

INTRODUCTION

The texts collected in issue four of the journal *Polish-Jewish Studies* (PJS 4) are published in three sections: Studies, Reviews/Discussion, and Chronicles. The first contains articles that result from two academic conferences organised by the Institute of National Remembrance: *Czas okupacji i zniewolenia. Żydzi i Polacy w obliczu totalitaryzmów 1939–1956* (Time of Occupation and Subjugation. Jews and Poles in the Face of Totalitarian Regimes 1939–1956), Warsaw, 6–7 July 2021, and *Aktion »Reinhardt« i Zagłada polskich Żydów – w kregu mechanizmów i sprawców* (*Aktion Reinhardt* and the Holocaust of Polish Jews – Mechanisms and Perpetrators), Warsaw, 9 March 2022. Thus, the volume is dominated by the subject of the German Occupation and bringing to justice the perpetrators of crimes against Jews.

At the beginning of the Studies section, we publish two texts devoted to Polish-Jewish relations in the interbellum. In the first, Konrad Zieliński presented a socio-demographic picture of the Jewish population in Poland in the second half of the 1930s, taking a critical look at Polish-Jewish relations that is in part due to the decade chosen. Among other topics, the author focused on state policy

towards Jews, including emigration policy and the so-called Jewish question in the context of the Catholic Church. Moreover, Zieliński assessed the actions of the Polish authorities in Jewish affairs as ones tolerating violence against Jews. The second article, by Marek Wierzbicki, is devoted to the state of research on Polish-Jewish relations on Polish soil under Soviet occupation between 1939 and 1941 – one of the most controversial topics in recent Polish history that has seen various interpretations both by Polish and Jewish community leaders as well as Polish historians and those abroad.

The section devoted to the German occupation opens with an article by Karolina Trzeskowska-Kubasik, “German Persecution and Repression of the Jewish Population in the Kreis Busko District between 1939 and 1942: Selected Issues.” Here, the author discusses the fundamental manifestations of the German authorities’ persecution of Jews in the first phase of the Holocaust in the area under study. This relates to instantaneous pogroms and other forms of repression in the first weeks of the war, the policy of establishing ghettos, as well as human and economic exploitation – all constituting an indirect form of extermination. Trzeskowska-Kubasik furthermore outlined the structures of the German civil and military-police administration in the Kreis Busko District, responsible for the crimes against Jews between 1939 and 1942.

The subsequent text on the occupation is that of Tomasz Domański, “The German Municipality-Level Administration in the General Government and Its Surviving Records for the Study of Polish-Jewish Relations. The Example of the Radom District.” The study argues that an analysis of the documentation produced by the German local government authorities, extant in the archives, clearly proves that the Polish population was purposefully embroiled in anti-Jewish policy and forced to participate accordingly. The most common method was the selective utilisation of fear using threats, intimidation, as well as collective and individual responsibility. The article also draws attention to the role of the village head (*sołtys*) and their office, whom the German authorities often made hostage to their operations. Domański’s findings, emphasising the role of the German factor, are also extremely important for research into the context of Polish-Jewish relations during the Second World War, which is sometimes overlooked or marginalised by many scholars.

One of the thousands of cases where Poles helped Jews during the Second World War was discussed by Kinga Czechowska. The author brings to life as it were the remarkable landowner Hipolit Aleksandrowicz and his accomplishments in offering assistance to Jews. The aforementioned, unlike many landowners from the lands incorporated into the German Reich in 1939, avoided death and persecution at the hands of his German neighbours. In the following years, he supported Poles and Jews. Furthermore, Czechowska outlines the motivations behind the landowner's actions and the circumstances relating to his assistance.

Roman Gieroń's article, "The Trial of Willi Haase before the Cracow Voivodeship Court in 1951," opens this part of PJS 4, devoted to research into the prosecution of crimes committed against Jews during the Second World War. Monika Tomkiewicz presents another brief study on this issue, "The Prosecution and Punishment of the Perpetrators of Crimes Committed against Jews in Ponary and other Execution Sites in the Vilnius Region." Both works refer to an extremely important trend in recent years of analysing post-war judicial and investigative materials, which – given the destruction of a vast number of documents by the Germans at that time – make it possible to establish the course of the Holocaust and to examine its perpetrators. Significantly, the conclusions of both authors are quite convergent – arguing that the results of the legal process pertaining to these crimes are, to the highest degree, unsatisfactory.

Another text in this section, integral to research into the perpetrators of crimes committed against Jews, is that of Maciej Korkuć, "'Yes, I plead guilty.' The Murder of Jankiel Lieberman in the Village of Rogów on 1 February 1943: A Case Study."¹ In the article, the author focuses on a single event concerning the hiding of a Jew by a Pole and his neighbours, which ended with the murder of the Jew. Maciej Korkuć, while by no means justifying the murder, attempts to discern the reasons for this dramatic decision through a multifaceted analysis of occupation conditions and their impact on Poles who were faced with singular choices (that sometimes resulted in terrible consequences for Polish-Jewish relations).

The post-war period was the subject of studies by Roman Gieroń and Mateusz Lisak. In the first, "Anti-Jewish Collective Violence in Rzeszów and Cracow in

¹ First published in the journal *Wiś Polska w Czasie II Wojny Światowej*, 2020, nr 1.

1945: A Comparison in the Context of Criminal Prosecutions,” Roman Gieron used surviving investigative materials from the anti-Jewish events, known as pogroms, of 11 August 1945 in Cracow and 11–12 June 1945 in Rzeszów. The documents were used to compare the course and extent of these events. At the same time, the scholar attempted to answer the question of the extent of the prosecution of the 1945 crimes committed against Jews in Cracow and Rzeszów – in communist Poland immediately after these tragic events and already after 1989. Mateusz Lisak, on the other hand, focused on the analysis of the pogrom in Kielce on 4 July 1946. His “Review of English-Language Studies of the Kielce Pogrom: 1946–1992,” is a comprehensive study in which the author concluded that the number of works published up to the early 1990s was exceedingly modest. According to Lisak, however, the focus of the works to date has been more on background findings than on a detailed analysis of the course of the event *per se*.

As in previous issues of *Polish-Jewish Studies*, extremely important – from the perspective of Holocaust Studies and Jewish Studies – respective points of view and literature are appraised in the Reviews/Discussion section, where five reviews are included. Some are pretty extensive studies with an insightful and detailed analysis of the issues raised by the authors of the publications in question. The reviewers are especially interested in well-known and well-publicised studies on Polish-Jewish relations in Poland and abroad in recent years.

Particularly noteworthy in this context are the polemical texts by Piotr Gontarczyk (“Jan Grabowski’s *Judenjagd*: A Case in Point for the Study of Holocaust Distortion”) and Paweł Kornacki’s review of the book by Anna Bikont (“The Holocaust Without the Germans: *Cena. W poszukiwaniu żydowskich dzieci po wojnie* [The Price. In Search of Jewish Children After the War]). In addition, Ryszard Śmietanka-Kruszelnicki appraised Krzysztof Kąkolewski’s book *Umarły cmentarz. Wstęp do studiów nad wyjaśnieniem przyczyn i przebiegu morderstwa na Żydach w Kielcach dnia 4 lipca 1946 roku* (The Lifeless Cemetery: Introduction to the Study of the Causes and Course of the Massacre of Jews in Kielce on 4 July 1946), while Martyna Grądzka-Rejak analysed the biography of Jakob Steinhardt by Dominik Flisiak, and Kinga Czechowska discussed the publication *Shtetl Lubicz* by Karolina Famulska-Ciesielska.

The last section, Chronicle, contains texts describing the activities of the Institute of National Remembrance in Cracow concerning the commemoration of Holocaust victims in connection with the eightieth anniversary of *Aktion Reinhardt* in 2022 (Roman Gieroń), a series of book promotions and debates around the book, *Stan badań nad pomocą Żydom na ziemiach polskich pod okupacją niemiecką – przegląd piśmiennictwa* (State of Research on Assistance Offered in Polish Territories to Jewish People During the German Occupation – A Review of the Literature) by Michał Siekierka and the conference, ‘*Warszawo ma...*’ 79th Anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, Warsaw, 14 April 2022, related by Dawid Chomej.

Tomasz Domański

Alicja Gontarek