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*Z ARMII ANDERSA DO ARMII IZRAELA. DROGI ŻYDOWSKICH
ŻOŁNIERZY WOJSKA POLSKIEGO DO NIEPODLEGŁEGO
IZRAELA / FROM ANDERS' ARMY TO THE ISRAELI ARMY:
THE WAYS LEADING THE JEWISH SOLDIERS OF THE POLISH
ARMY TO INDEPENDENT ISRAEL**

The work mentioned above in the title, published in 2020, was prepared in Polish, English and Hebrew. Its publisher is the Educational Projects Society (*Towarzystwo Projektów Edukacyjnych*), and its co-publisher is the Adam Mickiewicz Institute (*Instytut Adama Mickiewicza*). It addresses important and topical yet insufficiently known aspects of Polish-Jewish relations in the twentieth century. The authors should be commended for undertaking this task, all the more so because the publication is not addressed solely to Polish-speaking readers, as is usually the case with albums of this kind, but to a much wider audience. It is yet another noteworthy contribution related to the history of General Władysław Anders's army, which could be observed in recent years.¹

* T. Głowiński, D. Koreś, W. Mędykowski, J.W. Sienkiewicz, *Z armii Andersa do armii Izraela. Drogi żydowskich żołnierzy Wojska Polskiego do niepodległego Izraela / From Anders' Army to the Israeli Army: The Ways Leading the Jewish Soldiers of the Polish Army to Independent Israel* (Warsaw–Jerusalem: Towarzystwo Projektów Edukacyjnych – Instytut Adama Mickiewicza, 2020), 265 + 131 pp.

The work consists of seven chapters and also includes a bibliography, with forewords written by Herzel Makov, director of the Menachem Begin Heritage Centre in Jerusalem,² retired general Zvi Kantor, director of the Jewish Soldier in World War II Museum, and Paweł Zarzycki, president of the Educational Projects Society. The DVD and its contents, an integral part of the publication, are discussed later in the review.

The authors of this work did not limit themselves to describing the titular road “From Anders’ Army to the Israeli Army,” but began their story with an overview of Polish-Jewish relations before World War II in the first chapter, entitled “Polish-Jewish Relations before World War II” (*Relacje polsko-żydowskie przed drugą wojną światową*). The authors underline, among other things, that the Jewish community constituted the third-largest national minority living in the Second Polish Republic. They present the Jewish population’s social and professional cross-section and provide information about the educational level of its members. An important issue was the discussion of the activities of Jewish organizations in Poland (including paramilitary ones), with a particular emphasis on the Zionist movement and its activists, Vladimir Jabotinsky and Menachem Begin. Poland – as the authors write later in the chapter – supported the Jewish emigration movement to Palestine, and Jews were loyal citizens of the Second Republic. Members of Jewish paramilitary organizations – as Poland’s only national minority – were allowed to appear in public with weapons and in their uniforms during state ceremonies and holidays.

After reading the first chapter, the reviewer felt unsatisfied with the lack of discussion of the independence activities of Jews serving in Polish Legions during the World War I. This topic is only briefly mentioned in chapter two on page 52.³ Additionally, the reviewer noted the absence of detailed information on Jewish participation in the wars for the borders of the reborn Polish state, particularly the

¹ See N. Davies, *Szlak nadziei. Armia Andersa. Marsz przez trzy kontynenty* (Warsaw, 2015); S. Kalbarczyk, *Armia Andersa w ZSRS 1941–1942. Niespełnione braterstwo broni z Armią Czerwoną* (Warsaw, 2020).

² In the foreword in question, a typo in Begin’s name crept into the Polish version on p. 6 in the information on the position held by Makov; in the English-language version on p. 7, the name is spelled correctly.

³ See M. Gałęzowski, *Na wzór Berka Joselewicza. Żołnierze i oficerowie pochodzenia żydowskiego w Legionach Polskich* (Warsaw, 2010).

conflict with Bolshevik Russia. Some biographical entries in subsequent chapters of the album do provide information about Jewish soldiers fighting on Poland's side in this war.⁴ Also omitted are difficult episodes in Polish-Jewish relations of the period, such as the events that took place in Lwów in the autumn of 1918.⁵ What is more, while the chapter provides information on the support for Jewish emigration to Palestine and the various forms of support provided by the Polish state in the training of Zionist paramilitary organizations (pp. 28–44), there is no explanation of what specifically the Warsaw government's attitude was based on, who the Jewish fighters receiving training under the tutelage of instructors from the Polish Army would be fighting against in the future and by what methods.⁶ However, the above comments have little bearing on the overall assessment of the study.

The second chapter, entitled “World War II – Jews in the Polish Army, Their Participation in the September Campaign and Further Fate of Prisoners of War during the German Occupation” (*Druga wojna światowa – Żydzi w Wojsku Polskim, ich udział w kampanii wrześniowej i dalsze losy jeńców wojennych podczas okupacji niemieckiej*), describes the participation of Second Republic citizens of Jewish origin in the Polish campaign of 1939. When the war broke out, the Jews turned out to be loyal soldiers; they fought against the Germans unsparingly, and there were no complaints against them, which cannot be said, for example, about conscripts coming from the Belarusian, Ukrainian, and – of course – German minorities. The number of Jewish men participating in the defense of Poland, as the authors pointed out, was proportional to the size of their population in the country, and the size of losses sustained in combat was similar. The authors noted that the Germans did not acknowledge the veteran rights of Jewish soldiers. Instead, they released them from prisoner-of-war camps only to send them to ghettos in the General Governorate, where they were later exterminated, which primarily affected

⁴ See M. Gałęzowski, *Żydzi walczący o Polskę. Zapomniani obrońcy Rzeczypospolitej*, Cracow, 2021; *Polscy Żydzi dla Niepodległej (1918–1939). Historia, kultura, literatura*, ed. S.J. Żurek (Lublin, 2020).

⁵ See M. Klimecki and Z. Karpus, *Walki o Lwów w listopadzie 1918 r. i wojna polsko-ukraińska. Bezpieczeństwo ludności polskiej, żydowskiej i ukraińskiej w stolicy Galicji* (Toruń, 2020). Cf. D.K. Markowski, *Dwa powstania. Bitwa o Lwów 1918* (Cracow, 2019).

⁶ These issues are comprehensively covered in the following recent publication: K. Czechowska, *Polska dyplomacja wobec „kwestii żydowskiej” w latach 1932–1939* (Gdańsk–Warsaw, 2023).

rank-and-file soldiers. The authors focused on the tragic situation of the Jews in the German-occupied territories of the Second Republic and attention was also drawn to the attitude of Poles towards Jews in the German-occupied territories, which proved to be generally positive. However, amidst the chaos and terror of the occupation, there were inevitably instances of individuals from the margins of society who exploited the tragedy of their fellow citizens.

Analyzing the content of the second chapter, the reviewer drew attention to several issues. In the biographical entry for General Bernard Stanisław Mond (p. 54), information on the division he commanded in 1939 (the 6th Infantry Division) is missing. This was likely due to excessive abbreviations, possibly during the linguistic editing stage. Another shortcoming arising from insufficiently careful editing was the simultaneous occurrence of the terms *radziecki* and *sowiecki* [two different words in Polish for “Soviet” – t.n.] in the text, as well as the phrases “Polish campaign” and “September campaign.” Moreover, in the biographical entry for Henryk Wereszycki (p. 66), the previously absent abbreviations “pal” and “MBP” occur. Indeed, not every reader will know that those abbreviations refer respectively to a light artillery regiment (*pułk artylerii lekkiej*, pal) and the Ministry of Public Security (*Ministerstwo Bezpieczeństwa Publicznego*, MBP), especially as the album does not include a list of abbreviations – though these are expanded in the English-language version of the biographical entry. It is also hard not to notice the erroneous caption to the photo on p. 58: it does not show a platoon of Polish 7TP tanks, but clearly, these are Vickers Mk E light tanks. However, as before, these remarks have little effect on the overall assessment of the album.

In the next chapter, “Polish Lands under the Soviet Occupation – Poles and Jews in the Face of Stalinist Totalitarianism” (*Ziemie polskie pod okupacją sowiecką – Polacy i Żydzi wobec stalinowskiego totalitaryzmu*) the authors present the situation of Poles and Jews in the lands of the Second Polish Republic captured by the USSR after its treacherous invasion of Poland on 17 September 1939. The Soviets in the territories they occupied applied a different way of dealing with Polish citizens than the Germans. They placed Polish army officers, policemen, and civil servants – including those of Jewish ethnicity – in camps and then murdered most of them. Many inhabitants of the Eastern Borderlands, including Jews, were considered by the Soviets to be unfit for the so-called new reality. These people were subjected

to forced deportation deep into the USSR in several waves up to June 1941, where they had to face hunger, cold, and cruel treatment.

Reading the contents of chapter three, the reviewer noted that the authors did not address the activities of a large group of Polish citizens of Jewish ethnicity in the Eastern Borderlands, who either directly supported the invading Red Army in 1939 or joyfully welcomed the entering Soviet troops.⁷ This is relevant since their attitude cast a shadow over Polish-Jewish relations in the later period, as did the involvement of communist-sympathizing representatives of the ethnic minorities of the Second Republic in the activities of the Soviet occupation administration, as the authors of the album mention on p. 90.⁸ The anti-Polish activity of some people of Jewish ethnicity perpetuated the conviction, already existing during the Polish-Bolshevik War and in the interwar period, of the strong support that members of this national minority gave to the communists.⁹ This was one of the main problems that General Anders had to struggle with – after all, his army consisted of “Borderland” soldiers, on whom Soviet persecution had left a particular physical and psychological mark. More attention should have been paid to this issue (naturally, all things considered).

The fourth chapter – “Jews in the Polish Armed Forces in the USSR (1941–1942)” [*Żydzi w Polskich Siłach Zbrojnych w ZSRR (1941–1942)*] – shows the changes in the situation of Poles in the USSR after the Third Reich attacked the Soviets in June 1941. The Germans’ initial spectacular military successes (they occupied the territories of the Second Polish Republic seized by the Soviets in

⁷ See C. Grzelak, *Wilno–Grodno–Kodziowce 1939* (Warsaw, 2002); C. Grzelak, *Kresy w ogniu. Wojna na ziemiach wschodnich Rzeczypospolitej we wrześniu 1939 roku* (Warsaw, 2014); *Sowiecki najazd 1939. Sojusznik Hitlera napada polskie Kresy – relacje świadków i uczestników*, ed. C. Grzelak (Warsaw, 2017).

⁸ See e.g. M. Wierzbicki, “Stosunki polsko-żydowskie na Zachodniej Białorusi w latach 1939–1941,” in *Wokół Jedwabnego*, vol. 1: *Studia*, ed. P. Machciewicz, K. Persak (Warsaw, 2002), pp. 138–158. One Jewish author and participant of the events described explained years later that initially Jews were not treated badly by the Soviets, and justified their presence in the local authority structures created by the communists by the “liberal” policy of the USSR in the first period of the occupation of Polish lands. This period was thus characterised by “a fairly wide participation of the local population, including Jews, in the administration, especially at the lower levels. The aim was evidently to win favour with the local population and to create appearances of democracy”; see K. Nussbaum, *Historia złudzeń. Żydzi w Armii Polskiej w ZSRR* (Warsaw, 2016), p. 26.

⁹ For information on the situation in the Eastern Borderlands under the Soviet occupation, see also *Opór, przystosowanie czy współpraca? Obywatele II Rzeczypospolitej wobec okupacji sowieckiej ziem polskich w latach 1939–1941*, ed. P. Kardela, K. Sychowicz, J. Wasilewski (Białystok–Warsaw, 2023).

1939) led Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin to agree, among other things, to the creation of a Polish army in the USSR, which was to be composed of Poles residing in the territory he controlled. Patriotic considerations aside, the nascent army offered citizens of the Second Polish Republic (to whom the Soviet authorities had granted an “amnesty”), some of whom were of Jewish ethnicity, the opportunity to free themselves from the places of exile. This did not apply to citizens of the Second Republic of Poland of Belarusian, Ukrainian, and Jewish ethnicity who, after 17 September 1939, found themselves in territories seized by the Soviets and who were forcibly granted citizenship of the Soviet Union – they remained citizens of the USSR obliged to serve in the Red Army. In addition, the Soviet authorities tried to limit the influx of Jews into General Anders’s Army and conducted an intensive propaganda campaign on the anti-Semitism that was supposed to be rampant in the forming of Polish troops. The army organized by General Anders finally left the USSR in 1942 for Iran. A total of one hundred and fifteen thousand Polish citizens, including over six thousand Jews, were evacuated from the “ally’s” territory, according to the authors of the study.

After reading the fourth chapter, one cannot help but think that more attention should have been given to the issue of anti-Semitism in the Polish Armed Forces in the USSR that the Soviet propaganda did not fail to raise. Klemens Nussbaum, whose publication is missing from the bibliography of the reviewed work, wrote about the fact that Poles admitted Jews to the army in limited numbers (using, among other things, unreliable certificates of health issued by medical commissions), exposing them to harassment and humiliation. According to Nussbaum, this was due to General Anders’s intention to create an army in which the Polish element would dominate, unthreatened by the influence of the pre-war minorities.¹⁰ The second, no less important reason was said to be Polish anti-Semitism.

¹⁰ Sylwester Strzyżewski noted: “The Polish military authorities, when recruiting, paid particular attention to personnel matters (the army in the course of forming particularly felt the lack of qualified personnel, which affected the time and quality of the conducted training of soldiers). Priority was given to accepting young and strong men, as well as those with combat experience. Furthermore, it was considered no less important to accept soldiers with close ties to the Polish state, i.e. those who could be relied on the most. This was of particular importance under the circumstances of the conscription as it was conducted abroad. Continuous dependence on the Soviet command in practically every respect (supplies, accommodation, etc.), as well as the Soviet intelligence activity and political agitation, also by means of delegating communist activists to the Army, meant that special attention was paid to conscripts

Nussbaum disregarded the experience of Poles residing in the USSR, who suffered from various repressive measures for which, rightly or wrongly, they often blamed the Jews. In his work, however, he quoted a letter from the Polish ambassador to the USSR, Stanisław Kot:

Poles are generally very bitter towards Jews because of their behavior during the occupation, their cheerful welcome of the Red Army, their lambasting of Polish officers being led under guard, their servility to the Soviets, their denunciation of Poles, and so on. Even in the forced labour camps, many Jews tried to win favor with their superiors by hurling insults at Poles; there were also many Jews who denounced Poles, and not a few are suspected of having volunteered for the Polish Army today in order to continue denouncing.¹¹

Nussbaum described the anti-Polish behavior of Jews during the Soviet occupation and in the camps described by Kot as “alleged.” He also stated that underlining this issue by Poles was intended to justify the latter’s anti-Semitism.¹²

Nussbaum’s approach to the problems described in the paragraph above is biased and shows the perspective of a Polish Jew with extreme left-wing views. The reviewer cited it only because Nussbaum’s book still affects the opinions of foreign and Polish readers.¹³ In such a situation, it might be worthwhile to enter into a po-

of Ukrainian, Belarusian and Jewish nationalities. The possibility of exploiting nationality differences by the Soviet authorities was taken into account. The provocation of Polish-Jewish conflicts on this ground could weaken the position of the Polish government in the international arena” (S. Strzyżewski, “Dezercje Żydów z Armii Andersa w świetle dokumentów Instytutu Polskiego i Muzeum im. Władysława Sikorskiego w Londynie,” *Zeszyty Naukowe Wyższej Szkoły Oficerskiej Wojsk Łądowych* 3 (165) (2012), p. 224). It is worth noting in this context the conversation of Anders, Sikorski and Stalin, which took place in Moscow on 3 December 1941: “Anders: – I am counting on 150,000 men, but in this there is also a considerable Jewish element which does not want to serve in the army. Stalin: – Jews are lousy fighters. Sikorski: – Many among the Jews who have volunteered are profiteers or persons sentenced for smuggling, they will never make good soldiers. I do not need them in the Polish Army. Anders: – 250 Jews deserted from Buzuluk upon false news of the bombing of Kuybyshev. More than sixty Jews deserted from the 5th Division on the eve of the distribution of arms announced to the soldiers. Stalin: – Yes, Jews are poor fighters” (W. Anders, *Bez ostatniego rozdziału. Wspomnienia z lat 1939–1946*, n.p., n.d., p. 99).

¹¹ As cited in K. Nussbaum, *Historia złudzeń*, p. 57.

¹² On the repressive measures against Jews trying to join the Anders Army, see *ibid.*, pp. 53–58.

¹³ In Poland, Nussbaum’s book was published for the first time in 2016. Unfortunately, the fact-based introduction prepared for it did not prove to be comprehensive enough or insightful enough (see P. Benken, “Dzieje Żydów w polskich strukturach wojskowych w Związku Socjalistycznych Repub-

lemic with this narrative, since it is difficult to expect that Poles released from the camps would immediately change their attitude towards Jews, who – due to widely functioning stereotypes, sometimes reinforced by personal experience – were suspected of favouring the Soviets. General Anders noted:

I had serious problems when, at the beginning, national minorities, above all Jews, began to arrive in large numbers. [...] some Jews joyfully welcomed the Soviet troops entering Poland in 1939. Against this background, a resentment remained with the native Poles, which I had to overcome. On the other hand, some Jewish activists wanted to emphasize their Jewish identity.¹⁴

In formulating his accusations against General Anders, Nussbaum repeated information from communist propaganda. As Sylwester Strzyżewski, for example, noted while referring to the issue of the evacuation of the Polish Army from the USSR:

The relocating Army was followed by all sorts of false information concerning the discrimination against Jews that prevailed in the Polish Army. The source of this news was the Russians, skillfully inspiring the Jewish media to disclose this information [...] in order to discredit the Polish authorities in the eyes of the coalition partners, as well as to provoke a Polish-Jewish conflict. One such action took place in October 1942, when the Jewish Telegraph Agency, based in Kuybyshev, reported on the mass removal of Jews from the Polish Army being formed in the USSR. Allegedly, this was to prevent them from evacuating to Iran and to accept Poles in their place. These allegations were strongly opposed by General Anders.¹⁵

Specific actions of General Anders and his subordinates aimed at limiting the overall number of Jews admitted to the army, described by Nussbaum based on

lik Sowietów na podstawie 'Historii złudzeń...' Klemensa Nussbauma," in *Relacje polsko-żydowskie w XX wieku. Badania, kontrowersje, perspektywy*, ed. T. Domański, E. Majcher-Ociesa (Kielce–Warsaw, 2021), pp. 225–250).

¹⁴ W. Anders, *Bez ostatniego rozdziału*, p. 82.

¹⁵ S. Strzyżewski, "Dezerccje Żydów," p. 227. Strzyżewski's article is not included in the album's bibliography.

source material, could sometimes lead to discrimination against the citizens of the Second Republic of Poland of Jewish ethnicity who were refused admission to the Polish Armed Forces in the USSR. After all, this phenomenon was inevitable if one takes into account the state of Polish-Jewish relations at the time, for which not solely the Polish side was responsible, as Nussbaum, among others, would like to see it. It also resulted from the restrictions imposed by Stalin himself, who was interested in fueling tensions in Polish-Jewish relations to subsequently exploit them in the international arena. It should be emphasized that in view of the organizational and supply problems encountered, the first to be conscripted were – as Bartosz Janczak wrote – “young, physically fit, educated, loyal people who identified themselves with the Polish state.”¹⁶ It was feared that too large a proportion of soldiers of Belarusian, Ukrainian, and Jewish ethnicity would be used by the Soviets to provoke ethnic and religious conflicts. A nationality-religion census conducted in the army in December 1942 indicated that of the 4,978 people stating a nationality other than Polish, the largest group (71 percent) were Jews, although many hid their descent for fear of being expelled from the army, so their number was even larger.¹⁷

However, it is also difficult to agree with the statement of the study’s authors that the Soviets bore practically all the responsibility for the problems in Polish-Jewish relations related to the formation and functioning of General Anders’s army. Although their impact was not insignificant, the problem was much more profound and involved many complex issues. The authors in this context were over-optimistic in assuming that Jews had a negative attitude towards the USSR because of the persecution to which many of them were subjected on an equal level as Poles. Soviet activities during the formation of General Anders’s army and during its evacuation from the USSR are outlined on p. 130 as follows: “It was not only Stalin’s malice but also the deliberate sowing of a seed of mistrust between the representatives of two nations, both of which equally hated everything that communism and Soviet Russia represented.” How, then, can one explain the by no means negligible Jewish contribution to the later formation of military units made

¹⁶ B. Janczak, *Organizacja i wyszkolenie Armii Polskiej na Wschodzie w latach 1942–1944* (Łódź–Warsaw, 2023), p. 98.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

up of Poles, utterly dependent on Stalin's will, and the careers of people of Jewish ethnicity, among others, in the leadership structures of the communist security apparatus in Poland? Nussbaum even observed how Jews initially approached the USSR with fondness, believing that the communist ideology gave no room for discrimination based on nationality. Although Stalin cynically exploited Jews for his political ends during the World War II, those Jews who ended up in the USSR and served in the People's Polish Army were said to regard communists as their natural (though not ideal) allies in confronting the strongly hostile element of "Polish nationalists."¹⁸

It seems that the above-extended information, included in the publication even in an abbreviated form, could have helped readers outside of Poland better to understand the state of Polish-Jewish relations at the time and exposed the still-existing stereotypes created during the war by the communist propaganda. Klemens Nussbaum, associated after 1945 with the communist power structures, a person who left the People's Republic of Poland as a result of the anti-Semitic campaign in the late 1960s, is not an objective author. Nonetheless, the theses of his book *Historia złudzeń. Żydzi w Armii Polskiej w ZSRR* (History of Illusions. Jews in the Polish Army in the USSR), being a PhD thesis defended already during his stay in Israel and published in Hebrew in 1977, continue to contribute to the formation of a false image of Poles and General Anders among foreign readers.

The fifth chapter, titled "Jews in the Polish Army in the East 1942–1944" (*Żydzi w Armii Polskiej na Wschodzie 1942–1944*), explores the service of Jews in General Anders's troops during the years 1942–1944. According to the authors of this volume, forty-three hundred soldiers of Jewish ethnicity belonged to these troops. It is noteworthy that among the evacuated civilians were some 850 Jewish children, known as the "Tehran Children," many of whom grew up to become prominent figures fighting for the establishment and upholding of the State of Israel.

Soon after they arrived in Iran, Jewish soldiers began to leave the ranks of General Anders's army. Describing these events, the authors emphasize that they should not be perceived as desertions in the sense of a shameful act committed for low motives. This is because the decision was made by people who had lost

¹⁸ K. Nussbaum, *Historia złudzeń*.

everything in Poland, who had no one or nothing to return to, or who treated Palestine as their homeland. Moreover, General Anders himself took a relatively empathetic approach to the matter: the Polish military police, to say the least, did not pay much attention to the search for deserters, and some soldiers of Jewish ethnicity were on leave from the army. However, not all deserters from Anders's army were dedicated to the establishment of the state of Israel; some were motivated by more practical reasons, such as ensuring their own safety.

It is worth noting that many Jewish soldiers remained in General Anders's units, and there were also cases of people joining the ranks of this army who had been in Palestine for a long time. One example is Julian J. Buszgang (born in Lwów in 1925 but residing in Palestine since 1940) and his friends. The Jewish soldiers, who self-identified as Poles, remained under the command of General Anders and proceeded to the front lines, where they displayed remarkable bravery. This bravery is exemplified by the authors of the study.

When discussing chapter five, it is worth underlining the authors' approach to the issue of the desertion of General Anders's troops by Jewish soldiers and the General's reaction to it, signaled above. The situation in British-governed Palestine at the time was very delicate, and the Polish commander had to take it into account and demonstrate not only his care for the combat potential of his army but also his diplomatic sense. It seems that the general was not as favourably inclined towards Jewish deserters as the authors of the album suggest. Jacek Pietrzak wrote:

One issue around which certain myths and simplifications have grown is the attitude towards desertion demonstrated by General Anders, the commander of the Polish Armed Forces in the East and the 2nd Polish Corps. Based on the General's memoirs, the belief had become established that the abandonment of measures taken against deserters resulted from his personal decision. There are suggestions that this attitude may have resulted from his sympathy and understanding of the aspirations of the Jewish independence movement. At the same time, there is speculation that the General saw desertions as beneficial, given his views on the role of Jews in the army and the state. In fact, Anders was strongly critical of desertions, as a commander believing that they weakened discipline and deprived the army of trained soldiers, but also provided an

argument for accusations of anti-Semitism in its ranks. He also demanded that deserters be deprived of Polish citizenship and that the families of deserters be deprived of refugee benefits. In assessing the actions of the commander of the Polish Armed Forces in the East regarding the desertion issue, one must not forget the decisive importance of the Polish government's [-in-exile] position. While sharing Anders's concern about international repercussions, the government drew the opposite conclusion and opposed introducing repressive measures.¹⁹

Bartosz Janczak reported that 2,972 officers, non-commissioned officers, and privates deserted to Palestine, or 67 percent of all Polish soldiers of Jewish origin.²⁰ The problem became particularly acute during the preparations for the 2nd Corps' deployment to the Italian front. For example, in the 3rd Carpathian Rifle Division in July 1943, there were 18 officers and 1,142 soldiers of Jewish ethnicity; by the end of the year, their numbers were recorded as three officers and 222 soldiers.²¹ Among the deserters were often well-trained individuals serving in chancelleries and headquarters, whose absence weakened the combat readiness of the troops before they proceeded to the front lines.²²

Another important factor, described by Józef Smoliński, among others, was the persistence of strong tensions between Polish and Jewish soldiers, not only over the events of 1939–1941, but also over the process of evacuation from the USSR itself, which became a source of new accusations and resentment. These problems did not cease to exist even after the departure of the troops to the front.²³ It is worth mentioning that similar negative phenomena also had to be faced by the units of the Polish Armed Forces in Great Britain.²⁴

¹⁹ J. Pietrzak, "Wokół dezercji Żydów z Armii Polskiej na Wschodzie i konfliktu w Palestynie. Sprawa zejść w kibucach Chulda i Ramat ha-Kowesz w 1943 r.," *Dzieje Najnowsze* 3 (54) (2022), pp. 74–75.

²⁰ B. Janczak, *Organizacja i wyszkolenie Armii Polskiej*, p. 296.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 321.

²² *Ibid.*, pp. 321–322.

²³ J. Smoliński, "Sprawa dezercji Żydów z Armii Polskiej na Wschodzie w latach 1942–1944," in *Żydzi i Wojsko Polskie w XIX i XX wieku*, ed. T. Domański, E. Majcher-Ociesa (Warsaw–Kielce, 2020), pp. 265–276.

²⁴ J. Zuziak, "Dezercje żołnierzy-Żydów z Polskich Sił Zbrojnych w Wielkiej Brytanii w 1944 roku jako zagrożenie destrukcyjne w przededniu inwazji w Normandii," *Acta Universitatis Lodziensis. Folia Historica* 111 (2022), pp. 311–335.

While the authors of the album primarily focus on the positive aspects of Polish-Jewish relations, it might have been necessary to address the difficult and painful issues more extensively than they did. This is not about seeking out divisive topics but rather about providing a fuller understanding of the events and recognizing the Jewish soldiers who chose to stay with General Anders' forces until the end of the war. These men were undoubtedly great patriots who shed their blood in Italy and often made the greatest sacrifices.

The next chapter of the album – “Artists of Jewish Origin in the 2nd Corps of General Władysław Anders” (*Żydowscy i żydowskiego pochodzenia artyści plastycy w 2. Korpusie generała Władysława Andersa*) – reminds us of the unique revival of the visual arts in Poland between 1918 and 1939 and the significant participation of artists of Jewish origin in this trend. The criminal policies of the Germans and Soviets meant that very few artists survived the Holocaust in Poland or deportation deep into the USSR. Some survived only because they managed to leave the USSR with General Anders's army. As a result, Zygmunt Springer and his brother Leopold, for example, were able to continue their artistic activities and contributed to the artistic editing of Melchior Wańkowicz's work *Bitwa o Monte Cassino* (The Battle of Monte Cassino). However, more often than not, these were exceptions, for as the authors state, “the landscape of the artistic community in Poland changed radically after World War II” (p. 202).

The dedication of a whole separate chapter to Jewish artists in General Anders's army is partly because these issues have not been sufficiently discussed so far. Another significant aspect is that the work under review is part of a broader educational initiative, which also includes the exhibition “From Poland to Israel – Jewish Soldiers of the Anders Army.” The Educational Projects Society ran the project “Artists in Arms: Arts & Culture on the Trail of the Anders's Army,” culminating in an exhibition under the same title, complemented by an album curated by Jan Wiktor Sienkiewicz.²⁵

The final chapter, entitled “A Difficult Road to Independence – the Fate of Former Soldiers of the Polish Armed Forces in the USSR and the Polish Army in the East and Their Participation in the Fight for Israel's Independence in 1942–1949”

²⁵ J.W. Sienkiewicz, *Artyści Andersa* (Warsaw, 2021). It is worth mentioning that this author also wrote the monograph *Artyści Andersa: continuità e novità* (Toruń–Warsaw, 2013).

(Niełatwa droga do niepodległości – losy byłych żołnierzy Polskich Sił Zbrojnych w ZSRS i Armii Polskiej na Wschodzie oraz ich udział w walce o niepodległość Izraela w latach 1942–1949), shows the history of the former Polish Armed Forces soldiers in the land of Palestine and their participation in the fight for Israel's independence. It discusses the emigration of the Jewish population from Poland to Palestine before 1939, describes the Jewish paramilitary organizations fighting for independence, as well as their aims and methods. Remarkably, in each of these organizations, there were Jews with Polish roots, such as Emanuel Landau, Dr. Marek Kahan, Jakub Granek, Menachem Begin, and many others. After World War II ended, many Polish soldiers of Jewish origin came to Palestine. Incidentally, their number is not precisely known, but there were at least several hundred soldiers who fought in the ranks of the Polish Armed Forces, served in the 1st and 2nd Armies of the Polish People's Army, or survived the Holocaust. After all, more than 40 percent of the Jewish fighters who took part in Israel's War of Independence between 1948 and 1949 had previously served in Polish military formations or had received military training under the guidance of Polish instructors.

In chapter seven, the reviewer spotted a minor oversight: on page 231, the caption under the photograph is missing in Polish, with only the English caption provided. Reading the contents of this chapter, it was difficult not to have the impression that the Jews who arrived in the Middle East with General Anders's troops played a very important role in the subsequent struggle to establish an independent Israel and constituted invaluable social capital for the newly formed state, from which it benefited for decades.

A key feature of the reviewed album is a DVD containing the documentary *Żydzi w Armii Andersa* (Jews in Anders' Army), translated into English and Hebrew, which begins with David Ben Gurion reading the proclamation of the creation of the State of Israel. Statements follow from the Director Dr. Moshe Fuksman Shawl of the Knesset Museum, Director Herzl Makov of the Menachem Begin Centre, Director Brigadier General Zvi Kantor of the Jewish Soldier in World War II Museum, the Polish-Jewish relations researcher Krzysztof Majus, historian Dr. Daniel Koreś of the Institute of National Remembrance in Wrocław, "Tehran child," General Chaim Erez, Prof. Tomasz Głowiński of the University of Wrocław's Institute of History; "Tehran child," Ilana Ben-Gal (who talked about her brother Avigdor

Janusz Ben-Gal, the Major-General who saved Galilee from Syrian invasion during the 1973 Arab-Israeli war), Home Army officer and Israeli army Lieutenant Colonel, Stanisław Aronson and Julian Bussgang. All of them emphasise that even before the outbreak of the Second World War, the Polish state supported Jews in their struggle for Israel's independence. This support included facilitating emigration to Palestine and training fighters of the paramilitary organization Betar, with 50 per cent of the fighters trained in Poland. Among these fighters was the prominent Israeli leader and Nobel Peace Prize laureate Menachem Begin. It was also stated that during the World War II, few Jews managed to get from Europe to Palestine, and only few remember that most came with the army of General Anders. These people contributed significantly to the establishment of the state of Israel. Holocaust survivor Iliana Ben-Gal spoke with deep emotion, highlighting General Anders's favourable disposition towards the Jewish cause. His attitude saved many lives and became known in Israeli history as "Anders Aliya" – the Anders emigration.

The iconographic layer of the publication, which is, after all, so important in an album, should be assessed positively.²⁶ The chapters are illustrated with a variety of photographs that harmonise perfectly with the text. Many of them are extremely interesting, although some are well-known. The value of chapter six has been significantly enhanced by the inclusion of high-quality reproductions of the discussed works of art by Jewish artists. It was also a good idea to include biographical entries concerning some of the important personalities featured in the album's pages, as well as longer quotations that perfectly complement the main text. The only reservations pertain to the quality of some photographs in the album. It appears that at least some could have been restored, although the reviewer acknowledges that this would have involved significant costs and required a very high level of skill from the person responsible for this work.

Overall, the album is presented in an accessible style, with a volume that adequately covers the subject matter. The individual topics are presented coherently

²⁶ Records used are kept in the collections of the Central Archives of Modern Records, the Polish Institute and Sikorski Museum, the National Digital Archives, the Jewish Historical Institute, the Independence Museum in Warsaw, the Karta Institute, the Jabotinsky Institute in Israel, the Menachem Begin Heritage Centre, the Polish Institute of National Remembrance, the Katyń Museum, and in the author's personal collection.

and are easy to understand, although some errors and oversimplifications are present. The authors' work, based on archival research (including foreign sources) and literature in the field, is undoubtedly of interest not only to experts but also to readers with limited or no prior knowledge of the issues discussed. False opinions about the situation of the Jewish community in Poland between the wars and during World War II continue to circulate, and even less is known about the role played by General Anders's army in the emigration of Jews to Palestine. It is important to emphasize the great merits of the Polish state for establishing the state of Israel and, after its partition by the Germans and Soviets in 1939, of General Anders's army. Considering the above, the reviewed album – despite some remarks of a critical or polemical nature – is a valuable publication that fosters good Polish-Jewish relations. One can only feel slightly unsatisfied that the authors decided not to delve deeper into some of the more difficult topics in the history of these relations in the first half of the twentieth century so as to explain specific issues to the foreign reader better. It seems that, especially in the current situation, no opportunity should be missed to correct myths and stereotypes, mainly when a publication in a language other than Polish presents such an opportunity.