

Paweł Kornacki

Institute of National Remembrance, Branch in Białystok

ORCID 0000-0002-3454-8256

PRE-WAR ŁOMŻA DISTRICT INHABITANTS HELPING JEWS
DURING THE GERMAN OCCUPATION.
A CONTRIBUTION TO RESEARCH¹

Introduction

This article is an attempt to describe the aid activities undertaken by the inhabitants of the Łomża district (within its pre-war borders)² to help the Jews in the period from the summer of 1941 to the summer of 1944. This time span marks the beginning of the German occupation of the pre-war Łomża district (June 1941) and the occupation of most of its area by the Soviet Army in August 1944. This study explores various questions regarding the social background, gender, and motivations of Poles rescuing Jews. Equally important will be the answer to the question of the relationship between those in hiding and those providing help. These analyses are complemented by an attempt to catalogue the forms and places of aid to Jews in the area under examination.

¹ The Polish version of the text was published in: *Człowiek twórcą historii*, ed. C. Kukło, W. Walczak, vol. 4: *Spółeczeństwo Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej w XX w.* (Białystok, 2024), pp. 351–378.

² For the purposes of this article, the name “Łomża district” will sometimes be replaced by the term “Łomża region.”

The topic of aid to Jews in the Łomża district has not yet been the subject of a targeted study. A few cases of aid were mentioned by Szymon Datner.³ Some more information could be found in the publications by Waldemar Monkiewicz, Anna Pyżewska or Sebastian Piątkowski, covering a broader research area.⁴ The existing state of research is also due to objective problems typical of other areas of occupied Poland. Regarding the discussed topic, the Łomża District and the occupation-era Białystok Province (Bezirk Białystok) are underrepresented in the available sources. Documentation of the German occupation administration, that concern the issues under research presented in this article actually does not exist or has not yet been found, and the available Jewish testimonies fill this gap only to a limited extent. The few memories and post-war Polish testimonies are also laconic. As a result, answers to some of the questions asked in the introduction are either incomplete or formulated on the basis of individual cases.

The primary sources for the article included The Righteous Among the Nations documentation, Jewish testimonies and memoirs kept in the Yad Vashem Archives and the Jewish Historical Institute Archives, as well as testimonies published in the memorial books of Łomża, Ostrołęka, Zambrów, Stawiski, and Jedwabne,⁵ files of the District Commission for the Investigation of Hitlerite Crimes (Okręgowa Komisja Badania Zbrodni Hitlerowskich, hereinafter OKBZH) in Białystok, and

³ S. Datner, *Las Sprawiedliwych. Karta z dziejów ratownictwa Żydów w okupowanej Polsce* (Warsaw, 1968). Datner listed the following rescuers from the Łomża district: Józef Dąbkowski from Miastków, Zofia Greloch from Łomża, Janina Wądołowska with her family from the Grabnik settlement, Aleksander Wyrzykowski and Antonina Wyrzykowska from Janczewko.

⁴ There is a number of particular studies concerning the territory of the today's Podlaskie Voivodeship: W. Monkiewicz, "Za cenę życia. O ratowaniu Żydów w Białostockiem w okresie okupacji niemieckiej," in *Białostoccy Żydzi*, vol. 2, ed. A. Dobroński, W. Monkiewicz (Białystok, 1997), pp. 146–248; A. Pyżewska, "Pomoc dla ludności żydowskiej w Okręgu Białystok w latach okupacji niemieckiej," in *Polacy i Żydzi pod okupacją niemiecką 1939–1945. Studia i materiały*, ed. A. Żbikowski (Warsaw, 2006), pp. 941–960; *eadem*, "Pomoc ludności żydowskiej w latach okupacji niemieckiej na terenie przedwojennego województwa białostockiego – stan badań," in *Stan badań nad pomocą Żydom na ziemiach polskich pod okupacją niemiecką. Przegląd piśmiennictwa*, ed. T. Domański, A. Gontarek (Warsaw–Kielce, 2022), pp. 177–197; *Relacje o pomocy udzielanej Żydom przez Polaków w latach 1939–1945*, vol. 6: *Białostoczczyzna, Nowogródzczyzna, Polesie, Wileńszczyzna*, ed. S. Piątkowski (Lublin–Warsaw, 2022).

⁵ *Księga pamięci gminy żydowskiej w Zambrowie. Sefer Zambrov: zikaron le-kehilat ha-ḥodesh she-hushmedah hi'd. Seyfer Zembroye: tsum ondenk der fartilikter kehila hi'd*, ed. J.T. Lewiński, M.K. Frąckiewicz, M. Reczko (Łomża, 2020); *Księga pamięci gminy żydowskiej w Stawiskach. Sefer Stawisk: yizkor bukh*, ed. I. Rubin, M.K. Frąckiewicz, M. Reczko (Łomża, 2020); *Księga pamięci gminy żydowskiej w Łomży. Sefer zikaron li-kehilat Łomzah*, ed. J.T. Lewiński et al. (Łomża, 2019); *Księga Żydów ostrołęckich*, ed. I. Iwri, Z. Drezner, J. Gołota, A.K.F. Wołosz (Ostrołęka, 2004).

memories and testimonies, including audiovisual recordings kept in the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. A great deal of relevant information has been found in the files of criminal proceedings initiated under the so-called August Decree (the Polish Committee of National Liberation Decree of 31 August 1944). Although these mainly concerned the denunciations and murder of Jews, we also find in them references to people who rescued or hid them.⁶ Fragmentary information can also be found in the personal files of the Security Department (UB) officers of Jewish origin and in Polish memoirs, including testimonies and oral history records collected to this day from the descendants of those who helped Jews by historians, regionalists and various institutions.

Particularly noteworthy is a (hitherto unpublished) study by a post-war history teacher, Józef Klimaszewski, who, during the German occupation, took part in the national underground and resided in the village of Konopki (Zambrów district),⁷ entitled "*Na wspólnej ziemi pod wspólnym niebem*". *Sprawa żydowska na ziemi łomżyńskiej w latach 1900–1950* ("On Common Land Under Common Sky." The Jewish Question in the Łomża Region, 1900–1950.)⁸ It is a collection of the author's own studies, a record of his personal memories and experiences.⁹ Klimaszewski focuses mainly on the period of German occupation. Many of the events described in his work cannot be found in other sources and studies. Although we are not able to verify all the information it contains, it adds in no small measure to our knowledge of the history of the explored geographical area.

⁶ On the usefulness of these materials in conducting research on aid to Jews, see T. Domański, "Postępowania sądowe z dekretu z 31 sierpnia 1944 r. jako źródło do dziejów relacji polsko-żydowskich, ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem procesów tzw. sierpniówkowych na przykładzie powiatu kieleckiego," in *Relacje polsko-żydowskie w XX wieku. Badania – kontrowersje – perspektywy*, ed. T. Domański, E. Majcher-Ociesa (Kielce–Warsaw, 2012), pp. 127–151; R. Gieroń, "Zarys problematyki pomocy udzielanej Żydom podczas okupacji niemieckiej w aktach postępowań karnych na podstawie dekretu PKWN z 31 sierpnia 1944 r. na obszarze powojennego województwa krakowskiego," *Polish-Jewish Studies* 2 (2021), pp. 220–250.

⁷ Today, the village is known as Konopki-Jałbrzyków Stok, located in the Zambrów municipality. It is a village of petty nobility. Originally, Jałbrzyków Stok consisted of two parts: Konopki and Koziki, which is why the name Konopki-Koziki is sometimes encountered.

⁸ Yad Vashem Archives (hereinafter AYV), O.6/MISC, 103; J. Klimaszewski, "*Na wspólnej ziemi pod wspólnym niebem*". *Sprawa żydowska na ziemi łomżyńskiej w latach 1900–1950*, <https://collections.yadvashem.org/en/documents/3697764>.

⁹ They are complemented to a small extent by the publication of his brother Wacław: W. Klimaszewski, *Śladami pamięci rodu Klimaszewskich* (Białystok, 2017).

Polish-Jewish Relations in the Interwar Period

The Łomża District was part of the Białystok Voivodeship until March 1939, then as a result of an administrative reform it became part of the Warsaw Voivodeship. Until the extermination of Jews, it was bi-national. According to the 1931 census, the area was inhabited by 168,301 people, of whom 21,715 (12.9%) stated that their mother tongue was not Polish.¹⁰ The vast majority of them were Jews.¹¹ Perhaps a few declared Polish as their mother tongue, nevertheless the figure of about twenty-two thousand people seems to be the upper limit of the Jewish population in Łomża district. According to the same census, at that time, the Jewish population numbered 8,945 in Łomża, 1,551 in Stawiska, 3,142 in Zambrów, 858 in Jedwabne, 3,026 in Kolno, and 762 in Nowogród. In addition, 4,198 Jews lived in rural municipalities. By the outbreak of World War II, the number of Jewish inhabitants of the district may have increased slightly.

In the interwar period, Polish-Jewish relations in the Łomża region were complex. Stronnictwo Narodowe (the National Party, SN) had a considerable influence here, and some of the Catholic clergy favoured the party. The supporters of the “national party” fought over the “stall and workshop.”¹² Their militias picketed Jewish shops and caused riots during fairs and markets. The Łomża region was marked by a conflict between the government supporters (“Sanacja”) and nationalist movement supporters, which was further intensified by Polish-Jewish political tensions.¹³ The former was supported by part of the Jewish community. According

¹⁰ The census did not ask about nationality but about language (M. Urynowicz, “Ludność żydowska w Jedwabnem. Zmiany demograficzne od końca XIX wieku do 1941 roku na tle regionu łomżyńskiego,” in *Wokół Jedwabnego*, vol. 1, ed. K. Persak, P. Machcewicz (Warsaw, 2002), p. 95).

¹¹ A similar number of inhabitants – 21,451 – declared themselves to be of the Jewish faith at that time (*ibid.*, p. 88). Due to a different administrative division, we do not have aggregate data for the Łomża district from the 1921 census. The numbers of Jews in selected towns were as follows: Łomża – 9,131, Zambrów – 3,216, Kolno – 2,216, Stawiski – 1,920, Jedwabne – 757, Przytuły – 37, Zawady – 93, Piątnica – 520, Rutki – 713, Łomżyca – 93, Gać – 226, Modzele-Wygoda – 173, Szumowo – 181, Śniadowo – 386, Wizna – 714 (*Skorowidz miejscowości Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej opracowany na podstawie wyników pierwszego powszechnego spisu ludności z dn. 30 września 1921 r. i innych źródeł urzędowych*, vol. 5, *Województwo białostockie*, Warsaw, 1924).

¹² Cf. e.g. M. Czarniawski, “Jasne koszule” na jarmarku. Stronnictwo Narodowe w województwie białostockim w walce o stragan i warsztat (Warsaw, 2021).

¹³ This has been pointed out by Jan J. Milewski (*idem*, “Stosunki polsko-żydowskie w Ostrołęckiem i Łomżyńskiem w latach trzydziestych i w czasie II wojny światowej,” *Zeszyty Naukowe* 16 (2002), pp. 163–184).

to Józef Klimaszewski, however, everyday Polish-Jewish relations were healthy, and many Poles opposed the extremist activities of the radical right-wing nationalists. Nevertheless, Klimaszewski wrote, "... the Jews had a serious and justified resentment towards Polish society and the Polish state, in which they had not experienced peace in the last decade and did not feel safe."¹⁴

After the aggressors (the Third Reich and the Soviet Union) partitioned the lands of the Second Polish Republic, the Łomża District first became a part of the Soviet Byelostotskaya Oblast', and then found itself in Bezirk Białystok (Białystok Province), established by the Germans on 22 July 1941.

The Soviet Occupation and its Impact on Polish-Jewish Relations

In September 1939, the Łomża region was occupied by the Germans for about a dozen days. At the end of September, the Soviets replaced them.¹⁵ The Soviet occupation was an extremely difficult, even apocalyptic period for the Polish population. Scenes of the enthusiastic welcome of the Red Army entering cities and towns remain in the memory of the Polish inhabitants. It was also remembered that the greater part of the inhabitants greeting the Red Army were Jews. The perception among Poles was that social roles had been reversed. It had not gone unnoticed that then the Jews become those who worked in the militia, offices, shops. Jan Gosk from Rutki stated: "Now, it feels like a Jewish empire. They are elected everywhere, while a Pole is treated like a workhorse, only pulling and being whipped. These are tough times for Poles."¹⁶ It should be remembered that not many Jews supported the Soviet authorities, as the latter destroyed the traditional structure of the Jewish community, suppressed the religion, and those who owned some property were often deprived of it. Michał Gnatowski noted:

[...] not all Jews collaborated with the Soviets, betrayed Poland or compromised their civic duties. Only some of them did so, but the judgement of those who did

¹⁴ „Na wspólnej ziemi pod wspólnym niebem”. *Sprawa*, p. 66.

¹⁵ The Soviet occupation in the Łomża region has been most extensively discussed in publications by Michał Gnatowski. Cf. e.g. M. Gnatowski, *Polacy – Sowietci – Żydzi w regionie łomżyńskim w latach 1939–1941*, vol. 1–4 (Łomża, 2011); *idem*, „Sąsiedzi” w sowieckim raj. *Rejon jedwabieński pod radziecką władzą (1939–1941)* (Łomża, 2002).

¹⁶ As cited in M. Gnatowski, „Sąsiedzi”, p. 137.

so was unjustifiably extended to the entire Jewish community. In the absence of other nationalities in the region than Poles and Jews, and given the anti-Polish Soviet policy, Jews were the only group of locals on whose support the Soviet authorities relied. This meant that a significant proportion of them found themselves if not in the ranks of the new authorities, then at least in its entourage, often out of the willingness to survive under the new conditions. However, this caused the traditional prejudices of Poles against Jews to be compounded by the image of the Jew who participates in Sovietisation and Russification, benefits from it and supports the persecutors of Poles.¹⁷

The Jews who supported the Soviet authorities were visible and loud, and sought to prove themselves useful to their new principals. Many Jews were also among the so-called “Vostochniks” (people from the east), or Soviet officials, who flowed in from the USSR. As a result, Poles arrested by the Soviets remembered the Jew–delator, the Jew–NKVD officer, the Jew–executioner. This is how Marek Wierzbicki summarised this phenomenon:

Although the number of Jews actively involved in the extermination of Poles¹⁸ was relatively small [...], the number of passive supporters of the new authority’s moves was already much larger, and [...] the Polish population’s sense of injustice generally judged them exclusively as a manifestation of a “national treason.” Pro-Soviet attitudes, hostile to Poland, were more noticeable at that time [...]. What we were dealing with at the time was a mechanism whereby observers of the situation would first and foremost spot the shocking, negative events, because they were more striking, more memorable. Objectively speaking, therefore, at that time, instances of attitudes hostile to Poland and Poles were quite frequent.¹⁹

¹⁷ M. Gnatowski, *Polacy – Sowietci*, p. 197.

¹⁸ Apparently Wierzbicki refers there to the involvement of Jews in various forms of persecution of ethnic Poles, resulting in their physical elimination.

¹⁹ M. Wierzbicki, *Polacy i Żydzi w zaborze sowieckim. Stosunki polsko-żydowskie na ziemiach północno-wschodnich II RP pod okupacją sowiecką (1939–1941)* (Warsaw, 2007), pp. 129–130.

A case in point is, e.g., the conduct of Lejb Guzowski, deputy school headmaster in Wizna, who, from the pedestal of the destroyed monument honouring the Polish Military Organisation on 1 May 1940, delivered a speech slandering Poland and Poles:

You must remember once and for all that Poland will never return. The Great Land of the Soviets and we are the owners of this land. He then loudly cheered, 'Long live the Red Army!' and 'Long live the great leader – Father of the Nation Stalin!' After the lecture, the Russians shouted, 'Hurrah!' while the Jews applauded, and the mistreated and powerless Poles, with tears in their eyes and with hatred, watched their traitors and occupiers.²⁰

A similar situation occurred in Zambrów when, by order of the mayor, an ethnic Jew, a monument honouring the 1863–1864 Uprising insurgents and a statue of St. John were destroyed.²¹ The participation of some Jews in organising deportations to Siberia, including identification of addresses of the people to be deported, escorting detainees to loading stations, deepened the bitterness and sense of injustice among contemporary Poles.²² Given these events and the conditions of the German occupation, as Michał Gnatowski remarked, "Anti-Semitism in the specific conditions of the Łomża region took the form of anti-Sovietism."²³

The Change of the Occupier. Executions and Ghettos

It is impossible to determine the exact number of Jews who resided in the area in question at the beginning of the German occupation. It was likely similar to

²⁰ S. Gawrychowski, *Na placówce AK (1939–1945)* (Warsaw–Łomża, 1997), p. 64.

²¹ J. Klimaszewski, *W cieniu Czerwonego Boru*, a manuscript in the collections of the Historical Museum in Białystok, p. 27.

²² A similar picture of Polish-Jewish relations is presented in the work of Krzysztof Jasiewicz *Rzeczywistość sowiecka 1939–1941 r. w świadectwach polskich Żydów* (Warsaw, 2009). The issue is described quite differently by, among others, Jan T. Gross, *Opowieści kresowe 1939–1941. Żydzi i Sowietci* (Cracow, 2019). Interestingly, a similar view has been presented by Jasiewicz in the introduction of a monograph written at the time of the Jedwabne debate *Pierwsi po diable. Elity sowieckie w okupowanej Polsce 1939–1941* (Warsaw, 2002). Seven years later, in the publication *Rzeczywistość sowiecka* cited above, he described the conduct of Jews under the Soviet occupation in a diametrically different way.

²³ M. Gnatowski, *Polacy – Sowietci*, p. 201.

the number of Jewish inhabitants of the pre-war Łomża district.²⁴ However, it is obvious that the transition from Soviet to German occupation marked the beginning of the Holocaust in Łomża region. The first mass murders in Łomża were carried out at the end of June 1941. Between the end of June and September 1941, in numerous Anti-Semitic massacres and executions, the Germans, sometimes with the participation of Poles, murdered almost the entire Jewish communities of Kolno, Stawiska, Jedwabne,²⁵ Rutki and other, smaller localities. They also killed some part of the inhabitants of Zambrów and Łomża. About eight thousand Jews lost their lives.²⁶ The activities of the German commando or commandos that carried out these crimes were stopped after the establishment of German civilian administration in the Białystok province.²⁷

Testimonies reveal that when the Germans entered the Łomża region, a mass exodus of the Jewish population from towns to the countryside took place.²⁸ For

²⁴ The 1921 census showed 17,001 persons of the Mosaic religion (15,262 of whom declared Jewish nationality) (*Skorowidz miejscowości*, n.p.). On the other hand, according to the 1931 census, there were 20,472 residents of the district speaking Jewish (Yiddish) and 731 who spoke Hebrew (*Drugi powszechny spis ludności z dn. 9 XII 1931 r. Mieszkania i gospodarstwa domowe. Ludność. Stosunki zawodowe* (Warsaw, 1938), p. 30). After September 1939, there was a large migration of Jews from the General Governorate to the entire Byelostotskaya Oblast', including the Łomża district. These people, however, mostly fell victim to Soviet deportations. Arrests, conscription into the Red Army and the voluntary departure of Jews deep into the USSR also undoubtedly contributed to a significant depopulation.

²⁵ The Anti-Semitic massacre that took place in Jedwabne on 10 July 1941 is still the subject of much controversy today. On that day, several hundred Jewish inhabitants of Jedwabne were burned in a local barn. What the Poles' participation in the crime was is the subject of dispute. For more literature, cf. *Wokół Jedwabnego*, vol. 1–2, ed. K. Persak, P. Machciewicz (Warsaw, 2002); T. Sommer, M.J. Chodakiewicz, E. Stankiewicz, *Jedwabne historia prawdziwa. Zbrodnia z 10 lipca 1941 r.*, vol. 1–2 (Warsaw, 2021); P. Kornacki, "Wprowadzenie historyka do 'Księgi pamięci gminy żydowskiej w Jedwabnem,'" *Studia Łomżyńskie* 32 b (2022), pp. 257–308.

²⁶ Author's calculations. The approximate numbers of victims are respectively: Zambrów – one thousand, Łomża and surrounding settlements – two thousand, Kolno – 2,500, Stawiski – 1,500, Jedwabne – three hundred, other smaller towns – several hundred.

²⁷ For more on this topic, see P. Kornacki, "Eksterminacja ludności żydowskiej na północno-wschodnim Mazowszu," (the article will be published in the post-conference proceedings *Zbrodnie niemieckie i sowieckie na Północnym Mazowszu w latach 1939–1945*). It is reasonable to hypothesise that the original German goal was to kill all the Jews of the Łomża region. Afterimages of these plans have been preserved even in Jewish testimonies. E.g. Mojżesz Lewiński claimed that initially "the Germans wanted to make Łomża and Zambrów *Judenrein*, but after negotiations they agreed on ghettos" (AYV, O.3, 2327, testimony of Mojżesz Lewiński).

²⁸ Chaja Finkelsztejn from Radziłów, located outside the Łomża district, documented this phenomenon in her memoirs most extensively (Rechowot – Chaia Finkelsztejn testimony concerning her family's occupation fates in Radziłów, in *Wokół Jedwabnego*, vol. 2, pp. 263–317).

example, in Wizna, the predominantly Jewish centre was destroyed by bombing, prompting Jews to flee to the countryside or nearby villages, including Jedwabne.²⁹

Already in the summer of 1941, there were cases when Poles helped Jews seeking rescue. However, it was a one-off help. One of the fugitives from Łomża, Israel Lewin, was helped for a fortnight by the Szymański family from Bronów (earlier, Feliks Szymański from the village of Kossaki had not handed him over to unidentified bandits who were looking for him).³⁰ During the Anti-Semitic massacre in Jedwabne, Szmul Wasersztejn and Izrael Grądzowski also found rescue in the surrounding villages.³¹ In the town itself, Bolesław Olszewski hid Rubin Kosacki and his son.³² Józef Żyluk, convicted in the Łomża trial in 1949 for his involvement in the Anti-Semitic massacre, claimed to have rescued eight people.³³ The wife of another defendant in the same trial, Józef Chrzanowski, claimed that six people were hiding in their buildings.³⁴ A Jewish woman and her daughter were allegedly also hidden by Władysław Miciura,³⁵ whereas Czesław Sulewski “hid” an unidentified Jewish woman who had escaped from the market square.³⁶ Jan Michał Kielczewski also claimed to have hidden a Jewish woman and her daughter.³⁷ Czesław Strzelczyk claimed that his mother rescued a Jewish woman named Kuropatwa with

²⁹ Such a decision was made by Awigdor Nieławicki (Kochaw) (Awigdor Nieławicki testimony concerning Anti-Semitic acts in Wizna, 10 June 1945, Białystok, in *ibid.*, pp. 361–364).

³⁰ Izrael Lewin testimony concerning Anti-Semitic acts in Wizna, 25 September 1948, Łódź, in *ibid.*, vol. 2, pp. 365–366.

³¹ Minutes of the interview with the witness Józef Grądzowski concerning aid exhibited to him and members of his family by Feliks Żyluk and Franciszek Karwowski in Jedwabne and Janczewko, 15 November 1967, Łomża, in *Relacje o pomocy*, p. 188. The fates of Szmul Wasersztajn were most comprehensively described by Anna Bikont (A. Bikont, *My z Jedwabnego*, Warsaw, 2004).

³² Archives of the Institute of National Remembrance in Białystok (hereinafter AIPN Bi), 1/1321, Casefile concerning the aid provided to Kossacki/Kosecki Rubin by Olszewski Bolesław in the village of Jedwabne, Łomża district, in 1941.

³³ Request of the convict Józef Żyluk to the Supreme Court for summoning him to the appeal hearing, Ostrołęka, 28 July 1949, in *Wokół Jedwabnego*, vol. 2, p. 626.

³⁴ She claimed their names were: Haska Łojewska, Gołda Łojewska, Mindla Rubin and her husband, Mejer Gorfikel, Hemi Atlasowicz, Teofila Chrzanowska's application, 3 February 1949, Jedwabne, in *ibid.*, p. 525.

³⁵ Minutes of the District Court in Łomża main session concerning case of 22 defendants accused of committing the crime against Jews in Łomża (first day of hearing), 16 May 1949, Łomża, in *ibid.*, p. 583.

³⁶ Białystok Voivodeship Prosecutor's Office letter to the Białystok Voivodeship Court requesting amendment in the minutes of the court main session concerning Józef Sobuta's case of 11 December 1953, in *ibid.*, p. 797.

³⁷ Minutes of the interview of the witness Jan Michał Kielczewski by OKBZH in Białystok member, Justice Zbigniew Ludwiczak, in *ibid.*, p. 833.

five children.³⁸ The witness T.Ś. on the other hand, said that the Bednarczyk family sheltered Dina Goldberg – she was baptised.³⁹ The witness S.P. told that the butcher Kozłowski from Jedwabne on the day of the massacre rescued a little Jewish girl from a procession of people going “to be burned.” The child stayed in his house for about a month. Then she was taken by her aunt, who came from the ghetto in Łomża.⁴⁰ According to Fr. Marian Orłowski, Fr. Józef Kęblinski also hid several Jewish children in the pigsty for a few days. They were then handed over to other people, however, it is not known to whom.⁴¹ The abovementioned instances of aid in Jedwabne, especially those reported by persons accused of involvement in the massacre, raise understandable objections and are unverifiable. It is reasonable to assume that the defendants and their relatives, by making such statements, were trying to win favour with the law enforcement authorities. However, it cannot be ruled out that some of the described aid attempts actually occurred.⁴²

In Jedwabne, as well as in other towns, after the temporary threat ceased, Jews could return to their former places of residence or to the sealed quarters that had been created. In August 1941, the Germans established several ghettos in the Łomża district. The largest ghetto, with a population of seven to eight thousand people, was located in Łomża.⁴³ The second was in Zambrów, where around

³⁸ Minutes of the interview with the witness Czesław Strzelczyk by the Łomża district prosecutor Eugeniusz Kukielka, in *ibid.*, p. 843.

³⁹ In the source, Dina Goldberg is referred to as “Dyńcia” – it is a diminutive version of the name Dina. The same witness maintained that Poles helped other Jews to escape from the market square in Jedwabne or the march (Minutes of the interview with the witness T.Ś. by the Białystok OKŚZpNP prosecutor Radosław J. Ignatiew, 16 November 2001, Warsaw, in T. Sommer, M.J. Chodakiewicz, E. Stankiewicz, *Jedwabne historia prawdziwa*, vol. 2, p. 629).

⁴⁰ Minutes of the interview with the witness T.Ś. by the Białystok OKŚZpNP prosecutor Radosław J. Ignatiew, 20 April 2001, Łomża, in *ibid.*, p. 889.

⁴¹ Minutes of the interview with the witness Edward Marian Orłowski by the Białystok OKŚZpNP prosecutor Radosław J. Ignatiew, 25 July 2001, Jedwabne, in *ibid.*, p. 957.

⁴² It is reasonable to assume that the testimony given in the 2000s is more reliable in this case.

⁴³ The Jewish population of Łomża before the war numbered around ten thousand. Several thousand (at least two thousand) Jews lost their lives in several executions that took place from June to September 1941. As a result, between seven and eight thousand lived in the ghetto, which was established in early August 1941. These figures are uncertain, as many fugitives arrived in Łomża from Jedwabne, among other places (the Łomża entry in *The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos, 1933–1945*, vol. 2: *Ghettos in German-occupied Eastern Europe*, ed. M. Dean, M. Hecker (Bloomington, 2012), <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt2050wk1.19>. (hereinafter *Encyclopedia of Camps*).

two thousand people lived.⁴⁴ Between a few dozen and up to two hundred Jews lived in ghetto in Jedwabne,⁴⁵ around two hundred in Śniadowo,⁴⁶ and more or less sixty in Stawiski.⁴⁷ A few groups of Jews, often consisting of one or more families, remained in smaller settlements and villages. The period of ghettoisation in the Białystok province lasted a relatively short time – from the summer of 1941 until the beginning of November 1942, i.e. until the liquidation of most, and in the Łomża area, all of ghettos and smaller concentrations of Jews. The Łomża-based Jews were then relocated to the transit camp in Zambrów. This camp was located in the former military barracks, where the conditions there were severe. In large brick buildings,⁴⁸ the Germans crowded several thousand people.⁴⁹ The Jews from Łomża, Zambrów and the surrounding towns were confined there, and also ghetto inhabitants from Wysokie Mazowieckie, Sokoły and other settlements were sent there. Hunger prevailed, diseases were rampant and the German guards mistreated the Jews. The Germans set about liq-

⁴⁴ In all, 3,300 Jews were living in Zambrów in 1937. Between seven hundred and one thousand were murdered on 19 August 1941 in Rzaśnik. About three hundred old and disabled people were murdered by the Germans on 6 September 1941. An unspecified number died in other circumstances. As a result, around two thousand Jews remained. The Zambrów ghetto comprised five streets and was initially unfenced (the “Zambrów” entry in *Encyclopedia of Camps*).

⁴⁵ It is not entirely certain whether there was a ghetto in Jedwabne. After the Anti-Semitic massacres of 10 July 1941, most of the survivors fled the town, and testimonies of those who remained usually mention that the Jews lived in two houses in the Old Market Square. It is also uncertain how long this ghetto might have existed. The Jews of Jedwabne were at some undetermined point relocated to Łomża (the “Jedwabne” entry in *Encyclopedia of Camps*).

⁴⁶ This figure appears in the Polish post-war documentation. Szymon Datner maintained that between six hundred and six hundred and fifty Jews lived in the Śniadowo ghetto, but it is unclear where he derived this data from. The ghetto in Śniadowo existed until 2 November 1942 (S. Datner, *Zagłada Białegostoku i Białostoczczyzny. Notatki dokumentalne* (Warszawa, 2024), p. 214; the “Śniadowo” entry in *Encyclopedia of Camps*).

⁴⁷ The “Stawiski” entry in *Encyclopedia of Camps*.

⁴⁸ Some of these buildings have remained to this day. Unfortunately, it is not known exactly how many of them held Jews prisoner and what area the camp covered. Presumably, the prisoners were also housed in smaller sheds and buildings that do not exist today (<http://koszary.zambrow.org>, accessed 7 May 2024).

⁴⁹ According to various estimates, there were between twelve and twenty thousand Jews in the Zambrów camp (according to Laura Cargo, 17,500–20,000) (the “Zambrów” entry in *Encyclopedia of Camps*). According to Szymon Datner, the figure was between fourteen and seventeen thousand (S. Datner, *Zagłada*, p. 217). From Łomża and Zambrów alone, approximately ten thousand people were transported there. In addition to this, there were Jews from Wysokie Mazowieckie (about three thousand) and several smaller towns. It seems that the number of prisoners in the camp can be estimated at fourteen-fifteen thousand people.

liquidating the camp in mid-January 1943. The Jews were taken to the Czyżew railway station, from where they were transported to the Treblinka extermination camp.

German Response to the Escapes of Jews

During the liquidation operations, many Jews made a dramatic attempt to rescue themselves and decided to flee. Józef Klimaszewski estimated that about one-fifth of the ghettos inhabitants did so.⁵⁰ Unfortunately, it is not possible to verify this information in any way. Both Polish and Jewish testimonies contain statements that the Germans, during those actions, posted announcements about the death penalty for helping the fugitives.⁵¹ This threat was intended to discourage potential rescuers. At the same time, it was announced that handing over Jews to the Germans would be rewarded. The Germans organised manhunts to catch fugitives, and Poles were forced to take part in such actions. Józef Klimaszewski believed that "...peasants, generally, did not capture, or search so as to find Jews."⁵² The peasants, for example, told Rachela Drążek, a fugitive from the Łomża ghetto, to flee when they found her hiding in the bushes.⁵³ Abraham Śniadowicz, on the other hand, stated that after the liquidation of the ghettos:

[...] peasant gangs were formed to look for Jews and hand them over to the Germans. Peasants received three kilos of sugar from the gendarmes for capturing Jews. This new form of income became very popular in the surrounding villages. Peasants ran around like stricken mice looking for Jews who went into hiding.⁵⁴

⁵⁰ „*Na wspólnej ziemi pod wspólnym niebem*”. *Sprawa*, p. 165.

⁵¹ Information about the inevitable death penalty for aid shown to Jews appears in many testimonies. Unfortunately, no original German document explicitly expressing a threat of the death penalty is known to have remained. The Brańsk-based historian Zbigniew Romaniuk found an undated copy of such a document. It contains the sentence: “Whoever takes in fleeing Jews (*sic!*) to their home or gives them food or secretly hides them will be shot.” (<https://www.facebook.com/photo?fbid=5574804025928976&set=a.3033872416688829>, accessed 4 July 2024).

⁵² „*Na wspólnej ziemi pod wspólnym niebem*”. *Sprawa*, p. 166.

⁵³ P.M. Malczewska (R. Drążek), *Historia splątanej nici*, ed. D.W. Stabryła, (Lublin, 2023), p. 116.

⁵⁴ Archives of the Jewish Historical Institute (hereinafter AŻIH), 301/2270, testimony of Abraham Śniadowicz.

Accounts mentioning “Polish gangs” that captured and looted Jews are echoed in other Jewish testimonies as well.⁵⁵ The Zambrów camp, until its liquidation, was the place where captured Jews were delivered. After liquidation of the Zambrów camp, being captured meant for any Jew the immediate death. Manhunts and the searches for fugitives continued until the end of the German occupation. Many Jews lost their lives during the passage of the front in the summer of 1944, when they had to leave their hiding places.

Aid Provided by Poles in the Autumn of 1942

Jews who escaped from the ghettos sought support from Poles. Emergency aid was crucial at that time. Polish acquaintances would allow them to hide for a day, two or a few days. Then, due to fear of the Germans, Jews were asked to go elsewhere. For example, Nachman Podróźnik and his family who escaped from the ghetto in Łomża, took shelter with a Polish acquaintance in a barn. Through the gaps in the wall, Podróźnik watched the march of the Jews to the camp in Zambrów. The next day, the hosts’ daughter, crying, asked them to leave, as German announcements threatening inhabitants with death for helping Jews were displayed everywhere. Podróźnik did not give the name of his helper.⁵⁶ A resident of Łomża named Przechodzień helped the family and friends of Rachela Drążek. He hid them in his house, which was next to the ghetto, and then instructed them on how to get to the forest. There he helped them to build a shelter, visited them there, and provided them with supplies.⁵⁷ Helena Borowska hid the Gruszniewski family who had escaped from the Łomża ghetto, and then she passed them on to her brother Jan Burbutowski. The latter hid the fugitives in a dugout. After a month, the Gruszniewski family had had enough of staying “in a hole” and left the shelter.⁵⁸ For a week, within Łomża’s boundaries, in the attic of one of the

⁵⁵ For instance: AYV, O.3, 2327, testimony of Mojżesz Lewinski; AYV, O.3.3717, testimony of Israel Lewin; AYV, O.3, 2311, testimony of Icchak Szumowicz; AYV, M.1.803, testimony of Shlomo Ptak.

⁵⁶ The Podróźniks did not know what to do next. In the end, they used the hosts’ daughter’s idea of going to Warsaw (N. Podróźnik, *Pozorowana tożsamość. Historia przetrwania pod okupacją niemiecką* (Warsaw, 2020), pp. 61–62).

⁵⁷ P.M. Malczewska (R. Drążek), *Historia splecionej nici*, pp. 113–114; “Opowieść siostr Holcman,” in *Księga Żydów ostrołęckich*, pp. 384–390.

⁵⁸ P. Gruszniewski, *Escape: A Child’s Survival in the Holocaust* (BookBaby, 2020); AŻIH, 301/2736, Pinchas Gruszniewski, 15 September 1947; AŻIH, 301/1990, Pinchas Gruszniewski, 29 November 1946.

warehouses, four fugitives were hidden by Jadwiga and Stanisław Palusko. One of them had the surname Gołąbek.⁵⁹ Icchak Szumowicz, an inhabitant of the settlement of Czerwony Bór (the Łomża municipality), learnt about the impending German operation from local peasants. On the day before (1 November 1942), he and other members of his family fled to the village of Bacze Suche (the Łomża municipality), where a certain Janek Biały hid them for one night. They could not stay with him any longer. They spent the next night with another peasant and the next night with a man called Tiszka. There they could stay a little longer.⁶⁰

Many Jews were unable to cope with the difficult conditions and decided to stop hiding. The chairman of the Judenrat, Gliksman, escaped from the Zambrów ghetto with his father-in-law Mordko Rubikow. Gliksman quickly returned to the Zambrów camp. Rubikow hid with the Klimaszewski family in Konopki. He had to stay in a hiding place in the barn during the day, and in the evenings he came to warm himself in the house. After some time, he too decided to go back to the camp.⁶¹

Mojżesz Lewiński and his family also escaped from the ghetto in Zambrów. They all received short-term help for one, two or three days, but no one wanted to take them in for longer. Lewiński noted: "The peasants were afraid themselves, they could not and did not want to help us. There was no point in wandering any further. [...] There were many such cases. The Jews reported to the camp themselves because they had no other choice."⁶² After several days, they decided to go back to the camp in Zambrów.⁶³ Icchak Gołąbek, who had previously unsuccessfully sought help, did the same.⁶⁴ Nachman Podróźnik recalled that during his escape, he met

Owing to the efforts of Paul and Simon Gruszniewski, in 2018, Stanisław Borowski and Helena Borowska, Jan Burbutowski and Maria Burbutowska, and Franciszek Witowski and Eugenia Witowska were honoured with The Righteous Among the Nations title.

⁵⁹ Minutes of the interview with the witness Zdzisław Palusko concerning aid exhibited by his parents Jadwiga and Stanisław Palusko to a man named Gołąbek and other persons of Jewish nationality in Łomża, 1 December 1986, Wrocław, in *Relacje o pomocy*, pp. 242–243.

⁶⁰ AYW, O.3, 2311, testimony of Icchak Szumowicz.

⁶¹ Rubikow hoped his son-in-law would provide him with good living conditions there („*Na wspólnej ziemi pod wspólnym niebem*”. *Sprawa*, pp. 163–164).

⁶² AYW, O.3, 2327, testimony of Mojżesz Lewiński.

⁶³ AYW, O.3, 2327, testimony of Mojżesz Lewiński; M. Lewiński, "Niedopałek uratowany z ognia," in *Księga pamięci gminy żydowskiej w Zambrowie*, pp. 86–92.

⁶⁴ I. Gołombek, "Krew ogień i kolumny dym," in *ibid.*, pp. 62–81.

a Jewish woman with children in one of the huts: “Poor, weak and wandering in the forest already for two days. She is out of strength, the children are not dressed. They will return to Łomża. Come what may.” A little later, Podróżnik met other Jews. These, after two days of wandering, had also had enough.⁶⁵

The initial wave of mass escapes subsided over time. It is not known how many Jews were captured and delivered to the Zambrów camp, and how many reported there on their own. It is reasonable to assume that most of the fugitives ended up there.

Rescue after the Liquidation of the Zambrów Camp

It is impossible to estimate how many Jews tried to survive on the so-called “Aryan side,” having escaped from the camp in Zambrów before its liquidation in January 1943, as the Germans consistently took steps to kill Jewish fugitives. The survivors’ stories show that only few survived by hiding in just one place. Usually, the fugitives pursued some combination of hiding in forests, swamps and in the countryside.⁶⁶ Szymon Datner stated that the few rescued Jews from the Białystok region owed their lives to the mercy of Polish peasants, as it was mainly they who provided help, whether one-off or long-term, to Jews seeking help. One testimony from the vicinity of Śniadów briefly illustrates the terms of rescuing Jews:

A few people [Jews] survived this gehenna. They lived in forests, in dug-outs or in burrows dug in barns, in pigsties, cows, pigs stood over their shelters. They mostly hid in villages, in remote farms with Polish families. Poles, despite the great risk of death, helped the Jews.⁶⁷

The analysed cases of aid prove that in the Łomża district Jews found help mainly in rural areas, which shows a significant similarity to central Polish lands.⁶⁸

⁶⁵ N. Podróżnik, *Pozorowana tożsamość*, p. 64.

⁶⁶ The above observation bears a rather significant resemblance to attempts to survive on the “Aryan side” in the General Governorate.

⁶⁷ *Ze wspomnień świadka*, <https://historialomzy.pl/sniadowo-w-czasie-ii-wojny-swiatowej-cz-i/>, accessed 15 May 2024.

⁶⁸ See M. Urynowicz, “Zorganizowana i indywidualna pomoc Polaków dla ludności żydowskiej eks-terminowanej przez okupanta niemieckiego w okresie drugiej wojny światowej,” in *Polacy i Żydzi pod okupacją niemiecką 1939–1945*, pp. 209–364.

Hiding Jews in a small town such as Łomża or Zambrów was tough, not only because everyone in the neighbourhood knew each other, but, above all, for logistical reasons, such as securing a suitable hiding place or obtaining foodstuffs that were limited by the rationing system. Nevertheless, a few such examples can be identified. The already mentioned Helena Borowska hid Pinchas Gruszniewski for several days, who sought help from her after leaving his parents. She finally gave the boy a cross and asked him to seek help in the countryside, pretending to be a Polish child. A shopkeeper from Łomża, Czesław Żalek, helped Lea Maria Lasko and her daughter Sara (Sabina) for several weeks. When his neighbour and cousin threatened to turn him in, he arranged for them to stay at Aniela Kulesza's home.⁶⁹ An elderly woman from Zambrów named Leszczyńska took care of Chana Kopperman (born 6 July 1938). As late as 1942, she placed her in an orphanage in Łomża, where she was hidden under the name of Halina Koperska.⁷⁰ Zofia Greloch, a resident of Łomża, assisted her acquaintance Cypora Schlifer by arranging fake documents and securing a job for her.⁷¹ Schlifer, however, came from Warsaw, and hiding her identity was an easier task. For a short time, Józef Chojnower and his family benefitted from local help. After escaping from Łomża, he met his family at his acquaintance Teodor Dróznik's home. They then spent a week in Łomża at the home of a man called Tomaszewski. When Tomaszewski had sold their possessions for them, they set off with the money obtained in this way for Warsaw, where they lived on "Aryan papers".⁷² Elżbieta and Eustachiusz Styrnik from Zambrów saved the daughter of Mordechaj and Kejla Segal. This was possible because the Styrniks' daughter had died, and had been "exchanged" for a Jewish infant. Apparently, many people knew about this situation, but no one reported it.⁷³ Something of a rumour is the story of a Jewish infant from Łomża named Aleksandra. She was supposedly rescued by a married couple named Kresko. After the war, she stayed

⁶⁹ T. Rawa, *Czas przeszły. Wspomnienia*, <https://historialomzy.pl/czas-przeszly-wspomnienia-cz-6/>, accessed 7 May 2024; AYV, M 31.2/8754, Aniela Kulesza and Czesław Żalek.

⁷⁰ The girl was baptised and forgot about her Jewish origin. In 1949, Leszczyńska wrote a letter to her family. After many judicial proceedings, she was returned to the Jews in Łódź in 1950. Chana left for Israel (*Księga pamięci gminy żydowskiej w Zambrowie*, p. 110).

⁷¹ AYV, M.31.2/12093, Zofia Greloch.

⁷² AŻIH, 301/4866, Chojnower Józef.

⁷³ Testimony of Wojciech Grzesiuk, the son of Danuta Grzesiuk née Styrnik, held in the author's collection; AŻIH, 301/ 2248, testimony of Sokal Abraham Berl.

with them and found out about her Jewish origin after their death. These people were also supposed to have helped two other Jewish women.⁷⁴

One-off help was given to Jews by Czesław Siemiatycki, who recounted years later:

Jews came to me about 20 times and each time it was someone new. They came in groups and individually. I don't know where these Jews went to. After that, I was afraid of my own people in the village, because they held it against me that I was helping Jews. [...] I don't know if any of the neighbours helped Jews, because people didn't tell each other such things – they gave them bread and asked them to get out fast.⁷⁵

Emergency aid was needed by Jews who wandered through villages or hid in dugouts built in forests or on marshes.⁷⁶

Most Jewish groups hid for a shorter or longer period south of Łomża in a large forest called Czerwony Bór. It was there that, after the liquidation of the ghetto in Łomża, a dugout was built where a group of ten Jews hid. Among them were Rachela Drążek and the Holcman sisters. According to Rachela, at first it was a bit like being at a picnic. Campfires were lit, on which potatoes were baked, and expeditions were made to the surrounding villages for food. The little Rachela

⁷⁴ <https://missing-identity.net/aleksandra-nn-lomza-poland/>, accessed 15 May 2024. This is a site dedicated to the search for missing Jewish children. A first-communion (?) photo of Alexandra and some tentative references to her and her benefactors are posted there.

⁷⁵ Archives of the Institute of National Remembrance (hereinafter AIPN), 392/850, minutes of the interrogation of the witness Czesław Siemiatycki, 18 April 1988, fols. 17–18.

⁷⁶ According to Barbara Engelking, “Few Jews who found themselves in the Polish countryside after the deportations from the ghettos of 1942–1943, initially stayed in planned, arranged hiding places. A significant number, likely the majority, wandered in search of shelter for some time. This cycle of wandering, finding shelter, escaping or being expelled, and roaming again was a repetitive and characteristic pattern in nearly all stories of hiding on the ‘Aryan side,’ both in cities and in the countryside.” (B. Engelking, *Żydzi ukrywający się na wsi*, <https://sprawiedliwi.org.pl/pl/o-sprawiedliwych/zagladazydow-w-okupowanej-polsce/zydzi-ukrywajacy-sie-po-aryjskiej-stronie/zydzi-ukrywajacy-sie-na-wsi>, accessed 28 December 2023). The ways and strategies of hiding Jews in the countryside have been discussed in many publications including: *Zarys krajobrazu. Wieś polska wobec zagłady Żydów 1942–1945*, ed. B. Engelking, J. Grabowski, introduction by K. Persak (Warsaw, 2011); B. Engelking, „*Jest taki piękny słoneczny dzień...*” *Losy Żydów szukających ratunku na wsi polskiej 1942–1945* (Warsaw, 2011); *Dalej jest noc. Losy Żydów w wybranych powiatach okupowanej Polski*, ed. B. Engelking, J. Grabowski (Warsaw, 2018).

Drażek was also sent out for food. She wrote: "I don't remember anyone refusing anything."⁷⁷ When the frosts came, the girls would visit "a certain householder in Koziki" who gave them warm food. "She would refill their bowls endlessly. [...] She was a good and respectable woman." She sometimes also took care of Rachel's half-brother Idzio. "She was very fond of him and wouldn't let him go into the forest, fearing he would catch a cold."⁷⁸ In her subsequent wanderings in the forest, Rachel encountered more and more groups of fugitives. Such communities had no chance of survival without the support of the surrounding population. The Holcman sisters testimony, who were in hiding with Rachela, contains a telling statement: "We live only on what peasants give us out of pity: bread and sometimes a piece of lard. They leave it at an agreed place and we take it away at night."⁷⁹ It was common knowledge that there were Jews in the forest. At one point, the local people informed Rachela's group of an imminent manhunt. What is more, when the forester found their dugout on the critical day, he encouraged the gathered group to run for their lives. That same day, already during the manhunt, Rachela was found by a Pole. He did not turn her in either, but encouraged her to carry on with escaping.⁸⁰

Pinchas Gruszniewski briefly found himself in one of the Jewish camps. The Szarfsztajn and Szumowicz families built their "pit" on the outskirts of Czerwony Bór.⁸¹ There was a group hiding in Czerwony Bór, and the Stupnik brothers (Moses, Jankiel and Isaac) were among them. They formed a survival group that called itself a partisan group. There is no information in the surviving testimonies as to who helped them.⁸² Over time, due to German raids, Czerwony Bór ceased to be a safe haven.

⁷⁷ P.M. Malczewska (R. Drażek), *Historia splątanej nici*, p. 114.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 115.

⁷⁹ "Opowieść siostr Holcman," p. 388.

⁸⁰ P.M. Malczewska (R. Drażek), *Historia splątanej nici*, p. 116.

⁸¹ Czerwony Bór is mentioned here as a forest.

⁸² I. Stupnik, "Zakładamy grupę partyzancką," *Księga pamięci gminy żydowskiej w Zambrowie*, pp. 92–95; AIPN, 98/1216, Personal file of the Ministry of Public Security (UB) officer: Izaak Stupnik; Archives of the Institute of National Remembrance, Branch in Białystok (hereinafter AIPN Bi), 98/1217, Personal file of the Ministry of Public Security officer: Stupnik Mojżesz; AIPN Bi, 102/4050, Personal file of the Citizens' Militia officer: Stupnik Jakub/Jankiel. In a testimony by Mojżesz Lewiński, who met the Stupniks after the war, there is information that they were helped by some Polish peasant (AYV, O.3, 2327, testimony of Mojżesz Lewiński, p. 29).

The fugitives also tried to survive in other places. Between the villages of Konopki and Ciecioriki, as many as twelve Jews were hiding in a small forest. They had the support of the inhabitants of Konopki. At an unspecified time, due to denunciation, most of the Jews in hiding were killed by German gendarmes. Among those murdered was Aron, son of Jankiel, a tailor from Konopki.⁸³

Fajga Gołąbek from Stawiski, who came from the Rozensztejn family, survived the German occupation in forest shelters, and in the countryside. She lived in a family group. She got help from the inhabitants of the nearby village of Koziki (Śniadowo municipality).⁸⁴ The most supportive person was Rozalia Chrostek, who periodically hid some fugitives in her buildings.⁸⁵ Indeed, many of those who sought rescue in the forests were temporarily kept in hiding places prepared on farms. This was the riskiest way of helping, requiring strict secrecy on the part of both those providing a hiding place, and those in hiding. It should be noted that if a shelter in the forest was discovered, the Jews had some chance of escaping, whereas the discovery of a hiding place on a farm equalled with almost certain death. The living conditions in these hiding places were extremely harsh, as they were often set up in pigsties or henhouses, typically underneath where the farm animals were kept. Staying in such conditions for long periods of time was extremely arduous, and the Jews and the Poles hiding them lived in constant tension.⁸⁶

Using such hiding places was the last resort. Despite this, many similar cases are recorded in the Łomża district. Such help was provided by Apolonia and Bolesław Dobkowski from Zanklewo (Wizna municipality) to the Lewin family from Wizna

⁸³ They were to receive help from Stanisława Zaręba and Tomasz Zaręba, Jadwiga Siemiatycka and Czesław Siemiatycki, Wacław Pęski and Dionizy Ołdakowski (*ibid.*; „Na wspólnej ziemi pod wspólnym niebem”. *Sprawa*, p. 188).

⁸⁴ AYV, O.3, 3714, testimony of Fejgl (Rozensztejn) Golombek.

⁸⁵ According to the testimony of Eva Rosenstejn, the daughter of Abraham, one of Fejga's brothers, apart from the Chrosteks, the family received help from Julia Wojnicka, Stanisław Wojnicki, Lucjan Filipkowski (AYV, M.31.2/5457, Chrostek Rozalia and Chrostek Franciszek). 4 October 1992. The Chrosteks were awarded The Righteous Among the Nations title. It is rather intriguing that Franciszek was a prisoner of war and returned home only after the war.

⁸⁶ For example, Alexander Wyrzykowski described it this way: “Setting aside the complete care of these people, the most significant challenge was the constant fear and prolonged nervous tension, which made survival incredibly difficult.” Letter of Aleksander Wyrzykowski to the Jewish Historical Institute, 1964, in *Wokół Jedwabnego*, vol. 2, p. 234.

(Abraham, his wife Chasia Fejga, and their children, Icchak Jan and Ida Teresa).⁸⁷ The places where Jews were hidden was a cache in a house or a dugout in a field. Józef Głowacki in the village of Łączyn gave shelter to Fiszel Kawka, who came from the village of Tarnowo.⁸⁸ He was also helped by the Zysk family from Miastkowo. These people also sheltered a forty-year-old Jewish woman for three months, but they did not remember her name.⁸⁹ A similar fate befell Abraham Śniadowicz and his son, who periodically stayed in forest shelters in the vicinity of Miastkowo and sometimes obtained help from local peasants. The greatest support was given to them by the Banach and Sadowski families.⁹⁰ On the opposite eastern side of the district in the Chlebotki municipality, Hackiel Zacharewicz was in hiding, sometimes alone and sometimes with a group. Many local peasants helped him, including Franciszek Wądołowski, Wiktor Baranowski, Stanisław Brzostowski.⁹¹

Several Jews found shelter in Kolonia Grabnik near Jedwabne with Janina Wądołowska. They were said to be from Ostrołęka (Bluma Gedanken) and Wyszaków (Lena and Ester Rubin).⁹² In the village of Dzierzbia (Stawiski municipality), the Kukiełka family provided shelter for the winter to a Jewish couple named Boci. Prior to that, they also sheltered a Jewish man named Berci for two days.⁹³ In Gardlin (Zambrów municipality), Chrobociński family provided food for Janek Jabłoński and a certain Szuster family. A hiding place was set up in their barn, which initially housed two men and later a family with a two-year-old boy. The latter was often taken home by the Chrobocińskis. In turn, Czesław Klimaszewski

⁸⁷ AYV, M. 31.2/4598, Bolesław Dobkowski and Apolonia Dobkowska, Tadeusz Dobkowski, Wincenty Dobkowski and Mieczysław Dobkowski. They were awarded The Righteous Among the Nations title on 31 October 1991. After the war, the Lewin family bequeathed their house in Wizna to the Dobkowskis.

⁸⁸ AIPN Bi, 1/1271, Files concerning the aid provided to the Jewish population by the inhabitants of the village of Łączyn in the Ostrołęka district.

⁸⁹ AYV, M.31.2/ 5697, Paweł Zysk and Antonina Zysk, Albin Zysk and Stanisława Zysk. The Zysk family was awarded The Righteous Among the Nations title on 1 August 1993.

⁹⁰ AŻIH, 301/ 2270, testimony of Abraham Śniadowicz, AYV, M.31.2/9331, Banach Jan and Banach Anna.

⁹¹ AŻIH, 301/3158, testimony of Zacharewicz Abraham Chaskiel.

⁹² W. Monkiewicz, "Za cenę życia", p. 180; testimony of Anna Wądołowska in the IPN's National Education Bureau collection.

⁹³ Minutes of the interview with the witness Antonina Kukielko concerning aid exhibited by her and her husband to the Jewish spouses named Boci and man named Berci in Dzierzbia, 21 January 1988, Łomża, in *Relacje o pomocy*, pp. 146–147.

from Konopki helped several other Jews (Finkelsztajn Gerszeg, Siniak Gerszeg, Szmulak Symko). The latter found shelter also with Stanisław Chłudziński. Szmulak, Jabłonka and Tuchman⁹⁴ were hidden by him, together with several Soviet soldiers [alienated from their units by the rapid German advance in 1941, and not taken prisoner – t.n.], in a dugout on which, as a disguise, vegetables were grown.⁹⁵ Ignacy Pietrykowski and Izaak Gold stayed for many months at a farm of a man whose name the rescued Pietrykowski could not recall. Pietrykowski was also unable to recall the name of the village he was hiding in.⁹⁶ Liza Bursztyn, a refugee from the Łomża ghetto: “[...] lived for two years in terrible conditions. She had to hide in the cellar, in the attic, in the chimney, and in the fields. She hid for ten months in the countryside.”⁹⁷ Unfortunately, again we do not know the names of the rescuers as well as their financial and social situation. In the already mentioned village Konopki, many people helped the siblings, who came from Radzymin and worked as tailors. In mid-April 1943, the Klimaszewski family discovered their temporary hideout while dismantling a haystack. Until then, they had not realised where these people were hiding in their hay. After some time, the fugitives left. Until the very last moments of the German occupation, two Jews named Fajba and Gdal hid in the village. In the course of the passage of the front, Fajba was killed by a German, but Gdal survived.⁹⁸ With the support of the local Home Army cell, Dr. Benedykt Grundland, a Zambrów-based physician, and his family found shelter with Matylda and Edward Sapiński from the village Sędziwuje near Zambrów.

⁹⁴ It is not excluded that Zenon Tuchman is meant here (AIPN Bi, 98/273, Personal file of the Ministry of Public Security (UB) officer: Tuchman Zenon). In his biography, he stated only that he fled into the forest and wandered for 23 months “cold and hungry, without a roof over his head and without the right to live.”

⁹⁵ Minutes of the interview with the witness Tadeusz Chrobociński concerning aid exhibited by him, his parents Władysława and Franciszek Chrobocińskis and other members of the family to Janek Jabłoński (Jabłonka) and other persons of Jewish nationality in Gardlino, in *Relacje o pomocy*, pp. 148–149; AIPN, 392/1071, Files concerning the food aid and shelter provided by Franciszek Chrobociński and Władysława Chrobocińska, Czesław Klimaszewski to Szuster and his sons, Janek Jabłoński vel Jabłonka, in Gardlin, the Zambrów municipality, between 1942 and 1944.

⁹⁶ AIPN, Branch in Gdańsk (hereinafter AIPN Gd), 213/750, personal file of the Ministry of Public Security (UB) officer: Ignacy/Izaak Pietrykowski. Pietrykowski in his testimony given to the USMH confirmed the fact that he could not remember the name of the helper or the village where he was hiding (USC Shoah Foundation, testimony of Ignacy Pietrykowski).

⁹⁷ AŻIH, 301/2267, testimony of Liza Bursztyn.

⁹⁸ „Na wspólnej ziemi pod wspólnym niebem”. *Sprawa*, p. 66.

The family was then moved to Tomasz and Janina Kalinowski's place in the village Poryte Jabłoń (Zambrów municipality), where they remained until the end of the German occupation. At the Kalinowski's, the hiding place was arranged in the barn's attic. During his stay in the shelter, the doctor treated wounded partisans.⁹⁹ The Szumowicz and Szarfsztajn families (eight people in all) spent nine months in a hiding place under a pigsty on the farm of the Gosk family in the village of Nowe Wyrzyki (the Łomża municipality). The Gosks had already helped another man, Zelig Gebel. This man, however, revealed himself and had to leave.¹⁰⁰

Mojżesz Lewiński escaped while being put on a death transport in Czyżew. He was initially hidden by an army colleague called Gardecki from the village Szczodruchy (Kołaki Kościelne municipality).¹⁰¹ In January 1943, Lewiński went to the Głodowo Dąb village (Kołaki Kościelne municipality) to Józef Jaworowski.¹⁰² In November 1942, this man had refused to take Lewiński and his family in. However, when Lewiński returned alone, the man embraced him warmly and said, "God brought you here. When you were here a few months ago with your family, I couldn't take you in because there were four of you, but I can take in just you."¹⁰³ He treated Lewiński's frostbite and hid him until the end of the German occupation. His desperation was so intense that he initially kept hiding Lewiński as a secret from his wife. When she found out, she took the children and fled, returning only after about a fortnight.¹⁰⁴

It should be noted that in addition to those who provided help to individuals, some supported whole groups of fugitives. The best known Righteous from Łomża region is Antonina Wyrzykowska from the village Janczewko (Jedwabne municipality). She and her husband Aleksander Wyrzykowski and her parents Franciszek and

⁹⁹ AIPN, Branch in Wrocław (hereinafter AIPN Wr), 024/6104/12, registration file concerning Grunland Benedykt, testimony of Lidia Fischer, <http://wirtualnie.lomza.pl>; testimony of Zofia Olasik née Kalinowska, Institute of National Remembrance Branch National Education Bureau in Białystok Collection. The correct transcription of his second name is Grundland. Among other things, this is confirmed by the inscription on his daughter's gravestone in Wrocław.

¹⁰⁰ AYV, M.31.2/50, Gosk Mieczysław, Helena and Józef. The Gosk family consisted of Józef (father), his son Mieczysław and his daughter-in-law Helena.

¹⁰¹ The village of Szczodruchy, the Kołaki Kościelne municipality.

¹⁰² AYV, M.31.2/12256, Józef Jaworowski. 2 November 2011. Józef Jaworowski was awarded The Righteous Among the Nations title.

¹⁰³ AYV, O.3, 2327, testimony of Mojżesz Lewiński, p. 23.

¹⁰⁴ AYV, O.3, 2327, testimony of Mojżesz Lewiński; M. Lewiński, "Niedopalek uratowany z ognia."

Józefa Karwowski saved seven Jewish inhabitants of Jedwabne and refugees from the ghetto in Łomża: Mojżesz (Moshe) Olszewicz, Berek Olszewicz – Mojżesz's brother, Szmul Wasersztejn, Elka – Moshe Olszewicz's fiancée, Izrael Grądowski, Jankiel Kubrzański and Lea Sosnowska – Jankiel's fiancée. The Jews stayed in two hiding places dug under the pigsty and the henhouse between November 1942 and January 1945. The hosts experienced a moment of terror when the Germans raided the farm and made a search.¹⁰⁵ Józef Dąbrowski of Miastkowo helped many Jews: Abraham and Mejer Śniadowicz, Rostker from Ostrołęka, Szklarczyk from Łomża, Lewton from village Drogoszewo, Nadborn from village Rydzewo, and Wolkowicz with his son and sister.¹⁰⁶

Some of the Jews who survived after the war did not mention who helped them. For example, there was a group of Jews hiding in the woods near Rząśnik, among them Dawid Rozenberg. In his testimony, he described only the harm that Poles inflicted on his fellow Jews.¹⁰⁷ An encampment of Jewish escapees operated for a longer period of time on the marshes of the River Ruż near the Podosie village. Up to 25 people stayed there, where a workshop operated and some products [boots] were made and exchanged for food. The camp, with the undoubted support of local peasants, survived until June 1944, when a Home Army unit from the Ostrołęka district destroyed it.¹⁰⁸ Ignacy (Izaak) Pietrykowski survived the winter of 1942–1943 in the forests south of Zambrów with a group of about 20 people. They lived in two dugouts and survived on what they bought or begged from local

¹⁰⁵ Antonina Wyrzykowska and Aleksander Wyrzykowski were awarded The Righteous Among the Nations title on 19 January 1976, as did Franciszek Karwowski and Józefa Karwowska on 21 November 1993. The story of Antonina Wyrzykowska was most extensively described by Anna Bikont (A. Bikont, *My z Jedwabnego*); AYV, M.31.2/5756, Karwowski Franciszek and Karwowska Józefa; AYV M.31.2/1011, Antonina Wyrzykowska and Aleksander Wyrzykowski.

¹⁰⁶ AŻIH, 301/6625, Datner Szymon, Names of Poles who gave shelter to Jews in the Białystok region during the years of the German occupation, February 1946.

¹⁰⁷ AŻIH, 301/4407, testimony of Dawid Rozenberg.

¹⁰⁸ On the night of 1–2 June 1944, a Home Army unit of about 20 men, led by Bolesław Kurpiewski pseudonym "Orlik," attacked a Jewish encampment on the marshes of the Ruż River near the Podosie village. Twelve people were murdered on the spot, and two more were killed later. Several others escaped (A. Bikont, "Marzeniem pana Poteraja jak i moim jest, aby te niechlubne wydarzenia zostały opisane." O zbrodni oddziału AK na Żydach ukrywających się na bagnach koło wsi Podosie w Łomżyńskim," *Zagłada Żydów. Studia i Materiały* 18 (2002), pp. 170–199. The article provides more sources and references to the literature in the field). This is confirmed by the author's conversation with the son of one of the participants in this crime.

peasants. Unfortunately, Pietrykowski did not mention which villages supported them. He did, however, remember the name of the village where the local population attacked him. In the spring of 1943, peasants from Grochy Szlacheckie¹⁰⁹ tracked down a Jewish hideout. They captured and handed over to the German gendarmes the Jews from one of the shelters. The other hideout was liquidated by the gendarmes themselves, who murdered the Jews hidden there.¹¹⁰ One can only speculate as to the reasons why Pietrykowski “did not remember,” or perhaps did not want to give the names of the villages whose inhabitants showed help to the Jewish fugitives, whereas he gave the precise place and time of the contrary attitudes.

Aid Provided to Children¹¹¹

“They would take the little children home, teach them prayers, give them Polish names. But when a stranger came, they hid them.”¹¹² The nature of the aid provided to Jewish children was different from that provided to adults. Especially in the case of girls, the risk of exposure was relatively lower. Jewish charges were often given a false identity (they were claimed to be ‘illegitimate children’ or relatives). Most of the researched cases concerned help given to orphans. It is noteworthy that strong emotional bonds were formed between the guardians and their charges. There were also situations known when teenage children made up their own *curriculum vitae* and, wandering around villages, pretended to be Polish orphans. They tried to “blend in” with their surroundings, master or correct their Polish vocabulary, learn prayers, poems or songs. From the testimonies of surviving Jewish children, it seems that they believed in the effectiveness of mimicry. However, if this was the case, what was the purpose of: “when a stranger came, the guardians hid them”? It is highly likely that the guardians could easily discern

¹⁰⁹ Unidentified location, possibly Grądy Szlacheckie, the Miastkowo municipality.

¹¹⁰ AIPN Gd, 213/750, personal file of the Ministry of Public Security (UB) officer: Ignacy/Izaak Pietrykowski.

¹¹¹ Hiding children does not, of course, make a separate category, but their situation was sometimes so different (age, lack of independence) and their fate so dramatic that the author decided to highlight these cases separately. Their fate was a dominant feature of another publication by the author of this article (P. Kornacki, *Nie tylko Ulmowie. Historie o Polakach ratujących Żydów na Podlasiu*, Białystok, 2024).

¹¹² A passage taken from the memories of a witness, <https://historialomzy.pl/sniadowo-w-czasie-ii-wojny-swiatowej-cz-i/>, accessed 15 May 2024.

the identity of these children. For example, Rachela Drązek, a fugitive from the Łomża ghetto, believed she had the so-called “good looks” and thought she spoke flawless Polish. She was convinced that no one would suspect her Jewish origin. One may have doubts about this. Wandering from farm to farm, she introduced herself as an orphan looking for accommodation and food, or, sometimes, an occupation, and usually found it. At a farmer’s house in Żebry village, she admitted to her origin; they allowed her to stay for a few months.¹¹³ At least about a dozen families were engaged in helping the girl, among others from the villages of Uśnik Dolny (Śniadowo municipality, Myśliński family) or Koziki (the Śniadowo municipality). Rachela periodically hid with other young Jewish women. These were sisters Gienia, Sara and Rachela Holcmans and Chaja Freidel. One of them, Gienia Holcman, at one point hid in the Trzaski village (Troszyn municipality).¹¹⁴ She mentioned: “[I was there with a family of] nice people who treated me very decently.”¹¹⁵ She stayed at home but had a hiding place prepared in the barn, just in case. One day the German gendarmes turned up unexpectedly and conducted a search. Gienia hid in the attic; meanwhile, the Germans found a hiding place in the barn. The farmer’s son Stanisław was then beaten to death. He did not want to reveal who the hiding place was for.¹¹⁶ Sara Holcman, on the other hand, in her wanderings, found help from a woman she called “Gołąbieścicha” (Dove Woman).¹¹⁷ Rachel Holcman experienced the most problems. The girl was often chased away, but she survived too.

As in other situations, denunciations posed the greatest danger. Denunciation led to the death of a Jewish girl with the assumed name Danusia, who was hiding in the Wszerecz village (Śniadowo municipality) with the Kuczyński family. In June 1943, when the German gendarmerie arrived, all the household members fled, but the Germans shot the Jewish woman as she was fleeing. Jerzy Kuczyński, a teenager, was a direct witness of this death. The girl was killed a few metres from

¹¹³ Rachela Drązek did not reveal the man’s name.

¹¹⁴ Trzaski, the Troszyn municipality, Mazowieckie Voivodeship. During the German occupation, the village was in the territory of the General Governorate. The nearest village in the Łomża district was Podosie, which has already been mentioned here.

¹¹⁵ “Opowieść siostr Holcman,” p. 398.

¹¹⁶ Regrettably, it has not been possible to ascertain further details about the persons involved.

¹¹⁷ “Opowieść siostr Holcman,” p. 398.

his hiding place. The frightened boy attempted to escape, but was caught by the Germans and had to bury Danusia at the crime scene.¹¹⁸

In the Cieciorzy village (Turośl municipality), Pinchas Gruszniewski was rescued by Józef Malinowski. After the war, the boy found his brother, who had been taken from the Burbutowski family and kept by the Witowski couple.¹¹⁹

From the ghetto in Łomża, Jakub Piekarewicz made his way to Teodor Chrzanowski in the Trzaski village (Troszyn municipality). The farmers took care of him and the boy worked as a shepherd. The Chrzanowskis taught him Christian prayers, Polish songs and poems. Two other Jews also lived on the farm. In the winter, after the liquidation of the ghettos, they were found there by the Germans, who killed one of them, while the Chrzanowskis were arrested. The Chrzanowskis were released from prison after three months. Piekarewicz survived because the Germans considered him a Pole.¹²⁰

On the day the Łomża ghetto was liquidated, Chawa Rosensztejn was separated from her parents. She wandered from village to village, sometimes being passed from hand to hand or even transported in a sack. She spent four months at the homestead of the village headman in Karcz (Mały Płock municipality),¹²¹ and finally ended up with a farmer who reportedly was unaware of her descent. She survived there until the end of the war.¹²²

An attempt to save a Jewish infant in Bacze Mokre village failed.¹²³ It was the child of one of two Jewish women hiding in the neighbourhood, who were helped, among others, by a resident of this village, Władysław Milewski. According to one version, in the autumn of 1943 the village leader tried to “report” the child as Polish to the Germans, but someone probably made a denunciation. After arriving in

¹¹⁸ Testimony of Jerzy Kuczyński, 6 May 2010, <https://collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/irn45133>.

¹¹⁹ AŻIH, 301/2736, testimony of Pinchas Gruszniewski; P. Gruszniewski, *Escape*, p. 63; AYV, M.31.2/13585, Stanisław Borowski and Helena Borowska; AYV, M.31.2/13585/2, Jan Burbutowski and Maria Burbutowska; AYV, M.31.2/13585/1, Franciszek Witowski and Eugenia Witowska.

¹²⁰ AYV, O.3.11655, Testimony of Jacob Piekarewicz; *Historia Jankiela Piekarewicza z miejscowości Stawiski* [story of Jakub Piekarewicz], <https://pamiecitozsamosc.pl/historia-jankiela-piekarewicza-z-miejscowosci-stawiski>, accessed 15 May 2024.

¹²¹ Now part of the village of Śmiarowo, the Kolno district, the Mały Płock municipality.

¹²² AŻIH, 301/1272, testimony of Rosensztejn Chawa.

¹²³ Bacze Mokre, the Zambrów municipality.

the village, the gendarmes took the infant from the hands of Janina Waszkiewicz and murdered it cruelly.¹²⁴

Noemi Centnerschwer was wandering through the countryside in the neighbourhood of Śniadowo. She escaped from the ghetto together with her sister. They spent their days in the forest and their nights, she claimed, with good farmers. Eventually they separated, and her sister was killed. Noemi was left alone and, as she described, she lived her life being chased away from place to place. Like Rachel or Pinchas, she invented a false life story for herself. She managed to stay longer in Szabły village (Śniadowo municipality)¹²⁵ with a man called Jasiński. She did not manage to hide her identity. Nonetheless, the hosts kept her until the end of the German occupation.¹²⁶

In the spring of 1943, Helena Grodzka from Szlasy Łopienite village (Rutki municipality) found an eight-year-old Jewish girl. She fed and washed the child. It later turned out that she was the daughter of a Jew named Zyskind, who was hiding in the area. Until the autumn of 1943, this man came to see his daughter in the evenings, but one day he collected her and left.¹²⁷

Jan Jabłoński, village headman of Śliwowo-Łopienite (Rutki municipality), rescued a Jewish boy, Gedalie Wander, a resident of Białystok, who had escaped from a transport to Treblinka. His mother and sister both got killed by jumping from the train. The boy wandered around for some time. He survived despite the poor knowledge of the Polish language.¹²⁸

According to the testimony published in the memorial book of the Jewish community in Zambrów, a peasant, whose name is unknown, hid a Jewish boy whose name was Beinusz Bernard Sarna. In 1946, the man demanded payment from the

¹²⁴ Former gendarme Michał Ratajczak was sentenced in 1963 to seven years of imprisonment for the murder of a child and other crimes (Minutes of the interview with the witness Władysław Milewski concerning aid exhibited by him to a man named Ruban, and unnamed women of Jewish nationality in the vicinity of the village Bacze Mokre, 27 October 1986, Białystok, in *Relacje o pomocy*, pp. 345–348; AIPN Bi, 3/96, Prosecution casefile concerning the case of Ratajczak Michał).

¹²⁵ It is not clear whether the testimony refers to the village of Szabły Młode or Szabły Stare (the Łomża district, the Śniadowo municipality).

¹²⁶ AŻIH, 301/2750, testimony of Noemi Centnerschwer.

¹²⁷ Helena Grodzka's account concerning aid exhibited by her mother to Irena Zyskind in Szlasy-Łopienite, 7 November 1944, Zambrzyce, in *Relacje o pomocy*, p. 344.

¹²⁸ AYW, M.31.2/13146, Jabłoński Jan. On 17 November 2015, he was awarded The Righteous Among the Nations title.

Jews, and when he received it, he gave the boy away, and the boy was sent to an orphanage in Białystok.¹²⁹

In unexplained circumstances, Józef Lis, who came from the Bagatele village (Lithuania), found himself in the Srebrna village (Szumowo municipality). He wandered from farmer to farmer, from house to house, and, eventually, luckily survived until the end of the German occupation. According to his testimony, at the end of the German occupation, unidentified bandits killed his mother and sister.¹³⁰

Sura Bursztyn from the Wołomin ghetto was deported to the Treblinka death camp. According to her testimony, when she and others were being led to the gas chambers, a commotion arose and the girl and others managed to escape. Sura wandered around various towns, unable to hide her identity. From time to time she met people who helped her. Eventually, she ended up in the Zambrów ghetto. After its liquidation, she escaped again and began to wander yet again. She finally found safe haven and rescue with Janina and Jakub Krajewski in the Krajewo-Budziły village (Szumowo municipality).¹³¹ Janina Krajewska noted in her testimony the following about her motivations:

In November 1942, as a girl of twelve at the time, she arrived at our house, extremely emaciated. Her state of health was very seriously bad. She had numerous festering wounds on her body and head, as well as extensive bruises and knocked-out teeth. My husband and I guessed immediately that she was a Jewish child [...], but she did not admit that, claiming [...] that she was looking for her lost mother. Sympathising with this unfortunate girl, we kept her with us, even though we understood the great danger we were in from Germans. I treated and dressed her wounds for a long time.

¹²⁹ *Księga pamięci gminy żydowskiej w Zambrowie*, p. 110.

¹³⁰ AIPN Bi, 008/181, personal casefile of the secret collaborator (i.e. security police informer), pseudonym "Murarz," concerning Lis Józef, father's name: Erszek, born on 19 March 1933; recorded interview held in the collections of the National Education Bureau, Institute of National Remembrance, Branch in Białystok.

¹³¹ AYV, M.31.2/4760, Krajewski Jakub and Krajewska Janina; "Ocalona z Treblinki – Sura Bursztyn," in *Losy żydowskie. Świadectwo żywych*, vol. 2, ed. M. Turski (Warsaw, 1999), pp. 3–4.

In 1990, the rescued Sura, whose name was then Barbara Tyl, stated in a letter to the Israeli ambassador:

For their good heart, for their good deeds, for their downright heroic act, putting their lives on the line, I cannot express my gratitude in any other way. I therefore earnestly ask the Israeli government to make a gesture of recognition for what the Krajewski family did for me.¹³²

In 1946, Sura Bursztyn was baptised. Noemi Centnerszwer, Gedali Wander or Pinchas Gruszniewski were also persuaded to take a similar step. Undoubtedly, the motivation of some helpers was to convert a Jewish child to Christianity.

Repressions Against the Persons who Helped

Józef Klimaszewski claimed that after the liquidation of the surrounding ghettos in the Łomża district, many Jews hid in Konopki. During a raid in November 1942, about twenty of them were captured by the Germans. The occupiers arrested Dominik Ołdakowski, a Pole, at whose premises the Jews were found. He was released from a labour camp after a few weeks. According to Klimaszewski, this case was an exception, as initially, the Germans did not impose severe consequences on the Poles due to the fact that Jews hiding in this area was a widespread occurrence.¹³³

Based on the research that has been carried out, it has been concluded that there were at least a few cases of German repressions for helping Jews in the Łomża District during the Occupation. The first case happened still during the ghettoisation period and concerned the nineteen-year-old Czesław Kowalewski, who smuggled food into the Łomża ghetto. He was shot and his body was hanged at the ghetto

¹³² AYW, M.31.2/4760, Krajewski Jakub and Krajewska Janina. Neither Sura Bursztyn nor the Krajewskis lived to see this request fulfilled, as the procedure for awarding the Krajewskis The Righteous Among the Nations title at Yad Vashem took almost 30 years and they received it only on 17 July 2018.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, p. 169; Minutes of interview of the witness Antoni Kołakowski concerning aid exhibited by his parents Stefania and Łukasz Kołakowskis to a man named Aron and other persons of Jewish nationality in Konopki, in *Relacje o pomocy*, pp. 216–217; AIPN, 392/850, Files concerning the food aid provided by the families of Zaręba, Kołakowski, Siemiatycki, and by Wacław Pęski and Dionizy Ołdakowski to Jews hiding in the forest in the vicinity of the village of Konopki Koziki in the Zambrów municipality between 1942 and 1944.

gate. The corpse hung there for a whole day. The crime was likely meant to deter others from trying to get into the ghetto.¹³⁴

Another case is the death of Antoni Rydzewski from Budy Stawiskie. At an unspecified moment, most probably because of a denunciation, the German gendarmerie organised a raid during which several Jews were killed and Rydzewski, who was hiding them, was beaten and shot.¹³⁵ Near Grądy Woniecko in 1943 or 1944 the Germans killed Eugeniusz Kościelewski, who was hiding Jews. The occupiers shot three Jews who were hidden by him and burnt down the buildings.¹³⁶

A resident of Szlasy Łopienite (Rutki municipality), Jan Choiński, was sent to a concentration camp for helping a Jew from Łomża named Makulski. The Germans found out about the hiding of the Jew from an informer. Makulski and Choiński were cuffed together and taken to Rutki. A few days later, a show execution was held, and people from the entire area, including the Choiński family, were forced to attend. Those who arrived saw a grave with a Jew and a Pole standing over it. The Germans forced the Jew to enter the pit and ordered Choiński to bury him alive. When Choiński refused, the Germans ordered them to swap roles. Makulski then obeyed and began to fill the pit where Choiński stood. They then ordered Choiński out of the pit, shot the Jew, and ordered the Pole to bury the dead man. Choiński was then sent to the Stutthof camp, from where he did not return. His fellow inmates who survived the camp claimed that he was still alive in 1945.¹³⁷

The Rescuers' Motivations

In the available sources rarely do we find an answer to the question what motivated Poles to rescue Jews. The Yad Vashem Institute, when considering whether a family or a person should be honoured with The Righteous Among

¹³⁴ AIPN Bi, 1/1115, Old Łomża – Aid to Jews.

¹³⁵ *Represje za pomoc Żydom na okupowanych ziemiach polskich w czasie II wojny światowej*, ed. M. Grądzka-Rejak, A. Namysło (Warsaw, 2019), p. 287.

¹³⁶ However, the circumstances of this tragedy are unclear and the story is based solely on hearsay from witnesses. Even the details of the murdered man are uncertain. His name could have been Piotr and his surname Kościelecki. He could have been killed for helping partisans or in retaliation for killing a German. It is possible that he was not killed on the spot, but arrested and executed later (*Represje za pomoc Żydom*, p. 192); AIPN Bi, 1/1103, files concerning the inhabitants of the villages of Grądy-Woniecko and Bronowo murdered during World War II.

¹³⁷ Sources: AIPN, 392/1104, Files concerning the hiding by Jan Choiński and his family of a Jew named Kokoszko in the village of Szlasy Łopienite, the Zambrów district, between 1943 and 1944.

the Nations title, examines whether the help provided was selfless, eliminating as a rule those cases in which we are dealing with paid or co-paid help. In the testimonies concerning the rescue of Jews collected by the District Commission for the Investigation of Hitlerite Crimes (OKBZH), the financial aspect was also not taken into account. This type of source suggests that Poles supported Jews out of altruistic motives. However, post-war Jewish testimonies sometimes show that Jews promised Polish caretakers to bequeath their property to them after the war. For example, Ignacy Pietrykowski promised the man who was hiding him that he would hand over his properties in Łódź to him. His fellow Jew promised to give him his mill. In Pietrykowski's case, this was a trick designed to save his life, as he did not own any property.¹³⁸ Mieczysław Gosk, who was helping the Szarfsztajns and Szumowiczs, acted as an intermediary in the sale or exchange of their belongings and valuables. Apparently he was also promised some goods hidden by Jews seeking to be rescued.¹³⁹ Abraham Śniadowicz claimed that for hiding him, his son and two other Jews, he paid Banach "\$20 plus belongings" per month.¹⁴⁰ Hackiel Zacharewicz and his brother were able to hide at Franciszek Wądołowski's house when they gave him things from their flat. They also promised him that their friends from America would help him after the war came to an end.¹⁴¹ The Dobkowskis, in turn, after the war received the Lewins' house located in Wizna.¹⁴² Apparently a kind of contract between the rescuer and the rescued was formed, a phenomenon which, under the German occupation conditions, was not perceived as something pejorative.¹⁴³ In the opinion of the author of this text, the remuneration for the aid provided does not diminish the value of those who

¹³⁸ AIPN Gd, 213/750, personal file of the Ministry of Public Security (UB) officer: Ignacy/Izaak Pietrykowski.

¹³⁹ "W okolicach Łomży w dniach pogardy hitlerowskiej. Z ust Nachmana Szarfsztajna," *Księga pamięci gminy Żydowskiej w Łomży*, pp. 92–98, here: p. 98.

¹⁴⁰ AŻIH, 301/ 2270, testimony of Abraham Śniadowicz.

¹⁴¹ AŻIH, 301/3158, testimony of Zacharewicz Abraham Chaskiel.

¹⁴² AYW, M. 31.2/4598, Dobkowski Bolesław and Dobkowska Apolonia; Son: Tadeusz; Son: Mieczysław; Son: Wincenty.

¹⁴³ As Jan Grabowski noted: "Not only the recipients, but also the Jews themselves treated the payment for help as a natural thing, devoid of the stigma of betrayal or extreme exploitation. As long as the recipient of the payment respected the rules of the informal contract, i.e. did not unilaterally change the terms of the agreement, did not oppress or starve his charges and – most importantly – did not contribute to their extermination, such an attitude was assessed positively." (J. Grabowski, "Ratowanie Żydów za pieniądze – przemysł pomocy," *Zagłada Żydów. Studia i Materiały* 4 (2008), p. 108).

chose to help their fellow human beings. In many cases the money was used to support the fugitives. It should be remembered that all this took place under the conditions of acute impoverishment of the Polish population, widespread shortages and sometimes even starvation. Above all, however, the scale of the existing threat should be taken into account. Payment or the promise of it may have been an incentive to provide aid, but it was not necessarily the most important thing.

We can also point to strictly altruistic examples. This was especially true in cases of helping wandering children. The help Jaworowski gave to Mojżesz Lewiński for example, was certainly selfless.¹⁴⁴ The same was true in the case of the Wyrzykowski and Karwowski families from Janczewko. The Olszewicz family, rescued by them, testified after the war that Poles risked their lives and gave them their “last bread” so that the fugitives would not starve to death.¹⁴⁵ As Aleksander Wyrzykowski wrote: “After the liberation, those that I rescued dispersed to different parts of the world. I received nothing for my effort and sacrifice. At that time, it was evident that these people had nothing but... their lives.”¹⁴⁶ The friendship that evolved between the Wyrzykowskis and the Jews they rescued lasted for years, and Antonina Wyrzykowska travelled abroad many times to visit her former charges. Rozalia and Franciszek Chrostek emigrated to the USA thanks to the support of the Jews they had rescued.¹⁴⁷ The Głowackis, who helped Fiszel Kawka, moved to Australia. Czesław Żalek married the Jewish woman he rescued. When two members of the Kalinowski family got arrested because of their service in the Home Army, Dr. Grundland, who rescued them, got them out of jail. The man intervened with the Stupnik brothers working in the Zambrów Security Department (UB) and the Kalinowskis were released.¹⁴⁸ Many other families kept in touch with their helpers, thanked them, sent them letters and parcels, but there were also those who, for various reasons, broke off any contact. In this respect, the Stalinist era may have

¹⁴⁴ AYW, O.3, 2327, testimony of Mojżesz Lewiński.

¹⁴⁵ Olszewicz family's letter to Jewish Historical Institute [in Warsaw], 7 February 1961, Buenos Aires, in *Wokół Jedwabnego*, vol. 2 (Warsaw, 2002), p. 230.

¹⁴⁶ Aleksander Wyrzykowski's letter to Jewish Historical Institute [in Warsaw], 1 September 1964, Milanówek, in *ibid.*, p. 235.

¹⁴⁷ AYW, M.31.2/5457, Chrostek Rozalia and Chrostek Franciszek.

¹⁴⁸ Recorded interview kept in the collections of the National Education Bureau, Institute of National Remembrance, Branch in Białystok.

had an impact. The very fact of maintaining contact with people from abroad was suspicious in the eyes of the communist authorities and exposed the former rescuers to potential trouble.

Conclusion

Those who helped Jews were undoubtedly courageous people who found the strength to act in defiance of the German anti-help laws of the time. They may have been motivated by compassion towards others or sometimes by a willingness to earn money. At this stage of the research, it can be concluded that there were not many such people. These were mainly people from rural communities. Thirty-three people in the studied area have been awarded The Righteous Among the Nations title. Apart from them, the article mentions more than thirty situations of a person or a family that could aspire to such a title. There were certainly more people providing various forms of aid.

At this stage of the research, it can be concluded that the aid provided in the region under research was of an individual nature.¹⁴⁹ With a few exceptions (Zofia Greloch, the Borowskis, Czesław Żalek), aid was provided in various forms by people living in rural areas. Since only mentions of many cases have remained, and most testimonies are laconic, it seems almost impossible to attempt to draw a collective portrait. Instead, the research confirms Szymon Datner's opinion, already cited, that Jews survived thanks to the mercy of Polish peasants. The second conclusion is that we know very little about most of them, sometimes nothing.

The case of the aforementioned Józef Lis demonstrates the difficulties the researcher is dealing with. He, as well as his mother and sister, was hiding in villages located in the Szumowo municipality (Srebrna and Pęchratka). He changed his place of stay a dozen or possibly several dozen times. He could not remember how many people he stayed with longer, how many gave him one-off aid, and how many chased him away. There is no doubt, however, that all or almost all of the residents of these relatively large villages must have known that a Jewish boy was staying with various farmers in their vicinity. Both adults and children knew about it, and they brutally verified his origins time and again. Nevertheless, the escapee survived,

¹⁴⁹ The aid provided to Dr. Grundland and his family is an exception.

although his emotional testimony must strike terror in the listener at times. Both he and his guardians were threatened by the Germans and by unspecified “partisans” who were supposed to have killed his mother and sister. Nevertheless, several families provided him with long-term aid, while many others offered short-term help. Most importantly, no informer came forward and, according to Lis’ words, the temptations of those who wanted to kill him were also curbed. According to his testimony, he and his relatives have maintained relations with many families over the years. Can we therefore conclude that he was helped by two or three families, or should his rescue be credited to the many inhabitants of several villages?

The same was true of Rachela Drażek and her friends. She wandered through villages that were both known and unknown to her in the Łomża and Śniadowo municipalities. Also in her case, the account written down many years later is incomplete and chaotic, but it allows to ascertain that she was helped by many families. Although she also suffered a great deal of harm, her fate may induce some optimism, as it points out the goodness of many, often anonymous people. Rachel Drażek survived, converted to Christianity and joined a convent after the war. She decided that she would not nominate anyone to be awarded The Righteous Among the Nations title, claiming that she owed her rescue solely to Christ.

The case of the Konopki village (home of Józef Klimaszewski), also eludes any attempt at precise description. Many families gave short-term and long-term help to dozens of Jews, but despite their efforts none of them survived. Again, one has to ask rhetorically how many rescuers there were and is Konopki representative? On the other hand, the epic of the Szumowicz and Szarfszajn families, highlighted above,¹⁵⁰ proves the opposite. Only a few families and individuals offered them help, and most of those who were asked for help did not want to do so, and then there were also some who wanted to hand them over. It was only through incredible luck and the help by a few good people that they managed to survive. Even though they wrote down several testimonies years later, there is no way to identify all those who supported them, and only three representatives of the Gosk family were awarded The Righteous Among the Nations title.

¹⁵⁰ For more on Rachela Drażek, the Szarfszajtains and other cases of aid, see P. Kornacki, *Nie tylko Ulmowie*.

The case of Dr. Grundland and his family is also extremely interesting. Only two Polish families are known to have helped them. Even Zofia Olasik, who recounted the aid provided by her parents in 2023, had no knowledge of other helpers. Grundland did not leave his testimony, so we do not know whether there were more such families.

The above examples demonstrate that the number of the unknowns is much greater than what can be established today. We do not know how many Jews sought help, how many survived and for how long. This article refers to about 70 people who survived, among others, within the district. Undoubtedly, many more people attempted to survive. An even approximate number of Poles providing help is impossible to determine. We can speak of dozens of individuals or families. Based on conversations with the witnesses of history, it can be said that there may indeed have been more cases of rescuing Jews, but the vast majority of such cases are remembered to this day in a semi-legendary form.

Table 1. Righteous Among the Nations from the Łomża District¹⁵¹

First and last name	Place of rescue	Persons hidden	Recognition date
The Banachs, Jan and Anna	Miastkowo	The Rostiker family, Abram Sniadowicz and son Josek	11 June 2001
The Borowskis, Stanisław and Helena	Łomża	The Gruszniewski family	12 December 2018
The Burbutowskis, Jan and Maria	Giełczyn	The Gruszniewski family	12 December 2018
The Witowskis, Franciszek and Eugenia		Szymon Gruszniewski	12 December 2018
The Chrosteks, Rozalia and Franciszek	Koziki	The Rozensztejn family	4 October 1992
Bolesław, Apolonia, Tadeusz, Wincenty and Mieczysław Dobkowski	Zanklewo/ Wizna	Lewin family	31 October 1991
Mieczysław, Helena and Stanisław Gosk	Nowe Wyrzyki	The Szarfsztajn and Szumowicz families	16 February 1964

¹⁵¹ The table contains information only about people honoured with The Righteous Among the Nations title.

First and last name	Place of rescue	Persons hidden	Recognition date
Zofia Greloch	Łomża	Cypra Schlifer	26 April 2011
Jan Jabłoński	Śliwowo	Gedalie Wander	17 November 2015
Józef Jaworowski	Głodowo	Lewiński Mojżesz	2 November 2011
The Karwowskis, Franciszek and Józefa	Janczewek	Mojżesz and Berek Olszewicz, Szmul Wasersz- tejn, Elka NN, Izrael Grądzowski, Jankiel Kubrzański and Lea Sosnowska	21 November 1993
The Wyrzykowskis Antonina and Aleksander	Janczewek	Mojżesz and Berek Olszewicz, Szmul Wasersz- tejn, Elka NN, Izrael Grądzowski, Jankiel Kubrzański and Lea Sosnowska	19 January 1976
The Krajewskis, Jakub and Janina	Krajewo Budziły	Sura Bursztyn	27 May 2019
Aniela Kulesza	Kołaki Kościelne	Lea Maria Lasko and daughter	27 March 2000
Czesław Żalek	Łomża	Lea Maria Lasko and daughter	27 March 2000
Paweł, Antonina, Albin and Stanisław Zysk	Uśnik	Fiszel Kawka	1 August 1993

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Sources

- Archiwum Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej [Archives of the Institute of National Remembrance].
- Archiwum Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego [Archives of the Jewish Historical Institute].
- Historical Museum in Białystok, Klimaszewski J., *W cieniu Czerwonego Boru*, manuscript of the memoir.
- United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.
- Yad Vashem Archives.

Published Sources

- Gawrychowski, Stanisław. *Na placówce AK (1939–1945)*. Warsaw–Łomża: Towarzystwo Przyjaciół Ziemi Łomżyńskiej, 1997.
- Gruszniński, Paul, Larsen, Neil. *Escape: A Child's Survival in the Holocaust*. BookBaby, 2020.
- Księga Żydów ostrołęckich*. Ed. Icchak Iwri, Załman Drezner, Janusz Gołota, Artur K.F. Wołosz. Ostrołęka: Ostrołęckie Towarzystwo Naukowe im. Adama Chętnika, Towarzystwo Przyjaciół Ostrołęki, Ziomkostwo Ostrołęckie w Izraelu, 2002.
- Księga pamięci gminy żydowskiej w Zambrowie. Sefer Zambrov: zikaron le-kehilat ha-koresh she-hushmedah hi"l. Seyfer Zembroye: tsum ondenk der far'ilikter kehila hi"l*. Ed. Jom-Tow Lewiński, Małgorzata K. Frąckiewicz, Mirosław Reczko. Łomża: Łomżyńskie Towarzystwo Naukowe im. Wagów, Polskie Towarzystwo Historyczne Oddział w Łomży, 2020.
- Księga pamięci gminy żydowskiej w Stawiskach. Sefer Stawisk: yizkor bukh*. Ed. Joseph Rubin, Małgorzata K. Frąckiewicz, Mirosław Reczko. Łomża: Łomżyńskie Towarzystwo Naukowe im. Wagów w Łomży, Polskie Towarzystwo Historyczne Oddział w Łomży, 2020.
- Księga pamięci gminy żydowskiej w Łomży. Sefer zikaron li-kehilat Łomzah*. Ed. Jom-Tow Lewiński et al. Łomża: Łomżyńskie Towarzystwo Naukowe im. Wagów, Polskie Towarzystwo Historyczne Oddział w Łomży, 2019.
- Losy żydowskie. Świadectwo żywych*, vol. 2. Ed. Marian Turski (Warsaw: Stowarzyszenie Żydów Kombatantów i Poszkodowanych w II Wojnie Światowej, 1999).
- Malczewska, Paula Maria (Drażek, Rachela). *Historia splątanej nici*. Ed. Daniel Wojciech Stabryła. Lublin: Episteme, 2023.

Podróźnik, Nachman. *Pozorowana tożsamość. Historia przetrwania pod okupacją nazistowską*. Ed. Hela Podróźnik, Jerry Drew. Warsaw: Żydowski Instytut Historyczny, 2020.

Relacje o pomocy udzielanej Żydom przez Polaków w latach 1939–1945. Vol. 6. *Białostocka, Nowogródzka, Polesie, Wileńszczyzna*. Ed. Sebastian Piątkowski. Lublin–Warsaw: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, 2022.

Wokół Jedwabnego. Vol. 2. *Dokumenty*. Ed. Krzysztof Persak, Paweł Machcewicz. Warsaw: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, 2002.

Zarys krajobrazu. Wieś polska wobec zagłady Żydów 1942–1945. Ed. Barbara Engelking, Jan Grabowski, introduction by Krzysztof Persak. Warsaw: Stowarzyszenie Centrum Badań nad Zagładą Żydów, 2011.

Studies

Bikont, Anna. “‘Marzeniem pana Poteraja jak i moim jest, aby te niechlubne wydarzenia zostały opisane’. O zbrodni oddziału AK na Żydach ukrywających się na bagnach koło wsi Podosie w Łomżyńskim.” *Zagłada Żydów. Studia i Materiały* 18 (2022).

Bikont, Anna. *My z Jedwabnego*. Warsaw 2004.

Czarniawski, Marek. „Jasne koszule” na jarmarku. *Stronictwo Narodowe w województwie białostockim w walce o stragan i warsztat*. Białystok: Marek Czarniawski, 2021.

Engelking, Barbara. „Jest taki piękny słoneczny dzień...” *Losy Żydów szukających ratunku na wsi polskiej 1942–1945*. Warsaw: Stowarzyszenie Centrum Badań nad Zagładą Żydów, 2011.

Dalej jest noc. Losy Żydów w wybranych powiatach okupowanej Polski. Ed. Barbara Engelking, Jan Grabowski. Warsaw: Stowarzyszenie Centrum Badań nad Zagładą Żydów, 2018.

Datner, Szymon. *Las sprawiedliwych. Karta z dziejów ratownictwa Żydów w okupowanej Polsce*. Warsaw: Spółdzielnia Wydawniczo-Handlowa „Książka i Wiedza”, 1968.

Datner, Szymon. *Zagłada Białegostoku i Białostockizny. Notatki dokumentalne*. Warsaw: Żydowski Instytut Historyczny im. Emanuela Ringelbluma, 2024.

Gnatowski, Michał. *Polacy – Sowiet – Żydzi w regionie łomżyńskim w latach 1939–1941*. Vol. 1–4. Łomża: Łomżyńskie Towarzystwo Naukowe im. Wągów, 2004–2011.

Gnatowski, Michał. „Sąsiedzi” w sowieckim raju. *Rejon jedwabieński pod radziecką władzą 1939–1941*. Łomża: Łomżyńskie Towarzystwo Naukowe im. Wągów, 2002.

Grabowski, Jan. “Ratowanie Żydów za pieniądze – przemysł pomocy.” *Zagłada Żydów. Studia i Materiały* 4 (2008).

- Jasiewicz, Krzysztof. *Rzeczywistość sowiecka 1939–1941 r. w świadectwach polskich Żydów*.
Warsaw: Instytut Studiów Politycznych PAN, Oficyna Wydawnicza Rytm, 2009.
- Klimaszewski, Wacław. *Śladami pamięci rodu Klimaszewskich*. Białystok: Agencja Wydawnicza Eko Press, 2017.
- Kornacki, Paweł. "Wprowadzenie historyka do 'Księgi pamięci gminy żydowskiej w Jedwabnem'." *Studia Łomżyńskie* 32b (2022). https://ltn.lomza.pl/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/STUDIA_XXXIIB_ONLINE.pdf.
- Kornacki, Paweł. "Eksterminacja ludności żydowskiej na północno-wschodnim Mazowszu." In *Zbrodnie niemieckie i sowieckie na Północnym Mazowszu w latach 1939–1945*. Ed. Krzysztof Sychowicz, Leszek Zygmier, Mariusz Żuławnik. Białystok–Warsaw: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, Akademia Łomżyńska i Państwowa Akademia Nauk Stosowanych im. Ignacego Mościckiego w Ciechanowie, 2024.
- Kornacki, Paweł. *Nie tylko Ulmowie. Historie Polaków ratujących Żydów na Podlasiu*. Białystok–Warsaw: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, 2024.
- Monkiewicz, Waldemar. "Za cenę życia. O ratowaniu Żydów w Białostockiem w okresie okupacji niemieckiej." In *Białostoccy Żydzi*. Vol. 2. Ed. Adam Dobroński, Waldemar Monkiewicz. Białystok: Instytut Historii. Filii Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego w Białymstoku, 1997.
- Polacy i Żydzi pod okupacją niemiecką 1939–1945. Studia i materiały*. Ed. Andrzej Żbikowski. Warsaw: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, 2006.
- Pyżewska, Anna. "Pomoc ludności żydowskiej w latach okupacji niemieckiej na terenie przedwojennego województwa białostockiego – stan badań." In *Stan badań nad pomocą Żydom na ziemiach polskich pod okupacją niemiecką. Przegląd piśmiennictwa*. Ed. Tomasz Domański, Alicja Gontarek. Warsaw–Kielce: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, 2022.
- Relacje polsko-żydowskie w XX wieku. Badania – kontrowersje – perspektywy*. Ed. Tomasz Domański, Edyta Majcher-Ociesa (Kielce–Warsaw: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej).
- Represje za pomoc Żydom na okupowanych ziemiach polskich w czasie II wojny światowej*. Ed. Martyna Grądzka-Rejak, Aleksandra Namysło. Warsaw: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, 2019.
- The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos, 1933–1945*. Vol. 2. *Ghettos in German-occupied Eastern Europe*. Ed. Martin Dean, Mel Hecker. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012.

Wierzbicki, Marek. *Polacy i Żydzi w zaborze sowieckim. Stosunki polsko-żydowskie na ziemiach północno-wschodnich II RP pod okupacją sowiecką (1939–1941)*. Warsaw: Stowarzyszenie Kulturalne Fronda, 2007.

Wokół Jedwabnego. Vol. 1. *Studia*. Ed. Krzysztof Persak, Paweł Machcewicz. Warsaw: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, 2002.

Online Materials

Kuczyński, Jerzy. *Oral history interview with Jerzy Kuczyński*. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum website, ref. no. RG-50.488.0310. <https://collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/irn45133>.

Engelking, Barbara. *Żydzi ukrywający się na wsi*. Polin Museum website. <https://sprawiedliwi.org/pl/pl/o-sprawiedliwych/zagłada-zydow-w-okupowanej-polsce/zydzi-ukrywajacy-sie-po-aryjskiej-stronie/zydzi-ukrywajacy-sie-na-wsi>, accessed 28 December 2023.

Fischer, Lidia. [Testimony]. <http://wirtualnie.lomza.pl>.

Historia Jankiela Piekarewicza z miejscowości Stawiski. Pamięć i Tożsamość website. <https://pamiecitozsamosc.pl/historia-jankiela-piekarewicza-z-miejscowosci-stawiski>, accessed 15 May 2024.

Missing Identity. <https://missing-identity.net/aleksandra-nn-lomza-poland/>, accessed 15 May 2024.

Rawa, Tadeusz. *Czas przeszły. Wspomnienia*. Part 6. Serwis Historyczny Ziemi Łomżyńskiej website, 8 April 2020. <https://historialomzy.pl/czas-przeszly-wspomnienia-cz-6/>, accessed 5 January 2024.

Winko, Wojciech. *Śniadowo w czasie II wojny światowej (cz. I)*. Serwis Historyczny Ziemi Łomżyńskiej website, 25 May 2026. <https://historialomzy.pl/sniadowo-w-czasie-ii-wojny-swiatowej-cz-i/>, accessed 15 May 2024.

Zambrowskie Koszary website. <http://koszary.zambrow.org/>, accessed 7 May 2024.

Zbigniew Romaniuk Facebook profile. <https://www.facebook.com/photo?fbid=5574804025928976&set=a.3033872416688829>, accessed 4 July 2024.

SUMMARY

The pre-war Łomża District under the German occupation was part of the Białystok Province (Bezirk Białystok). When the Germans started the deportation of Jews to

extermination camps on 2 November 1942, many of them escaped in an attempt to survive. Despite the issues left over from the times of the Soviet occupation, there were Poles who provided them with aid. In the Łomża District, almost all the rescuers were peasants, and the help they provided was of an individual nature. In total, the study covers several dozen rescue cases in this area. The author describes the motivations of the rescuers and the repressions they faced, as well as the relationships between them and the rescued.

KEYWORDS

Holocaust • Łomża region • Zambrów • Łomża • helping Jews •
The Righteous Among the Nations