

Dawid Chomej
University of Siedlce
Institute of National Remembrance
ORCID 0000-0003-3067-7357

PROCEEDINGS FROM THE CONFERENCE
“WARSZAWO MA ...¹ – 79TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE WARSAW
GHETTO UPRISING,” WARSAW, 14 APRIL 2022

On 14 April 2022 at the Museum of Independence (*Muzeum Niepodległości*) in Warsaw the conference “Warszawo ma...’ 79. rocznica Powstania w Getcie Warszawskim” (“*My Warsaw – 79th Anniversary, Warsaw Ghetto Uprising*”) took place. As if naturally, the conference aims and subject matter were tied at this time to the anniversary of the Jewish rising. Before the start of the proceedings, a fragment of the film *Zakazane piosenki* (Forbidden Songs) was screened. Deputy Director of Programming Beata Michalec greeted guests in the name of Director Tadeusz Skoczek, Museum of Independence in Warsaw. Subsequently, Aleksander Ferens, Mayor of Śródmieście, Warsaw, outlined the work of institutions engaged in the research and propagation of knowledge on the history of Polish Jews such as the Jewish Historical Institute (*Żydowski Instytut Historyczny*), POLIN Museum of the History of Jews (*Muzeum Historii Żydów*

¹ *Warszawo ma*, a song written by Ludwik Starski (based on the melody of the song “*Miasteczka Belz*”) from the 1946 film *Zakazane piosenki* (Forbidden Songs), directed by Leonard Buczkowski [translator’s note], https://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zakazane_piosenki (accessed 21 November 2023).

Polskich POLIN) as well as the future Museum of the Warsaw Ghetto (*Muzeum Getta Warszawskiego*).

After the speeches relating to the abovementioned anniversary, Maciej Jakubowski from the Department of History and Research (*Dział Historii i Badań Naukowych*), Museum of Independence in Warsaw, presented a historical outline of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. He went on to remind listeners that the April Rising, led in the main by the young, was both the greatest Jewish armed action during the Second World War and the first urban uprising in occupied Europe. The presentation by Krystyna Budnicka, a child survivor and member of the Children of the Holocaust Association (*Dzieci Holokaustu*), closed the introductory section of the proceedings. She went on in vivid terms to recount her childhood in Muranów, Warsaw and the tragedy of the Holocaust, as a result of which almost her entire immediate family met their death or were murdered. In no uncertain terms, Budnicka emphasised that she owes her survival to other people and circumstances, and because of this, today, she feels obliged to pass on her knowledge about these events.

The plenary session began with a paper by Beata Michalec, “O poszukiwaniach żydowskich dzieci i borykaniu się z brakiem tożsamości” (On the Search for Jewish children and Struggling With a Lack of Identity). Michalec referred to Oliver Sacks’ notion on the fundamental role of memory in the formation of the unique “self.” Michalec then juxtaposed Sacks’ concept with the fate of Jewish children who only discovered their roots and true life history after the war. The restoration of their Jewish identity sometimes occurred independently of them, especially when envoys from Palestine and Zionist activists² sought Jewish orphans residing in foster Polish families to reclaim them for the nascent Jewish state and its people. Sometimes, however, Holocaust survivors began to inquire into their own history themselves years later and formed associations for people with a similar life story. One of the first was the kibbutz Ghetto Fighters’ House Archives (*Lohamei Haghetaot*) (named after the Ghetto Fighters) in Israel, which in 1994 established the Department and Archive of Children without Identity. In Poland, the first

² First and foremost the mission by Lejb Majzels, 1947–1948, should be noted. His notes were recently analysed by Anna Bikont, see *ead.*, *Cena. W poszukiwaniu żydowskich dzieci po wojnie* (Wołowiec, 2022).

such organisation was the Children of the Holocaust Association (*Stowarzyszenie 'Dzieci Holocaustu'*), established in 1991.

The next paper, “Chłopi and Żydzi w panoramie dziejów” (Peasants and Jews in the Panorama of History), was delivered by Janusz Gmitruk, Director of the Museum of the History of the Polish People’s Movement (*Muzeum Historii Polskiego Ruchu Ludowego*, MHPRL). In his speech, Gmitruk emphasised that the history of relations between Poles (peasants) and Jews is one, first and foremost, a history of cooperation, not conflict. Both groups, to the same extent, benefited from the peace and rights prevailing in Poland and were equally affected by the misfortunes befalling the country. According to Gmitruk, the Jews, valued for their resourcefulness, entrepreneurship and hunger for knowledge, had a positive impact on the economic and intellectual development of the country as a whole. Significantly for the researcher, the emerging political aspirations of the Jews found understanding among the representatives of the peasant movement, who fought against their political discrimination. The good relations linking Polish peasants and this ethnic community, according to Gmitruk, were reflected in the face of trial when, during the Second World War, more than 100,000 Jews were rescued from extermination in hamlets and villages.³ Moreover, Gmitruk pointed out that just as the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising was the first urban uprising, the Zamość Uprising was the first peasant uprising in German-occupied Europe.

The next speaker was another representative of the MHPRL, Jerzy Mazurek, who presented “The Extermination of Jews in the Opatów District (Radom District, GG).” Mazurek began his speech with an outline of the situation of the Opatów County population between 1939 and 1942, which did not differ from the situation of Jews in other parts of the Radom District. The ghettos created by the German occupation authorities in the area, including those in Opatów, Ostrowiec, Ożarów,

³ Gmitruk refers to the older historiographic research, where the number of Jews rescued by Poles is estimated at up to even 120,000. The latest research, however, significantly reduces this number, to name for example the study by Albert Stankowski and Piotr Weiser, who estimated the number of Jews rescued to be around 15–20,000 (T. Domański and A. Gontarek, “Wstęp,” in *Stan badań nad pomocą Żydom na ziemiach polskich pod okupacją niemiecką. Przegląd piśmiennictwa*, ed. by T. Domański and A. Gontarek (Kielce–Warsaw, 2022); M. Grądzka-Rejak and A. Namysło, “Prawodawstwo niemieckie wobec Polaków i Żydów na terenie Generalnego Gubernatorstwa oraz ziem wcielonych do III Rzeszy. Analiza porównawcza,” in *ibid.*; see W. Stankowski and P. Weiser, “Demograficzne skutki Holocaustu,” in *Następstwa zagłady Żydów: Polska 1944–2010*, ed. by F. Tych and M. Adamczyk-Garbowska (Lublin, 2012).

and Sandomierz, were open or semi-open, i.e. there were no external restrictions in the form of walls or fences, known from Warsaw, Łódź or the larger ghettos of the Radom District, such as Kielce. Mazurek discussed the policy of resettlement and expropriation of Jewish property, before focusing on the presentation of *Aktion Reinhardt* in Opatów County. This criminal operation began with the so-called deportation of Jews from Ostrowiec, carried out on 11–12 October 1941. Some 11,000 people fell victim to this murderous operation and were transported to the extermination camp at Treblinka, of whom as many as 2,000 were killed on the spot, and following the example of other deportation operations, some Jews were left there. Such deportations in other ghettos were carried out in a similar manner. Mazurek also referred to statistical studies, indicating the extent of murder and deportation in the German Occupation. Before the war, the total number of Jews in the Opatów County was estimated at around 43,000, whereas just over a thousand survived the Second World War. At the end of his paper, the scholar touched upon the situation of the Jews in the first post-war years, especially the exodus of the few remaining from the area. According to his findings, the reason why the few survivors decided to emigrate was due to attacks on Jews returning. As a result of the exodus, only a few individuals remained in the region.

The next presentation was given by Janusz Owsiany, a Varsavianist and member of the Warsaw FWK Distillery Association (*Stowarzyszenie Monopol Warszawski*),⁴ who recalled the role played by the director of the Warsaw Zoo, Jan Żabiński, in saving Jews during the German occupation, which is already well-known in academic and journalist circles. Owsiany reminded that Żabiński was at one point asked by Ziegler, head of the German labour office, the so-called Arbeitsamt, to help him rescue one of the ghetto prisoners, Szymon Tenenbaum, who was an entomologist highly regarded in the world (also by the Germans themselves). Tenenbaum did not ultimately decide to leave the ghetto, as he had found a new species of endemic insect in the ghetto. Still, the bearer pass obtained from Ziegler made it possible to take about 300 people out of the ghetto to the so-called Aryan side. All these people hid on the zoo grounds, where they received help from Żabiński

⁴ Named in English after the building where the distillery *Fabryka Wódek "Koneser"* produced vodka. Now a centre for the advancement of Warsaw culture, history and heritage [translator's note].

that enabled them to survive the war. This is the story that came to form the basis of the film *The Zookeeper's Wife* in 2017.

Ryszard Ślężak, a retired employee of the MHPRL, raised the little-known issue of post-war reparations for the Jewish minority. The speaker argued that, as early as February 1947, the British authorities, followed shortly by the French, required the government in Poland to take up the subject of compensation for Jews, which was to cover all titles, including rights to real estate and lost claims. According to Ślężak, the often quoted sum of \$40 million, paid by Poland, includes only a compensation settlement – the value of all property transferred should also be added to this amount. One example is the plot of land under the US embassy in Switzerland, transferred by Poland as compensation. The nominal amount of the paid claims oscillates around \$6 billion. In conclusion, Ślężak stated that the issue of reparations has not, however, been fully settled to date.

Representing the MHPRL, Mirosława Bednarzak-Libera delivered a paper on “Towarzystwo Szkoły Ludowej wobec ludności żydowskiej w autonomicznej Galicji” (The People’s School Society ‘PSS’ and the Jewish population in Autonomous Galicia). The Society was founded in 1891 to commemorate the Constitution of 3 May, and its first director was the poet Adam Asnyk. One of the organisation’s aims was the education and assimilation of local Jews. To realise the chosen directions, PSS colleges and reading rooms were established in Brody, Lwów and Żółków. In these establishments, books were made available for free, theatrical and musical performances were organised, lectures were given, celebrations were held together, and people gathered for various social gatherings. The society was also concerned with educating young people, including Jews, who were taught tolerance, camaraderie, obedience to elders, and an orderly, peaceful way of life. The society’s activities did not meet with resistance from local Jews, as they saw it as an opportunity to improve their living conditions and break their isolation. In her conclusions, Bednarzak-Libera argued that PSS activities failed to lay the foundations for a common social platform between Poles and Jews, the latter remaining isolated and shunned by Christian families.

The following two papers brought the conference participants to consider Jewish resistance to the Germans in occupied Poland. Paweł Kornacki from the Historical Research Office (*Biuro Badań Historycznych*) of the Institute of National Remem-

branch (*Instytut Pamięci Narodowej*, IPN) Branch in Białystok discussed how the Białystok Ghetto Uprising in older historiography was presented. The scholar emphasised that in previous years, Israeli researcher Sara Bender had pointed out that the images of the Białystok uprising presented in the historiography of the 1940s and 1950s had little in common with the truth. A myth was created that spoke of fierce urban battles that lasted almost a month. Meanwhile, as Kornacki pointed out, the Germans, after the experience of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising and the Treblinka II uprising, expected resistance and, before the liquidation operation itself, assembled a larger police force and staffed the key buildings.

In addition, the weak conspiracy in the ghetto was unable to win over the local Jews, who believed that they would only survive the war by working for the Germans. The uprising, the speaker argued, took place in an area occupied by little more than 30 buildings. The insurgents, after a brief and unsuccessful firefight, were told to retreat and try to hide among the gathered crowd. Resistance eventually collapsed when a German tank drove into the battle area. The whole event can thus be described as a well-planned, brutal police operation with elements of resistance by a group of Jews. On the other hand, Kornacki did not consider it appropriate to change the already accepted terminology in light of the latest findings, as the participants in the fighting called the resistance an uprising. For this reason alone, they should not be deprived of the right to call it thus.

In the next presentation, Dawid Chomej and Janusz Piwowar from the IPN Archives in Warsaw presented hitherto unknown Gestapo files in Ciechanów and Płock concerning two micro-histories from the history of the Warsaw Ghetto: Rosa Hutnik and Lotte Eckstein. They were born in Germany to Polish Jewish families, and both were suddenly forced to emigrate to their parents' country during the so-called *Polenaktion* in 1938. They settled in Warsaw, where they were imprisoned behind the ghetto walls after the outbreak of war, and the difficult living conditions made them decide to flee to Płońsk, where Rosa Hutnik had family. On 20 June 1941, the women left the ghetto by tram by bribing the conductor. Their escape was helped by people they met, who enabled them to cross the border between the General Government and the Third Reich. A critical moment occurred during a crossing of bridges over the Vistula and Narew rivers near Nowy Dwór Mazowiecki, during which the escapees managed to pass off "old documents"

to German officials. When the women asked German soldiers for directions, they were rumbled for a trivial reason. One of the railwaymen listening to the conversation, surprised by the fact that the women pretending to be Polish spoke fluent German, decided to inform the Gestapo in Modlin. After their arrest, Rosa and Lotte were accused of leaving the ghetto without permission, bribing a tram driver, removing their armband with the Star of David and illegally crossing the border. The intention was to send them to the Ravensbrück camp, but only Rosa Hutnik ended up there. Lotte Eckstein was murdered in the camp in Działdów on 17 July 1941, less than a month after her arrest. Rosa herself did not survive the concentration camp – “Golgota kobiet” (Golgotha of Women) – she died in KL Ravensbrück on 12 March 1942.

This paper was followed by a break in the proceedings with the opening of the exhibition *Ruch ludowy, bataliony chłopskie i wieś polska w obronie ludności żydowskiej podczas II wojny światowej* (The People’s Movement, Peasant Battalions and the Polish Countryside in Defence of the Jewish Population During the Second World War). After the break, a recording of Dorota Loboda’s speech, “Twoje odwrócenie głowy pomaga tym, którzy dopuszczają się zła’ – warszawska nagroda edukacyjna im. Marka Edelmana i jej wpływ na kształtowanie się postaw dzieci i młodzieży” (‘Looking the Other Way Helps Those Who Commit Evil’ – the Warsaw Mark Edelman Award for Education and Its Impact on the Shaping of Children and Youth). The organiser and founder of this prize is the City of Warsaw in cooperation with POLIN. The project, aimed at Warsaw schools, seeks to remind people of the city’s Jewish history – not only its tragic turn of events but also its cultural history. By recalling the figure of Marek Edelman, this initiative is intended to help shape a young generation that is open to others and opposed to any discrimination and violation of rights.

Next, Anna Skoczek from the Bogdan Jański Academy in Cracow presented a paper on the event “Pin a Daffodil” and began by describing the fate of Marek Edelman, one of the leaders of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, who after the war used to place a bouquet of daffodils in Muranów on each anniversary of the uprising in tribute to his fallen colleagues. This tradition was referred to in 2013 by POLIN with its campaign “Pin a Daffodil – Lest We Forget.” Paper daffodils distributed by volunteers reminded people of the heroes of the uprising. Schools from all over

Poland were able to join this initiative and demonstrate their own ingenuity in the form of promoting the memory of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. The school represented by the speaker organised a karaoke competition, a concert and a film screening among others.

Subsequently, Przemysław Prekiel, The Museum of History in Przasnysz (*Muzeum Historyczny w Przasnyszu*), introduced the personal wartime history of Professor Krzysztof Dunin-Wąsowicz, closely associated with helping Jews during the Second World War. He was born on 22 January 1923 into a Warsaw intelligentsia family with Piłsudski traditions and a member of “Żegota,”⁵ who, during the war, was involved in helping Jewish youth. Krzysztof Dunin-Wąsowicz believed that people helping Jews could be divided by their motivations into four categories: (1) those doing it for religious reasons, (2) ideologues, anti-fascists – mainly socialists, (3) professional groups – Polish doctors helped Jewish doctors, lawyers helped Jewish lawyers, etc., and (4) good-hearted people, to which the professor counted his parents.

He was drawn into Żegota by his future long-time friend Władysław Bartoszewski after the latter’s release from the concentration camp. The first people Dunin-Wąsowicz helped were Maurycy Gelbert and the Tejhorn family, using the surname Motyka. The professor provided these people with care, housing and a livelihood. He used to say that it was easier to overcome the fear of death than people’s indifference, which usually paralysed them and made it impossible for them to help. Captured by the Germans on 13 April 1944, he went through the Szucha Gestapo Interrogation Jail, the Pawiak Prison and the Stutthof Concentration Camp, from which he managed to escape only when the camp was evacuated in February 1945. For his actions, Professor Krzysztof Dunin-Wąsowicz was awarded, among others, the Righteous Among the Nations medal and the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising medal. An excellent historian and author of more than a dozen books – he passed on 9 May 2013.

In his presentation, Rafał Kowalski, The Museum of Mazowian Jews (*Muzeum Żydów Mazowieckich*) in Płock, took his cue from Martin Pollack’s idea that to understand an enormous history, one must look at the individual experiences of

⁵ Rada Pomocy Żydom (Council for the Aid to Jews), hereinafter referred to as “Żegota”.

people. In this context, Kowalski presented many reminiscences of Płock Jews, witnesses to the last moments of their more than eight-hundred-year annals in the region, interrupted by the Germans in the course of just 17 months. Among the accounts presented in the paper was that of Maurycy Zielonka, from a family of Płock shopkeepers, who had his shop taken over overnight by an SS man, not allowing him to take anything from it and leaving only a receipt on the basis of which he was to receive compensation from the German state after the war.

Another, Jurek Rawicki's father, a manager at the Sarna agricultural machinery factory, was forced to leave for Warsaw when his deputy, a German named Gross, spread rumours that he was acting to the detriment of the factory. The speaker also presented the account of four-year-old Jakub Guterman: "a sudden noise in the middle of the night, a harsh light, banging on the door, his mother in a long shirt flying to the door and opening it, his half-naked and bleeding father lying in bed for the next few weeks." Many such Jews from Płock ended up in the Warsaw ghetto. Kowalski presented the gruesome memories of one of them, Lolek Gutman. There were about 60 people in the bunker where he was hiding, including a young couple with a small child. The child kept crying and people started saying that the Germans would discover the bunker because of this and everyone would die. The young parents realised they had no choice. They put the baby on the table and strangled it.

Next, Mirosław Matosek, Academy of Commerce and Foreign Languages (*Zespół Szkół Stenotypii and Języków Obcych*), presented the paper "Życie codzienne i zagłada aniołów i ludzi" (Everyday Life and the Extermination of Angels and Humans). The title referred to Friedrich Weinreb's book *Spotkanie z aniołami i ludźmi. Misterium czynu* (Encountering Angels and Humans. A Mystery Play of Deeds), in which he describes his fantastical 1935 visit to Sobolewo, almost 60% inhabited by Jews and not an arena for nationality conflicts during the Second Polish Republic. During the German Occupation, a ghetto was established in Sobolewo based on the order of 20 November 1941, issued by the Starost of Garwolin, Dr. Carl Ludwig Freudenthal, where almost 4,000 Jews passed through. In his paper, Matosek focused on the individual memories of people who managed to survive the extermination of Jews in the ghetto. One of the most striking accounts spoke of a young poor Jewish woman who asked a gendarme for a bullet

for herself and her little ones. The gendarmes led her to Łaskarzew, only to be shot there with other Jews sometime later.

Then Krzysztof Bąkała from the Museum of Independence in Warsaw introduced the figure of Zofia Kossak-Szczucka. Despite preaching anti-Semitism, she became one of the most active people who helped Jews during the Holocaust. The speaker recalled her immense commitment to rescuing Jews, including her activities in the Konrad Żegota Provisional Committee for Aid to Jews (*Tymczasowy Komitet Pomocy Żydom im. Konrada Żegoty*),⁶ which she co-founded, and recalled the writer's numerous appeals in the Front for the Rebirth of Poland (*Front Odrodzenia Polski*) publication to give up their indifference to the suffering and murder of Jews, and finally to call for action for those in need. The paper was concluded with a telling quote from Jan Dobraczyński: "No one else has done so much and heard so few words of appreciation."

Another speaker, Daria Zarodkiewicz, student at the Vistula University of Finance and Business (*Akademia Finansów and Biznesu Vistula*), presented the history of the Maków Mazowiecki Ghetto in her paper. Jews settled in the town in the sixteenth century and by the end of the nineteenth century it had already become one of the largest Jewish communities in Mazowsze. The first persecutions of Jews began when the Germans entered Maków. At first, these were limited to robbing shops, beatings, forcing Jews to do public works or cutting their beards – humiliating especially for pious Jews. The situation escalated in early 1940 with the order to isolate the Jews and have them wear an insignia. Further, Jewish people from the districts of Maków and Pułtusk were transported to the Maków ghetto, which was established at this time. The very poor living conditions (known from other ghettos, such as scarcity of food and especially water, overcrowding and disease) worsened dramatically after subsequent transports from Chorzele, Przasnysz, Sierpc and Mława. It is estimated that a total of over 12,000 people passed through this small ghetto. The liquidation of the ghetto, where all Jews from the surrounding

⁶ On 27 September 1942, the Polish Underground State set up the Konrad Żegota Provisional Committee to Aid Jews, later (4 December 1942) renamed as the "Żegota" Council for Aid to Jews at the Government Delegation for Poland, <https://ipn.gov.pl/pl/aktualnosci/171145,80-rocznica-powstania-Tymczasowego-Komitetu-Pomocy-Zydom-im-Konrada-Zegoty.html>, trans. Richard J. Reisner (accessed 24 October 2023).

labour camps had been transported, took place in November 1942. Those unable to work, including women and children under 16, were transported to the Treblinka extermination camp, while the rest were taken to Auschwitz-Birkenau extermination/concentration camp. Zarodkiewicz noted that young Jews from the Maków Mazowiecki ghetto were among the members of the Sonderkommando uprising of 7 October 1944, during which Crematoria 2 and 4 were burned.

Maciej Jakubowski, an employee of the Museum of Independence, touched on another of the Mazovian ghettos in his lecture – this time in Strzegowo. The history of Jews in this locality was not a very long one, beginning only in the second half of the nineteenth century. Despite this, the number of Jewish inhabitants grew rapidly and already by 1921 there were 591 Jews in Strzegowo alone (31% of the population) and 704 in the entire district. Jakubowski pointed out that the ghetto in this village was created in violation of the Third Reich's law, which forbade the creation of ghettos away from urban centres. This was due to the corrupting of the local German authorities by the Judenrat and the creation of a sham typhus epidemic. The initial period of the ghetto was relatively tolerable, with the authorities not hindering contact with the so-called Aryan side. Conditions began to deteriorate as the number of inhabitants of the ghetto increased, with people being brought in from the surrounding areas, including Bieżun, Sierpc and Drobin, as well as from Pomerania.

In the summer of 1942, a real typhus epidemic had already broken out and the behaviour of the German authorities, which became very brutal from then on, also changed. Jakubowski notes that in the Strzegowo ghetto, as in other ghettos, there must have been underground organisations, mainly leftist, Zionist and communist, that were engaged in cooperating with the Poles in organising help for the lack of food and other necessities. Unfortunately, we do not have detailed data about their activities. The history of the Strzegowo ghetto ended in November 1942, exactly one year after its establishment, with the deportation of all the Jews residing there to the Treblinka extermination camp.

In his presentation, Krzysztof Andrulonis, a student of Polish Philology and Literature at the University of Warsaw, introduced the life and work of Henryka Łazowertówna, a Polish poet of Jewish origin. Born in 1909 in Warsaw, she was educated as a Polish and classical philologist. In 1930, she won a poetry competi-

tion organised by the Polish Studies Club at the University of Warsaw with her poem *Stara panna* (The Old Maid) and was a member of the Professional Union of Polish Writers (*Związku Zawodowego Literatów Polskich*). She lived on Sienna Street in Warsaw, which was incorporated into the ghetto, and despite the possibility of doing so, did not leave the ghetto because of her mother. She became involved in the Central Society for the Care of Orphans (CENTOS).⁷ Around 22 July 1942, at the very beginning of the *Aktion* to destroy the ghetto, she was sent with her mother to Treblinka, where she died shortly afterwards in August. Władysław Smulski, who knew her, described Łazowertówna as very lively, witty, with a tendency for romantic exaltation, emotional and very feminine. Edward Kozikowski of the Professional Union remembered her as a very dedicated and conscientious employee. Andrulonis points out that the dominant features of her work were cordiality, lightness and simplicity of style, as well as directness, one free from pathos and far from fairy-tale fantasy with an ability to listen to herself. The poet, distrustful of the temptations of the modern world and the harmony of the classical phrase, was focused and, close-minded and faithful to reality, being focused on the detail. Today, she is best known for her poem *Mały szmugler* (The Little Smuggler), inscribed on the Memorial to Children – Victims of the Holocaust (*Pomnik Pamięci Dzieci – Ofiar Holokaustu*) in the Jewish cemetery on Okopowa Street in Warsaw.

Robert Hasselbusch, an employee of the Museum of Independence in Warsaw, presented the events of the Gestapo prison at Pawiak during the *Warsaw Ghetto Uprising* and began by recalling that Pawiak was located in the middle of the ghetto and was therefore often referred to as the prison behind the double wall. Just before the outbreak of the Ghetto Uprising, in March 1943, the prison staff was increased in number, additional machine gun positions were installed and for some time no Polish workers were allowed on the premises. This was due to the crew's fear that the insurgents would capture the prison and the inmates would join them. Hasselbusch focused on the experiences of the prisoners, who heard the sounds of the nearby fighting and experienced deep anxiety. He cited the account of Dr. Anna

⁷ Centralne Towarzystwo Opieki nad Sierotami (Central Union of Associations for the Care of Jewish Children and Orphans), [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/CENTOS_\(charity\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/CENTOS_(charity)) (accessed 24 October 2023).

Czuperska, a prison doctor, recalling that with the first shots, the women began to pray and sing patriotic and religious songs. Meanwhile, the German prison staff were extremely nervous and ran around the corridors, mirroring the anxiety of the prisoners. In this context, Pola Gojawiczyńska wrote about the growing hope of defeating the Germans and in the end, Pawiak did not find itself in the line of battle, although the fires in the neighbouring buildings reached it, making the air scarce and heat unbearable. After the final suppression of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising, secret executions of Pawiak prisoners took place in its ruins.

Bartłomiej Sokołowski, Museum of Independence, Warsaw, presented the work of Roman Kramsztyk (1885–1942), an artist associated with the Warsaw Ghetto. Kramsztyk was a draughtsman and painter, who showed great talent from an early age, as evidenced by his surviving sketchbook. At the age of just 13, he created extremely mature portraits of his family, cityscapes and sketches of nature. Later in his education, he was inspired by the works of the Renaissance period, particularly the Italian masters and therefore became an advocate of sanguine drawing after Leonardo da Vinci. Kramsztyk settled in Paris, but usually spent his holidays in Poland. The outbreak of war prevented him from returning from Warsaw to Paris and as a result he later found himself in the Warsaw Ghetto. In his talk, Sokołowski focused on drawings from this period of his work, which are emotionally charged because of the everyday tragedy of the people surrounding Kramsztyk. He observed the unfolding of this from the perspective of the cafés in which he loved to sit, most often on Rymarska or Elektoralna streets, next to the border wall. He created his compositions with a delicate line, but with a strong contour and chiaroscuro modelling, thus achieving the effect of Michelangelo's sculptural sketches. Here, Kramsztyk's drawings depict harrowing scenes, images of old people and children doomed to extermination. Despite his prolific output and passing his bulging sketchbooks over to the Aryan side, few drawings have survived. The best known is the drawing *Rodzina w getcie* (Family in the Ghetto). Kramsztyk's works were popularised after the war by Maria Konowa (Kowalska), who exhibited them in Sao Paulo.

In his presentation, Andrzej Kotecki introduced the Judaica in the Museum of Independence collection in Warsaw. These are broadly divided into two groups. The first includes objects from the ghettos in Warsaw and Łódź, while the second

includes objects related to the commemoration of these places. The more interesting items in the first group undoubtedly include banknotes and coins from the Łódź ghetto, which was the only one (apart from the Terezin ghetto) to issue its own means of payment. This was an additional measure to make contact with the outside world more difficult – the unfavourable conversion rate meant that Jews who were forced to buy them lost all their savings on banknotes that had no value outside the ghetto walls. Another interesting exhibit is an anonymous letter describing living conditions in the ghetto. The collection also contains, among other things, a banjo with a membrane made of parchment containing Hebrew text and weapons from the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising (including a Vis pistol, a loader and a petrol bottle fuse). Items commemorating the Warsaw Ghetto are mainly medals issued by the Warsaw Ghetto Heroes Museum (*Muzeum im. Bohaterów Getta Warszawskiego*) and commemorative posters.

Piotr Maroński, Museum of Independence Warsaw, tackled the problem of supplying weapons to the Warsaw Ghetto. The scholar pointed out that the main difficulty in researching this topic is estimating the number of insurgents and in this respect sources are not unanimous on this point, giving a figure of between 150 and around 1,000 fighters. Another important issue is the origin of the delivered weapons, especially as there was also a shortage of them on the Aryan side in Warsaw, which was preparing for the uprising, as indicated by the known radiograms sent to General Władysław Sikorski – the Prime Minister and Commander-in-Chief. Meanwhile, memoir sources say that every insurgent was equipped with a pistol and at least 10 rounds of ammunition, not to mention a dozen or so heavy machine guns and other types of weapons, such as incendiary bottles, the so-called *wańki*. The question of the money needed to buy the weapons and how they were smuggled into the ghetto also needs clarification – at a time when smuggling the smallest amount of food involved many difficulties.

Further, Maroński reports that funds for the purchase of weapons were collected by various organisations. This issue is being dealt with by a group of researchers from the Jewish Historical Institute (*Żydowski Instytut Historyczny*). The issue of weapons smuggling was supposed to be solved by tunnels, various people who had the right to enter the ghetto carrying individual pieces and the acquisition of a certain amount of weapons in the first days of the uprising, especially on weak

collaborationist units made up among others of Russians (who were pressured by the Germans at the beginning of the fighting to recognise the situation). Weapons were also at the disposal of criminal groups, which the insurgents tried to draw into their ranks. Maroński concluded by saying that the issue of the transfer of weapons requires further clarification.

The conference was closed by Dorota Michalec, who thanked everyone for taking part. The spectrum of topics covered shows not only the great interest of historians in Jewish topics, but also the need for further in-depth research. The papers delivered by younger researchers indicate that the next generation understands that one cannot discuss the German Occupation and later Russian, of Polish territory during the Second World War without exploring the question of Jewish communities and their tragic fate.