most closely guarded secret of the pogrom” is a premature opinion, which is definitely too presumptive and does not reflect the real state of affairs.

The research conducted in WBH [*Wojskowe Biuro Historyczne*, the Military Historical Bureau] was too modest to explore the problems related to the actions of the Polish Army (*Wojsko Polskie*, WP) and the Internal Security Corps (*Korpus Bezpieczeństwa Wewnętrznego*, KBW) units stationed in Kielce. For example, the archives of the 2nd Warsaw Infantry Division contain much important data concerning the Kielce City Command (units of this division were stationed in Kielce, Radom and Częstochowa in 1946). Among others, the soldiers from this formation played an ominous role in the initial phase of the pogrom on Planty Street in Kielce. Targeted research could be carried out after reading Tadeusz Banaszek’s article about the Kielce garrison in 1945–1950.³⁸ Given the apparent lack of Tokarska-Bakir’s acquaintance with the research literature considering the social and political situation and the state of security in the Kielce Voivodeship in 1945–1946, the radical, unambiguous and categorical tone of her interpretation

³⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 589.

³⁷ See H. Mazur, ‘Źródła do dziejów kieleckiego przemysłu po 1945 r. w zasobie Archiwum Państwowego w Kielcach’, *Studia Muzealno-Historyczne* 2013, vol. 5, pp. 67–78. Information on the archival collections of *Suchedniowska Huta Ludwików in Kielce (1908–1948)* and (after the change of the plant’s name) of *Kieleckie Zakłady Wyróbów Metalowych in Kielce (1948–1954)*, see *ibidem*, p. 71.

³⁸ T. Banaszek, ‘Garnizon Kielce w latach 1945–1950’, *Studia Muzealno-Historyczne* 2011, vol. 3, pp. 237–262. All researchers should note the following paragraph (p. 246): “An important task for the garrison authorities was to ensure the proper level of discipline of the soldiers outside the barracks. In the period from December 1945 to November 1946 alone, City Command patrols detained a total of 1520 soldiers and functionaries. The offences for which they were detained were mainly failing to salute, drunkenness and brawls, desertion and dismissal without leave, lack of travel documents.”

of some important issues, the recognition of which is of essential significance for understanding the events of 4 July 1946, is astonishing. Her particularly blatant statement on the state of the forces of repression in Kielce a few days after the referendum,³⁹ which took place on 30 June 1946, reads as follows:

“On the day of the pogrom, the local Department of Security was paralysed by fear. The senior officers did not decide to intervene because they were afraid of the crowd, of responsibility, and still looked to their superiors. Moreover, the unit responsible for acting in such situations, the Provincial Security Committee [Wojewódzki Komitet Bezpieczeństwa, WKB], was headed by Colonel Stanisław Kupsza, a Russian in Polish uniform. Kupsza completely disregarded the danger. The Russians behaved similarly when asked to intervene by the besieged on Planty Street and by the head of UB, Władysław Sobczyński. They explained themselves by their lack of Polish uniforms. I suppose they just did not want to get involved in a Polish brawl and risk their heads. They knew that the Russian soldiers dispersing the crowd were flammable material that could cause an uprising in the country, for which they would pay with their heads.”⁴⁰

Neither the state of the research nor her own academic achievements entitle Tokarska-Bakir to put forward such radical theses about the senior officers' fear of the crowd or the threat of a revolt in the country.⁴¹ This statement is an intentional and biased vision of events; it is an example of the contradiction between the evidence and an ambition to create the past⁴². In order to assess the Russians' 'fear' of the inhabitants of Kielce or the whole Kielce voivodship, it would be advisable to read the publications concerning the activities (including the efficiency⁴³) of

³⁹ In the bibliography of *Pod kłótwą*, the basic study on the falsified referendum is not mentioned: *Referendum z 30 czerwca 1946 r. Przebieg i wyniki*, ed. A. Paczkowski, Warsaw 1993.

⁴⁰ 'Antysemicki tłum, antysemicka milicja. [Z Joanną Tokarską-Bakir] rozmawia Tomasz Targoński', *Newsweek Historia* 2018, no. 4–5, p. 37. The motive of the 'uprising' appears in the book (see J. Tokarska-Bakir, *Pod kłótwą...*, vol. 1, pp. 59, 344).

⁴¹ See *inter alia* F. Musiał, 'Stan badań nad dziejami komunistycznego aparatu represji za lata 2000–2013', *Aparat Represji w Polsce Ludowej 1944–1989* 2015, no. 1, pp. 11–143.

⁴² K. Pomian, *Historia. Nauka wobec pamięci*, Lublin 2006, pp. 10, 157. "There is no history without the awareness of the boundary between the realm of reality and the realm of fiction. [...] A writer becomes a historian only when he acknowledges the requirement to prove what he says and when he tries to fulfil that requirement."

⁴³ P. Kołakowski, *Pretorianie Stalina. Sowieckie służby bezpieczeństwa i wywiadu na ziemiach polskich 1939–1945*, Warsaw 2010, pp. 247, 257, 261–263, 290, 326–331, 350–351, 358–361, 369, 371, 374–375, 390–391, 396.

the NKVD in the Kielce region⁴⁴ and the attitude of many Red Army soldiers towards the inhabitants of the Kielce voivodeship in 1945–1946.⁴⁵ The *Collection of Records from Russian Archives* could be also researched, especially those files that contain documents related to the activities of the NKVD (of the I and II Battalions of the 98th NKVD Regiment and the II Battalion of the 18th NKVD Regiment of the 64th NKVD Division) in the Kielce Voivodeship.⁴⁶ On the presence and operation of the Red Army in Kielce, Tokarska-Bakir wrote that “there were only two of its official bridgeheads in the city: the command post of the Soviet troops facing 7 Planty Street, at 47 Focha Street, and the NKVD headquarters at 24 [Planty Street]. But the presence of the new order could be felt everywhere [...]” The next paragraph starts with the statement: “While the Russians still care about appearances of the rule of law, on their behalf two Poles rule in Kielce, and they do not particularly care about it [the rule of law] [the author was referring to the voivode Eugeniusz Wiślicz-Iwańczyk and Major Władysław Sobczyński, head of the Voivodship Department of Security in Kielce – R.Ś.-K].”⁴⁷ The basis for this conclusion is unknown (given the state of research on the Soviet forces’ role in the process of building Communist power structures in Poland). The footnotes given in this thread do not support such a conclusion. This is consistent with the author’s omission of the issue of the significant participation of Red Army officers delegated to the 2nd WDP [*Warszawska Dywizja Piechoty*, the Warsaw Infantry Division] (including the 4th Infantry Regiment stationed in Kielce) and to the KBW unit in Kielce. The absence of any mention of the 2nd Battalion (under the command of Major Sorokin) of the 18th NKVD Regiment, which was then stationed in

⁴⁴ See *inter alia*: *NKWD i polskie podziemie 1944–1945. Z „teczek specjalnych” Józefa W. Stalina*, ed. A.F. Noskowa, A. Fitowa, Cracow 1998, pp. 196–197, 245–246, 253–254; *Teczka specjalna J.W. Stalina. Raporty NKWD z Polski 1944–1946*, ed. T. Cariewskaja, A. Chmielarz, A. Paczkowski, E. Rosowska, S. Rudnicki, Warsaw 1998, pp. 173, 189–190, 210, 215, 218, 221, 234, 270–271, 288–290, 301, 309–310, 321–322, 338, 368–372, 373–374, 382–384, 469–471, 482–483; G. Motyka, *Na białych Polaków oblawa. Wojska NKWD w walce z polskim podziemem 1944–1953*, Cracow 2014, pp. 206–207, 324–342.

⁴⁵ R. Śmietanka-Kruszelnicki, E. Wróbel, ‘Przestępstwa żołnierzy Armii Czerwonej na Kielecczyźnie 1945–1946’, *Zeszyty Historyczne WiN-u* 2006, no. 25, pp. 121–128.

⁴⁶ R. Śmietanka-Kruszelnicki, *Podziemie poakowskie na Kielecczyźnie w latach 1945–1948*, Cracow 2002, pp. 67, 369. See also J. Tomaszewski, *Sowietyzacja Wojska Polskiego w latach 1943–1956*, Wrocław 2012, pp. 128–129, 139, 145, 238, 284–285, 362.

⁴⁷ J. Tokarska-Bakir, *Pod kłótwą...*, vol. 1, p. 103.

Kielce, is also surprising.⁴⁸ There is scarcely any mention of the representatives of the Soviet forces of repression who were present in Kielce in 1946. Thus, even individual mentions of particular functionaries should be appreciated, as should the avoidance of unambiguous statements such as “research in the Institute of National Remembrance and in the Central Military Archive has not confirmed the existence of such a person [an NKVD officer, Diomin – R.Ś.-K].”⁴⁹ This information is not fully documented, as an officer named Diomin does indeed appear in a document (of June 1946) in a publication on the activities of the Independence Underground in the Radom region after 1945.⁵⁰ Tokarska-Bakir wrote in a similar vein about *Informacja Wojskowa* [Military Information, the military counterintelligence and security service, IW] in the context of the Kielce pogrom: “bordering on sabotage, the activity of heavily overestimated Information troops, where, as we read in the reports, almost exclusively amateurs worked.”⁵¹ In support of such an assessment, Józef Różański’s report of 18 July 1946 for the Minister of Public Security (p. 665, footnote 1068)⁵² is quoted. The report contains information on the participation of soldiers of the 2nd WDP in the pogrom, the arrest of 34 soldiers and officers, and on “attempts to erase the guilt of the soldiers by Major Litiagin⁵³ [the head of Information of the 2nd Division]” and the change of situation after the arrival of Colonel Jan Rutkowski, who “in some way ended this sabotage”. The second document on which the author bases her argument about the IW is the report on the activity of the military prosecutor’s offices in Military District VI for September 1946.⁵⁴ It seems that even in this case, her lack of acquaintance with the literature on

⁴⁸ T. Banaszek, ‘Garnizon Kielce...’, p. 259; G. Motyka, *Na białych Polaków oblawa...*, p. 336.

⁴⁹ J. Tokarska-Bakir, *Pod klątwą...*, vol. 1, p. 419. Cf.: *Wokół pogromu kieleckiego...*, vol. 1, p. 489. The published document (of 11 July 1946) from the Russian archives contains the name ‘Demin’.

⁵⁰ K. Busse, A. Kutkowski, *Bić się do końca. Podziemie niepodległościowe w regionie radomskim w latach 1945–1950*, Lublin–Radom 2012, p. 58. Publication based mainly on IPN archival materials.

⁵¹ J. Tokarska-Bakir, *Pod klątwą...*, vol. 1, p. 186.

⁵² See ‘Raport Józefa Różańskiego dla ministra bezpieczeństwa publicznego’, Warsaw, 18 July 1946 r. in *Wokół pogromu kieleckiego...*, vol. 1, p. 505.

⁵³ This is most probably a reference to Major Anatol Letyagin. See W. Tkaczew, *Powstanie i działalność organów informacji Wojska Polskiego w latach 1943–1948. Kontrwywiad wojskowy*, Warsaw 1994, p. 237: “The method of physical and mental coercion has been used and promoted by investigators from SMERSH since the Information organs started to operate. The most active among them were Lt. Col. Anatol Targoński, Major Paweł Smolikow, Major Władysław Czerniawski and Major Anatol Letyagin [...]” (see also pp. 285–286; cf.: J. Tokarska-Bakir, *Pod klątwą...*, vol. 1, p. 529).

⁵⁴ J. Tokarska-Bakir, *Pod klątwą...*, vol. 1, p. 665, footnote 1068.

the WP's Information services has led to hasty generalisations.⁵⁵ The loyal thinking of the soldiers and officers of the Polish Army was monitored by a well-positioned informants' network, whose work consisted primarily in tracing 'hostile statements' and 'ambiguities in biography'. This was supposed to lead to the discovery and unmasking of the 'hostile element' – from the point of view of the Communist government – in the ranks of the army.⁵⁶ In 1946, 3419 officers were removed from

⁵⁵ J. Poksiński, *Stalinowskie represje wobec oficerów Wojska Polskiego 1945–1956. "TUN"*, Warsaw 2013, pp. 27–37, 51–52, 60–62. Describing the activities of the WP Information in 1946, the author stated (p. 34): "In 1946, 1401 members and sympathisers of the PSL were revealed in the structures of the armed forces with counter-intelligence methods: 429 officers, 410 NCOs and 562 privates. At that time, however, no great threat to the army from the so-called underground organisations was found." (p. 35) "In accordance with the principles of counter-intelligence work, particular attention was paid to the 'base of hostile activity'. These are those military circles (personnel, soldiers in active service, civil employees) that are most susceptible to the so-called hostile penetration of foreign intelligence and to possible cooperation with illegal anti-state organisations. In 1946, the following people were considered to be such a 'base of hostile activity': former 'andersowcy' [soldiers of General Anders' army], former *Armia Krajowa* soldiers, former German army soldiers, sympathisers of the Polish Peasants' Party (PSL), pre-war professional soldiers, former internees in the Soviet Union and officers who had been prisoners of war. These categories of persons were 'put under surveillance in the special control and observation records'. There were 5899 soldiers in active service under surveillance, including 3832 officers, 1142 NCOs and 925 privates. Among the officers, 494 former AK officers, 1845 pre-war professional officers, 928 officers who were former prisoners of war, 424 sympathisers of the Polish Peasants' Party (PSL), 219 pre-war professional soldiers and 214 former AK soldiers were under surveillance. In the group of drafted soldiers, 562 PSL supporters and 282 former AK soldiers were monitored. The execution of the adopted counter-espionage tasks required an appropriate informants' network. In 1946, 7000 new agents and informants started to work there. The whole informants' network consisted of 8530 people, including 254 agents, 892 liaison agents and 7384 informants. In the next two years, the informants' network grew to an insignificant extent." (p. 36) "In 1946, the WP Information authorities arrested a total of 2266 persons, including 457 officers, 488 NCOs, 671 privates and 650 civilians. Of the total number of those arrested, 702 were detained on charges of collaboration with 'gangs' and the Underground, 329 on charges of desertion, 322 for 'hostile agitation', 146 for robberies, 68 on charges of espionage [...], and 602 arrested were suspected of malfeasance of office. Detention has not yet meant an investigation or prosecution. In 1946, only 1325 [investigations] were initiated, i.e. they covered 58.4% of all arrested. In total, in 1946, 1476 prosecutions were conducted." (p. 51) "It is characteristic that the number of arrests made by the WP Information authorities between 1950 and 1953 was lower than those made by the service in 1946 alone." (p. 52) "In 1946, [...] they arrested 2266 people [...]. This means that the repressions of the 1950s, despite all their brutality, reached far fewer people than the political repressions of the 1940s." (p. 62) "On 1 January 1946 there were 725 full-time operative staff employed in WP Information, including 517 Soviet officers and NCOs (71.3%), and only 208 Polish officers and NCOs (28.7%). Out of 166 commanding posts in the military counter-intelligence organs of the time, 150 were occupied by Soviet officers, i.e. 90.3%, and Polish officers 16, i.e. 9.7%. Major changes occurred at the end of the first half of 1946. Out of the total number of 850 operative staff of the WP Information, Polish officers now held 517 positions (64.4%), and Soviet officers 333, i.e. 35.6%. Out of 178 commanding posts, Soviet officers still held 138, i.e. 77.6%, and Polish officers 40, i.e. 22.4%."

⁵⁶ Z. Palski, *Informacja Wojska Polskiego 1943–1957*, Warsaw 2016, p. 95, see also *idem*, 'Praca operacyjna organów Informacji Wojska Polskiego 1945–1957', *Przegląd Historyczno-Wojсковy* 2004, no. 2, p. 179.

the army for political reasons, including 1359 because of evidence collected by the Information authorities. There were many members and sympathisers of the Polish Peasant's Party in this group.⁵⁷ Prior to the referendum of 30 June 1946, the head of the Main Information Directorate, Colonel Jan Rutkowski, sent "Guidelines No. 2/7266" of 11 June 1946 to his subordinate units. These guidelines ordered that "10 days before the referendum, the PSL supporters in the army should be arrested, sent on official trips, or given disciplinary punishment under hastily invented pretexts." This was aimed at "preventing them from taking part in the referendum." Persons who "cannot be excluded from voting in any of the above ways should on the day of voting be placed with agents for observation, and if they are found to be undertaking hostile activity, e.g. a hostile agitation, measures should be taken on the spot to make this impossible."⁵⁸ An analysis of materials concerning the implementation of the above 'guidelines' could yield much data about political sympathies in the army (including the Kielce garrison in mid-1946) and make clearer the scope and nature of the repression applied in the Polish Army units. This would probably be difficult, however, because the extent of the destruction of military archives reported in the literature is breathtaking.⁵⁹ Tokarska-Bakir's book analyses the question of which groups of soldiers participated in the pogrom as well as the responsibility of particular officers, including Soviet officers, for the tragic development of events. Earlier, however, in a very short passage the author described the functioning of the WP units in the Kielce region in a very superficial and fragmented way. In judging the 'morale' of the soldiers, Tokarska-Bakir wrote:

"As they looked for a *modus vivendi*, the Polish Army troops assigned to track down the 'forest units' in the Kielce region willingly joined in agricultural work or securing transports of international aid from UNRRA, instead of pushing themselves into battle. There were also many reports of officers cooperating with the Underground.

⁵⁷ W. Tkaczew, *Powstanie i działalność...*, p. 192.

⁵⁸ Quote from: Z. Palski, *Agentura Informacji Wojskowej w latach 1945–1956*, Warsaw 1992, p. 12. The heads of District Information Directorate No. 6 in Łódź were Lieutenant Colonel Piotr Jewsiukow (from May to December 1945), and then Colonel Zygmunt Okręt (from December 1945 to September 1946). Major Anatoli Letyagin was "an officer of the Information Authorities investigative apparatus from 1945 to 1947 (the Main Information Directorate's investigative apparatus)" (See Z. Palski, *Informacja Wojska Polskiego 1943–1957*, Warsaw 2016, pp. 233, 235).

⁵⁹ Z. Palski, *Informacja Wojska Polskiego...*, p. 9. The author writes that "at the turn of 1990, by order of the last head of the WSW [*Wojskowa Służba Wewnętrzna*, the Internal Military Service], General Edmund Buła, the majority – as much as 85%! – of the Information archives were destroyed."

During the operation against Marian Bernaciak-‘Orlik’s’ unit at the turn of June 1946, there was a “disclosure 2nd” Lieutenant Tadeusz Terczyński a.k.a. ‘Okop’ from the 2nd Infantry Division ‘Fourth’ Regiment, which during the so-called Operation ‘Dęblin’ on 28 May 1946, ‘joined the gang,’ having previously killed a soldier from his subunit. This had an impact on the unit: at least five of its soldiers were later brought to court for their participation in the pogrom.”⁶⁰

It is difficult to say what the basis of the thesis about the reluctance to fight against the Underground might be, not to mention the willingness to participate in auxiliary works and protect aid transports. The author does not refer to the studies on the functioning of the 2nd WDP units in 1945–1946, nor to any archival sources (and it would be advisable to analyse the reports and testimonies available in WBH),⁶¹ but, when writing about the cooperation of officers with the Underground, she refers to Anna Grażyna Kister’s article published in *Zeszyty Historyczne WiN-u* in 2003.⁶² However, apart from the case of Lieutenant Tadeusz Terczyński, there is no mention of any other officers cooperating with the Underground in the Kielce Voivodeship.⁶³ Tokarska-Bakir’s use of the phrase “*dekonspiracja* of Lieutenant Tadeusz Terczyński a.k.a. ‘Okop’” suggests that Terczyński, while serving in the army, was also associated with some Underground organisation. It is not clear which organisation might have been involved, or whether this even happened at all. However, connecting the passage of Lt. Terczyński to the partisan unit with the atmosphere that supposedly prevailed in the 4th Infantry Regiment, and with the sentencing of this unit’s soldiers for participation in the Kielce pogrom, remains a mystery of invention by the author of *Pod klątwą*. It is worth noting that in June 1946 the ‘organs of KBW Information’ arrested six officers and 17 private soldiers of the Polish Army in Dęblin for “helping” the partisan unit of Lieutenant Marian Bernaciak a.k.a ‘Orlik’ (he died on 24 June 1946).⁶⁴ The same is true

⁶⁰ J. Tokarska-Bakir, *Pod klątwą...*, vol. 1, p. 385.

⁶¹ See *inter alia* WBH CAW, ‘Dowództwo 2 WDP z lat 1946–1949’, IV.521.2.152, pp. 21, 51, 53, 56, 62, 82, 103–104, 112, and ‘7. Pułk KBW’, 1580/75/290, p. 171; T. Banaszek, ‘Garnizon Kielce...’, pp. 347–349.

⁶² J. Tokarska-Bakir, *Pod klątwą...*, vol. 1, p. 736, footnote 2306.

⁶³ A.G. Kister, ‘Wojsko wobec polskiego niepodległościowego podziemia zbrojnego 1944–1949’, *Zeszyty Historyczne WiN-u* 2003, no. 19–20, p. 53.

⁶⁴ *Eadem*, *Studium zniewolenia. Walka aparatu bezpieczeństwa z polskim zbrojnym podziemem niepodległościowym na Lubelszczyźnie (1944–1947)*, Cracow 2005, p. 170, and Appendix (Order No. 70 of the Minister of Public Security Gen. Stanisław Radkiewicz. Warsaw, 23 July 1946 – p. 4 of the document).

of Tokarska-Bakir's interpretation of the action taken by the Underground group in Kielce in March 1946. In the book we read: "The fact that the Underground was well aware of the positions of the outposts of the 2nd Infantry Division in Kielce is evidenced by the effective action carried out in March 1946 to free one of the commanders of the post-AK group from the headquarters of the 2nd Department of Information of this unit."⁶⁵ In 1946, the Underground unit from outside of the Kielce district carried out an action in town, which gained widespread publicity. On 23 March 1946, a group of several young Underground members and partisans (from the Radom district) under the command of Stanisław Piwnicki 'Szczerbol' carried out a daring rescue of Lieutenant Henryk Rozkrót 'Alocha' from the HQ of Information. The WP Information HQ was captured without a shot fired, 15–17 soldiers were disarmed, and after the commander of the local Radom post-AK group was released, the rescuing party quietly left the town. The members of this group did not have 'Underground contacts' in Kielce, and the success of the action was the result of surprise.⁶⁶ The participation of the army in the events of 4 July 1946 and its responsibility for them is summarised as follows: "The Kielce pogrom can be described as a reaction of a mixture of an anti-Semitic Militia, a demoralised army and the illegitimate Department of Security – institutions which, drifting, not only failed to contain the outbreak of anti-Jewish panic, but also fuelled it."⁶⁷ In another part of the book we can find threads concerning the conduct of the officers responsible for soldiers' behaviour, as well as an evaluation of how the pogrom was documented in the 2nd WDP Command. The author describes this as follows:

"The military documentation, signed by the deputy head of the 2nd Infantry Division Kazimierz Konieczny, describes the events of the 4th of July and the participation of the army in a very general way, which may be related to the attempts to cover up the scandal by a certain Major Lityagin from Information of the 2nd Infantry Division [...]. It is also worth remembering that during the first trial after the pogrom, public opinion was appalled by the attitude of the prosecutor

⁶⁵ J. Tokarska-Bakir, *Pod kłótwą...*, vol. 1. See "Corrigenda et addenda [...] missing piece of text after p. 385."

⁶⁶ R. Śmietanka-Kruszelnicki, *Podziemie poakowskie na Kielecczyźnie...*, p. 223; *idem*, "Żołnierze Wojska Polskiego wobec Urzędu Bezpieczeństwa. Ostatnia walka podporucznika Henryka Rozkróta 'Alochy'", *Echo Dnia* (annex: *Kuryer kielecki. Specjalna gazeta okolicznościowa*), 11 August 2011, p. 7.

⁶⁷ J. Tokarska-Bakir, *Pod kłótwą...*, vol. 1, p. 405.

Kazimierz Golczewski, who did not allow any examination of the soldiers' attitude [...]. In this context, the question should be considered as to why Konieczny's report ignores the actions of Markiewicz, as well as the confiscation of weapons from the Jews that preceded the massacre. These were the two key incidents for the pogrom, and therefore almost immediately triggered waves of gossip about an UB provocation. [...] In all three of Konieczny's accounts, we observe a tendency to ignore the violence committed by the military, and to antedate his own actions so that they finish before the first victims fell.”⁶⁸

Key questions have been asked here, but it is difficult to understand why the actions of the Soviet officer Major Wasyl Markiewicz (the Kielce City Commander) and the confiscation of weapons from the Jews by the army officers are to be equated with an 'UB provocation.' Should not these occurrences, undoubtedly important for the dynamics of the pogrom, be considered in terms of irresponsible (?) actions taken by officers?

In another section of the book, the author once again draws attention to Soviet officers: “there are at least three ‘POPs’ in Kupsza's staff.”⁶⁹ These are Kazimierz Konieczny, Antoni Frankowski and Wasyl Markiewicz – all necessary to comprehend the role of the army in the pogrom. Kupsza and Markiewicz will be sent back to Russia in the future. Konieczny and Frankowski will declare their Polish nationality.”⁷⁰ The author fills more space with remarks concerning the Kielce City Commander, stating: “Wasyl Markiewicz is the fourth Soviet officer of the 2nd Infantry Division in a Polish uniform, speaking Polish the least. [...] It seems that it was his hesitation that influenced the fatal development of events on Planty.”⁷¹ Apart from the question of this officer's 'hesitation' (other sources make it possible to interpret his behaviour in a different way), it is worth noting Tokarska-Bakir's statement concerning Major Markiewicz. The information that Major Markiewicz “disappears from the documentation of the 2nd Infantry Division” after the building

⁶⁸ *Ibidem*, pp. 393–394.

⁶⁹ ‘Pełniący Obowiązki Polaka’ – ‘Acting Poles’, acronym ‘POP’ – this is how Soviet soldiers and officers delegated to the units of the Polish Army were commonly described (See J. Karpiński, *Polska, komunizm, opozycja. Słownik*, Warsaw 1988, p. 40). In Polish, ‘pop’ also means an Orthodox Christian priest.

⁷⁰ J. Tokarska-Bakir, *Pod klątwą...*, vol. 1, p. 391.

⁷¹ *Ibidem*, p. 392.

on 7/9 Planty Street was raided by the besiegers of the Jewish Committee does not reflect the actual state of events.⁷² In the archival documentation remaining after the activities of the 2nd WDP, one can easily find documents (orders) concerning the person of Major Markiewicz; for example, he was “responsible” for “order and safety during the funeral” of the pogrom victims on 8 July 1946. He was supposed to receive “precise instructions concerning the route and the means to secure the funeral from the chief of staff” (route: “from the city hospital to the Jewish cemetery”). A “unit of 120 men” was to be assigned to Major Markiewicz’s orders by the “Commander of the Internal Troops [*Wojska Wewnętrzne, KBW*].” In the same order we can read that the 4th Infantry Regiment was supposed to put “2 rifle companies of 50 men [and] 5 cars in the barracks in an emergency” which were to be “ready for use at any time.”⁷³ The arrival of the units of the 2nd Warsaw Infantry Division to Kielce made the army assume co-responsibility for order and safety in the city. A special role in this respect was assigned to the City’s Command. According to a report of 30 June 1946, the ‘crew’ of the City’s Command consisted of four officers (including the City Commander), five NCOs and 13 private soldiers. As of 7 January 1946, the Kielce City Commander was Lieutenant Colonel Wasyl Taran (head of the 2nd Department of the 2nd WDP), and from 8 April to 13 November 1946, Major Wasyl Markiewicz (head of the 2nd WDP Engineer Service). The City’s Command was manned by the 4th Infantry Regiment (whose commanding officer was Lieutenant Colonel Wasyl Kułakowski.)⁷⁴ The need to explain all the threads related to the functioning and activities undertaken by the City’s Command also arises when considering the entries (in the manuscript), which can be found in the document (reproduction)⁷⁵ entitled ‘Pogrom w Kielcach, czwartek, 4.07.1946 [r.], dane do raportu’ published in the study by Arnon Rubin entitled *Facts and Fictions about the Rescue of the Polish Jewry during the Holocaust*

⁷² *Ibidem*, p. 391.

⁷³ WBH CAW, ‘Dowództwo 2. WDP z lat 1946–1949’, IV.521.2.42, ‘Rozkaz garnizonowy nr 019 Dowódcy Garnizonu Kielce płk. [Stanisława] Kupszy w zwi[ązku] z pogrzebem ofiar z dnia 4 VII 1946’, Kielce, 7 July 1946, p. 88; see also pp. 97, 114, 134.

⁷⁴ T. Banaszek, ‘Garnizon Kielce...’, p. 259; *idem*, ‘4 Pułk Piechoty/Zmechanizowany w Kielcach w latach 1945–1995’ in *4 Pułk Piechoty Legionów Polskich – historia i pamięć w 100. rocznicę powstania*, ed. U. Oettingen, W. Rutkowska, J. Główna, Kielce 2015, pp. 197–199.

⁷⁵ Tokarska-Bakir believes that the author of the document was Adolf Berman (See J. Tokarska-Bakir, *Pod klątwą...*, vol. 2, pp. 113–116).

(vol. 6: *The Kielce Pogrom. Spontaneity, Provocation or Part of a Country-Wide Scheme?*, Tel Aviv 2004, pp. 310–313). The abovementioned document (p. 311) reads: “8) There is already a large crowd – around 4,000 people. The Militia and the Army, guns pointed at the house. 9) Shots are heard fired at the Committee: the military shoot with PPSH [submachine guns]. Major Markiewicz gave the order to shoot! 10) The army storms into the building; the shooting in the building begins; the army turns the hooligan action into a pogrom; inside, the Jews barricaded themselves. 11) After the army, the militiamen and the crowd are storming [the place]. Massacre.” Tokarska-Bakir repeatedly refers to the above document in her publication *Pod klątwą* (see vol. 1, pp. 196, 202–207). For inexplicable reasons, however, in volume 2 of the publication (a collection of documents), the following words disappeared from the quoted document: “Major Markiewicz gave the order to shoot!” In the very same point 9 of the document, the record instead of “shots are heard fired at the Committee: the military shoot with PPSH,” is quoted as follows: “shots are heard in the Committee: the military shoot with PPSH.”⁷⁶

The problem of the responsibility of army officers actually disappears in the description of “four components of the explosive mixture that went off on Planty Street.” These “four components” were presented as follows:

“In the second year after the war, Kielce’s institutions became the bridgeheads of domestic Communism, and its backbone was the newly established middle class. [...] This can be seen from the example of the Kielce’s MO, consisting of well-acclimatised pre-war officers. The common hostility towards Jews in this environment could be called – in Charles Tilly’s terms – an easy to activate social resource. It would be the first of four components of the explosive mixture that went off on Planty Street. The second component was that neither the local Church nor even the moderate WiN Underground [‘Wolność i Niezawisłość’, ‘Freedom and Independence’] ruled out the possibility that the Jews could really have participated in kidnapping Polish children. Third – the fact that the concierges of the tenement houses they took over feared the claims from the Jewish owners. But the most important factor facilitating violence in Kielce was something that was commonly called ‘Jewish lording.’”⁷⁷

⁷⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 114.

⁷⁷ J. Tokarska-Bakir, *Pod klątwą...*, vol. 1, p. 409. According to the author, the presence of such an ‘explosive mixture’ must have resulted in a pogrom, and no provocation was needed.

How does Tokarska-Bakir see the participation in the pogrom of Kielce's inhabitants in such a context? When writing about the general condemnation of the pogrom, the author referred to the attitude of the inhabitants of Kielce in these terms: "Initially, the majority of Kielce's inhabitants, of whom – according to Witold Kula's calculations – up to a quarter could have taken part in the pogrom, spoke of 'burden', 'disgrace' and 'stigma'."⁷⁸ By referring to sentences taken out of Witold Kula's text (and out of its context), she did not inform the reader about Marcin Kula's reservations made in the introduction to his father's article. Marcin Kula, in deciding to publish a "previously unpublished article" (written a month after the pogrom), stated that "the text [...] has many clear shallow places" and "certainly does not contain a 'learned' analysis of the situation in Poland."⁷⁹ To illustrate the problem, it is worth presenting the most significant fragments of Witold Kula's article 'Nasza w tym rola (Głos pesymisty)':

"It's been a month since the Kielce events. A trial was held and a sentence was passed on a few unlucky people, who, unlike the rest of the crowd of several thousand people, were not lucky and got into the hands of the security authorities after being awakened at some hour. [...] Characteristically, the factors that caused the Kielce pogrom [...] exposed to the world the Fascist face of our opposition – both the one from the forest and the one grouped around the cardinals. [...] In cases such as those of Kielce, two factors have to be distinguished: a clearly perceptible control and steering centre on the one hand, and an accumulated mass of forces ready to listen to its whispers on the other. The centre prepares the ground, the centre sets the moment, the centre assembles the blast, the centre watches over the course of events, strengthening the action as it develops and reviving it as it expires. [...] It was not the decision of the NSZ centre [*Narodowe Siły Zbrojne*, National Armed Forces] that caused the outbreak and success of the Kielce pogrom, but rather the potential readiness of Kielce's society. In connection with the Kielce pogrom, a lot was said and written about the action driving forces, about the NSZ commanding centre. I do not deny the validity of this. But much too little was said about the accumulated reservoir of forces ready to listen to the whispers of this centre. [...] We probably will not exaggerate if we say that every fourth inhabitant of Kielce

⁷⁸ *Ibidem*, pp. 186, 664 (footnote 1061).

⁷⁹ M. Kula, *Uparta sprawa. Żydowska? Polska? Ludzka?*, Cracow 2004, pp. 154–158.

took an active part in the pogrom. And will we exaggerate when we suppose that for every active person there were two who did not find enough courage to go out on the street, sitting at home, following the course of events happily or at least with indifferent approval? [...] The choice of Kielce by the commanding centre was probably quite accidental. What was successful in Kielce could also be successful in many other cities. It could have worked there, because there is also this accumulation of 'potential readiness'. The estimation of the size of this 'readiness', made by us on the example of Kielce, must therefore unfortunately be regarded as quite representative."⁸⁰

It is hard to omit that Witold Kula's deliberations from 1946 fit quite well with the course of the arguments presented by the author of *Pod klątwą*, albeit with a certain exception: at the time when he was writing the above text, Witold Kula believed in the existence of an "commanding centre," and this puts him in the circle of believers in the conspiracy theory.

Describing the complex picture of social relations in the city, Joanna Tokarska-Bakir stated: "In Kielce, it is completely normal. It is not uncommon for one brother to be in PPR [*Polska Partia Robotnicza*, the Polish Workers' Party] and the other in 'gangs', or one in the UB and the other in the Militia. Both institutions sincerely hate each other. The former, supported by the Russians, dominates unquestionably, while the latter has public support. It is also supported by the Underground."⁸¹ To support the thesis about the position of the Militia, the author does not refer to any historical research. In the following paragraphs, however, when describing the situation in other areas of Poland and listing the events (including the functioning of the Underground's dead-letter boxes) of 1945, she suggests that there was some kind of cooperation between Kielce's militiamen and Underground organisations in 1946. It does not seem appropriate to draw such conclusions from these prerequisites.⁸² This type of argumentation, built on selectively quoted facts and data from different areas, and chronologically inconsistent, reverses the relationship between the facts and their context. And the facts are relevant and understandable when placed in context, at a particular place

⁸⁰ W. Kula, 'Nasza w tym rola (Głos pesymisty)' in M. Kula, *Uparta sprawa...*, pp. 158–162.

⁸¹ J. Tokarska-Bakir, *Pod klątwą...*, vol. 1, pp. 135–136.

⁸² See the methodological remarks in the further parts of this paper.

and time. The cooperation, or informal contacts, between militiamen and various Underground structures looked different in different areas (both on a national scale and in particular voivodeships) in 1945–1946.

In Tokarska-Bakir's study we find information documented by sources that were created under specific conditions (e.g. during a 'purge' in the MO's ranks). Much of this information concerns the participation of individual militiamen in the murders of Jews during the German occupation, as well as common crimes committed by militiamen. The entry of such people into the ranks of the MO would be an attempt to escape responsibility for such acts. However, the author of *Pod klątwą* has not conducted any detailed research that could answer questions concerning the scale of the employment of people 'with a criminal background' (another question is the veracity of such accusations) in the ranks of the Voivodeship Command of the MO [*Komenda Wojewódzka MO, KWMO*] and the District Command of the MO [*Komenda Powiatowa MO, KPMO*] in Kielce, as well as the state of discipline among these officers of the repressive forces. The capacity for research in this area has not been fully exploited.⁸³ Even a random look at the documents produced by the KWMO in Kielce results in an image of an MO which differs from the one presented in the book. The same applies to the relations between the various structures of the armed Underground and Militia in the Kielce Voivodeship. They will be different both in particular districts (and even municipalities), and in the years of 1945 and 1946. Here one could mention the excerpts from the report of the Voivodeship Commander of the MO in Kielce of 20 November 1945 (the report covers a period of at least six months): "The Citizens' Militia in the Kielce Voivodeship fought 24 fights against reactionary gangs in operational accidents and in defence at the MO posts. [...] In combat [...] 58 militiamen were killed and 36 militiamen were wounded. [...] As of 15 November [19]45, the officers were disciplinarily punished 21 times, 3 were brought to court, NCOs and privates were disciplinarily punished 522 times, and 21 were brought to court."⁸⁴ Another document contains data on the entire activity undertaken by the militiamen of the Kielce Voivodeship. The report of

⁸³ See M. Grosicka, 'Postawy ludowców wobec rozpadu struktur Polskiego Państwa Podziemnego na Kielecczyźnie' in *Z dziejów Polskiego Państwa Podziemnego na Kielecczyźnie 1939–1945*, ed. T. Domański, J. Gapys, Kielce 2016, pp. 96–103.

⁸⁴ AIPN, KGMO, 35/3134, 'Raport Komendanta Wojewódzkiego MO do Komendy Głównej MO w Warszawie', Kielce, 20 November 1945, pp. 1, 5.

the deputy commander-in-chief of the Kielce KWMO of 14 April 1945 stated that from 16 to 31 March 1945, “1202 people were arrested, including 112 for drunkenness, 38 for armed robbery, 15 for robbery without weapons, 12 for trading home-made vodka, 347 for theft, 91 for belonging to the German nation, 90 for cooperation with Germans, 5 for falsification of evidence, 15 for usury, 18 for appropriation of someone else’s property, 14 for abuse of power, 42 for activities to the detriment of the state, 177 for possession of weapons, 9 for killing, four for arson, 213 for other minor crimes. 26 people were handed over to the Military Administration Command, 269 to the Department of Security; 78 people were handed to the disposal of the Prosecutor of the District Court, 111 people were handed over to the municipal court, 35 people were detained for further investigation. The others were released after interrogation. 2112 people were interrogated.”⁸⁵ Already a cursory analysis of this document shows how difficult it is to distinguish between the scale of the threat of common banditry and the ‘threat’ to the Communist power structures resulting from the activities of the armed Independence Underground.

In the first half of 1945, the transfer of soldiers and militiamen from the repressive forces to the Independence and anti-Communist Underground was frequent. In the Sandomierz district, *inter alia*, Lieutenant Jan Smokowski a.k.a. ‘Bojko’, the KPMO commander in Sandomierz deserted from the ranks of the MO and started resistance against the Communist authorities. The group he led consisted of former militiamen and was called ‘Biały Orzeł’ [White Eagle]. In the Jędrzejów district, Lieutenant Jan Kurgan ‘Huragan’, the former KPMO commander in Jędrzejów, also deserted. At the end of April 1945, with a group of militiamen, he left the district command and formed a partisan unit. But after just a few months both partisan groups ceased to exist. The ‘White Eagle’ group was crushed, and in the night of 23/24 July Lieutenant Smokowski “was captured while sleeping and killed while resisting.” In the same month, Lieutenant Kurgan’s group revealed itself.⁸⁶ The abovementioned events resulted in an exchange of personnel in the

⁸⁵ AIPN, KGMO, 35/793, ‘Raport z[astęp]cy komendanta MO woj. kieleckiego za okres od 16 do 31 III 1945 r.’, Kielce, 14 April 1945 r., p. 5.

⁸⁶ R. Śmietanka-Kruszelnicki, *Podziemie poakowskie na Kielecczyźnie...*, pp. 91, 116, 119; *Atlas polskiego podziemia niepodległościowego...*, p. 278.

MO's local structures and the increased surveillance of militiamen by the UB. The surveillance on 'politically uncertain' militiamen was so effective that in August 1945 Lieutenant Colonel Jan Sońta a.k.a 'Ośka' was arrested (a former officer of the MO headquarters, then transferred to the army as a 'special tasks officer'; during the German occupation he was the commander of a partisan unit of the Peasant Battalions [*Bataliony Chłopskie*, BCh] operating in the Kielce region), and soon several of his close associates were arrested. The arrests, investigations and trials of a group of militiamen (including officers) from the BCh partisan unit in Kielce drew the attention of the Communist authorities to the whole community.⁸⁷ Lieutenant Jan Rogoziński 'Ostry' was also an associate of Lieutenant Colonel Sońta. In January 1946, he was the MO commander in Miastko in Western Pomerania. Threatened with arrest, he deserted with a group of subordinates, and came back to the areas he knew from the German occupation, the Iłża and Radom districts, and joined the underground anti-Communist resistance there. A few months later, on 24 May 1946 in Radom, he was surrounded by UB and MO functionaries and died in a fight.⁸⁸

The reader, 'buried' by a huge amount of inconsistently documented information,⁸⁹ may not realise how cautiously one should approach the description of some threads or characters in the study. The same applies to the reliability of partial data (a problem that is also known in literature as 'fact-value'⁹⁰), which is important for the description of the decision-making relations and dependencies occurring in the circles of Communist power. Such a situation does not positively affect the possibility of conducting comparative analyses, and it also affects the assessment of accepted interpretations. Several issues raising serious doubts should be inspected closely in this context.

The situation of the Jews under the German occupation is analysed by the author in the context of the activity of the Polish Underground (of different ideological

⁸⁷ P. Bednarczyk, *Jan Sońta "Ośka" (1919–1990). Partyzancka biografia*, Warsaw 2007, pp. 97–98, 139–153; see J. Tokarska-Bakir, *Pod klątwą...*, vol. 1, pp. 661–662, footnote 1018.

⁸⁸ R. Śmietanka-Kruszelnicki, *Podziemie poakowskie na Kielecczyźnie...*, pp. 155–156, 175.

⁸⁹ The reports referred to here often have little to do with the events of 4 July 1946 in Kielce. Reading the book, it is hard to resist the impression that the author has been "unable" to control the abundance of source material.

⁹⁰ M. Kempny, *Antropologia bez dogmatów – teoria społeczna bez iluzji*, Warsaw 1994, p. 37–38.

currents), and partisan units, including the Home Army [*Armia Krajowa*, AK] unit operating in the Włoszczowa district commanded by Captain Mieczysław Tarchalski a.k.a 'Marcin'. When reading the passages discussing the abovementioned events, one may get the impression that Tokarska-Bakir has discovered many cases which had hitherto been unknown⁹¹. Meanwhile, there is quite an extensive literature concerning Captain 'Marcin's' unit, including the murder of Jews in Starzyna village on 10 September 1943 committed by partisans of Lt. Leon Szymbierski 'Orzeł'. This should have been read and criticised. The case of Lt. Szymbierski has been described by Kazimierz Iranek-Osmecki,⁹² Bogdan Hillebrandt,⁹³ Wojciech Borzobohaty,⁹⁴ Ryszard Nazarewicz⁹⁵ and Dariusz Libionka.⁹⁶ The charges against Mieczysław Tarchalski have been analysed by Zbyszko Szymczyk⁹⁷ and Tomasz Domański.⁹⁸ Domański also addressed the question of the cognitive value of the evidence collected in the trials and investigations conducted under the August 1944 Decree regulations (the so-called *sierpniówki*), including the credibility of the testimonies of Hipolit Świdorski and Mieczysław Tarchalski which were given during the investigation conducted by the UB.⁹⁹

⁹¹ J. Tokarska-Bakir, *Pod klątwą...*, vol. 1, pp. 215–216, 679–681 (footnotes 1236–1254), 666 (footnote 1080).

⁹² K. Iranek-Osmecki, *Kto ratuje jedno życie... Polacy i Żydzi 1939–1945*, Warsaw 2009, p. 319.

⁹³ B. Hillebrandt, *Partyzantka na Kielecczyźnie 1939–1945*, Warsaw 1967, pp. 202–203.

⁹⁴ W. Borzobohaty, *"Jodła". Okręg Radomsko-Kielecki ZWZ-AK 1939–1945*, Warsaw 1988, p. 261.

⁹⁵ R. Nazarewicz, *Armii Ludowej dylematy i dramaty*, Warsaw 1998, pp. 203–205 (referring to the 'Dziennik Oddziału Orła' [Eagle Division's "Diary"] of Lt. Leon Szymbierski).

⁹⁶ D. Libionka, 'ZWZ-AK i Delegatura Rządu RP wobec eksterminacji Żydów polskich' in *Polacy i Żydzi pod okupacją niemiecką 1939–1945. Studia i materiały*, ed. A. Żbikowski, Warsaw 2006, pp. 120–121.

⁹⁷ Z. Szymczyk, 'Mieczysław Tarchalski (1903–1981). Przyczynek do represji komunistycznych AK', *Niepodległość i Pamięć* 2006, no. 22, pp. 83–99.

⁹⁸ T. Domański, "Sierpniówki" jako źródło do dziejów Armii Krajowej w Okręgu Radomsko-Kieleckim na przykładzie procesów przed Sądem Okręgowym, Sądem Apelacyjnym i Sądem Wojewódzkim w Kielcach. Wybrane problemy badawcze' in *Z dziejów Polskiego Państwa podziemnego na Kielecczyźnie...*, pp. 173–174, 182–183, 186–188, 190–191, 195, 197–198, 214.

⁹⁹ *Ibidem*, pp. 182, 184–196, 215–216. Summing up his considerations, Domański stated (pp. 215–216): "Therefore, in concluding [my] reflections on [the minutes of the trials of the] 'sierpniówki' as a source for the history of AK (based on specific examples), as its defendants were involved in the activities of the Independence Underground during World War II, it should be stated that this material bears a clear stamp of the times in which it was created. Numerous manipulations took place at different stages of the judicial process, such as forcing confessions according to the wishes of the prosecution, and deliberate procedural irregularities. This material prompts the researcher to be extremely cautious in making judgements and scholarly opinions. In most cases, [this material] demonstrates the shaping of the reality of the occupation for propaganda purposes rather than for objective description [...]."

The author's ignorance of the state of research into the history of the Underground during the German occupation and the post-war period results in the use of incorrect (or imprecise) terms concerning the organisational affiliation of individual Underground structures, groups and partisan units or individuals. Such situations reduce the level of trust in the image of the past as constructed in the work.

There is a huge difference between the description of the people killed on 8 September 1944 near Rząbiec (Włoszczowa district) by the soldiers of the Holy Cross Mountains Brigade of the NSZ [*Brygada Świętokrzyska NSZ*] as "partisans of Karavayev's nearly 100-strong unit consisting of Red Army soldiers"¹⁰⁰ and the information that among these 'partisans' there was a "sabotage and intelligence group 'Szturm' (formed by the People's Commissariat of the State Security of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic [NKGB])" commanded by Captain Ivan Ivanovich Karavayev.¹⁰¹ A similar problem is encountered when determining the organisational affiliation of the Underground groups operating in 1945. In the mention of the troops of Lieutenant Antoni Sobol 'Dołęga', the phrase "SN [*Stronnictwo Narodowe*, the National Party], NSZ, *Związek Zbrojnej Konspiracji* [the Union of Armed Resistance]" was used.¹⁰² In fact, this unit was a partisan unit of *Narodowy Związek Zbrojny* [the National Armed Union, NZZ], which in 1946 subordinated itself to the WiN Inspectorate which used the codename '*Związek Zbrojnej Konspiracji*' [the Union of Armed Resistance]. The undocumented hypothesis, expressed in a remark about collusion by "an ardent Catholic, a nationalist from NSZ, a value-oriented AK soldier, and GL [*Gwardia Ludowa*, People's Guard] member", appeared in the context of the gathering of an anti-Semitic crowd in Kielce.¹⁰³ This event, which occurred at the end of 1945, is an interesting case. The author of *Pod klątwą* wrote about an "NSZ group" which "escaped arrest by the Militia" in December 1945 "taking weapons and documents with them."¹⁰⁴ In a footnote (p. 636, footnote 665) she noted my different opinion

¹⁰⁰ J. Tokarska-Bakir, *Pod klątwą...*, vol. 1, p. 728, footnote 2179.

¹⁰¹ P. Gontarczyk, *Polska Partia Robotnicza. Droga do władzy (1941–1944)*, Warsaw 2006, pp. 353–354; R. Śmietanka-Kruszelnicki, *Podziemie poakowskie na Kielecczyźnie...*, pp. 35–36.

¹⁰² J. Tokarska-Bakir, *Pod klątwą...*, vol. 1, p. 328.

¹⁰³ *Ibidem*, p. 246.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 136.

about the membership of this group: “Śmietanka-Kruszelnicki claims it was the ‘*Niepodległość*’ [Independence] group.”¹⁰⁵ Contrary to appearances, this is not a trivial matter, because in the whole case, both the escapes from MO detention of a group of people connected with *Niepodległość* (it turns out that not all the fugitives were connected to this elite post-AK organisation) and the functioning of the structures of *Niepodległość* in Kielce, are linked by the personality of the District Court Prosecutor in Kielce, Jan Wrzeszcz, who on 4 July 1946 tried to intervene in the situation on Planty Street, in order to prevent the course of events from escalating. During the trial before the Military District Court [*Wojskowy Sąd Rejonowy*, WSR] in Warsaw in December 1946, prosecutor Wrzeszcz was a witness for the defence of Lt. Col. Wiktor Kuźnicki, the KWMO commander-in-chief during the Kielce pogrom. Wrzeszcz testified to Kuźnicki’s benefit, both in terms of the functioning of the MO (“I can state that he tried as much as possible to train and educate the MO in the democratic spirit”) and their behaviour during the pogrom (“I had the impression that nothing depended on Kuźnicki there, because senior military officers were present”).¹⁰⁶ The charges against Colonel Kuźnicki mainly concerned the seemingly “reactionary”¹⁰⁷ officer MO cadre (accepted by him), as well as the lack of proper cooperation with the UB; these were based on reports by Captain Stanisław Olczyk (the MO district commander in Starachowice in July 1946; later promoted to MO deputy voivodeship commander) and Captain Roman Olszański-Przybyłowski (MO deputy voivodeship commander).¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁵ See R. Śmietanka-Kruszelnicki, ‘Pogrom w Kielcach – podziemie w roli oskarżonego’ in *Wokół pogromu kieleckiego...*, vol. 1, p. 69: “The first case is a mention of a group of people supposedly connected with the NSZ who escaped from the KWMO detention centre. This imprecise term in fact concerns a group of former AK members, linked in 1945 with the intelligence and counter-intelligence division of the elite post-AK organisation ‘*Niepodległość*’ operating in Kielce. Perhaps this group included people from the so-called executive (among others, those who carried out death sentences on informants).”

¹⁰⁶ ‘Protokół rozprawy Wojskowego Sądu Rejonowego’, Warsaw, 13 December 1946 in *Antyżydowskie wydarzenia kieleckie 4 lipca 1946 roku. Dokumenty i materiały. Akta procesów uczestników wydarzeń oraz funkcjonariuszy Milicji Obywatelskiej i Wojewódzkiego Urzędu Bezpieczeństwa Publicznego*, vol. 1, ed. S. Meducki, Z. Wrona, Kielce 1992, p. 377.

¹⁰⁷ See R. Śmietanka-Kruszelnicki, ‘Pogrom w Kielcach – podziemie w roli oskarżonego...’, pp. 68–69.

¹⁰⁸ J. Tokarska-Bakir, *Pod kłątwą...*, vol. 1, p. 341, 352. According to the author of *Pod kłątwą*, a few years earlier Olszański-Przybyłowski had collaborated with SMERSH and the NKVD, and his subordinates accused him of extorting testimonies (See *ibidem*, pp. 363–366, 537–538, 726–727 [here: footnote 2163]). Olczyk was known for his brutal behaviour towards people (See *ibidem*, pp. 163, 536–537; cf.: R. Śmietanka-Kruszelnicki, ‘Działania aparatu represji. Wydarzenia w Starachowicach w noc sylwestrową w 1945 r. w świetle dokumentów’, *Aparat represji w Polsce Ludowej 1944–1989* 2004, no. 1, p. 339).

The personality of Lieutenant Colonel Wiktor Kuźnicki, or more specifically the charges against him, play an important role in building the narrative about the responsibility of a group KWMO officers in Kielce for the events of 4 July 1946. This is why the question of the credibility of the documents produced by them (or with their participation) is so important. During the investigation into Lieutenant Colonel Kuźnicki, Captain Stanisław Olczyk, interrogated on 13 August 1946, testified as follows:

“Lieutenant Colonel [Wiktor] Kuźnicki [on 31 May 1946, in a conversation with the MO district commanders MO – R.Ś.-K.] referred to part of the land reform, saying that he was a Pole and [...] he believed that Poland was for Poles only, and if kolkhozes were to be established in Poland, he would be the first to take a weapon and go to the forest. Moreover, [...] Kuźnicki mentioned that if Poland had become the seventeenth Soviet republic, he would never have agreed to this. [...] he said that Soviets were deliberately provoking the disturbance of peace in Poland [...]. After the conversation on the day of the briefing, Kuźnicki’s words [...] were accepted by the Częstochowa Commander of Town [...], the Radom Commander of Town, the District Commander of Jędrzejów [...]”¹⁰⁹

The credibility of Captain Olczyk’s testimony on Lieutenant Colonel Kuźnicki’s supposed statements is extremely dubious. It is difficult to acknowledge that Lieutenant Colonel Kuźnicki – an officer of the Communist forces of repression, who had taken part in the Civil War in Spain, then stayed in Soviet Russia, served as a head of the 3rd Division of the *Armia Ludowa* general staff, then from October 1944 served in the MO Main Command [Komenda Główna MO, KGMO], and from January 1945 served as commander of the MO structures in the Kielce voivodeship, thus fully aware of the operative capabilities of the Soviet services – would have shown such openness in expressing ‘reactionary views’ on the political situation in Poland. It is more likely that these accusations were an attempt to create a false image of the relations prevailing within the KWMO in Kielce.

¹⁰⁹ Archives of the Institute of National Remembrance, Delegation in Kielce (*Archiwum Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej, Delegatura w Kielcach*; hereinafter AIPN Ki), ‘Akta śledztwa (zbiór dokumentów) w sprawie pogromu Żydów w Kielcach 4 VII 1946 r.’, vol. 6, Minutes of the Interrogation of the Witness Stanisław Olczyk, 13 August 1946, p. 810.

Tokarska-Bakir's uncritical approach to the sources, which is partially due to her unfamiliarity with the literature in the field, can also be seen in the extended biography of Bronisław Ziętał. An egregious example of this approach is the statement that Bronisław Ziętał (under the assumed name of Bronisław Dąbek) remained 'in the unit' under the command of 'Szary' (the author does not state clearly whether she was referring to Captain Antoni Heda a.k.a. 'Szary') "until July 1946."¹¹⁰ The case of an unidentified armed unit under the command of one 'Szary' in the Holy Cross Mountains [Góry Świętokrzyskie] in mid-1946, in the context of the activities of the so-called simulated units, has been discussed by me on previous occasions. It seems that Tokarska-Bakir should at least mention this matter.¹¹¹ It is worth noting that the post-AK partisan unit commanded by Captain Antoni Heda a.k.a. 'Szary' which took part in the raid on the Kielce prison in August 1945, had already ceased to exist several months previously.¹¹² The abovementioned questions, resulting from the absence of proper contextual knowledge of the sources, are an introduction to another serious problem arising during Tokarska-Bakir's analysis of the documents – an over-interpretation of the sources. Considering the current advances in research on the Communist repression apparatus and on the history of the Independence Underground, the use of the experiences and achievements of historians (e.g. in the field of source studies) is essential, and allows serious interpretational errors to be avoided.¹¹³

¹¹⁰ J. Tokarska-Bakir, *Pod kłębem...*, vol. 1, p. 136.

¹¹¹ See R. Śmietanka-Kruszelnicki, 'Pogrom w Kielcach – podziemie w roli oskarżonego...', pp. 38–39, 46–49.

¹¹² In September 1945, Heda withdrew from Underground activities (See S. Piątkowski, M. Sołtysiak, *Antoni Heda "Szary". Biografia*, Kielce 2014, pp. 60–62; R. Śmietanka-Kruszelnicki, *Podziemie poakowskie na Kielecczyźnie...*, pp. 110–111, 121, 145). In 2017, a weekly newspaper published an article on the activities of the Underground after 1945. The author of the article quoted excerpts from a CIA report of 1947 which mentioned 'Szary' (this thread has nothing to do with reality): "The area of the Holy Cross Mountains [Góry Świętokrzyskie] located between Kielce and Opatów is wild and uninhabited [...]. During the war it was an AK stronghold, and it is still the headquarters of 'Szary', one of the most famous partisans in Poland. According to the former UB deputy commander in Kielce, the forces under 'Szary' number seven to eight thousand people" (See P. Dybicz, 'Bezsensowna walka "wyklętych"', *Przegląd* 2017, no. 10, p. 11).

¹¹³ See A. Skibińska, J. Tokarska-Bakir, "Barabas" i Żydzi. Z historii oddziału AK "Wybraniec", *Zagłada Żydów. Studia i Materiały* 2011, no. 7, pp. 63–122; cf. T. Domański, 'Z historii oddziału "Wybranieckich", czyli o wiarygodności materiałów śledczych i operacyjnych UB (cz. 1)', *Arcana* 2012, no. 106–107, pp. 253–279; *idem*, 'Z historii oddziału "Wybranieckich", czyli o wiarygodności materiałów śledczych i operacyjnych UB (cz. 2)', *Arcana* 2012, no. 109, pp. 120–144.

The author of *Pod klątwą* referred in several places to the problems concerning the nature of the sources, including the following passages:

“A huge part of the materials on which I am basing [my work] was produced by the institutions of Communist power: the MO, Departments of Security, the prosecutor’s office and the courts. They must be treated with caution, but no more than any other source. I disagree with those who say these documents are unbelievable. [...] Nevertheless, wherever possible, I confront them with other points of view, especially with the view of the Underground, as recorded in the original archives of the *Zrzeszenie ‘Wolność i Niezawisłość’* [Freedom and Independence Association]. Even more important is the perspective of the Jewish victims and the witnesses of the pogrom, whose voices have so far mostly been overlooked. Michał Chęciński’s home archive, made available to me by his family, also became an important collection on which I relied. Every piece of information I use, every detail about the topography and atmosphere of the Kielce region, is based on historical sources: interrogation minutes, government reports of various levels, autopsies’ reports, press and photographic reports, letters and memoirs.”¹¹⁴

And then:

“From Kurosawa’s film comes the name of the ‘Rashōmon effect’, which describes a situation in which we are dealing with irrevocably contradictory relations about an event or sequence of events. It fits perfectly with the reconstruction of the Kielce pogrom, which, despite the abundance of sources, is still unattainable. Representatives of all uniformed services present on Planty Street – militiamen, UB functionaries, the KBW and the 2nd Warsaw Infantry Division of the Polish Army soldiers – only presented perspectives favourable to themselves. Their testimonies contradict each other and cannot be integrated into a coherent narrative. Although the frame has been drawn, when we go deeper, it somehow blurs.”¹¹⁵

Further,

“This abundance of material does not solve the essential problems. There are so many contradictory descriptions of the pogrom, and in parallel so much key evidence is absent, that every attempt to reconstruct the events on Planty Street is burdened not only with a risk, but even a guarantee of error. In order to solve this

¹¹⁴ J. Tokarska-Bakir, *Pod klątwą...*, vol. 1, p. 13.

¹¹⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 186.

problem, and not to fall into a nihilism that equates all interpretations, I will adopt the following method: firstly, not so much proving, but rather questioning the most dubious explanations; secondly, pointing out circumstantial evidence concerning the overlooked sources and testing their credibility on the basis of existing ones.”¹¹⁶

It would seem that such an assessment of the source background would make it necessary for the author to familiarise herself with at least the basic literature dealing with the aforementioned issues in accordance with the following principle: “In classical historiographic research strategy, proving the credibility and/or reliability of testimonies is a *sine qua non* condition for the authenticity of the source data obtained. It is thus according to credibility and/or authenticity that the ‘aspirations are considered’ to be a legitimate historical source.”¹¹⁷

In her research, Tokarska-Bakir refers to the method of triangulation (a well-established theory), which makes it possible “to use different theoretical approaches to interpret the same set of data.”¹¹⁸ This method should secure the reliability of research, the correctness of the conclusions drawn and the verification of the data collected. Critical analysis of the sources plays a significant role in the process of collecting empirical data and applying the case study method.¹¹⁹

Assuming (optimistically) that Tokarska-Bakir made the appropriate critique of the sources and found a number of facts which were then used to present the events involved, let us look at another matter described in her book.

During the raid on the Kielce prison in the night of 4/5 August 1945 by the concentrated post-AK units under the command of Captain Antoni Heda ‘Szary’

¹¹⁶ *Ibidem*.

¹¹⁷ W. Wrzosek, ‘Źródło historyczne jako alibi realistyczne historyka’ in *Historyk wobec źródeł. Historiografia klasyczna i nowe propozycje metodologiczne*, ed. J. Kolbuszewska, R. Stobiecki, Łódź 2010, p. 31.

¹¹⁸ J. Tokarska-Bakir, *Pod klątwą...*, vol. 1, pp. 193, 671 (footnote 1114). According to Krzysztof Konecki, the methodology of well-established theory “consists of building a theory (of medium range) based on systematically collected empirical data. [...] This theory is therefore derived here from empirical data analysis. Thus, theoretical proposals are not built using a logical deduction method based on previously accepted axioms or assumptions [...]. The theory emerges here in the course of systematic research [...], from empirical data that directly relate to the observed part of social reality. Hypotheses, concepts and features of concepts are built during empirical research, and are modified and verified during the research. Thus, building a theory is also closely linked to the long-term research process itself” (See *Studia z metodologii badań jakościowych. Teoria ugruntowana*, Warsaw 2000, p. 26).

¹¹⁹ See E. Domańska, *Historia egzystencjalna. Krytyczne studium narratywizmu i humanistyki zaangażowanej*, Warsaw 2012, pp. 86–94, 171–177.

a leaflet was also distributed in the town: “On the day the Kielce prison was raided by a partisan group under the command of Heda-‘Szary’ leaflets appeared in Kielce: ‘Poles! The current government is not the government of national unification [...]. At the helm of power are the Jews and minions of Russia, commanded by Stalin in everything.’ And on the back: ‘Do you know who judges Poles? – Jews. Do you know who murders Poles? – Jews. Do you know who rules Poland? – Jews and Bolsheviks. Do you know who’s the Security commander in Kielce? – Major Jew.’”¹²⁰ In a footnote (p. 647, footnote 816), there is a reference to a published interview with Stanisław Meducki, a researcher into the Kielce pogrom. For comparison, it is worth quoting the extract of his statement which Tokarska-Bakir refers to: “On 4 August 1945, an underground military unit raided a prison in Kielce, and leaflets were scattered around the city, in which one could read that ‘the current government is not the government of national unification [...]. At the helm of power are the Jews and minions of Russia, commanded by Stalin in everything.’ I had this leaflet in my hand. There was a handwritten note on the back: ‘Do you know who judges Poles? – Jews. Do you know who rules Poland? – Jews and Bolsheviks. Do you know who’s the Security commander in Kielce? – Major Jew.’”¹²¹ Meducki referred to a copy of the leaflet,¹²² on the reverse side of which was a handwritten note. The content of the interview does not indicate where this copy might be found. Combining the two independent texts (of different authorships) that appeared on the leaflet, and quoting them as a uniform message produced by the Underground, as Tokarska-Bakir did, is unacceptable. It should also be noted that the leaflet was edited and printed by resistance members from the Radom region and brought from there for the Kielce prison raid.¹²³ The problem presented here can be summarised with the statement that each theory has its own selected ‘facts.’ Is it just a result of a lack of experience in historical research methodology, or is the problem deeper? It is possible to understand the need to demonstrate workshop inventiveness when interpreting the source material, but the above experiment is only an example of simplification and error.

¹²⁰ J. Tokarska-Bakir, *Pod klątwą...*, vol. 1, pp. 156–157.

¹²¹ *Zabić Żyda! Kulisy i tajemnice pogromu kieleckiego 1946*, ed. T. Wiącek, Cracow 1992, p. 144.

¹²² Longer extracts from the leaflet entitled ‘Polacy’ dated 5 August 1945, signed ‘D.O.W.S.’ (an acronym of *Dowódca Oddziału Wolności Sokół* [Commander of the Sokół Liberation Unit], Lieutenant Stefan Bembiński a.k.a. ‘Harnaś’). See R. Śmietanka-Kruszelnicki, *Podziemie poakowskie na Kielecczyźnie ...*, p. 110.

¹²³ *Ibidem*, pp. 109–112.

The specificity of a part of the source material (investigative and court records,¹²⁴ reports of the security apparatus) often confronts the historian with the problem of the credibility of the authors of the documents and of the data present in the documents analysed.¹²⁵ The problem – truth or fiction (which often appears when analysing documents related to events in Kielce) – is difficult to solve.¹²⁶ To a lesser extent, this problem is also present in the evaluation of the ‘WiN materials’ kept in the Archiwum Narodowe in Cracow which Tokarska-Bakir used. Many documents from the ‘WiN collection’ have already been analysed and used in publications.¹²⁷

¹²⁴ R. Śmietanka-Kruszelnicki, ‘Protokół przesłuchania jako źródło historyczne’ in *Wokół teczek bezpieki. Zagadnienia metodologiczno-źródłoznawcze*, ed. F. Musiał, Cracow 2015, pp. 365–375; see also J. Tokarska-Bakir, ‘Ganz Andere? Żyd jako czarownica i czarownica jako Żyd w polskich i obcych źródłach etnograficznych, czyli jak czytać protokoły przesłuchań’ in *Inny, inna, inne. O inności w kulturze*, ed. M. Janion, C. Snochowska-Gonzales, K. Szczuka, Warsaw 2004, p. 130: “The documents at our disposal, including in particular the interrogation minutes, can only be a source of knowledge about the torturers, rarely about the victims of torture. [...] Orwell writes about the feelings of the interrogated in the following way: ‘He became simply a mouth that uttered, a hand that signed whatever was demanded of him.’ [...] The naive reasoning of a serious historian helps to understand why, during the Stalinist political trials, the public so easily believed in the absurd self-incriminations forced by torture.”

¹²⁵ Some of the documents produced during the investigations (especially those conducted in July and August 1946) should be subject to specialist examination (see M. Czubalski, A. Krukowski, ‘Kryminalistyczne metody badania źródeł historycznych XIX i XX wieku’, *Studia Źródłoznawcze* 1972, vol. 17, pp. 9–11, 32).

¹²⁶ See *inter alia* W. Frazik, F. Musiał, ‘Akta agenturalne w pracy historyka’, *Zeszyty Historyczne WiN-u* 2003, no. 19–20, pp. 315–339; A. Paczkowski, ‘Archiwa aparatu bezpieczeństwa PRL jako źródło: co już zrobiono, co można zbadać’, *Pamięć i Sprawiedliwość* 2003, no. 1, pp. 9–12; A. Dudek, Z. Zblewski, ‘Materiały operacyjne służb specjalnych PRL jako źródło historyczne. Uwagi metodologiczne’, *Aparat Represji w Polsce Ludowej 1944–1989* 2004, no. 1, pp. 26–32; W. Suleja, ‘Żłudny czar teczek, czyli “teczkowe grzechy główne”’ in *Od Piłsudskiego do Wałęsy. Studia z dziejów Polski w XX wieku*, ed. K. Persak et al., Warsaw 2008, pp. 512–516; Z. Zblewski, ‘Kilka uwag o wykorzystaniu zbiorów archiwalnych IPN w badaniach nad najnowszymi dziejami Polski’, *Kwartalnik Historyczny* 2010, no. 2, pp. 61–74, and ‘Dyskusja wokół tekstu Z. Zblewskiego: od Redakcji, Błażej Brzostek, Antoni Dudek, Jerzy Gaul, Dariusz Jarosz, Tadeusz Paweł Rutkowski, Stanisław Wiech, Wiktoria Śliwowska, Jerzy Eisler’, *ibidem*, pp. 75–100; K. Brzechczyn, ‘Problem wiarygodności teczek i opartej na nich narracji historycznej. Kilka uwag metodologicznych’, *Pamięć i Sprawiedliwość* 2012, no. 2, pp. 53–77.

¹²⁷ W. Frazik, ‘Siatki wywiadowcze Obszaru Południowego Zrzeszenia “Wolność i Niezawisłość”’ in *W sieci. Powojenne polskie siatki wywiadowcze (AK-NIE-DSZ-WiN, PSZ) w latach 1944–1955*, ed. M. Bechta, Warsaw 2016, pp. 296–297, 321, 327–329, 332–333; see p. 296: “It is very difficult – in the absence of the possibility to verify many details – to assess the reliability and usefulness of these reports from the perspective of several decades. Certainly, their level was not equal; apart from true and valuable reports, there were also those that we can unambiguously dismiss. Attempts to verify the data collected were made at every level of the organisation, but it was different when this data originated from intercepted documents, and different when it came from rumours or overheard opinions. The problem of reliability and quality of the reports has been a recurring theme in the organisational correspondence throughout the existence of WiN.” See also Z. Zblewski, *Okręg Krakowski Zrzeszenia “Wolność i Niezawisłość” 1945–1948. Geneza, struktury, działalność*, Cracow 2005, pp. 201–203, 280–290, 297–298, 306.

To illustrate the problem of the lack of reliability of some of the source data found in the Underground documentation, it is worth presenting an extract from one of the intelligence reports. The (central-level) WiN report of 1 July 1946, sent to London, reads as follows: “On 1 June, the ammunition depots in Kielce were attacked. The fight lasted about an hour. The attack was repelled. The attacking patrols reached the city centre. [...]”¹²⁸ If the above excerpt from the WiN intelligence network’s report was to be treated uncritically, one might think that the Underground structures near Kielce had a serious strike force at their disposal and were capable of carrying out an attack on the provincial capital. But this image of the Underground has little to do with reality.¹²⁹

Referring to various threads from the history of armed resistance in Kielce at that time, Tokarska-Bakir is trying hard to present the Underground in Kielce and its support structures, which still existed in mid-1946, as a significant opponent of Communist power. There are some examples of this: “[...] WiN’s ‘mailbox’ [dead-letter box] was supposedly placed at a distance of a few [house] numbers from the MO post on Sienkiewicza st., and Żbik-Kołaciński’s contact box right by the post itself. By the way, [that was] the same [post] where Walenty Błaszczyk would report the disappearance of Henio, and from where a militia patrol would be sent to the Jewish Committee on Planty.”¹³⁰ However, there is no clear information in the text that the security apparatus had long since liquidated the organisations (in 1945 and early 1946) that used these ‘boxes.’ They had been ‘burned’ [compromised] and were under surveillance.¹³¹ Continuing the theme of contacts between the MO and the Underground, at the beginning of the next paragraph she quotes an extract from Order No. 4 of *Konspiracyjne Wojsko Polskie* (the Underground Polish Army, KWP): “The Citizens’ Militia, although not devoid of guilt, shows a great

¹²⁸ ‘Sprawozdanie “Stoczni” z 1 VII 1946 r.’ in *Zrzeszenie Wolność i Niezawisłość w dokumentach*, vol. 1, ed. J. Huchłowa et al., Wrocław 1997, pp. 640–641.

¹²⁹ See R. Śmietanka-Kruszelnicki, ‘Pogrom w Kielcach – podziemie w roli oskarżonego...’, pp. 33–36.

¹³⁰ J. Tokarska-Bakir, *Pod klątwą...*, vol. 1, p. 136.

¹³¹ In the first half of 1945, as a result of the arrests of several people who had participated in forming the new structures of the post-AK Underground (at the district level), many dead-letter boxes and contact points in the centre of Kielce (on Leśna, Mała, Prosta, Sienkiewicza and Żelazna streets) were compromised. It is clear that this area had been under surveillance and operative control of the security apparatus (See R. Śmietanka-Kruszelnicki, ‘Nieznane źródła, nieznane fakty, nieznani ludzie. Świadczenie czasu wojny i Zagłady’, *Tygodnik eM* [Supplement: ‘Dodatek historyczny IPN’, no. 2], 17 June 2018, p. 3).

deal of loyalty to truly Polish elements, and sometimes secretly rebels against the methods of red terror.” Then she refers to the events in Kielce, stating: “An example of ‘loyalty to truly Polish elements’ was given by the Kielce MO in December 1945, when the NSZ group [...] was arrested [...]. Just before Christmas the whole NSZ group escaped from custody [...]”¹³² In another part of the book we come across the following description: “Order No. 4 of the command of the General Staff of *Konspiracyjne Wojsko Polskie*, a large unit operating in the Kielce region under the command of the aforementioned Warszyc.”¹³³ Such deliberations around the activity of the KWP, an organisation of the Independence Underground directed by Captain Stanisław Sojczyński a.k.a. ‘Warszyc’ until the end of June 1946, were artificially ‘pasted’ into the image of the Underground operating in the Kielce region. Considering the findings of the literature in the field, it is hard not to notice that this Underground organisation (which was mainly well-developed in the Łódź voivodship) had limited influence in the area between the Vistula and the Pilica, and never had a “large unit” operating in the Kielce voivodship (except for the Częstochowa district) under the “command of Warszyc.”¹³⁴ It is worth adding that the KWP’s Order No. 4 is dated 16 January 1946¹³⁵, and quoting it in the context of the events in Kielce that occurred in December 1945 is not the best idea. It does not seem that the threads presented above (with a visibly instrumental treatment of the source material) document the ‘ideological proximity’ of the militiamen and the Underground on the eve of the pogrom.

The author’s reflections on the ‘train actions’ carried out by the Underground in the Kielce region in 1946 raise serious objections. The sentence, “We know about the reports of the ‘train action’ carried out by WiN units in the vicinity of Kielce and Radom, especially on the Dęblin-Radom route; as late as 5 July 1946, it also covered Pionki station,”¹³⁶ is a mixture of true and false data. No WiN units carried out train actions in 1946 near Kielce. However, in the Radom region, which was covered by the activities of the Armed Underground Union (*Związek Zbrojnej Konspiracji*,

¹³² J. Tokarska-Bakir, *Pod kłatwą...*, vol. 1, p. 136.

¹³³ *Ibidem*, p. 182.

¹³⁴ *Atlas polskiego podziemia niepodległościowego...*, pp. 284–285, 288, 386–387, 392–393, 400, 402–403, 409.

¹³⁵ T. Toborek, *Stanisław Sojczyński i Konspiracyjne Wojsko Polskie*, Łódź 2007, p. 66.

¹³⁶ J. Tokarska-Bakir, *Pod kłatwą...*, vol. 1, p. 207.

ZZK; WiN Inspectorate under the command of Lieutenant Franciszek Jaskulski ‘Zagończyk’), there were several such actions on the Radom – Pionki – Dęblin route. The last one on 5 July 1946, or more precisely on the night of 4/5 July, just after midnight, ended with a clash between the ZZK unit and soldiers of the 98th NKVD regiment.¹³⁷ When discussing the activity of the ZZK armed units, we should mention another event in which soldiers of that formation participated, which Tokarska-Bakir describes in a manner contrary to the truth. In the book we read: “On 15 May 1946, in Zwoleń, as a result of the clash between partisans and Soviets, the losses amounted to 29 barns, 22 cowsheds, 17 houses, 24 pigs, nine sheep, 3 heifers; also during this shooting two juvenile boys were killed and five people were wounded.”¹³⁸ The ‘Battle of Zwoleń’, the event we are discussing, took place on 15 June 1946 (this date is included in footnote 928 on page 656 of the book; partisan units were also mentioned there), and several dozen Soviet soldiers were killed and wounded. However, a large part of the losses resulted not so much from the clash as from the Red Army deliberately burning the local civilians’ buildings.¹³⁹

The use of the text of the leaflet, which Tokarska-Bakir considered to have been produced by the authentic structures of the Independence Underground,¹⁴⁰ without the reservations that exist in the literature as to its authorship and the credibility of the leaflet’s contents,¹⁴¹ is unacceptable, and is due to her poor knowledge of the Underground’s operation in Kielce in 1946. Moreover, in an earlier publication, *Okrzyki pogromowe* (2012), Tokarska-Bakir quoted a fragment of this print as “a leaflet from the Underground group ‘Wolność i Niezawisłość’ published after the Kielce pogrom.”¹⁴² The description of the document as “a threat” targeted at the deputy voivode Henryk Urbanowicz shows similar signs of carelessness in drawing

¹³⁷ R. Śmietanka-Kruszelnicki, *Podziemie poakowskie na Kielecczyźnie...*, pp. 235–236.

¹³⁸ J. Tokarska-Bakir, *Pod klątwą...*, vol. 1, p. 172.

¹³⁹ R. Śmietanka-Kruszelnicki, *Komendant “Zagończyk”. Z dziejów zbrojnego podziemia antykomunistycznego*, Warsaw 2000, pp. 68–72.

¹⁴⁰ J. Tokarska-Bakir, *Pod klątwą...*, vol. 1, p. 236–237.

¹⁴¹ R. Śmietanka-Kruszelnicki, *Podziemie poakowskie na Kielecczyźnie...*, pp. 260–261, 274; *idem*, ‘Podziemie antykomunistyczne wobec Żydów po 1945 r. – wstęp do problematyki (na przykładzie województwa kieleckiego)’ in *Z przeszłości Żydów polskich. Polityka, gospodarka, kultura, społeczeństwo*, ed. J. Wijaczka, G. Miernik, Cracow 2005, pp. 268–269; R. Śmietanka-Kruszelnicki, ‘Pogrom w Kielcach – podziemie w roli oskarżonego...’, pp. 72–73.

¹⁴² J. Tokarska-Bakir, *Okrzyki pogromowe...*, p. 168.

upon unresearched sources allegedly originating from the authentic Underground structures. The final section should raise doubts: “We, the AK organisation, will blow up everything. [Signature:] General of the AK. [note in the bottom:] Jewish lackeys, Jewish security.”¹⁴³ Another issue is that such false testimonies can be valuable sources in the context of researching the reasons why such documents were produced.

Continuing the problem of alleged propaganda activities by Underground organisations with anti-Semitic overtones, Tokarska-Bakir drew attention to “racist caricatures [...] from the magazine *Iskra*, published by the post-WiN organisation *Młoda Polska*, from the autumn of 1946.” Next, she quotes the texts appended to these caricatures,¹⁴⁴ referring to my article in the first part of her reasoning.¹⁴⁵ Considering the texts from the cartoons, however, she refers to another publication.¹⁴⁶ The problem is that the references to *Młoda Polska* concern two different Underground organisations: the first one under this name functioned in Radom from autumn 1946 to August 1947, and the second – responsible for the caricatures – operated in the Łódź voivodeship in 1950.¹⁴⁷ They cannot be connected in any way.

A similar problem, due to the author’s frequent use of longer quotations that play an important role in ‘building the atmosphere’ of the narrative, occurs when drawing upon accounts and memories of the events of 4 July 1946. Tokarska-Bakir does not acquaint the readers with the various evaluations of how useful such sources are in academic research. Oral history,¹⁴⁸ understood as the transmission of information by recording personal experiences and opinions in various ways, is an important form of studying the past. The conviction that memory recorded in the form of memoirs, accounts or various types of recordings can be as valuable

¹⁴³ Eadem, *Pod klątwą...*, vol. 1, p. 377; See A. Rubin, *Facts and Fictions about the Rescue of the Polish Jewry during the Holocaust*, vol. 6: *The Kielce Pogrom. Spontaneity, Provocation or Part of a Country-Wide Scheme?*, Tel Aviv 2004, p. 314.

¹⁴⁴ J. Tokarska-Bakir, *Pod klątwą...*, vol. 1, p. 130.

¹⁴⁵ R. Śmietanka-Kruszelnicki, ‘Zrzeszenie “Wolność i Niezawisłość” na Kielecczyźnie 1945–1948’, *Zeszyty Historyczne WiN-u* 2003, no. 19–20, p. 179; See J. Tokarska-Bakir, *Pod klątwą...*, vol. 1, p. 631, footnote 621. The author gives an incorrect page number in my article.

¹⁴⁶ *Atlas polskiego podziemia niepodległościowego...*, p. 415.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibidem*, pp. 412, 415.

¹⁴⁸ M. Kurkowska, ‘Archiwa pamięci – oral history’, *Historyka* 1998, vol. 28, pp. 67–76.

a source of cognition¹⁴⁹ as archival materials has led to methodological and source-based reflection on how to use such sources in academic research. A number of reservations and comments have been expressed to this end.¹⁵⁰ The fundamental question was also whether *oral history* can be used to explore the past itself, and not the memory of participants and witnesses of past events. Human memory is selective and fragmented, and often also unreliable (the authors of these accounts have various possibilities of remembering the events, and some events and people are forgotten in the course of the natural process of oblivion). Such accounts also contain elements of interpretation (as a result of opinions, later experiences, or emotions evoked when the events are recalled).¹⁵¹

The comments and reservations made by historians about the reliability of 'individual memory' are motivated by research practice. The perceptible subjectivity of statements and the distortion of facts often result from reasons other than the passage of time. Judging events from the present perspective often distorts the message. The need to separate what has actually been remembered from the knowledge acquired later, such as the overlapping of memories with information taken from available studies, may sometimes be problematic for the authors of the accounts. Being part of a group of people with similar experiences, circulating 'environmental' or 'ambient' stories, can lead to the creation and recording in the memory of messages heard, the acceptance of a certain version of the causes, and the course of specific events.¹⁵²

¹⁴⁹ J. Topolski, *Jak się pisze i rozumie historię. Tajemnice narracji historycznej*, Poznań 2008, p. 281.

¹⁵⁰ A. Paczkowski, 'O osobliwościach badań nad historią najnowszą' in *Historyk wobec źródeł...*, p. 165: "Despite its name, 'oral history' is as often – or perhaps even more often – a research procedure in sociology, especially in anthropology or social psychology, and not in history as a science aiming to know and understand the past." See also pp. 168–169; K. Pomian, *Historia...*, pp. 145–148; J. Serczyk, 'Kilka niezobowiązujących spostrzeżeń o metodologii historii najnowszej', *Przegląd Humanistyczny* 1995, no. 5, p. 15: "One can [...] say in particular that, of all the possible sources that a historian of recent history has to deal with, organised accounts are among those with the lowest degree of credibility (although they are at the same time authentic in most cases). Their informative value is roughly the same as the analogous value of speeches of prosecution and defence statements in court proceedings."

¹⁵¹ M. Dymkowski, *Wprowadzenie do psychologii historycznej*, Gdańsk 2003, pp. 13–16, 69–74, 99–101, 103, 107, 129, 142.

¹⁵² K. Polasik-Wrzosek, 'Pośredniość i bezpośredniość poznania jako dylemat poznania historycznego w świetle refleksji antropologicznej' in *Antropologizowanie humanistyki. Zjawisko, proces, perspektywy*, ed. J. Kowalewski, W. Piasek, Olsztyn 2009, pp. 209–221.

The following passages from the accounts and memoirs from the first volume of *Pod kłatwą* may serve as an appropriate exemplification of the above considerations: “I couldn’t see these people,” recalls Herman, “but I heard them gritting their teeth and saying that the Jews had to be finished off without any exceptions, to finish what Hitler started”¹⁵³; “I went out onto Sienkiewicz [Street] and asked what it was about. People said: ‘We have to beat the Jews, they murder our children, they killed one or two.’ After an hour, they were talking about ten. In this crowd people were walking with poles, with chains, with canes, with stones in hands, the peasants and merchants were running, I saw some scouts with canes. But I didn’t see any authorities, either state or municipal. I went on with this crowd, I felt safe, because in Kielce they did not know me as a Jew. [...] I entered this crowd and went with it onto Planty, where several of my friends lived. It was about 10 a.m. [...] There were shopkeepers, housewives, firefighters, labourers, even priests in cassocks, the Militia were hanging around with a smile on their faces, as if encouraging this crowd. There were also *protégés* of the scout movement in their scout uniforms, with canes in their hands, in Polish it’s called *ciupaga*”¹⁵⁴; “I was coming back, and on the way I saw that the whole town had come to this place, under this house. I saw that the entire town was already standing, the works had stopped, people were walking, young, old, children, all with poles pulled out of fences, with batons, with iron bars pulled out of the ground, all flew in this direction. The entire town went to beat the Jews”¹⁵⁵; “There were plenty of people. They closed the factories and everyone went to murder Jews. [...] I can’t imagine the Russians were guilty. The Russians freed me from the concentration camp”¹⁵⁶; “We came to Kielce, and there the entire streets were flooded with blood. I couldn’t imagine it could happen at all. I was completely stunned by that view. From where did so much blood come? Whose blood is that? I couldn’t understand yet that it was just Jewish blood. They told me: ‘Lady, the crowds, all the factories have left.’ Well, it’s hard to imagine. Well, the whole nation beat them, the workers, not the workers, whoever could, beat them. Whoever could. Everybody, everybody. And mostly over the head. [...]

¹⁵³ J. Tokarska-Bakir, *Pod kłatwą...*, vol. 1, p. 23.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibidem*, pp. 24–25.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 27.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibidem*, pp. 55–56.

At the funeral, there the whole of Kielce were present, together with those workers who took part in the pogrom. The same, all the factories”¹⁵⁷; “A great crowd gathered on Planty square, and so my day began then. [...] Then I remember that some Militia units came to this square and ordered them to leave, but the people did not want to. They were shooting, I remember, in the air, but the crowd didn’t disperse. It took an hour or more. I remember that some military – Polish or from the AK, I don’t know – went into that kibbutz, up the stairs, then into the kibbutz, and they started shooting.”¹⁵⁸ The exaggeration of the number of people taking part in the pogrom, which can be understood in the accounts of people who felt themselves to be in danger of death (psychological aspects), is unacceptable in scholarly research. Such exaggeration is unfounded, and leads to misconceptions about the events of 4 July 1946. The concentration of subjective and traumatic descriptions of the experiences of particular people may result in too much arbitrariness in the interpretation of facts.

In order to avoid overestimating the value of a given account for academic research, it is necessary first of all to assess the state of the author’s information, their source information,¹⁵⁹ their role in the events described (the problem of personal involvement), and their personality and their submission to the influence of other people, groups or environments¹⁶⁰ (both at the time of the events and during the submission of the account).¹⁶¹ Each account has different ‘layers of

¹⁵⁷ *Ibidem*, pp. 70–71.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 41.

¹⁵⁹ See R. Polczyk, *Mechanizmy efektu dezinformacji w kontekście zeznań świadka naoczego*, Cracow 2007: “The effect of disinformation is a phenomenon consisting of a situation when to the reports from memory of an event information is included which the person reporting did not acquire as a result of becoming acquainted with the event, but which was obtained from sources other than the event itself” (p. 17); also, “parallel trace theory” (p. 90–92), “fuzzy trace theory” (p. 96–99).

¹⁶⁰ M. Saryusz-Wolska, ‘Posłowie. Teorie pamięci Aleidy Assmann’ in A. Assmann, *Między historią a pamięcią. Antologia*, ed. M. Saryusz-Wolska, Warsaw 2013, p. 316.

¹⁶¹ M. Kurkowska-Budzan, ‘Ile cukru w cukrze, czyli ile historii w historii mówionej’ in *Klio na wolności. Historiografia dziejów najnowszych w Polsce po 1989 r.*, ed. M. Kruszyński, S. Łukasiewicz, M. Mazur, S. Poleszak, P. Witek, Lublin 2016, pp. 123–124: “The interlocutors sharing their memories and also their opinions do not report directly on events, do not reproduce them, but express through them: what they now think that they know; what they now think that they knew then; what they now think that they experienced then. [...] A man who talks about his experience is by no means an ‘informer’ or ‘witness to history’ – he is its main character and narrator” (all pp. 117–125). See also P. Ricoeur, *Pamięć, historia, zapomnienie*, trans. J. Margański, Cracow 2012, pp. 73–75, 216–219, 229, 450–451, 586–595, 658–660.

information, and so the researcher's work does not end with the use of directly spoken information, but requires the interpretation of what has not been spoken about and remains hidden.¹⁶²

The passages of the accounts quoted above (the quotations are much longer in the book) create a picture of a pogrom that has little in common with an attempt to describe events objectively. The narrative thus constructed more resembles the poetics of historical reportage or subjective social reportage, rather than the neutral language of an academic study. Instead of the distanced text of a scholar, we are dealing with an emotionally saturated documentary and historical story, where the aesthetic qualities of the narrative and its dramatisation play significant roles. The moving statements of the victims undoubtedly have an impact on the readers and their evaluation of selected characters and events.¹⁶³ Is this not, then, part of a kind of game of associations with an unprepared recipient? The lack of commentary on the passages quoted by the author places the odium for the crime of 4 July 1946 on the society of Kielce as a whole, and moralising displaces reliable analysis. The adoption of such a narrative strategy also creates hypothetical entities and relationships, swings between facts and 'literary hypotheses', and promotes the creation of events whose image can be easily manipulated or distorted. This can be avoided by passing from superficial semantics to the 'deeper meaning' of individual extracts from the accounts, because Tokarska-Bakir knows perfectly well that the author of the source conveys "to a historian the information about the past, as he understood this past and wanted to convey it." Thus, a historian obtains

¹⁶² On the use of accounts in historical research See K. Kersten, 'Relacje jako typ źródła historycznego', *Kultura i Społeczeństwo* 1970, vol. 14, no. 3, p. 129–137; J. Eisler, 'Refleksje nad wykorzystaniem relacji jako źródła w badaniu historii PRL (rozmowy z dysydentami i prominentami)', *Polska 1944/45–1989. Studia i Materiały* 2004, vol. 6: *Warsztat badawczy*, pp. 49–64; I. Lewandowska, 'Wywiad jako technika zdobywania informacji źródłowych w badaniu historii najnowszej', *Echa Przeszłości* 2004, vol. 5, pp. 279–299; See also K. Kosiński, 'Pamiętnikarstwo konkursowe jako źródło historyczne', *Polska 1944/45–1989. Studia i Materiały* 2004, vol. 6: *Warsztat badawczy*, p. 138; 'Wybrane problemy metodologii i metodyki badań nad najnowszą historią Polski. Dyskusja', *Pamięć i Sprawiedliwość* 2012, no. 2, pp. 17–19; A. Stolarz, *Historia mówiona w warsztacie historyka mentalności*, *ibidem*, pp. 103–114; 'Dyskusja wokół tekstu', *Kwartalnik Historyczny* 2010, no. 2, pp. 77, 79–80. The discussion of the text by Zdzisław Zblewski: 'Kilka uwag o wykorzystaniu zbiorów archiwalnych IPN w badaniach nad najnowszymi dziejami Polski' (*Kwartalnik Historyczny* 2010, no. 2, pp. 61–74).

¹⁶³ *Reportaż bez granic? Teksty, warsztat reportera, zjawiska medialne*, ed. I. Borkowski, Wrocław 2010, pp. 18, 48–49.

“the information burdened with the informant’s interpretation of the information, dependent on the knowledge and value system represented by the informant.”¹⁶⁴ It is difficult to know how to distinguish what is important for the construction of the image of events from the memory¹⁶⁵ of Jews and Poles, and from the sensitivity that has grown up around these events. It seems that only a neutral analysis of the source messages will allow the truth to be separated from appearances, rumours from reliable information, and mystification from unconscious disinformation.

However, a reader who is impressed by the account of a huge crowd equipped with various “tools of crime”,¹⁶⁶ should be able to directly juxtapose such an image with other sources. These may include the ‘Protocol of Inspection’ of the crime scene of 6 July 1946. Lieutenant Andrzej Wilkoszyński, a deputy prosecutor from the Military District Prosecutor’s Office (*Wojskowa Prokuratura Rejonowa*, WPR) in Kielce, considered “the objects found [...] in house no. 7a on Planty Street” as “material evidence.” Items considered “factual evidence” in this document included: “1) a radiator element, 2) a piece of iron, 3) 6 paving stones, 4) 2 bricks, and 5) 6 pieces of wooden stacks.”¹⁶⁷ This serves as a substitute for a juxtaposition of sources showing the reader the problem of subjectivity of statements and the distortion of the image of events.

In the context of the ‘material evidence’ from the crime scene, namely the “shell fired from the PPSH”¹⁶⁸, attention should be paid to the wording Tokarska-Bakir uses in the footnote referring to it: “Militiaman Rogoziński testified at his own trial on 24 July 1950 that apart from the handgun, the so-called ‘six’, he had such a PPSH with him [...]”¹⁶⁹ Was militiaman Jan Rogoziński the only one in possession of “such a PPSH”? Did the author check (and was it possible to check) how many officers and soldiers in and around the building had machine guns of this type? If this is not possible, no particular person should be suggested as responsible for the use of the weapon.

¹⁶⁴ J. Topolski, *Wprowadzenie do historii*, Poznań 1998, p. 44.

¹⁶⁵ A historian often finds himself in a situation of “rivalry between the desire for fidelity to memory and the search for truth in history” (P. Ricoeur, *Pamięć, historia, zapomnienie...*, p. 659).

¹⁶⁶ See J. Tokarska-Bakir, *Pod kłótwę...*, vol. 1, pp. 60–61.

¹⁶⁷ AIPN, 01453/4/1, ‘Protokół oględzin’ [Minutes of the Inspection], Kielce, 6 July 1946, p. 15; see also *ibidem*, p. 14, and AIPN, 01453/4/2, pp. 113, 353.

¹⁶⁸ J. Tokarska-Bakir, *Pod kłótwę...*, vol. 1, p. 61.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 603, footnote 167.

Coming back to the issue of the crowd participating in the pogrom, it would be worth, in the context of the fragments of the accounts quoted above, signalling the issue – not very precisely speaking – of the ‘density’ of the attacking crowd. The inspiration for such deliberations was the incident when Sylwester and Zofia (*née* Zylbersztajn) Klimczak (“in UB uniforms”) took five Jews out of the building and rescued them. After leaving the building, the Jews were supposed to have been driven away with their defenders.¹⁷⁰ Referring to the accounts and other sources that describe a huge crowd surrounding the HQ of the Jewish Committee, it is hard not to ask the question: how was it possible that two people (including a WUBP [Voivodship Department of Security] officer in Kielce) managed to save five people and drive away by car from the building? What does this event prove? Why were there no more similar cases of the besieged being rescued? Was the crowd on this side of the building less aggressive? If so, what was the reason?

Continuing the thread of the cognitive value of the account, we should take a closer look at those sections which offer interesting insights into the unusual behaviour and situations that took place during the pogrom with the participation of representatives of Soviet formations: “Our neighbours from across [the street] were Russians. Russian officers. That’s why all the Poles around us didn’t have the courage to enter. They were just screaming that we have to get these Jews and take revenge on them. I had an aunt on Planty Street who turned to one good Russian officer from there to save her. But he told her she has no right to leave today, she has to stay at home. There was always a guard downstairs in front of the Russians’ house. On that day, the gate was firmly closed, no guard was visible”¹⁷¹; “Szmulek, who survived the August pogrom in Cracow, does not want to wait for the development of events. [...] They decide to turn into the side streets. They are taking a roundabout route to Foch Street, to the Soviet Army Command. But the heavy iron gate, which is usually open wide and guarded by at least one guard, is now firmly closed. Even the guard is inside”¹⁷²; “I was saved by wearing a Russian army greatcoat. I walked like this because I had no other clothes and it saved my life. [...] At 5 p.m., I think maybe it was 5–6 p.m., the Russian army arrived.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 53.

¹⁷¹ *Ibidem*, p. 25.

¹⁷² *Ibidem*, p. 26.

They started saying through the loudspeakers that we, the Russian army, could leave. [...] We were a little afraid, because before that the Polish Army came and they slaughtered us all. Most died because of how the Polish Army behaved. [...] There was one major there [...]. I asked, why didn't you come earlier? He said he called Warsaw, whether to come or end it all. That's what they told him: 'No, don't get involved, don't show yourselves in the street.' No Russian soldier was allowed to go out, so it could not be said that the Russians did it.¹⁷³ These situations, very different from regular everyday occurrences, could only be interpreted after a meticulous analysis of the functioning of the Soviet repression forces stationed in Kielce and its immediate vicinity in 1945–1946, and their behaviour in contact with the local population.¹⁷⁴

The accounts of direct witnesses are important in order to obtain a multifaceted description of the events that took place in and around the building at 7/9 Planty Street. Among those Tokarska-Bakir quotes, two deserve special attention:

"Suddenly we see that the militiamen and officers of the Polish Army are entering the building. The militiamen, it seems, were downstairs, and upstairs there were only soldiers. When they came inside, they started to take our guns away, they ordered us to give the guns back. And when we gave up our guns, at that moment the shooting began, they started shooting at us. I don't know where those shots came from, whether downstairs or upstairs, I don't remember, I can't say now where the first shot came from. All I remember is that the soldiers disarmed us and started shooting at us right after the disarming. They started disarming from the second floor, then they went down. Those in military uniforms – only they had guns, ours were taken away from us. They started shooting and started screaming for us to go downstairs, those soldiers who came in, they were screaming to us to go downstairs. At 11.00, 11.30, something like that, they started pushing us out of the house. The guns were taken away from us, I don't know – at 10.00, 10.15. And as soon as they took the guns, the shooting started. We were terrified. [...] Because at the same time the soldiers started pushing us to the staircase and pushing us down to the exit. We resisted, we didn't want to move, they started pushing us with rifle butts. And they pushed

¹⁷³ *Ibidem*, pp. 43–44.

¹⁷⁴ See also *ibidem*, pp. 32, 310, 319–320, 330, 336, 711.

us out onto the square. And when we got there, on one side and on the other side of the exit, a crowd lined up and started beating us with stones, and they started beating us with clubs, sticks. The civilians stood in two lines with stones, with irons. Everyone was holding something in their hands, either iron, or bricks, or stones, or some stick. [...] Who pushed us out? There were only military men in the building. Military, I don't know where they were from, whether from the KBW or from elsewhere, but they were not militiamen. The militiamen were just downstairs, at the door, in front of the crowd. The militiamen were pushing us into the yard. There were no civilian people in the building. The civilians were standing right behind the door, and as soon as they opened the door and pushed us out, there was already a double line."¹⁷⁵

"I witnessed how they shot Kahane. They came in and shot him instantly. He was the head of the Jewish Committee. He called the authorities to report the danger, that they wanted to kill us, that they were doing a pogrom. They said they had already sent the army. [...] The pogrom started and Kahane kept calling the Militia to send help. The more they sent, the worse it got, the more they murdered. They sent the Militia – they couldn't help. They sent the army, so they went in and started to take watches and shoot. You can say that the army did this entire pogrom. And they broke into that door, and they immediately shot him, Kahane. I know that. They shot him and then one of these two – maybe there were three of them, I don't know exactly – one came to the window and shouted to the crowd standing in the yard: 'We've killed that president,' or how did he say it? – 'You can murder.' That's what he said through the window. People, a lot of people heard it, and the proper pogrom started."¹⁷⁶

The description and explanation of the role played by particular officers and groups of soldiers in the Kielce pogrom are among the key problems still awaiting an in-depth analysis.

A careful reading of the accounts published in Volume 2 of *Pod klątwa* (and used in the narrative of Volume 1) would make very clear the problem of the credibility of specific sources and the statements they quote. This is true regarding an account by Bruno Piątek, an employee of the Ludwików Steelworks, submitted to the Jewish

¹⁷⁵ *Ibidem*, pp. 29–31.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 43.

Historical Institute in 1984 and published several years later.¹⁷⁷ Here are some of the passages of the account that are important for the assessment of its credibility:

“I lived in Kielce at that time [...] and worked at Ludwików Steelworks. I rode [...] by motorcycle to the Kielce-Herbskie railway station, waiting for the announced express train from Wrocław. I was accompanied by my wife’s brother Franciszek Mróz and an engineer from the Ludwików Steelworks, Mr. Elżanowski. There were a lot of men on the platforms besides us. But I didn’t pay attention to them at first. As soon as the train entered the station, people started to be pushed out of the wagons, those opposing were pulled out by the men on the platform. [...] Right after people were pulled out, they started killing them. [...] During these events at the station, one could not expect help from anywhere. During the murder, I saw individuals in the uniforms of Polish military formations, who [...] were smashing the heads of the Jews on the ground with blocks. [...] I also heard single shots. I counted seven [corpses] at the station. [...] After some time I took my motorcycle and rode again to the Kielce-Herbskie railway station [...]. The station area was deserted. But in front of the station barrack I saw [...] another man’s corpse lying on the ground. It was probably a Jew who had initially managed to hide in the railway offices, but who was nevertheless [...] killed on leaving. [...] I gave a detailed description of my observations during the pogrom in writing to the Department of Security in Kielce. [...] I have never been summoned to any interrogations or confrontations. I have now written down again the description of the events to leave some trace of these nightmarish scenes. I am describing it for a reason, because no one else can do it, because all those present at the Kielce-Herbskie railway station at that time were actively involved in chasing the Jews as they were running chaotically away, or were blocking their way [...] being in danger, apart from the discussion with the surrounding crowd, constantly [checking] the area, looking for the railway guard or some other relief. But I didn’t see anybody, and no help came.”¹⁷⁸

Tokarska-Bakir described the events at the Kielce-Herbskie station¹⁷⁹ on the basis of the account by Bruno Piątek and the testimony of Czesław Nowak, then

¹⁷⁷ J. Tokarska-Bakir, *Pod klątwą...*, vol. 2, pp. 654, 657.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibidem*, pp. 654–657.

¹⁷⁹ J. Tokarska-Bakir, *Pod klątwą...*, vol. 1, pp. 231–232, 304.

14 years old.¹⁸⁰ It is very negligent that Tokarska-Bakir did not carry out a critical analysis of these sources before describing the reconstructed incidents at the station.¹⁸¹ The record in the minutes of Czesław Nowak's interrogations on 9 and 27 July 1946, mentioning a man who murdered two Jews and describing "two officers of the Soviet Army" forbidding people to leave the train,¹⁸² signalled the possibility of a different course of events than that described in Piątek's account. This problem was further exacerbated by the report contained in the interrogation of the witness Jan Kurczyński (an employee at the railway station in Kielce-Herbskie in July 1946) from 1996:

"I remember that on 4 July 1946, after the arrival of a passenger train from Częstochowa station at Kielce-Herbskie station around noon, I noticed unknown perpetrators – whether there were uniformed people among them, I don't know – chasing the passengers out of the carriages of that train, and shots were heard. Who fired, I don't know. There were a lot of people at the station. I watched the incident from the office window. I saw armed individuals among civilians. These individuals were shooting at people running away from the train. [...] a young man of Jewish origin came to the office, where, besides me, Mieczysław Winiarski and two railway guards were on duty [...] and asked us to save him. [...] through the window I also saw a group of people approaching the office. [...] A group of these people wanted to break down the office door. The railway security guards present in the office started screaming at them to leave the door that we were holding closed, because they would use weapons. Then the people pushing gradually started to leave. [...] I don't know what uniforms the soldiers who came to the office were wearing. Around 5 or 6 p.m. that day, a truck with a tarpaulin came to the Kielce-Herbskie station and I saw through the office window four or six dead men were being loaded onto the trunk of this truck. [...] I suppose they died during the shooting. I wasn't leaving the office. [...] The next day, when I arrived on night duty, I found out that Mieczysław Winiarski, a traffic orderly, had been arrested. [...] I know that Mieczysław Winiarski was

¹⁸⁰ *Eadem, Pod klątwą...*, vol. 2, pp. 652–653.

¹⁸¹ In writing about the methods she used in her research (e.g. triangulation), the author draws attention to the principle of *testis unus, testis nullus* (one witness, no witness). See J. Tokarska-Bakir, *Pod klątwą...*, vol. 1, p. 671, footnote 1114.

¹⁸² *Ibidem*.

detained for a very short time, because on the day after he was absent I was on duty with him. Mieczysław Winiarski told me that an individual who had been hiding in our office on 4 July 1946 came to the lock-up and declared that he [Winiarski] should be released because we had saved his life. [...] Moreover, he added that the shunters who were on duty at the Kielce-Herbskie station on 4 July 1946 told me that the Soviet army soldiers were shooting from the freight trains they were escorting at those fleeing the station.”¹⁸³

The rescued Jew was Józef Zilberman, who was interrogated on 8 July 1946 by Jan Grzęda, a WUBP officer, and testified as follows:

“On July 4, 1946, on the train from Wrocław, at Herby-Kielce station, the boys who were selling lemonade entered the wagon and started screaming that there were Jews here. There were four of us in that carriage; three of us jumped on the tracks and behind them a whole crowd of people who immediately started beating them, and I jumped on the platform and slowly went to the station and entered the office of the traffic manager. This manager asked me if I was Jewish, I admitted it, so he started to call Security right away, so that they would come, because three Jews had been killed and one was alive. He called Security several times. There was another one with a rifle, who also called Security, because there were a lot of people screaming around the building: ‘Why are you keeping him there? he has to be killed.’ After about two hours the Security arrived and took me and these three corpses away.”¹⁸⁴

Among the people who saved Zilberman from death was Mieczysław Winiarski, whose testimony, also dated 8 July 1946, is very interesting and brings much detailed and surprising information:

“On 4 July 1946, while on duty at the Herby-Kielce station as an internal traffic officer, I received passenger train No. 713 going from Wrocław to Lublin at 2.20 p.m. The supervising officer, Jerzy Skorus, an inhabitant of Kielce, got on the train at the platform, and I was in the office. At one point I was receiving a call

¹⁸³ *Ibidem*, pp. 650–652.

¹⁸⁴ AIPN Ki, collection ‘Wojewódzki Urząd Spraw Wewnętrznych Kielce’ (Voivodship Office of Internal Affairs in Kielce, hereafter WUSW Kielce), 013/4744, Minutes of the Interrogation of the Witness Józef Zilberman, Kielce, 8 July 1946, pp. 27–28. ‘Józef Zilberman, son of Szlama, born on 25 December 1923 in Siedliszcze nad Wieprzem (Chełm district), tailor, married, resident of Piotrolesie, 13 Zamkowa Street, Rychbach district’.

from the control room or from Piaski and at that time a man came to my office and I noticed a guard behind him. This guard kept people from pushing into the office. I asked this man: are you Jewish? And he said: Yes, I am a Jew. And he was telling the people who had followed him that he was not guilty. I immediately sent a telegram to the traffic dispatcher that there were three Jews killed and there was one Jewish man alive in my office, and I asked him to notify Security to take him away because he was being threatened by a crowd; and at the same time I asked what to do with the dead. After some time, I called the telephone exchange of Kielce station, asking for [a connection with] Security and they put me through, I talked, I don't know with who, probably the barrage company¹⁸⁵. After a while, I called the barrage group because people were threatening me because I had kept the Jew. At that time I received the transport of the Soviet Army, so I went to the transport commander for help, so the transport commander came to my office and was there all the time until this Jew was taken by Security, and then they also took these corpses. After a short time, after a car from the Security had taken these Jews, the living one and the dead, a barrage company also came. This Jew was in my office for about two hours. [...] I don't know who killed those Jews because I was in the office, and of those who stood under the windows and wanted to kill the one who was in my office, I didn't know anyone, because they were just youngsters about 18–19 years old, and I'd been in Kielce only for a month because I had been transferred from Włoszczowa.¹⁸⁶

¹⁸⁵ See AIPN, 578/226, Operative Reports of the Internal Security Forces in Kielce (*Wojska Bezpieczeństwa Wewnętrznego*, WBW). Opened on 1 May 1946, closed on 3 September 1946. Report from WBW Command of Kielce Voivodeship to the KBW Operative Branch in Warsaw on the activity of gangs in Kielce voivodeship and the WBW's operative activities for the period from 1 July 1946 to 31 July 1946, Kielce, 1 August 1946, p. 58: "III. The activities of the Barrage Commands. In the reporting period, four barrage groups were still working on the territory of the voivodship at the railway stations of Częstochowa, Kielce, Skarżysko-Kamienna and Radom, controlling trains running on the lines Częstochowa–Kielce, Kielce–Skarżysko-Kamienna, Skarżysko-Kamienna–Radom, Radom–Dęblin. Apart from checking the trains, they maintain orderliness and internal order in the stations where they are placed, detaining any suspicious or disruptive persons. The barrage groups are impeccable in their work and carry it out properly. They are still made up of the personnel of the 8th Independent Operative Battalion. During the period of 1–31 July [19]46, a total of 770 people were detained. On 7 July [19]46, the whole personal of the barrage group in Częstochowa was changed for the service's purposes."

¹⁸⁶ AIPN Ki, WUSW Kielce, 013/4744, Minutes of the Interrogation of the Suspect Mieczysław Winiarski, Kielce, 8 July 1946, pp. 23–25.

In the decision to dismiss the investigation concerning Mieczysław Winiarski, the WUBP investigative officer in Kielce, Bogdan Janusiewicz, wrote that “Mieczysław Winiarski was serving at the Herby-Kielce railway station as a traffic officer on duty on 4 July 1946, where three Jews were murdered, and the fourth survived because Mieczysław Winiarski hid him in his office. Despite the civilian population threatening him, he did not let anyone into the office, and notified the WUBP in Kielce.”¹⁸⁷

After analysing the course of the events of 4 July 1946 at the Kielce-Herby station, considering the abovementioned passages from the sources, some extremely important questions should be asked. How did a few people, despite the aggressive attitude of a crowd (of undefined number), manage to protect a Jew from death at this station? Why was it here that the threat of a railway guard using a gun, and later the presence of a Soviet soldier, proved to be an effective barrier against an aggressive crowd? Why was the attitude of the Soviet soldier at this station so special?

Did Tokarska-Bakir, when discussing the events at the Kielce-Herby station, succeed in implementing the idea contained in the subtitle of the book *Spółeczny portret pogromu kieleckiego* [A social portrait of the Kielce pogrom] by “using the methods available to historical anthropology – research and critical microanalysis, allowing the pogrom to be seen through the eyes of as many witnesses as possible”?¹⁸⁸ One may have fundamental doubts about this. It turns out that the content of the newly discovered documents not only makes it necessary to verify the adopted version of events, but also reveals ‘forgotten’ sourcing problems – the reliability of the author of the source. Perhaps this problem would not have appeared if Tokarska-Bakir had not underestimated (?) the archival records she herself included in Bruno Piątek’s biographical note.¹⁸⁹ It seems that the problem of the unclear

¹⁸⁷ *Ibidem*, Decision to Dismiss the Investigation, Kielce, 20 July 1946, p. 29.

¹⁸⁸ J. Tokarska-Bakir, *Pod kłatwą...*, vol. 1, p. 23.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 540: “in the general information registry of the ‘C’ Division of KWMO/WUSW in Kielce, AIPN Ki-032: pseudonym ‘Lud’; AIPN Ki-0024-1011.” See AIPN Ki, WUSW Kielce, 0024/1011, Case file title: “A microfilm of the case file of a secret informant pseudonym ‘Lud’ concerning Brunon Piątek, father’s name: Jan, born 6 January 1909.” There are several documents in this file: a personal questionnaire (no date); a request for approval to recruit a candidate for informant, prepared by Stefan Fortuna, WUBP officer in Kielce (no date); an agent-informant questionnaire (no author or date); curriculum vitae (signed by Brunon Piątek), Kielce, 28 October 1945. Obligation

relationships between the authors of the sources quoted (accounts, memories) and the Communist security apparatus is broader and requires more detailed analysis.¹⁹⁰

At this point it is worth noting one more issue. In a situation where the sources are of doubtful reliability, the use of paraphrase¹⁹¹ does not seem to be a good idea. Adopting such a narrative style in academic studies is a risky undertaking.¹⁹² Paraphrasing the source entries in *Pod klątwą*, in the absence of clear information about them in the text, could lead the reader (who will not necessarily compare the text with the sources in Volume 2) not to notice this difference at all. Such an attitude may be met with accusations of a disregard for facts and a wishful reshaping of reality.¹⁹³

In the presentation of Brunon Piątek's account (p. 231), mention is made of a 'considerable' number of men on 'platforms' at the Kielce-Herby station and the statement: "At first I did not pay attention to them."¹⁹⁴ Tokarska-Bakir has added a footnote (no. 1375) to this extract (p. 668) in which she mentioned the 'paraphrasing' of the account by Brunon Piątek, and also wrote (based on an article by Julia Pirotte, 'Kielce 1946 r', in *Polityka*, 22 June 1991, p. 10): "A young, unknown Jewish man told Julia Pirotte about the men waiting on the platform in Kielce the day after the pogrom: 'A group of men were waiting for us at the

statement (handwritten by Brunon Piątek), Kielce, 19 October [19]45; Report by Jan Krawczyk, a functionary of the Department of Security at K[ieleckie] Z[akłady] W[yrobów] M[etalowych] to the Head of Division IV of WUBP in Kielce concerning the exclusion of 'Lud' from the informants' network, Kielce, 20 February [19]50. There are no documents proving that Brunon Piątek really cooperated with the UB. In Jan Krawczyk's report (p. 5) we read, among other things: "exclude the informant 'Lud' from the informants' network because, after considering the reports and being in contact with him, he does not have any value, and I stated that he himself is engaged in long-term sabotage; I have decided to put him under surveillance, as a person of interest in the case file of S[uchedniowska] H[uta] L[udwików]." The document contains a confirmation note dated 21 February [19]50: "I support the request, and it should be stated that Lud is cooperating closely with Dir[ector] Sobol, who is under our surveillance, and they own a locksmith's workshop together [...]. As it turned out, he revealed our cooperation to Sobol and worked on the reports with him."

¹⁹⁰ J. Tokarska-Bakir, *Pod klątwą...*, vol. 1, pp. 229, 504 (biography of Zbigniew Chodak), 687 (footnotes: 1362, 1363).

¹⁹¹ *Ibidem*, p. 593, footnote 12.

¹⁹² P. Nowak, 'Parafrazowanie – narzędzie manipulacji i perswazji' in *Manipulacja w języku*, ed. P. Krzyżanowski, P. Nowak, Lublin 2004, p. 137. According to the author, "the manipulative or persuasive nature of a periphrastic statement is determined by the situational/contextual nature of the text built on the basis of earlier statements."

¹⁹³ A. Grzywa, *Potęga manipulacji*, Lublin 2012, p. 13.

¹⁹⁴ J. Tokarska-Bakir, *Pod klątwą...*, vol. 1, p. 231.

station, mostly railwaymen. They held brake pads in their hands. They got to beating us. We lost consciousness.”¹⁹⁵ However, the problem is that in Julia Pirotte’s article, the above incident is actually described differently: “In Kielce we were with a young officer in the early morning [5 July 1946 – R.Ś.-K.]. The platforms and waiting rooms seemed deserted. Here and there, some railwaymen showed up. ‘What’s going on here?’ I asked one of them. ‘I don’t know anything. I didn’t see anything.’ I heard a similar answer many times that day. No one knew anything. From the station we went to the PPR Voivodeship Committee. The streets were grey, deserted. It was scary.” Julia Pirotte then quoted some statements about the events of 4 July 1946, including the one about the ‘young man’: “I came to Kielce with three young Jews. We wanted to learn to work on the farm. We wanted to go to Palestine and join the kibbutz there. A group of men, mostly railwaymen, were waiting for us at the station. They held brake pads in their hands. They started beating. I lost consciousness.’ [...] I found out later that for three more days the pogromists checked the trains passing through Kielce and killed every Jew they met.”¹⁹⁶ Comparing the passages as quoted, it is hard not to notice that Tokarska-Bakir has paraphrased Julia Pirotte’s text quite considerably. It should also be added that the last quoted sentence about the “pogromists... checking” trains “for three days” did not happen in reality.

The author’s statements concerning the behaviour of a group of firefighters from Kielce whom the Department of Security called to intervene on Planty Street also raise objections. In the book we find references to this in several places (vol. 1: pp. 32, 256, 596 [footnote 62]): “It was 10.30 a.m. when the fire brigade came; they wanted to disperse the crowd with water, but they said they cut their hoses [from the account of Jechiel Alpert – R.Ś.-K.].”¹⁹⁷ This sentence has been annotated with footnote 62 on page 596, where we read: “The hosepipes were not cut. They were not used due to ‘indecisiveness in the use of the fire nozzle’, see part 2: 1.25: Report of the Head of WUBP Division V, Stanisław Mareczko.”¹⁹⁸ A similar argument, but with an unambiguous commentary, was presented on p. 256: “The fire brigade’s

¹⁹⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 688, footnote 1375.

¹⁹⁶ J. Pirotte, ‘Kielce 1946 r.’, *Polityka*, 22 June 1991, no. 25 (1781), p. 10.

¹⁹⁷ J. Tokarska-Bakir, *Pod klątwą...*, vol. 1, p. 32.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 596, footnote 62.

water cart broke down first, and when it arrived after the repair, it was not used either – due, as we read in the report, to ‘indecisiveness in the use of the fire nozzle’ [the author refers to footnote 1513 on p. 694 – R.Ś.-K.]. Like the militiamen and soldiers, the firefighters did not want to expose themselves to the crowd.¹⁹⁹

However, in archival research, a document was found which undermined this unambiguous assessment of the firefighters’ attitude, and which indicates the more complex development of the situation when the firefighters participated:

“In connection with the excesses that occurred in the area of the city of Kielce, I report that on that day I was absent on duty until 2 p.m. Based on the information received, I report the following: on 4 July at 10.30 a.m., the Municipal Professional Fire Brigade was summoned by the Security authorities by phone to appear with fire-fighting equipment in front of the building of the Voivodship Department of Security in Kielce on Foch Street. [...] After difficulties in starting the emergency car (the clutch broke), one section of emergency vehicles arrived at the indicated place, not knowing the purpose or need. The Department of Security sent an emergency car to Planty Street, where, as it turned out, there was an incident with the Jews. Here UB officers ordered the firemen to release water on the crowd of people to disperse the demonstrators. The angry crowd took a dangerous attitude towards the firefighters, threatening to destroy the fire-fighting equipment and lynch the crew. Some military men present supposedly ordered the firemen to leave, so the emergency car returned to the barracks. After some time, UB officers returned to the fire brigade barracks, demanding they go back to the place, for a known purpose. As the emergency car was [out of order], the firefighters used a horse cart, following the instruction. On the basis of further reports received, the result of the firefighters’ participation showed that: 1. The emergency equipment was on site until the end of the ongoing excesses, unfolding the hose line for several sections of the discharge hose, as ordered; 2. The agitated population prevented the use of the water, destroying the hoses; 3. The assembled people threw insults at the firefighters, threatening the helpless firemen with their slaughter; 4. After the firefighters were released from the above-mentioned action and returned to the barracks, the following arrests were made: the deputy commander (the commander

¹⁹⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 256. Footnote 1513 on page 694 reads: “See part 1: 26 and part 7: *Strażacy*.”

on leave), the shift commander and seven fire brigade members. [...] He mentions that the Security authorities also called upon the fire brigade of the *Spolem* factory to disperse the crowd.”²⁰⁰

Reading the above text brings some important questions. Did the guards come under the protection of the UB officers? Did the Department of Security officers protect the actions taken by the firemen? Did they recognise the attackers from the crowd and the ‘military’ who ordered the firefighters to leave the scene? What actions were taken by the firefighters from *Spolem*, and were they also arrested? How far away were the firefighters with their equipment from the building inhabited by the Jews? (This also raises the question of how to get to the building, that is, the problem of how ‘dense’ the aggressive crowd was.) It should be noted that the quoted text is another testimony to the inadequate behaviour of the military towards the persons whose actions were aimed at stopping the events from escalating.

Returning to the question of the credibility of the documentation produced by the ‘institutions of Communist power’ (the Militia, the Departments of Security, the prosecutor’s offices, the courts), Tokarska-Bakir decided that they deserved to be trusted because of their ‘secrecy’, and made the assumption that the highest circles of power need to know the true picture of the situation (“in the long run, no power blinds itself”).²⁰¹ The above sentences have been annotated with footnotes: “The lower levels of administration usually beautify the reality they report to their superiors, but the highest level would not retain power if they did not have the correct orientation of the real state of affairs [...]. ‘Falsifications’ within the secret sources that dominate the contemporary discussion about vetting

²⁰⁰ State Archive in Kielce (*Archiwum Państwowe w Kielcach*), collection UWK II, ‘Letter of the Voivodship Fire Inspector, Fire Brigade Lt. Col. Józef Plebanek to the Kielce Voivode, Kielce’, 8 July 1946, p. 35; see also K. Janicki, T. Nowak, *Kielecka straż pożarna w latach 1939–2013*, Kielce 2013, p. 44: “After the action, the firefighters were detained by Department of Security functionaries in custody for a few days. They left thanks to the intervention of fire brigade Major Stanisław Drożdżeński. Fire brigade Senior Sergeant emeritus Tymoteusz Stando commented on this fact as follows: ‘I was hired into the Kielce Professional Fire Brigade a week after the outrageous pogrom. I learned about the actions of the firefighting crew, called by the Department of Security to disperse the crowd, directly from the mouths of the firefighters used in the intervention. However, I have to say that they spoke about it in a very sparing manner, and they did not want to comment upon their stay in UB custody at all. Most likely, the UB officers have forbidden it. The only thing my colleagues said was that they were suspected of deliberately refusing to perform the task entrusted to them, and they were saved by the commandant of the Municipal Professional Fire Brigade, who had great respect in Kielce.’”

²⁰¹ J. Tokarska-Bakir, *Pod klątwą...*, vol. 1, p. 13.

are an exception that does not violate this rule.”²⁰² Considering the problem of ‘falsifications’ (‘false’ as in ‘untrue’) in the context of vetting is insufficient, and may be a symptom of relaxation of the rigours of the scholarly mindset. In the current state of research,²⁰³ a few sentences are definitely not enough and will not replace a critical theoretical, methodological or source-based reflection on how to use this type of source. Moreover, we are dealing here with the specificity of sources described as indirect and targeted (the problem of ‘narrative structure consisting of informational, rhetorical and ideological-theoretical layers’), and which thus require meticulous internal criticism.²⁰⁴ We must not forget that we interpret the text, and formulate hypotheses concerning its meanings and markings, based on our knowledge of the object, author and language. It is also difficult not to agree with Jerzy Topolski’s idea that “falsification [...] is an activity with a specific load of ‘awareness.’”²⁰⁵

We may gain the impression that this affirmative attitude towards the police source material, resulting to some extent from the lack of critical reflection on one’s own research practice, is an element of the research and narrative strategy adopted by the author. This is clearly visible when reading the section of the book concerning Bishop Czesław Kaczmarek:

“Before the pogrom, Bishop Kaczmarek claimed that the reason for the [public’s] aversion to Jews was their participation in the Communist government. After the pogrom, if one assumes the UB reports as trustworthy (and what follows from the report of the bishop’s curia), he presented it as a deed of ‘Judaeo-Communism’. Nor did he acquit himself of ‘racial’ labels during his imprisonment. [...] It is only under the pressure of the investigation, perhaps in anticipation of an amnesty for the tenth anniversary of the People’s Republic of Poland, that the bishop has formulated a moderate self-criticism: ‘The atmosphere of political anti-Semitism in Kielce, evoked and maintained by me and the priests subordinate to me, was conducive to the outbreak of the anti-Semitic incidents that took place during my stay in Polanica

²⁰² *Ibidem*, p. 592, footnote 3.

²⁰³ See footnote 66 and statements by Henryk Dominiczak and Andrzej Grajewski in ‘Ankieta historyczna’, *Pamięć i Sprawiedliwość* 2003, no. 1, pp. 30, 36.

²⁰⁴ K. Brzechczyn, ‘Problem wiarygodności teczek...’, pp. 61–63, 75; J. Topolski, *Jak się pisze i rozumie historię. Tajemnice narracji historycznej*, Warszawa 1996, pp. 340–341.

²⁰⁵ J. Topolski, *Wprowadzenie do historii...*, p. 47.

Zdrój in the summer of 1946.’ In this statement, one can see a confession forced on a man broken by months of investigation. Certainly, prison in the Stalinist period was a difficult experience,²⁰⁶ but one can get the impression that it mainly broke the subordinates of the bishop, Rev. Widlak and Rev. Danielewicz. Czesław Kaczmarek was generally treated well; thanks to Julia Brystigerowa’s efforts in the prison on Rakowiecka Street, a chapel was even organised for him, he was given a separate diet and his daily walk was extended. Also, reading the interrogation minutes suggests a less heroic view of the priest’s self-criticism – a vision of compromise, in which, at the price of public repentance, the Ministry of Public Security did not accuse him of a pogrom; and they also dropped the charges of hiding weapons and radio transmitters, for which he could have been punished incomparably more severely.”²⁰⁷

These far-reaching considerations are based on accounts by Jechiel Alpert; a report from an informant of the Department of Security; Bishop Kaczmarek’s secret prison messages intercepted by the Department of Security; accounts quoted by Rev. Jan Śledzianowski; the testimony of Adam Humer on 2 December 1993; and the ‘self-criticism’ filed by Julia Brystigierowa and Józef Różański concerning the ‘errors of investigative work’ allegedly committed during the investigation of Bishop Kaczmarek (“abandonment of the final clarification of the case of weapons, radio transmitters and documents”).²⁰⁸ The reference to Adam Humer is extremely shocking here. It seems that the author’s errors of interpretation are also due to the failure to see the different credibility of documents (i.e. the credibility of the documents’ authors) produced in the different apparatus of repression structures at different times. The rhetorical question could be asked: was Tokarska-Bakir careful enough when using ‘classified’ documents?

Joanna Tokarska-Bakir did not refer to the report published in 2013, which is probably due to her lack of acquaintance with the state of research concerning the course of the investigation conducted against Bishop Kaczmarek, among others. In this study we read:

²⁰⁶ Apparently Tokarska-Bakir does not know the publication: T. Wolsza, *Więzienia stalinowskie w Polsce. System, codzienność, represje*, Warsaw 2013.

²⁰⁷ J. Tokarska-Bakir, *Pod klątwą...*, vol. 1, pp. 124–125.

²⁰⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 627, footnotes 570–580.

“The arrested bishop, as well as the other persons, was subjected to unauthorised investigative methods which were supposed to lead to the confession of wrongdoings not committed: hunger, mental terror, pharmaceutical means and provocative confrontation between co-defendants. The use of pharmaceuticals on Bishop Kaczmarek at the end of April 1953 was confirmed by internal data analysis. At that time the bishop was given ‘medicines’, which caused unusual sleepiness and dullness. [...] The constant, long hours of interrogation were equally burdensome. As has been established, in the course of the investigation proceedings prior to the main trial, Bishop Kaczmarek was interrogated 223 times in total. [...] The analysis of the investigation minutes allows us to form the thesis that the activities of the prison cell informants were an important factor in the investigation of the ‘Kielce case’. [...] The actions of the prison cell agent and the investigative methods led Bishop Kaczmarek to a complete mental breakdown in spring 1953.”²⁰⁹

Bożena Szaynok, in her review paper *Utrwalanie uproszczeń*,²¹⁰ focused on the analysis of the problem of the relationships between the Church and the Jews (appearing in *Pod klątwą*), recognising that the ‘research trails’ undertaken in the publication, however ‘significant and interesting’ (e.g. “checking the presence of the beliefs about Jews abducting Polish children and about ritual murder in the post-war Church”²¹¹), but in the study there are “many simplifications, images that are untrue or supported by selective sources.” The reviewer also did not find sufficient justification for the thesis about “the involvement of the Church in pogroms.” On the basis of several examples, she justified her opinion that “part of the description of the Church raises [...] objections.” An important problem, as the reviewer noted, is also that “one can see in some places of the book *Pod klątwą* that sources are being ‘pulled up’ to the thesis about the Church’s belief in Jews abducting Polish children.” Szaynok pointed out the omission of sources that did not match the assumed thesis, as well as the differences between the quotations cited in Tokarska-Bakir’s book and the original wordings of the sources cited.

²⁰⁹ *Wokół procesu biskupa kieleckiego Czesława Kaczmarka. Wspomnienia nazaretanki s. Izabelli Machowskiej*, ed. T. Domański, D. Kozieł, Kielce 2013, pp. 39, 41.

²¹⁰ B. Szaynok, ‘Utrwalanie uproszczeń’, *Więź* 2018, no. 2, pp. 89–100.

²¹¹ *Ibidem*, p. 90.

The reviewer negatively assessed the reference to Adam Humer when analysing the attitude of Bishop Czesław Kaczmarek.

The matter of the credibility of the investigative documentation also appeared in the context of the trials directly related to the Kielce pogrom. On page 188, we read: “In subsequent trials, suspects have increasingly claimed their innocence and withdrawn the explanations given in the investigation. Almost everyone talked about the beating, which could actually have happened in the first hours of the investigation, but rather not later, when a ministerial and party leadership appeared in Kielce which cared for the appearance of the rule of law.”²¹² I do not think that the contextual knowledge and the experience of working with documents produced in such circumstances would entitle the author of *Pod klątwą* to draw such far-reaching conclusions.

It is also sometimes difficult to find rationality in these deductions – unless it is about making an appropriate impression on the ‘unprepared’ reader – in the context of searching for an answer to the question about the reasons why help was not offered to the Jews under attack, or the inhabitants of Kielce provided insufficient help. In analysing the photographs of groups of Kielce residents taken by Julia Pirotte on the day of the pogrom victims’ funeral, Tokarska-Bakir wrote about “a symbolic portrait of Kielce in 1946” in Pirotte’s lens. However, these pictures lead the observant researcher to a surprising deduction:

“Everywhere in the foreground and background, only children and young people can be seen. On the right, there is a single woman with a scarf, a man in a cloth cap, whose face we cannot see. The dominant figure in the photograph is a girl in a white blouse [...]. Where did all the adults go? They clearly did not want to appear in this picture. The entry of the Russians caused the men in the officers’ boots and riding breeches, to whom the city had previously belonged, to suddenly want to be invisible. Except the clergy, it was they who could have stopped the pogrom. The only question is, whether they would have wanted to. Although the Kielce structures of the *Zrzeszenie ‘Wolność i Niezawisłość’* ceased activities in March 1946, it still remained the most important Underground organisation – just as in the entire country. How its members perceived Jews can be seen thanks to the WiN archive,

²¹² J. Tokarska-Bakir, *Pod klątwą...*, vol. 1, p. 188; see also p. 666, footnote 1079.

which has remained in its original state. Although it principally documents the state of the southern part of the country, it can be assumed that in Kielce, Jews were thought of in a similar way.”²¹³

It seems that it is impossible to ‘assume’ in such a way,²¹⁴ just as it is not easy to cite the reasons why the resistance members – supposing that Tokarska-Bakir means them – ‘wanted to be invisible’. It should be noted that a serious argument for being ‘invisible’ was the scale of repressions by the Communist authorities in 1945–1946. According to the security apparatus documents, 235 people were arrested in Kielce voivodship in 1945, while in 1946 this number reached 3585.²¹⁵

The break-up of the WiN 1st Main Board by the UB and the formation of two major WiN centres in Poland around the WiN 2nd Main Board (including the structures of the Southern Area) and the WiN Central Area headquarters, had a significant impact on the establishment and operation of the three independent and unconnected WiN organisations in the Kielce region. This applies to the First and Second Headquarters of the WiN District in Kielce, the Inspectorate (codenamed the Armed Underground Union, *Związek Zbrojnej Konspiracji*, ZZK), organised in the northern part of Kielce province, and the structures operating in 1948 under the name of Service for Free Poland (*Służba Wolnej Polsce*, SWP), covering two districts of the southern Kielce region. The WiN District Headquarters and SWP conducted mainly organisational, intelligence, information and propaganda activities. It is noteworthy that the ZZK inspectorate had developed a whole range of working departments (organisational, security – including so-called self-defence, information and propaganda). In terms of the number of people involved, the structures created and the scale (also territorially) of the activities it carried out, it was incomparable to the other WiN organisations that existed in Kielce region after 1945.

The WiN 1st District Headquarters in Kielce, established in the autumn of 1945, tried to implement the program assumptions of the WiN 1st Main Board. The work

²¹³ *Ibidem*, vol. 1, pp. 125, 127.

²¹⁴ For the propaganda activities of WiN organisations, see R. Śmietanka-Kruszelnicki, *Podziemie poakowskie na Kielecczyźnie...*, pp. 129, 141–144, 160, 162, 172, 195–214, 269–270, 278–279, 288, 291–293, 302.

²¹⁵ AIPN, 0887/73, Statistics of Persons Arrested by the Security Service in the Years 1944–1956, [Warsaw], 1979, pp. 4–5.

of the Command (codenamed “Ł-5”), whose activity was treated as ‘political work’ to prevent ‘fratricidal fights’, was led by Józef Stępkowski a.k.a. ‘Major’. The number of members of the Command and associates was unlikely to exceed ten people. The intelligence arm was run by Eugeniusz Knej a.k.a. ‘Sobolewski’ and Cpl. Zdzisław Miodek a.k.a. ‘W-1’ (employed in the office of the 8th KBW Regiment in Kielce); the function of ‘informant’ in the headquarters was performed by Lt. Col. Włodzimierz Gierowski. The ‘mailbox’ of the Command was located in a shop at 37 Sienkiewicz Street in Kielce, and was looked after by Zofia Karbownicka. Lieutenant Zbigniew Grabowski a.k.a. ‘Jerzy’ organised press distribution. They did not publish their own press or leaflets. It is likely that only the newspaper of the WiN Central Area *Wolne Słowo* (Free Word) was distributed. The District Headquarters did not have any partisan units, nor did it have weapons or ammunition.

However, the members of the District Headquarters did not live to see the parliamentary elections that were the goal of their activities. The political plans related to this event, during which ‘a certain group of people’ was supposed to officially ‘come forward with the programme’, could not be implemented. The establishment of three districts – Kielce (under the leadership of Zbigniew Grabowski), Częstochowa (under the leadership of Jan Marzecki), and Radom – remained at the planning stage. All the Command’s activities were interrupted by arrests in February and March 1946. This was caused by the UB working out the WiN headquarters’ communication network.

The WiN Second Headquarters of the Kielce District, codenamed ‘Fala’ and then ‘Nida’, was established (at the initiative of the President of the WiN Central Area, Lieutenant Colonel Wincenty Kwieciński) between March and June/July 1946. It was led by Major Edward Herman, a.k.a. ‘KW 5’, ‘Stary’, ‘Jan’, codename ‘F’. The skeleton crew command (five people) did not have its own partisan units. In the structure as described, the organisational, intelligence and propaganda activities were conducted by several dozen people. Command probably published one issue of the *Na Straży* newspaper (October 1946?). The structure was planned to cover the entire Kielce voivodship, divided into four regions. The regions were to be divided into committees (administratively mirroring the districts). Until the cessation of its activity at the turn of 1947, the communication system (a few dead-letter boxes and contact points) and the nucleus of the intelligence (the

information officer in the headquarters was Józef Teliga a.k.a. 'Sfinks' (codename 'FI') were best organised.²¹⁶

Blaming the Independence Underground for causing the pogrom, a technique known from the propaganda activities of the Communist authorities at that time,²¹⁷ is treated by researchers as a typical trick of Communist propaganda, which used every opportunity to attack 'reaction'.²¹⁸ However, such a view does not entirely reflect the complex picture of events which emerges after a close examination of some of the documents that were produced during the investigations, related directly to the events of 4 July 1946 or referring indirectly to the 'background of events' created by propaganda. Do the 'threads concerning the Underground', appearing in the documents reflect the intentions of some representatives of the Communist bodies of repression? For it is not entirely true, as Tokarska-Bakir claims in *Okrzyki pogromowe*, that "none of the persons tried in the Kielce trials were accused of [...] belonging to the groups being fought against [the Underground – R.Ś.-K.]."²¹⁹ It is enough to subject the minutes from the interrogation of Józef Kukliński, one of the persons sentenced in the first Kielce trial for participating in the pogrom, to closer scrutiny.

It should be emphasised that evaluating the sources produced by the organs of repression, which document the armed resistance to Communist power after 1945, leads to source and methodological problems. The authors' ignorance of the reports, accounts and testimonies (and sometimes the deliberate assessment of all of the Underground activities as the work of 'bandits') clearly hinders the analysis

²¹⁶ R. Śmietanka-Kruszelnicki, 'Inspektorat Związku Zbrojnej Konspiracji na tle pozostałych struktur Zrzeszenia WiN w województwie kieleckim' in *Obszar Centralny Zrzeszenia WiN 1945–1947*, ed. T. Łabuszewski, Warsaw 2018, pp. 541–543.

²¹⁷ *Idem*, 'Pogrom w Kielcach – podziemie w roli oskarżonego...', pp. 25–74.

²¹⁸ M. Mazur, 'Propaganda komunistyczna wobec Armii Krajowej', *Dzieje Najnowsze* 2015, no. 1, pp. 61–79; 'Protokół z konferencji członków kierownictwa Okręgu Krakowskiego WiN. Tarnów, 27–30 sierpnia 1946', in ed. Z. Zblewski, *Zeszyty Historyczne WiN-u* 2006, no. 25, pp. 136–139, 144–147.

²¹⁹ J. Tokarska-Bakir, *Okrzyki pogromowe...*, p. 168. In this context, it is also worth noting other aspects of Communist propaganda aimed at 'reaction' (See R. Śmietanka-Kruszelnicki, 'Procesy kierownictwa Komendy Okręgu Kieleckiego Zrzeszenia WiN oraz Komendanta Inspektoratu ZZK przed Wojskowym Sądem Rejonowym w Kielcach jako elementy politycznej rozprawy z podziemiem niepodległościowym i antykomunistycznym na Kielecczyźnie', typescript, Kielce 2016). Article submitted for printing as part of the post-conference materials: *Procesy polityczne lat 40. i 50. – zbrodnie w świetle prawa*. The conference was held on 25 February 2016 in Warsaw. See also R. Śmietanka-Kruszelnicki, 'Pogrom Żydów w Kielcach 4 lipca 1946 r. ...', pp. 117–118.

of documents, especially as it is often possible to discern events that stand on the borderline between activities continuing the armed struggle for Independence and anti-Communist rule, and acts bearing clear signs of common crimes. The distinction between these two phenomena (which sometimes intertwine) still evokes great emotions.

The fragments of two documents produced by the District Department of Security (PUBP) in Sandomierz are worth quoting here (even though written in typical UB jargon): “The political situation [...] is presenting in such a way that the majority of people from these municipalities [the municipalities of Koprzywnica and Łoniów in Sandomierz district – R.Ś.-K.] are under bandit terror, and [obtaining] intelligence in this area is very difficult. The attitude of the people towards the gang is better than that towards the PUBP and MO officers. On the other hand, Osiek, Tursko Wielkie, Połaniec and Rytwiany are completely resistant municipalities, where it is impossible for a man from the PUBP, MO or the PPR to survive at all. There is intelligence in this area, which is very difficult. Almost the entire population is one large gang”²²⁰; “In general, the entire district of Sandomierz is hostile towards the current government, but in the places where the bandits have put down their weapons, the people have a better attitude [...]. The worst disposition is in the Klimontów, Jurkowice and Tursko Wielkie municipalities. In these areas, every man is a deadly enemy.”²²¹

The Underground had to face a brutal, invective-laden campaign discrediting the AK soldiers, *Zrzeszenie ‘Wolność i Niezawisłość’*, the NSZ, the National Military Union (*Narodowe Zjednoczenie Wojskowe*, NZW), the Home Army Resistance Movement (*Ruch Oporu Armii Krajowej*, ROAK), and other Underground organisations. Communist propaganda portrayed the partisan commanders as demoralised, cruel and devoid of human feelings. Resistance fighters and partisans were presented as traitors, fascists, and lackeys of Nazism. This false image of the Independence Underground was an important element in destroying

²²⁰ AIPN Ki, 018/89, ‘Report [PUBP Sandomierz] to the Voivodship Department of Security in Kielce [for the period 1 June – 30 June 1945], [Sandomierz]’, n.d., p. 13.

²²¹ *Ibidem*, ‘Report of the Head of the PUBP in Sandomierz Division of Fighting B[anditry] Władysław Łożyński to the WUBP in Kielce Division of Fighting B[anditry]’, Sandomierz, 10 August 1945, p. 31.

Polish resistance and contributed to breaking the ties between the Underground and society.

The long-lasting Communist propaganda and indoctrination led to the formation of various clichés concerning the post-war period. One of them was the image of the ‘forest units’ as nothing more than common bandits, which was blatantly different from the reality of those years. It cannot be claimed that the phenomenon of common criminality in the ranks of the Underground did not exist at all; however, this is a complex issue. Criminal acts occurred to a greater or lesser extent whenever the conflict between the fighting political camps or the fight in defence of independence took the form of armed clashes. The scale of this phenomenon is inextricably linked to the efficiency of the Underground structures and their intra-organisational discipline.

After reading the contents of Joanna Tokarska-Bakir’s book and its academic apparatus, the question inevitably arises: the absence of an adequate introduction, the absence of a proper bibliography, the absence of indexes (primarily personal), the presence of footnotes that do not document the content or are imprecisely constructed, the absence of footnotes in places that need to be documented – are all these the result of carelessness, a disregard of the attentive reader, or are they motivated by other factors?

The absence of a personal index makes it very difficult to check and verify the information (and the description in the book raises doubts) regarding which particular person was accused of criminal acts. One example is the description of the crime attributed to Julian Chorążak, who was convicted in the first trial in Kielce. On page 114 of the first volume, the author wrote: “Meanwhile, on the basis of the evidence presented in Chapter 2, it is known that two Polish victims of the pogrom, Jan Jaworski and Stanisław Niewiarski/Niewiarowski, died at the hands of their compatriots. The circumstances of the death of the first one are described by [...] Janina Kulpa. The second one was killed by Julian Chorążak from Czarnolas.”²²² In the case of Chorążak, Tokarska-Bakir refers the reader to footnote 511 on page 622. There we read: “See part 2: 5.7A – Julian Chorążak”. According to the author’s suggestion, we reach for volume two and there, on pages 453–454,

²²² J. Tokarska-Bakir, *Pod kłótwą...*, vol. 1, p. 114.

we find “Minutes of the Interrogation of the Suspect Julian Chorążak on 6 July 1946”. It contains the following passage:

“Yes, I confess that on 4 July 1946 in Kielce at 7a Planty Street around 12.30 p.m. I beat the concierge of the house, whose name I do not know [...]. I was standing in front of the window on the ground floor of this house when the crowd pressed in, I don't know how I got through the window into this house concierge's flat. When others started beating him, thinking that he was a Jew, I also thought that he was a Jew, in this apartment I found a piece of stick, with which I hit this concierge once in the head. Some lieutenant started screaming that the concierge wasn't a Jew and not to beat him, and then they stopped beating him. Right after that, I left the apartment and stood in the street. I didn't beat anybody else [...].”²²³

The complexity of the whole situation emerges from another extract of volume one: “Stanisław Niewiarski, a Polish concierge on Planty [Street], 165 cm tall: shot, [...] after 3 hours he died in the hospital due to internal bleeding. The description does not match the age: it is stated that he was about 25 years old, while witnesses (Miriam Machtynger, Julian Chorążak and UB officers) state that Niewiarski was a grey-haired old man. The type of injuries inflicted on him also does not match with the minutes – Julian Chorążak admitted to hitting the concierge on his head with a stick, and the WUBP officers were witnesses. Meanwhile, the corpse attributed to Niewiarski does not bear any traces of battery; according to the minutes, the death occurred from a gunshot.”²²⁴ In the next sentence Tokarska-Bakir states that “there must have been a mistake and the body of the concierge was among the unidentified,”²²⁵ and points to another person among those murdered during the pogrom.²²⁶ On the basis of the ‘evidence presented’ above, which the author refers to, can it be unequivocally stated that Stanisław Niewiarski “was killed by Julian Chorążak”?

A wholly incomplete picture of the political and social reality of Kielce in mid-1946 emerges from the book, and in some fragments it is entirely false. This is, *inter alia*, the result of drawing general conclusions from various details.

²²³ *Eadem, Pod klątwa...*, vol. 2, pp. 453–454.

²²⁴ *Eadem, Pod klątwa...*, vol. 1, p. 64. For more on Julian Chorążak, see also pp. 232–234, 237.

²²⁵ *Ibidem*.

²²⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 604, footnote 197.

The problems of the operations of the 2nd WDP and Information units, the activity of informants and agents of the Department of Security, the activity of Soviet formations in 1945–1946 in Kielce voivodship: these are essentially omitted or very poorly described. Moreover, the analysis of actions taken by the Kielce City Command (headed by Major Wasyl Markiewicz) and the gendarmes of the 2nd WDP, concerning whether members of these formations participated or not in the murder of the Jews, is far from sufficient. The state of the organs of repression (especially the WP and KBW units) which were at the disposal of the authorities on 4 July 1946 should be reconsidered.²²⁷ It is worth recalling that on 3 July 1946, from Kozenice to Kielce, “an operative group numbering 110 men in strength [...] from the KBW Officers’ School” in Legnica returned (it had left for Częstochowa on 6 July). This elite unit was at the disposal of the WBW Command in Kielce.²²⁸

The question of the death (real or fake?) of the ‘officer’ should be clarified by further research. Information about this event appears in witness accounts and other documents (sources). It clearly emerges from those accounts that it had a great influence on ‘warming up’ the atmosphere in the crowd and intensifying the aggressive actions of particular groups of people, especially military personnel. The book presents various versions of the ‘death of a Polish officer’ thread, which as the author points out is particularly appealing to the imagination.²²⁹ It is difficult to say when the false rumour of an officer’s death (or in another version, the death of an officer and his child) began to circulate among the soldiers. Whether it was a result of a mutation of the original rumour or a spontaneous fabrication, where it came from and how it spread, is unknown. One important testimony here lies in an account by Rachel Grunglas (of 5 July 1946), sent by the Central Committee of Polish Jews (*Centralny Komitet Żydów Polskich*, CKŻP) to the PSL General Secretariat on 26 July 1946. In the report we read: “When I left the railway station

²²⁷ R. Śmietanka-Kruszelnicki, ‘Tłum na ulicy Planty...’, pp. 108–109, 112.

²²⁸ AIPN, 578/226, ‘Operative Reports of the Kielce WBW, Report of the Kielce WBW Command to KBW, Operative Division in Warsaw, Kielce’, 19 July 1946, p. 98.

²²⁹ J. Tokarska-Bakir, *Pod kłatwą...*, vol. 1, pp. 220–223, 356, 594 (footnote 35), 683 (footnote 1295: “It is worth noting the history of this motif as a fuse (or rather an alibi) for anti-Jewish violence [...]”); see also U. Głowacka-Maksymiuk, ‘Wydarzenia rewolucji 1905 roku w guberni siedleckiej’ in *Dziedzictwo rewolucji 1905–1907*, ed. A. Żarnowska et al., Warsaw–Radom 2007, p. 300; W. Mędykowski, *W cieniu gigantów. Pogromy 1941 r. w byłej sowieckiej strefie okupacyjnej*, Jerusalem 2018, pp. 81–83, 326, 328–329, 334–335, 337–339.

for the city, I noticed groups of people dressed in military uniforms and carrying rifles, those groups were searching for people looking Jewish. [...] The soldiers who surrounded the building told me to go into the neighbouring confectionery store to wait, because they didn't recognise me as a Jewish woman [...], they answered my question that the Jews had killed 12 Polish children, that was said by a boy who was the only one to save himself from the basement. Moreover, the Jews had killed an officer and his child, which was found in the basement, and so the army was also searching and shooting.”²³⁰

The sources do not sufficiently justify the burdening of the militiamen, especially the groups of functionaries (NCOs and officers) from the station at 45 Sienkiewicz Street and from the MO Voivodship Headquarters, with the greatest responsibility for the outbreak and course of the pogrom. This interpretation omits some of the events (the disarming of the Jews, the presence of the military in the building, the shots fired from the building in the direction of the crowd) which took place on Planty Street; the image which emerges from the source records is more complicated. The actions carried out by the militiamen had a great influence on the crowd of people around the building at 7 Planty Street, but the beginning of the violent anti-Jewish incidents should be connected with the arrival of the military and its actions. Tokarska-Bakir does not pay due attention to the issue of the fabricated accusations in the investigative and judicial documentation, while giving so-called ‘access’ to other people (the possibility of arrest and investigation, or possible prosecution). In this respect, the absence of an impartial analysis of the conditions and context is clear, and the jumping to conclusions on the basis of fragments of documents produced by the Communist apparatus of repression is especially striking.²³¹ I consider the allegations that the militiamen had an overwhelming influence on the course of the pogrom to be unfounded, lacking an in-depth study of the practices of the institutions of repression in the Kielce of 1946. The assumption that it was anti-Semitism dating back to the times of the German occupation that made the group of militiamen reveal their true and sinister

²³⁰ *Komunikaty Polskiego Stronnictwa Ludowego 1946–1947*, ed. M. Adamczyk, J. Gmitruk, J. Mazurek, Warsaw 2002, pp. 271–272; See J. Tokarska-Bakir, *Pod klątwą...*, vol. 2, pp. 624–625.

²³¹ See J. Pomorski, ‘Historiografia dziejów najnowszych – wyzwania metodologiczne’ in *idem*, *Spoglądając w przeszłość... Studia i szkice metahistoryczne*, Lublin 2017, pp. 360, 362–365.

face on 4 July 1946, regardless of the consequences, is unreliable. The duration, the place of events and the presence of many representatives of the organs of repression meant every person who was in charge or following orders was identifiable and could be included in the documents produced in the various formations taking part in the events. In summarising the question of the militiamen's responsibility for the events of 4 July 1946, one may risk a statement that *Pod klątwą* raised more problematic situations (and open questions) than it provided sufficiently justified answers concerning the attitude of the group of KWMO Kielce officers and officers from the MO Station at 45 Sienkiewicz Street.

I believe that the author failed to explain the problem of the exceptional helplessness of the organs of repression on 4 July 1946 in Kielce or the lack of reaction (activity, commitment) from the NKVD unit then stationed in Kielce. The attempt to explain the inability to cope with the crowd; the chaotic, disorderly and ineffective actions taken by the local military units, and the general moral condition of the officers and soldiers is poorly documented. Explaining the absence of reaction from the Soviet bodies of repression in terms of a proposed fear of the Poles is unacceptable. On the contrary, a different picture emerges from the documents concerning the 'state of security' in the streets of Kielce many months before the outbreak of the pogrom on 4 July 1946 (there had been no disturbances in which a larger group of inhabitants had participated; the constant presence of patrols of the Kielce City Command in the city, and the disciplining of officers and soldiers from all formations deployed on the streets). 4 July 1946 was a time of astonishing helplessness and instability among the power structures in the provincial capital. The unwillingness to fight against the Independence Underground units noticeable in some units of the 2nd WDP was not an expression of the relaxation of discipline among the soldiers, but was caused primarily by the reluctance to shoot at Poles. It should also be added that such situations were not common, and the moods among the soldiers of the units stationed in Kielce and fighting against the armed Underground were variable and often depended on specific situations (such as the number and extent of victims among the WP soldiers).

The book did not contain an answer to an important question: why, on the one hand, were the commanders of the units of repression bodies on Planty Street not able to control the chaos and carry out appropriate actions against the participants

in the pogrom, yet on the other hand, they effectively counteracted the attempt made by Jan Wrzeszcz, prosecutor of the District Court in Kielce? He came to the scene of the events with his close associates and, because of his powers, he wanted to coordinate actions aimed at controlling the crowd. But he was not allowed to do so.²³² How can we reasonably explain why Major Władysław Sobczyński, the WUBP head in Kielce, sent only two Security officers to stand against the employees of Ludwików in order to stop their march on Planty Street?²³³ After all, it is obvious that in such an atmosphere, at a time when the pogrom was going on and there were many victims, two officers would not be able to stop a marching crowd, although they would probably have been able to recognise many people in the crowd. Were they interrogated about these events? and if so, where are the documents?

The formation of unambiguous opinions concerning the role played by the 'Ludwików workers' paired with the incomplete knowledge of the employees of the Ludwików Steelworks and how the plant operated in the political reality of the time (the strike by part of the workers in February 1946, the 2nd WDP's 'care' of the Ludwików Steelworks, the work of German POWs in the plant²³⁴) raises doubts and is premature.²³⁵ It should be remembered that research that cannot be considered closed (due to the possibility of further targeted research and the use of interdisciplinary studies, *inter alia*) may bring new interpretations of the events and show their meaning in a different perspective. This also raises the question of potential information in the sources.²³⁶

Many times one receives the impression that the author is balancing between documented facts and hypotheses of a purely literary nature. Perhaps we should assume that in the case of the first volume of *Pod klątwą* we are dealing with a 'well-

²³² J. Tokarska-Bakir, *Pod klątwą...*, vol. 2, pp. 618–621.

²³³ Minutes of the Interrogation of Suspect Władysław Sobczyński, Warsaw, 11 July 1946 in *Antyżydowskie wydarzenia kieleckie 4 lipca 1946 roku. Dokumenty i materiały. Akta procesów...*, vol. 1, p. 316.

²³⁴ J. Kochanowski, *W polskiej niewoli. Niemieccy jeńcy wojenni w Polsce 1945–1950*, Warsaw 2001, pp. 58, 453, 455; M. Zawisza, 'Robotnicy przemysłowi w województwie kieleckim w latach 1945–1949', Kielce 2015, typescript of doctoral thesis written under supervision of Prof. G. Miernik (by courtesy of the author), pp. 100, 107, 270–272, 288, 297.

²³⁵ P. Matusak, *Ruch oporu w przemyśle wojennym okupanta hitlerowskiego na ziemiach polskich w latach 1939–1945*, Warsaw 1983, pp. 255, 257.

²³⁶ See J. Topolski, *Wprowadzenie do historii...*, p. 38.

-written story' about the pogrom (containing a narrative with a predominance of conceptualism) rather than a study based on strict research procedures.²³⁷

Joanna Tokarska-Bakir has demonstrated a great passion for research, albeit an undoubtedly selective sensitivity, and created a book with a highly engaging narrative, but with one-sided overtones. The apparent tendency to simplify and ignore uncomfortable data (or not even knowing it) has resulted in a great confusion between the empirical and the conceptual. The narrative descriptions which are the book's asset bring it closer to fiction but move it away from research. Although one should be critical of the basis in sources, the way the problems are presented (and the theories used), the selection of facts (and their interpretation), as well as the theses put forward by the author, it should be noted that the book deals with many questions which were previously unknown or not fully recognised, and that it provides many source clues. The sphere of recognition should include further 'sensitive' research fields, including biographical data concerning the subsequently identified participants in the events of 4 July 1946. The question of the credibility of those who testified about the pogrom and became involved in cooperation with the secret services under Communist rule needs to be addressed. It becomes necessary to re-examine the events from these perspectives: the actions of groups of the military, the participation of the workers from the Ludwików Steelworks, and the possibilities of saving the victims of the pogrom.

Paradoxically, Joanna Tokarska-Bakir's book may become a turning point in the development of research into the Kielce pogrom, as the reaction from those circles interested in research on Polish-Jewish relations will testify to the condition of Polish historiography of recent history. Perhaps *Pod klątwą* will turn out to be a necessary stage on the way to explaining the 'mystery' of the Kielce pogrom of 4 July 1946.

²³⁷ M. Kempny, *Antropologia bez dogmatów – teoria społeczna bez iluzji*, Warsaw 1994, p. 141; J. Topolski, *Jak się pisze i rozumie historię. Tajemnice narracji historycznej*, Warsaw 1996, p. 21.