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PIOTR DŁUGOŁĘCKI,
W OBliczu ZAGŁADY.

*RZĄD RP NA UCHODŹSTWIE WOBEC ŻYDÓW 1939–1945**
(CONFRONTING THE HOLOCAUST: DOCUMENTS ON THE
POLISH GOVERNMENT-IN-EXILE'S POLICY CONCERNING JEWS
1939–1945)

In recent years, an increasing number of studies has been published, aiming to analyse the attitude of the Polish Government-in-Exile towards Jews, both those in occupied Polish territory and Polish citizens of Jewish nationality who were abroad after the outbreak of World War II. These publications are primarily concerned with the official response to the Holocaust. In this context, the activity of diplomacy is very often examined – due to its scope, scale, and relevance for the persecuted Jews. So far, most attention has been paid to the Polish Embassy in Bern, headed by Aleksander Ładoś (1891–1963) as *chargé d'affaires*.¹

* *W obliczu Zagłady. Rząd RP na uchodźstwie wobec Żydów 1939–1945*, ed. Piotr Długolecki (Warsaw: Polski Instytut Spraw Międzynarodowych, 2021), XCIV + 1121 pp. The Polish Institute of International Affairs also published a full English version of the present study. The title in English is: *Con-*

One of the titles which undoubtedly attests to the intensification of research focusing on the abovementioned issues is the source edition *W obliczu Zagłady. Rząd RP na uchodźstwie wobec Żydów 1939–1945* (*Confronting the Holocaust. Documents on the Polish Government-in-Exile's Policy Concerning Jews 1939–1945*), edited by Piotr Długołęcki, and published by the Polish Institute of International Affairs. Owing to the Benedictine work of the study's editor, we have received a chronologically arranged collection of documents covering the years 1939–1945, i.e., the period of the entire World War II. This is the first publication of this kind to comprehensively present sources on the activities of the Polish Government-in-Exile toward Jews. With more than a thousand pages, the work is all the more deserving of a scholarly analysis.

Piotr Długołęcki, as can be read on the website of the Polish Institute of International Affairs, is its long-standing employee and an editor of its flagship research project, which consists of compiling and preparing for publication of the Polish state's diplomatic documents. So far, several volumes of the *Polskie Dokumenty Dyplomatyczne* (Polish Diplomatic Documents, PDD) series have been published, including the years 1959, 1976, and 1980–1981. He has also published in such journals as: *Polski Przegląd Dyplomatyczny* and *Sprawy Międzynarodowe*. His research interests focus on the Polish foreign policy in the twentieth century and thus has considerable experience in compiling source materials.

The publication under review begins with a Preface outlining the contents of the collection of sources. It spans 57 pages and is divided into 13 sections, entitled (in the order presented in the book): “A New Perspective,” “The Government of the Republic of Poland in Exile towards Jews,” “Circumstances,” “The Types of Actions Undertaken,” “The Mass and Systemic Nature of the Actions Undertaken,” “Accusations of Anti-Semitism and Abuses,” “Bureaucratic Difficulties,” “The Role of the [Diplomatic] Posts,” “Government-in-Exile: The Headquarters and Diplomatic

fronting the Holocaust: Documents on the Polish Government-in-Exile's Policy Concerning Jews 1939–1945, ed. Piotr Długołęcki (Warsaw: Polski Instytut Spraw Międzynarodowych, 2022), 1121 pp.

¹ For an overview of the literature on the actions of Polish diplomacy towards Jews during World War II, see A. Gontarek, “Dyplomacja polska a pomoc udzielana Żydom na ziemiach polskich pod okupacją niemiecką w latach 1939–1943 – 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. 155–172.

Posts (Organisational Matters),” “Criteria for the Selection of Documents and Research Proposals,” “The Source Base,” “Editing Rules,” “The Polish Diplomatic Service Towards the Holocaust – Overview of Publications” and “Acknowledgments.”

This review touches on the key issues identified by the volume’s editor but focuses primarily on the flaws of the work, with the caveat that they do not significantly affect the positive assessment of the entire work, whose great value is the gathering the extensive documentation of the Polish Government-in-Exile. The most important remarks relate primarily to the preface to the collection, although there are also reflections of a somewhat more general nature about the work as a whole.

Beginning with the structure of the reviewed study – it raises serious doubts and makes one ask whether the editor has really thought it through. First of all, it is very chaotic – the order of the issues raised gives the impression of lack of plan. It also seems that such a large number of separate parts is unnecessary.

Taking into account the source editing standards, it is very puzzling why the editor did not decide to present the state of his research right after the Preface, to proceed then to explain in detail the subject and object of his research, to only at a later stage discuss the documentation collected and the conclusions drawn from it. While the order of the issues addressed should not be treated too rigidly, the editor’s chosen schedule does not align well with the general rules that historians typically follow when publishing this type of material. Following criteria known only to himself, the editor has placed the state of the research (selective, by the way) at the very end of the Preface. It is also incomprehensible and rather bizarre that the subject under study is discussed only after its activities have been presented. Also, the characteristics of diplomacy’s activities appears when the editor has previously analysed all the issues concerning the sources collected, reinforcing the impression of chaos. Where did the pattern of interweaving the issues in such an unfettered manner come from? A narrative structured in this way does not make the Preface any easier to read.

Regarding the very detailed breakdown of the Preface, some topics even overlap – e.g., bureaucratic difficulties can be treated as circumstances noted by the editor, but they have been ranked separately. Why one may ask? The same is true of the issue of responses to accusations of anti-Semitism and abuse – why has it not been included in the section titled “The Types of Action Undertaken”?

Another point worth discussing is the conceptual framework. It should be made clear that the publication is not the result of an original initiative on the editor's part – it has been published as part and parcel of a documentary sources collections series of the Polish Government-in-Exile. This raises the question of whether it is a prelude to a sub-series dedicated to the other national minorities, e.g., the Ukrainians, or whether it is about highlighting the Holocaust as a crime without precedent in Europe's long history. After all, it was the Holocaust that was the main reason for aid activities. The editor's clear position on this issue is lacking. He did not comment on his scholarly motives until p. 48:

It is worth mentioning that the inspiration for this publication was, however, one of the Polish-language volumes published by PISM *Polskie Dokumenty Dyplomatyczne 1940* [*Polish Diplomatic Documents 1940*], the main task of which was to lay bare the full spectrum of foreign policy. At that time, the need to show primarily political and diplomatic sources did not allow for the inclusion of several consular documents that pointed to the aid rendered by the posts. The inability to include a more extensive selection of such documents in the series initiated the process that led to this publication.²

The meaning of the above paragraph can thus be understood that the subject of Holocaust studies appeared somewhat by chance, 'on the margins', in the course of other works. It seems that the quoted words are a rather unfortunate explanation of the reasons for launching research, resulting in the publication under review – given that the genocide leading to the almost complete physical liquidation of the Jewish community in occupied Polish territory is discussed there.

Moving to the further, equally important issues, concerning the subject and object of this work: the subtitle of the publication reads *Documents on the Polish Government-in-Exile's Policy Concerning Jews 1939–1945*. Meanwhile, the discussion lacks a clear statement of whom and what this study is about – in terms of the subjects (empowered entities) and the objects. These scopes are presented

² *W obliczu Zagłady*, p. XLVIII.

differently, depending on the part. In the Preface (A New Perspective), it is stated that the publication constitutes “the first attempt to demonstrate the conditions and mechanisms of actions implemented by the Polish Government-in-Exile towards the Jews during World War II.”³ Thus, we literally understand that the editor is only interested in the “conditions and mechanisms” of the government’s actions. A holistic approach, in keeping with the title of the work, does not appear until the section entitled “Criteria for the Selection of Documents and Research Proposals,” where passages about the purpose of this work are included, from which we learn something about the subject of the work. By the way, why did such an important issue find itself only in the middle of the study (p. 33)? Thus, the subject in this part is “the Government-in-Exile,” yet at other times, we are “primarily” talking about diplomatic or consular posts. The editor first presents it as follows: “The main purpose of this collection is to demonstrate the entirety of actions taken by the Government-in-Exile towards Jews,”⁴ whereupon he narrows down his subject with his research perspective and states that “the aim of this volume is above all to show the activities of the diplomatic and consular service, not the attitudes of Polish society or the situation of the Jews in occupied Poland.”⁵ If we had any further doubt, the exact phrases appear in the chapter “Polish Diplomacy Confronting the Holocaust. Survey of Publications.” Within a few lines, we read:

Although this volume contains documents that illustrate the activities of the émigré authorities in London and the situation of Jews in occupied Poland, its main task is to present a record of the activities of Polish diplomatic and consular posts around the world. [...] It should be emphasised once again that this volume does not show the history of the Holocaust or the attitude of the Polish population towards Jews during World War II; it illustrates mainly the activities of the Polish authorities in exile, with particular emphasis on the activities of diplomatic and consular officials.⁶

³ *Ibid.*, p. VII.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. XXXII.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. XXXIII.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. LIII.

It follows that the collection of sources deals not with the entirety of the activities of the Polish Government-in-Exile towards the Jews, but ‘primarily’ the activities of the consular and diplomatic service... The careful reader may also feel confused by the fact that the editor, when discussing the purpose of his work, for reasons that are not clear, makes three statements about whether or not the documents illustrate the full spectrum of the situation of the Jews and twice states that they do not, and once that they do.⁷ Thereby, we enter the area of subjects (i.e., themes, topics) this work aims to address. Leaving aside whether such considerations are legitimate, let us emphasise that, as far as the object of the work is concerned, there is a lack of scholarly precision – for there is inconsistent discussion once about Jews during World War II and another time about Jews in occupied Polish territory.

The editor’s overly casual approach to defining the scope of the subjects also has other manifestations, as he erroneously equates the entirety of the Polish government’s activities towards the Jews, including the activities of Polish diplomacy, with aid activities which, however, are areas which can be distinguished. The boundaries between the two types of activity – the standard and the extraordinary (aid-oriented) – are blurred; as the editor notes, they are understood as ‘efforts.’⁸ We become aware of this when reading the different sections of the Preface. To avoid reiterating every contradiction in detail, let’s highlight that the most glaring issue is equating government activity with aid activity in the sections “A New Perspective and Types of Action Undertaken.”⁹

The next issue is the problem of defining these ‘efforts’. What is the editor’s position on this? He identifies information, propaganda, legal activities, and, notably, “strictly aid-oriented activity,” which in turn, as the preface to the sources states, “consists in finding a safe shelter or enabling the evacuation of endangered people.”¹⁰ Let us dwell on this issue for a while. Can the first three types of activities mentioned (information, propaganda, and legal) also mean aid activity in the right context and situation? It appears so. Moreover, the next question that comes to mind is, for what reasons would “strictly aid-oriented activity” have to be re-

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. XXXIII, LIII.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. VII.

⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. VII–VIII, XII–XVIII.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. VII.

duced to ensure shelter and evacuation? The editor has not defined at all how he understands aid actions and, at the same time, uses the term “strictly aid-related activity.” What is the difference between strictly aid and aid?

As one moves on through the Preface, the lack of coherence in the argument becomes increasingly evident. The proposed typology of activities suddenly transforms into planes of “primarily aid, information, and propaganda, as well as legal activities,” whereupon we learn that “more specific sorts of assistance” were forgery or obtaining the necessary documentation.¹¹ Thus, as this reviewer understands it, the previously given definition of strictly aid-related activity has been expanded (to include the delivery of documents), except that this time, it is not preceded by the word “strictly,” (*stricte*) which is replaced by unspecified specificity. Further on, the editor also introduces us to the issue of forms of assistance. These included sending parcels containing medicines, food, and clothing, as well as attempts to transfer money or – yes, indeed! – “deliver necessary (genuine and forged) documents.”¹² On the same page, the documentation provided to Jews was simultaneously considered both a type of aid activity and its form. Is this an accurate treatment of the issue? According to the dictionary definition, are “kind/type” truly synonymous with “form”?

Another issue is that if the editor has distinguished the areas of obtaining documents, their kinds, and ways of transferring them to users, the division should instead be made according to the criteria opposing each other: documents – legal/illegal; places where they went – occupied Poland/Europe/Soviet Union/other countries; their recipients – Polish citizens/foreigners. Instead of this seemingly simplest and most obvious division, the editor tries to convince us to accept a rather original way of seeing the issue. Namely, he believes that falsifying and obtaining the necessary documentation should be divided into the following three categories: The first is obtaining genuine documents issued by the diplomatic posts of the neutral states, the second is issuing Polish passports to people who were not Polish citizens, while the third type of action undertaken includes the manufacturing of documents (e.g., baptismal certificates), with the primary purpose of hiding the Jewish descent of refugees.¹³

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. XII.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. XIV.

The question then arises whether falsifying consisted only of issuing baptismal certificates. Didn't this practice also apply to passports, since not only Polish citizens received them? Didn't they have an aid or rescue dimension to them? We know, after all, that in many places, desperate Jews gave different, often false, identities and Polish officials were aware of this. In general, therefore, all such actions had a protective function – they concealed the real state of affairs. To sum up, the depiction of aid activities by Polish diplomacy would be much clearer if presented coherently. This means ensuring all parts are compatible with each other and clearly explaining in one place what the collection of sources entails, what is meant by governmental activities (including aid activities), the typology of activities with a particular focus on aid (according to specified criteria, which should also be listed), and their forms. As it stands, there is quite a lot of conceptual confusion and an unnecessary search, stemming probably from the lack of linguistic precision, for alleged “specific” and “distinctive features” (distinctive from what?).¹⁴

Undoubtedly, a comprehensive analysis of the aid question is not easy due to the large amount of archival material. The catalogue of aid and rescue activities understood as above-standard initiatives will grow as the research develops. We can certainly include in it falsifying documents (and any illegal, extra-legal activity), concealing national/religious identity, providing assistance to citizens of other countries, conducting extraordinary interventions and making efforts to protect life and health. They also include activities in which the person undertaking them risked his or her own life and health and that of his or her colleagues, as well as the fate of the establishment when it was threatened with closure, for example. Indeed, information and propaganda activities were also included in the broadly understood aid activities, but not every event in this sphere had a protective or aid-related dimension, as the editor presents it. Many of them tell us more about the direction of Polish policy towards the so-called Jewish question and Jewish refugees rather than attest to any tangible support. Generally, aid activity had to be extraordinarily coordinated, going beyond the standard legal and state obligations. After all, the duty of the Polish state, and particularly of the consular and diplomatic corps, was to care for all citizens of the Polish state residing abroad

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. XII.

regardless of their religion, nationality, and so on. By the same token, we have to distinguish between ordinary activities and those that are unusual, which we would classify as aid or rescue.

On the sidelines of considerations of the definitional framework related to aid given to Jews, let us mention that it will probably be necessary in the near future to distinguish between the terms “aid” and “rescue” on the assumption that the former may have either a broader or a narrower meaning. A clear division will play a particularly important role in issues related to Polish diplomacy’s aid activities since the territories in which these services operated had a varied status, ranging from independent, occupied, and neutral to those located within spheres of influence.

It is apt now to confront the most important theses contained in the work under discussion. From the very first sentence, Piotr Długołęcki argues that we are dealing here with a large-scale nature of “efforts” made by the Polish government to aid and rescue Jews. Let us leave aside the fact that how they are to be understood is unclear. Nevertheless, the editor leaves no doubt that their second feature was their systemic nature. The large-scale and systemic nature of the actions undertaken is the editor’s two most important findings. Apart from this, as we can read, “in principle, all Polish posts were engaged in aid activities,” whereas “Polish officials and diplomats organised one of the largest relief actions to help Jews carried out during World War II.”¹⁵ Focusing on Jewish affairs, as the editor goes on to state, constituted one of the most important policies of the Polish Government-in-Exile’s, which “allows readers to look at the history of mutual [Polish-Jewish – A.G.] relations during World War II from a new perspective.”¹⁶

While the large-scale, or rather universal, nature of the aid effort is unquestionable, the application of the concept of systemic nature to government activity invites debate.¹⁷ If it was indeed characterised by such an attribute, the question arises within which system it was conducted. What was the nature of this system? When was it established, and what was the aid and rescue mechanism? The ques-

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. VII, XIX.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. VII, XVIII.

¹⁷ Elsewhere, the editor noted that it wasn’t the aid itself that was large-scale, but rather the significant attention the state institutions “paid a lot of attention to providing assistance to refugees dispersed around the world, as well as those in occupied Poland.” (*ibid.*, p. XXIX).

tion of its location within the structures of the Polish government is also crucial. Was there a kind of decision-making centre(s) that could make decisions on an ongoing basis, or were the activities decentralised, ad hoc, interventionist, and spontaneous? This information is missing, so it is difficult to take the argument of systemic nature on faith. Perhaps the editor meant the systematic nature of aid?

The argument of systemic nature of the governments activities is indirectly contradicted by the words of the editor himself when he considers the problem of the lack of a governmental study, which would summarise all actions connected with all matters related to Polish citizens of Jewish nationality. The editor concluded that no such document had been prepared, although attempts had been made to do so, mainly in the context of repelling accusations of anti-Semitism, and apparently, such a need had been signalled by Tadeusz Romer.¹⁸ It follows that the assistance provided, when we speak of its totality, was of a rather dispersed nature, difficult to coordinate, with no clear center, unified structure, or system, so it cannot come as a surprise that compiling a comprehensive study on this topic encountered difficulties. Certainly, researchers will analyse this issue in the near future. After all, dealing with, for example, the problem of mass refugees does not yet prove that the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and its diplomatic missions developed a specific, well-defined aid system. Undoubtedly, the very organisational structure of the consular and diplomatic missions served as a kind of base.

At the end of this thread, it is also appropriate to raise the question of the scale of aid, which should have been attempted in exact or approximate figures. A significant drawback of the reviewed volume is the omission of this issue. It would have been worthwhile to analyse the various refugee figures appearing in the available sources. However fluctuating this phenomenon may be, such an attempt is not entirely impossible, and it would not hurt to present some statistics to support the key points about the large-scale and systemic nature of the discussed aid activity.

With regard to the Holocaust itself: let us begin with the placement of the Holocaust in the work under review. Thus in a study of aid issues, we should expect a clear position on the main reasons for initiating acts of aid and support, whereas in this volume, persecution, anti-Jewish policy and then the Holocaust

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. LV.

are treated as “conditions” to be expressed. It is difficult to agree with the fact that the editor writes about the Holocaust indirectly and, as it were, as an aside, only in the section concerning the question of conditions. The Holocaust should occupy a more prominent place in the narrative – certainly not as a distant background, as it was the generator of all rescue and aid activities. Symbolically, the misplacement of the Holocaust is evidenced by the fact that the term first appears in bracketed information.¹⁹ Furthermore, in relation to genocide, it should be written with a capital letter (unlike the lowercase used in the Preface).²⁰

On the other hand, the significance of the Holocaust issue, as inferred from the editor’s intentions, is highlighted by the final section of the work, which surveys the literature on Polish diplomacy’s actions during the Holocaust. Before delving into the substantive issues, it is essential to acknowledge some gaps in the literature. Notably absent is a study by Ewa Pałasz-Rutkowska (Chair of Japanese Studies, Jagiellonian University) on the Polish ambassador to Japan and later foreign minister, Tadeusz Romer.²¹ There are also publications not mentioned by Izaak Lewin or Agnieszka Haska that explicitly discuss rescue activities.²² It is, therefore, difficult to take seriously the statement that no publication has so far “focused on the rescue activities carried out by diplomatic and consular missions or various kinds of aid agencies.”²³

It is also perplexing to exclude Kazimierz Iranek-Osmecki’s²⁴ contribution to the typology of Polish diplomatic activities in support of the Jews. Iranek-Osmecki was the first person, not being a professional historian, who attempted this type of analysis.²⁵ His study was published in London in 1968, while David Engel’s work, singled

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. IX.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. LIII.

²¹ E. Pałasz-Rutkowska, “The Polish Ambassador Tadeusz Romer: A Rescuer of Refugees in Tokyo,” *Darbai ir dienos* 67 (2017), pp. 239–254.

²² A. Haska, “Proszę Pana o energiczną interwencję. Aleksander Ładoś (1891–1963) i ratowanie Żydów przez Poselstwo RP w Bernie,” *Zagłada Żydów. Studia i Materiały* 11 (2015), pp. 299–309. For information on the problem of overlooking the work of Izaak Lewin, see A. Gontarek, “Dyplomacja polska,” pp. 156–158.

²³ *W obliczu Zagłady*, p. LIII.

²⁴ K. Iranek-Osmecki, *Kto ratuje jedno życie... Polacy i Żydzi 1939–1945* (London, 1968).

²⁵ The failure to include Kazimierz Iranek-Osmecki is all the more astonishing as he was probably the only person, as the editor mentioned, who, in the post-war years, tried to obtain information about aid to Jews from representatives of the diplomatic service, *W obliczu Zagłady*, p. LVI.

out by the editor as the one that constituted the narrative of the Polish response to the Holocaust, was not published until 1993. Of course, the two books cannot be compared – in fact, they both already belong to the historiography of Polish-Jewish relations, and their conclusions should be thoroughly revised, but the gaps identified do not allow us to have full confidence in the editor as an expert on the subject matter. Overall, reading this section leads one to conclude that the editor does not necessarily understand the genesis and course of the turbulent Polish-Jewish discussion on the role of the Polish government, including diplomacy, in saving Jews. Its key participants were undoubtedly not only Jan Tomasz Gross and David Engel. It is worth mentioning moreover, Edward Raczynski was also among the many people who spoke out on this issue.²⁶ The question may arise as to whether the editor saw the need to give voice to both sides of the debate at all, given the importance of the issue he was dealing with. The presentation of literature is also a considerable problem. It is a kind of overview rather than an analysis of scholar's discussion.

Let us now turn to the editor's conclusions about the diplomatic activity in the face of the Holocaust. This should be done with great caution since the "diplomatic" part does not contain any more information as such about the diplomatic note of 10 December 1942, known as the "Raczynski's Note" – notably, only one sentence.²⁷ Incidentally, it is clear from the entire Preface that the greatest achievement of the Polish Foreign Minister Edward Raczynski was his interventions in France, to which the editor devotes considerable space.²⁸ Meanwhile, it was this note that most clearly testifies to the direction of Polish policy towards the Holocaust, and it was this note that, albeit belatedly, led to the internationalisation of the Holocaust problem. Thanks to it, the whole world, or at least the leadership elites of the time, had the opportunity to learn about the genocide of Jews, not just the Polish ones, and were able to make it a public matter. It is therefore difficult to understand why the editor, while mentioning elsewhere (in general terms and as if in passing) the historical evaluations of the note, including the negative ones, did not outline what this note was in the first place.²⁹

²⁶ A. Gontarek, "Dyplomacja polska," p. 130.

²⁷ *W obliczu Zagłady*, p. LI.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. XV–XVI.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. XIII, XLVIII.

Another key issue relating to the Holocaust that requires comment is that of the extensive passport operations conducted by Polish diplomacy in South American countries aimed at confirming the validity of these documents and of fundamental importance for saving the Jews who were in internment camps, mainly in France (e.g., the Vittel camp). While the general facts presented by the editor on this subject are accurate, the interpretations regarding the German side's knowledge and the reasons for its failure can be reasonably challenged. It is revealed that the Germans were unaware of the procedure of issuing passports by Polish diplomacy until the end of 1943. Additionally, the operation was allegedly hindered by the fault of the Jews themselves, which was purportedly the decisive factor for its failure. In fact, the existing body of scholarly work contradicts the first assertion – according to scholars, the Gestapo in the occupied Polish territories was not only aware of the passport operation but also began to use these documents to deceive Jews in hiding through its agents, leading to their eventual capture and execution.³⁰ Regarding the second issue, being a highly controversial interpretation, let us first quote a more extensive passage in which the editor writes about the reasons why the intervention did not go as the Polish side intended:

In June 1944, the actions carried out were summarised as follows: ‘The Ministry spares no effort to trigger an effective action that could protect Jews who were provided with Latin-American courtesy passports [*sic!*] from deportation to Poland and extermination. What makes it difficult is having only residual data on the number of people concerned and the number of passports of individual American republics. Already in March, the Ministry demanded that the Jewish organizations in Switzerland provide as complete data as possible, but it has not yet received them.’³¹

It may be understood that the lack of good contact between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the “Jewish organisations in Switzerland” may have been an important factor affecting the success of the operation, but did it really play such

³⁰ Like, for example, during the Hotel Polski “scandal” in the Warsaw ghetto. More in A. Haska, „Jestem Żydem, chcę wejść”. *Hotel Polski w Warszawie 1943* (Warsaw, 2006).

³¹ *W obliczu Zagłady*, p. XV.

an important role when the bulk of the passports were obtained by members of the Polish Legation in Bern in cooperation with Relico or Waad Hacala? Did the legation not have a list of those who received passports? Or did the organisations mentioned above suddenly refuse to cooperate? If so, for what reasons? Such a list is, for example, available in the MFA files group at the Hoover Institution Archives. This issue should be clarified, whereas the editor leaves it without any comment.

Finally, the Holocaust is connected with the question of Jewish survival strategies. It is to be appreciated that this issue – in the context of Polish actions in general – has been addressed (and this time in the right place, i.e., as external conditions). The editor rightly argues that a commonality of interests emerged between Polish diplomacy and the refugees: Polish representations sought to help the Jewish refugee masses by evacuating them, which corresponded with the goals of the Jewish refugees, who, in the first place, were aiming to leave Europe.³² It is worth mentioning, however, that many desperate Jewish fugitives resorted to falsifying their travel documents on their own and attempted to corrupt Polish officials to get out of threatened or occupied countries. At times, this caused problems in terms of eroding the trust in Polish institutions placed in them by the authorities of various European countries. Such uncovered cases required explanations, numerous conversations, and efforts, as they gave rise to suspicions that Polish posts may have been behind them. This even threatened their closure or a significant reduction in their activities. In this way, Jewish survival strategies can be interpreted not only as actions fostering the activities of Polish posts but paradoxically also as a factor hindering them.

The question of the Holocaust also arises in connection with the editor's proposed periodisation of the Polish Government-in-Exile's actions towards the Jews. This is not an easy task, as the collection of sources covers the entire period of World War II, and such activities were conducted almost all over the globe. The question then arises as to what criteria should be used to distinguish specific periods of this activity. Was it correct to establish a general chronological division, homogeneous for the entire volume, and is such homogeneity justified at all since the Holocaust took place in the territories occupied by the Third Reich, but not in the USSR?

³² *Ibid.*, p. XI.

Piotr Długolecki divides the activities of the Polish Government-in-Exile into the following “periods”: “the initial period of war” (until October 1940) when “it was possible for Jewish people to emigrate from the part of Poland occupied by the Germans,” “the period of direct extermination of Jews” (1941–1943) and “the final years of the war” (1944–1945).³³ Such a division raises doubts not only because it abstracts from the conditions in the Soviet Union, but above all because it was created and based on a mixture of criteria – at one time only events taking place in Polish lands (e.g., the establishment of ghettos) were considered, and at another time those taking place in the whole of Europe. It would make sense to consider government activity in two rather than three periods – before the start of mass extermination, i.e., up to 1941 (and in other territories up to 1942), and after the beginning of the process of mass murder aimed at the complete physical elimination of Jews. Given that the collection of sources focuses on government initiatives, it would be acceptable to consider another significant event: Raczynski’s Note of 10 December 1942. Researchers highlight the fact that this note was a crucial moment in the history of the Holocaust and was fundamentally important for evaluating both the official Polish and global response. Unfortunately, it has received too little attention in Polish historiography. For instance, it has been overlooked that the interventions of the Polish government and its diplomatic posts can be divided into two periods: before and after the public disclosure of the truth about the Holocaust.

Finally, the third issue pertains to periodisation. The term “the final years of the war” (1944–1945) might mistakenly imply that the Holocaust ended in 1943. Of course, the editor does not say so; after all, he stated that the third period was filled primarily with “aiding refugees scattered in many countries around the world.” It was also “the time of the appeals to stop the extermination of the Hungarian Jews and of the suggestions being made by the Polish part for retaliatory actions.”³⁴ Nevertheless, it may give the impression that direct extermination ceased during this period, as it was the name of the previous period that referred to the Holocaust process.

³³ *Ibid.*, pp. IX–X.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. X.

The attempt to define the third period of activities in greater detail can also be said to be unsuccessful. In this context, one may ask why is only the thread related to Hungarian Jews and the reprisals emphasised here? Did the Polish government focus exclusively on these planes of activity at that time,³⁵ and neglect other issues? In the view of this review, periods are identified and characterised to capture the dynamics of activities in a changing reality. However, the periodisation proposed by the editor does not accurately reflect the processes that took place.

Moreover, the deliberations about periodisation appeared only in the “Circumstances” section, whereas they should have been included in another: “The Types of Actions Undertaken.” Then we would have known which types/kinds of actions took place in which period. The editor, however, chose a different route. When he wrote about the kinds of activities, he omitted the time factor. Instead, he enumerated government and departmental initiatives, e.g. in the sphere of information and propaganda activities, these were:

notes, appeals, discussions, public speeches, radio and press interviews, inspired publications, document collections editions, accounts, photographs, brochures, bulletins issued by the Polish diplomatic and consular posts, reports published by the institutions “established for this purpose” and the continued campaign against anti-Semitism accusations.³⁶

So we learn something about the forms of government activity, but we do not know how these relate to the previously distinguished “periods.” Why were the latter proposed and, more importantly, do the Holocaust and its course have any relevance here at all?

The analysis of the source base, presented by Piotr Długolecki, requires a separate commentary. He dedicated two sections to this issue: “Criteria for the Selection of Documents” and “Research Proposals and The Source Base.” Let us skip the “Editing Rules” – as they are technical – and focus on the fundamental issue, namely the arrangement of the collected documentation. Indeed, the very fact

³⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. IX–X.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. IX–X, XIII.

of gathering it in such a large quantity deserves praise – it is the result of titanic work, testifying to the editor's in-depth source research. However, it is somewhat questionable to dogmatically follow the rules of all PDD series volumes, which always arrange the documentation according to a chronological key, while completely ignoring the subject factor. It would seem that a chronological/issue-based pattern would be preferable for the subject matter under consideration. The most crucial argument in favour of such a solution is the global scope of the Polish government's activities. Governmental activities were carried out under diverse political conditions – under at least two totalitarianisms (Nazi and the Soviet in the territories that the Third German Reich and the Soviet Union seized) and under the circumstances of particular independent states, sometimes with neutral status with respect to the ongoing World War II. The documents could therefore be divided into four parts: the first batch of source material could present those sources that deal with the overall general policy of the government towards the Jewish question, the Jews and the Holocaust, while in the following parts it would make sense to separately include documentation on activities in the countries occupied by the Third Reich, in the territory of the USSR and in other countries. With such a division, it would, of course, be a good idea to reflect the actual organisational structure of the Polish government in the arrangement of the archives (or at least to attempt to do so). A purely chronological arrangement is not the best solution. Let us also mention that the editor himself, with regard to the arrangement of the sources, only justified why the publication of documents in the order in which they were created is preferable to the concept of segregating documents according to the dates on which they were sent or received.³⁷ This approach has resulted in the reviewed publication becoming largely a study based on an inventory of registered documents rather than a problem-analytical presentation of the examined research question.

Regarding the criteria for selecting archival material, the volume includes material produced by the authorities of the Republic of Poland in exile, a fact repeated twice in close succession.³⁸ However, this otherwise obvious criterion is

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. XL.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. XXX, XXXI.

not respected, and the reasons for this are unclear. For instance, it is not evident why and for what purpose (“as an exception”) several documents produced by Jewish organisations and groups, both in the country and abroad, were included. In contrast, the reply to the note of 10 December 1942 deliberately was not.³⁹ Considering the subject matter and its great importance, as well as its role as a testimony to the tangible success of the Polish government and its diplomacy, this second document should have been published as an exception. Similarly, it was questionable to include other documents in the volume that, although produced by the Polish government, did not deal with Jewish matters. We are referring to the opening document of the collection, namely the circular on the German invasion of Poland by Poland’s Minister of Foreign Affairs, dated 1 September 1939, and the last document in the volume, the note of the Polish Government-in-Exile of 6 July 1945, addressed to the British Minister of Foreign Affairs, protesting the recognition of the Provisional Government of National Unity (*Tymczasowy Rząd Jedności Narodowej*). With regard to the first document, the editor stated: “We decided that starting a volume devoted to World War II with documents from 17 or 30 September 1939 would be an artificial operation, disruptive to the narrative,”⁴⁰ whereas the reason for including the second document is purely symbolical – this document marks “the end of the diplomatic efforts of the Government-in-Exile in Jewish matters.”⁴¹ This reasoning is controversial. Contrary to the editor’s intentions, his methodology here appears “artificial.” Firstly, because the specific subject of the collection of documents is not the multidimensional and multifaceted activities of the Polish Government-in-Exile during World War II, as in this case we are interested in a narrower perspective. It was therefore necessary to find the first and the last relevant document testifying to the wartime activity of the government towards Jews/Jewish matters, and to explain their importance and significance in the introduction, as well as to include information on when the activity of the Polish Government-in-Exile officially began and when it ended.

³⁹ The editor likely included materials of Jewish provenance to preempt accusations of excluding Jewish voices from the volume. However, he also included numerous documents produced by the Polish administration where Jews expressed their opinions, ensuring that their perspective was not omitted from the collection, *ibid.*, p. XXXI.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. XXIX.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

There are many more such exceptions because, as the editor argues, there was a need to place the records in the relevant context, and thereby facilitate their interpretation.⁴² This is an unusual method for compiling a collection of sources, where some documents are explained by publishing others that are entirely unrelated to the subject. In fact, it can mean complete freedom in selecting source material. This is well illustrated by the included document considering the death of General Władysław Sikorski in the Gibraltar plane crash, a circumstance unrelated directly to Jewish issues.⁴³ The further we go in reading the collection of sources, the more we become convinced that it is not so much about the activities of the Polish government towards the Jews as it is an illustration of the various kinds of documentation kept in the archives, a picture of the archival resources on Jewish topics related to the activities of the Polish Government-in-Exile.

The “illustrativeness criterion” moreover, applied by the editor in selecting source material of domestic provenance is not entirely clear. This pertains to potentially important documents that reached the Polish political elite in various ministries from the occupied country and were subsequently used by them. The editor wrote: “Documents issued in occupied Poland, which showed the nature of daily life under occupation, were provided as illustrations or in the context of their further use by the authorities in exile.”⁴⁴ What kind of illustrating is this, what kind of “further use” is meant, and what contexts or situations are being referred to? This we do not learn. We can only read that “documents from occupied Poland were published only incidentally as it were, to illustrate this type of archival material.”⁴⁵ Was the purpose of including these documents simply to illustrate them?

The editor has edited and published 554 documents from 11 archives, the vast majority of which have never been published. References to several hundred more are included in the footnotes. This is indeed a massive collection of material. Arranged chronologically, 18 documents from 1939, 65 from 1940, 69 from 1941, 155 from 1942, 112 from 1943, 116 from 1944, and 19 from 1945 are presented,

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. XXX.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. XXXII.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. XXXII.

but the work lacks this kind of precise enumeration. Therefore, this article presents a reviewer's duty to use his own calculations. These statistics indicate that the largest part comes from 1942–1944.

Unfortunately, there was a lack of meticulousness in presenting the sources' provenance. Apart from general data on the use of documentation from several hundred record groups held in the eleven archives mentioned above and their cursory characteristics in the form of an apparently haphazard enumeration of resources, no information is given as to which of them – in percentage terms or in absolute numbers – constitute the core of the published documents. This is important for assessing the reasons for the omissions in the conducted research. An interesting question, for example, may be how many of these come from Polish archives and how many from foreign ones, which group proved to be the most abundant in information on Jewish issues. Did the collections held in Yad Vashem, as the editor stated, indeed form the source basis of the volume under review?⁴⁶ This is doubtful, especially since the editor was interested in documents produced by the Polish side.

The overview of the collected material is facilitated by two indexes – a subject index, including a geographical index, and a personal index. It was a good solution to highlight in bold, next to the individual index headings, those documents directly related to the announced topic. In this way, a distinction is made between documents entirely concerning the subject matter in question and those that only mention it.

In conclusion, it should be noted that the introduction to the collection of sources contains many inaccuracies, contradictions, and repetitions. There are also errors, and the conclusions are generally chaotic. These flaws cast a shadow over the entire work, which, of course, also contains valuable insights. For example, the issue of legal aid is addressed for the first time, but these are mere mentions that are not given adequate prominence. The issue of accusations of anti-Semitism and abuse, however, has been developed in more depth. In addition, the research proposals the editor discusses in greater detail are of interest and importance to the entire community of historians dealing with aid.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. XXXVI.

Unfortunately, the editor's main theses put forward in the Preface are not convincing, as we have to take his word that what he has presented marks a new research perspective. What impresses is not so much the analysis and discussion of the sources as the sizable collection of archival material, covering more than a thousand pages, which probably contains many valuable and previously unknown sources. However, one would need to study the documents page by page to discover this. The biggest drawback of the reviewed study is the lack of consideration for the newly discovered documents. While there are references and examples, they are presented without any hierarchy and appear random, lacking connection to the key issues. Further, the editor does not specify which material constitutes the primary source corpus and why.

It is also unclear which archival materials are most important in relation to the existing research and how they change the "old" research perspective. We are also interested in knowing which group of archival materials or documents deepen and refine our knowledge. It is significant that when there is an attempt to discuss the documentation, it only forms the backdrop of a narrative on another topic of concern to the editor, namely why still, during the war, no comprehensive governmental study of the Polish government's actions towards Jews was produced. This causes the editor's dissatisfaction, and this is the focus of his attention. When viewed in this way, the few important documents listed by Piotr Długolecki do not seem to be of much value because what is missing is an "ideal" document, i.e. one in which everything the Polish government knew and did on the Holocaust and where the Jewish question is covered.

The above remarks, as strongly emphasised at the beginning of the review, do not invalidate the great value of the reviewed work. Piotr Długolecki deserves the highest praise, especially since he has never dealt with Jewish matters before (and perhaps this is the reason for the various shortcomings). His work is a milestone in the study of the Polish response to the Holocaust and future generations of scholars will undoubtedly draw upon it. The purpose of this review, despite its critical comments, is to encourage the use of Piotr Długolecki's work. It is very likely that the material presented introduces a new research perspective, but this needs to be confirmed/validated in subsequent works. The editor's most significant accomplishment is the gathering, chronological arrangement, and compilation of

this extensive body of documentation (even if it should be noted that this academic activity is insufficient to meet the level of scholarly rigor typically expected from such a work.) In doing so, he has hinted at its potential, leaving it to others to spend weeks deciphering what this new perspective is. For we will analyse it differently in the context of reactions to the Holocaust, differently in relation to the refugee problem, and yet differently in relation to the Jewish question as one of the political problems.

Despite the many negative points made by this reviewer, the work in question has fulfilled its basic purpose and, following the editor's wishes, provides an impetus for further research, particularly, it is believed, on aid to Jews during the German occupation. This is the first publication therefore that can so clearly contribute to a paradigm shift in aid-related research – it makes one realise all the more that saving Jews is a broader research question going beyond matters pertaining to the occupied lands of the Second Polish Republic. Thanks to the study conducted by Piotr Długolecki, we become persuaded that aid to Jews as a research question has a European, international and, ultimately, global dimension.