



Polish-Jewish
STUDIES

Polish-Jewish STUDIES

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INTRODUCTION

This year marks the 80th anniversary of the murder in Markowa (Podkarpackie region) of the Ulma Family and the Jews they sheltered from the Goldman, Didner and Grünfeld families. Because of this family's heroism and extraordinary acts, the Sejm of the Republic of Poland, by a resolution of 28 July 2023, established 2024 the Year of the Ulma Family. The resolution stated that "in Poland and beyond its borders they (i.e. Ulmas) are a symbol of all those who gave their lives for helping Jews persecuted by the Germans."¹ The fifth volume of *Polish-Jewish Studies* primarily focuses on the aid provided to the Jews during World War II in occupied Poland as well as in other parts of Europe. The volume is divided in four sections: "Studies," "Sources," "Reviews/Polemics," and "Chronicles."

The first group of texts, found in the "Studies" section, consists of articles related to the issue's main theme, presenting it from comparative, historiographical, methodological, and psychological perspectives. The section opens with the article "Types of Penalties for Helping Jews between 1939 and 1945. Typology and Overview: German Regulations in Force in Selected Areas of Occupied Europe. A Research Reconnaissance," in which Martyna Grądzka-Rejak and Aleksandra Namysłó presented the current state of knowledge on the consequences of providing various types of assistance to Jews in selected countries occupied by or cooperating with the German Reich. In the second article, Alicja Gontarek and

¹ Resolution of the Sejm of the Republic of Poland of 28 July 2023 on the establishment of the year 2024 as the Year of the Ulma Family (*Monitor Polski* 2023, item 886).

Tomasz Domański (“The Phenomenon of Aid Given to Jews by Poles in the Occupied Polish Territories: Approaches and Research Models. A Survey of Positions Taken by Polish and Polish-Jewish Historians”) drew attention to the so-called conceptual model of research on aid to Jews, which prevails in the existing literature and consists in recounting individual testimonies (or collections of testimonies). At the same time, the study advocated a wider application of a model addressing this topic in a thematic manner, which would make it possible to draw a historical synthesis. Meanwhile, the third text (“Was it Trauma? Insights into the Psychological Costs of Hiding Jews During World War II”) by Wiesława Sotwin, presents this researcher’s take on the issue of aid from the point of view of a psychologist. The article considers applying the category of trauma to experiences of people who gave shelter to Jews. The author pointed out that the trauma of those who provided help to the Jews is absent in the public space, and stressed that this problem has still not been socially embraced and acknowledged.

This section’s second group includes texts attempting to respond to the research postulate of Domański and Gontarek presented above. These articles deal with various forms of assistance given to the Jews in selected areas of occupied Poland. The first text concerns the Distrikt Krakau (Cracow Province) and focuses on the problem of providing shelter to Jewish children (“At Home, We Called Her Hanka.” The Issue of Poles Sheltering Jewish Children on the Aryan Side in the Distrikt Krakau (Cracow Province”). Basing on the fates of several dozen children, Roman Gieron outlined the nature of the help given to them – he answered the question of how they reached their new guardians, and characterised the conditions in which they were staying. The author took into account the context of the various challenges, problems and dangers that those who decided to provide long-term assistance faced in the German occupation conditions. The next article presents the forms of support provided to Jews residing in the so-called Jewish quarters established by the German authorities on the territory of the pre-war Stanisławów Voivodeship (“Individual Aid Provided to Jews in Ghettos in the German Occupation: The Pre-War Stanisławów Voivodeship (1941–1943)”). Tomasz Gonet, providing an overview of the occupation-era conditions in the analysed area, attempted both a description and a statistical account of the above phenomenon. In the last article of this group, Paweł Kornacki presents various aid activities undertaken to

support the Jews under the German occupation, based on the example of the pre-war Łomża District (“Pre-War Łomża District Inhabitants Helping Jews During the German Occupation. A Contribution to Research”).

The “Studies” section closes by containing texts focusing on the lives of Jews imprisoned in the ghettos and their survival strategies – these articles also contain threads relating to the subject of aid. “Resistance and Struggle for the Survival of Garbatka Jews Under the German Occupation” became the subject of Ryszard Śmietanka-Kruszelnicki’s research. Łukasz Połomski in turn outlined “Everyday Life and Living Conditions of Jews in the Nowy Sącz Ghetto 1940–1942.” These texts broaden the knowledge on the history of local Jewish communities and their destruction during World War II.

In the “Sources” section, Kinga Czechowska draws attention to the still unexplored topic of the involvement of the Polish Protestants in helping Jews. In her article entitled “Polish Evangelicals Helping Jews. Two Letters of Celina Reńska née Kawecka to Yad Vashem Concerning Aid Provided in Warsaw by the Szulc and Stechbart Families,” she presents documents that are intended to prompt further research into the issue.

Eight reviews in all form the next part of *Polish-Jewish Studies* no. 5. Przemysław Benken reviews an illustrated study (Warsaw–Jerusalem, 2020), edited by Tomasz Głowiński, Daniel Koreś, Witold Mędykowski and Jan Wiktor 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*). The presentations and assessments of the publication by Ryszard Tyndorf and Zygmunt Zieliński concerning the activities of the Catholic Church and Catholic clergy to aid Jews in German-occupied Poland (*Wartime Rescue of Jews by the Polish Catholic Clergy: The Testimony of Survivors and Rescuers*, vol. 1–2, Lublin, 2023) are included in this section in two texts penned by Piotr Briks and Limore Yagil. In the next review, Tomasz Domański analyses the posters on display at the exhibition “Some Were Neighbors. Choice, Human Behavior and the Holocaust” – that were prepared by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum and toured many Polish towns and institutions. Thereafter, Adam Dziurok shares his thoughts on Andrew Kornbluth’s publication *The August Trials: The Holocaust and Postwar Justice in Poland*. Alicja Gontarek reviews the extensive (over

a thousand pages long) publication edited by Piotr Długołęcki, presenting sources concerning the activities of the Polish Government-in-Exile towards the Jewish population (*W obliczu Zagłady. Rząd RP na uchodźstwie wobec Żydów 1939–1945*, Warsaw, 2021; *Confronting the Holocaust: Documents on the Polish Government-in-Exile's Policy Concerning Jews 1939–1945*, Warsaw, 2022). Next, Martyna Grądzka-Rejak reviews the publication by Andrzej Żbikowski (*O nadziei, cierpieniu, bólu. Ludność cywilna w czasie powstania w getcie warszawskim*, Warsaw, 2023 [Hope, Suffering, and Pain: The Civilian Population During the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising]), and a collective monograph dedicated to Jewish women who fought in the uprising in the Warsaw Ghetto (*Kwestia charakteru. Bojowniczkę z getta warszawskiego*, ed. Sylwia Chutnik, Monika Sznajderman, Wołowiec–Warsaw, 2023 [A Matter of Character: Women Combatants from the Warsaw Ghetto]).

The last section, “Chronicles,” includes three texts and begins with the article by Wojciech Hanus “For though they be punished in the sight of men, yet is their hope full of immortality...” Report on Institute of National Remembrance Activities in Connection with Solemn Beatification of the Ulma Family,” who provides a detailed description of the Institute’s initiatives associated with the ceremony held on 10 September 2023 in Markowa. The other two are a continuation of the previous volume of Polish-Jewish Studies no. 4 theme, and are related to the Institute of National Remembrance activities commemorating the victims of Operation “Reinhardt.” Tomasz Domański demonstrates the scope of these initiatives in “Institute of National Remembrance: Research, Educational and Commemorative Activities Devoted to German ‘Operation Reinhardt’ Eightieth Anniversary Events. Report” and in closing this volume of Polish-Jewish Studies no. 5, Paweł Kornacki gives a detailed account of one of the first major academic events to take place in 2022 – in connection with the anniversary of the start of this criminal German Aktion (Symposium Report: “*Aktion Reinhardt* and the Holocaust of Polish Jews: Exploring the Mechanisms and Perpetrators,” Warsaw, 9 March 2022).

Roman Gieron

* Book of Wisdom 3:4. The Polish verse was used on one of the posters of the exhibition “Death for Humanity. The Ulma Family.”



STUDIES

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TYPES OF PENALTIES FOR HELPING JEWS BETWEEN
1939 AND 1945. TYPOLOGY AND OVERVIEW:
GERMAN REGULATIONS IN FORCE IN SELECTED AREAS
OF OCCUPIED EUROPE. A RESEARCH RECONNAISSANCE

The topic of aid provided to the Jews in various European countries occupied by the Third Reich has long been a subject of interest to historians, particularly those residing in those countries affected.¹ The vast majority of studies deal with the attitudes of local non-Jewish societies towards the Holocaust, and emphasise mainly laudable attitudes and the heroes, whose deeds were sometimes inscribed in the historical context and the occupation-era reality of the country in question.² However, it is often difficult to find in these works

¹ The literature in the field addressed in the title of the paper concerning particular countries can be found in the footnotes, later on in this article; we do not reproduce these bibliographic entries in a collective footnote.

² Cf. also: *Solidarität und Hilfe für Juden während der NS-Zeit. Regionalstudien*, vol. 1: *Polen, Rumänien, Griechenland, Luxemburg, Norwegen, Schweiz*, ed. W. Benz, J. Wetzel (Berlin, 1996); vol. 2: *Ukraine, Frankreich, Böhmen und Mähren, Österreich, Lettland, Litauen, Estland* (Berlin, 1998); vol. 3: *Dänemark, Niederlande, Spanien, Portugal, Ungarn, Albanien, Weißrußland* (Berlin, 1999); vol. 4: *Slowakei, Bulgarien, Serbien, Kroatien mit Bosnien und Herzegowina, Belgien, Italien* (Berlin, 2004).

comprehensive information on the criminal and civil responsibilities imposed by Nazi authorities or collaborating governments for aiding Jews.³ This is all the more important as German legislation in this regard was one of the key elements affecting attitudes towards the Holocaust. Due to a lack of sufficient research on the subject, the same myths and generalisations as well as unverified data continue to be reiterated in the literature in the field, especially regarding the number of people repressed by the occupying or collaborationist authorities – including those who were murdered – for helping Jews.⁴

This article aims to compile and present the current state of knowledge on the consequences that threatened citizens for providing various types of support to the Jews in selected countries in Western Europe and the Balkan Peninsula, where the problem has been most visible and thus most thoroughly studied by historians. The cases analysed are: Serbia, the Independent State of Croatia, Albania, Greece, France (the occupied zone and the Vichy state), Belgium and the Netherlands.⁵ An outline of the behaviour of local non-Jewish societies towards the anti-Jewish policy of the Nazis and the governments of selected occupied and collaboration-

³ Marek Jan Chodakiewicz was one of the first authors to write about the issue of punishment both in the General Government and in other countries of occupied Europe: “The death penalty for hiding Jews was in force in Poland, in the occupied part of the Soviet Union, in Serbia and – at least theoretically – in the Czech Republic and Norway; in other countries, the same act was punishable by imprisonment or a labour camp. Throughout Europe, people of great stature, individualists, decided to help Jews at the risk of losing their freedom or their lives. Unfortunately, most citizens were afraid to give such help. Many were interested in taking over Jewish property. But only a minority acted actively against Jews, for instance in the form of a denunciation.” (M.J. Chodakiewicz, *Żydzi i Polacy 1918–1955. Współistnienie – Zagłada – komunizm*, Warsaw, 2000, p. 350).

⁴ For more on this subject, cf. *Represje za pomoc Żydom na okupowanych ziemiach polskich w czasie II wojny światowej*, vol. 1, ed. M. Grądzka-Rejak, A. Namysło (Warsaw, 2019). The book was also published in English: *Persecution for Providing Help to Jews in Occupied Polish Territories During World War II*, vol. 1, ed. M. Grądzka-Rejak, A. Namysło, Warsaw 2022. Cf. *Stan badań nad pomocą Żydom na ziemiach polskich pod okupacją niemiecką – przegląd piśmiennictwa*, ed. T. Domański, A. Gontarek (Warsaw–Kielce, 2022).

⁵ In recent years, the issue of criminalisation of helping Jews in Western European countries has been addressed in general terms by Bogdan Musiał in chapter 6 “Penalizacja pomocy Żydom w innych krajach oraz powojenny los niemieckich sprawców,” in B. Musiał, *Kto dopomoże Żydowi...* (Poznań, 2019), pp. 209–214. An article published in the 1960s is also worth mentioning: T. Berenstein, A. Rutkowski, “O ratownictwie Żydów przez Polaków w okresie okupacji hitlerowskiej,” *Biuletyn ŻIH* 3 (35) (1960), pp. 3–46. Although the authors focused on aid provided to Jews and sanctions for it in the GG, they pointed out many examples from other occupied European countries. The text is at times laconic and requires critical reading, but it is nonetheless one of the first studies to extensively describe the issues of aid and penalties for it in various occupied countries.

ist countries in Europe attitudes towards it will be the background to this issue. One reference point for the facts discussed here is the description of the German authorities' conduct towards those who supported Jews in the General Government (GG).

General Government

German plans for the Polish territories occupied in September and October 1939 envisaged special treatment for the General Government. The Governorate was to become a colony of the Third Reich and a reservoir of cheap labour. Obedience to the authorities was enforced through terror and intimidation of the local population. In order to make the population de-nationalised, in the first weeks of the war the occupiers started to exterminate the Polish intelligentsia and leadership. Between September 1939 and April 1940, as part of the so-called Intelligenzaktion, SS and Selbstschutz formations exterminated approximately 50 thousand representatives of this social group in Pomerania, Greater Poland and Silesia. Thereafter, between May and July 1940, in the course of the Extraordinary Pacification Aktion (Außerordentliche Befriedungsaktion, AB), the Germans arrested approximately ten thousand representatives of the Polish intellectual and political elites, and murdered about 3,500 of them. This article only hints at the occupier's terror against Poles, implemented from the first days of the war and it should be noted there is an extensive literature in this matter.⁶ We acknowledge that the occupier's terror is one of the important factors affecting Polish-Jewish relations during the period in question. Further, we examine the issues related to the punishments for helping Jews only.

The history of Polish-Jewish relations in the GG can be divided into three main phases: the period before the beginning of Operation Reinhardt, the period when it was carried out, and the period after it ended, when the few Jews who had survived the deportations to the death camps were already hiding on the so-called Aryan side. From the perspective of research on repression for contacts and various forms of aid, the second and third phases are particularly important,

⁶ We already published more on this in the article "Relacje polsko-żydowskie w okresie II wojny światowej. Kontekst i uwarunkowania," in *Represje za pomoc Żydom*, vol. 1.

although the normative act regulating punishments for helping Jews was already introduced in the autumn of 1941, i.e. before the essential stage of the physical extermination. However, the current research indicates that most of the repression, including summary executions, took place after the start of the mass deportations of Jews. Since then, the role of the Special Courts has been reduced, replaced with execution of punishments in the moment of discovery of the very act of aid given.

Faced with the quick and efficient so-called 'liquidation actions' in the following localities of the various GG districts, Jews subsequently adopted various attitudes and survival strategies. Most of them, following the orders of the authorities, turned up at assembly points, from where they were sent to the transports. Researchers are still searching in the sources for the answers for the questions regarding to what extent the Jews were aware of where they were being sent, and how it affected their decisions.⁷ Their actions were influenced by a variety of factors, such as having a family, the poor health state caused by their previous stay in the ghetto, or their belief in false information that the purpose of the deportations was resettlement to the labour camps. Few, both in the face of deportation and before it, undertook various forms of collaboration with the occupier, hoping that by doing so they would save their own lives and their next of kin.⁸ Some Jews, according to research – a rather small percentage of the inhabitants of ghettos and other Jewish concentrations that escaped deportation – chose to seek shelter on the so-called 'Aryan side' as a chance for survival. Some carried out a reconnaissance before leaving the ghettos, others avoided it – if the deportation at the last moment, and still others jumped out of speeding trains and the escape was successful – tried to hide in an area unknown to them. Some of those in hiding tried to make contact with non-Jewish acquaintances or strangers, while others tried to remain incon-

⁷ Cf. e.g. M. Ferenc, „Každy pyta, co z nami będzie”. *Mieszkańcy getta warszawskiego wobec wiadomości o wojnie i Zagładzie* (Warsaw, 2021).

⁸ The issue of the various forms of Jewish cooperation is a difficult and complex one, affected by a number of factors. For more information about it, cf. among others: W. Mędykowski, „Przeciw swoim. Wzorce kolaboracji żydowskiej w Krakowie i okolicy,” *Zagłada Żydów. Studia i Materiały* (hereinafter *ZŻSM*) 2 (2006), pp. 202–220; A. Jarkowska-Natkaniec, *Wymuszona współpraca czy zdrada? Wokół przypadków kolaboracji Żydów w okupowanym Krakowie* (Cracow, 2017). Cf. also: T. Frydel, „Powiat dębicki,” in *Dalej jest noc. Losy Żydów w wybranych powiatach okupowanej Polski*, ed. B. Engelking, J. Grabowski, vol. 2 (Warsaw, 2018), pp. 361–522; S. Datner, *Zagłada Białegostoku i Białostoczczyzny. Notatki dokumentalne* (Warsaw, 2023).

spicuous and live independently under an assumed identity.⁹ The attitudes and behaviour of Jews facing genocide per se are not the focus of this article, so this question is not analysed here comprehensively but notwithstanding, this issue needs to be outlined because without the various actions on the part of the Jews undertaken during Aktion Reinhardt there would have been possibly no one left to be helped. Hence, the authors of this study have taken the liberty of only hinting at these themes, and the literature in the field indicated in the footnotes will allow readers to explore them in greater depth themselves.

The attitudes of the non-Jews towards those seeking rescue from the Holocaust varied. Some people, more or less aware of the consequences of their actions, decided to help. They did so incidentally or for a longer time, selflessly, or in return for covering the costs of hiding, or for payment or the promise of benefits to materialise after the war. Others, for various reasons, took no action at all. Their motivations were complex, and often stemmed from individual experiences. Some sympathised with the Jews but did not try to help them. Some suppressed their perception of the problem, averted their eyes from those seeking help and treated them with indifference. There were also those who did not think about the issue at all, focusing on their own problems. Some felt satisfaction or contentment at the removal of Jews from their cities and towns. They manifested this in public or among their next of kin, e.g. with gestures, verbally or in other ways. There were also those who turned fugitives and helpers in to the authorities, or even themselves in various circumstances murdered people hiding on their own farms or far away from them – e.g. in the forests – hoping to obtain valuables or other material goods, and sometimes because of fear of punishment for having previously helped them.¹⁰ Some were encouraged by “rewards” offered by the Germans for informa-

⁹ Cf. M. Melchior, *Zagłada a tożsamość. Polscy Żydzi ocaleni „na aryjskich papierach”*. Analiza doświadczenia biograficznego, Warsaw 2004; J. Nalewajko-Kulikow, *Strategie przetrwania. Żydzi po aryjskiej stronie Warszawy* (Warsaw, 2004); G. Berendt, “Żydzi zbiegli z gett i obozów śmierci,” in *Zagłada Żydów na polskiej prowincji*, ed. A. Sitarek, M. Trębacz, E. Wiatr (Łódź, 2012), pp. 121–158; M. Grądzka-Rejak, “Od dłuższego czasu straciłem wszelki kontakt z żydami i żydostwem. Neofici w okupowanym Krakowie w świetle materiałów Archiwum Kurii Metropolitalnej w Krakowie,” *ZŻSM* 13 (2017); *eadem*, “Myśmy się nawzajem poznawały po oczach...’ Z badań nad strategiami przetrwania kobiet żydowskich funkcjonujących ‘na powierzchni’ po tzw. aryjskiej stronie w okupowanym Krakowie i okolicach,” *Pamięć i Sprawiedliwość* 26 (2015).

¹⁰ The literature in the field concerning both help and negative attitudes is quite extensive. See e.g.: N. Aleksion, “Polska i zagraniczna historiografia na temat stosunków polsko-żydowskich w okre-

tion about Jews in hiding and people helping them. Depending on the locality or the district, such a “reward” could take the form of money, sometimes increased by a kilogram (or more) of sugar, a litre of alcohol, a cubic metre of grain, a ration of food or wood, or the victim’s shoes and clothes, or other items found on them. In Częstochowa, the reward for turning in a Jew in hiding was 200 zlotys; in Warsaw, it was 20 percent of the value of the property found with the arrested person.¹¹

The spectrum of human attitudes and behaviour in the face of the Holocaust was very wide and depended on many different factors, individual characteristics and circumstances. Nor was it always the case that people consistently adhered to a position once taken. An analysis of the sources reveals the varied motivations and, to some extent, the circumstances in which particular events took place. These records often show a study of the nature and behaviour of people in a borderline

sie drugiej wojny światowej,” *ZŻSM* 1 (2005), pp. 32–51; D. Libionka, “Polskie piśmiennictwo na temat zorganizowanej i indywidualnej pomocy Żydom (1945–2008),” *ZŻSM* 4 (2008), pp. 17–80; E. Rączy, “Historiografia polska przełomu XX/XXI stulecia wobec zagłady Żydów oraz stosunków polsko-żydowskich. Zarys problematyki,” *Białostockie Teki Historyczne* 15 (2017); T. Berenstein, A. Rutkowski, “O ratownictwie Żydów,” pp. 3–46; S. Datner, *Las sprawiedliwych* (Warsaw, 1968); W. Bartoszewski, Z. Lewinówna, *Ten jest z ojczyzny mojej. Polacy z pomocą Żydom 1939–1945* (Cracow, 1966; second edition Cracow, 1969); *Polacy–Żydzi 1939–1945*, ed. S. Wroński, M. Zwolakowa (Warsaw, 1971); M. Arczyński, W. Balcerak, *Kryptonim „Żegota”. Z dziejów pomocy Żydom w Polsce 1939–1945* (Warsaw, 1979); T. Prekerowa, *Konspiracyjna Rada Pomocy Żydom w Warszawie 1942–1945* (Warsaw, 1982); W. Bielawski, *Zbrodnie na Polakach dokonane przez hitlerowców za pomoc udzielaną Żydom* (Warsaw, 1987); *Those Who Helped: Polish Rescuers of Jews During the Holocaust*, ed. R. Walczak, H. Muszyński, J.P. Śliwczyński, I. Borowicz, T. Prekerowa, part 3 (Warsaw, 1997); A. Żbikowski, *U genezy Jedwabnego. Żydzi na Kresach północno-wschodnich II Rzeczypospolitej, wrzesień 1939 – lipiec 1941* (Warsaw, 2006); E. Rączy, *Pomoc Polaków dla ludności żydowskiej na Rzeszowszczyźnie 1939–1945* (Rzeszów, 2008); „Kto w takich czasach Żydom przechowuje?...” *Polacy niosący pomoc ludności żydowskiej w okresie okupacji niemieckiej*, ed. A. Namysł (Warsaw, 2009); *Polacy i Żydzi pod okupacją niemiecką 1939–1945. Studia i materiały*, ed. A. Żbikowski (Warsaw, 2006); *Zagłada Żydów na polskiej prowincji*; M. Szpytma, *Sprawiedliwi i ich świat. Markowa w fotografii Józefa Ulmy* (Cracow, 2015, second edition, revised and updated); *Relacje o pomocy udzielanej Żydom przez Polaków w latach 1939–1945*, selected and edited by S. Piątkowski, vol. 1–7 (Lublin–Warsaw, 2018–2023); *Stan badań nad pomocą Żydom*; B. Engelking, *Jest taki piękny słoneczny dzień. Losy Żydów szukających ratunku na polskiej wsi 1942–1945* (Warsaw, 2011); J. Grabowski, *Judenjagd. Polowanie na Żydów 1942–1945. Studium dziejów pewnego powiatu* (Warsaw, 2011); T. Markiel, A. Skibińska, „Jakie to ma znaczenie, czy zrobili to z chciwości?” *Zagłada domu Trynczerów* (Warsaw, 2011); *Klucze i kasa. O mieniu żydowskim w Polsce pod okupacją niemiecką i we wczesnych latach powojennych, 1939–1950*, ed. J. Grabowski, D. Libionka (Warsaw, 2014); J. Kowalska-Leder, “‘Coraz to nowe żądania, coraz to nowe grymasy’. Relacja władzy i podporządkowania między Polakami a Żydami w kryjówkach po aryjskiej stronie,” *ZŻSM* 12 (2016), pp. 209–241; A. Bikont, *Nigdy nie byłaś Żydówką. Sześć opowieści o dziewczynkach w ukryciu* (Wołowiec, 2023); *Dalej jest noc*, vol. 1–2.

¹¹ G. Berendt, “Cena życia – ekonomiczne uwarunkowania egzystencji Żydów po ‘aryjskiej stronie,’” *ZŻSM* 4 (2008), p. 119.

situation, in a state of anomie, that escaped patterns and generalisations. Two opposite attitudes are most often discussed in the research – active assistance in rescue and active collaboration in capturing Jews, blackmailing them or murdering them. No less important, however, is a thorough analysis of the reactions, behaviour and motivations of those people who are collectively described as indifferent or bystanders.¹²

Several factors could influence these actions and motivations: the wide-ranging terror imposed by the occupying forces, the legislation introduced by occupier, and the practical enforcement of orders by the authorities.¹³ The aftermath of the so-called “Second GG Residence Restriction Regulation” of 29 April 1941 (*Zweite Verordnung über Aufenthaltsbeschränkungen im Generalgouvernement*) brought about locally introduced acts that regulated separating Jews from the rest of the population in particular localities. One such place was Warsaw. Heinz Auerswald,¹⁴ the Commissioner of the Jewish quarter in Warsaw, issued an order on 30 June 1941, under which “the control authorities are instructed to use weapons against anyone who tries to evade apprehension by escaping.” Auerswald was in charge of sealing the borders

¹² Cf. E. Janicka, “Obserwatorzy uczestniczący zamiast świadków i rama zamiast obrzeży. O nowe kategorie opisu polskiego kontekstu Zagłady,” *Teksty Drugie. Teoria literatury, krytyka, interpretacja* 3 (2018), pp. 131–147. DOI: 10.18318/td.2018.3.8. <https://journals.openedition.org/td/9631>, accessed 12 June 2024; K. Koprowska, *Postronni? Zagłada w relacjach chłopskich świadków* (Cracow, 2018); B. Engelking, *Jest taki piękny słoneczny dzień*; J.T. Gross “‘Ten jest z ojczyzny mojej...’, ale go nie lubię,” in *idem*, *Upiorna dekada. Trzy eseje o stereotypach na temat Żydów, Polaków, Niemców i komunistów 1939–1948* (Cracow, 2001); J. Kowalska-Leder, *Nie wiem, jak ich mam cenić. Strefa ambiwalencji w świadectwach Polaków i Żydów* (Warsaw, 2019).

¹³ In this article, we have reviewed the legal acts concerning punishments for helping Jews in the GG issued at different levels of the German administration. Some of these acts have already been cited in the literature in the field (cited collectively in B. Musiał’s publication, *Kto dopomoże Żydowi...*). Others are the result of archival research and appear in the pertinent literature for the first time. Cf. i.a. L. Górnicki, “Z problematyki podmiotów prawa cywilnego i praw podmiotowych prywatnych obywateli polskich w Generalnym Gubernatorstwie,” *Studia nad Autorytaryzmem i Totalitaryzmem* 42 (4) (2020), pp. 71–117. DOI <https://doi.org/10.19195/2300-7249.42.4.4>.

¹⁴ Heinz Friedrich Auerswald (1908–1970), a lawyer, worked as a lawyer in Bremen before the war. He joined the SS in 1933 and became a member of the NSDAP party in the late 1930s. After the outbreak of the Second World War, he was sent to the Eastern Front as an order police officer (Schutzpolizei). In occupied Warsaw, he became an employee of the civilian German administration. He served as a desk officer for the German national group and the head of the Population and Welfare Sub-department in the Office of the Head of the Warsaw Distrikt. In May 1941, he took up the post of the Commissioner for the Jewish residential quarter [i.e. ghetto] in Warsaw, which he supervised. He officially held the aforementioned post until January 1943, although in practice his role changed when the deportation of Jews to the Treblinka extermination camp began in the Summer of 1942.

of the Warsaw Ghetto and eliminating individual smuggling and mass smuggling, as well as other illegal commercial contacts between Jews and the so-called Aryan side. His regulation was also a convenient formula for police patrols to legalise the murder of Jews residing and captured outside of their designated part of the city. In order to communicate this information to the Jews, the regulation was published in the columns of the collaborationist newspaper *Gazeta Żydowska* (Jewish Gazette).¹⁵

It is worth adding that this legal act forbidding Jews to go to the so-called Aryan side was recorded in Emanuel Ringelblum's notes. The exact date of this note is missing, but it was dated June 1941: "An order forbidding passage to the other side is ready."¹⁶ On 22 July 1941, Claus Volkman, the district governor (*Kreishauptmann*) in Krasnystaw, issued an order "on the use of public resources by Jews, loitering by Jews."¹⁷ Under this regulation, Jews were prohibited from using "the means of public transportation (such as omnibuses, taxis, horse-drawn carriages and sledges) provided by locally operating professional entrepreneurs."¹⁸ Offences against this part of the order were punishable by fine and imprisonment, or one of these penalties.

The second part of this act dealt with the "wandering of Jews." The district governor emphasised that their excessive movement resulted in the spread of typhoid germs ("the eradication of typhoid fever is possible if the ban on Jewish wandering is absolutely maintained.")¹⁹ Jews apprehended on the so-called Aryan side without permission were to be fined one thousand zlotys, and repeat offenders, in addition to a financial penalty, were to be sent to a labour camp in Augustów. The regulation obliged gendarmerie and Polish Police officers to act:

On the authority of the district governor, the gendarmerie will appoint and collect these fines. At the same time, any money in the possession of a Jewish

¹⁵ *Gazeta Żydowska*, No. 52 of 30 June 1941.

¹⁶ *Archiwum Ringelbluma. Konspiracyjne Archiwum Getta Warszawy*, vol. 29: *Pisma Emanuela Ringelbluma z getta*, ed. J. Nalewajko-Kulikow (Warsaw, 2018), p. 274.

¹⁷ In the second part, it concerned "a call to Ukrainians to volunteer for guard duty." *Archiwum Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej* (Archives of the Institute of National Remembrance, hereinafter AIPN), Główna Komisja (The Main Commission, hereinafter GK), 196/334, collection *Najwyższy Trybunał Narodowy w Warszawie 1946–1948, Proces Jozefa Bühlera*, pp. 125–126.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ Here and hereafter, in the original regulations, the spelling of the word "Jew" has been in the lower case (*żyd*).

person encountered will be confiscated. The Polish Police should also stop and identify wandering Jews, and confiscate any money found on them and hand it over to the gendarmerie in Krasnystaw.

This regulation aggravated the isolation of the Jews, but did not directly refer to possible Polish aid to them. Nevertheless, it was one of the regulations targeted at Jews illegally crossing the ghetto's borders. This act was part of a broader policy of restricting the rights of the latter and in propaganda terms portraying them as carriers of typhus germs.

The change came with the *Dritte Verordnung über Aufenthaltsbeschränkungen im Generalgouvernement*, i.e. the “Third GG Residence Restriction Regulation” of 15 October 1941.²⁰ It stated that “Jews who leave their designated district without authorisation are liable to the death penalty.” The death penalty for helping Jews was in force in the five Districts (*Distrikte*) in the GG. This was also the area in which it was most likely to be enforced during the World War II. Given the coincidence of the timing of this regulation with the preparations for Aktion Reinhardt, it was intended to keep the Jews concentrated at selected points prior to the planned deportations. In addition, however, a provision was introduced that was of vital importance for the survival strategies being pursued on the so-called Aryan side and for Polish-Jewish relations in the GG. For it said: “Anyone who knowingly hides Jews shall be subject to the same penalty [death].”²¹ It was the first legislation threatening Poles with the death penalty on a large scale for taking specific actions. Kazimierz Iranek-Osmecki, writing about Polish-Jewish relations during the World War II, took note of the conditions created by the Germans and the activities they undertook to drive Poles into the machinery of the Holocaust:

The Germans wanted to find allies in Poles in this crime. [...] they assigned rewards for complicity in the extermination of the Jews; they punished with death those who helped the Jews. Poland was the only country among all those

²⁰ It is worth adding that Hans Frank issued the first GG residence restriction regulation on 13 September 1940. The second one was dated 29 April 1941.

²¹ The Third GG Residence Restriction Regulation of 15 October 1941, *Verordnungsblatt für das Generalgouvernement* (Journal of Regulations for the GG) 1941, No. 99, p. 595.

occupied by the Germans where they applied the death penalty for this act of mercy towards the Jews. The Polish nation took the side of the Jews and did not allow to be used in this criminal action. It condemned the German crimes. It gave comprehensive aid to the Jews. In giving it, thousands of Poles suffered death at the hands of the occupying forces.²²

Leaving aside the inaccurate information that only in the occupied Polish territories was the death penalty in force, as well as regarding the number of repressed persons, it is important to point out the entanglement of Poles in the Holocaust with the use of the law. When analysing this legal act, it should be stressed that the ordinance made precise that criminalisation of a deed was implemented when such shelter was given consciously. Hence, in case of confrontation or judicial proceedings there was a possibility to prove that one did not have information about the person's origin.

The following paragraphs of the regulation were also important: "(2) Inciters and aiders shall be punished in the same way as the perpetrator, an attempted act shall be punished as an accomplished act. In milder cases, heavy imprisonment or prison may be adjudicated. (3) Sentencing shall be carried out by the Special Courts." Thus, not only active assistance in providing shelter ("gives a hideout") was to be punished by death, but also complicity and persuasion in providing support or other contacts. Literally interpreting the provision, only assistance consisting in "giving shelter," i.e. providing housing ("a hiding place," etc.) was punishable by the aforementioned penalty. The regulation did not cover other forms of contact, such as emergency aid (apart from accommodation), the transfer and sale of food, the handing over of correspondence, medicines, etc. However, in practice, repressions were also applied for these forms of support, although, as the stories analysed and described below show, the harshest punishments were usually administered precisely for the provision of shelter.²³ Another reason, as understood by the occupier, for sentencing to death was the act of omission, i.e. failure to provide information about Jews in hiding.²⁴ The issuing of this regulation was interpreted, among other

²² K. Iranek-Osmecki, *Kto ratuje jedno życie... Polacy i Żydzi 1939–1945*, (Warsaw, 1981), p. 245.

²³ Cf. *Represje za pomoc Żydom*.

²⁴ Cf. *Relacje o pomocy*.

things in line with the Nazi propaganda, as a safeguard against the possible spread of diseases.²⁵ It should be noted that, according to the cited legislation, sentences were to be passed before the so-called Special Courts. However, over time, this was abandoned, as it were, leaving it to the commanders of the retaliation expeditions to decide each time on the punishments to be applied to the suspects, including the possible murder of those who were helping Jews.²⁶

As a result, in the weeks and months that followed, the governors of the various *Distrikts* and lower-level German officials (*Kreishauptmänner*, district governors) drafted similar regulations. As early as 30 October 1941, the district governor of Grójec issued an announcement forbidding aid to Jews. The spreading typhus was cited as the reason:

The epidemic typhus is spreading in our county in an alarming way. In almost every case of disease, it can be ascertained that the spreaders of this sickness are

²⁵ The collaborationist newspaper *Nowy Głos Lubelski*, published an extensive commentary on the regulation in question: "According to a regulation issued these days by the Governor-General, Jews who leave their designated quarter without permission are subject to the death penalty. The same punishment is administered to anyone who knowingly gives refuge to such persons. The Special Court is competent to hear these cases. Since the establishment of the Gen[eral] Gov[ernorate] the administrative authorities have been making constant efforts to issue all possible measures to safeguard the health of the population. Experience has shown that, especially in the larger cities, the main spreaders of epidemics were Jews, who therefore had to be separated from the rest of the Aryan population by designating special closed districts for them. Practice in a very short time demonstrated the validity of such a regulation, as we see, for example, in Warsaw. Unfortunately, however, it was discovered that some Jews, in spite of the explicit statutory regulations issued in this direction, constantly attempted to leave the quarter assigned to them. In view of this state of affairs, the Governor-General felt it necessary to impose a severe but nevertheless just punishment on all those who in any way contribute to the transmission of infectious diseases from the Jewish quarters. It is noteworthy in this connection that the new regulation makes no difference whatsoever between a Jew who possibly carries germs of a disease out of a Jewish quarter and persons who give shelter to such Jews outside the Jewish quarter despite the fact that they know that such an act is not only forbidden but, what is more, that they contribute to exposing the broad masses of the population to the danger of contracting diseases." As cited in: *Brama Grodzka Teatr NN*: <https://teatrnn.pl/wydarzenia/wydarzenie/rozporzadzenie-o-zakazie-opuszczania-gett/>, accessed 24 May 2024.

²⁶ Cf. e.g. K. Graczyk, *Sondergericht Kattowitz Sąd Specjalny w Katowicach 1939–1945* (Warsaw, 2020); A. Namysło, "Represje na polskich obywatelach za udzielanie pomocy ludności żydowskiej w świetle niemieckich akt procesowych," in *Zagłada Żydów na polskiej prowincji*; A. Namysło, "Persecution of Polish Citizens for Providing Help to Jews in the Light of Procedural Files of German Special Courts," in *The Holocaust and Polish-Jewish Relations: Selected Issue*, ed. M. Grądzka-Rejak, A. Sitarek (Warsaw, 2018); M. Becker, *Sądownictwo niemieckie i jego rola w polityce okupacyjnej na ziemiach polskich wcielonych do Rzeszy 1939–1945* (Warsaw, 2020).

Jews. It is therefore necessary to prevent Jews from roaming the Grójec district by all means. For this reason, it is necessary that none of the villagers in the district should, under any circumstances, allow a Jew into their dwellings, or provide them with food either as alms or for money.²⁷

Failure to comply with this announcement was subject to punishment: “it is therefore forbidden for the population of the district to take in Jews or give them anything to eat. Those who do not comply with this ban will immediately be arrested and sent to a forced labour camp for an extended period of time.”

It should be noted that the announcement was issued when there was no longer a ghetto in Grójec. The liquidation of the Jewish quarters in the towns near Warsaw took place in the winter and spring of 1941. Jews from this area were brought to Warsaw.

Thereafter, on 10 November 1941, the Governor of the Warsaw Distrikt, Ludwig Fischer, issued a supplementary announcement to Hans Frank's regulation. The name of the act already indicated that it concerned the death penalty for the unauthorised leaving of the so-called Jewish residential districts. The wording of this act states:

In recent times in numerous proven cases epidemic typhus has been spread by Jews who have left their designated residential districts. In order to prevent the danger this poses to the population, the Governor-General has decreed that a Jew who unauthorised leaves his designated residential district in the future will be punished by death. The same punishment shall be imposed on anyone who knowingly gives such Jews shelter or helps them in any other way (e.g. by providing accommodation, maintenance, by taking them on vehicles of any kind, etc.). Judgement shall be passed by the Special Court.

²⁷ Archiwum Akt Nowych (Central Archives of Modern Records, hereinafter AAN), collection Niemieckie władze okupacyjne – zbiór akt [German occupation authorities – collection of records], 2/1335/0/5.5/104, Announcement of the Grójec district governor on the ban to provide help to Jews of 30 October 1941, p. 121, <https://www.szukajwarchiwach.gov.pl/skan/-/skan/8da91e26f06f1dc486a40ea0ccfccd89cef33eb2cf696f969896d8ccb614d4fd>.

Here, therefore, attention was drawn once again to the issues of cleanliness that resounded in the Nazi propaganda and the alleged spread of the disease by Jews imputed to them by this propaganda. Motivating their provisions on sanitary grounds, Germans greatly expanded the categories of activities that were criminalised, adding occasional activities such as helping Jews to move about. At the end of the regulation, it was emphasised that it would be ruthlessly enforced: “I call upon the entire population of the Warsaw Distrikt to draw special attention to this new statutory provision, because from now on merciless severity will be applied.”²⁸ Such a provision was clearly designed to deter the population from engaging in aid activities. Given the available sources, it is impossible to determine the actual impact of this legislation on the individual decisions made to provide (or not to) aid to Jews.

In his occupation-era notes, Emanuel Ringelblum did not refer to the regulation of 15 October 1941, but pointed to a piece of legislation from early November of that year. His comment probably referred to a regulation issued by Ludwig Fischer: “In the first decade of November [19]41 an order was issued which threatens Jews who leave the ghetto without a pass with the death penalty. This was the outcome of Frank’s last stay in Warsaw. This order had a certain, albeit small, effect on prices.”²⁹

Ringelblum referred to Hans Frank’s visit to Warsaw in October 1941. The General Governor received information about the living conditions in the ghetto from the ghetto commissioner Heinz Auerswald and the head of the Transferstelle, Max Bischof. It is worth adding that in the following pages of his notes, Ringelblum described examples of the implementation of this regulation in practice. Between 1 and 10 November 1941, he noted:

Ghetto commissar Auerswald demands absolutely that the Jew[ish] police form their own execution platoon to carry out sentences in the Jew[ish] prison at Zamenhofa [Street]. Szeryński, a neophyte who prays in church every Sunday

²⁸ AIPN GK, 141/74, vol. 9, Der Gouverneur [des Distrikts Warschau] – Dr. [Ludwig] Fischer: Bekanntmachung (Betrifft: Todesstrafe für unbefugtes Verlassen der jüdischen Wohnbezirke), Warschau: 10. November 1941. [Dr [Ludwig] Fischer: Announcement (Subject: Death penalty for unauthorised leaving of Jewish residential quarters), Warsaw, 10 November 1941].

²⁹ *Archiwum Ringelbluma*, vol. 29, p. 309.

and is known as a huge bribe-taker, had already agreed to this when he was threatened with execution himself if he refused. It would be horrible if the Jews themselves had to be executioners! Moreover, for this offence [leaving the ghetto without a pass], there are approximately 100 Jews in prison, facing the threat of the death penalty.³⁰

As a meticulous chronicler of events in the Warsaw Ghetto, Ringelblum described the prevailing mood there after the first mass execution for crossing the ghetto's borders:

The death sentence that was carried out on 8 Jews, including six women, shocked all of Warsaw. We have seen various things in Warsaw and in other cities, especially in Lithuania, where they carry out mass executions, but all this pales in comparison with the fact that 8 people were shot for having crossed the ghetto's threshold. The news of the intention to issue an order to shoot people for leaving the ghetto spread throughout the city during Frank's last stay in Warsaw. This is said to have been the project of Auerswald, whom the Jews regarded at first as a friend and a decent man. The sentences on eight people were carried out in the Jewish prison at Gęsia [Street] 24 [...] Auerswald was late for the execution, and said: 'Schade, zu spät' [Pity, too late]. There were some SS officers present at the execution who smoked cigarettes and behaved cynically while it was taking place. They also say that Leist was at the execution. Among the Jews [were present]: Szeryński, Lederman and Lejkin, who are said to have distinguished themselves by being particularly fierce when dragging the convicts out of their cells. The prosecutor read out the sentence and then the execution took place. The street in front of the prison was black with people. The screams of relatives could be heard. The sentence was carried out on Tuesday at half past eight in the morning. One of the six women was a beggar, another was a mother, and another was 16 years old and despaired terribly before the execution. Also present was Rabbi Weinberg, who brought the will of one of the convicted men. The story goes that the convicted men behaved peacefully. Auerswald's red death

³⁰ *Archiwum Ringelbluma*, vol. 29, p. 310.

sentence posters appeared in the streets. Characteristically, all eight convicts were caught by Polish policemen. One woman lost her life over 100 zloty. This was because she wanted to give the policeman only 50 zloty and he demanded 100 zloty. One of the two men was a glazier who supported his family through work [done] outside the ghetto. There are now 400 Jews arrested, 20 of whom the court has already sentenced to death. They say that also among the Germans this verdict caused a big stir. After all, cases of people being shot for leaving the ghetto have not been known before. This is the first case of its kind in history. The whole affair, as well as the threat of the death penalty in general, had little effect on the smuggling, which continues unabated.³¹

In the days and weeks that followed, Ringelblum provided further examples of executions for crossing the ghetto's borders.

On 21 November 1941, Eberhard Schöngarth, the commander of the Security Police (*Sicherheitspolizei*, SiPo) in the GG, issued the so-called order to shoot (German: *Schießbefehl*) Jews who were outside the ghettos.³² Police officers received the authorisation to kill these people, including women and children.³³ According to the wording of this document, the order was allegedly introduced due to concerns about the spread of typhoid fever, which Nazi propaganda equated with “wandering” Jews. In all likelihood, as in the case of the establishment of ghettos, this was merely a propaganda effort to justify the measures taken. The wording indicated:

[S]ince it is known that Jews can only be stopped by force, whereby they mostly resist and take every opportunity to escape, therefore, with the approval of the higher SS and Police Commander, firearms must be used to the greatest extent possible. I therefore order that at the slightest resistance such wandering Jews

³¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 313–314.

³² AIPN, GK, 362/633, p. 15; See also *Die Verfolgung und Ermordung der europäischen Juden durch das nationalsozialistische Deutschland 1933–1945*, vol. 9: *Polen: Generalgouvernement August 1941–1945*, ed. K.-P. Friedrich (Munich, 2014), pp. 131–132.

³³ J.A. Młynarczyk, S. Piątkowski, *Cena poświęcenia. Zbrodnie na Polakach za pomoc udzielaną Żydom w rejonie Ciepłelowa* (Cracow, 2007), pp. 50–51; For more on the so-called third phase of the Holocaust, see D. Libionka, *Zagłada Żydów w Generalnym Gubernatorstwie. Zarys problematyki* (Lublin, 2017), pp. 248–258.

or if they try to escape are to be shot immediately. This order is to be strictly obeyed in order to effectively prevent the spread of epidemic typhus by loitering Jews who have left the ghetto without permission. The results of this order are to be reported to me on a regular basis.³⁴

The *Schießbefehl* not only enabled (and even ordered) the shooting of Jews residing outside the ghettos without special permissions, but also, in this regard, significantly influenced the activities of the Special Courts.

On 17 December 1941, a proclamation was issued by Heinz Werner Schwender, the district governor of Łowicz, “about the death penalty for giving aid to Jews.”³⁵ Here, too, the sanitary argument was invoked: “Recently there have been numerous cases of inhabitants of the Łowicz district falling ill with epidemic typhoid. It was found that the spreaders of this disease are Jews.”³⁶ It went on to indicate what should be done in the event of a contact with them: “In order to prevent the spread of this disease, I recommend that any wandering Jew be handed over to the nearest police station. Furthermore, all contact with Jews should be avoided.”³⁷ These arguments were reinforced by drawing attention to the punishments for providing support to ghetto fugitives: “anyone who assists Jews in leaving a place of isolation without permission from the authorities, or otherwise aids them, faces the threat of the death penalty.”³⁸ As in the case of Grójec, the district governor’s proclamation was issued when there was no longer a ghetto in Łowicz. The decision to deport almost all its inhabitants to Warsaw was taken on 22 February 1941, and the resettlement was to be completed by mid-March. Only about 100 craftsmen and Judenrat officials, employed at the Work House, were left behind. After a few months, when they had completed the tasks assigned to them, they were deported too.³⁹

³⁴ Cited after: B. Musiał, *Kto dopomoże Żydowi*, pp. 94–95.

³⁵ AAN, 2/1335/0/5.5/104, p. 98; <https://www.szukajwarchiwach.gov.pl/skan/-/skan/e7dbbddf-f5a43ecc0304a58aedc7b8e37c2c7be306e9d0a9ce93c9dbc9910afc>.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ *Ibid.* To strengthen the message, reference was made in the text of this proclamation to the opinion of an official doctor, who claimed that “even after a short conversation with a Jewish woman, a villager, who by that time had already died, had been infected with typhus.”

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ B. Engelking, “Życie codzienne Żydów w miasteczkach dystryktu warszawskiego,” in *Prowincja Noc. Życie i zagłada Żydów w dystrykcie warszawskim*, ed. B. Engelking, J. Leociak, D. Libionka (Warsaw, 2007), pp. 119–221; J. Petelewicz, “Dzieje ludności żydowskiej w Łowiczu 1939–1945,” part 1, *Teka His-*

On 1 January 1942, the order of the Governor of the Radom Distrikt Ernst Kundt, issued on 11 December of the previous year “concerning the restrictions on the residence of Jews in the Radom Distrikt,” came into force.⁴⁰ It reiterated the provisions of the Governor General’s regulation of 15 October 1941 which prohibited Jews from leaving ghettos and other designated Jewish places of concentrations. Paragraph 3 of this act forbade giving them assistance, but the catalogue of forbidden acts was broader than indicated in the basic document: “It is forbidden to lend shelter, food or other assistance or to facilitate the departure of Jews who do not comply with the provisions of par. 1 and 2.”⁴¹ It further clarified: “It is prohibited for all drivers and vehicle owners to allow Jews to use their vehicles.”⁴² According to this regulation, the punishment for “knowingly lending shelter to such Jews”⁴³ was death.

Also, during the deportations from the ghettos to the extermination camps carried out as part of Aktion Reinhardt, local announcements were issued reminding the public of the sanctions for obstructing these actions or giving shelter to Jewish escapees. Such acts were made public in the Cracow Distrikt, for example. While we have not found such a document for Cracow city, they appeared in other major cities in the Cracow Distrikt. Rzeszów is a noteworthy example. From the end of June 1942, the ghetto there became a concentration place for Jews from the surrounding smaller ghettos in Błażowa, Czudec, Głogów Małopolski, Kolbuszowa, Leżajsk, Łańcut, Niebylec, Sędziszów Małopolski, Sokołów Małopolski, Strzyżów, and Tyczyn. Just before the resettlements, the Germans issued an announcement in which helping Jews was declared as punishable with the death penalty. This was mentioned by Walery Sanecki, who lived in Rzeszów during the occupation:

On my way home from my usual activity, I noticed new announcements. There would be nothing to mention – because the Germans did not spare announce-

toryka 11 (1998), pp. 89–118; part 2, *Teka Historyka* 12 (1998), pp. 91–124; “Łowicz,” in *The Yad Vashem Encyclopedia of the Ghettos During the Holocaust* ([Jerusalem], 2009), pp. 417–418.

⁴⁰ Archiwum Państwowe w Radomiu (State Archives in Radom, hereinafter APR), collection Zbiór afiszów, plakatów i druków ulotnych z lat 1939–1945 [Collection of posters, placards and leaflets 1939–1945], 58/1192/0/-/481; <https://www.szukajwarchiwach.gov.pl/skan//skan/55cd3015eacda8ac5cd998da2fb24127c650c2f58204d4c6ad790941c9a116f5>.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ *Ibid.*

ments of various content – if it were not for the fact that the content of this announcement made such a depressing impression on me that I still cannot forget it. The local Kreishauptmann (the district chief, being the already mentioned bloody oppressor of the Polish and Jews [Heinz] Ehaus), ordered the Jews living in the surrounding villages and towns to ‘resettle’ immediately to the Rzeszów ghetto. The order was put in some short, sharp sentences that were very harsh and intent on depriving as many Jews as possible of their lives in the process. Failure to comply with the very short time limit for carrying out the order was punishable by immediate death; for deviating from the designated route (not always the shortest) – again death; for attempting to escape, hide or possess objects to facilitate hiding – again immediate death. Even the Polish population faced the death penalty for selling or giving away anything that would facilitate hiding. In practice, this meant that even the sale or donation of a small amount of food was punishable by death, because food is indispensable for hiding, and the Germans in such cases always did much more than they announced.⁴⁴

Already at this stage, the German occupier tried to show the inhabitants of the so-called Aryan side the consequences of trying to trade with and to help Jews. Sanecki reported that during the July deportations from the Rzeszów ghetto to the Bełżec death camp (7–8, 11, 14–15 and 17–18 July 1942), a similar notice was issued. Citizens faced punishment both for helping the deported and for watching the deportation action:

For the duration of this procession of Jews to Golgotha, the streets through which this procession was marching were closed to other traffic. The inhabitants of the houses along these streets had to sit in their flat, doors and windows had to be closed. It was also forbidden to look out of the windows. But in spite of this prohibition, many Poles hiding behind the curtains saw very well the indescribable and truly Dantesque scenes that took place at every step.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Archiwum Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego (Archives of the Jewish Historical Institute, hereinafter AŻIH), collection Zbiór relacji Żydów ocalałych z Zagłady [Collection of testimonies of Jews – Holocaust survivors], 301/2305, Testimony of Walery Sanecki, p. 26.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

The aforementioned announcements are similar to the occupier's resolutions issued in other towns in the Cracow Distrikt.

On 24 June 1942, an announcement was made in Przemyśl ("To the Ukrainian and Polish Population of the Przemyśl district and the Town of Przemyśl") that read:

In order to carry out the deportation of Jews ordered by the SS and the Police Commander of the Cracow Distrikt, I announce: I. On Monday, 27 July 1942, the resettlement of Jews in the county and town of Przemyśl begins. II. Any Ukrainian or Pole who attempts to interfere in any way with the deportation of Jews will be shot.⁴⁶

The same sanction faced citizens for helping persons who had escaped from deportation sites. One can also point to an announcement issued in Bochnia, in the Cracow Distrikt, signed by the governor of the Krakau-Land district, Albert Schaar, entitled "To carry out the deportation of Jews from Bochnia ordered by the SS and Police Commander in the Distrikt Krakau." It states:

On 24.[0]8.1942, the deportation of Jews begins in Bochnia. 2) Any Pole who in any form whatsoever endangers or hinders the deportation of Jews by his actions, or who provides assistance through such actions, will be shot. 3) Any Pole who, during or after the deportation, takes in a Jew, hides or assists in doing so, will be shot. 4) Any Pole who enters the home of a resettled Jew without permission, will be shot as a looter. 5) Standing in the streets during the operation is prohibited. Windows are to be kept closed. 6) Persons who have taken possession of any items for money or free of charge from Jews since 15.[0]8.1942 are to return them by 1.[0]9.1942 to the competent mayor with confirmation of receipt. Violations will be severely punished.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ AŻIH, collection Obwieszczenia i zarządzenia władz okupacyjnych. 1939 – 1945 [Announcements and orders of the German occupation authorities. 1939–1945], 241/228, To the Ukrainian and Polish Population of the Przemyśl District and the Town of Przemyśl.

⁴⁷ Archiwum Narodowe w Krakowie (National Archives in Cracow), collection Zbiór afiszy [Collection of placards] ([1877] 1888 – 1999 [2011]), 29/4182/113 (former reference: Archiwum Narodowe w Krakowie, Oddział w Bochni – National Archives in Cracow, Division in Bochnia, collection Zbiór afiszy, 29/182/113).

According to this document, those who gave refuge to fugitives, obstructed deportations and were caught stealing were liable to the death penalty. Receiving goods from Jews was also punished, but it was not specified how. Identical in content was an announcement made on 22 August 1942, also signed by Schaar, concerning the deportation from Wieliczka.⁴⁸ The announcement of 25 August 1942 was of the same nature. "To course of the resettlement of Jews from the Neumarkt/Dunajec district." It stated:

1. The resettlement is to be conducted in the Neumarkt/Dunajec district on 30 August 1942. (2) Any Pole who hinders or obstructs the resettlement in any way, or through his actions supports a Jew, will be shot. (3) Any Pole who accepts or hides a Jew during or after resettlement shall be shot. (4) Any Pole who enters the flat of a resettled Jew without permission shall be shot as a looter. (5) On the day of the resettlement, stopping in the street is forbidden and windows are to be closed.⁴⁹

A similar announcement was made before the deportation from Skawina, where a gathering site was established for Jews also from the surrounding settlements. This was mentioned by Kazimierz Sedlaczek, who was present in Skawina at the time of the deportation of the inhabitants of the local ghetto to the Bełżec death camp:

At the end of August 1942, the witness left for Skawina near Cracow to examine the business records of the chicory factory [...]. Upon leaving the railway sta-

⁴⁸ "To conduct the resettlement of Jews from Wieliczka ordered by the SS and Police Commander in the Krakau Distrikt, I announce the following:

1) On 27.8.1942, the resettlement of Jews in Wieliczka begins.
2) Every Pole who, in any form whatsoever, endangers or hinders the resettlement of Jews by his actions, or who provides assistance through such actions, will be shot.
3) Any Pole who, during or after the resettlement, takes in a Jew, hides or assists in doing so will be shot.
4) Any Pole who enters the dwelling of a resettled Jew without permission shall be shot as a looter.
5) Standing out in the streets during the operation is forbidden. Windows are to be closed [...]"

AŻIH, collection *Obwieszczenia i zarządzenia władz okupacyjnych. 1939 – 1945* [Announcements and orders of the German occupation authorities. 1939–1945], 241/268, Announcement. To conduct the resettlement of Jews from Wieliczka ordered by the SS and Police Commander in the Krakau Distrikt.

⁴⁹ Warsaw Ghetto Museum, MGW-A/331, Announcement. To conduct of the resettlement of Jews from the Neumarkt/Dunajec district governor on 25 August 1942.

tion, he was taken aback by the eerie silence and depopulation in the streets of the town. Posters in Polish and German with the printed signature Sz. Schaar, Kreishauptmann, were spread all over the walls of the town. The entire placard was printed, only the dates and place names were written out in coloured pencil. The placard stated that on 27 August it was ordered that Jews were to be expelled, that all Jews were to assemble at the Market Square under death penalty, that also under death penalty no Pole was allowed to look out of the window, or to be in the street, or to provide any help to a Jew.⁵⁰

All of the aforementioned acts were intended to deter potential onlookers, as well as people who, for various motives, might provide support to the fugitives. In this way, the Germans sought to streamline the process of liquidating individual ghettos.

On 5 September 1942, the commander of the SS and Police of the Warsaw Distrikt, Ferdinand von Sammern-Frankenegg, issued a proclamation “concerning the death penalty for supporting Jews who crossed the border of the Jewish residential district without authorisation.” The document stated:

In recent times, a greater number of Jews have got out without authorisation from the residential district designated for them. They are still staying in the Warsaw Distrikt. I would like to remind you that the third regulation of the Governor General, dated 15 October 1941, stipulates that not only Jews will be sentenced to death for crossing the border of the Jewish residential district, but anyone who in any way assists them in hiding. I point out that the assistance given to a Jew is not considered to be only giving them lodging and food, but also transporting them by any means of transport, buying various goods from them, etc. I appeal to the people of the Warsaw Distrikt to report immediately to the nearest police or gendarmerie station any Jew who is staying outside the Jewish residential district without permission. Whoever has helped a Jew, or is still helping a Jew, and reports to the nearest police or gendarmerie station by 4 p.m. on 9 September 1942, shall not be subject to criminal liability. Also not

⁵⁰ AŻIH, collection Zbiór relacji Żydów Ocalałych z Zagłady [Collection of testimonies of Jews – Holocaust survivors], 301/4701, p. 2, Testimony of Kazimierz Sedlaczek. (The testimony of 19 December 1945 was written down by the minutes clerk in the third person.) The original spelling has been kept.

subject to criminal liability shall be anyone who, by 9 September 1942, 4 p.m., sends items purchased from a Jew to the address in Warsaw, Niska 20, or reports this to the nearest police station or gendarmerie.⁵¹

The document broadened the scope of activities subject to repressions, ranging from providing shelter (even for one night) to offering emergency aid, and engaging in business contacts. Importantly, the previously ordered punishments were waived for those who voluntarily reported to the police or gendarmerie post within the specified timeframe, turned in individuals in hiding to the German authorities, or returned belongings obtained from Jews, whether in return for help, or by purchase. This was undoubtedly a kind of a peculiar reward/abolition to encourage the surrender of those in hiding.

On 15 September 1942, an announcement was published by the deputy district governor of Tarnów, Dr. Karl Pernutz, concerning the expulsion of the Jews of Tarnów.⁵² It stated:

[P]ara. 1. On 16 September 1942, a resettlement of Jews will take place. Para. 2. Any Pole who in any way obstructs the resettlement operation will be subject to the severest punishments. Para. 3. Any Pole who, during or after the resettlement operation, takes in a Jew or gives him shelter will be shot. Para. 4. Passes authorising entry to the Jewish residential district shall cease to be valid on the publication of this announcement. Persons who nevertheless enter the Jewish residential district shall be subject to severe punishments and risk being shot. Para. 5. Whoever directly or indirectly buys, receives as a gift or otherwise comes into possession of anything from a Jew shall be liable to severe punishments. Every Pole who has in his possession things which are the property of a Jew is obliged to immediately report this fact to the Security Police in Tarnów, otherwise he will be treated as a plunderer and subject to the severest punishments. Para. 6. During the transport

⁵¹ AIPN, GK, 141/75, vol. 4/1, Collection of placards and posters (mainly from the General Government). The announcement of the SS and Police Commander in the Warsaw Distrikt of 5 September 1942 concerning the death penalty for supporting Jews who crossed the border of the Jewish quarter without permission.

⁵² AIPN, GK, 141/51, vol. 10.

of Jews from the assembly site to the railway station, public access to the streets and squares through which the transport will pass is prohibited. When the transport approaches the streets in question, the inhabitants are to close the entrance gates of the houses and windows and refrain from observing the transport. Failure to comply with the above regulations will be subject to severe punishments.⁵³

The order had a more elaborate content than acts from, for example, Bochnia or Wieliczka. Nevertheless, the criminal sanctions indicated therein were similar to those in other towns.

On 24 September 1942, an announcement was issued in Częstochowa concerning the “detention of Jews in hiding.” It stated:

There is a need to remind that under para. 3 of the Gen[eral] Gov[ernorate] Residence Restriction Order of 15 October 1941, Jews who leave the Jewish residential district without permission are subject to the death penalty. Pursuant to this order, persons who knowingly give shelter to such Jews, provide them with food or sell them food articles, are also punishable by death. The non-Jews are hereby strongly warned against: (1) giving shelter to Jews; (2) providing them with food; (3) selling them food articles.⁵⁴

This document, identical to the others cited above, also expanded the catalogue of criminalised acts. In doing so, attention was drawn to the act of “knowingly” giving aid to Jews. Thus, in this case, there was a chance to defend oneself with the argument that the accused person did not in fact know whom they supported. On 1 November 1942, the regulation of Friedrich Wilhelm Krüger, Higher SS and Police Commander in the GG “On the Establishment of a Jewish Residential Quarter in the Warsaw and Lublin Distriks,” dated 28 October of that year, came into force, which indicated in which localities the so-called residual ghettos (*Restgetto*) were to operate. It stated:

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ AŻIH, collection Obwieszczenia i zarządzenia władz okupacyjnych. 1939–1945 [Announcements and orders of the German occupation authorities. 1939–1945], 241/13, Announcement. Subject: Detention of Jews in hiding, Częstochowa 24 September 1942; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/show-content/publication/edition/18643?id=18643&dirids=1>, accessed 5 June 2024.

[P]ara. 2. All Jews within the meaning of the Regulation on the definition of the term “Jew” in the General Government of 24 July 1940 (Journal of the GG Regulations, p. 231) in the Warschau and Lublin Distrikts are to take up residence in one of the Jewish residential quarters listed in paragraph 1 for the Warschau Distrikt or, alternatively, the Lublin Distrikt by 30 November 1942. All other persons must have left the Jewish residential quarters by this time, unless they have been granted a police residence permit. Further details will be regulated by an order of the competent district governor (SS and police commander). From 1 December 1942, no Jews in the Warschau and Lublin Distrikts will be permitted to stay outside or leave a Jewish residential quarter without a police permit. From 1 December 1942, other persons are permitted to stay in or enter a Jewish residential quarter only on the basis of a police permit. Permits are granted by the district chief administrative officer responsible for the Jewish residential quarter – the Commissioner of the Jewish residential quarter for the Warschau Ghetto. Jews employed in military and armaments establishments and placed in closed camps shall be exempted from the obligation to choose a Jewish residential quarter. Para. 3. Jews who contravene the provisions of Paragraph 2 shall, under the existing provisions, be liable to the death penalty. The same punishment shall be imposed on anyone who knowingly gives refuge to such a Jew, i.e. who, in particular, places a Jew outside a Jewish residential quarter, feeds him or hides him. Whoever becomes aware of a Jew unlawfully residing outside a Jewish residential quarter and fails to report this to the Police, shall be subject to police security measures. Non-Jews who, contrary to the provisions of para. 2, do not leave the Jewish residential quarter on time or who enter it without a police permit, shall be subject to a fine of up to one thousand zlotys converted to a custodial sentence of up to three months in criminal and administrative proceedings. The punitive decisions shall be issued by the district governor (town governor).⁵⁵

⁵⁵ *Eksterminacja Żydów na ziemiach polskich w okresie okupacji hitlerowskiej. Zbiór dokumentów*, ed. T. Berenstein, A. Eisenbach, A. Rutkowski (Warsaw, 1957), pp. 313–314; Police regulation concerning the establishment of a Jewish residential quarter in the Warschau and Lublin Distrikts, dated 28 October 1942, *Verordnungsblatt für das Generalgouvernement* 1942, No. 94; AIPN, GK, 196/333, p. 275.

This regulation was reminiscent of the Governor General's decree and again sanctioned the death penalty for persons providing aid to Jews ("whoever, in particular, places a Jew outside the precinct of a Jewish residential quarter, feeds or hides him.")⁵⁶ It also extended the catalogue of behaviour penalised by the occupying forces, as it listed not only the provision of shelter. On November 12, 1942, an analogous regulation came into force for the Cracow, Radom and Galicia Distrikts.⁵⁷

Bogdan Musiał pointed out that Krüger's regulations of 28 October and 10 November 1942 "standardised and at the same time aggravated the criminal sanctions for aid to Jewish fugitives shown by non-Jewish inhabitants of the GG. Although it was mainly Poles whom the regulations concerned, theoretically, the other inhabitants of the GG, i.e., Ukrainians, Volksdeutsche and Reichsdeutsche (Germans, citizens of the Reich),⁵⁸ were also subject to these provisions."⁵⁹ It is worth rounding off these reflections with one rather obvious observation. Krüger's regulations were introduced at a time when the vast majority of ghettos and Jewish communities that had not been placed in the so-called "sealed quarters" no longer existed. The crucial phase of Aktion Reinhardt was conducted in the GG in the summer and early autumn of 1942. By November of that year, mainly "residual ghettos" were in operation. This is important in the context of helping Jews staying already on the so-called Aryan side.

Despite a certain unification and bringing order to German legislation as a result of Krüger's activities, there were still provisions issued by the authorities stipulating repression for help given to Jews. On 16 November 1942, Ludwig Fischer, Governor of the Warsaw Distrikt, issued an announcement "concerning the creation of six residual ghettos in the Warsaw Distrikt," which reminded people of the punishments for helping Jews and for not reporting the fact of such help being provided.⁶⁰ Paragraph three of this announcement referred to the consequences

⁵⁶ Police regulation concerning the establishment of a Jewish residential quarter in the Warschau and Lublin Distrikts, dated 28 October 1942, *Verordnungsblatt für das Generalgouvernement* 1942, No. 94, p. 666.

⁵⁷ B. Musiał, *Kto dopomoże Żydowi*, p. 129.

⁵⁸ For more on the punishments imposed on the citizens of the Reich, cf. *Ibid.*, pp. 143–145.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 133.

⁶⁰ AIPN, GK, 141/75, Collection of placards and posters (mainly from the General Government). Announcement of 16 November 1942 concerning the establishment of six residual ghettos in the Distrikt Warschau, reminding of the punishments for helping Jews and for failing to report the fact of having provided such help; L. Landau, *Kronika lat wojny i okupacji*, vol. 2: *Grudzień 1942 – czerwiec 1943* (Warsaw, 1962), p. 32.

of aiding persons who had escaped from the ghettos and those who stayed in the designated six “residual ghettos”:

Jews who contravene the provisions of para. 2 shall, according to the existing provisions, be liable to the death penalty. (2) The same punishment shall be imposed on anyone who knowingly shelters such a Jew, i.e., who, in particular, places, feeds or hides a Jew outside the precinct of a Jewish residential quarter. (3) Whoever becomes aware that a Jew is unlawfully residing outside a Jewish residential quarter and fails to report this to the police shall be subject to police security measures (e.g. placement in a concentration camp). (4) Persons, who are not Jewish and who, contrary to para. 2, fail to leave the Jewish residential quarter on time or who enter it without a police permit, shall be liable, in criminal and administrative proceedings, to a fine of up to one thousand zlotys converted to a custodial sentence of up to three months.⁶¹

Particularly noteworthy is the third point, which indicated the possibility that a person helping members of the Jewish community could be sent to a concentration camp.

The enforcement of the aforementioned regulations and the application of repressive measures mainly concerned provincial areas (villages, hamlets, small towns). After the liquidation of subsequent ghettos, special pursuit groups were sent all over the area to “track down” Jewish fugitives and those who tried to give them shelter. It was not uncommon for Poles (including entire families) being caught committing such a crime to be shot on site, have their property looted and destroyed, be brutally beaten, or be brought before German special or interim courts.⁶² Information about such incidents spread all over the area and heightened the fear among those at whose homes the Jews were sheltered. Also, the local authorities, including, for example, the so-called Blue Police [*Polnische Polizei*], used such incidents to discourage the local population from helping.⁶³ In addition, the inhabitants of villages and towns witnessed the repression inflicted on their

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² For more on this, cf. *Represje za pomoc Żydom*; see also *Relacje o pomocy*.

⁶³ See *Dalej jest noc*, vol. 2, pp. 470–477; J.A. Młynarczyk, S. Piątkowski, *Cena poświęcenia*, p. 74.

neighbours for helping Jews (and other activities in contravention of the German occupation legislation). The beating, arresting and shooting of people (including family members of witnesses to the events) took place in front of bystanders and, as a result, stayed in their memory and resonated. Historian Marcin Zaremba, elaborating on this theme, noted:

During the occupation [to generally summarise this phenomenon], people lived in immense tension. Everyone, from the occupier's point of view, could have "something on their conscience." In addition, the Germans did not stick to any legal regulations, they were unpredictable. To enforce obedience, they usually used blunt, senseless violence, which created an atmosphere of terror. Increased repression put people in a state of collective psychosis manifested in: runaway attitudes, atomisation and a wave of apocalyptic rumours.⁶⁴

These considerations relate to the impact of both stories about one's own experiences, as well as circulated information and rumours, concerning mass murders and other punishments for helping Jews, on the latter's relations with Poles in the GG. This issue requires further research.⁶⁵

It is worth referring at this point to an official document of the SS and Police of the Galicia Distrikt (*Distrikt Galizien*), recalled by Filip Friedman. According to this source, between October 1943 and June 1944, among the 1,541 Ukrainians sentenced to death for various offences, such as belonging to the resistance movement or sabotage, there are about 100 who were sentenced and murdered for helping Jews. The death penalty regulation referred to by the author was dated 2 October 1943.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ M. Zaremba, *Wielka trwoga. Polska 1944–1947. Ludowa reakcja na kryzys* (Cracow–Warsaw, 2013), p. 106.

⁶⁵ Cf. M. Szpytma, "Zbrodnie na ludności żydowskiej w Markowej w 1942 roku w kontekście postępowań karnych z lat 1949–1954," *Zeszyty Historyczne WiN-u* 40 (2014), pp. 39–66; G. Berendt, "Beyond Human Imagination. The Married Couple of Wołosiańscy from Drohobych as an Instance of Individual Assistance Given to Many Jews During German Occupation in 1939–1945," in *Poles Saving Jews During World War II*, ed. K. Cegielska, Z. Kłafka (Toruń, 2016). For information on the circulation of information, see also M. Ferenc, „Každy pyta co z nami będzie.”

⁶⁶ Ph. Friedman, "Ukrainian-Jewish Relations During The Nazi Occupation," in *The Nazi Holocaust: Public Opinion and Relations to the Jews in Nazi Europe*, vol. 1, ed. M.R. Marrus (Berlin, 1989), pp. 387–388.

The contents of the regulations cited above, issued at various decision-making levels and in various parts of the GG, contained similar provisions on criminal accountability for supporting Jews. The number of these legal acts, the circumstances in which these were issued, and its territorial scope were posted throughout the GG, both in large cities and in the provinces, where the mayors were responsible for their promulgation, indicating that the general population of the country was aware of the punishments imposed for helping Jewish neighbours. Of course, this does not give researchers a clear answer to the question of the extent to which the inhabitants of the so-called Aryan side were really aware of the threat. It is sometimes a long way from the existence of a legal act to people being aware that its provisions also apply to them, and that the punishments stipulated therein will be carried out.

Nonetheless, given that the above-mentioned announcements were posted in cities, towns, as well as in the countryside (the mayors were responsible for this) and the information about punishments for helping Jews spread, it can be assumed that – knowing the occupier's regulations – people widely talked about them. The testimonies of the Jewish survivors include references to the dilemmas and discussions held on this subject by those helping them.⁶⁷ In any case, the legal system is an important consideration when analysing the relationship between Christians and Jews, including decisions to provide aid to the latter. Due to the diversity of life situations, it is difficult to create a pattern of how these decisions were made and applied in practice. Often the circumstances of the incident, including the form of support provided, played a significant role, which influenced the type of punishments. Bogdan Musiał indicated the significance of the Krüger regulation, which – on pain of sanctions – imposed an obligation on residents to provide all information about Jews illegally leaving the ghettos and staying on the so-called Aryan side. This act also extended the responsibility for sheltering Jews to the household members (regardless of whether they were aware of it or not).⁶⁸ In December 1942, priests were ordered to read the following regulation in the churches of the Janów Lubelski district:

⁶⁷ Cf. i.a. *Relacje o pomocy*.

⁶⁸ B. Musiał, *Kto dopomoże Żydowi*, pp. 130–131.

Immediately report to the police or the gendarmerie which strangers and suspects are staying in the village and, in particular, give the names of those inhabitants who give shelter to bandits and various travellers, as this is the only way to prevent bandits from staying in the village. Detaining bandits is punishable by death, affecting not only the hosts but also their family members and neighbours, along with the confiscation of property.[...] According to an order of the Kreishauptmann of 23 October 1942 [...] liable to the death penalty shall be all inhabitants and neighbours who detain Jews, provide them with food or assist them in escaping, and especially anyone who puts carts at the disposal of Jews.⁶⁹

The content of this regulation may explain the intensification of implementing the harshest punishments. However, it does not bring any closer to answering the question of why, in some cases, the Germans zealously applied collective responsibility, in others they administered the lowest penalties possible, and still in others they did so only when they faced disciplinary consequences. Poorly sourced issues include bribes and other forms of benefits. Bogdan Musiał pointed out that the so-called *Schutzhaft*, or preventive detention, was used more frequently in the first years of the occupation.⁷⁰ The biographies of repressed individuals, known to researchers, indicate that after the liquidation of the ghettos during *Aktion Reinhardt* (from late 1942 onwards), other forms of punishment were used more frequently than the death penalty.⁷¹

Polish Territories Incorporated into the Third Reich

The results of historical research indicate that in the Second Polish Republic territories incorporated into Germany, no general regulation on the death penalty for helping Jews was introduced. Prohibitions of aiding Jews appeared locally at the time of the liquidation of particular ghettos, e.g. on 24 June 1942 in the district of *Blachstädt* (*Blachownia*, then Upper Silesian Province), after all the Jews had been expelled, the local district governor issued a “public warning,” which read that “whoever would help Jews by hiding them or aiding them in any other way

⁶⁹ As cited in M.J. Chodakiewicz, *Żydzi i Polacy*, p. 185.

⁷⁰ B. Musiał, *Kto dopomoże Żydowi*, p. 149.

⁷¹ Cf. *Represje za pomoc Żydom*.

is to expect the severest punishment. Also those persons will be held criminally accountable who, knowing of an unlawful stay of Jews in the Blachstädt County, do not immediately report this to the nearest police station or gendarmerie.”⁷²

However, there are no known cases of this regulation being implemented in practice.

The lack of a fundamental regulation of the matter at a district or provincial level did not mean that there was no repression for helping Jews. In a dozen or so known cases in the areas mentioned, the Germans deported the vast majority of the convicts to concentration camps or imprisoned them, although there were also death sentences. Among others, in June 1941, the death sentence was pronounced by the Special Court in Włocławek against Zenon Rzymkowski for delivering meat to the ghetto in Kutno. The Germans communicated the news of his execution by means of the so-called “death placards” posted in this town. In addition to the data of the executed man, they added a photograph of his body hanging on the gallows. However, Rzymkowski was not accused of contacts with Jews, let alone of helping them, but of illegal trading and thus breaking the regulations on war economy and animal slaughter.⁷³

In conclusion, the problem of criminal accountability for helping Jews in the territories incorporated into the Reich requires further detailed research.

Reichskommissariat Ukraine and Reichskommissariat Ostland (Volhynia, Polesie, Navahrudak Region, Eastern Białystok Region, Vilnius Region)

In the context of the recurring discussion on whether the death penalty for aid to Jews was introduced only in the General Government, attention should be drawn to the areas mentioned in the subtitle, which fell into German hands as a result of the Third Reich’s invasion of the USSR. Strict legislation, including the death

⁷² M. Łyszczarz, *Sosnowiec w okresie okupacji hitlerowskiej (4 IX 1939 r. – 27 I 1945 r.). Szkice monograficzne* [Sosnowiec under the Hitlerite Occupation (4 September 1939 – 27 January 1945). Monographic Sketches], Sosnowiec 1970, typescript in the collections of the Institute of National Remembrance’s Library, Branch in Katowice, n.p.

⁷³ AIPN, GK, 73/43, Oberlandesgericht Posen Justizpressestelle; Der Oberstaatsanwalt beim dem Sondergericht in Leslau. (Collection of copies of indictments drawn up by the Public Prosecutor’s Office at the Special Court in Włocławek, in cases referred for trial by the Special Court in Włocławek; includes documents dated from June to September 1941); *Relacje o pomocy*, vol. 7: *III Rzesza i ziemie wcielone do Rzeszy*, selected and edited by S. Piątkowski (Warsaw, 2023).

penalty, was in force in these areas, linked, among others, to the commencement of the murdering of Jews by the Einsatzgruppen.⁷⁴ Based on current knowledge, it is likely that no legal act introducing the aforementioned sanction was passed in these areas. However, in practice, repressions for helping Jews – including killings – were carried out. The absence of a sanction similar as in the GG might be related to the plan to conduct mass executions of Jews by shooting, rather than deporting them to death camps. Holocaust historians Israel Gutman and Naama Galil have pointed out the great contrast between Western and Central, and Eastern European countries in this matter.⁷⁵ They stressed that, for example, in the Netherlands and France, those who provided help to Jews were threatened with deportation to a concentration camp, while in occupied Poland and in the occupied territories of the USSR, such people were shot together with those they were hiding. Ukrainian Holocaust historian, Igor Shchupak, on the other hand, wrote that the Germans first and foremost imposed an obligation on mayors (district governors) to inform on Jews in hiding. “Ordinary residents” were warned of the consequences of sheltering them or other forms of aid. It was pointed out that there were various sanctions for doing so, including the death penalty.⁷⁶ As an example, Shchupak cited an announcement from Berdyczów that said:

(1) Every mayor or village leader shall be obliged to arrest, while cooperating with the local police, and hand over to the SD police in Berdyczów every Jewish person from other villages, especially if the person has been staying here since 24 December 1942. (2) All local residents are forbidden to shelter or hide Jewish persons from other villages. (3) Whenever a Jewish person is found to be residing somewhere without permission, the entire family giving shelter will be punished with death. (4) The same punishment will be applied to the mayor – village leader who does not immediately comply with para. 1.

⁷⁴ Aus der Verordnung Rosenbergs über die Einführung der Todesstrafe für Ungehorsam gegenüber den Okkupationsbehörden [From the Rosenberg’s decree on implementation of death penalty for disobedience to the occupation authorities].

⁷⁵ I. Gutman, N. Galil’ [И. Гутман, Н. Галиль], *Katastrofa i pamyat’ o ney* [Катастрофа и память о ней] (Jerusalem, 2007), p. 237.

⁷⁶ For more on this topic: I. Shchupak, “The Rescue of Jews from the Nazi Genocide by the Inhabitants of Eastern Galicia,” *European Spatial Research and Policy* 28 (2021), pp. 73–96.

The document was signed by the Gebietskommissar (District Commissioner).⁷⁷ It is worth noting that it extended the death penalty to family members living in the same house as the person hiding Jews, regardless of the degree of awareness of the fact. This procedure aimed to intimidate the local population and also to introduce antagonism within families. Moreover, introducing the responsibility of the local authorities, if Jews in hiding were found in the area under their authority, generated an additional conflict of interest and meant that people deciding to help had to be even more cautious.

The Germans also encouraged the inhabitants of Galicia and Podolia to report cases of Jews in hiding. An informer whose report would help capture one of them was promised a reward: “in an amount determined by the SS and the Chief of Police,”⁷⁸ and therefore determined locally. Shchupak writes about Ukrainians executed for hiding Jews in many towns and villages in the Vinnytsia region and the Dnipropetrovsk, Kyiv, Lviv and Kharkiv regions, but does not give the names of people repressed.⁷⁹

Similarly, in the area of the General Commissariat Ostland, which included, among others, the north-eastern Borderlands of the Second Polish Republic, thus far researchers have not found a legal act introducing the death penalty for those providing shelter or any other support to Jews as valid throughout its territory. However, in the State Archive of the Grodno region, there is an official announcement about the death penalty for helping Jews, issued in Słonim on 22 December 1942. The German town administration informed about the threat of shooting for hiding Jews in houses or on farms of the town’s inhabitants. They were also ordered to immediately report to the gendarmerie any information about Jews in the area living on their own or hiding at someone’s house.⁸⁰ The date of the document shows that it was made public several months after the liquidation of the local ghetto. For as early as 29 June 1942,

⁷⁷ R. Szuchta, P. Trojański, *Holokaust. (Nie)odrobiona lekcja historii*, trans. N. Tkaczenko (Warsaw–Cracow, 2023), p. 434.

⁷⁸ I. Shchupak, “The Rescue.”

⁷⁹ The scholar indicated the relevant literature: “Убили односельчан принявших евреев. Акт. Харьковская область, Дергачевский р-н, Семеновка [Убили односельчан принявших евреев. Акт. Харьковская область, Дергачевский р-н, Семеновка],” in *Dokumenty obviniajut. Kholokost: sviditel'stva Krasnoy Armii* [Документы обвиняют. Холокост: свидетельства Красной Армии], elaborated by F.D. Sverdlov, ed. I.A. Al'tman [сост. Ф. Д. Свердлов, изд. И.А. Альтман], (Moscow, 1996).

⁸⁰ Yad Vashem Archives (hereinafter AYV), M.41, 3/48, Gosudarstvenyi Arkhiv Grodenskoy Oblasti, Grodno [Государственный Архив Гродненской Области, Гродно], p. 6.

the Germans had murdered some ten thousand Słonim Jews in the nearby Pietralewicz, leaving about 800 of them alive to clean up the area after the (former) ghetto.

Of particular note in this context is the case of Father Adam Sztarek and the nuns Ewa (Bogumiła Noiszewska) and Marta (Kazimiera Wołowska), who were arrested in Słonim for helping Jews and executed on the nearby Pietralewicka Mountain on 18 December 1942,⁸¹ a few days before the aforementioned document came into effect. Perhaps it had already been made known, or the repression was being applied without any legal basis.

Balkan Countries

Before the outbreak of the Second World War, a total of between 1.4 and 1.8 million Jews lived in the Balkan states.⁸² Their extermination proceeded differently in each of these countries. This was due to several factors: the situation of the members of the ethnic group in question in the past, their citizenship status under the occupation (citizens of the countries mentioned or refugees), the attitude of the non-Jewish communities and the role of the local governments in carrying out the tasks imposed on them by the German overlords. The latter was related to the attitude of the local authorities towards the expansionist and annexationist policies of the Third Reich. This policy was initially supported by Yugoslavia and Bulgaria, both of which joined the so-called Tripartite Pact in March 1941. Bulgaria remained in it until September 1944, while Yugoslavia in April 1941 refused to allow German troops intending to attack Greece to pass through its territory. It was then that Germany, along with Italy, Bulgaria and Hungary, invaded its territory. The Third Reich then annexed northern Slovenia, while Italy annexed the southern part of that country and north-western Dalmatia, at the same time establishing a protectorate over Montenegro. Albania, which had already been incorporated into Benito Mussolini's state in April 1939, received lands inhabited by ethnic Albanians – Kosovo and a small part of Macedonia. Bulgaria⁸³ was granted most of Macedonia and Western Thrace, while Vojvodina,

⁸¹ AYV, Department of the Righteous Among the Nations, Adam Sztarek's Documents, M.31.2/9178.

⁸² The Balkan states, according to the political division of the inter-war period, included Albania, Bulgaria, Greece, Yugoslavia, Romania and Hungary.

⁸³ Bulgaria was an ally of Germany, and initially its government was willing to deport "its" Jews to German death camps. Eventually, nine thousand to eleven thousand of them were deported from the annexed

a part of Slovenia (Prekmurje) and some Croatian lands (Barania and Medzimirje) were incorporated into Hungary. On other territories of Croatia and in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Independent State of Croatia (NHD) was created, fully dependent on Italy and the Third Reich. Central Serbia, northern Kosovo and Banat came under German military administration. On 1 September 1941, a National Salvation Government collaborating with Berlin was formed there, headed by Milan Nedić.⁸⁴ The Germans occupied also a greater part of Greece.

Following the Balkan campaign of 1941, over one hundred and fifty thousand Jews resided in territories occupied by the Third Reich.⁸⁵ After the capitulation of Italy in September 1943, Albania also came under the German occupation with its Jewish community, which numbered about 400 before April 1941, a significant percentage of whom were refugees from Germany and Austria. After the incorporation of Kosovo and parts of Macedonia into Albania, this number rose to over 1,500 as a result of an influx of over a thousand refugees from Macedonia, northern Serbia, Germany, Austria and occupied Poland.⁸⁶

territories of Western Thrace and southern Dobrudja. However, another deportation, this time from Plovdiv and Kiustendil, planned for March 1943, was stopped by the government in Sofia. This was the result of protests of the Bulgarian society, the Orthodox Church, and also Dymitar Peshhev MP, who petitioned Tsar Boris III to stop the deportation. Metropolitan Kirill of Plovdiv, later Patriarch, announced the opening of all Orthodox churches to Jews. As a result, on 24 May 1943, the authorities called off the deportation of forty-eight thousand people. It is estimated that 78 per cent of the sixty-five thousand Bulgarian Jews survived the war (cited after: M. Bar-Zohar, *Beyond Hitler's Grasp: The Heroic Rescue of Bulgaria's Jews*, Holbrook, MA, 1998; F.B. Chary, *The Bulgarian Jews and the Final Solution, 1940–1944*, Pittsburgh, 1972). In contrast, in the pre-World War I Romanian state territory called Regat, operations against Jews followed the typical pattern: violence, confiscation of property and the creation of ghettos. The conflict between the Bucharest government and the Germans helped to limit the number of deportees. However, more than four hundred and twenty thousand Romanian Jews were murdered during the Holocaust.

⁸⁴ E. Gitman, *When Courage Prevailed: The Rescue and Survival of Jews in the Independent State of Croatia 1941–1945* (St. Paul, 2011), pp. 20–23; R. Hilberg, *Zagłada Żydów europejskich*, vol. 2 (Warsaw, 2018), p. 882; *Die Verfolgung und Ermordung der europäischen Juden durch das nationalsozialistische Deutschland 1933–1945*, vol. 14: *Besetztes Südosteuropa und Italien*, ed. S. Berger, S. Schmid, E. Lewin, M. Vassilikou, (Munich, 2017), pp. 37–42.

⁸⁵ K. Vidakovic-Petrov, "The Holocaust in Yugoslavia: Questions of Identity," in *Hiding, Sheltering and Borrowing Identities: Avenues of Rescue During the Holocaust*, ed. D. Michman (Jerusalem, 2017), p. 343; J. Tomasevich, *War and Revolution in Yugoslavia 1941–1945: Occupation and Collaboration* (Stanford, 2001), p. 583.

⁸⁶ P. Mojzes, *Balkan Genocides: Holocaust and Ethnic Cleansing in the Twentieth Century* (New York, 2011), p. 93; T. Czekalski, "Bałkańska ziemia obiecana? Problem Holokaustu w albańskich badaniach nad przeszłością," *ZŻSM* 11 (2015), p. 533; M. Ristović, "Yugoslav Jews Fleeing the Holocaust 1941–1945," in *Remembering for the Future: The Holocaust in an Age of Genocide*, ed. J.K. Roth, E. Maxwell, M. Levy, W. Whitworth (London, 2001), pp. 40, 512–526.

Serbia

After the occupation regime had been installed, approximately sixteen thousand Jews resided in Serbia. As early as April 1941, legislation was introduced to eliminate them from professional, social and economic engagement, as well as to stigmatise them, impose forced labour on them, and deprive them of their property (the so-called Aryanisation). According to Raul Hilberg, thus “the first [th]ree phases of the extermination process were introduced in a single day.”⁸⁷ From July 1941, mainly in retaliation for partisan actions, the Germans conducted mass executions of Serbs and Jews, and in December they began deporting the latter to the Sajmište concentration camp near Belgrade, where they were gassed in a special car. By May 1942, some seven to ten thousand people had been murdered there. Apart from the occupied territories of Poland and the USSR, only in Serbia were Jews not transported out of the country, but murdered on the spot. These operations resulted in the deaths – according to various estimates – of some 13–14.8 thousand Jews, and only a fifth of those who had lived in Serbia before the war managed to survive the war.⁸⁸

The operations of the Germans against Jews were actively supported by the civil administration and police of the Nedić government, as well as by volunteer troops (Serbian National Guard), members of the nationalist fascist party ZBOR headed by Dimitrij Ljotić and the party’s armed organisation, the Serbian Volunteer Corps.⁸⁹ Between 1942 and 1944, their actions resulted in at least 455 Jews being captured and handed over to the Germans. Consequently, many Serbian Jews attempted to cross the border into territories under Italian or Hungarian occupation, which

⁸⁷ R. Hilberg, *Zagłada Żydów europejskich*, p. 849; M. Ivanković, A. Stojanović, “Anti-Semitic Propaganda and Legislation in Serbia 1939–1942: Content, Scale, Aims and Role of the German Factor,” *Istorija 20. Veka* 37 (2) (2019), pp. 91–98, <https://www.jevrejskadigitalnabiblioteka.rs/bitstream/handle/123456789/1380/AntisemitskaPropaganda.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>, accessed 30 July 2024.

⁸⁸ R. Hilberg, *Zagłada Żydów europejskich*, pp. 860–861; P. Longerich, *Holocaust: The Nazi Persecution and Murder of the Jews* (Oxford, 2010), pp. 300–301; J. Frussetta, “The Final Solution in southeastern Europe: Between Nazi catalysts and local motivations,” in *The Routledge History of Holocaust*, ed. J.C. Friedman (London – New York, 2011), p. 265; M.F. Levy, “A Tangled Tale: The Survival of Serbian Jews during World War II,” *Serbian Studies: Journal of the North American Society for Serbian Studies* 27 (2013), pp. 15–16.

⁸⁹ R. Tucović, “Collaboration of the special police in the implementation of the ‘Final Solution’ in Occupied Serbia (1941–1944),” *Limes Plus: Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities* 15 (2–3) (2018), p. 46, https://www.academia.edu/41920162/HOLOCAUST_AND_RESTITUTION_IN_FORMER_YUGOSLAVIA_Legal_and_Historical_Challenges, accessed 30 July 2024.

were considered safe at the time. Others hid in the villages, usually claiming the identity of Serbian refugees from the Independent State of Croatia.⁹⁰

Michele Frucht Levy mentioned three factors that could have helped Yugoslavian Jews to survive the war. The first and most important was the relatively lenient policy in the Italian occupation zone (until capitulation of Italy in September 1943), as it was not subjected to the regulations coming from the authorities in Berlin. The second was the institutional chaos within the German occupation forces, which reduced the effectiveness of their operations. The third factor was the:

[A]id of non-Jews throughout Serbia and in all areas through which or to which Jews fled. Eyewitness testimonies, petitions, letters and other documents repeatedly suggest the crucial importance of such aid, provided in various forms and for various motivations by non-Jewish Serbs, Croats and Muslims, Islamic and Catholic clergy, partisans and Chetniks and members of both the Nedić government, and the Italian, Croatian and German armed forces.⁹¹

It is difficult to estimate what percentage of Jews survived the war thanks to this aid.⁹² Helping Jews was punishable by death. Interestingly, for many years the question of sanctions for this support was neither addressed by Serbian scholars nor by Holocaust researchers. Only Belgrade historian Milan Ristović, in his article “Jews in Serbia during World War Two: Between ‘The Final Solution to the Jewish Question’ and ‘The Righteous Among Nations,’” mentioned that “[un]til 30 May 1941 there was a strict prohibition on helping Jews. The sanction for breaking the rule and for providing any aid to Jewish refugees was to share their horrific fate

⁹⁰ S. Heim, “The Holocaust in the European Context: Using Experiences from Other Countries for the Persecution of Jews in Serbia,” in *Eskalacija u Holokaust. Od streljačkih vodova do gasnog kamiona koncentracionog logora na Sajmištu: Dve odlučujuće faze Holokausta u Srbiji / Escalating into Holocaust: From execution squads to the gas van of the concentration camp at Sajmište: Two defining phases of the Holocaust in Serbia*, ed. V. Pavlaković (Belgrade, 2017), pp. 101–105; S. Schmid, “The Holocaust in Serbia in the European Context: The Serbian Case as a Part of Shared European Past,” in *ibid.*, pp. 109–117; *Die Verfolgung und Ermordung der europäischen Juden durch das nationalsozialistische Deutschland 1933–1945*, vol. 14, pp. 43–46; R. Tucović, “Collaboration of the special police,” p. 46.

⁹¹ M.F. Levy, “A Tangled Tale,” p. 19.

⁹² By 2022, the Yad Vashem Institute had honoured 139 Serbs with the title of The Righteous Among the Nations.

in one of the camps or execution sites.”⁹³ Ristović was probably referring to one of the provisions of the decree on Jews and Gypsies of April 1941.⁹⁴

This decree, signed by SS-Obersturmführer Karl Pamer, was published in the *Verordnungsblatt des Befehlshabers Serbien* on 24 December 1941 and came into force on 22 December. Its content read as follows:

It is forbidden, under death penalty: to give accommodation to or to hide Jews; to receive for safekeeping, to buy, to exchange or to obtain in any other legal transaction valuable objects of any kind, furniture and money from Jews.⁹⁵

On 13 January 1942, the content of the decree was reported by the Jewish Telegraphic Agency:

The death penalty will be carried out against any person in Serbia who hides Jews or finances or assists them, the Serbian newspaper *Novo Vreme* reported here today. [...] All property in the custody of Jews must be declared to the German military authorities in Belgrade before 15 January, writes the newspaper. Any agreements or contracts concluded with Jews from 6 April onwards must also be reported. Failure to comply with these regulations will be punishable by death.⁹⁶

This decree encompassed a much wider range of activities subject to the highest sanctions compared to the regulation issued on 15 October 1941 in the General Government.

⁹³ M. Ristović, “Jews in Serbia During World War Two: Between ‘The Final Solution to the Jewish Question’ and ‘The Righteous Among Nations,’” in M. Fogell, M. Ristović, M. Koljanin, *Serbia: Righteous Among Nations* (Belgrade, 2010).

⁹⁴ This regulation ordered that all persons in Serbia with property obtained from Jews since 6 April 1941, the date of Hitler’s invasion of Yugoslavia, or who were indebted to Jews, should submit details of such transactions to the Nazi occupation authorities within a month. All transactions between Serbs and Jews, even those concluded before the Nazi invasion, were declared null and void. Any contract or agreement made with the intention of circumventing the anti-Jewish law was to be severely punished.

⁹⁵ Document received courtesy of the Serbian historian Milan Koljanin.

⁹⁶ *Jewish Telegraphic Agency. Daily News Bulletin*, 13 January 1942, No. 10, p. 3. M.F. Levy writes in his article equally enigmatically: “Finally, aid to Jews in any form was criminalized,” without explaining the meaning of this statement (cited after: M.F. Levy, “A Tangled Tale,” p. 17).

Other Serbian historians, Mladenka Ivanković and Aleksandar Stojanović, wrote about an amendment to the abovementioned decree, which appeared in April 1942, and was published in the *Journal of Regulations of the Military Commander in Serbia*. According to this amendment, all persons:

[W]ho owned Jewish property, kept Jewish property or were indebted to a Jew were to report to the German police authorities within 30 days. All agreements made with Jews after 6 April 1941, even those that were not concluded to cover up property or to hide property, were to be reported. The population of occupied Serbia was warned that even cases in which there was only a suspicion that some property might be Jewish were to be reported, on pain of severe punishments.⁹⁷

The historians further explain:

According to paragraph 22 of the original Jewish and Gypsy Order of May 1941, which was confirmed and extended by a decree of April 1942, the punishment for not declaring or hiding Jewish property or for showing any opposition to the said anti-Semitic decrees was ‘imprisonment and a fine or one of the two. In severe cases, the penalty is imprisonment or death.’⁹⁸

It is challenging to find information in the works concerning aid to persons of Jewish nationality in Serbia, whether the above-mentioned regulation was enforced. An analysis of numerous testimonies of those who aided Jews has yielded little so far. Only one shows that the regulation was applied in practice. Andrej Trumpej, a monk from Slovenia, was a vicar of the Church of Saints Cyril and Methodius in Belgrade from 1929. At the time of the deportation of the local Jews to the death camps, he helped the family of his compatriot Antonije Ograjenšek, who, having previously married Avram Kalef, had embraced Judaism and brought up her daughters, Matilda and Rachel, in that faith. When it became apparent that all

⁹⁷ M. Ivankovic, A. Stojanović, “Anti-Semitic propaganda,” p. 94.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

Jews would be deported, Antonije turned to Fr. Trumpej for help. She had her old birth certificate, confirming that she was a Christian, but above all she wanted to protect her children. The priest issued fake baptismal documents for the girls in the names of Breda and Matilda Okrajšek. He also enrolled them in the Matija Ban secondary school. Although no one in the new neighbourhood knew them, the headmaster of the school, a *Volksdeutscher* called Orthaber, knew of their Jewish origin. Nevertheless, he complied with Trumpej's request and did not reveal the secret to anyone until the end of the war. The vicar also issued similar documents to two Jewish sisters, allowing them to join a group of workers sent to forced labour in Germany under false names. On the day they were due to leave Belgrade, someone recognised them and turned them in to the Germans. As a result, Fr. Trumpej was arrested. Brutally interrogated, he was not broken, and did not reveal to the Germans any information about the people he had helped. After spending several months in a Gestapo prison, he was released.⁹⁹

Croatia

As mentioned above, the NHD, created by the Germans on 16 April 1941 in the lands of Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, was, contrary to its name, fully dependent on the Axis states. It was headed by Ante Pavelić, leader of the local fascists, known as the *Ustaše*. Initially, his statehood was home to thirty–five to forty thousand Jews.¹⁰⁰

As in Serbia, the first anti-Jewish regulations, based on the Third Reich legislation, were introduced by the authorities in Zagreb as early as April 1941. As Esther Gitman estimated, by May 1945 “589 anti-Jewish regulations and decrees appeared in Croatian dailies.”¹⁰¹ The next stage of this policy was the deportation of Jews from the cities to concentration camps and, from November 1941 onwards, to the extermination camps Jasenovac and Stara Gradiška. More than 19,000 of them were murdered there.¹⁰² In August 1942, the deportation of approximately

⁹⁹ “Tumpej Andrej,” <https://collections.yadvashem.org/en/righteous/4045495>; see also <https://beotura.rs/en/andrej-tumpej-pravednik-medju-narodima/>, accessed 30 July 2024.

¹⁰⁰ E. Gitman, *When Courage Prevailed*, p. XXIII; R. Hilberg, *Zagłada Żydów europejskich*, pp. 882–883.

¹⁰¹ E. Gitman, *When Courage Prevailed*, p. 28.

¹⁰² R. Hilberg, *Zagłada Żydów europejskich*, p. 888.

five thousand Jews from the NHD to German extermination centres, mainly to Auschwitz, began. In May 1943, another deportation followed. Only the so-called honourable Aryans, considered important to the Croatian state and holding special letters, the so-called *Schutzbriefe*, remained on site.¹⁰³

Also “ordinary” citizens participated in the crimes initiated mainly by local fascists,¹⁰⁴ and some of the Catholic clergy supported the anti-Semitic policies of the state. In cities such as Sarajevo, Zagreb and Osijek, the *Ustaša* systematically searched for Jews, making any aid practically impossible. According to historians Ivo and Slavko Goldstein, the risk of hiding persons of Jewish nationality increased especially after the publication of an announcement stating that any aid provided to them was subject to the severest punishment.¹⁰⁵ Nonetheless, there were people who, to the best of their ability, tried to bring help and rescue, although many of their testimonies indicate that notices were posted warning that anyone who hid Jews in their home would be killed. Ahmed Sadiq-Šaralop moved from Macedonia to Sarajevo in 1913. There he befriended many Jews, including Isidor Papo, with whom he traded. After some time, the Muslim moved again, this time to Konjic, where he opened a shop. One day, in mid-1941, he noticed Papo with his wife and two children at the railway station, boarding a train bound for Sarajevo. He warned his friend that the Germans were conducting deportation operations in that city. He took the whole family to his home, where they remained until they could obtain documents allowing them to reach the Italian occupation zone. Sadiq-Šaralop was denounced and, in the last transport, deported to Jasenovac, where he died.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰³ N. Bartulin, *Honorary Aryans: National-Racial Identity and Protected Jews in the Independent State of Croatia*, (New York, 2013), pp. 61–87; Y. Radchenko, “‘The Poglavnik... Raises His Heroic Right Hand in Honor of Ukraine’: Ustaša-Melnykite Cooperation in the Genocide in the Independent State of Croatia, 1941–1945,” in *Yad Vashem Studies* 2 (49) (2021), pp. 95–97; *Die Verfolgung und Ermordung der europäischen Juden durch das nationalsozialistische Deutschland 1933–1945*, vol. 14, pp. 170–191.

¹⁰⁴ Schmidt cites the findings of Dragan Cvetković, according to whom between twenty-one thousand and twenty-three thousand Jews (74.6 per cent) were killed by the *Ustaše*, seventy-two hundred to seventy-seven hundred (25 per cent) by the Germans and 130 Jews (0.4 per cent) by Italians. As cited in *Die Verfolgung und Ermordung der europäischen Juden durch das nationalsozialistische Deutschland 1933–1945*, vol. 14, p. 195.

¹⁰⁵ I. Goldstein, S. Goldstein, *The Holocaust in Croatia* (Pittsburgh, 2016). The authors do not elaborate on this theme, nor do they refer to documents that could confirm this.

¹⁰⁶ “Ahmed Sadiq-Šaralop,” <https://collections.yadvashem.org/en/righteous/4017307>.

Brothers Vid and Anto Milošević were carpet traders in Sarajevo. After the authorities closed down Jewish shops, they offered their neighbour Leon Altarac a job. Soon their business became a hideout for many Jews despite warnings and threats of arrest. In November 1942, the Ustaša raided their shop and arrested both brothers and the people they were hiding. They were deported to Jasenovac. After spending 13 months in the camp, the Miloševices were released on 13 December 1943.¹⁰⁷

Albania

Albania, occupied from 1939 by Italy and from 1943 by Germany, was one of the countries with the highest percentage of Jewish survivors. Their rapid influx in 1939 led to the first laws against them, issued by the local Italian-controlled government, which concerned an immigration ban and announced the deportation of new arrivals. Subsequent orders eliminated representatives of Jews from economic, social and political engagement. However, those acts were not strictly enforced, so Jews felt relatively safe in Albania. The situation changed after the Wannsee Conference in January 1942. Under German pressure, the Italians rounded up 51 Jews in a camp in Pristina and in March 1942 handed them over to the Germans, who deported them to the Sajmište concentration camp in Serbia and murdered them. The others were placed in a camp in Berat, where they remained until the capitulation of Italy.¹⁰⁸

The occupation of Albania by the Third Reich in November 1943 complicated the situation of the resident Jews. In the northern and central parts of the country, there were about eight hundred (other sources say that about eighteen hundred to two thousand), mainly refugees from Yugoslavia, Bulgaria and other European countries.¹⁰⁹ The Germans introduced anti-Jewish legislation, but Jews did not need to wear markings. As late as November, they demanded that the collaborationist Albanian authorities compile a census of the Jews living in their country, but this demand was ignored. Nonetheless, in April 1944, members of the Albanian Muslim

¹⁰⁷ "Vid i Anto Milošević" in *Holocaust in Yugoslavia*, ed. N. Fogel (Kragujevac, 2013), n.p.

¹⁰⁸ P. Mojzes, *Balkan Genocides*, p. 94; B.J. Fischer, *Albania at War 1939–1945* (West Lafayette, IN, 1999), p. 187.

¹⁰⁹ T. Czekalski, "Bałkańska ziemia obiecana?" p. 537.

Nazi 21st Mountain SS Division “Skanderbeg” arrested 281 Jews¹¹⁰ from Pristina and deported them to the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp, where more than a half of them perished.¹¹¹

Most of the members of the national minority discussed went to the mountains, where Albanian peasants, according to the customary hospitality rules (known as *besa*), hid them until the end of the war or transported them to Adriatic ports, from where they could escape to Italy.¹¹² Almost two thousand people were rescued in this way, of whom, it is estimated, several hundred survived until the end of the war in hiding. According to the Albanian historian Apostol Kotani, during the German occupation Albanians were to risk their own lives to protect Jews from deportation.¹¹³ However, the scholar fails to inform on the basis of which sources he has formed such an opinion. Nor does he give an example of the Germans’ repressive actions.

The aid for the Jews in Albania is illustrated by the story of Eugen and Elsa Hochberg and their daughter Miriam and relative Adela. The family tried to make their way to Italy via Kosovo and Albania, using false documents with the name of Hadžić. They reached Prizren in Albania, where they rented a room in a house belonging to the Jovanović family. The eldest son of this family, Petar/Pero, assumed responsibility for the family in hiding. As a result of a denunciation which took place in early 1944, the Germans arrested the Hochbergs except for Miriam, who remained in the house with Petar. The next day, the latter was also arrested, as the occupiers suspected that he was hiding a Jewish girl. They tortured him, but the boy maintained that Miriam was Serbian, which was supposedly evidenced by her blue eyes. Eventually Petar was released from custody.¹¹⁴ It should be added that in Albania and Yugoslavia, Jews also joined partisan units.

¹¹⁰ The Albanian historian Sinani considers this figure to be inflated. He believed that only a few dozen people were arrested. After *ibid.*, p. 541.

¹¹¹ P. Mojzes, *Balkan Genocides*, pp. 94–95; *Die Verfolgung und Ermordung der europäischen Juden durch das nationalsozialistische Deutschland 1933–1945*, vol. 14, pp. 78–88; S. Shinani, *Albanians and Jews: The Protection and Salvation: A Monographic Study* (Tirana, 2014), pp. 231–248.

¹¹² N.H. Gershman, *Besa: Muslim Who Saved Jews in World War II* (Syracuse, NY, 2008); *Rescue in Albania: One Hundred Percent of Jews in Albania Rescued from Holocaust* (Cathedral City, CA, 1997), pp. 42–44; I. Nidam-Orvieto, I. Steinfeldt, *The Rescue of Jews in Albania through the Perspective of the Yad Vashem Files of the Righteous Among the Nations*, as cited in: <https://www.yadvashem.org/righteous/resources/rescue-of-jews-in-albania-through-yad-vashem-files.html>.

¹¹³ A. Kotani, *A History of Jews in Albania* (Lulu, 2012).

¹¹⁴ “Jovanović Pero,” <https://collections.yadvashem.org/en/righteous/4015481>, accessed 30 July 2024.

Greece

After the occupation of Greece by the Axis powers in April 1941, western Macedonia, eastern Thrace, western Crete and islands in the northern Aegean came under the German occupation. Western Thrace was incorporated into Bulgaria, while the central part of the country, eastern Crete, islands in the southern Aegean and in the Ionian Sea came under the Italian occupation.¹¹⁵ There were approximately seventy-two thousand Jews living in the entire Greece at the time. As many as fifty-five thousand of them, including a community of about forty-three thousand in Thessaloniki, found themselves in areas governed by the Germans.¹¹⁶

In the first phase of deportation, which lasted from 20 March to 19 August 1943, more than forty thousand Jews from Thessaloniki were deported to Auschwitz, where the vast majority of them were murdered. Also in March 1943, the extermination of Jews from the territories incorporated into Bulgaria began. More than four thousand people were deported, first to concentration camps in that country and then to Treblinka.¹¹⁷ In this situation, there was a massive flight of Jews to the relatively safe Italian zone, whose authorities tried to ignore the anti-Semitic orders of their allies. It was not until September 1943, after this zone had been occupied by the Third Reich, that the Germans between March and July 1944, deported over five thousand Jews from this zone to Auschwitz.¹¹⁸ Overall, more than 80 per cent of Jews lost their lives during the Second World War.

The remainder hid thanks to the help of Greeks, and around a thousand of them fought in partisan units linked to the local resistance movement, the National Liberation Movement. Greek administrative and ecclesiastical authorities protested against the deportation operations.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁵ For more information, see L. Poliakov, *Jews under the Italian Occupation* (New York, 1983).

¹¹⁶ *Die Verfolgung und Ermordung der europäischen Juden durch das nationalsozialistische Deutschland 1933–1945*, vol. 14, pp. 59–78.

¹¹⁷ N. Tzafleris, "Persecution and Rescue of the Jews of Volos During the Holocaust in Greece (1943–1944)," in *Hiding, Sheltering, and Borrowing Identities*, pp. 125–144.

¹¹⁸ *Die Verfolgung und Ermordung der europäischen Juden durch das nationalsozialistische Deutschland 1933–1945*, vol. 14, pp. 65–69.

¹¹⁹ Loukás Karrer (1909–1985), the mayor of the Zakynthos island, and Metropolitan Bishop Chrysostomos (1890–1958) prevented the deportation of 274 Jews. When the occupation authorities demanded a list of them, the bishop wrote only two names on it – his own and that of the mayor. Meanwhile, the Jews took refuge in the mountains, in the villages and in the homes of Christians. In this way, they survived on the island until the end of the occupation, i.e. October 1944. Metropolitan Demetrios Bishop Ioakim

In the literature in the field concerning the extermination of the Greek Jews, there are passages suggesting that helping them was fraught with risk. Indeed, on 3 October 1943, General Jürgen Stroop¹²⁰ issued in Athens a regulation concerning Jews. He imposed a curfew, ordered Jews to return to their permanent places of residence, etc. Under point 4, he decreed that those who disobeyed his orders would be executed, and that non-Jewish residents who hid or helped them in escaping would be sent to concentration camps or face harsher punishments.¹²¹ This regulation was binding also in other regions of Greece.¹²²

Michael Matsas, a Greek Holocaust survivor, in his book, which is not strictly academic, recalled a clergyman who lost his life helping Jews, Father Vasiliov, who helped Greek officers¹²³ get to the Middle East. He was denounced and executed with other civilians and ten officers.¹²⁴ Matsas also described the story of Father Irinaios Typaldos, who performed his ministry in the central Catholic Church in Athens while also working as a secretary at the Spanish embassy. Owing to this, he helped Jews by issuing them Spanish identity cards. In 1944, he was arrested, and was interrogated by the Gestapo, and then sent to prison for several weeks. He was released thanks to the intervention of the Spanish embassy.¹²⁵

Already two years earlier, the Jewish Telegraphic Agency, on 19 October 1942, had reported:

(Alexopoulos, 1873–1959) behaved similarly. In September 1943, he and the rabbi of the local Jewish community, Moshe Pesach (1869–1955), who had cooperated with the Greek resistance, refused to give the Germans a list of names of the thousand-strong community of Volos. With the help of the inhabitants of the town and neighbouring villages, the Metropolitan hid almost 700 people in the Pelion mountains.

¹²⁰ Following the suppressing of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising and the liquidation of that district, Stroop was stationed in Greece from early September 1943, where he was involved in the takeover of areas previously occupied by Italians. He served as the Higher SS and Police Commander (HSSPF) in Athens. Among his tasks was the reorganisation of the police there. Stroop also carried out the deportation of several thousand Greek Jews to the Auschwitz II Birkenau death camp. He then served from November 1943 to March 1945 as the SS and Police Commander in Wiesbaden.

¹²¹ M. Matsas, *The Illusion of Safety: The Story of the Greek Jews During the Second World War* (Phoenix, 1997), p. 99.

¹²² Michael Matsas stated that in Agrinion, where he was living, this regulation was published in the local newspaper on 8 October 1943. Bogdan Musiał, on the other hand, states that on 4 November 1943 in Athens, the Germans were to announce that helping Jews in escape would be punished by death, as cited in B. Musiał, *Kto dopomoże Żydowi*, p. 214 (footnote 299).

¹²³ M. Matsas does not explicitly state that these were Jewish officers, but he nevertheless includes this case in the paragraph on aid given to this ethnic group.

¹²⁴ M. Matsas, *The Illusion of Safety*, p. 174.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*; <https://collections.yadvashem.org/en/righteous/4042989>.

The Greek Information Office reported today that the Nazi occupation authorities in northern Greece had launched a campaign of persecution against Jews. Greek priests were being urged to tell their parishioners that Jews were an 'inferior race' and asked them not to help the victims of the Germans. Most of the clergy refused and called for all possible help. Many priests were arrested and their churches were closed and handed over to the military. One monk was executed for hiding Jews pursued by the Gestapo. A secret fundraising was organised in Athens to help victims of persecution. The Germans found out about this, arrested the leaders and threatened anyone offering such help with punishment.¹²⁶

The same source, on 2 May 1943, reported arrests among the Greek clergy:

As reported in the London press today, six hundred Greek priests were sent by the German occupation authorities to concentration camps for refusing to give anti-Jewish sermons as directed by the Nazis. Not only did the priests refuse to comply with the German order, but they also exhorted their congregations to give every possible assistance to the Jews in Greece. A delegation of the Jewish community in Alexandria, Egypt, visited the Greek Orthodox Patriarch in the city and thanked him for the stand against anti-Jewish measures taken by the Greek churches.

A few months later, on 26 November 1943, the same newspaper wrote:

The fate of Athens' fifteen thousand Jews depends on the outcome of the fierce battle being waged between the Greek population which is hiding Jews, and the German occupation authorities, who have ordered the arrest and deportation of every Jew in Greece, the Greek government-in-exile revealed today. In an eight thousand-word report describing the situation of Jews in Greece, the government gives an account of how the population rescued Jews from under the nose of the Gestapo and has so far successfully hidden them despite intensive searches by

¹²⁶ *Jewish Telegraphic Agency: Daily News Bulletin*, No. 241 of 19 October 1942, p. 3.

the Nazis. The report confirms that at least fifty thousand of Thessaloniki's sixty thousand Jews were deported and that western Thrace and eastern Macedonia, which the Bulgarians occupied, are now completely *judenrein*. The report reveals that a few weeks after the capitulation of Italy, members of a special commission set up by Alfred Rosenberg, the chief Nazi theorist of 'race,' to exterminate European Jewry arrived in Athens and demanded that Chief Rabbi Barzilai give them a list of all the Jews living in the Greek capital. Pleading that he needed at least three days to secure such a list, the chief rabbi took advantage of the delay to destroy all records relating to the Jewish community and then disappeared. The three-day delay also gave the Greek patriots time to take most of the Jews out of the city. Jewish families were dispersed and individual members were given shelter in the homes of non-Jews. Meanwhile, the patriots, assisted by Greek civil and religious officials, and the Greek police, some of whom were secret members of resistance groups, prepared false documents for the Jews. The Rosenberg Commission took immediate countermeasures. It issued a decree ordering the Jews to return to their homes and report to the police in their home districts on pain of the death penalty. They also warned the heads of (non-Jewish) families to report to the police the identity of any non-Jewish family member staying in their homes. Severe penalties were also stipulated for failure to report, in some cases including death. However, the German threats failed. Only three hundred families reported to the police. Greek families adopted hundreds of Jewish children, claiming them as their own, and entire Jewish families found refuge in homes in the countryside. The Greek government report commends Archbishop Chrysostomos and other clergy for helping the Jews and intervening with the Germans on their behalf. It indicates that the Jewish question had become a national issue and even the puppet prime minister was forced to protest against the Germans.¹²⁷

Countries Occupied by the Third Reich in Western Europe

In the summer of 1940, Western European countries found themselves under German occupation. The forms it took were derived from the Third Reich's policy objectives in the area. These included the maintenance of order, the smooth inte-

¹²⁷ *JTA*, 26 November 1943, No. 102, p. 2.

gration of local economies into Berlin's war effort, and cooperation with the local bureaucracy. Jews, integrated and assimilated into the local communities, made up a small proportion of the total population – ranging from 0.75 per cent in Belgium and France to 1.5 per cent in the Netherlands.

The Holocaust process began in these countries in the spring of 1942. Until then, unlike in the occupied Polish territories or Soviet territories occupied since June 1941, the policy of the Third Reich focused on imposing various restrictions on Jews, but they were not explicitly barred from contact with the rest of the population. Consequently, in the area in question, there were milder penalties for helping Jews. The highest sanction was deportation to a concentration camp (which could be fatal), but among the penalties there was also imprisonment, deprivation of a job or position, and a fine. Historians point to several reasons for this. Representing a relatively small percentage of the total population, Jews were not a challenge for the German genocidal measures in relation to the countries of Eastern Europe. After a series of regulations discriminating against and, to some extent, isolating Jews from local communities, Germans immediately set about deporting them to extermination camps located in occupied Polish lands. Another factor, determining the legal solutions regulating the general population's contacts with Jews, was its attitude towards Jews during the first years of the occupation.

France

At the end of 1939, France was home to approximately three hundred and fifty thousand Jews, with half being assimilated local citizens and the other half comprising of refugees and immigrants without French citizenship. After the defeat in June 1940, its northern part was occupied by the Third Reich, while the southern part – with Vichy, to which the government moved from Paris – remained unoccupied until November 1942.

As a result, the situation of Jews depended on which part of France they resided in.¹²⁸ The Germans consequently, by mid-1942, introduced anti-Jewish regulations in both zones, mostly not differing in content and purpose from those known in

¹²⁸ E. Benbassa, *The Jews of France: A History from Antiquity to the Present* (Princeton, NJ, 1999), p. 166.

other occupied countries. The mass extermination of Jews begun in March 1942. Up to July 1944 in extermination camps (mainly in KL Auschwitz) more than seventy thousand French Jews were murdered.¹²⁹

The historian Julian Jackson wrote that the behaviour of the French in the first two years of the occupation was characterised by indifference and aversion towards Jews and that the first occupier's regulations against them did not make a special impression on the general population. Only when the Germans made it compulsory for Jews to wear the Star of David, some French, in protest against the stigmatisation, pinned such stars or signs resembling them on their clothes, for which they were interned in a special camp.¹³⁰ Tal Bruttman added that:

However, whether French or German law was applied, the sanctions stipulated for breaking it fell exclusively on Jews, and all the regulations that appeared in France did not include the question of criminal responsibility for helping Jews. Only in one area do anti-Semitic regulations in France refer to and impose sanctions for helping Jews. This concerns the question of "economic Aryanisation." In November 1941, a few weeks after the introduction of the "Aryanisation" policy, two laws were promulgated one after the other stipulating criminal sanctions against violators of their provisions: from one to five years' imprisonment and a fine of between ten thousand and twenty thousand francs "for any person, even a non-Jew, who, on his own behalf or on behalf of another individual, would take action to violate the provisions of the above law."¹³¹

The amendment of this regulation was linked to the practice of formal and in fact fictitious seizure of property by "Aryan" associates of Jews. The same author concludes:

Apart from the legislation related to "Aryanisation," no anti-Semitic laws were targeted against non-Jews and no laws prohibited, for example, taking them

¹²⁹ R. Hilberg, *Zagłada Żydów europejskich*, pp. 753–820.

¹³⁰ J. Jackson, *France: The Dark Years 1940–1944* (Oxford, 2003).

¹³¹ T. Bruttman, "Polityka antyżydowska, 'ostateczne rozwiązanie' i pomoc udzielana Żydom we Francji Vichy w latach 1940–1945," *ZŻSM* 11 (2015), pp. 139–140.

under one's roof. By way of comparison, it should be reiterated that, from the summer of 1940, the German army informed in local orders that providing a soldier of an enemy army with lodging would be punishable by death. This law was, moreover, was extended to the entire occupied zone by a decree of 10 October 1940. Help given to Jews could be sanctioned under common law, not under specific anti-Semitic provisions. This applied, for example, to the provision of false documents or food supplies (e.g. the sale of goods to people without ration cards).¹³²

The empathy of the French increased in the summer of 1942, after the first brutal mass arrests of Jews in the south of the country.¹³³ Persons involved in helping them were also arrested at this time. Following a wave of deportations, the Catholic Church also became involved in helping members of the Jewish community. On 23 August 1942, the Archbishop of Toulouse, Cardinal Jules-Géraud Saliège, sent a pastoral letter to the parishes under his authority, protesting against the deportation of Jews. Other bishops followed his example. The letters were read out by priests in churches, which was seen by the Vichy government as a call to help Jews. The Church also joined in the operation of hiding Jewish children.¹³⁴ As a result, following the order of the head of the Vichy government Pierre Laval, several priests were arrested in the Lyon archdiocese, including the Jesuit Pierre Chaillet, the right hand of the local archbishop Pierre-Marie Gerlier. Chaillet, together with Abbot Alexandre Glasberg (a convert from Judaism), was active in the *Amitié chrétienne*, an organisation that helped Jews. Among others, its members provided them with housing, false documents, food ration cards and financial assistance. They also hid their children in Catholic families. The abovementioned Jesuit took part as well in rescuing 108 such children from the Venissieux camp near Lyon. In December 1942, he was accused of hiding 80 Jewish children, and the Vichy Interior Ministry ordered him to reveal the addresses of their hiding places. When the friar refused, he was locked up in a psychiatric hospital for two

¹³² *Ibid.*

¹³³ J. Jackson, *France*, p. 375; M. Marrus, R. Paxton, *Vichy France and the Jews* (New York, 1981), pp. 270–279.

¹³⁴ J. Jackson, *France*, p. 376.

months. In February 1943, the Gestapo raided the offices of the Amitié Chrétienne and arrested all its members, including Chaillet, who, while waiting to be interrogated, swallowed the documents incriminating his organisation. After a brutal beating, he was released and placed under house arrest. Undeterred, he continued to campaign in his underground newspaper for the cause of giving aid to Jews. Until the end of the war, he was persecuted by the Gestapo.¹³⁵

Representatives of various underground organisations, including Suzanne Spaak, an activist of the National Movement Against Racism (MNCR) and the communist Red Orchestra, took part in rescuing Jewish children facing deportation to German extermination camps. In early 1943, she was involved in rescuing 163 children who had been placed in Union Générale des Israélites de France (UGIF) centres.¹³⁶ She hid some of them in her own home, providing them with clothing and food coupons and arranging for their relocation to safe places in different parts of the country. Following the arrest of the Belgian Red Orchestra activists in the spring of 1942, and the exposure of the organisation's network in France, the Gestapo detained more than 600 people over the next 18 months, including Suzanne Spaak in Paris. Placed in Fresnes prison in October 1943, she was tortured and then, on 12 August 1944, about a fortnight before the liberation of Paris, murdered.¹³⁷

The inhabitants of the village of Le Chambon sur Lignon, an isolated village located on the hilltop of Vivarais, in the Auvergne department of south-central France, also took part in the relief effort. More than three thousand of them, led by Pastor André Trocmé, his wife Magda and his clerical assistant, Edouard Theis, supported almost five thousand Jews between December 1940 and September 1944. Locals gave them shelter in their own homes, hotels, schools and workplaces, new identity cards were made for them and they were guided across the border into Switzerland. In February 1943, for organising the hiding of Jewish children, the pastor, his assistant and Roger Darcissac were arrested by the French police for a month.¹³⁸

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*

¹³⁶ E. Benbassa, *The Jews of France*, p. 175.

¹³⁷ S. Spaak, as cited in <https://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/exhibitions/righteous-women/spaak.asp>.

¹³⁸ S. Zuccotti, *The Holocaust, the French, and the Jews* (Lincoln, NE, 1999), p. 229; P. Henry, *We Only Know Men: The Rescue of Jews in France During the Holocaust* (Washington, 2014), pp. 6–43.

At the beginning of 1944, probably influenced by changes in the war situation, the Germans began to treat those providing aid to Jews more harshly. Bruttmann stated on this period as follows:

In Grenoble, the Kommando used various methods to discourage such behaviour [i.e. helping Jews]. All those suspected of sheltering or protecting Jews were arrested, which the French police regularly communicated during the Grenoble operation. During the preparations for the roundup on 4 February 1944 in Paris, Heinz Röthke informed the French police that henceforth those 'sheltering Jews or giving false information to prevent their arrest' would be held 'personally accountable.' Neither sheltering Jews nor facilitating their escape probably resulted in punishments harsher than a few days' detention: people of Aryan origin were released after a longer or shorter stay at the Hotel Suisse et Bordeaux. It did happen that such persons were sent to prison or a camp, but this was due to the discovery of their other underground activity, unrelated to helping Jews.¹³⁹

The historian goes on to give the example of Paul Croux, who was arrested by the SS on 12 February 1944 "for hiding a Jew." He was deported to the Compiègne camp, then to the Mauthausen Concentration Camp, where he died on 25 August that year. "Although the reason for his arrest was helping a Jew," wrote Bruttmann, "Croux was nevertheless sent to the camp for another reason – during the arrest of his lodger, the Germans found incriminating documents confirming his membership of the Résistance." In the last weeks of the summer of 1944, those who provided help to members of the Jewish community, and especially those who gave them shelter, were exposed to brutal repression. Bruttmann used the example of Huguette Dubois, who was arrested in Lyon on 15 July 1944 along with her husband Raphaël Rosner, a Jew. Rosner was killed a few hours after his arrest, while his wife was detained and interrogated about "receiving Jews or prisoners of war." After being detained for weeks, Dubois was declared "*verjudet*" (Judaised) and was sent to the Ravensbrück concentration camp on 11 August 1944. Joséphine Chatre and her brother Claudius, on the other hand, were arrested in Lyon on

¹³⁹ T. Bruttmann, "Polityka antyżydowska," p. 196.

28 June 1944 for hiding a Jewish couple. Both were sent to a concentration camp. Bruttman concludes: “In the summer of 1944, the situation in France, although due to the imminent liberation for a short time and in a decidedly milder form, evolved towards what was known from the East. And there was a high price to pay for helping the Jews.”¹⁴⁰

According to Susan Zuccotti’s findings, 75 per cent of over three hundred thousand Jews living in France in 1940, including thirty thousand in Paris, survived the war. Approximately one hundred and forty thousand to one hundred and fifty thousand were in hiding, either on their own or in an organised manner, throughout the country. Between twenty thousand and thirty thousand Jews were saved owing to the help of Jewish organisations, which placed them (mainly children) in non-Jewish homes. Nearly fifty thousand fled to Switzerland or Spain.¹⁴¹

Belgium

In this country, similar to France, the public largely remained indifferent to the anti-Semitic policies of the occupying power,¹⁴² although protests were held in several cities by the non-Jews against the Germans’ moves. The local governments of several cities manifested their solidarity with Jews by slowing down or blocking their registration, which, as it later turned out, served as the basis of deportation operations. In June 1942, a conference of 19 mayors of the Brussels region took place, at which officials refused to promulgate the regulation of 4 June 1942 on the compulsory marking of Jews in their areas. Those opposed to the introduction of this compulsory marking were the Mayor of Brussels, Joseph Van De Meulebroeck, the municipal government of Liège, as well as the Archbishop of Mechelen, the Primate of Belgium Cardinal Joseph-Ernest van Roey.¹⁴³ The first printed protest against the deportations of Jews appeared in September 1942 in underground Catholic newspapers: *La Libre Belgique* and *De Vrijshutter*. The protests and the

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁴¹ S. Zuccotti, *The Holocaust, the French, and the Jews*, p. 237.

¹⁴² D. Michman, “Historical Introduction,” in *The Encyclopedia of the Righteous among the Nations: Belgium*, ed. I. Gutman, D. Michman, S. Bender, vol. D [4], (Yad Vashem, 2005), p. XXIII. Cf. also M. Van Den Wijngaert, “The Belgian Catholics and the Jews During the German occupation 1940–1944,” in *Belgium and the Holocaust: Jews, Belgians, Germans*, ed. D. Michman (Jerusalem, 1998).

¹⁴³ M. Van Den Wijngaert, “The Belgian Catholics,” p. 229.

slowing down of the registration of Jews made it easier for many of them to find refuge before the deportations to the extermination camps began, and the RSHA abandoned its plan to deport Jewish men over 65 and Jewish women over 60 to forced labour camps.¹⁴⁴

Aid activities intensified during the mass deportations of Jews to extermination camps. Hiding them, according to a decree issued by the Germans on 1 June 1942, was punishable by imprisonment and a fine.¹⁴⁵ By the end of the occupation, more than 40 per cent of the Jews were in hiding, and in June 1944, according to a Security Police and SD plenipotentiary, 80 per cent of them had false identity cards.¹⁴⁶ Israeli historian Dan Michman estimated that around twenty-five thousand found refuge with Belgian families.¹⁴⁷ It is difficult to estimate on the basis of the existent literature in the field how many Belgians were repressed due to non-compliance with the regulation of 1 June 1942.

The Netherlands

Compared to other Western European countries, legislation against Jews was introduced most quickly in the Netherlands (by November 1941) and was also most strictly enforced. In the following years, the area where Jews could reside was gradually restricted. Between January 1942 and April 1943, resettlements created a large concentration of Jews in eastern Amsterdam, after which, in April 1943, they were only allowed to live in Rotterdam and The Hague. From early July 1942 to October 1943, Dutch Jews were deported in waves to the extermination camps at Auschwitz and Sobibor. About one hundred and two thousand of them died there.¹⁴⁸

Hilberg noted that the success of the Germans' anti-Jewish policy in the Netherlands was largely due to the integration of Nazi ideology into the occupation regime from the outset. Unlike in Belgium and the occupied part of France, in the

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 231.

¹⁴⁵ B. Musiał, *Kto dopomoże Żydowi*, p. 210.

¹⁴⁶ M. Paldiel, "The Rescue of Jewish Children in Belgium During World War II," in *Belgium and the Holocaust*, ed. D. Michman (Jerusalem, 1998), p. 307.

¹⁴⁷ D. Michman, "Historical Introduction," p. XXVII.

¹⁴⁸ R. Hilberg, *Zagłada Żydów europejskich*, pp. 702–738; J. Presser, *Ashes in the Wind: The Destruction of Dutch Jewry* (Detroit, 1988).

Netherlands the Germans established their civilian administration, namely the SS and party-dominated Reichskommissariat, headed by the Austrian-born lawyer and Nazi Arthur Seyss-Inquart.

Representatives of the local social elite collaborated with German authorities. As Jozeph Michman wrote: “The anti-Jewish policy was an element of the multifaceted policy of collaboration with the occupier, from which the Dutch collaborationist government derived economic profit (among other things).”¹⁴⁹ The same author added that one element in the success of the Nazis’ operations was that, although Jews had been formally full citizens of the Netherlands for over 150 years, their status had never been respected in practice.¹⁵⁰ According to Michman, an equally important factor was the attitude of the victims themselves, who were not fully aware of the Germans’ true intentions and hence cooperated with them in the deportations. Also, the lowland topography of the country, devoid of high hills, made it difficult for the persecuted to hide, and the heavily guarded border made it impossible to escape across it.¹⁵¹

As a result, the percentage of Jewish survivors in this country was lower than in France or Belgium. On the other hand, it was in the Netherlands that the earliest public protests against the discrimination of Jews took place. Following the German order of 5 October 1940, which excluded Jews from the civil service, Leiden University professor Rudolph Pabus publicly opposed these measures, which resulted in his arrest. In February 1941, there was a series of Dutch protests against the activities of members of the local Nazi party in Amsterdam, which included the burning of synagogues. In response, the authorities arrested 400 Jews from that city and from Rotterdam, who were deported to the Buchenwald concentration camp. This, in turn, led to the first mass protest against anti-Jewish operations, which took place on 25 February 1941. On that day, a wave of strikes broke out in North Holland and Utrecht, and more than eighteen thousand workers in the arms industry stopped working. As a consequence, the Germans surrounded the

¹⁴⁹ J. Michman, “Historical Introduction,” in *The Encyclopedia of the Righteous Among the Nations. Rescuers of Jews During the Holocaust*, ed. I. Gutman, S. Bender, vol. 2, *The Netherlands*, ed. J. Michman, B.J. Flim (Yad Vashem, 2004), p. XIX.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. XXI; R. Hilberg, *Zagłada Żydów europejskich*, pp. 702–715.

predominantly Jewish district of Amsterdam, expelled all non-Jewish residents from it, and created a ghetto.¹⁵²

The outcome of these events was that Seyss-Inquart communicated publicly in his speech on 21 March 1941 that helping Jews would be punishable. He reportedly said, “We will attack Jews anywhere, and those who join them will face the same consequences.”¹⁵³ Thus, he threatened the Dutch that if they supported Jews, they would share their fate. In practice, according to Michman, no such cases occurred. Those who were arrested for helping Jews were sent to prisons or concentration camps in Germany. This was confirmed by the SS and Police Commander Hans Rauter in a letter to Heinrich Himmler in September 1942, in which he announced that anyone who assisted in hiding Jews, or even in crossing the border, would be sent to a concentration camp.¹⁵⁴

Support for Jews was the reason for the execution of the Protestant, pacifist, teacher Johan (Joop) Westerweel. In 1940, he and his wife Wilhelmina moved to Rotterdam, where he became the director of one of the Montessori schools. During the occupation, he became involved in helping Jews. From August 1943, together with a group of friends (called the Westerweel group), he helped young refugees from Germany and Austria who wanted to go to Palestine; among other things, he hid fifty pioneers from the Zionist organisation He-Chalutz. Realising that hiding these people was not enough to save them, the group began to look for ways to help them escape from the Netherlands. In December 1943, Joop led a number of youths to France. At the same time, his wife was arrested for trying to free one of the most active Zionist activists from prison. In March 1944, Westerweel and his colleague Bouke Koning were stopped at the Dutch-Belgian border with two Jewish women they were escorting. The teacher was imprisoned in a camp in Vught and executed on 11 August 1944.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵² R. Hilberg, *Zagłada Żydów europejskich*, p. 717, L. Baron, “The Dutchness of Dutch Rescuers: The National Dimension of Altruism,” in P. Oliner, S.P. Oliner, L. Baron, L. Blum, *Embracing the Other: Philosophical, Psychological, and Historical Perspectives on Altruism* (New York, 1992), p. 312. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.18574/nyu/9780814762622.003.0022>.

¹⁵³ J. Michman, “Historical introduction,” p. XVIII.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁵ Joop Westerweel, as cited in https://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/exhibitions/righteous-teachers/westerweel.asp?WT.mc_id=wiki. For more, see H. Schippers, *Westerweel Group: Non-Conformist Resistance Against Nazi Germany: A Joint Rescue Effort of Dutch Idealists and Dutch-German Zion-*

The period of mass deportations of Jews to the death camps was a testing time for conduct of the Dutch. In the summer of 1942, during the operation to organize the transports, the head of the Amsterdam Metropolitan Police wrote to Hans Rauter, noting that the Dutch who observed the police activities showed both sympathy and indignation. On 26 July 1942, in a letter to Seyss-Inquart, the local bishops openly condemned the deportations of Dutch workers and Jews. One of the authors of the letter, the Archbishop of Utrecht Johannes de Jong, who before the war had been regarded as a fervent opponent of Nazism, financed various relief efforts for Jews and urged other bishops to cooperate.¹⁵⁶ In the province of Limburg, among others, some 2,500 to 3,500 Jews were in hiding, thanks to the activity of the local Bishop Lammers. In addition, thanks to the help of the province's inhabitants and a good topographical location (many caves on the Belgian border), it was possible to smuggle about three thousand of them through Belgium and France to Spain and Switzerland. At that time, about twenty-eight thousand more remained in hiding.¹⁵⁷

In the Netherlands, helping Jews was punishable by imprisonment as well as by being sent to a camp. As a rule, convicts did not leave their own country, although there are known cases of them being taken to concentration camps in the Reich. It is worth quoting at this point the findings of Marnix Croes:

The surviving archives of the Security Police do not contain clear data on the number of Dutch people arrested for helping Jews in hiding, but they do provide some clues. A reinterpretation of the known statistics yields the following result: on 9 May 1943, 1,604 Dutchmen were in custody for helping Jews in hiding. This represented 30 per cent of all Dutch people held in "preventive detention" at the time, which is quite a substantial percentage (usually, if people who helped Jews were punished, they received short sentences of preventive detention, referred to as *Schutzhaft*. Only in the most severe cases were they sent to one

ists (Berlin–Boston, 2019); Y. Lindeman, "All or Nothing: The Rescue Mission of Joop Westerweel," in *Making a Difference: Rescue and Assistance During the Holocaust: Essays in Honor of Marion Pritchard*, ed. D. Scrase, W. Mieder, K. Quimby Johnson (Burlington, 2005), pp. 241–265.

¹⁵⁶ J. Michman, "Historical Introduction," pp. XVIII–XIX.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

of the concentration camps in Germany). Several months later, their number had risen to 1997, i.e. 20 per cent of the total number of inmates at that time.¹⁵⁸

This number probably included Casper ten Boom and his two daughters Cornelia (Corrie) and Elisabeth from Haarlem in North Holland – Calvinists with strongly anti-German views. At the end of 1942, the three of them joined the BeJe group, which took its name from the abbreviation Bartelijorisstraat, i.e. the street where the family lived. The members of this organisation found shelter for dozens of Jews, including many children. Corrie was in constant contact with those in hiding and provided them with food ration cards. The operation was financed by wealthier Jews and by ten Boom family themselves, who ran a jewellery shop. On 28 February 1944, the family was denounced. Those in hiding escaped in time, but the father and his daughters, as well as 30 other associates, were detained. Casper ten Boom, who was 84 years old at the time, died after ten days in German prison Oranjestad in Scheveningen, South Holland. His daughters were interned in the same place for the first three months, after which they were taken to the concentration camp in Vught and then to Ravensbrück. In December 1944, Betsie died. Corrie was released two weeks later and returned to Haarlem. The Jews protected by this family remained in hiding until the end of the war.¹⁵⁹

In June 1943, Henriëtte (Hetty) Voûte was arrested. She was an activist of the Utrecht Children's Committee (*Utrechts Kindercomité*), engaged, among others, in protecting Jewish children against the Holocaust. Her main task was to obtain food ration cards for them and to take them to places of hiding. Along with her, the Germans arrested Gisela Wieberdink (Söhnlein), who from the Autumn of 1942 was one of the most important underground activists and liaisons between the aforementioned committee and the Amsterdam Student Group (Amsterdamse Studentengroep, ASG)¹⁶⁰ and was involved mainly in smuggling Jewish children

¹⁵⁸ M. Croes, "Zagłada Żydów w Holandii a odsetek ocalałych," *ZŻSM* 4 (2008), p. 238; J. Michman, "Historical Introduction," p. XXVII.

¹⁵⁹ <https://www.yadvashem.org/righteous/stories/voute-wieberdink-soehnlein.html>.

¹⁶⁰ In July 1942, a group of students from the University of Amsterdam came into contact with the Utrechts Kindercomité (UKC), which was in charge of finding shelter in their city for Jewish children from Amsterdam. Thus, on the initiative of Piet Meerburg and Jur Haak, the Amsterdam Student Group (Amsterdamse Studentengroep, ASG) was founded, whose activities focused, among other things, on

to hideouts in the south of Holland. Both were sent to KL Vught, and then to KL Ravensbrück.¹⁶¹

Persecutions affected also Tineke Wiwbaut (Guilonard). Following in the footsteps of her father (d. in 1939), who refused to do business with the Germans after Kristallnacht, she became active in the resistance movement. When her Jewish classmates had to leave high school in Amsterdam in 1941, she and her classmates arranged hiding places, food ration cards and false identity cards for them. Shortly afterwards, she joined the armed underground under the pseudonym Thea Beerens. After she was compromised, she was arrested on September 17, 1943, for her underground activities and for helping the Jewish Moritz family. She was sent to KL Vught and later to various concentration camps in Germany.¹⁶²

Another story is also worth quoting. Johannes Bogaard, a farmer from the village of Nieuw Vennep, was brought up in a Calvinist family where the contents of the Bible were treated with great respect and the Jews were regarded as the “chosen people.” His religious convictions led him to a decision to help them during the occupation. He not only hid Jews on the family farm, but also went to Amsterdam to bring them safely to his home. In addition, he provided them with false documents, funds and food. He was assisted in this by his close family.

At the end of 1942, the Germans raided his farm and caught 11 Jews in hiding. They deported them to a camp and also arrested Johannes’ father. This was a warning to them to stop helping Jews. Nevertheless, the family continued their activities. On 6 October 1943, the Germans came to the Bogaard farm again in the course of an investigation into the murder of a Danish SS-Man allegedly committed by one of those in hiding. At that time, 34 Jews were caught and deported. The family managed to hide others away – in haystacks, a rain canal and farm buildings. Bogaard’s father, brother and sister were arrested and sent to German concentration camps. After these experiences, Johannes decided to

rescuing the youngest children. The organisation was supported by Dr Fiedeldij Dop, a well-known doctor-pediatrician in the Netherlands at the time, who urged the parents of his Jewish patients to place them under its care. Thanks to this, 70 children were successfully hidden outside the city at the end of August 1942. By the end of the war, the ASG, through the contacts it made, had found shelter for 350 children, while the UKC had rescued around 400.

¹⁶¹ <https://www.yadvashem.org/righteous/stories/voute-wieberdink-soehnlein.html>.

¹⁶² <https://www.yadvashem.org/righteous/stories/voute-wieberdink-soehnlein.html>.

seek a safer refuge for people in his care. In and around his farm – in the homes of family members and neighbours – around 300 people were in hiding between 1941 and 1943. In 1963, he was awarded the title of The Righteous Among the Nations.¹⁶³

It is estimated that in the Netherlands, during the German occupation, twenty-four thousand to twenty-five thousand Jews stayed in hiding with the help of organised and individual efforts. Out of this figure, twelve thousand to seventeen thousand survived, including four thousand children. At least twelve thousand Jews were captured by the occupying forces and their collaborators.¹⁶⁴

Conclusion

World War II saw the segregation of Jews, their exclusion from economic and social life, and ultimately their physical extermination, take diverse forms across countries that were either occupied by or allied with the Third Reich. In an article published in 1960, Tatiana Berenstein and Adam Rutkowski pointed out several factors that influenced this:

The challenge of rescue efforts clearly varied across these countries. It depended largely on the intensity of the occupier's terror against the population in a given country and on the attitude of the population, on the degree to which it was infected with the venom of anti-Semitism. The repressions used by the occupying forces for helping Jews also played a major role. In the occupied countries in the West and in the satellite countries (later, in fact, also occupied), we do not encounter an official warning by the authorities that there was a death penalty for helping Jews. There is also a deafening silence in the documents (concerning France, Belgium, the Netherlands, etc.) about the execution of death sentences on Frenchmen, Belgians, Danes, etc., arrested for hiding persecuted Jews. The situation is different in Poland and in the occupied Soviet territories.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶³ M. Gilbert, *The Righteous: The Unsung Heroes of The Holocaust* (New York, 2003).

¹⁶⁴ B. Moore, *Victims and Survivors: The Nazi Persecution of the Jews in the Netherlands, 1940–1945* (London – New York, 1997), p. 147.

¹⁶⁵ T. Berenstein, A. Rutkowski, "O ratownictwie," p. 16.

The intensification of the aforementioned process depended on the size of the Jewish community in a given country; the nature of the occupation; the course of the installation of the German authorities; and their approach to the local population. The outcome of this policy was the introduction of legislation regulating or penalising contacts between Jews and the rest of the population. As indicated in this study, these laws were introduced in various countries at various times under the German occupation and the severity of punishments was not uniform.

The analysis presented above makes it possible to catalogue the forms of repression used against citizens of occupied countries for helping Jews.¹⁶⁶ These were:

- (1) criminal, civil and administrative sanctions, imposed in the course of the proceedings by the judicial authorities
- (2) deprivation, damage or destruction of property
- (3) physical abuse (beatings, torture, other forms of coercing testimonies), and psychological abuse (e.g. threats against the suspect or his relatives)
- (4) restriction and/or deprivation of liberty (including arrest, imprisonment in varying terms)
- (5) deportation to a labour and/or concentration camp
- (6) loss of life.¹⁶⁷

These sanctions could be applied individually or in combination, in any arrangement. Occasionally, the lighter sanctions were used as a warning and deterrent to those providing further support to Jews.

The severity of the punishments for undertaking aid activities (or being aware of such) and their enforcement was not standardised and depended on the coun-

¹⁶⁶ In this article, we use the definition developed for the research project “Register of facts of repression against Polish citizens for helping the Jews during the Second World War.” According to this definition, repression is defined as the activities of the Third Reich military and civilian authorities, above all the courts and the public prosecutor’s office, the police authorities and the security services with the complicity of the Nazi party and its affiliated and collaborating organisations, against people who, to some extent, violated the rules of interaction with the Jews regulated by the German occupation law. We also refer to some findings presented in: M. Grądzka-Rejak, A. Namysło, “Prawodawstwo niemieckie wobec Polaków i Żydów na terenie Generalnego Gubernatorstwa oraz ziem wcielonych do III Rzeszy. Analiza porównawcza,” in *Stan badań nad pomocą Żydom; eadem*, “Relacje polsko-żydowskie,” pp. 7–63.

¹⁶⁷ *Represje za pomoc Żydom*, p. 72.

try. One important reason for these differences was Nazi ideology and the related policy of treating local communities as more or less related to the Germanic race. Another factor was the degree of involvement of the authorities and societies of the occupied countries in the Holocaust. An important element was the timing and stage of the implementation of the “final solution” in the different territories.

In general, the toughest laws were applied in Eastern Europe. In the General Government, in the Reichskommissariat Ukraine, Reichskommissariat Ostland (Volhynia, Polessia, Navahrudak region, eastern Białystok region, Vilnius region), in Serbia, and in several other regions, the highest level of punishment was introduced and enforced. This was due to several reasons. The eastern part of the continent had the highest number of Jews and was, therefore, the most susceptible to acts of solidarity from other population groups. The Holocaust in this area had many phases and began simultaneously with the German occupation. Moreover, Eastern Europeans knew from their own experience what violence, terror and genocide were, and were often conscious witnesses of at least some stages of the Holocaust.

In Western Europe, the death penalty was not introduced and the most severe sanction for helping Jews was deportation to a concentration camp. In this part of Europe, the process of the Holocaust unfolded through a series of brief successive deportation waves. In the mentality of non-Jewish, local societies, unaffected by terror and repression to a degree comparable to Eastern Europe, extermination often remained beyond people’s perception, including the conjectures of the Jewish victims themselves. Nevertheless, being acquainted with the punishment system for providing various forms of aid to Jews in occupied Europe requires continued in-depth source research. Although contemporary historiography recognises the importance of this issue in the context of particular European countries (and thus not only Polish territories), it remains difficult to find specific, documented examples of the activities discussed in this article, as well as specific data or even estimates.

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SUMMARY

Help given to the Jews in various European countries occupied by the Third Reich has been a subject of interest to historians and researchers in other academic fields for many years now. This particularly concerns the local researchers. An analysis of the studies shows that most of them deal with the attitudes of local non-Jewish societies towards the Holocaust and highlight mainly praiseworthy attitudes and their heroes, whose deeds were sometimes inscribed in the historical context and the reality of the occupation of the specific country. An issue that remains on the periphery of this research is the subject of criminal and civil liability for helping Jews introduced by the Nazi authorities or governments collaborating with the Third Reich. This article aims to put together and present the current state of knowledge on the consequences faced by citizens for providing various types of aid to the Jews in selected countries in Western Europe and the Balkan Peninsula, where the problem was most prominent and thus has been most thoroughly studied by historians. The cases analysed are: Serbia, the Independent State of Croatia, Albania, Greece, France (the occupied zone and the Vichy State), Belgium and the Netherlands. An important part of the article is also taken up by a discussion of the legal grounds for repression for aid in the General Government.

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KEYWORDS

Holocaust • General Government • Third Reich • helping Jews • persecution for helping Jews • occupied Europe • penalties • punishments • death penalty • sentences • Special Courts

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THE PHENOMENON OF AID GIVEN TO JEWS BY POLES
IN THE OCCUPIED POLISH TERRITORIES:
APPROACHES AND RESEARCH MODELS.
A SURVEY OF POSITIONS TAKEN BY POLISH AND
POLISH-JEWISH HISTORIANS

Introduction

The first accounts on help given to Jews by Poles in the context of Polish-Jewish relations under the German occupation began to be published shortly after the end of World War II, mainly in newspapers of that time. Representatives of Polish and Jewish circles spoke out on this issue such as Szymon Datner, Michał Borwicz, Józef Kermisz or Betti Ajzensztajn,¹ taking the lead among the publicists. However, research on a wider scale conducted in Poland as well as in exile did not begin until the 1960s. Thus, two circulations of historical

¹ See D. Libionka, "Antysemityzm i Zagłada na łamach prasy w Polsce w latach 1945–1946," in *Polska 1944/45–1989. Studia i materiały* 2 (1997), pp. 151–190; *idem*, "Polskie piśmiennictwo na temat zorganizowanej i indywidualnej pomocy Żydom (1945–2008)," *Zagłada Żydów. Studia i Materiały* (hereinafter *ZŻSM*) 4 (2008), pp. 18–26; K. Kocik, "Obraz Rady Pomocy Żydom w wybranych polskich tekstach naukowych z lat 1945–1989," in *Kościół, Żydzi, jezuici. Wokół pomocy Żydom w czasie II wojny światowej*, ed. M. Wenklar (Cracow, 2021), pp. 75–79.

communication on the subject existed whose respective themes were developed and emphasised. In the first, originating in communist Poland, strictly aid-related research was initiated and in the second originating in the West, where there was no censorship and state control over publications.²

The aid-related research in the Polish People's Republic developed from its inception in the shadow of the anti-Semitic campaign unleashed by the communist authorities in 1968. The subject of aid gained the support of communist (state) propaganda, which used sometimes false testimonies about the rescue of Jews to create an image of massive and selfless help provided by Poles. The narrative constructed during this period was intended to counter the voices emerging outside the country about the hostile attitude of Poles towards Jews under the German occupation. The story of the "merciful Pole" and the "ungrateful Jew" became one of the main theses of the propaganda of the time.³

It is symptomatic that, from the beginning, Polish works produced in the West were also similarly confrontational. As a matter of fact, we are talking about one study by Kazimierz Iranek-Osmecki, who, as an amateur historian, was concerned with "the matter of bringing out the truth and the matter of good relations between Poles and Jews" in the face of the accusations appearing in the 1960s in the West about the passive attitude and the collaboration of the Polish government with the Third Reich in the extermination of Jews.⁴

Although the output of that period and of the following years should be regarded as very valuable, from today's perspective it cannot be overlooked that the Polish researchers who dealt with the subject of aid until the turn of the 1980s and

² Two fundamental monographs referred to in the article are: *Ten jest z ojczyzny mojej. Polacy z pomocą Żydom 1939–1945*, second extended edition, ed. W. Bartoszewski, Z. Lewinówna (Cracow, 1969) (first edition 1966, third edition 2007), and K. Iranek-Osmecki, *Kto ratuje jedno życie... Polacy i Żydzi 1939–1945* (Warsaw, 2009) (first edition London, 1968).

³ From the numerous literature in the field, see M. Mazur, *Polityczne kampanie prasowe w okresie rządów Władysława Gomułki* (Lublin, 2004), p. 119; P. Osęka, *Syjniści, inspiratorzy, wicherzyciele. Obraz wroga w propagandzie marca 1968* (Warsaw, 1999), pp. 53–83; *Marzec 1968. Trzydzieści lat później. Materiały konferencji zorganizowanej na Uniwersytecie Warszawskim 6 i 7 marca 1998 r.*, vol. 1: *Referaty*, ed. M. Kula, P. Osęka, M. Zaręba (Warsaw, 1998).

⁴ For more on this publication, and other publications dealing with the position of the Polish government-in-exile towards the Holocaust, 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. 129–130.

1990s formed a very narrow circle. As a rule, they were concerned with people who during World War II had themselves given aid to the Jews or had been its recipients, e.g. Władysław Bartoszewski, Teresa Prekerowa,⁵ Szymon Datner or Zofia Lewinówna.⁶ Kazimierz Iranek-Osmecki is also a witness to history, a “Silent-Unseen” [wartime special operations soldier], and a historian.⁷

Holocaust research began to flourish in Poland after 1989. At that time, researchers began to make up for the backlog from the communist period. Aid studies were relegated to the background, as a side topic, but at the same time part of the then dynamically developing Holocaust studies in the country. A postulate was introduced into the scholarly discussion to take into account the negative attitudes of Poles towards Jews, which occurred alongside the positive ones or were intertwined with them.⁸

At the same time, an attempt was made to integrate research into wartime Jewish history, including aid, which was discussed in the context of the Holocaust and Polish-Jewish relations under the German occupation. Unfortunately, the presented state of research was basically limited to a literature overview devoid of in-depth analyses, as well as critical assessments of the political inclinations of historians during the communist period.⁹ Dariusz Libionka’s 2008 work, focusing entirely on

⁵ Both Władysław Bartoszewski and Teresa Prekerowa were awarded the Israeli Righteous Among the Nations title.

⁶ See S. Datner, *Las sprawiedliwych. Karta z dziejów ratowania Żydów w okupowanej Polsce* (Warsaw, 1968); *Polacy – Żydzi 1939–1945*, ed. S. Wroński, M. Zwolakowa (Warsaw, 1971); T. Prekerowa, *Konspiracyjna Rada Pomocy Żydom w Warszawie 1942–1945* (Warsaw, 1982) (second edition Warsaw, 2019); *eadem*, “Who Helped Jews During the Holocaust in Poland?,” *Acta Poloniae Historica* 76 (1997), pp. 153–170.

⁷ In 1943, Iranek-Osmecki was parachuted into occupied Poland, where he in April took up post of a head of Section IV (logistics) of the Home Army Headquarters, and in January 1944 of Section II (information and intelligence). For more, see J. Majka, G. Ostasz, *Pułkownik Kazimierz Iranek-Osmecki. Emisariusz, cichociemny, oficer Komendy Głównej Armii Krajowej* (Rzeszów, 2007).

⁸ Of particular importance was the establishment of the periodical *Zagłada Żydów. Studia i Materiały* (English: *Holocaust: Studies and Materials*) (around which a then small group of scholars gathered), and the Anielewicz Centre for Holocaust Research. As Joshua Zimmerman noted, these scholars were committed to “a reassessment of all outstanding issues in wartime Polish-Jewish relations,” and showing “the negative anti-Jewish element in the Polish underground’s historical record” (J. Zimmerman, *Polskie Państwo Podziemne i Żydzi w czasie II wojny światowej*, Warsaw, 2018, pp. 22–23.) (translator’s note: the original passages in English were taken from J. Zimmerman, *The Polish Underground and the Jews, 1939–1945*, Cambridge, 2015, pp. 7–8.)

⁹ J. Tomaszewski, “Historiografia polska o Zagładzie,” *Biuletyn ŻIH* 2 (2000), pp. 155–170; L. Dobroszycki, “Polska historiografia na temat Zagłady. Przegląd literatury i próba syntezy,” in *Holocaust*

summarising research achievements in the field of aid, stood out positively. The different treatment of the topic is already worth emphasising. The comprehensive study is not so much a survey of the existing literature,¹⁰ as it is a successful attempt to discuss the entire body of research on aid in Poland in the post-war period, the Polish People's Republic and after 1989. The author noted that they were characterised by "manipulation and instrumentalisation," with these processes extending from the end of World War II up to and including his contemporary period (the second half of the first decade of the 21st century). At the same time, he did not deny the existence of professional historians' work unencumbered by such a burden. In addition, Libionka, on the basis of the literature he collected and pointed to, reflected on the number of Jews rescued thanks to Polish aid; the number of Poles involved in the aid; Polish personal losses incurred as a result of helping Jews; the aid provided by the Catholic Church; the "Żegota" Council for Aid to Jews, as well as – in the author's opinion at that time – the negative role of the Institute of National Remembrance in aid-related research.¹¹ The author's conclusions and observations can be summed up in a rather short sentence: the Polish aid delivered to the Jews was extremely modest, whereas historians and researchers have greatly overestimated both the number of Jews saved thanks to Polish aid and the size of Polish personal losses.¹²

The authors of this publication, 16 years after Libionka's study appeared, have a completely different perception of the role of the IPN in aid-related research and

z perspektywy półwiecza. Pięćdziesiąta rocznica powstania w getcie warszawskim. Materiały z konferencji zorganizowanej przez Żydowski Instytut Historyczny w dniach 29–31 marca 1993, ed. D. Grinberg, P. Szapiro (Warsaw, 1994), pp. 177–187; N. Aleksion, "Historiografia na temat Zagłady i stosunków polsko-żydowskich w okresie drugiej wojny światowej," *ZŻSM* 1 (2005), pp. 33–50; J. Leociak, "Dyskurs o pomocy," *ZŻSM* 4 (2008), pp. 9–13; E. Rączy, "Historiografia polska przełomu XX/XXI wobec Zagłady Żydów oraz stosunków polsko-żydowskich. Zarys problematyki," *Białostockie Teki Historyczne* 15 (2017), pp. 249–260.

¹⁰ D. Libionka, „Polskie piśmiennictwo,” pp. 17–83. Numerous publications of a regional nature produced before Libionka's work are not discussed.

¹¹ The historian accused the Institute of National Remembrance, and in particular its scholarly and educational divisions, of shaping a "dictate of a properly understood politics of history," i.e. a simplified vision of relations between the two communities that does not reflect actual relations, and of politicising research on aid, which was supposed to be a response to the "hysteria surrounding Jan Tomasz Gross' books *Neighbours* and *Fear*," depicting dark pages in the attitudes of Poles towards Jews and the Holocaust during World War II. (*ibid.*, pp. 72–76). See also K. Persak, "Co dziś wiemy o niemieckich represjach za pomoc udzielaną Żydom?," *ZŻSM* 16 (2020), pp. 761–791.

¹² D. Libionka, „Polskie piśmiennictwo,” pp. 17–80.

positively assess its activities in this field.¹³ An era has passed since the publication of the article “Polskie piśmiennictwo na temat zorganizowanej i indywidualnej pomocy Żydom (1945–2008)” and IPN’s aid-related research has developed considerably since then. It should be reminded that the institution was established by the Act of 18 December 1998¹⁴ to replace the former Main Commission for the Investigation of Crimes against the Polish Nation (GKBZpNP).¹⁵ Over the years, it became the only research centre to deal with the question of aid in a systematic and long-term means. At first, the activities of the IPN were a continuation of the research started by the GKBZHwP on the human losses of Poles murdered for helping Jews, while in 2006 the Institute became involved in the project “Index of Poles Persecuted for Helping Jews,” which resulted in the preparation of several publications. Research work was also initiated on the several-volume work *Represje za pomoc Żydom*, (Repressions for aid given to Jews) as part of which the cases of deaths for helping the Jewish population in the occupied Polish territories are continuously verified.¹⁶

On the basis of the work carried out under the “Indeks Polaków zamordowanych i represjonowanych za pomoc Żydom” (Index of Poles Persecuted for Helping Jews) project, a Central Research Project named “Dzieje Żydów w Polsce i relacje polsko-żydowskie w latach 1917–1990” (The History of Jews in Poland and Polish-Jewish Relations between 1917 and 1990) was launched by the IPN in 2017.¹⁷ The IPN’s output also includes publications attempting to provide a regional

¹³ Libionka, with all his criticism of the IPN, stipulated: “[...] a full assessment of the activities carried out within the IPN, and above all the research strategies used, will come after the publication of the research results. It is not unlikely that a new quality will emerge.” *Ibid.*, p. 74.

¹⁴ Actually, IPN began operating in 2000.

¹⁵ The GKBZpNP (Main Commission for the Investigation of Crimes against the Polish Nation) was established in place of the Main Commission for the Investigation of Hitlerite Crimes in Poland (GKBZHwP).

¹⁶ See M. Szytma, *Sprawiedliwi i ich świat. Markowa w fotografii Józefa Ulmy* (Cracow, 2007); *Kto w takich czasach Żydów przechowuje? Polacy niosący pomoc ludności żydowskiej w okresie okupacji niemieckiej*, ed. A. Namysło (Warsaw, 2009); K. Madaj, M. Żuławnik, *Proboszcz getta* (Warsaw, 2010); *Represje za pomoc Żydom na okupowanych ziemiach polskich w czasie II wojny światowej*, vol. 1, ed. M. Grądzka-Rejak, A. Namysło (Warsaw, 2019) (English version: *Persecution for Providing Help to Jews in Occupied Polish Territories During World War II*, vol. 1, ed. M. Grądzka-Rejak, A. Namysło, Warsaw, 2022).

¹⁷ It is the current name of the project. An earlier one was “Polish-Jewish Relations between 1918 and 1968.” The output of the IPN in the field of the Holocaust research and Polish-Jewish relations can be found in a special catalogue. See https://ipn.gov.pl/pl/publikacje/katalog-publicacji/43598_Zaglada-Zydow-i-stosunki-polsko-zydowskie-podczas-II-wojny-swiatowej-katalog-pub.html, accessed 4 March 2024.

perspective on aid-related topics, covering the whole range of aid-related issues in a selected field.¹⁸ In this respect, studies on the Rzeszów region¹⁹ and the Silesian Voivodship²⁰ have been prepared. More recently, historians – IPN employees have also joined the rapidly growing (especially after 2021) current of research on the aid activities of Polish diplomacy.²¹ Many submissions from the aid-related field are also published in the academic journal *Polish-Jewish Studies*, which has been published under the IPN aegis since 2020.²²

Awareness of the fact that more than 80 years have passed since the end of World War II, and more than 50 since the appearance of the first scholarly works on the subject of helping Jews, underpinned the IPN's publishing initiative to bring together all the existing knowledge on the subject. This was a collective study entitled “Stan badań nad pomocą Żydom na ziemiach polskich pod okupacją niemiecką” (The State of Research on Helping Jews on Polish territories under German occupation), in which 23 authors participated. This publication clearly indicates that aid to Jews in the occupied Polish territory was widespread, but it was not a mass movement. It involved at most several hundred thousand people who provided support to the Jews.²³ Members of various groups and social strata, with the rural population at the forefront, were involved in such activities. The Occupation conditions in Poland, i.e. the German daily terror and criminal

¹⁸ M. Kalisz, E. Rączy, *Dzieje społeczności żydowskiej powiatu gorlickiego podczas okupacji niemieckiej 1939–1945* (Rzeszów, 2015); E. Rączy, I. Witowicz, *Polacy ratujący Żydów na Rzeszowszczyźnie w latach 1939–1945 / Poles Rescuing Jews in the Rzeszów Region in the Years 1939–1945* (Rzeszów, 2011).

¹⁹ E. Rączy, *Pomoc Polaków dla ludności żydowskiej na Rzeszowszczyźnie 1939–1945* (Rzeszów, 2008).

²⁰ A. Namysł, *Po tej stronie był również Człowiek. Mieszkańcy przedwojennego województwa śląskiego z pomocą Żydom w okresie II wojny światowej* (Katowice–Warszawa, 2021).

²¹ See A. Gontarek, “Polskie przedstawicielstwo konsularno-dyplomatyczne w Hawanie a sprawa uchodźców żydowskich na Kubie podczas II wojny światowej,” *Polish-Jewish Studies* (hereinafter *PJS*) 1 (2020), pp. 41–76; *eadem*, “Działalność Poselstwa Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej w Hiszpanii na rzecz pomocy uchodźcom żydowskim w czasie II wojny światowej (w świetle akt Ministerstwa Spraw Zagranicznych przechowywanych w Archiwum Instytutu Hoovera. Zarys problemu,” *Almanach Historyczny* 23 (2021), pp. 235–266; *eadem*, “Władysław Günther-Schwarzburg jako poseł Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej w Atenach i jego działalność na rzecz polskich i żydowskich uchodźców w Grecji w latach 1939–1941,” *PJS* 3 (2022), pp. 322–377.

²² See the IPN periodicals webpage: <https://czasopisma.ipn.gov.pl/index.php/pjs>.

²³ T. Domański, A. Gontarek, “Wstęp,” in *Stan badań nad pomocą*, p. 26; *eidem*, “Co wiemy o pomocy udzielanej Żydom przez Polaków w czasie II wojny światowej,” in *Nie tylko o Ulmach. O pomocy udzielanej Żydom na ziemiach polskich podczas okupacji niemieckiej w latach 1939–1945*, ed. *eidem* (Warsaw, 2023), pp. 56–57.

anti-aid laws on the one hand,²⁴ and the extensive system of economic plunder of the occupied Polish lands, resulting in the rapid impoverishment of the entire population on the other,²⁵ exerted an overriding, though not the only²⁶ impact on the possibilities of giving aid.

An important contribution of the *Stan badań nad pomocą Żydom na ziemiach polskich pod okupacją niemiecką – przegląd piśmiennictwa*, whose authors conducted an extensive analysis of the existing literature on the subject, was above all to expose the glaring discrepancy between the belief, which appears in some research circles, that the aid-related topic is in research terms completed, and the actual state of affairs. The publication has shown how inaccurate this thesis is – which has never been confirmed by any scholarly research²⁷ – as both the state of knowledge

²⁴ One of the most important scholars analysing the anti-aid law and the German mechanisms implicating Poles in the Holocaust is Bogdan Musiał. See B. Musiał, *Kto dopomoże Żydowi...* (Poznań, 2019).

²⁵ The marginalisation and omission of the actual circumstances of the Occupation (the historical context) – apart from the expertise shortcomings demonstrated by the sometimes unreliable analysis of archival materials – was the subject of an academic polemic between Tomasz Domański and the editors and authors of the book *Dalej jest noc. Losy Żydów w wybranych powiatach okupowanej Polski* (Night without End. The Fate of Jews in Selected Counties of Occupied Poland), vol. 1–2, ed. B. Engelking, J. Grabowski (Warsaw, 2018). T. Domański (following Marcin Urynowicz) believes that omitting the historical context leads to the establishment of an untrue picture of Polish-Jewish relations under the German occupation and the picture presented in this work needs to be corrected. See M. Urynowicz, “Zorganizowana i indywidualna pomoc Polaków dla ludności żydowskiej eksterminowanej przez okupanta niemieckiego w okresie drugiej wojny światowej,” in *Polacy i Żydzi pod okupacją niemiecką 1939–1945. Studia i materiały*, ed. A. Zbikowski (Warsaw, 2006), p. 263; T. Domański, *Korekta obrazu? Refleksje źródłoznawcze wokół książki „Dalej jest noc. Losy Żydów w wybranych powiatach okupowanej Polski”* (Correcting the Picture? Some Reflections on the Use of Sources in the Book “Night without End. The Fate of Jews in Selected Counties of Occupied Poland”), t. 1–2, red. Barbara Engelking, Jan Grabowski, Warszawa 2018 (Warsaw, 2019); *idem*, *Korekty ciąg dalszy. Odpowiedź redaktorom i współautorom książki „Dalej jest noc. Losy Żydów w wybranych powiatach okupowanej Polski,”* red. B. Engelking, J. Grabowski, Warszawa 2018 na ich polemikę z moją recenzją „Korekta obrazu? Refleksje źródłoznawcze wokół książki »Dalej jest noc. Losy Żydów w wybranych powiatach okupowanej Polski«, t. 1–2, red. Barbara Engelking, Jan Grabowski, Warszawa 2018, Warszawa 2019 (Correcting the Picture, Continued. The Reply to the Editors and Co-Authors of the Book *Night without End* [...]) (Warsaw, 2020). See also B. Musiał, *Kto dopomoże Żydowi*, pp. 12–15. The replies of the authors of the individual chapters of *Dalej jest noc* (Night without End) to *Korekta obrazu* (Correcting the Picture) have been published on the webpage of the Polish Center for Holocaust Research. See <https://www.holocaustresearch.pl/index.php?show=555>, accessed 4 March 2024.

²⁶ What is lacking so far is a problem-based study that would present the issue of the main and circumstantial factors in a structured way, taking into account its hierarchy, which determined aid activities.

²⁷ It is noteworthy that the cutting edge of critical analyses of the IPN's activity was most often directed against the politics of history on which this institution had an influence. Since one of pillars of these politics turned out to be the question of aid, criticism and attacks on the discussion in this field led to the creation of the impression that there was an overabundance of information about Poles rescuing

and the number of studies on aid have proved to be far from satisfactory. It could even be said that the field of research on aid has many blank spaces.

Furthermore, almost all authors agreed that scholarly output is dominated by works on overly individualised and at the same time schematic aid stories. In most cases, they are presented superficially and have many gaps, sometimes containing only mentions of the act of helping. This has resulted in a picture of the aid phenomenon that we can describe as de-fragmented or even extremely fragmented, both on a national scale and within specific regions, such as particular cities. Some exceptions to this are the first analytical works cited above and a few others, including source studies.²⁸ An extensive, scholarly approach is also characteristic of some publications on Polish families providing help and suffering tragic consequences as a result such as the Ulm family²⁹ – or other persons engaged in rescuing Jews.³⁰

Although, from today's perspective, of course, every single case of aid that has come to light and been described is valuable (it is also necessary to continually search for more rescue accounts), the current state of research into the under-

Jews in the media and public space. In contrast, in the strictly research sphere the situation was and still is exactly the opposite. For an example of a critique on the politics of history in Poland, see K. Zieliński, "Kilka uwag o polityce historycznej w Polsce," *Wschód Europy. Studia humanistyczno-społeczne* 8 (2022), pp. 163–187.

²⁸ T. Prekerowa, *Konspiracyjna Rada Pomocy Żydom*, first edition; M. Arczyński, W. Balcerak, *Kryptonim „Żegota”. Z dziejów pomocy Żydom w Polsce 1939–1945* (Warsaw, 1983); M. Urynowicz, "Zorganizowana i indywidualna pomoc," pp. 217–240; M. Cobel-Tokarska, *Bezludna wyspa, nora, grób. Wojenne kryjówki Żydów w okupowanej Polsce* (Warszawa, 2012); *Rada Pomocy Żydom „Żegota” przy Pełnomocniku Rządu RP na Kraj i Referat Żydowski „Żegota” Departamentu Spraw Wewnętrznych Delegatury Rządu RP na Kraj. Dokumenty z zasobu Archiwum Akt Nowych 1942–1944*, selected and edited by M. Olczak (Warsaw, [2015]); *Relacje o pomocy udzielanej Żydom przez Polaków w latach 1939–1945*, vol. 1: *Dystrykt warszawski Generalnego Gubernatorstwa*, selected and edited by S. Piątkowski (Lublin–Warsaw, 2018); vol. 2: *Dystrykt krakowski Generalnego Gubernatorstwa*, selected and edited by S. Piątkowski (Lublin–Warsaw, 2020); vol. 3: *Dystrykt lubelski Generalnego Gubernatorstwa*, selected and edited by S. Piątkowski (Lublin–Warsaw, 2020); vol. 4: *Dystrykt radomski Generalnego Gubernatorstwa*, selected and edited by S. Piątkowski (Warsaw, 2020); vol. 5: *Dystrykt Galicja Generalnego Gubernatorstwa i Wołyń*, selected and edited by S. Piątkowski (Lublin–Warsaw, 2021); vol. 6: *Białostocka, Nowogródzka, Polesie, Wileńszczyzna*, selected and edited by S. Piątkowski (Lublin–Warsaw, 2022); vol. 7: *Trzecia Rzesza i ziemie polskie do niej wcielone* (Lublin–Warsaw, 2023).

²⁹ The widely described history of the Ulma family, about whom a great many works have been written (we refrain from listing them here – most of them have been authored by Mateusz Szyptma), is an example not only of an excellent micro-study, but also a source of knowledge about the mechanisms of the Occupation and its governance. See J.A. Młynarczyk, S. Piątkowski, *Cena poświęcenia. Zbrodnie na Polakach za pomoc udzielaną Żydom w okolicach Ciepłowa* (Cracow, 2007).

³⁰ One could invoke Irena Sendler, whose name appears in countless publications, or Jan Karski.

standing of the phenomenon of aid leads to the reflection that the main task for the coming time should be to introduce a more problem-based approach to the scholarly discourse on aid than has been the case up to now. It also would appear necessary to present a research overview of the history of aid under the German occupation (further omissions in this matter will leave many questions about the nature of aid and its mechanisms unanswered).³¹ Before this happens, however, it is necessary – in our view – to diagnose in which paradigm aid research has been conducted so far. We will focus on three selected issues: the treatment of aid-related topics in research on occupied Polish lands, i.e. the place it occupies among other issues specific to this period, the adopted research model(s) and the meaning of the term “aid” itself.

Polish-Jewish Relations or the Periphery of the Holocaust – the Treatment of Aid-Related Topics in Research on Occupied Polish Territories

It seems that the question of the place of aid-related topics in research on occupied Polish lands, i.e. the ways of comprehension of this issue, has not yet been discussed in the scholarly literature. Probably one may argue there are no disagreements among historians as to the assignment of aid-related research to social history with a high interdisciplinary potential, but the precise outlining of which narrower research context among the broad issues of World War II they fit into may give rise to disputes. Until now, this problem has been resolved in two ways – one group of scholars considered the phenomenon of aid, as one of the reactions to the Holocaust, to be an element of the complex Polish-Jewish relations under the German occupation, while another treated it exclusively as part of Holocaust research, and placed it on its peripheries.

The question of the place of the issue of aid in research on the occupied Polish lands is of great significance because, depending on its precise location, we will

³¹ For important clues for the presentation of the collective portrait of The Righteous among the Nations, see Teresa Prekerowa’s article “Who helped Jews,” pp. 153–170. On the basis of materials from the Yad Vashem Institute and the former GKBZHWP, this author tried to find out, according to the English title, “who helped Jews?,” She took into account several categories: age, gender, pre-war contacts, and ultimately came to a belief that people who helped Jews were “ordinary people,” with no special distinguishing features.

adopt a different narrative approach, i.e. we will either discuss aid taking into account the intertwining of many conditions and factors, characteristic for the occupied Polish lands (a broad, multidimensional, holistic approach) and concerning both Poles and Jews, or we will limit ourselves to the experience of the Holocaust (a narrowed/particular, one-dimensional approach). How then, have historians presented the above issue? It is now apt to refer to their research.

A survey of Polish and Polish-Jewish research positions should begin with the Jewish historian Emanuel Ringelblum,³² the author of *Stosunki polsko-żydowskie w czasie drugiej wojny światowej* (Polish-Jewish Relations During World War II)³³ that he wrote when he was hiding in the “Kryśia” shelter in Warsaw on Grójecka Street during World War II. Although his work was not published in Polish until 1988 (why only then?), there is no doubt that it was known to most post-war historians researching aid matters and was treated by them as an important, and sometimes crucial, point of reference for their research.³⁴ In this sketch we treat this study primarily as a document of the epoch – the time of the Holocaust – appreciating the importance of all the observations.

Ringelblum had no doubt that helping the Jews should be considered as a part of Polish-Jewish relations under the German occupation, as the title and structure of his work point out. The problem, however, consists in the fact that he focused on exposing the fate of only one of the parties, leaving the other – the Polish one – on the margins of the analysis, so to speak, and in the distant background. This type

³² It is clear that the question of aid provided by Poles to Jews under the German occupation has been dealt with by many Polish and Polish-Jewish historians or, more broadly, researchers (academics). Here one can name, for example, Lucjan Dobroszycki, Israel Gutman, Stefan Korboński, Jan Marek Chodakiewicz and many others. However, in our opinion, their works, although otherwise valuable, do not address the essence of the problem analysed, i.e. they do not come forward with an original research concept that would handle the question of helping Jews. The indicated authors duplicate the conclusions concerning individual or organised aid proposed by the researchers mentioned in the main body of the article. See M.J. Chodakiewicz, *Żydzi i Polacy 1918–1995. Współistnienie – Zagłada – komunizm* (Warsaw, 2000), pp. 145–299; *idem*, “Refleksje: nowa praca, stare podejście,” in *Złote serca czy złote żniwa? Studia nad wojennymi losami Polaków i Żydów*, ed. *idem*, W. Muszyński (Warsaw, 2011), pp. 51–52; S. Korboński, *Polskie Państwo Podziemne. Przewodnik po podziemiu z lat 1939–1945* (Bydgoszcz, [1990]), pp. 121–144.

³³ E. Ringelblum, *Stosunki polsko-żydowskie w czasie drugiej wojny światowej. Uwagi i spostrzeżenia*, edited and with an introduction by A. Eisenbach (Warsaw, 1988).

³⁴ Of the lesser-known authors referring to Ringelblum’s conclusions on Polish aid (spontaneous, unorganised, paid aid), mention can be made of Józef Orlicki. See J. Orlicki, *Szkice z dziejów stosunków polsko-żydowskich 1918–1949* (Szczecin, 1983), pp. 110–112.

of approach can be seen most clearly in the chapters “Po aryjskiej stronie” (On the Aryan Side) or “Dzieci żydowskie po aryjskiej stronie” (Jewish Children on the Aryan Side) that hardly discuss all the problems faced by those who decided to keep Jews at home. With the taking in of a Jew, their world changed in a significant way – henceforth they were in constant danger, as sanctioned under the German law.³⁵ However, this is not simply a diagnosis of the approach Ringelblum chose, nor a discussion of whether it is correct or not, but of the interpretative consequences of this researcher’s willingness to describe such a broad issue as Polish-Jewish relations while refraining from an equivalent analysis of the Occupation conditions affecting Poles as well.

How, then, did Ringelblum view the realities of the Occupation in the context of Polish society? This problem is not discussed at sufficient length in his work but mentioned sparingly. In general terms, we learn that the country was “ruled by a mad terror,” that there were “detentions and manhunts [...] at every step.”³⁶ Ringelblum devoted a separate chapter to the sanctions for helping Jews, presenting his view on the matter very inconsistently.³⁷ First, he sometimes doubted the actual application of the death penalty in Warsaw, something that historians commented on right after the war.³⁸ He seems to have generally downplayed the threat posed by the anti-aid laws. He idealistically asserted that if a Jewish person, upon being discovered by the Germans, assured them that the tenants were unaware of her or his Jewish identity, it could shield Poles from reprisals for hiding Jews. Furthermore, Ringelblum minimized the issue of collective responsibility for aiding those in hiding, as dictated by German orders, to mere rumours “being

³⁵ E. Ringelblum, *Stosunki polsko-żydowskie w czasie drugiej wojny światowej. Pisma z bunkra*, ed. T. Epstein, (Warsaw, 2020), pp. 102–131.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 189.

³⁷ The inconsistencies in his manuscript are most likely due to the author’s own tragic situation and the general circumstances (the Holocaust) in which the researcher found himself. For more on the circumstances surrounding the creation of the Ringelblum study, see *ibid.*, pp. 23–31.

³⁸ Ringelblum noted: “I have not been able to establish whether there have been incidents of Poles being executed in Warsaw for hiding Jews.” However, in the conclusion of the chapter in question, he contradicted himself: “[on the outskirts of Warsaw] from time to time Poles are the victims of such executions. It is enough to denounce someone for hiding Jews, and they face severe repressions” (*ibid.*, pp. 143, 147). Artur Eisenbach and Tadeusz Epsztejn mentioned the murders of Poles in Warsaw in their editions of Ringelblum’s book. The former mentioned 17 such victims in Warsaw (*ibid.*, p. 143; E. Ringelblum, *Stosunki polsko-żydowskie w czasie drugiej wojny światowej. Pisma*, p. 115).

spread by it is not known who.” In his opinion, those rumours were spread by the Gestapo.³⁹ In another passage, he wrote that during the liquidation of the Warsaw Ghetto in 1942, the reason for the passive attitude of Poles towards the Holocaust “was only one: fear of the German, fear of punishment for hiding Jews.”⁴⁰ In the context of the rescue of Jewish children on the other hand, he explicitly stated that “the population’s fear of an anti-Semitic bashing was greater than its fear of the Germans, and it determined the poor results of the children’s rescue operation.”⁴¹

He interpreted the issue of German punishments for aid outside of big towns differently, noting the Germans’ use of two “methods” there – reward and punishment. The death penalty, in his view, was used there every time the liquidation of the provincial ghettos began, and “the time span of the hiding of the Jew depended on two factors: the German terror and the atmosphere of the environment,” the latter factor determining the chances of survival of the Jewish population.⁴²

The conflicting positions on the enforcement of the death penalty indicate that Ringelblum did not recognise the problem of German anti-aid laws accurately enough.⁴³ He wrote in passing about German orders appearing on the Aryan side that announced hard prison terms or the death penalty for “knowingly hiding Jews.”⁴⁴ He therefore failed to see the process of tightening the anti-aid laws, for posters and placards about the death penalty for helping Jews were not, as Ringelblum’s testimony might suggest, an occasional feature of the landscape accompanying the so-called liquidation operations of individual ghettos, from Warsaw to

³⁹ Ringelblum raised the issue in the context of the collective responsibility that would affect specifically two neighbouring buildings, standing next to the house where the Jew(s) were kept, and the inhabitants of that house (E. Ringelblum, *Stosunki polsko-żydowskie w czasie drugiej wojny światowej*. Pisma, pp. 143–144).

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 99.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 142.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 130.

⁴³ Let us mention the order of the plenipotentiary of the district governor for the city of Warsaw, Ludwig Leist, of 14 January 1941. In it, for the first time during the German occupation, the authorities threatened with punishment those Poles who helped Jews or who knew of the stay of Jews outside the Jewish quarter and failed to report this. The sign of equality was made here – both attitudes were considered a criminal act. The fine was to be up to 1,000 zlotys, and in the case of denial or lack of possibility of payment – the punishment was up to 3 months in jail. The exact wording is provided in B. Musiał, *Kto dopomoże Żydowi*, p. 62. An even stricter order was introduced in November 1942. The denunciation order was linked to the sanction of “police security measures” for failure to comply with it, which in the German occupation practice meant deportation to a concentration camp or the death penalty (*ibid.*, pp. 127–131).

⁴⁴ E. Ringelblum, *Stosunki polsko-żydowskie w czasie drugiej wojny światowej*. Uwagi, p. 115.

small provincial Jewish centres. Last but not least, the above-mentioned founder of Oneg Shabbat, an otherwise astute observer of Polish and Jewish societies under the German occupation – did not point to Hans Frank’s order of 15 October 1941, which is a key document for today’s research on aid. The order introduced the death penalty for providing shelter to Jews who left a designated district. Perhaps this is why Ringelblum wrote mildly that “the punishments were more severe” for Jews than for Poles hiding the former. However, from a legal point of view, the punishments were not harsher – both Jews and Poles faced the death penalty. However, in the case of Jews the death penalty was carried out with total determination; it was somewhat different in regard to the Poles hiding Jews, who were not in every case executed for the help given. Ringelblum therefore failed to see the process of tightening the anti-aid laws, for posters and placards about the death penalty for helping Jews were not, as his testimony might suggest, an occasional feature of the landscape accompanying the so-called liquidation operations of individual ghettos, from Warsaw to small provincial Jewish centres.

Given the contradictions, ambiguities and general inconsistencies that surface in Ringelblum’s work on the circumstances and conditions that shaped Polish-Jewish relations under the German occupation, it is necessary to refer to the conclusion of his study, where he clearly indicated two factors significantly limiting Polish aid: “Polish fascism, embodied in exuberant, animal anti-Semitism, [which] created unfavourable conditions for the operation of saving Jews on a mass scale,” and also “German terror, mass detentions and manhunts, as well as harsh punishments for hiding Jews.”⁴⁵

The first attempts to reflect on Polish-Jewish relations after the war were made as early as 1946. They referred to the actual, rather than the declared approach proposed by Ringelblum, i.e. it was primarily a description of Polish attitudes

⁴⁵ Elsewhere in the conclusion, Ringelblum presented the matter somewhat differently: “[...] Polish fascism, allied with anti-Semitism, has captured most of Polish society. It is this that we accuse of the fact that Poland will not take the place in rescuing Jews that Western European countries will.” (E. Ringelblum, *Stosunki polsko-żydowskie w czasie drugiej wojny światowej. Pisma*, pp. 212–213). Tadeusz Epsztein referred to the factor of anti-Semitism, raising what appears to be the fundamental question of its real impact on the success of the liquidation of Polish Jews: “It is hard not to agree with the author that anti-Semitic sentiments in the Polish lands had an impact on the number of Holocaust survivors. However, it is impossible to assess unequivocally the extent to which this changed the final balance of the tragedy. (*ibid.*, p. 27).

towards Jews in the face of the Holocaust, rather than an attempt to take into account the testimonies of the two sides. We are mentioning here the works of Betti Ajzensztajn⁴⁶ and Józef Kermisz,⁴⁷ which – even though those were published in communist Poland – do not contain a propaganda message yet. Both dealt with the history of Jewish resistance during the Holocaust, and both wanted to assess the attitudes and behaviour of Poles towards the underground struggle of Jews, including the help they were shown. The first author, who dealt with the underground movement in the ghettos and camps, focused in one of the book's subsections on the attitude of the "local population" – she meant the people, i.e. the "average" representatives of Polish society – towards Jews. As she wrote, the "progressive" Polish intelligentsia, involved in the activities of the Council to Aid Jews "Żegota," and "a certain part of the population" led the way in aid activities. The rest of the population was reluctant and hostile to Jews. Betti Ajzensztajn also emphasised the "positive contribution of the clergy" – "many Jewish children were kept in the monasteries."⁴⁸ Compared to Ringelblum's opinion, her assessment was more favourable.⁴⁹

Equally important, in addition to the diagnosis made, was the author's explanation of the reasons for this state of affairs. She explained laconically that the German occupier had contributed to it by destroying the Polish intelligentsia. This opened the way for "anti-Semitism rooted for centuries," i.e. it weakened the promotion of the aid action, led by none other than the intelligentsia, i.e. a group which had a significant impact on the rest of the population.⁵⁰ In this interpretation therefore, the cause of the mass resentment towards Jews was the elimination of the most prominent members of Polish society "in order to deprive the nation of its leadership." The author indicates a causal mechanism for the formation of Polish attitudes – first, the Germans created certain conditions, which were then compounded by issues of ethnic/racial resentment towards Jews by a section of Polish society. The generator and a kind of trigger of many negative attitudes were thus the Germans themselves

⁴⁶ *Ruch podziemny w gettach i obozach*, ed. B. Ajzensztajn (Łódź, 1946).

⁴⁷ J. Kermisz, *Powstanie w getcie warszawskim (19.IV. – 16.V.1943)* (Łódź, 1946).

⁴⁸ *Ruch podziemny w gettach*, p. 17.

⁴⁹ See E. Ringelblum, *Stosunki polsko-żydowskie w czasie drugiej wojny światowej. Pisma*, p. 142.

⁵⁰ *Ruch podziemny w gettach*, p. 17.

and their policies. In Ringelblum's work, despite the author's inconsistencies regarding aid, two factors are identified as shaping the Polish potential for providing assistance: anti-Semitism, and fear of the Germans. The former is highlighted as having a decisive impact, not so much on the number of Jewish victims, but on the lack of the possibility for Jews to successfully escape the Holocaust.

In his writings on the 1943 Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, Józef Kermisz uniquely compiled the first comprehensive account of how Varsovians reacted to the Jewish armed resistance. What prevailed – in his opinion – was indifference and passivity. However, the author stated clearly that both the underground homeland authorities (on 19 April 1943) and the Polish government-in-exile (on 5 May 1943) tried to persuade the indifferent masses of the population to act in terms of aid. This did not succeed on a wider scale, although the author noted that “many” Poles provided assistance.⁵¹ So again, as in Betti Ajzensztajn's case, the position of the common people was confronted with that of the elites – to the advantage of the latter.

It is a telling fact that this researcher paid a lot of attention to German propaganda during the 1943 Uprising, the aim of which was to create a conviction among the Polish population not only of the “malignancy of Jewish elements,” but also of the “terrible danger” that the Jews and their alleged “demonic strengths” have supposedly posed. Enumerating these German activities is here of crucial importance, for discussion on this matter addresses the issue of comprehension of the topic, and represents one of the earliest attempts to outline the Occupation context for Polish-Jewish relations during the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. It then highlights the mechanism by which the German propaganda influenced Poles, entangling them in the extermination process, and weakening their inclination to help.

This propaganda was what Kermisz called “shaping of thought.” He noted that it was used from the very first moments of the Uprising – for example, onlookers were allowed to stand against the wall right next to the machine gun positions, giving the impression that the population supported the crackdown on the fighting Jews in the ghetto. Most significant in the propaganda and disinformation efforts, however, was the issue of the Katyń Forest massacre. Kermisz recalled the large megaphones standing in many squares and at intersections, which gave new

⁵¹ J. Kermisz, *Powstanie w getcie warszawskim*, p. 55.

details of the Katyń crime four times a day, insinuating that the perpetrators of Katyń were Jews. In addition, the Germans displayed photographs of the victims of the “Jewish-Bolshevik crimes” in the shop windows of shops in the Krakowskie Przedmieście and Marszałkowska Streets, in Aleje Jerozolimskie and in Nowy Świat. Underneath those photographs Germans posted unambiguous inscriptions: “This is how Jews murder.” Poster campaigns were undertaken, and red posters depicting the “monstrosity of the Jewish whip of humanity” were pasted on walls and fences.⁵² The Germans also spread rumours designed to arouse hostility towards Jews. Weapons used by insurgents were supposed to have been obtained from the Soviets, which was made plausible by the Soviet air raid on Warsaw on the night of 12–13 May 1943. Jews were also supposed to guide planes so that they could bomb key targets. In addition, fugitives from the ghetto allegedly were to murder Poles. Disinformation extended to territories incorporated into the Third Reich – articles appeared in the Poznań and Pomeranian press stating that Poles, outraged by the Katyń Forest Massacre, had “rushed into the Warsaw Ghetto.”⁵³

The above analysis shows that all three works (we are not comparing the content here, but the way of comprehension of the topic) represent two different research approaches to relational matter. It is paradoxical that Ringelblum’s study, which was intended to present the relations of the two peoples – Poles and Jews – became a description of the attitudes of the former towards the latter, without sufficient concern for presenting the Occupation conditions to which the Polish population was subjected. Meanwhile, the other works on the Holocaust (not immediately concerning the testimonies) cited here, published just after the war by Jewish historians, tried to explain the role of the German occupier in shaping the mutual relations of Poles and Jews much more accurately, taking into account cause and effect relationships.

Full-scale research on aid did not begin in post-war Poland, as already mentioned, until the 1960s, when the subject was taken up by successive Jewish researchers – Tatiana Berenstein, Adam Rutkowski and Szymon Datner. All of these authors understood Polish aid to Jews as part of the wider problem of the relations between the two peoples. In their work *Pomoc Żydom w Polsce 1939–1945* (Helping

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 51.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, pp. 51–52.

Jews in Poland 1939-1945),⁵⁴ Berenstein and Rutkowski underlined the German perfidy of exploiting mutual conflicts for their own benefit.

Berenstein and Rutkowski recognised the impact of the Occupation terror on the ability to support Jews and the essential differences in this respect between occupied Polish lands and the rest of Europe.⁵⁵ For researchers, both Jews and Poles were victims of the occupier's criminal policy, the Jews being the first to be exterminated by the Germans. This view was emphatically expressed by Szymon Datner, who named the chapter of his book *Ratownictwo Żydów w warunkach bezwzględnej terroru wobec Polaków* (Rescue of the Jews under Conditions of Ruthless Terror Against the Poles).⁵⁶

Other Polish scholars, Stanisław Wroński and Maria Zwolakowa, perceived the Polish and Jewish experience of the German occupation differently, although also in the relational discourse. In their opinion, under the Occupation a community of the Polish and Jewish fates existed.⁵⁷ However, this view is not true. The experience of the Holocaust made a drastic distinction between the situation of Jews condemned to total extermination and that of the Polish population.

The difficulty of embedding research on aid in a specific scholarly framework and as it turns out, the labile nature of views on the subject can also be traced back here using the example of Władysław Bartoszewski, the most eminent researcher on the subject of aid. On the occasion of just one of the editions of his flagship work, *Ten jest z ojczyzny mojej* (He Is from My Homeland), he formed two fundamentally different conclusions. In the preface to the 2007 edition, Bartoszewski stated: "When I began my systematic research into the issue of Polish-Jewish relations during World War II, thousands of witnesses and participants of the events on both sides of the [ghetto] wall were still alive. Today, there are few of them left."⁵⁸ There is no doubt, therefore, that he positioned aid research into the field of Polish-

⁵⁴ T. Berenstein, A. Rutkowski, *Pomoc Żydom w Polsce 1939–1945* (Warsaw, 1963).

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 5–19.

⁵⁶ S. Datner, *Las sprawiedliwych*, p. 8; Datner expressed these research views also in other works. See *idem*, "Udział polskich jeńców wojennych w ratowaniu Żydów w czasie II wojny światowej," *Biuletyn ŻIH* 3–4 (107–108) (1978), pp. 73–87.

⁵⁷ *Polacy – Żydzi 1939–1945*.

⁵⁸ W. Bartoszewski, "Przedmowa" in *Ten jest z ojczyzny mojej. Polacy z pomocą Żydom 1939–1945*, third updated edition, ed. *idem*, Z. Lewinówna (Warsaw, 2007), p. V.

Jewish relations. Yet, in an interview with Marian Turski added in the appendix, he contradicted himself stating: “We assumed that our book was not a history of Jews under Occupation or a history of Polish-Jewish relations. I limited myself to one element: the help given to Jews and the rescue of Jews.”⁵⁹

This statement implies that his research was not part of Polish-Jewish relations or the history of the Holocaust. If we do indeed accept this point of view, the question arises: what manner of coverage of the subject of aid was Władysław Bartoszewski advocating? It remains rather unanswered, although the rest of the interview shows that Bartoszewski saw the need for social research and for an analysis of “the background, the environment, the conditions, the possibilities and the different trends in different regions of Poland”⁶⁰ – Poland under Occupation, one should add. Thus, consciously or not, he returned to the original idea that aid to the Jews should be considered, studied and explored as part of Polish-Jewish relations under the German occupation.

If one takes into account the differences arising from the existing ways of comprehension, which let us simplify by calling them “Poles towards Jews” and “Polish-Jewish relations,” then Bartoszewski’s mutually exclusive opinions on the subject of the place of aid research, and also the uniqueness of the Holocaust as a historical phenomenon, we should not be too surprised that there is also a research concept of this subject different from that of the first works on aid. The above treats the issue of aid as a part of Holocaust studies, placing the Holocaust at the centre of events in conjunction with the survival strategies of Jews, a term that is used quite generally and discretionarily.⁶¹ When viewed in this way, the help that

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. XII. Bartoszewski and Lewinówna presented the same conclusions in the preface to the first edition published in 1966 (p. 73).

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. XV.

⁶¹ A number of works on the subject suggest that the concept encompasses any action leading to the saving of one’s own life, although the term “strategy” implies rather a stage of planning and preparation for action in the decision-making process, as opposed, for example, to a mere reaction, which may only be ad hoc, taken under the influence of the moment, fear and so on. This raises the question of whether survival strategies differed in any way from spontaneous reactions. For more on the differences between survival strategies and modes of survival in the research literature of the Holocaust studies stream, see T. Domański, *Korekta*. Małgorzata Melchior seems to notice these differences as well: M. Melchior, “Uciekinierzy z gett po ‘aryjskiej’ stronie na prowincji dystryktu warszawskiego – sposoby przetrwania,” in *Prowincja noc. Żydzi i zagłada Żydów w dystrykcie warszawskim*, ed. B. Engelking, J. Leociak, D. Libionka (Warsaw, 2007), p. 321.

Jews received from Poles becomes one of the many phenomena experienced by the Jewish people, but seen only from the Jewish perspective, i.e. of the victims. About the broader experience of the rescuers and their perspective in the light of this research we have learned, so far, very little.⁶² We thus obtain an incomplete picture, i.e. we study only one participant in the aid action or, more broadly, one side of the mutual relations, i.e. the victims of the Holocaust.⁶³ It is, of course, difficult to criticise this research approach; such an approach is even indispensable when analysing the Holocaust, since Holocaust studies by definition deal with the Jewish perspective only, in which “the history of the Holocaust should be seen from the side of the victims, and the side of the victims is not so much represented as [in an objective sense – A.G. and T.D.] monopolised by Jews.”⁶⁴

While the marginalisation of the Polish experience of aid by all means falls within the hitherto outlined theoretical framework for the study of the Holocaust, in recent years many researchers dealing with the fate of the Jews in the General Governorate have become convinced that the theoretical formula for such studies, inspired by the social sciences and the perspective of Jewish sources, is sufficiently broad and capacious to enable them to provide final, definitive, and objectified conclusions about the attitude of Poles towards Jews and even, it would appear, to draw a complete picture of Polish-Jewish relations. This kind of research undoubtedly produced an extremely simplified vision of the German occupation, which has become the subject of a historical dispute. It was formed by removing the general historical context (the background of events) from the historical argumentation, especially that concerning the German policy towards the Polish population.⁶⁵

⁶² Very often in the memoirs of survivors, the terms of the Polish occupation are reduced to a distant background. For example, Janina Bauman noted: “The men and women who gave us shelter, and even their children, had their own daily affairs to attend to, problems to solve, minor troubles and serious worries, some achievements and failures, moments of joy or sadness. Our existence was empty. We simply lasted, measuring time.” (J. Nalewajko-Kulikow, *Strategie przetrwania. Żydzi po aryjskiej stronie Warszawy*, Warsaw, 2004, p. 102).

⁶³ B. Engelking, *Jest taki piękny słoneczny dzień... Losy Żydów szukających ratunku na wsi polskiej 1942–1945* (Warsaw, 2011), p. 13; see also *eadem*, J. Grabowski, “Wstęp,” in *Dalej jest noc*, p. 17.

⁶⁴ B. Karwowska, “Bystander czy (pasywny) świadek? Kilka uwag nad konsekwencjami wyboru terminologii w badaniach nad Zagładą lub Holocaustem,” *Roczniki Humanistyczne* 64 (1) (2016), p. 94; H. Sinnreich, “Polska i żydowska historiografia stosunków żydowsko-polskich podczas drugiej wojny światowej,” in *Polacy i Żydzi. Kwestia otwarta*, ed. R. Cherry, A. Orla-Bukowska (Warsaw, 2008), p. 123.

⁶⁵ Recently, Anna Bikont has offered a journalistic perspective on the German occupation. A critical analysis of the historical context of the World War II presented in her publication in the aspect of Polish-

Subsequently, the thesis of ‘German absence,’ especially in the countryside, was brought into scholarly circulation, and especially between 1942 and 1945 (the third phase of the Holocaust), when in fact quite the opposite was true.⁶⁶ Even “new” terms that do not correspond to the actual state of affairs were used, such as “German-Polish administration,” supposedly describing the terms of the war in a local perspective, but in practice suggesting the existence of a Polish state administration under German occupation.⁶⁷

When one conflates the aforementioned elements of the “new vision” of the Occupation, a kind of paradox emerges. In these studies, on the one hand, the Polish rescuer, or more broadly Poles and their Occupation experiences, are relegated to the background and are barely noticeable, while on the other hand a very distinctive and controversial thesis is put forward (mainly on the basis of Jewish testimonies), in which the idea persists that it was the attitude of the Polish population towards Jews (the question that comes to mind is: dictated by what?), which greatly determined the chances of survival of Jews in the years 1942–1945.⁶⁸

Without diminishing the Jewish experience during the Holocaust, i.e. the importance of the testimonies of Jews who managed to survive the Occupation, and accepting as a fact that in most of those accounts we will read about Poles’ indifference and lack of mass help from their part, and in many cases about their participation – forced, spontaneous, and voluntary – in the Holocaust, we should ask about the causes of all phenomena occurring in Polish-Jewish relations, both positive and negative. Does the formula of Holocaust studies offer such possibilities? Can the complex matter of Polish-Jewish relations be comprehensively presented solely through it, or do the “Jewish world” and the “Polish world” balance each other out in the research process within its framework, to the extent, of course that this framework was outlined by the Germans? Where is the space in the above for the fundamental point, namely

Jewish relations is presented by P. Kornacki, “Holokaust bez Niemców. Recenzja książki Anny Bikont, ‘Cena. W poszukiwaniu żydowskich dzieci po wojnie,’” *Wołowiec* 2022, 464 p.,” *PJS* 4 (2023), pp. 405–418.

⁶⁶ In extreme cases, the “context-less” analysis leads to historically absurd comparisons of Polish-Jewish relations under the German occupation from “the Second World War to the civil (tribal) war in Africa in the late 20th century.” See Sidi N’Diaye, “Les meurtres de voisins au Rwanda et en Pologne: réflexions sur les imaginaires de haine,” in *Les Polonais et la Shoah. Une nouvelle école historique*, ed. A. Kichelewski, J. Lyon-Cean, J.-Ch. Szurek, A. Wiewiorka (Paris, 2019), pp. 291–305.

⁶⁷ B. Engelking, J. Grabowski, “Wstęp,” p. 19; T. Domański, *Korekta obrazu*, p. 9.

⁶⁸ B. Engelking, J. Grabowski, “Wstęp,” p. 13.

to display the cause-and-effect relationships between the anti-help laws created by the German occupation administration and the attitudes of Poles towards Jews?⁶⁹

Another question is whether it is good practice to unreflectively transplant general observations about the indifference of Western European societies to the Holocaust to the occupied Polish territory. It is important to remember that in the former the death penalty was not applied for helping the Jewish population, nor was it carried out on an ad hoc basis. The scale of German terror and exploitation of the local non-Jewish population was also smaller. There were therefore huge administrative, economic and social differences in the ability to help Jews between Eastern and Western Europe. Attempts to make these differences shallow (or to pretend that they did not exist), to look “by force” for “universal moral choices,” although quite attractive in the narrative layer of the historical account, move us away from understanding the mechanisms used by the Germans in occupied Europe, and all the more do not bring us closer to understanding the phenomenon of aid and the conditions in which it unfolded.⁷⁰

Certainly, only a broader, relational take, and not the one arising directly from Holocaust studies, can lead to an answer to the many nagging questions about the nature of aid as well as Polish attitudes in general. The existence of the two problems as a means of comprehension in respect to the above is, of course, not a problem in research terms per se, but – as it turns out – such different means of comprehension may carry radically different interpretations in analysing the relationship

⁶⁹ Following Zofia Kossak-Szczucka's musings, Michał Grynberg highlighted a shift in the peasants' attitude towards Jews in 1942, from positive to negative. He identified three main causes for this change: German anti-Semitic propaganda, incentives for denunciation, and the erosion of social norms due to the Occupation's brutality. See M. Grynberg, *Księga sprawiedliwych* (Warsaw, 1993), pp. 13–15. Years later, Andrzej Żbikowski, while analysing denunciations in Warsaw from 1940 to 1941, briefly mentioned the existence of anti-help orders in a footnote, following the work of Tatiana Berenstein, Adam Rutkowski, Barbara Engelking, and Jacek Leociak. However, he did not explore the potential impact of the German-imposed duty to denounce on Polish-Jewish relations. See A. Żbikowski, “Antysemityzm, szmalcownictwo, współpraca z Niemcami a stosunki polsko-żydowskie pod okupacją niemiecką,” in *Polacy i Żydzi pod okupacją*, p. 448. In the occupied Polish territories, the Germans implemented a system that effectively (the question is: how effectively?) coerced the rural population into participating in their crimes. Under threats of various forms of punishment and terror, locals were forced to engage in anti-Jewish and extermination policies. This system operated alongside voluntary actions driven by factors such as anti-Semitism.

⁷⁰ “This manner of comprehension was showcased, for instance, at the exhibition ‘Byli sąsiadami’ (They Were Neighbours).” See T. Domański, “W stronę bezkontekstowości. Garść refleksji na temat wystawy: ‘Byli sąsiadami. Ludzkie wybory i zachowania w obliczu Zagłady,’” *PJS* 5 (2024).

between Poles and Jews under the German occupation. Here, in the context of the cited Holocaust studies, we will only draw attention to a study by Bogdan Musiał, who put forward a thesis opposite to that formulated by some Holocaust scholars. In his groundbreaking study *Kto dopomoże Żydowi...* (Whoever Will Help the Jew...), this historian, basing on German archival sources, presented an interesting thesis that the increasing severity of the German “law,” which *de facto* amounted to lawlessness, was a reaction to the broadly understood Polish aid to the Jews and/or perceived by the Germans as aid activities, including maintaining contacts with Jews – against the will of the occupiers – at various stages of the Holocaust, which prevented the implementation of the German anti-Jewish policy.⁷¹

The Basic Conceptual Model in Aid-Related Research

Throughout the entire period of the Polish People’s Republic, only one person has set the tone for discussions on aid, ever since the publication of the fundamental work *Ten jest z ojczyzny mojej*. That author was Władysław Bartoszewski, who, having dealt with this issue almost single-handedly, whether he wanted to or not, imposed a certain model on the description of Poles rescuing Jews that consisted in presenting the individual stories of the rescuers, and directed his attention above all to aid campaigns in Warsaw and its vicinity, i.e. where he himself was active as part of the Council to Aid Jews. It seems that the researcher, by the power of his authority (by the way, Władysław Bartoszewski had no formal academic education in history, only in Polish Studies), contributed to the spreading of this model also amongst other historians, such as Teresa Prekerowa,⁷² doing so consciously or unconsciously, by making corrections to their works, suggesting changes and providing historical advice.⁷³ We will therefore call Bartoszewski’s proposal the basic

⁷¹ B. Musiał, *Kto dopomoże Żydowi*, *passim*.

⁷² There is no doubt that Władysław Bartoszewski had a significant impact on the final form of Teresa Prekerowa’s publication on the Council for Aid to Jews “Żegota.” Prekerowa concentrated mainly on the aid efforts in Warsaw. It almost seems as though she prepared her work under Bartoszewski’s close supervision, not merely receiving his advice as a mentor and expert in the field, but having him shape the publication’s final form. For more on the relations between Prekerowa and Bartoszewski in the context of their joint work on the book, see A. Namysło, “Wprowadzenie do drugiego wydania,” in T. Prekerowa, *Konspiracyjna Rada Pomocy Żydom w Warszawie 1942–1945* (Warsaw, 2019), pp. 23–24.

⁷³ In the context of aid-related works, we find traces of discussions and reflections on the modelling and conceptualisation of narratives focused on individuals in the review of the historian of the Polish Academy of Sciences, Jan Eugeniusz Zamojski, whose reviews were heavily influenced by

conceptual model in aid research.⁷⁴ It is characteristic that he was, and still is very popular among many researchers and continues to shape the public perception of the rescue of Jews by Poles under the German occupation.⁷⁵

Immediately after the publication of the first edition of *Ten jest z ojczyzny mojej* this model was noted by professional historians. Let us recall one of these voices in which it was accurately characterised. Michał Borwicz wrote:

Authors to whom the thing really mattered preferred not to operate with 'entireties.' Despite the fact that the actual situation under discussion was characterised also by the activity of underground bodies, and even the dedicated work of an organisation set up specifically for this purpose, they stubbornly stuck to the method of recording isolated incidents, provided they were indisputable: ones in which you could provide the names of specific guardians and specific charges, precise – if possible – dates and addresses, all in the precise context of each of these facts. This was the case for authors of chronicles written in the years of the Occupation itself (even if – for security reasons – they had to hide their names under their pseudonyms), the same was the case immediately after the war and this is also the case in the present published volume.⁷⁶

Bartoszewski and Prekerowa's works. We do not rule out that this influence proved strong enough to influence the author's treatment of the subject in a manner characteristic to Bartoszewski. Zamojski stated in "Kwartalnik Historyczny" that Prekerowa's monograph "is not the work of a professional historian," and he argued, among other things, as follows: "The narrative method adopted, the use of the name, of an event that accommodates a synthesis of some more general phenomena allows for a more complete perception of the truth about the affairs of the time [...]. The author writes matter-of-factly [...], however, in some places one senses the need for a more analytical approach." The main objection was the failure to specify the position that aid to the Jewish population took in the overall work of the Government Delegation for Poland (A. Namysło, "Wprowadzenie do drugiego wydania," pp. 25–26).

⁷⁴ As a model we understand an arrangement of assumptions, concepts and relationships interconnecting those, that allows to approximately describe (model) a selected aspect of reality. It is not an unequivocal concept and can be defined differently depending on the field and academic discipline.

⁷⁵ J. Hera, *Polacy ratujący Żydów. Słownik* (Warsaw, 2014); *Biografie Sprawiedliwych*, ed. A. Krochmal, P. Pietrzyk (Warsaw, 2023). This model has also been applied to the analysis of the aid activities of Polish diplomacy. See e.g. *Lista Ładosia. Spis osób, na których nazwiska w okresie II wojny światowej zostały wystawione paszporty latynoamerykańskie przez Poselstwo RP i organizacje żydowskie w Szwajcarii*, ed. J. Kumoch (Warsaw, 2022).

⁷⁶ M. Borwicz, "Ten jest z ojczyzny mojej," in *Ten jest z ojczyzny mojej*, ed. W. Bartoszewski, Z. Lewinówna (Warsaw, 2007), p. 783.

Similar criticism about the lack of historical analysis, historical background or insufficient analysis was voiced by Jan Górski, Karol Marian Pospieszalski and Szymon Datner.⁷⁷ These and other reviews meant that, with subsequent editions of the book *Ten jest z ojczyzny mojej*, the authors tried to add the missing elements, which they grouped under specific headings, i.e.: individual aid, organised aid, ‘the price of aid.’ These eventually resulted in a work that was referred to in reviews as the *Złota Księga* (Golden Book).⁷⁸

It is worth noting that a different model in the communist period was proposed by Tatiana Berenstein and Adam Rutkowski – authors of the first study on aid of 1963. They tried to place their historical analysis in a strictly scholarly framework.

The application of the aforementioned basic conceptual model to aid research involves collecting and recording aid cases and describing them as unrelated stories. Thus, the main aim of Władysław Bartoszewski was to gather individual stories in one publication and save them from oblivion, rather than to engage in a classical scholarly analysis aimed at investigating the phenomenon of aid, including outlining its mechanisms or a collective portrait of those who rescued Jews.⁷⁹ For

⁷⁷ J. Górski, “Ten jest z ojczyzny mojej,” in *ibid.*, pp. 812–816; K.M. Pospieszalski, “[Władysław Bartoszewski – Zofia Lewinówna (oprac.)], *Ten jest z ojczyzny mojej*. Polacy z pomocą Żydom 1939–1945,” in *ibid.*, pp. 809–811; A. Namysło, “Wprowadzenie do drugiego wydania,” pp. 25–26.

⁷⁸ While reviews of this work were generally positive, its meaning to different people varied. Even an opinion was formed that Bartoszewski’s and Lewinówna’s work gave rise to a discussion on the sources of resentment against Jews in the Polish countryside. These were supposed to be: the attitude of the gentry, the 19th century partition powers playing out national conflicts and “our mostly primitive clergy.” See Dedal [Andrzej Kijowski], “Zawsze jest ktoś,” in *Ten jest z ojczyzny mojej*, pp. 874–875.

⁷⁹ The testimonies published in 1966 by Bartoszewski and Lewinówna came from a number of sources, such as *Tygodnik Powszechny*, *Biuletyn ŻIH*, the collections of Rev. Dr. Jan Zieja, Bartoszewski’s own collections, and chiefly responses to a questionnaire published in *Tygodnik Powszechny*. The introduction to the first edition (and subsequent editions) does not provide quantitative data regarding the typology of testimonies on which the two researchers relied. It is also not known how many testimonies were submitted to the *Tygodnik Powszechny*’s editorial board and how many were rejected. Above all, however, there was no attempt to discuss analytically the data collected, such as the time and place of the rescue operation, and this is particularly important because in subsequent editions of the book, such as the 1969 edition, the number of testimonies included was increased. The number of rescuers and survivors (from the point of view of the source material collected) is also not given. The editors of the book’s first edition focused on systematically presenting forms of individual aid (*Ten jest z ojczyzny mojej*, first edition, p. 76), and approached the structure of the work quite loosely “because this is the most prominent feature of the aid operation – its diversity from all points of view, from forms and methods to the social position of both parties (especially the helping party) and the degree of danger” (*ibid.*, p. 77). The 2013 edition had a different structure: published material was divided into three sections: organised aid, individual aid (majority of the presented cases), and the price of aid.

this reason, contemporary researchers are confronted with the perplexing question of what do we know about Poles saving Jews in the light of the research that Bartoszewski and Lewinówna undertook, apart from the fact that every person they described rendered considerable services for saving Jews, and saved their lives or tried to do so?

The acceptance and adoption of the model of individualised stories in the process of shaping historical narration by subsequent researchers was also facilitated by the procedure of awarding the Israeli Righteous Among the Nations title or Polish national honours for aid activities, which always focused on particular people or aid stories. The process of honouring then moved onto the historical field, which manifested itself in works dedicated to the Righteous, with the *Księga Sprawiedliwych wśród Narodów Świata* (The Book of the Righteous Among the Nations) at the forefront, which (apart from an analytical introduction concentrating on a superficial analysis of the honoured) presents a model individualistic approach, presented through an alphabetical arrangement of the names of the Righteous.⁸⁰ Such studies are more akin to commemorative literature than to scholarly analysis.

A third important factor that has influenced the popularity of the narrative model in question after 1989 is the shortage of sources on the subject of aid. Any historian dealing with this problem is aware that there are not sufficient archival records on the subject, and that those that do exist, such as documents of judicial provenance, require extensive and time-consuming archival research and analyses.⁸¹ Regardless of which type of archival source we are dealing with for the history of aid, it should be emphasised that they present above all the individual stories, because aid activities were the result of individual Polish-Jewish relationships. They were undertaken in strict secrecy, under the threat of death, and most often the

⁸⁰ M. Grynberg, *Księga sprawiedliwych; Księga Sprawiedliwych wśród Narodów Świata. Ratujący Żydów podczas Holocaustu. Polska*, ed. I. Gutman *et al.*, vol. 1–2 (Cracow, 2009).

⁸¹ A. Krochmal, "Pomoc Żydom w czasie II wojny światowej w świetle polskich i niemieckich źródeł archiwalnych," in *Z dziejów stosunków polsko-żydowskich w XX wieku*, ed. E. Czop, E. Rączy (Rzeszów, 2009); 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. Badania – kontrowersje – perspektywy*, ed. T. Domański, E. Majcher-Ociesa (Kielce–Warsaw, 2021), pp. 127–151; R. Gieroń, "Zarys problematyki pomocy udzielanej Żydom podczas okupacji niemieckiej w aktach postępowań karnych wszczętych na podstawie dekretu PKWN z 31 sierpnia 1944 r. na obszarze powojennego województwa krakowskiego," *PJS* 2 (2021), pp. 220–250.

act of helping took place in the countryside among peasants, who were not eager after the end of the war to write down the traces of their heroic activity on behalf of Jews, in contrast, for example, to representatives of the intelligentsia. Hence, personal testimonies and memories – Jewish and Polish – play such a large role. Thus, those testimonies also significantly affect the individualised picture of assistance. Moreover, their verification and mutual confrontation is often a tedious research process, which may discourage the undertaking of aid research.⁸²

It is also worth mentioning, while explaining the reasons for the popularity of the basic conceptual model in the research on aid, the general atmosphere unfavourable to this research. It is determined not only by intense interpretative disputes about the place and role of Poles helping Jews under the German occupation in historical memory and contemporary historical policy,⁸³ but also by voices formulated in research circles that deprecate and negate the sense of research on aid. One of the extreme arguments, happily not formulated in the field of history, shall be referred to. Aid is presented here as an attempt to build a “myth of innocent Poland” (“the good name of Poland”) or as a form of a peculiar antidote to the work of Jan Tomasz Gross and other researchers ideologically close to him.⁸⁴ Particularly worrying is the view, characterised by a profound bias formulated a few years ago, situating aid research in the “martyrdom-conservative” current that constitutes a counterbalance to “unmasking-ethical” historiography, capable of reformulating the discourse on Polish-Jewish relations and exploring “black pages from history.” Even the choice of the topic was supposed to be an “ideological manifestation” (sic!).⁸⁵ Paradoxically then, after the communist years the subject of aid-related research has again become very “political” in the eyes of some researchers. This time it even found itself censored. Therefore, in view of the presented politicised

⁸² M. Grądzka-Rejak, A. Namysł, “Indeks Polaków zamordowanych i represjonowanych za pomoc Żydom w okresie II wojny światowej,” in *Represje za pomoc Żydom*, pp. 64–73; T. Domański, “Stan badań nad pomocą świadczoną Żydom przez ludność polską w okresie II wojny światowej na okupowanych terenach województwa kieleckiego,” in *Stan badań nad pomocą*, pp. 199–266. Antoni Sułek has recently formed similar reflections in his article “Ulmowie na tle. Ten obraz relacji Polaków z Żydami jest bardziej skomplikowany,” <https://www.polityka.pl/tygodnikpolityka/historia/2228386,1,ulmowie-na-tle-ten-obraz-relacji-polakow-z-zydami-jest-bardziej-skomplikowany.read>, accessed 23 November 2023.

⁸³ T. Domański, A. Gontarek, “Wstęp,” p. 7.

⁸⁴ P. Forecki, *Po Jedwabnem. Anatomia pamięci funkcjonalnej* (Warsaw, 2018), pp. 262–264.

⁸⁵ B. Krupa, “Historia krytyczna i jej ‘gabinet cieni’.” *Historiografia polska wobec Zagłady 2003–2013*, *ZŻSM* 10 (2014), pp. 722–723. Cf. K. Zieliński, “Kilka uwag o polityce.”

approach to the reality, in which scholarship becomes an immanent part of it, is there room for people whose academic choices are not dictated by the desire to belong to political “camps”? The answer to such a question should be in the affirmative, on the assumption that an antagonising and stigmatising type of thinking leading to simplification should be decisively rejected in the 21st century, and scholars should be left free to choose their research directions. The elimination of such voices will perhaps unblock and unleash the creative powers of historians who, in our view, have not yet fully grasped the possibility of applying the scholarly potential of various research models when analysing the aid phenomenon.

Attempts to Define Aid and its Typologies

Aid, it could be said, was a multidimensional and multifaceted phenomenon. Its complex, heterogeneous nature caused (and continues to cause) research difficulties in capturing its essence. The complications involved have become apparent in the works of all leading historians dealing with aid issues or in studies addressing the subject in passing. How then, have historians defined aid and what terms have they used to capture the meaning of aid-related activity?

The first historian to write about its nature was, of course, Emanuel Ringelblum, although he did not discuss the issue very extensively, attempting to estimate its scale primarily in Warsaw itself.⁸⁶ Characteristically, in analysing the problem of aid, he made Western European countries the point of reference for his argument. He stated that Jews were hidden there en masse, in contrast to occupied Poland.⁸⁷

Ringelblum distinguished between two main types of aid activities, according to the criterion of their typology/kind. The predominant one was providing shelter to hide for money,⁸⁸ understood by him as a paid “job,” within which a kind

⁸⁶ E. Ringelblum, *Stosunki polsko-żydowskie w czasie drugiej wojny światowej. Pisma*, p. 213.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 212–213.

⁸⁸ Ringelblum never used the term “paid aid,” although he did discuss rescuing for money in the chapter on aid. He also appreciated this form of aid. There is now an ongoing debate as to how paid support given to Jews that led to the saving of lives should be treated. The most recent findings on the economic aspect of aid were made by Grzegorz Berendt. In his opinion, in view of the progressing pauperisation of Polish society as a result of German predatory policy, at a certain stage the co-financing of aid by Jews became a necessity. (G. Berendt, “Niemiecka polityka gospodarcza w okupowanej Polsce a materialne warunki niesienia pomocy Żydom,” in *Nie tylko o Ulmach*, pp. 61–69; see also A. Czocher, “Okupacyjne uwarunkowania pomocy ukrywającym się Żydom w Generalnym Gubernatorstwie,” in *Kościół, Żydzi, jezuici...*, pp. 45–67). On the other hand, scholars from the circle of the Polish Centre

of a tariff was in force.⁸⁹ The scope of aid stemming from idealistic motives was much smaller.⁹⁰ It should be noted that he treated helping children separately and it can therefore be understood that it was a third type of aid, special because of its uniqueness.⁹¹ At the same time, he often noted the atmosphere of indifference, which he counted among the conditions that were not conducive to the mass rescue of Jews.⁹²

Ringelblum believed that persons who hid Jews for money, if they were not motivated, apart from financial considerations, by “strong moral motives,” “sooner or later” got rid of them.⁹³ He explicitly identified this second group as “idealists,” praising them as “the noblest idealists,”⁹⁴ “Aryan friends,” “Aryan hosts,” “kind-hearted people” or “guardian angels,” and also sometimes referred to as “party people,” i.e. those engaged in underground activities. In doing so, he noted that the care of a single Jew had to be exercised not by a single “Aryan friend,” but by “friends who would create an atmosphere of sympathy around him [the Jew], who

for Holocaust Research have formed the thesis of an alleged wicked desire to enrich oneself on Jews as the main motive for rescuing them for money (J. Tokarska-Bakir, *Okrzyki pogromowe. Szkice z antropologii historycznej Polski 1939–1946* [Wołowiec, 2012]; B. Engelking, *Jest taki piękny słoneczny dzień*; J. Grabowski, “Ratowanie Żydów za pieniądze: przemysł pomocy,” *ZŻSM* 4 (2008), pp. 81–109; *Dalej jest noc*). It is worth recalling that Jan Grabowski translated the English term “paid helpers” into Polish as “biorcy” (i.e. “takers”), which does not necessarily convey the meaning of the original version and denies the nature of aid for this type of activity. For more on this topic, see T. Domański, A. Gontarek, “Wstęp,” pp. 8–9; M. Urynowicz, “O pomocy Żydom w IFiS PAN – kilka uwag,” *Biuletyn Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej* 3 (2009), pp. 109–112.

⁸⁹ E. Ringelblum, *Stosunki polsko-żydowskie w czasie drugiej wojny światowej. Pisma*, p. 211. Ringelblum knew the rates that were paid in Warsaw for hiding. They amounted as much as 2 to 3 thousand zlotys per month. The cost of keeping a child in hiding, on the other hand, was 100 zloty per day. In conclusion, he stated that hideouts were “costly paid” by Jews (*ibid.*, pp. 114, 211).

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 189–211.

⁹¹ It is difficult to treat Ringelblum’s chapter on this subject as an analysis of aid and its terms in Polish-Jewish relations. It speaks of the “passage” of children to the Aryan side, as if it happened without the participation of Poles and mainly for money, and of the dilemmas of the children themselves, who found themselves in a difficult situation, without parents (relatives). Ringelblum reduced the role of Polish guardians to a description of their feelings or attitudes towards Jewish children, often mitigated by money. He also mentioned the “liking of the children” by some of the Aryan guardians, while he categorised those who adopted them as wanting in this way to “document their attitude to the tragedy of the Jewish people” (*ibid.*, pp. 132–142).

⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 43.

⁹³ It is worth noting that selfless aid could also be discontinued at any time. On the other hand, we know of cases where paid aid turned into selfless aid – relationships initiated on economic grounds turned into friendships.

⁹⁴ Ringelblum devoted a separate chapter to “idealists.” (*ibid.*, pp. 189–211).

would care for him and solve his endless daily worries with heart.”⁹⁵ He thus drew attention to the importance of the network that was formed when aid was provided. Furthermore, he observed that every Jew, without exception, on the Aryan side had to have this kind of care. He generally qualified the helping attitude as heroism, being the opposite not only of denunciation and other negative behaviour, but also of a passive attitude.⁹⁶ Ringelblum also drew attention to the wide cross-section of society in the context of helping, depicting in his work a gallery of personalities dedicated to the operation of rescuing Jews (a model continued and developed by Bartoszewski after the war). Ringelblum, however, only divided them into two class categories – the wealthy elite and the working people.⁹⁷

The authors of the first post-war monograph on aid, Tatiana Berenstein and Adam Rutkowski, defined aid differently,⁹⁸ namely as “a field of the struggle of Polish society against the German occupier,” thus emphasising that such activities had an anti-German dimension. They also singled out its component parts – “giving aid” to Jews, “hiding” them and “defending” them from the Holocaust.⁹⁹ What they did not express explicitly on that occasion was the view that one of the inherent features of aid was its secret nature. Such a view emerged somewhat later.¹⁰⁰ The treatment of aid as a secret activity in post-war historiography was primarily summarised by Teresa Prekerowa’s position: “The benevolence towards oppressed Jews was thus henceforth sought to be given a secret form.”¹⁰¹

We learn more about what aid was in the understanding of these authors from the structure of their study. The fundamental concept becomes apparent already

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 38, 114, 189–190, 211.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 41, 43, 211, 213.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 210. Epsztein remarked that Ringelblum sometimes applied a social class criterion, and even saw in his writings a “pattern” in interpretations according to which “the poor are always better people than the rich,” although Ringelblum was not always consistent in this. Perhaps this understanding of social divisions was the basis of Ringelblum’s opinion that it was mostly not wealthy people who showed “fortitude of heart” by saving Jews (*ibid.*, pp. 28, 99).

⁹⁸ T. Berenstein, A. Rutkowski, *Pomoc Żydom w Polsce*, p. 5.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ *Za to groziła śmierć. Polacy z pomocą Żydom w czasie okupacji*, selected, edited and introduction written by W. Smólski (Warsaw, 1981), p. 9.

¹⁰¹ T. Prekerowa, *Zarys dziejów Żydów w Polsce w latach 1939–1945* (Warsaw, 1992), p. 70. It is significant that the Sejm of the Republic of Poland regarded aid efforts for those racially persecuted as being on par with the active struggle against the occupying forces. (W. Bartoszewski, “Przedmowa,” third edition, p. XIII).

in the table of contents. Aid was divided into individual and organised activities (“the Polish resistance movement,” the Council to Aid Jews “Żegota”), while the aid phenomena was a dynamic process, being a response to the anti-Jewish policy of the Germans – the authors distinguished aid in the “first period of Occupation,” then “intensification of repressions for giving it,” and rescue in the period of deportation to death camps and of extermination (the third phase of the Holocaust). This was a complete novelty in aid-related writing. The authors, following Ringelblum, also highlighted the unique aid activity of saving children, emphasising the role of Polish guardians of the youngest victims of the Holocaust.¹⁰² However, they devised a different interpretation of the issue than Ringelblum did. The founder of Oneg Shabbat painted a gloomy picture of the tragic fate of children on the Aryan side, full of mental and physical suffering, while Berenstein and Rutkowski, referring exclusively to the category of compassion, (which by the way did not appear at all in Ringelblum’s work) presented an idealised version – children outside the ghetto were to meet on their way only “good,” “compassionate,” “faithful,” “caring,” “indefatigable,” “infinitely self-sacrificing,” “unfailing,” guardians and friends.¹⁰³

Another typology presented by them was the introduction of a clear territorial criterion. In Ringelblum’s case, it was barely outlined by indicating two Occupation planes – Warsaw as a kind of epicentre of events, and the distant province. Berenstein and Rutkowski recognised that there were two territorial planes of the rescue and hiding operation, i.e. the city and the countryside, with the latter having a greater potential. They noted that in the countryside, Jews were generally able to hide only “below the surface,” while in the cities they were able to hide both “on the surface” and below, which had consequences for the rescue action.¹⁰⁴ The

¹⁰² T. Berenstein. A. Rutkowski, *Pomoc Żydom w Polsce*, pp. 49–52.

¹⁰³ In comparison, Ringelblum, when writing about “guardians,” used the following (in addition to the aforementioned ‘liking’) words and expressions: “zadokumentowanie” (“documenting,” “getting documents,”) “urządzenie dziecka” (“arranging or installing a child,”) “męczenie się z dziećmi żydowskimi” (“struggling or being bothered with Jewish children,”) “zakrzękanie się” (“getting their head around or busying themselves with,”) “otrzymywanie zysków” (“receiving profits,”) “wyrzucanie dzieci” (“throwing the children out,”) “oddawanie w ręce mundurowej policji” (“handing [children] over to the uniformed police,”) “lekcja żydożercza od opiekunów” (“a lesson in hatred for Jews from the guardians,”) “antysemickie rozmowy” (“anti-Semitic talks”) (E. Ringelblum, *Stosunki polsko-żydowskie w czasie drugiej wojny światowej*. *Pisma*, pp. 132–142).

¹⁰⁴ Ringelblum employs the terms “na powierzchni” (“on the surface”) and “pod powierzchnią” (“below the surface”).

researchers explained why rural regions were characterised by a greater potential – it was determined by the greater number of potential “forms” of assistance, by which Berenstein and Rutkowski meant “pits,” hiding places in the cellars of houses and farm buildings, orchards, gardens, camouflaged hiding places in attics, barns, haystacks, and structures outside homesteads, such as burrows, shelters, dugouts in forests and fields.¹⁰⁵

The aforementioned two scholars also expanded the question of the motivations of those providing support to the Jewish population, pointing to its various types (ideological, political and social reasons, neighbourly, collegial, friendly, professional relations, selfless help, humanitarianism, religious considerations). In doing so, they developed Ringelblum’s rather simplistic yet correct concept of idealism as the basic moral-psychological condition for selfless help.¹⁰⁶

Aid was understood and defined in a completely different way in the work *Las sprawiedliwych* (Forest of the Righteous) by Szymon Datner – as an individual act, i.e. an individual choice, associated with taking a risk and, above all, with a moral choice. In a passage of his book that is almost canonical for aid-related research, he emphasised the moment when the decision to provide support is made:

When a stranger, a Jew, knocked on the window of a peasant’s hut at night, the Jewish problem of those years knocked with him, with all its implications, risks, dangers, with the necessity of making a decision and the spiritual dilemma associated with it. [...] It seems, in general, that there were four possibilities for solving such a dilemma: the first – according to the Occupation “law” imposed by the invader – was to hand the Jew over to the hands of the torturers, which was tantamount to condemning him to death; the second – not to hand him over but not to help him either; the third – to give him *ad hoc* help; the fourth – to take care of him and give him shelter for a longer period of time.¹⁰⁷

According to Datner, who reconstructed in this passage a catalogue of the main attitudes, the field of aid covered its two types hitherto absent from historiogra-

¹⁰⁵ T. Berenstein, A. Rutkowski, *Pomoc Żydom w Polsce*, pp. 35, 45, 47–48.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 35 ff.

¹⁰⁷ S. Datner, *Las sprawiedliwych*, p. 27.

phy – ad hoc aid and long-term aid, which both meant engaging in active action, or “active rescuing.”¹⁰⁸

A more specific, more exhaustive and elaborate, albeit chaotic, set of characteristics was presented in the 1960s by Władysław Bartoszewski and Zofia Lewinówna. They observed:

We have endeavored to show the aid given to those in danger in its every aspect: aid from individuals, organisations, and institutions, spontaneous and organised aid; political and armed, material and moral, offered to individuals and communities, involving helpers on both ad hoc and permanent bases, and posing varying degrees of risk, yet always carrying some level of threat.¹⁰⁹

In the somewhat unstructured attempt presented above to define what aid is, the extension of its typology, contained in the brief quotation above, is notable. However, its essence is not clarified. It is worth noting that, for example, for Tatiana Berenstein and Adam Rutkowski, helping Jews equated with the Poles’ struggle against the Germans.

The second half of the 1960s saw the publication of Kazimierz Iranek-Osmecki’s *Kto ratuje jedno życie* (He Who Saves One Life), published in London in 1968, in addition to domestic publications on aid.¹¹⁰ In his introduction, the author made it clear that books published behind the Iron Curtain did not reach Western societies, and therefore did not have the chance to tell the whole story of the Polish effort to help Jews. What was new in his work was to discuss the assistance provided to the Jewish population outside of occupied Poland, as well as to those deported there, to point out the role of the Polish Underground State, the Polish government-in-exile and Polish diplomacy in aid operations, and to examine more closely the activities of the Social Committee for Aid to the Jewish Population [translator’s note: a pre-

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁹ *Ten jest z ojczyzny mojej*, first edition, p. 73.

¹¹⁰ Iranek-Osmecki’s book was published in Polish twice, first in London in 1968, and then in Warsaw in 2009 (a reprint was published in 1981). Additionally, the book was published in English in 1971, and again in 1979. K. Iranek-Osmecki, *He Who Saves One Life* (New York, 1971, second edition New York, 1979).

decessor of the Council for Aid to Jews “Żegota”] in Poland. Putting pen to paper, Iranek-Osmecki became an amateur historian who prepared the first analytical and holistic study of Polish aid that covered the full spectrum of aid facets.¹¹¹ The author defined aid by its types, dividing it into: “spontaneous,” “organised civilian,” “military,” “in arming,” “during combat,” “financial,” “from the West,” fighting riots against Jews, and facilitating the establishment of communication of Jews from the occupied country with European countries and the USA.¹¹²

Iranek-Osmecki was also the first author who, having the unfettered opportunity to compare the situation in the occupied Polish lands with the countries of Western Europe during World War II, saw that Polish aid should be considered in terms of a phenomenon – not least because it was punishable by death. He expressed it as follows:

In order to bring aid to Jews, the Polish Secret State, although itself burdened by its struggle against the occupying forces, created an extensive organisation especially for this purpose. This organisation had a structured management and executive authority, field units, provided hiding places for Jews, maintained courier and radio communication with the West, and supplied armaments and funds. Of all the countries occupied by the Germans, as well as of the satellite countries, and countries allied with the Germans, from which the Nazis also deported Jews or exterminated them on the spot, Poland was the only one to establish an aid organisation based on the underground state bodies.¹¹³

He supported this view with a presentation of a typology of the repressions or circumstances of deaths cases for providing help, adding a very important sentence:

¹¹¹ Some scholars have, not unreasonably, formed objections to this publication, especially to the “homeland” part. They point to the author’s incorrect motivation (“defence of the good name of the Poles”), lack of professionalism, adaptation of the argumentation to preconceived theses and “correct highlighting of controversial episodes” (D. Libionka, “Polskie piśmiennictwo,” p. 44). The main shortcoming of this work is that it saturates the narrative with positive manifestations of the activities of the Polish government and society while omitting or eliminating negative phenomena. See A. Gontarek, “Dyplomacja polska a pomoc,” pp. 124–126.

¹¹² K. Iranek-Osmecki, *Kto ratuje jedno życie*, pp. 222–299.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 300–301.

If the accusation of passivity on the part of Poles is made by those in the West—who could have saved Jews without their own sacrifice – who did nothing to help the suffering Jews, let them remember those who provided help at the cost of their own lives.¹¹⁴

Thus, in this thread, Iranek-Osmecki included conclusions contrary to Ringelblum's thesis of alleged mass aid to Jews in Western Europe.

Another position relevant to the definitional issues discussed here is Teresa Prekerowa's study of the Council for Aid to Jews "Żegota." In describing its activity, the researcher did not specify what aid should be understood as such. She referred to German anti-aid orders:

In later periods [of the Occupation], the governors and police authorities of the various GG Distrikts published announcements reminding the public of the death penalty and specifying what the German authorities meant by the term "aid" (giving Jews accommodation, maintaining them, transporting them, buying goods from them, selling them anything, etc.).¹¹⁵

Reaching back to the Occupation orders which directly influenced the possibility of providing aid, and having defined this aid in terms of the war, also forced the researcher to reconsider the issue of trade and smuggling between Poles and Jews, and Jews and Poles in the context of aid. Ringelblum had noted the Polish-Jewish "cooperation" in this regard already during the war (as "one of the most beautiful pages in the history of mutual relations between the two peoples during the present war"),¹¹⁶ thus clearly emphasising that Jews were not only recipients of aid but also its co-creators. The historian therefore did not count this cooperation as a strictly aid-related activity.

The case was viewed differently by Prekerowa, who, adopting the optics of the German anti-aid laws, defined smuggling and trafficking as aid because the Germans' aim was to starve Jews in the ghettos and camps. Undoubtedly, with-

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 301.

¹¹⁵ T. Prekerowa, *Konspiracyjna Rada Pomocy Żydom*, first edition, p. 43.

¹¹⁶ E. Ringelblum, *Stosunki polsko-żydowskie w czasie drugiej wojny światowej. Pisma*, pp. 66–71.

out the illegal acquisition of food, the majority of the Jewish population would have been condemned to death by starvation under the conditions forged by the German authorities. In the light of the above circumstance, food smuggling and trade contacts could indeed be regarded as part of the phenomenon of aid, although it should be emphasised that there is still no clear position on the part of contemporary researchers on this topic.¹¹⁷ However, it is worth pointing out that this aid could only take place under conditions where the mutual contacts were on an equal footing, i.e. where both parties adhered to a contract to which they had mutually agreed.¹¹⁸

Another work by a Polish historian, in our view worth examining from a conceptual angle, came from Marcin Urynowicz. The author, like others before him, did not attempt to form a definition of aid, viewing it through the lens of a typology of aid activities. His work is distinguished from others by its attempt to systematise these activities.¹¹⁹ The researcher introduced a threefold division: 1) organised aid (activities of political parties, social and military organisations before the establishment of the Council for Aid to Jews “Żegota”), 2) activities of the Council for Aid to Jews “Żegota” and 3) aid outside Polish lands provided by Poles and Polish government/social institutions, as well as individual aid. The researcher also stressed the importance of the time factor in considering the typology of aid, distinguishing between permanent, periodic and ad hoc or one-off aid. The publication furthermore contains attempts to name the aid in a different

¹¹⁷ T. Domański, A. Gontarek, “Wstęp,” p. 22. See also D. Siepracka, J. Wróbel, “Stan badań na temat pomocy udzielanej przez Polaków ludności żydowskiej na obszarze województwa łódzkiego w latach okupacji niemieckiej 1919–1945,” in *Stan badań nad pomocą*, pp. 430–469; S. Pietrzykowski, “Stan badań nad pomocą świadczoną przez Polaków społeczności żydowskiej w województwie poznańskim w latach 1939–1945,” in *Stan badań nad pomocą*, pp. 585–613.

¹¹⁸ J. Grabowski, “Ratowanie Żydów za pieniądze,” pp. 82–83; M. Urynowicz, “Stosunki polsko-żydowskie w Warszawie w okresie okupacji hitlerowskiej,” in *Polacy i Żydzi pod okupacją*, pp. 665–666 (documents No. 19 and No. 20). Some contemporary scholars dismiss food smuggling into the ghettos as a form of aid. Bartłomiej Krupa, for example, noted: “Even smuggling (after all, not selfless) is treated by the author [Jan Przedpeński] as an example of the brave attitude of Poles.” See B. Krupa, *Opowiadanie Zagładę. Polska proza i historiografia wobec Holocaustu (1987–2003)* (Cracow, 2013), p. 241. By visibly distancing himself from referring to smuggling as a “brave stance,” Krupa did not address the Occupation conditions caused by German alimentary policy or the personal risks faced by smugglers, including the threat of the death penalty.

¹¹⁹ We do not refer in this article to content that the author has taken from the work of other historians, mainly of Nechama Tec.

way than by its type. Urynowicz noted that from the beginning of the Occupation it had a spontaneous, secret and diverse character, and rightly concludes that aid activities were first born in the social sphere and then were transferred to the institutional sphere in the form of organised aid.¹²⁰

Also important for understanding the issue of aid is the aforementioned publication by Bogdan Musiał *Kto dopomoże Żydowi...*, which presents in great detail the understanding of aid to Jews through the lens of the German anti-aid laws. The author not only answered in detail the question of how the German occupier defined the anti-aid laws, but also why Germans decided to introduce those laws, how its evolution took place and what was the mechanism of its implementation and what were the consequences of the contemporary legal situation in force, which as already indicated, was lawless by nature. The Germans, according to Musiał, having learnt about the type of contacts under Occupation between Jews and non-Jews (mainly Poles) and their intensity, introduced into the anti-aid laws the idea of punishing non-Jews more severely for giving help than Jews for accepting it. Musiał asserted bluntly that for Jews it did not matter whether they lost their lives from starvation in the ghettos, by crossing the ghetto boundary in order to obtain food, or already outside the ghetto. From the German perspective, it was necessary to implement strict deterrent measures against the Polish population, who were expected to cease prohibited interactions with Jews for fear of losing their lives.¹²¹ The historian also drew attention to the idea of the feigned legalism of the Germans' actions, i.e. the issuing of special orders by the relevant civil authorities of the GG and the individual district governors and provincial governors (Distrikts' governors).¹²²

Musiał's work shows distinctively that the process of implementing the laws discussed here was gradual. Today, it would be known as "testing social reactions" – the successive tightening of criminal sanctions was intended to disrupt the aid observed by German officials. This touches on a key issue: what exactly

¹²⁰ M. Urynowicz, "Zorganizowana i indywidualna pomoc Polaków," p. 215.

¹²¹ B. Musiał, *Kto dopomoże Żydowi*, pp. 51–53, 89.

¹²² On the governance mechanisms under the German occupation, see W. Wichert, "Niemiecki system okupacyjny na ziemiach polskich w latach 1939–1945. Zarys problematyki," in *Stan badań nad pomocą*, pp. 28–82.

constituted aid in the German occupation optics? German definitions of aid – for we are not talking about a single term here – can be traced quite easily on the basis of the published criminal anti-aid orders. First and foremost, there was the issue of aid given to Jews attempting to leave a designated residential district, and aid provided to them on the Aryan side (order of the district chief’s plenipotentiary for the city of Warsaw Ludwik Leist of 14 January 1941), and the ban on trade between Poles and Jews, including “donating and otherwise passing of goods of all kinds to Jews” (Leist’s order of 13 February 1941), by which smuggling and Poles’ support for begging Jewish children on the so-called Aryan side were to be restricted. The issue of giving shelter was handled again by Governor-General Hans Frank in the well-known regulation of 15 October 1941, which introduced the death penalty for giving shelter to Jews leaving a designated residential district. From then on, the regulations were made more specific. For example, on 10 November 1941, the governor of the Warsaw Distrikt issued an order introducing the death penalty not only for giving shelter but also for giving alms to begging Jewish children, thus in practice for an act of mercy. A year later, on 30 November 1942, the higher SS and police commander in the GG (HSSuPF) Friedrich-Wilhelm Krüger issued an order whereby any activity that served to prolong the lives of Jews against the German will would become [prohibited] aid, regardless of whether such activity was of a paid, altruistic or even exploitative nature.¹²³

Musiał, basing on the results of the survey, introduced a new concept in his work – “readiness to help” – estimating that it was “widespread” among Poles (“high readiness”), which turned out to be the main reason for the introduction and subsequent tightening of the laws against persons helping Jews.¹²⁴ The aim of these measures was to reduce or eliminate the phenomenon of aid, as it stood in the way of implementing the policy of exterminating Jews.¹²⁵ Thus, from the German point of view, it did not matter whether the aid provided was selfless or

¹²³ B. Musiał, *Kto dopomoże Żydowi*, pp. 58–61; 127–131. Within this field of the German occupation regulations, particular SS and police commanders (SSuPF), including those in the Radom Distrikt, issued orders that were similar in content. See J.A. Młynarczyk, S. Piątkowski, *Cena poświęcenia*, p. 70.

¹²⁴ It is debatable whether Polish society showed a conscious “readiness to help” or perhaps a readiness for contacts with Jews that existed in the inter-war period, which were suddenly forbidden by the Germans.

¹²⁵ B. Musiał, *Kto dopomoże Żydowi*, pp. 121, 227–228.

motivated by gains – all of the above-mentioned actions on the part of Poles were detailed in German orders and criminalised. The German regulations, according to Musiał, implied that any contact with a Jew was a form of aid because it prolonged their life.¹²⁶

Another novelty in Musiał's narrative, formed on the basis of research on the laws against aid, is the category of the "self-preservation instinct," understood as the avoidance of danger, introduced into the discussion of Polish-Jewish relations in the context of refusal to help Jews. It is a rather separate category from fear and anxiety, which nevertheless undoubtedly blocked help. This theme (developed in historical monographs) appeared in connection with the question of collective responsibility for the help given by Polish families. The matter at stake was mainly the fate of the children of those parents who decided to rescue Jews. The author wrote: "Protecting one's own children, especially little ones, from mortal danger is one of the basic instincts of self-preservation."¹²⁷ Another point is that maternal instinct, which this historian did not mention, may have also played an important role. An exploration of this and similar topics related to the background of refusal of help as seen from an individual perspective is still ahead of us. It is certainly an interdisciplinary topic that goes beyond the scope of historical craft.

Finally, it is worth recalling the definition of aid offered by historians – IPN researchers Martyna Grądzka-Rejak and Aleksandra Namysło:

[The acts of aid were] documented or verbally certified, prohibited by German law, conscious, active and positive activities undertaken for the benefit of the Jews, segregated under German laws. In order for a deed to be considered aid, the condition of its measurable efficiency must be fulfilled, and the activity in question should lead to a specific result, i.e. an improvement of the situation in which the person was, before the aid arrived.¹²⁸

It is worth emphasising that this attempt to create a definition came from the IPN historian community, which, as we have written has made the greatest

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 127–131.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 184, 243.

¹²⁸ *Represje za pomoc Żydom*, vol. 1, p. 72.

contribution to aid research. The direction of the definitional search presented by the researchers is undoubtedly correct and provides an excellent starting point for further proposals in this area. However, as the above definition was formed for a specific publication that sought to qualify or reject cases of aid, it can hardly be considered universal. In our view, there was insufficient attention given to the circumstances surrounding emergency aid. The use of the term “prohibited” in the context of German anti-aid laws is also debatable.¹²⁹

At the same time, it is worth pointing out the emergence of terminological proposals different from those considered so far. These proposals signal rather than resolve certain definitional problems.¹³⁰ Terms such as: “aid” and “rescue,” the “Righteous” and other rescuer, have been distinguished, with the potential for differences between these terms outlined. A discussion of the term “Polish aid strategies” is also of key importance here. As aid research progresses, an increasing number of terms related to the provision of aid would emerge. When considering this, it is crucial to always juxtapose the legal situation imposed by the German occupiers with the very essence of aid.¹³¹

Conclusions

As far as the literature approaches comprehension problems of the above methodological issues is concerned, in declarative terms a considerable number of researchers consider aid as a relational issue. However, in fact they focus on discussing the attitudes of Poles towards Jews, including aid. At the same time, they refrain from explaining in detail the mechanisms shaping Polish-Jewish relations, determined by the conditions of the German occupation. Such works, although noting the existence of a “Polish side,” are essentially descriptive rather than analytical, and their authors do not delve into the essence of the mutual relationship. The other approach is to present the perspective of only one side – that of the Jewish victim, which is now the quintessence of Holocaust studies. In our view, the two most commonly used concepts – “Poles towards Jews” and Holocaust studies – somewhat simplistically attempt to answer first and foremost the question

¹²⁹ The terms like “sanction,” “penalty,” “repression” would be much closer to the Occupation situation.

¹³⁰ T. Domański, A. Gontarek, “Co wiemy o pomocy,” pp. 39–59.

¹³¹ The authors of this text are preparing an article on terminological issues in the field of aid.

of the very nature of the historical context at hand, ignoring the next that comes to mind as to why it was so.

The above-mentioned types of concepts are also characterised by a common research assumption regarding the attitudes of the Polish population. This assumption is based on the conviction that the model of social relations in this national group is static, which in the era of intensive development of social sciences is rather odd. After all, it is not necessary to convince anyone today that conditions under the German occupation created a dynamic, constantly changing situation, and it was this actual context that shaped the attitudes of Poles towards Jews.

Regarding the issue of adopted research models – the basic conceptual model has undoubtedly dominated and continues to dominate in the existing literature (although the patterns are being broken),¹³² consisting in the presentation of individual stories of saving Jews, resulting in the form of individual stories or as collections combined into a single study. This model has significantly influenced the collective consciousness of historians working on the subject, although paradoxically, its scholarly validity can be questioned. Perhaps this is why many scholars have been convinced that the subject of aid is not an issue of a research discipline, as the tried and trusted research question chronological method has rarely been applied to the analysis of the aid phenomenon in the works from this field.

In addition to the model mentioned above, there were of course, works that presented the issue in a structured way, and approached the research question in chronological categories, i.e. according to academic rigour. This model, for example, was used in works on organised aid (the Council for Aid to Jews Żegota), or on hiding places, among others. It would appear that this second model, more broadly applied, enables presenting the entirety of aid issues in a historical overview, which is still missing.

The scholarly literature presented and discussed above clearly demonstrates that the evolution of research on aid to Jews has not led to forming an aid definition that could be universally used today. Nor, it can be argued, has there been any debate

¹³² See T. Gonet, *Pomoc Żydom na terenie przedwojennego województwa stanisławowskiego podczas okupacji niemieckiej 1941–1944* [Aid to Jews in the territory of the pre-war Stanisławów Voivodeship under German occupation 1941–1944], Warsaw, 2023. Manuscript of a PhD thesis written at the Cardinal Stanisław Wyszyński University in Warsaw under the direction of Professor Adam Dziurok.

about the need for it in academic research. In fact, only the historians at the Institute of National Remembrance (IPN) have ventured to present it, although their proposal needs to be revised and made more precise. The existing state of affairs is probably due to the dual status of the leading “aid” researchers of the older generation who initiated the research – they were both witnesses of history and historians, in some cases historian-amateurs. The former circumstance in particular meant that they understood aid somewhat intuitively and did not formulate elaborate theoretical frameworks. More attention was paid to the typology and categories of aid, constantly expanding and changing, according to their own concepts, to the scopes of aid activities, which made it possible to vaguely define their nature.

Examining the causes behind the prolonged neglect of the definitional field, it is also worth noting a research gap that surfaced in the early 1990s, coinciding with the democratisation of academic research. At that time, aid-related research began to disappear in favour of an almost exclusive exploration of the so-called dark pages in Polish-Jewish relations during World War II. Subsequently, this current rather quickly dominated the scholarly debate on the subject. Thus, it is unsurprising that only in recent times have the first studies emerged, examining issues like the repression of the Poles for aiding Jews, or the German anti-help laws, which provide a clearer understanding of what aid entailed under the German occupation. Studies of this type – in addition to other scholarly studies – lay the foundations for an indispensable method enabling a research overview for a comprehension of existing knowledge on aid activities.

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SUMMARY

The aid provided to Jews by Poles during World War II was for many post-war decades an issue addressed by a small group of researchers. As a rule, these were people who had themselves given help to the Jews during World War II or had been recipients. At the same time, the topic was subject to political pressure from the communist authorities. In this outline, the authors explore the place of aid-related research within the broader context of issues arising from the terms of the German occupation. The authors examine how the phenomenon of aid has been perceived and documented in historical writings. The authors assert that the cumulative approach of showcasing individual rescuers' stories has been crucial. Nevertheless, they emphasize the necessity for a thorough examination and deeper analysis of aid-related research.

KEYWORDS

helping Jews • research models • Emanuel Ringelblum •
Władysław Bartoszewski • Holocaust studies

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WAS IT TRAUMA? INSIGHTS INTO THE PSYCHOLOGICAL COSTS OF HIDING JEWS DURING WORLD WAR II

Sally Frishberg, a Jewish woman who as a little girl was rescued in the village of Mokszanka (Polish Subcarpathia, near Przeworsk) by Maria and Stanisław Grocholski during World War II, said in the documentary *Echoes from the Attic*, recorded in 2012,¹ that it was only then [i.e. in the time of interview] that she has had realised that it was not only her and her relatives who experienced trauma, but also the members of the Polish family who gave them shelter. At the same time, one may think that she used the term “trauma” not in the colloquial but in the academic sense, since she emphasised that it was “a trauma,” and not just an “ordinary” fear. She reproached herself for not having noticed this trauma until then.

However, while the Holocaust-associated trauma suffered by Jews is well described in scholarly literature and present in the public awareness, the trauma of those who rescued Jews is absent from the public sphere. Perhaps then, Sally

¹ *Echoes from the Attic*, directed by Debbie Goodstein-Rosenfeld, 2012, <https://voicesfromtheattic-echoesfromtheattic.vhx.tv/products/echoes-from-the-attic>, accessed 12 October 2023. The film will be discussed below in the article.

Frishberg was wrong and, in regard to those who sheltered the Jews, the category of trauma is not applicable?

In this article, this author will try to answer this question. First, the study will present how scholarly research accounts for trauma, then it will focus on psychological research on the people who rescued Jews during the war, and finally, it will return to the experiences of the Grocholski family.

Discovering and Defining Trauma

The term “trauma” was defined in the psychology at the end of the nineteenth century to name traumatic experiences that have been removed from a person’s consciousness.²

During World War I, the term was coined to describe the soldiers’ experiences. The novelty appeared because many of them either while still in the trenches or after returning from the front suffered a range of mental disorders. Initially, these disorders were thought to be the result of the shock of exploding bombs, so the syndrome was referred to as “shell shock,” or “bomb shock,” or, more generally, “war neurosis.” However, it soon became apparent that this shock resulted from witnessing the deaths of close or distant comrades, and facing constant threat to life during months of trench warfare. At the same time, the existence of war neurosis was intensely questioned, and soldiers’ mental problems were attributed to a lack of morale. Thus, after the end of the war, the interest in shell shock quickly died out.³ In the United States, the discussion returned during World War II, however, after the end of the war history repeated itself, i.e. the interest in the veterans’ mental state was not great enough to trigger research on the subject.⁴

Polish psychologists, on the other hand, swiftly embarked on documenting the psychological effects of war on a considerable scale, particularly when considering the vast post-war devastation. Almost immediately after the end of hostilities, as early as in June and July 1945, pioneering research in this area was launched by

² J. Herman, *Trauma. Od przemocy domowej do terroru politycznego* (Warsaw, 2020), pp. 25–34. See English edition: J. Herman, *Trauma and Recovery: The Aftermath of Violence – From Domestic Abuse to Political Terror* (New York, 1997).

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 34–37.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 40.

psychologists associated with the State Institute of Mental Hygiene (*Państwowy Instytut Higieny Psychiczej*) in Warsaw. They carried out a questionnaire survey involving over five thousand persons aged from 15 to 23 from Warsaw, Cracow, and Lublin. Among other questions, they asked “Have you noticed a nervous disorder in yourself or someone close to you?” Almost two thirds of the respondents answered in the affirmative.⁵

What constituted these “nervous disorders?” Their symptoms were presented with remarkable insight by Stefan Baley in his article “Psychiczne wpływy drugiej wojny światowej” (Mental Impact of World War II), published in 1948.⁶ Baley described the mental shock felt by people who encountered gruesome scenes during the war, and how elements of these scenes later were intruding into their consciousness both while they were awake (in the 1970s this phenomenon became to be known as flashbacks), and in their sleep (nightmares). He described various behaviors and reactions linked to the wartime shock experience, including:

(1) outbursts of intense emotions, disproportionate to the current situation, such as aggression or sobbing, triggered by a minor and seemingly neutral stimulus

(2) hypervigilance, which manifested as violent reactions to even weak but unexpected stimuli, such as a knocking sound

(3) strong physiological responses, like an accelerated heartbeat, and motoric reactions, such as rushing to the gateways [in search for shelter], triggered by the whirr of an airplane

(4) unconscious avoidance of certain situations or objects, such as a e.g. shower, because – upon drawing the person’s attention to it – the shower was associated with a concentration camp

(5) anhedonia (inability to feel pleasure and joy), loss of faith in the sense of life, depressive and anxious states

(6) “bizarre” and unjustified feeling of guilt towards those who died in the camp that characterises some former concentration camp prisoners

⁵ M. Kaczyńska, “Psychiczne skutki wojny wśród dzieci i młodzieży,” *Zdrowie Psychiczne* 1 (1946), p. 60.

⁶ S. Baley, “Psychiczne wpływy drugiej wojny światowej,” *Psychologia Wychowawcza* 13 (1/2) (1948), pp. 6–24.

Stefan Baley (b. 1885, d. 1952) – was a psychologist, physician and pedagogue, belonged to the Lwów–Warsaw philosophy school, founder of Polish developmental and educational psychology.

(7) sense of unreality (“what is happening now is unreal”) experienced by some people after the war

(8) phenomena of depersonalisation (“it’s not me, things like that don’t happen to me”) and dissociation (experiencing a sense of detachment and observing oneself from an external perspective) experienced by some people during the war.

Baley noted that arguably both depersonalisation and dissociation are forms of self-protection. He recorded the blunted or emotionally indifferent state of former concentration camp inmates.

In the end of his article, Baley pointed out that the severity of the symptoms described above varied among persons examined, and indicated that it probably depended on both situational (the war trauma severity) and personality-related factors. In his analyses, Baley did not provide any statistic data because he simply did not have such. He relied on a variety of records: already existing studies, data obtained from aid agencies, his own interviews and observations. He did not use the term “trauma,” but “war trauma,” (“uraz wojenny”) and called the described set of symptoms a “war complex” (“kompleks wojenny”). In fact, Stefan Baley identified what we now recognize as the Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) nearly thirty years before it was defined by American researchers.

Unfortunately, at the end of the 1940s, psychological research on the effects of the war was halted in Poland. This was probably due to ideological pressure to transform the pre-war, “bourgeois” psychology into a academic discipline serving the interests of “the people”: it rejected its previous foundations and relied on the so-called Pavlovianism – an ideologised and vulgarised version of Pavlov’s theory.⁷ However, immediately after October ‘56, research on the effects of the war was taken up again. This time it was launched by a group of Cracow-based psychiatrists led by Antoni Kępiński.⁸ Between 1959 and 1961, the group conducted a study on the effects of imprisonment in a concentration camp, without considering differences in nationality. The research

⁷ Ivan Pavlov (b. 1849, d. 1936) – a prominent Russian physiologist, Nobel Prize laureate (1904), discoverer and researcher of the principles of respondent conditioning. His research and concepts were used by Marxist ideologues to impose the allegedly only “correct” way of practising psychiatry and psychology on psychologists and psychiatrists in the Soviet Union and the Soviet Bloc countries.

⁸ Antoni Kępiński (b. 1918, d. 1972) – was one of Poland’s most renowned psychiatrists. He served for many years as the head of the Psychiatric Clinic in Cracow, and penned numerous influential books on mental disorders and diseases.

resulted in the description of the so-called KZ-Syndrome, a set of symptoms associated with imprisonment in a camp. Again, many of these symptoms nowadays are classified as symptoms of PTSD.⁹ It is worth mentioning that the periodical *Przegląd Lekarski – Oświęcim* (which was founded on i.a. Antoni Kępiński's initiative) published more than a thousand papers between 1961 and 1991 concerning the medical, psychological and social consequences of imprisonment in concentration camps.¹⁰

In the United States, renewed interest in trauma emerged in the 1970s because of the Vietnam War. Judith Herman,¹¹ a prominent American trauma researcher, observed that a significant social struggle occurred, the assessment of the experiences of Vietnam War veterans being its stake. By the late 1970s, the veterans emerged victorious in this struggle, as a special assistance program was implemented for them, and numerous research studies were initiated. The conclusions were surprising: many of the symptoms of the disorders suffered by veterans could not be attributed to any known psychiatric nosology. At the same time, in the 1970s – under the influence of feminist movements – research on the effects of physical and sexual violence against women and children was started. Consequently, in 1980, the American Psychiatric Association introduced Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) as a new category in the third edition of its Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-III).¹²

In this classification, man-made disasters (e.g. imprisonment in concentration camps, bombing, torture, terrorism), fighting on the front, natural disasters (e.g. floods, earthquakes), traffic and industrial disasters, as well as sexual (especially rape) and physical violence are recognised as occurrences that could lead to PTSD. These are extraordinary situations, catastrophic in nature, that transgress everyday human experiences.¹³ During such events, individuals encounter an overwhelming force bent on their annihilation, rendering them virtually defenseless. Many

⁹ A. Szymusik, "Badanie byłych więźniów obozów koncentracyjnych w krakowskiej Klinice Psychiatrycznej w latach 1959–1990," *Przegląd Lekarski – Oświęcim* 48 (1) (1991), pp. 22–28.

¹⁰ A note on *Przegląd Lekarski – Oświęcim* published on the webpage of the *Medical Review – Auschwitz* project, www.mp.pl/auschwitz/journal/172694,about-the-journal, accessed 10 April 2024.

¹¹ J. Herman, *Trauma. Od przemocy*, pp. 41–42.

¹² M. Lis-Turlejska, *Stres traumatyczny. Występowanie, następstwa, terapia* (Warsaw, 2002), pp. 41–42. See *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (third edition)*. DSM-III (American Psychiatric Association, 1980), pp. 236–238.

¹³ M. Lis-Turlejska, *Stres traumatyczny*, pp. 42–43.

trauma researchers believe that helplessness constitutes the essence of the traumatic experience; it is this helplessness that generates the overwhelming dread which, both during and after the event, disrupts a person's mental system. This disruption results in various distressing symptoms of PTSD and can also lead to depression or a range of physical complaints.¹⁴

According to DSM-III, PTSD consists of three groups of symptoms. The first relates to unwanted, yet persistently recurring memories associated with a traumatic event. These memories may appear while the person is awake in the form of so-called flashbacks, i.e. elements of sensations from the traumatic situation (e.g. hearing the whirring of an aeroplane), as well as in the form of nightmares. The second group of symptoms is related to the unconscious avoidance of anything that could be associated with the traumatic situation (as in the example described by Baley of a former concentration camp prisoner avoiding the shower). Lastly, the third group of symptoms arises from the excessive physiological arousal remaining in the body due to the experienced dread. This group includes variety of symptoms, i.a. difficulties in falling asleep, hypervigilance, irritability, and outbursts of anger.¹⁵

In subsequent editions of the DSM (fourth edition in 1994 and fifth edition in 2013), the original definition of PTSD was revised. The most significant and controversial change was broadening the scope of traumatic events to include not only direct participation in life-threatening situations but also witnessing such events.¹⁶

Following the American Psychiatric Association, the World Health Organization (WHO) included PTSD in its International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Health Problems (ICD-10) in 1992. Additionally, WHO identified acute stress reaction (ASR) syndrome, which the American Psychiatric Association later

¹⁴ B. van der Kolk, *Strach ucieleśniony. Mózg, umysł i ciało w terapii traumy* (Warsaw, 2019), p. 127. See English edition: B. van der Kolk, *The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma* (London, 2015).

¹⁵ M. Lis-Turlejska, *Stres traumatyczny*, pp. 42–43.

¹⁶ B. Zawadzki, A. Popiel, "Na rozstaju dróg: struktura objawów stresu pourazowego (PTSD) po DSM-5, a przed ICD-11," *Nauka* 4 (2014), p. 72; S. Steuden, K. Janowski, "Trauma – kontrowersje wokół pojęcia, diagnoza, następstwa, implikacje praktyczne," *Roczniki Psychologiczne* 19 (3) (2016), pp. 551–553, and the English version of the paper: S. Steuden, K. Janowski, "Trauma – Controversies Surrounding the Concept, Diagnosis, Aftermath, and Practical Implications," *Roczniki Psychologiczne* 19 (3) (2016), pp. 569–571. See *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (4th Edition) (American Psychiatric Publishing, Inc., 1994); *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders. Fifth Edition* (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). DOI: <https://doi/book/10.1176/appi.books.9780890425596>.

incorporated as acute stress disorder (ASD) in the DSM-IV in 1994. In Poland, the ICD system is used, but the differences between the ICD and DSM regarding PTSD are minimal and, for the purposes of this article, negligible.¹⁷

Acute stress reaction syndrome (ASR) is defined in the ICD-10 as a transient disorder of significant severity that develops in a person without any other apparent mental disorder in response to an exceptional physical or mental stress that usually subsides within a few hours or days. Such a stressful stimulus could be a natural disaster, combat fatigue, house fire etc. It is assumed that ASR has a huge variety of symptoms, and that the reaction to the stress can be graded. In its mild form, it manifests as anxiety and bewilderment, accompanied by a narrowing of consciousness, an inability to comprehend the situation, and disorientation. By contrast, in the moderate form at least two, and in the severe form – at least four of the symptoms should be present:

- (1) withdrawal from social interactions
- (2) narrowing of attention
- (3) anger, rage or verbalised aggression
- (4) despair or a sense of hopelessness
- (5) inappropriate or pointless overactivity
- (6) uncontrolled and undue sadness (gloominess).

In addition, dissociative states that are beyond conscious control or even beyond awareness may occur.¹⁸

Of course, not all people who have experienced a traumatic situation develop ASR or PTSD. Estimates vary, e.g. Janusz Heitzmann¹⁹ stated that PTSD affects around 10–20 per cent of people who have experienced a traumatic situation, while ASR affects more, up to 50 per cent, but these estimates are burdened with a fair amount of uncertainty. The uncertainty is caused by the occurrence that the emergence of the effects of trauma depends on situational factors (the duration and severity of the trauma) and personality-related factors (including emotional

¹⁷ S. Steuden, K. Janowski, "Trauma – kontrowersje," pp. 549–550; S. Steuden, K. Janowski, "Trauma – Controversies," pp. 567–568

¹⁸ J. Heitzmann, "Zaburzenia po stresie traumatycznym – praktyka kliniczna i opiniowanie," *Psychiatria po Dyplomie* 7 (5) (2010), p. 61.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

vulnerability). Recently, there has been growing emphasis on the importance of social support after psychic trauma as a crucial and powerful protective factor against the development of PTSD.²⁰

A Psychological Portrait of People who Rescued Jews During the War. Current Research Overview

Once PTSD was identified and classified as a mental disorder in DSM and ICD, psychologists and psychiatrists acquired a previously unavailable new tool for studying war victims. This turning point has led to a kind of explosion of research on the trauma of Jewish Holocaust survivors since the 1980s. While working on this article, in August 2023, I typed the keyword “Holocaust trauma” into the most popular psychological search engines (APA PsycArticles and APA PsycInfo) and came up with 1,487 entries. In Poland, the team associated with Cracow’s Psychiatry Clinic of the Medical Academy (*Klinika Psychiatrii Akademii Medycznej*) (and later Collegium Medicum of the Jagiellonian University) has made a particular contribution to the study of Holocaust survivors. In the 1990s, on the initiative of Maria Orwid,²¹ this clinic began conducting individual therapy sessions for Holocaust survivors, which later expanded to group therapy. There was also research that included not only survivors, but also their children, thus addressing the transgenerational transmission of trauma.²²

Unfortunately, when I typed “Jews’ rescuer trauma” into the search engines, I did not receive a single entry. So the search was expanded and “Jews’ rescuers” was typed in. In this case, 37 items were obtained, all of which dealt with factors that distinguish those who rescued Jews during the war from those who did not. In other words, that research was about finding out the reasons why some people chose to act so heroically.

²⁰ M. Rzeszutek, M. Lis-Turlejska, A. Krajewska, A. Zawadzka, M. Lewandowski, S. Szumiał, “Long-Term Psychological Consequences of World War II. Trauma Among Polish Survivors: A Mixed-Method Study on the Role of Social Acknowledgement,” *Frontiers in Psychology* 11 (2020), p. 2.

²¹ Maria Orwid (b. 1930, d. 2009) – was a psychiatrist specialising in child and adolescent disorders. She was one of the pioneers of family therapy in Poland. Born in a Polish-assimilated Jewish family, during the war she escaped with her mother from the ghetto in Przemyśl, and hid in the house of Teofila Kic, who was in 2008 posthumously honoured with The Righteous Among the Nations title.

²² K. Rutkowski, E. Dembińska, “Powojenne badania stresu pourazowego w Krakowie, cz. 2: Badania po roku 1989,” *Psychiatria Polska* 50 (5) (2015), pp. 949–951.

Research into the Motivations of People who Rescued Jews During the War

The pioneering research in this area was carried out in the 1980s by Samuel Oliner and his wife Pearl. Interestingly, Oliner was born in Poland (near Dukla), escaped from the ghetto as a teenager and survived the war thanks to the help of his neighbours in his home village. After the war, he moved to the United States, where he pursued his academic career.²³ Oliners' research was remarkably extensive.²⁴ It took place across several European countries formerly occupied by Nazi Germany during World War II, including Poland, with the involvement of Polish psychologists. A total of 700 interviews were gathered – half from individuals who aided Jews under the German occupation and half from those who did not. The purpose of analysing these interviews was to understand the motivations behind the actions of those who risked their lives to save Jews.

In their search for answers, the Oliners considered 150 variables, which they gradually grouped into larger groups. Ultimately, they concluded that what set rescuers apart from non-rescuers was the so-called extensiveness felt, i.e. universality of moral obligation to help. In other words, those who did not aid Jews felt a moral duty to help only those who were relatively close to them, such as family members, neighbours, or members of their own social group. Those who did help Jews felt a moral obligation to provide aid even to those who were essentially strangers.

In a subsequent publication, Pearl Oliner²⁵ reanalysed the data and found that individuals who rescued Jews had significantly more positive interactions with Jews and foreigners before the war, compared to those who did not provide aid. It can therefore be assumed that, at least for some rescuers, the extensiveness of moral obligations was due to the inclusion of people from other ethnic groups in the “we” circle already before the war.

²³ A biographical note about Samuel Oliner on the Polin Museum website Wirtualny Sztetl, <https://sztetl.org.pl/pl/biogramy/4640-oliner-samuel-p>, accessed 12 October 2023.

²⁴ S.P. Oliner, P.M. Oliner, *The Altruistic Personality: Rescuers of Jews in Nazi Europe* (New York, 1988).

²⁵ As cited in Ch.J. Einolf, “Does Extensivity Form Part of the Altruistic Personality? An Empirical Test of Oliner and Oliner’s Theory,” *Social Science Research* 39 (2010), p. 143.

It is relevant to note that Pearl Oliner's conclusions correspond with historical findings in this matter. Zuzanna Schnepf-Kończak analysed 479 cases of The Righteous who helped Jews in villages in the General Governorate. Almost 60 per cent gave shelter to Jews with whom they had personal relations before the war, and another almost 10 per cent to Jews who were acquaintances of their relatives. Looking from the other side at the data obtained from this analysis, it can be concluded that 81 per cent of the rescued Jews had lived before the war in the neighbourhood of those Poles who hid them during the war.²⁶

Of the more recent psychological research on rescuers of Jews, it is worth noting the work of Stephanie Fagin-Jones and Elizabeth Midlarsky,²⁷ who also searched for the factors that determined the decision to help Jews. The results of their research largely overlap with the Oliners' findings. Similarly to the Oliners, these researchers found that it was personality traits, rather than situational factors like housing conditions, that distinguished those who helped from those who did not. Among the personality traits, however, they identified not only a sense of moral obligation to help, but also a willingness to take risks, which according to them was higher in those who rescued Jews than in those who did not. They therefore entitled their article: "Courageous Altruism: Personal and Situational Correlates of Rescue During the Holocaust."

Although the motivations for helping Jews during the war have been extensively studied, the mental toll on those who helped has hardly received any attention or been the subject of research. Neither in English nor in Polish literature in the field has this author been able to find studies concerning the trauma of those who helped Jews. In contrast, two Polish studies on the prevalence of PTSD among civilian survivors of World War II include people who hid Jews during the war.

²⁶ Z. Schnepf-Kończak, "Polish Help to Jews in the Countryside During the German Occupation: A Sketch Using the Example of the Righteous Among the Nations," *Holocaust Study Studies and Materials* (2013), pp. 122–158. See also M. Urynowicz, "Zorganizowana i indywidualna pomoc Polaków dla ludności żydowskiej eksterminowanej przez okupanta niemieckiego w okresie drugiej wojny światowej," in *Polacy i Żydzi pod okupacją niemiecką 1939–1945. Studia i materiały*, ed. A. Żbikowski (Warsaw, 2006), pp. 209–364.

²⁷ S. Fagin-Jones, E. Midlarsky, "Courageous Altruism: Personal and Situational Correlates of Rescue During the Holocaust," *The Journal of Positive Psychology* 2 (2) (2007), pp. 136–147.

The Psychological Costs of Helping Jews

The first of these studies was conducted in 2014 and published two years later. Its authors, Maja Lis-Turlejska, Aleksandra Łuszczynska and Szymon Szumiał,²⁸ gathered data from 96 people: 59 women and 37 men aged 70–96, i.e. those who were between one and 27 years old in 1945. The respondents completed a specially made questionnaire entitled “Events Connected with World War II,” two questionnaires to diagnose PTSD and one measuring levels of depression.

The questionnaire “Events Connected with World War II” included facts such as the loss of a next of kin, torture; imprisonment in a concentration camp, staying in a ghetto, being bombed, going into hiding, being forcibly deported to Siberia, forced labour and starvation endangering one’s life or health. Moreover, pursuant to DSM-V, witnessing combat, seeing someone being shot, or witnessing an execution were included. However, in terms of this article, the most interesting is that hiding Jews and witnessing Jews being attacked or persecuted was also on the list.

The respondents were asked to mark all the events in which they had participated. As a result, ten respondents (i.e. 10.45 per cent) did not mark any, while the others ticked off from 1 to over 10 events. Hiding Jews was declared by four people (4.2 per cent of survey participants), while being a witness to an or persecution of Jews was declared by 38 people (39.6 per cent of survey participants). In the group of people who had not experienced any traumatic event during the war, there was no one for whom a diagnosis of PTSD could be found on the basis of the tests used. In contrast, among those who had marked at least one such event, there were 31 (i.e. 36 per cent of the subjects) whose results indicated the presence of PTSD at the clinical level. In terms of severity of depression, there were no significant differences between the above groups.

The second study²⁹ was published in 2020. It involved 123 participants aged between 74 and 103 years (with an average age of 85.2 years), meaning that they were between one and 29 years old in 1945. They were presented with a list of traumatic events described above, tools diagnosing PTSD and depression, and a questionnaire

²⁸ M. Lis-Turlejska, A. Łuszczynska, S. Szumiał, “Rozpowszechnienie PTSD wśród osób, które przeżyły II wojnę światową w Polsce,” *Psychiatria Polska* 50 (5) (2016), pp. 923–934.

²⁹ M. Rzeszutek, M. Lis-Turlejska, A. Krajewska, A. Zawadzka, M. Lewandowski, S. Szumiał, “Long-Term Psychological Consequences.”

examining the social recognition of a person's trauma, i.e. the extent to which the survey participants are perceived by their immediate and distant environment as victims of war. In this survey, 19 people (15.4 per cent) reported hiding Jews and 42 (34.1 per cent) reported witnessing Jews being attacked or persecuted.

Twenty-five people from the examined group (20.3 per cent) met the criteria for PTSD and 66 people (53.7 per cent) had results indicative of depression, with the greater the number of traumatic events a person declared, the higher the level of PTSD and depression symptoms they presented. In addition, very interesting results were obtained when the examined persons' social recognition of trauma was included in the statistical analyses. This variable caused the link between the number of traumatic events and depression to disappear. However, this was not the case for PTSD. In other words, the lack of social recognition that a person was a victim of war appeared to be associated with the level of PTSD symptoms, but not with the level of depression.

To summarise both studies, it must first of all be emphasised that hiding Jews was considered in those surveys as a traumatic event. This is obvious, as people hiding Jews faced a significant and often prolonged threat, risking not only their own lives, but also the lives of their loved ones. Moreover, according to DSM-V, also being a witness to the persecution of Jews was considered a traumatic event. As already mentioned, the extension in DSM-V of the list of traumatic events to include situations where one is not a participant in the events, but a witness to them, is questionable. This nonetheless is taken into account, however, because certainly the perspective of a trauma can be relevant for the analysis of the behaviour of so-called bystanders, i.e. witnesses of the Holocaust.³⁰ Nevertheless, this subject shall not be addressed here, as it is extensive and contentious, and undoubtedly needs a targeted analysis.

The authors of the studies discussed above considered the hiding of Jews as a traumatic event, but it is not possible to state on the basis of the results of these studies whether the people who hid Jews (23 in both studies in total) had symptoms of PTSD, because the researchers analysed the data obtained collectively for all categories of traumatic events. Thus, the question in the title of this article can

³⁰ M. Jakimowicz, "Trauma świadka, trauma ofiary? Holokaust i antypolska akcja w pamięci osób urodzonych w Galicji Wschodniej," *Etnografia. Praktyki, teorie, doświadczenia* 4 (2018), pp. 191–210.

be answered by stating that hiding Jews was a traumatic event, but it is not known whether it resulted in PTSD symptoms.

In this situation, we are only left with estimates. In the first study, 36 percent of survey participants who experienced at least one traumatic event during the war had PTSD symptoms sixty years later, while in the second study, just over 20 percent did. Considering the severe punishments imposed in Poland for hiding Jews, it is certain, though difficult to estimate, that a significant proportion of Poles who hid Jews during the war suffered from PTSD for varying durations, and in many cases, likely for the rest of their lives.

Case Study: The Trauma of the Grocholski Family

As mentioned in the introduction, after having presented what trauma is in research terms and the presentation of psychological studies on people who i.a. rescued Jews during the war, it is possible to return to the question of the trauma of Maria and Stanisław Grocholski. In the analyses to answer this question, two sources shall be relied on.

The first is a note posted on the Yad Vashem website about Stanisław Grocholski,³¹ who in 2011 (that is 34 years after his death) was honoured with The Righteous Among the Nations title. His wife Maria Grocholska did not receive this title, but the note about Grocholski contains information also about her.

The second source is the documentary film *Echoes from the Attic*, directed by Debbie Goodstein-Rosenfeld,³² the daughter of one of the people rescued by the Grocholski family. This film was made in 2012 on the occasion of the ceremony of handing The Righteous Among the Nations medal awarded posthumously to Stanisław Grocholski. The first part of the film shows the ceremony during which Zofia Lasek, the oldest daughter of the Grocholski spouses, received the medal on behalf of her father. During this ceremony, the film *Voices from the Attic*, also made in 1989 by Debbie Goodstein-Rosenfeld,³³ is also screened, recounting the

³¹ Stanisław Grocholski's biographical note on the Yad Vashem website, https://righteous.yadvashem.org/?searchType=righteous_only&language=en&itemId=4350116&ind=0, accessed 22 September 2023.

³² *Echoes from the Attic*.

³³ See <https://voicesfromtheatticechoesfromtheattic.vhx.tv/products/echoes-from-the-attic>, accessed 12 October 2023.

ordeal of the Jewish families who were hidden by the Grocholskis in the attic of their wooden house. In this film, several survivors speak negatively about Maria Grocholska. Consequently, Zofia Lasek, affected by how her mother was portrayed, leaves the ceremony with her family. The second part of the film tells the story of how Jews, a big group of whom came from the United States to the ceremony honouring Stanisław Grocholski, moved by Zofia Lasek's reaction, enter into a conversation with her about the events of the war. This conversation leads Sally Frishberg, one of the survivors, to conclude that the trauma was shared not only by the Jews in hiding, but also by the Grocholski family.

As the note on the Yad Vashem website indicates, Stanisław Grocholski befriended as a child the Jewish siblings Cywia and Yitzhak Gamss, and was warmly welcomed in their home, which must have been of great importance to him, as he himself lost his parents at an early age. By the time of the war, both Grocholski and the Gamsses were adults and had families of their own. In the summer of 1942, Cywia and Yitzhak and their families managed to avoid deportation. They wandered around, slept in the open air and Grocholski provided them with food. However, in the autumn, having realised that they would not survive the winter in the fields, Cywia Engelberg (née Gamss) asked Stanisław to hide them in her house, and promised his wife all her jewellery and valuables. Mrs. Grocholska demanded also a small sheepskin (coat),³⁴ which was retrieved from Engelberg's neighbour and delivered to her. In the autumn, the Grocholskis took twelve people under their roof: two couples (Cywia and Leon Engelberg, and Yitzhak and Leah Gamss) along with eight children. During the winter, at Cywia's request, Stanisław also took in three of her brothers. Thus, in total, fifteen people found shelter in the Grocholski household: seven adults and eight children.

Stanisław Grocholski's motivation, as presented in his biographical note on the Yad Vashem website, may be an illustration of the extensiveness of which the Oliners wrote. According to the same note, on the other hand, Maria Grocholska's motivation seems to have been purely material, for she was not satisfied with

³⁴ Zofia Lasek in the film *Echoes from the Attic* spoke about a "small sheepskin coat" ("kożuszek"), the Yad Vashem note, however, mentions a "fur coat." Considering that the events discussed took place in wartime Poland's mountain countryside in the 1940s, one may presume that it was a lady's sheepskin coat.

promises that she would receive Cywia Engelberg's valuables, and she additionally demanded her sheepskin. However, taking in Jews (twelve people!) on condition of getting a sheepskin seems odd to me. Was a sheepskin valuable enough at the time to offset the immense risk and burden of hiding twelve people? Perhaps it was merely a ploy? Perhaps Grocholska, reluctant to take in Jews who were likely strangers to her, felt unable or unwilling to refuse her husband, who was considered the "head of the family" according to the social norms of the time. Consequently, she demanded the sheepskin, hoping that Cywia Engelberg would not part with it before the upcoming winter, and the issue would resolve itself on its own. These questions cannot be answered, so we do not know Grocholska's motives, especially her relationship with her husband – in sum, *tabula rasa*. Grocholska was likely driven by a mix of conflicting motives, but ultimately, as Yad Vashem suggests, her hopes for financial gain may have prevailed.

The Jews were hidden by the Grocholskis for almost two years, from autumn 1942 until August 1944, when the Red Army entered the village. At one time there were fifteen of them; eventually twelve survived (Leah Gamss and her two children did not survive). They stayed mainly in the attic of the wooden house where the Grocholskis lived, and also in the barn in winter, because it was warmer there.

How did the Grocholski family manage their everyday lives during that period? How did they handle the immense danger and the strain on their resources caused by hiding so many people? Especially as they themselves had four little children; their eldest daughter was about 8 years old at the time.

As the Yad Vashem note indicates, the Grocholski family – probably fearing that one of the children might unintentionally reveal that there were people in their attic – tried to keep this fact a secret. Also, the Grocholskis' eldest daughter, Zofia Lasek, in *Echoes from the Attic* recalls that sometimes at night she would hear her father talking in a low voice to strangers. This made her fearful. She also tells how one day her mother sent her with a can of milk and bread to her father, who was working in the field, but she guessed that the food was not really for him. She concludes, "I sensed something, but it was really nothing." She was aware that something unusual was happening in the house, but she couldn't grasp what it was. These memories imply that the Grocholskis managed to conceal the presence of Jews in the attic from their children. How then, did they do it?

Given the division of responsibilities in a rural household at the time, it can be assumed that this task rested mainly on Maria Grocholska's shoulders. Her husband probably did work in the field and farm (ploughing, sowing, etc.) from early spring to late autumn, while she took care of the house and four small children. Incidentally, it may be argued that this situation was beneficial for Grocholski's mental condition, because during his fieldwork he was away from the immediate source of stress, and relieved his physiological tension with physical effort. His wife, on the other hand, was not afforded this. She, while staying at home, had to be constantly on guard to ensure that the children on the ground floor did not hear that several people, including several children, lived in the attic. It is known from numerous psychological studies that vigilance, one of the basic functions of attention, is very draining on mental resources.³⁵ All armies of the world are aware of this, by the way, which is why soldiers on guard change every few hours. Grocholska "stood guard" continuously, all day long (and probably sometimes even at night, as she had small children) for almost two years! Additionally, it's likely that this situation led to significant tension, mutual grievances, and resentment between her and "the attic."

It is likely Grocholska's duties also included preparing meals for those in hiding. Zofia Lasek, in the film *Echoes from the Attic* recounts how she and her mother were peeling a huge pot of potatoes for the Jews hidden in the attic, and unexpectedly a neighbour dropped by and asked Grocholska who they were peeling it for. Grocholska then showed not only her cold blood, but also her intelligence, as she quickly found a rational explanation. She told her neighbour that their horse had fallen ill and they were peeling the potatoes for it, because a sick horse cannot be fed unpeeled potatoes.

Zofia Lasek also remembers that there were times when they experienced hunger, suggesting that the Grocholski farm struggled to provide enough food for the extra dozen people. Survivors in the film *Echoes from the Attic* say that the Grocholskis constantly demanded money from them for food, and Lasek claims that her parents sold the jewellery of the Jews to buy food. The Grocholskis therefore had to obtain food from outside. How did they do this? What risks did it entail? Unfortunately, there is no information on this in the sources discussed.

³⁵ E. Nęcka, J. Orzechowski, B. Szymura, S. Wichary, *Psychologia poznawcza* (Warsaw, 2020), p. 198.

Similarly, we don't know the diet of the persons in hiding. Did they subsist on just potatoes, bread, and milk? Did Grocholska prepare hot meals for them? If so, how often and what did she cook? Perhaps she made soup or baked bread for them, which seems likely given that baking bread was common in the countryside at that time. If that was the case, how much bread did she have to bake to feed a dozen people? All these questions remain unanswered.

On the other hand, we learn from the Yad Vashem note that the hidden often suffered from thirst, as there was only one well in the village and Grocholski was afraid to go to fetch water too often so as not to arouse suspicions. It can therefore be assumed that it was his responsibility to fetch water. How many buckets a day was it necessary to bring to satisfy the basic needs of a dozen people? After all, as one can assume, at least from time to time water was needed by those hiding not only for consumption, but also to wash themselves or wash their underwear. How far was the well from the Grocholskis' house? Neither the note in question nor the film provides any information on this subject. To complete the picture of everyday life, it should be added that, as we read in the Yad Vashem note, it was Grocholski who carried the buckets of faeces out of the attic at night and emptied it.

In the Grocholskis' everyday life, the constant threat of being compromised and their relentless efforts to avoid it were ever-present. Mokszańska, where they lived, is located about 15 km from Markowa, where in March 1944 the Germans killed for hiding Jews not only the Ulma spouses but also all their children, who were of a similar age to the Grocholskis children. One can assume that the news of the massacre in Markowa quickly reached Mokszańska. Did it also reach the Grocholski family? How did they react to it? From March until the end of July 1944, when the Red Army entered Mokszańska, four more months passed – 120 long days and nights....

In the film *Echoes from the Attic* survivors say that Grocholska suffered a nervous breakdown during the war and cursed them with the worst insults. In the Yad Vashem note, there is no information about her nervous breakdown, whereas instead we read that one day one of the Jewish children saw Maria Grocholski feeding the chicken and muttering: "You only cause me trouble. One day I will put poison in your food and rid myself of all of you." The Jews hiding in the attic fell into a panic: they thought that Grocholska really meant it. One of them

intervened with her husband who made excuses for his wife's conduct, saying this was only because she was so scared of being caught. Following that, no similar incident occurred again.

Assuming that the Jewish girl understood Grocholska's "muttering" correctly, how should the story be interpreted? Did Maria really intend to poison the Jews she was hiding? Moreover, is there information on her nervous breakdown mentioned in the film? Unfortunately, the timeline of these events is unknown. However, on the basis of the data available and circumstantial knowledge of this trauma, an attempt shall be made to reconstruct (of course only as far as possible), what Grocholska experienced in psychological terms from the moment she agreed to take the Jews into her home. In doing so, the assumption is made, as per above, that although her motivation was probably very complex, in the end the hope of material gain prevailed.

It is likely that over time Grocholska realised more and more that no amount of material gain could offset the danger and burden of keeping a group of Jews in her home. Hiding Jews, especially such a big group, posed a danger that at any moment the matter would come to light, the Germans would raid her house and her entire family, including her four young children, would be killed. However, throwing the Jews out was not a viable option either, as they would almost certainly be quickly captured by the Germans and might reveal their hiding place, under interrogation. This was all the more likely as there were several children among them. Thus, Grocholska and her children found themselves in a deadly trap. The literature in the field³⁶ emphasises that the essence of a traumatic event is being confronted with an overwhelming force while having no means of escape, leaving the person helpless. This was precisely the traumatic situation Maria Grocholska faced.

What emotions did this situation evoke in her? Undoubtedly, fear was paramount. Researchers often emphasize that in a traumatic situation, it is not just "mere" fear, but an overwhelming sense of terror linked to the prospect of annihilation. This feeling of terror in turn gave rise to an explosive mixture of negative emotions: bitterness, grief, despair, anger, rage and hatred towards those who were the cause of her predicament. Who was, in her mind, that cause? Certainly

³⁶ B. van der Kolk, *Strach ucieleśniony*, pp. 88–90.

the Jews in hiding. Was it also her husband? We do not know. Moreover, what of Grocholska herself? Did she regret that she had agreed, was she angry with herself, did she have a sense of guilt? We do not know that either.

Researchers emphasise that certain sensations during a traumatic event are so extreme that a person's mental system is unable to integrate them into the self and then a detachment, or dissociation, occurs.³⁷ Was this the case for Grocholska? It can be assumed that on a day-to-day basis these negative emotions were pushed out of her consciousness, because otherwise she would not be able to live normally. However, from time to time they gained more or less control over her behaviour. This is when thoughts would come over her that she would poison the Jews and free herself from danger, or she would hurl the worst insults at them. Was she then losing her sense of identity (which in professional language is called depersonalisation) or of the surrounding reality (which in turn is described as derealisation)? We do not know this. However, it can be assumed with a high degree of probability that these behaviours were beyond her conscious control, or perhaps beyond her consciousness at all. It can also be assumed that those were not the only symptoms of Grocholska's mental suffering, but we have no information about others.

Of course, a diagnosis cannot be made on the basis of material collected in this way (especially as this author is not a psychiatrist, but a psychologist), but it seems that Grocholska's nervous breakdown in professional language would be called acute stress reaction (ASR) syndrome. As mentioned earlier, this happens quite often in a traumatic situation, spontaneously subsides or develops into a chronic state, i.e. PTSD.

In the film *Echoes from the Attic* Grocholskis' daughter says that her parents had "shattered nerves," "neuroses" and "stomach ulcers" after the war. Thus, it can be thought that in Maria Grocholska's case the acute stress reaction turned into a chronic state, but her husband was not spared the effects of the trauma either, with the result that they both experienced post-traumatic stress symptoms such as excessive agitation (irritability), generalised anxiety and somatic ailments for the rest of their lives.

Lasek also says that her parents did not disclose after the war that they had hidden Jews. The Yad Vashem note also underlines that the Grocholskis refused

³⁷ *Ibid.*

to disclose this fact for a long time after the war. Public opinion often points out fear of their neighbours' anti-Semitism as the reason for such behaviour. However, it may be posited that in the case of the Grocholski family it may also have been caused by the trauma they experienced, as avoidance of stimuli associated with a traumatic situation is one of the PTSD primary symptoms. This seems all the more likely because the trauma led to Grocholska's socially unacceptable behaviour, or more broadly, a psychological crisis that the family probably did not want to reveal to the outside world.

Further, what can be said of the Grocholskis' children in this matter? Zofia Lasek says of herself that she was afraid, she "lost her childhood," her parents "used her." She recalls how her father would beat her to make her cry loudly. At the time, there were Germans in the village, and a Jewish child was crying in the attic. Her father wanted to drown out the sound of the child's cries with his daughter's cry. After telling this story, she adds that she has forgiven her father, but she probably means not only that beating, but the whole thing, namely the extremely difficult, tense atmosphere in the house that prevailed both when there were Jews in the attic and later, after the war, when both parents were struggling with the effects of the trauma.

As in the findings of Sally Frishberg, it can be seen that hiding Jews was a profound trauma for the entire Grocholski family. Not only did they experience a traumatic situation that lasted almost two years, but they also suffered the psychological and somatic effects of this situation. Maria Grocholska suffered an acute traumatic stress reaction (ASR) during the war per se, and both Grocholskis experienced the psychological and somatic effects of this stress long after the war, probably until their deaths. It can be assumed that the parents' trauma also had a negative impact on their daughters.

At this point, it is difficult not to ask the following: why has the trauma of the Grocholski family, especially Maria, been overlooked by the Yad Vashem Institute? Why has the "muttering" about the poisoning of Jews not been given any thought? Why has the information, which could be read as a serious accusation against Mrs. Grocholska, not been commented on by the Institute? After all, knowledge of the trauma of the Holocaust must be widespread at Yad Vashem, and Stanisław Grocholski explained his wife's behavior by her extreme fear. Why, then, has no

attempt been made to explain her behavior in the light of the general knowledge on trauma?

The conclusion can be reached that to some extent, the focus on the perspective of the survivors and the almost complete omission of the Grocholskis' perspective, which is very evident in the note in question, is responsible for this. This is understandable, as when the note was edited, the Grocholskis had already been dead for several decades. Moreover, Maria's behaviour must have been very painful for the Jews in hiding and added to the fear they experienced, so it is hardly surprising that they remembered her only in dark colours. However, what is striking about the note is the lack of any attempt to objectify the events presented or to clarify the questionable circumstances. This applies not only to Grocholska's "muttering."

For example, the matter of feeding the hidden Jews is reduced to a few words, namely the mention that Grocholski brought them food at night. By contrast, the story of the sheepskin coat takes up two long sentences, and the story of the "muttering" about poisoning – five. Meanwhile, the task of feeding a dozen or so people for almost two years in these conditions must have been an immense challenge for the hosts in every respect: organisational, financial, emotional (even peeling potatoes was risky), and physical. It was a constant concern, an arduous duty, and required daily work, likely falling primarily on Maria.

Finally, it is unclear why the note, intended to honour Stanisław Grocholski, includes purely negative information about his wife. This information could have been omitted. Would Grocholski have been satisfied with this form of recognition?

Conclusion: The Issue of Acknowledging the Trauma Suffered by Those Who Gave Shelter to Jews

It is undeniable that hiding Jews was a traumatic experience for those involved, particularly in situations where entire families faced the threat of the death penalty. This conclusion follows directly from the classification of traumatic events within both DSM-V and ICD-10. In the absence of systemic research, the question of how often sheltering Jews led to the occurrence of disorders caused by traumatic stress cannot be answered with equal clarity. This applies both to the acute stress reaction (ASR), i.e. the symptoms that appeared while the traumatic situation was still present, and to post-traumatic symptoms (PTSD): depression and somatic

disorders. This type of trauma has been overlooked, it has neither been studied nor described in literature, nor is it present in the public consciousness. There are probably many reasons for this omission. Here two of them shall be highlighted.

Firstly, the growth of research-based knowledge on trauma coincided with Poland's restoration of sovereignty, allowing researchers to study groups that had faced political persecution, such as Stalinist prisoners and exiles to Siberia. Consequently, trauma researchers focused on these groups.³⁸ Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, as the authors of a study on the prevalence of PTSD in the adult population of our country³⁹ point out, Poles, for political reasons, had not been able to freely disclose their difficult experiences for several decades. As a result, neither the trauma of World War II nor other traumas experienced in connection with historical events have been socially assimilated and acknowledged.⁴⁰ However, as the history of the Grocholski family, and above all the story of Maria Grocholska shows, this omission has had very serious negative consequences for the remembrance of these people. For if the trauma of those who rescued Jews during the war had been described and socially acknowledged, the authors of the note on the Yad Vashem website would not have been able to describe the Grocholski family as they did.

Today, this oversight will be very difficult to rectify, if it is possible at all. The people who sheltered Jews have long since passed away; also their children belong to a passing generation. It is therefore no longer possible to study either the first or the second generation of people who experienced the trauma of hiding Jews. In similar situations, the researcher refers to written documents, but do such documents exist?

³⁸ K. Rutkowski, E. Dembińska, J. Walczewska, "Posttrauma Symptoms in Poles Persecuted for Political Reasons, 1939–1968," *Journal of Loss and Trauma* 20 (2015), pp. 72–84.

³⁹ M. Rzeszutek *et al.*, "Exposure to Self-Reported Traumatic Events and Probable PTSD in a National Sample of Poles: Why Does Poland's PTSD Prevalence Differ from Other National Estimates?," *Plos One* 18 (7) (2023), pp. 8–9.

⁴⁰ It is difficult to disagree with this statement. Indeed, it appears that the psychological effects of traumas related to Polish historical experiences are neither present in the public consciousness nor in the cultural sphere. For instance, many American films focus on the overcoming of trauma by Vietnam War veterans. In contrast, our filmography includes works that address traumatic events, such as *Przesłuchanie* (Interrogation) directed by Ryszard Bugajski and *Wołyń* (Volhynia) directed by Wojciech Smarzowski, but lacks films that explore the subsequent fate of trauma survivors and their struggle with the psychological effects of these experiences.

While looking for materials for this article,⁴¹ this author browsed, among other sources, through one of the volumes covering testimonies about aid provided to Jews by Poles during World War II (coming from the so-called Bielawski investigation), edited by Sebastian Piątkowski.⁴² The interrogations in this investigation, however, were conducted only to establish facts about who helped the persecuted Jews, when, where and in what form, while there is no information on the mental states of the rescuers. This raises the question of whether there is any material in Polish archives at all that could be examined from the point of view of the trauma of those who hid Jews.

The case of Maria Grocholska also prompted the thought that records on the effects of the traumatic stress on people who helped Jews might be held in the archives of the Yad Vashem Institute. It would be appropriate to look for them there. Admittedly, this proposition touches not only on a sensitive topic in Polish-Jewish relations, but also on inter-state relations (Poland-Israel), and therefore a strictly political area.⁴³ However, it would appear that a joint Polish-Israeli study of the trauma of Poles who rescued Jews during the war could improve these relations.

The film *Echoes from the Attic* ends with a happy ending. Sally Frishberg and Zofia Lasek, after a difficult conversation about the relationship of their families during the war, part in cordial harmony. Of course, what the heroines of the film succeeded in doing is much more difficult to achieve in the socio-political dimension, but it is necessary to make such an attempt because the work started by the protagonists of the film *Echoes from the Attic* is certainly worth continuing.

⁴¹ My sincere thanks to Dr. Roman Gieroi for his help in my research, particularly for pointing out Stanisław Grocholski's biographical note on the Yad Vashem website, and one of the volumes of investigation records from the so-called Bielawski investigation.

⁴² *Relacje o pomocy udzielanej Żydom przez Polaków w latach 1939–1945*, vol. 2: *Dystrykt krakowski Generalnego Gubernatorstwa*, selected and edited by S. Piątkowski (Lublin–Warsaw, 2020).

⁴³ Renowned trauma expert Judith Lewis Herman contends that acknowledging specific types of trauma, such as those experienced by Vietnam War veterans, inherently intersects with political issues.

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SUMMARY

This article discusses the problem of applying the category of trauma to people who provided shelter to Jews during World War II. The Holocaust-related trauma suffered by Jews is well described in the literature and present in the public consciousness. The trauma of those who rescued Jews, however, is absent from the public sphere. This brief study outlines how trauma is addressed in Holocaust studies, then presents psychological research on those who rescued Jews during World War II. Finally, in the light of the research-based knowledge on trauma and the psychological portrait of those who rescued Jews, an attempt is made to analyse the problem by means of the case study of the Grocholski family, who hid a large group of Jews. The study revealed that hiding Jews was a highly traumatic experience for those involved, particularly when the entire host family faced the threat of death. This conclusion follows directly from the classification of traumatic events contained in both DSM-V and ICD-10. Due to the lack of systemic research, the question of how giving shelter to Jews often led to the emergence of disorders caused by traumatic stress cannot be answered equally clearly. Finally, the article highlights some of the reasons why this trauma has been overlooked in the literature and in the public consciousness.

KEYWORDS

Trauma • helping Jews • The Righteous Among the Nations • Cracow province • Distrikt Krakau • Holocaust

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“AT HOME, WE CALLED HER HANKA.” THE ISSUE OF POLES
SHELTERING JEWISH CHILDREN ON THE ARYAN SIDE IN THE
DISTRIKT KRAKAU (CRACOW PROVINCE)

“I am a pre-war anti-Semite, but my soul turned over when I saw the bestiality of the Germans towards Jews, because it was beneath the dignity of the nation, something that one could not directly imagine was possible,”¹ – Dr. Franciszek Kowalski wrote in a letter to the Voivodeship Jewish Historical Commission in Cracow in January 1947. From his correspondence, we learn that during the German occupation, this Polish lawyer together with his wife took care of the Anisfelds’ family 12-year-old daughter. Using forged documents with the name “Anna Dąbska,” the girl stayed in the care of the Kowalski family in Niepołomice near Cracow until November 1943, and then, thanks to their help, she left with her parents for Hungary. Dr. Kowalski added that when she stayed with them, they addressed her as “Hanka.”²

¹ Archives of the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw (hereinafter: AŻIH), 301/3389, Letter of Dr. Franciszek Kowalski to the Voivodeship Jewish Historical Commission in Cracow, Zakopane, 25 January 1947, n.p.

² *Ibid.*

The recent research confirm that, despite many publications appearing since the early post-war years, the scale of aid provided to the Jewish population in the occupied Polish territories has still not been fully studied. It is necessary to agree with Tomasz Domański and Alicja Gontarek that

historians and scholars in related fields, above all social sciences, face a serious challenge of a multifaceted, multidimensional and multidirectional analysis of the phenomenon of rescuing Jews from the Holocaust, taking into account the realities of the war, the context of the German occupation and the regional specificity.³

I would like to point out selected aspects of the problem of sheltering⁴ Jewish children by Poles (individuals and families) on the so-called Aryan side⁵ in the wartime Krakau Distrikt (Cracow province). Basing on the data on the fate of several dozen children, I want to discuss the nature of the help given to them, together with presenting the wider context of the issue. In addition to indicating the ways in which the children were transferred to their new guardians, and a brief characteristics of their stay on the “Aryan” side, I will also attempt to present some of the challenges, problems and dangers their new guardians faced.

Although we have a considerable amount of literature concerning the fate of Jewish children during the Holocaust,⁶ the above-mentioned topic has not yet been

³ T. Domański, A. Gontarek, “Wstęp” [Introduction], in *Stan badań nad pomocą Żydom na ziemiach polskich pod okupacją niemiecką – przegląd piśmiennictwa*, ed. T. Domański, A. Gontarek (Warsaw–Kielce 2022), p. 25.

⁴ In the existing literature in the field, we know that one of the forms of helping the Jews was giving shelter; cf. M. Urynowicz, “Zorganizowana i indywidualna pomoc Polaków dla ludności żydowskiej eksterminowanej przez okupanta niemieckiego w okresie drugiej wojny światowej,” in *Polacy i Żydzi pod okupacją niemiecką 1939–1945. Studia i materiały*, ed. A. Żbikowski (Warsaw, 2006), p. 253.

⁵ For definitions of the so-called “Aryan side,” see M. Melchior, *Zagłada a tożsamość. Polscy Żydzi ocaleni „na aryjskich papierach”. Analiza doświadczenia biograficznego* (Warsaw, 2004), pp. 13–15; J. Nalewajko-Kulikov, *Strategie przetrwania Żydów po aryjskiej stronie Warszawy* (Warsaw, 2004), p. 8; G. Berendt, “Cena życia – ekonomiczne uwarunkowania egzystencji Żydów po ‘aryjskiej stronie,’” *Zagłada Żydów. Studia i Materiały* 4 (2008), p. 110. In this article I adopted the definition accepted by Małgorzata Melchior.

⁶ It is worth referring to works presenting and analysing the early testimonies of children and older people who survived the Holocaust as children. See *Dzieci oskarżają*, ed. M. Hochberg-Mariańska, N. Grüss (Cracow, 1947); J. Kowalska-Leder, *Doświadczenie Zagłady z perspektywy dziecka w polskiej literaturze dokumentu osobistego* (Wrocław, 2009); *Dzieci żydowskie w czasach Zagłady. Wczesne świadectwa*

comprehensively covered on a province-wide basis.⁷ I would like to add that I will not address the topic of organised (institutional) aid – provided by the Cracow branch of the Council for Aid to Jews⁸ and the clergy (diocesan and religious) – nor with emergency (one-off) aid.⁹ I have used the Jewish survivors post-war testimonies (mainly children, but also their parents), as well as the accounts of those who helped them and other eyewitnesses. The records used are kept in the Archives of

1944–1948. *Relacje dziecięce ze zbiorów Centralnej Żydowskiej Komisji Historycznej*, ed. O. Orzeł, (Warsaw, 2014); K. Sokołowska, „I dziś jestem widzem”. *Narracje dzieci Holocaustu* (Warsaw, 2013); *Dzieci Holocaustu mówią*, vol. 1, ed. W. Śliwowska (Warsaw, 1993), vol. 2, ed. J. Gutenbaum, A. Latała (Warsaw, 1993), vol. 3, ed. K. Meloch, H. Szostkiewicz (Warsaw, 2008), vol. 4, ed. K. Meloch, H. Szostkiewicz (Warsaw, 2012), vol. 5, ed. A. Kołacińska-Gałązka (Warsaw, 2014); J. Iwaszkiewicz, *Wtedy kwitły forsycje. Pamiątniki dzieci – ofiar Holocaustu* (Warsaw, 2002).

⁷ For information ‘on the fate of Jewish children in this area, see among others M. Grądzka, *Przerwane dzieciństwo. Losy dzieci Żydowskiego Domu Sierot przy ul. Dietla 64 w Krakowie podczas okupacji niemieckiej* (Cracow, 2012); M. Grądzka-Rejak, “‘Chrońmy dziecko przed ulicą!’. Miesiąc Dziecka w getcie krakowskim w świetle publikacji ‘Gazety Żydowskiej’”, in *Zdeptane dzieciństwo. II wojna światowa i jej wpływ na losy dzieci*, ed. A. Bartuś, P. Trojański (Oświęcim, 2017), pp. 229–243; G. Siwior, “Koniec drogi. Losy Dawida Kurzmanna i zagłada żydowskiego sierocińca w Krakowie”, in *ibid.*, pp. 261–275; A. Jarkowska-Natkaniec, “Losy dzieci policjantów żydowskich w okupowanym Krakowie”, in *ibid.*, pp. 277–291. In addition, the work of Joanna Sliwa is worth noting: J. Sliwa, *Jewish Childhood in Kraków: A Microhistory of the Holocaust* (New Brunswick, 2021); *eadem*, “Coping with Distorted Reality: Children in the Kraków Ghetto,” *Holocaust Studies: A Journal of Culture and History* 16 (2010), pp. 177–202; *eadem*, “The Forced Relocation to the Kraków Ghetto as Remembered by Child Survivors,” in *The Young Victims of the Nazi Regime: Migration, the Holocaust and Postwar Displacement*, ed. S. Gigliotti, M. Tempian (London, 2016), pp. 153–169; *eadem*, “Cladestine Activities and Concealed Presence: A Case Study of Children in the Kraków Ghetto,” in *Jewish Families in Europe, 1939 – Present: History, Representation, and Memory*, ed. J.B. Michlic (Waltham, 2017), pp. 26–45; *eadem*, “‘Ma’am, do you know that a Jew lives here?’ The Betrayal of Polish Women and the Jewish Children They Hid During the Holocaust – the Case of Cracow,” in *If This Is a Woman: Studies on Women and Gender in the Holocaust*, ed. D. Neštáková, K. Grosse-Sommer, B. Klacsmann, J. Drábik (Boston, 2021), pp. 163–180. Information on the hiding of Jewish children by Polish families in the region discussed can also be found in the following works: E. Rączy, *Pomoc Polaków dla ludności żydowskiej na Rzeszowszczyźnie 1939–1945* (Rzeszów, 2008), pp. 116–119; B. Heksel, “Życie w ukryciu. Historie indywidualne z terenu Krakowa i województwa małopolskiego,” in K. Kocik, B. Heksel, *Żegota. Ukryta pomoc* (Cracow, 2017), pp. 209–215.

⁸ For the most recent findings, see B. Heksel, “Krakowska Rada Pomocy Żydom,” in K. Kocik, B. Heksel, *Żegota*, pp. 111–190.

⁹ On the aid activities of the clergy in Cracow, see M. Grądzka, “Kościół katolicki w okupowanym Krakowie w pomocy Żydom. Zarys problematyki badawczej,” in *Kościół krakowski 1939–1945*, ed. Ł. Klimek (Cracow, 2014), pp. 125–154; J. Sliwa, “Jewish Children Seeking Help in Catholic Institutions in Kraków During the Holocaust,” *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry* 36 (2024), pp. 327–341. For more, see among others N. Bogner, *At the Mercy of Strangers: The Rescue of Hidden Jewish Children with Assumed Identities in Poland* (Jerusalem, 2009); E. Kurek, *Dzieci żydowskie w klasztorach. Udział żeńskich zgromadzeń zakonnych w akcji ratowania dzieci żydowskich w Polsce w latach 1939–1945* (Zakrzewo, 2012); *eadem*, *Gdy klasztor znaczył życie. Udział żeńskich zgromadzeń zakonnych w akcji ratowania dzieci żydowskich w Polsce w latach 1939–1945* (Cracow, 1992); *Wartime Rescue of Jews by the Polish Catholic Clergy: The Testimony of Survivors and Rescuers*, vols. 1–2, ed. R. Tyndorf, Z. Zieliński (Lublin, 2023).

the Institute of National Remembrance,¹⁰ the Yad Vashem Archives in Jerusalem,¹¹ Archives of the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw, and in the IPN's Branch Commission for the Prosecution of Crimes against the Polish Nation in Cracow.

Regulatory Environment

Decisions to support or hide Jewish children were made under conditions created by the German occupier. One of the cornerstones of the German system in the occupied Polish territories was the laws enacted by representatives of the Third Reich. This was also the tool the Germans used in their anti-Jewish activities. In No. 99 of the *Dziennik Rozporządzeń dla Generalnego Gubernatorstwa* (Journal of Regulations for the General Governorate), published on 25 October 1941, a legal act imposing the death penalty on Jews who left without a permission the residential district designated for them was published.¹² The same punishment was also to be imposed on those who gave them shelter. The signing of this legislation, commonly known as the Third General Governorate Residence Restriction Regulation of 15 October 1941 by Governor-General Hans Frank, was an important caesura in German anti-Jewish activities. As time went by, the local German police and civilian authorities extended the use of the death penalty by means of orders and announcements (notices). In order to put the legal situation arranged in organised manner, in November 1942 the higher SS and police commander in General Governorate Friedrich Wilhelm Krüger issued regulations stipulating that any form of aid provided to the Jewish population would be punishable by death.¹³

¹⁰ Some of the records kept in the Archives of the Institute of National Remembrance (hereinafter AIPN) in the record group No. 392 used in this article, commonly referred to as the "Bielawski investigation," were published in *Relacje o pomocy udzielanej Żydom przez Polaków w latach 1939–1945*, vol. 2: *Dystrykt krakowski Generalnego Gubernatorstwa*, selected and edited by S. Piątkowski (Lublin–Warsaw, 2020).

¹¹ Many thanks to Magdalena Palka for her help in arranging the photocopies of archival records I made during my study visit at the Yad Vashem Institute Archives in Jerusalem.

¹² The regulation had been signed by Governor-General Hans Frank a few days earlier, on 15 October 1941, but did not come into force until the day it was promulgated.

¹³ On 1 November 1942, in the issue no. 94 of the Journal of Regulations for the General Governorate the Police regulation concerning the establishment of a Jewish residential quarter in the Warschau and Lublin Distrikts of 29 October 1942 was published. The Cracow Distrikt came under the Police regulation concerning the establishment of Jewish residential quarters in the Radom, Krakau and Galizien Distrikts of 10 November 1942, which was published on 14 November 1942 in issue no. 98 of the Journal of Regulations... and came into force on 20 November 1942.

Moreover, all General Governorate residents were required to report any Jewish fugitives, with the threat of police security measures being enforced against those who failed to comply.¹⁴

These acts were not ineffective laws. In the area researched, e.g. Wojciech Gicala was murdered for hiding a Jewish child. This nearly fifty-year-old man was shot dead by a German gendarme near the town hall in Nowy Wiśnicz in August 1942. On the same day, a boy who had stayed with him for only about two days was murdered in the Jewish cemetery.¹⁵ By these acts, German authorities sought to portray Jewish fugitives, including children, as threats to local communities. Despite the imposed sanctions, some individuals still offered them aid and care. The cases examined in this article demonstrate that their motivations were influenced by a variety of factors.

Motives for Providing Aid

Why did Dr. Franciszek Kowalski, mentioned above, decide to hide a Jewish girl despite the harsh penalties introduced by the German occupiers and did so for almost a year? In his letter he stated that, while staying in Cracow as a “displaced person from Zakopane,” in September 1942, he received a very unusual proposal. Through Jewish acquaintances, he was approached by “a certain Anisfeld (Jew), a Cracow feather merchant, living in Józefa Street,” with the proposal that he would

¹⁴ B. Musiał, *Kto dopomoże Żydowi...* (Poznań, 2019), pp. 127–131.

¹⁵ Institute of National Remembrance, Branch Commission for the Prosecution of Crimes against the Polish Nation in Cracow, (hereinafter: OKŚZpNP Kr), S 23.2004.Zn, vol. 1, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Edward Bachula, Bochnia, of 16 February 1967, pp. 66–66v; *ibid.*, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Teofil Trojanowski, Bochnia, of 16 February 1967, p. 68; OKŚZpNP Kr, S 23.2004.Zn, vol. 2, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Stanisław Banaś, Bochnia, of 16 June 1970, p. 249; *ibid.*, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Julian Trzaska, Gliwice, of 29 July 1970, pp. 289–290; *ibid.*, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Apolonia Górnisiewicz née Kasińska, Cracow, of 23 April 1975, pp. 351–352; *ibid.*, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Edward Bachula, Cracow, of 23 April 1975, pp. 353–355; *ibid.*, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Teofil Trojanowski, Bochnia, of 8 May 1975, pp. 365–367; *ibid.*, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Karol Trzaska, Cracow of 16 May 1975, pp. 375–376; *ibid.*, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Anna Widelko, Cracow, 27 May 1975, pp. 381–382. According to Dagmara Swątek-Niewińska, the name of the gendarme who shot the Jewish boy and Wojciech Gicala was Franck (D. Swątek-Niewińska, “Powiat bocheński,” in *Dalej jest noc. Losy Żydów w wybranych powiatach okupowanej Polski*, vol. 2, ed. B. Engelking, J. Grabowski, Warsaw 2018, pp. 574–575). However, according to the testimony given by the above-mentioned witnesses, Gicala was shot by a gendarme named Bogusch. Furthermore, Swątek-Niewińska erroneously uses the name “Gicała.” The man’s name was “Gicala” (see for instance OKŚZpNP Kr, S 23.2004.Zn, vol. 2, Summary copy of the death certificate of Wojciech Gicala, Nowy Wiśnicz, 19 April 1975, n.p.).

recommend Kowalski for a position to “a German–sPrussian acquaintance, Otto GörSCH,” who managed a large goose farm in Niepołomice near Cracow. At the time, GörSCH was said to be looking for a “lawyer, bookkeeper and cashier who spoke German,” and Kowalski was most likely in a difficult financial situation. Anisfeld made one condition: Kowalski would take care of his twelve-year-old daughter. At first, the man was afraid to hide the Jewish girl and felt reluctant to take a job with a German supervisor. Eventually, however, Kowalski agreed.¹⁶

This event took place three months after the first deportations from the Cracow ghetto. It is estimated that in June 1942, between five thousand and seven thousand Jews were sent from there to the extermination camp in Bełżec.¹⁷ Scholars noted that during the *Aktion Reinhardt*, the German operation aiming at exterminating the Jews in the General Governorate, the search for refuge on the so-called ‘Aryan side’ became widespread among Jews.¹⁸ Those who had the suitable contacts, opportunities and resources, and made efforts to save their own lives or those of their next of kin, tried above all to save the children – handing them over to the care of others, friends or strangers, in the hope that in this way the children would survive. The lack of sources, as well as the fact that most of the Jewish inhabitants of the Distrikt Krakau died during the Holocaust, makes it impossible to give a precise answer to the question of how large this group was. With regard to the Distrikt Krakau, it seems that a small number of people is in question here. They tended to be polonised people and were often relatively wealthy (or had adequate funds at their disposal), so that they could, for example, allocate a certain amount of money for the upkeep of their charge on the “Aryan” side. For instance, in 1943, Gusta Goldberger, an employee at the Optima factory in Cracow, asked Wiktor Węgrzyn, a chimney sweep at the same factory, to hide her young son Stefan. She also provided him with ten thousand zlotys to cover the expenses.¹⁹ Born in 1935,

¹⁶ AŻIH, 301/3389, Letter of Dr. Franciszek Kowalski to the Voivodeship Jewish Historical Commission in Cracow, Zakopane, 25 January 1947, n.p.

¹⁷ E. Rączy, *Zagłada Żydów w dystrykcie krakowskim w latach 1939–1945* (Rzeszów, 2014), p. 282.

¹⁸ Cf. M. Grądzka-Rejak, A. Namysło, “Relacje polsko-żydowskie w okresie II wojny światowej. Kontekst i uwarunkowania,” in *Represje za pomoc Żydom na okupowanych ziemiach polskich w czasie II wojny światowej*, ed. M. Grądzka-Rejak, A. Namysło (Warsaw, 2019), p. 36.

¹⁹ AIPN Kr, 502/584, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Wiktor Węgrzyn, Cracow, of 23 June 1945, pp. 20–21; *ibid.*, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Gusta Goldberger, Cracow, of 23 June 1945, pp. 26–26v.

Sulamit Korn was entrusted to Poles living in the nearby village of Sławkowice even before Jews were deported from Wieliczka, and her parents were expected to provide one thousand zlotys a month for her upkeep.²⁰

Accepting a new person into someone's care involved additional maintenance costs, primarily for food, but also for other expenses. Grzegorz Berendt stated: "Due to the economic policies imposed by the Germans, millions in occupied Poland were reduced to mere subsistence, with little capacity to offer sustained, altruistic help."²¹ The increasing impoverishment of the Poles meant that the co-financing of childcare was often an indispensable term.²² Cases, where children were taken in exchange for money or for a promise to receive something in return, are known, however, there were also cases of help given selflessly. For example, Antonina Czuba testified that her parents Hieronim and Barbara Mikłarz agreed to take care of the approximately two-year-old Elza Rozeman at the request of her grandmother. The girl came from a "poor family, she didn't have any property."²³ Nevertheless, she was hidden on the Mikłarzes' farm in Pruchnik from mid-1942 until the end of the German occupation. "Elza Rozeman, who came from a Jewish family, was given complete sustenance, underwear and clothing at our house and slept with us in the chamber,"²⁴ – recalled the daughter of Hieronim and Barbara. Tomasz Domański was right when he noted that for those who rescued Jews "lacking resources or being from the Jewish poor," it was "an extra sacrifice and an economic challenge."²⁵

²⁰ It is unclear how long the girl stayed in Sławkowice. According to Sulamit Korn's post-war testimony, when it "began to be talked about" in that village that she was Jewish, the farmer hiding her sent her to Biezanów, where her aunt prepared for her a new hiding place. On her subsequent fate, see AŻIH, 301/1112, Testimony of Sulamit Korn.

²¹ G. Berendt, "Cena życia," p. 141.

²² For more on this, see *ibid.*, pp. 110–143.

²³ Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Antonina Czuba on the aid provided by her, her parents Barbara and Hieronim Mikłarz and other family members to Elza Rozeman in Pruchnik (Jarosław district), Rzeszów, 30 April 1971, in *Relacje o pomocy*, p. 351. See also AIPN, 392/1576, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Józef Lewandowski, Jarosław, 9 September 1970, p. 3; *ibid.*, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Józef Folta, Jarosław, 15 October 1970, p. 4; *ibid.*, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Elżbieta Pałys, Rzeszów, 11 May 1971, pp. 18–19.

²⁴ Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Antonina Czuba on the aid provided by her, her parents Barbara and Hieronim Mikłarz and other family members to Elza Rozeman in Pruchnik (Jarosław district), Rzeszów, 30 April 1971 in *Relacje o pomocy*, p. 351.

²⁵ T. Domański, *Korekta obrazu? Refleksje źródłoznawcze wokół książki „Dalej jest noc. Losy Żydów w wybranych powiatach okupowanej Polski”, t. 1–2, red. Barbara Engelking, Jan Grabowski, Warszawa 2018* (Warsaw, 2019), p. 52.

It is often difficult to assess the motivation of those who decided to take care of Jewish children. Sometimes this decision must have been taken by the future guardians under the impact of unexpected course of events. For example, in June 1942, a ten-year-old Maks Weissberg was brought to Justyna and Janina Gosławski, who lived in Cracow, by his older brother Józef, who had already stayed with them for some time.²⁶ Unfortunately, Józef was soon arrested. Despite this, the Gosławski sisters continued to take care of Maks. In Maks Weissberg's statement filed in Paris in 1950 at the notary's public office concerning the aforementioned women, he noted that they have treated him as their own son: "they risked their lives, not only did they keep me as their son and I bore their name, but they also kept me without any compensation."²⁷

According to Bartosz Heksel, who has researched the cases of Jews hiding in Cracow and nearby towns, the fragmentary remaining source material does not allow "to draw even general conclusions about the motivations of those who rescued persons of Jewish origin."²⁸ On the other hand, according to Joanna Michlic, people making the decision to hide a child were motivated by a variety of reasons of a "practical or emotional, noble or shameful" nature.²⁹ What mattered was "affection and attachment to a vulnerable child, unconditional love for children or the desire to have children [...] but also emotional ties and loyalty to Jewish members of mixed Christian-Jewish families."³⁰ The researcher identified several types of rescuers: altruists driven by patriotic and moral reasons, pre-war friends or acquaintances of Jews, and those who provided help in exchange for money, viewing it either as financial support for the child's care or an opportunity to enrich themselves.³¹

Assessing the issue of taking money requires a broader view of the carers' behaviour. In some cases person sheltering the child, after losing contact with the person donating the funds for care, or after the funds received ran out, decided to

²⁶ See R. Gieroń, "Zarys problematyki pomocy udzielanej Żydom podczas okupacji niemieckiej w aktach postępowań karnych wszczętych na podstawie dekretu PKWN z 31 sierpnia 1944 r. na obszarze powojennego województwa krakowskiego," *Polish-Jewish Studies* 2 (2021), pp. 228–230.

²⁷ AIPN Kr, 502/2508, Declaration filed at the notary public's office concerning Ms Gosławska and Ms Tomczyk (a certified translation from the French), Paris, 16 May 1950, p. 70v.

²⁸ B. Heksel, "Życie w ukryciu," p. 195.

²⁹ J.B. Michlic, *Piętno Zagłady. Wojenna i powojenna historia oraz pamięć żydowskich dzieci ocalałych w Polsce* (Warsaw, 2020), p. 148.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 144.

³¹ *Ibid.*

carry on with the care. Anna Poleska, who agreed to take care of a two-year-old Tamara Goldstein, received more than seven thousand zlotys and “certain pieces of clothing” from her parents. Jakub Goldstein and his wife wanted to make their way to Switzerland; they promised Poleska that they would systematically send more money once they got there. According to Anna’s testimony, however, this did not happen: “The payment I received from her parents was enough for only one year; I bore the rest of the costs myself. I had to struggle not only to provide food suitable for the child, but also clothing, which was extremely hard for me, especially as my husband died and I had to earn a living on my own.”³² The same happened to Katarzyna Matusz (née Dudzik), who, in March 1943, at the request of Roman Poser, took his brother Majer’s son, a two-year-old Izydor, into her care. The boy had been taken out of the Cracow ghetto just before its liquidation. Katarzyna was promised that she would receive “certain payments to cover the child’s upkeep on a monthly basis.”³³ However, the payment “did not happen, as the ghetto was liquidated in a short time and I lost contact with this family,” the Polish woman recalled.³⁴ Despite this, she and her husband Stanisław took care of the boy until the end of the German occupation.³⁵

It is likely that some in a similar situation tried to get rid of the child. We also know of cases of people who initially took in a Jewish child and only after some time demanded or asked for money to support it.³⁶ There were also those who provided care only for money. Given the limited source material, it is difficult to ascertain the full extent of these phenomena.

Looking for a Shelter for Children

New homes (and new carers) were sought both before, during and after the German deportation operations. In the area researched, the search seems to have intensified from mid-1942, when direct deportations of the Jews to the Bełżec

³² AŻIH, 301/2339, Testimony of Anna Poleska.

³³ AYV, M.31.2/5307, Statement by Katarzyna Matusz, Żary, 30 November 1988, n.p.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ AYV, M.31.2/5307, Statement by Rochelle Rose Poser, New York, 19 September 1988, n.p.

³⁶ Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Helena Żurawicz regarding the aid provided by her mother, her husband Waław Żurawicz, and Maria Pietrek to Eta Frymermann in Wieliczka (Cracow district), Warsaw, 29 May 1991, in *Relacje o pomocy*, pp. 458–459.

extermination camp from the Distrikt Krakau began. Despite the lack of sources preventing us from reconstructing many details of these events, the separation of Jewish parents from their children was invariably a dramatic experience.³⁷

Finding care for the children on the “Aryan” side was done by the still living parents (or one of them), or by relatives.³⁸ They sought shelter for children both within their current locality and beyond it. Marian Imerglück hid his daughter Sonia on the farm of the Łosiowski family in the village of Zagórzany near Gdów in February 1943, just before the liquidation of the Cracow ghetto (where he and his family lived). The girl was brought to the village by an acquaintance of the Imerglück family, Zofia Nowak, who was Anna Łosiowska’s sister.³⁹ Miriam Stern, who was also in Cracow ghetto, also found shelter for her daughter Sara in 1942 in the village of Bystra Podhalańska, a few dozen kilometres from Cracow, in the home of the large Bachul family.⁴⁰ Perhaps to parents seeking shelter for their loved ones, the countryside appeared to be a safer place than the “hermetic” Cracow.⁴¹ It should be added, however, that under the conditions of the German occupation, choosing a hiding place did not provide a guarantee that the child would be rescued.⁴²

Their future guardians were also involved in smuggling the children to the “Aryan” side and in finding them a safe shelter.⁴³ Feliks Michalik, at the request of his acquaintance Izrael Reisig, helped his several-year-old daughter, Henryka, to get out of the Rzeszów ghetto. One day, probably at the end of 1942, at a pre-arranged hour, Reisig handed him his daughter over the fence surround-

³⁷ Martyna Grądzka-Rejak indicated the dilemmas of Jewish women in moving their children to the so-called Aryan side (*eadem*, “Zdobywczynie życia. Wybrane aspekty codzienności dziewcząt i kobiet żydowskich podczas okupacji niemieckiej (1939–1942),” in *Ciemności kryją ziemię. Wybrane aspekty badań i nauczania o Holokauście*, ed. M. Grądzka-Rejak, P. Trojański (Cracow – Nowy Sącz, 2019), pp. 65–66.

³⁸ Cf. J.B. Michlic, *Piętno Zagłady*, p. 117.

³⁹ AIPN Kr, 502/2929, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Marian Imerglück, Myślenice, 22 September 1945, pp. 16–17; AIPN Kr, 502/4161, Report by Marian Szczęsny Imerglück, Nazareth, 22 December 1960, pp. 5–6; *ibid.*, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Anna Łosiowska, Myślenice, 17 March 1961, pp. 10–12.

⁴⁰ AYV, M.31.2/4718, Testimony given by Sara Yareach that she was rescued by the Bachul family, no place of statement given, 4 January 1988, n.p.

⁴¹ Cf. M. Grądzka-Rejak, A. Namysło, “Relacje polsko-żydowskie,” p. 43.

⁴² As discussed below, Sara Stern survived the occupation. Sonia Imerglück, on the other hand, did not.

⁴³ Cf. J.B. Michlic, *Piętno Zagłady*, p. 118.

ing the ghetto.⁴⁴ Initially, Henryka stayed with Michalik's mother and also with his sister Zofia. She was then sent to the farm of Mrs. Weis in Gwoźnica Górna. After some time, however, she returned to the care of Zofia and then to Feliks Michalik.⁴⁵

Polish acquaintances of the Jews, including their former employees, such as e.g. their children's nannies, also sought care for the children. Augusta Szemelowska (née Trammer) recalled that she and her mother Elfryda hid Olga Mandel in her flat in Łagiewniki.⁴⁶ The girl was led out of the Tarnów ghetto by her former nanny. She then stayed with Augusta and her mother for "a few months, until her mother found a place to stay at in Warsaw."⁴⁷

Among the people arranging shelter for Jewish children were also clergymen. In late 1942 or early 1943, the Kłosowski spouses living in Kocmyrzów took in a girl who introduced herself as Rozalia Bochenek. In fact, she was Rozalia Allerhand,⁴⁸ who had previously been hiding with her sister Anna in Monasterzyska near Stanisławów. The girl was brought to the Kłosowskis by Fr. Czabański at the request of his nephew, Fr. Alfons Walkiewicz, who was then a priest in the parish of Barysz near Buczacz.⁴⁹

Getting children out of closed ghettos sometimes required being ingenious. Many years after the war, Cracow inhabitant Aniela Nowak recalled that an eight-year-old boy Janek Weber, who was hidden by her, was taken out of the Cracow

⁴⁴ Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Feliks Michalik regarding the aid provided by him and other persons of Polish nationality to Henryka Reisig in Rzeszów, Gwoźnica Górna (Niebylec commune) and other localities of the region, Rzeszów, 17 October 1970 in *Relacje o pomocy*, p. 390.

⁴⁵ AIPN, 392/1766, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Zofia Kapała, Rzeszów, 30 October 1970, pp. 14–15.

⁴⁶ Olga Kapeliuk (née Mandel), born 10 June 1932 in Cracow, professor emeritus of linguistics and African studies, one of the leading experts on the Amharic language (<https://prabook.com/web/olga.kapeliuk/552462>, accessed 20 March 2024).

⁴⁷ AYV, M.31.2/4817, Testimony of Augusta Szemelowska, Cracow, 20 July 1990, n.p.

⁴⁸ According to Kunegunda Kłosowska, the girl claimed to be around nine years old. Roman, on the other hand, stated: "The girl told us that she was born in 1929." (AIPN, 392/188, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Roman Kłosowski, Poznań, 13 March 1970, pp. 5–7; *ibid.*, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Kunegunda Kłosowska, Poznań, 10 April 1970, pp. 14–18).

⁴⁹ AIPN, 392/188, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Romana Kłosowski, Poznań, 13 March 1970, pp. 5–7; *ibid.*, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Kunegunda Kłosowska, Poznań, 10 April 1970, pp. 14–18; *ibid.*, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Ignacy Czabański, Poznań, 14 April 1970, pp. 29–31; *ibid.*, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Alfons Walkiewicz, Poznań, 28 April 1970, pp. 38–40.

ghetto in a suitcase.⁵⁰ For success of such activities, the favourable circumstances were also necessary. After the end of the war, Stefania Bilińska recounted that she went to Wieliczka with the intention of taking a ten-year-old Yitzhak Lermer from there, for she had promised this to his mother Klara. However, she did not succeed in taking him “for fear that the Germans, of whom there were many in Wieliczka at the time, would discover this fact.”⁵¹ Eventually, her uncle Władysław Korbas transported the boy in his truck to Cracow, to the home of Stefania’s mother at 10 Chodkiewicza Street.⁵²

Ichhak Lermer lived under the care of the Biliński family until the end of the German occupation, first in Cracow and then back in Dobczyce. However, in some cases it happened that the children stayed with their new guardians only for a limited time, and then, if possible, returned to their parents or relatives (who, for example, sought safe shelter on the “Aryan” side or made efforts to arrange a departure to another place).

Just before the next deportation operation, carried out on 28 October 1942, the six-year-old boy Zygmunt Weinreb was led out of the Cracow ghetto by his cousin, who, according to Weinreb’s post-war testimony, “had the protection of the commander of the Blue Police.”⁵³ Earlier, the boy had been left in the ghetto by his mother Bronisława, who at the time – after selling her jewellery and buying a forged *Kennkarte* – had left for Maków Podhalański in search for accommodation. After leaving the ghetto, Weinreb was taken to the janitor Józef Puchała, who lived with his wife Maria on the premises of the Bonarka brickworks in Łagiewniki, on the outskirts of the city. After some time, Bronisława returned and took her son away.⁵⁴

In some cases Jewish parents requested that their children be hidden for a certain time, but when they couldn’t find a safe hiding place, they left them with their new guardians for an extended duration. This was the case of spouses Lejzor and

⁵⁰ AYW, M.31.2/6222, Statement by Jan Weber, Jerusalem, 12 July 1993, n.p.; *ibid.*, Testimony of Aniela Nowak regarding the aid she provided to Jews during the German occupation, Cracow, 23 June 1994, n.p.

⁵¹ AYW, M.31.2/4756, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Stefania Bilińska, Cracow, 21 September 1984, n.p.; AIPN, 392/545, Statement by Ichhak Lermer, [Tel Aviv], [2 April 1989], p. 21.

⁵² AYW, M.31.2/4756, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Stefania Bilińska, Cracow, 21 September 1984, n.p.; *ibid.*, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Józefa Głuś, Cracow, 28 September 1984, n.p.

⁵³ AŻIH, 301/406, Testimony of Zygmunt Weinreb.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

Syma Szajer, about thirty-year-old farmers from the village of Husów, hiding in the forest, who probably in August 1942 approached the Boratyns and asked them to look after their one-year-old son, whose name was Mordek. According to Stanisława Boratyn, the Szajer family promised to return to pick up the boy the next day (since they wanted to find a suitable hiding place for him). However, they did not show up until several weeks later, asking then the Boratyns to continue hiding the child.⁵⁵

Sometimes the parents decided to separate the siblings and hide the children separately up to the moment when the danger would be over. In the summer of 1942, Dawid and Paulina Münzer, along with other Jews from Dobczyce, obtained written order to report to the assembly point in the market square on 22 August 1942. They decided then to go into hiding. On the night before the deportation operation, their eleven-year-old son Aleksander was taken by Franciszek Mróz, a Home Army soldier, to the house of Genowefa Misiorowa in the village of Skrzyńka. Münzers' daughter, fourteen-year-old Emilia, on the other hand, was initially hidden by an acquaintance of her father, Twardosz, in the village of Lipnik. However, the farmer was afraid to keep her any longer, which is probably why, after two weeks, she was led to the Kaczmarczyk family, who lived on Górska Street in Dobczyce. Her mother was staying there. Aleksander Münzer, too, had to leave his hiding place after some time; after the war, he recalled that his stay in Skrzyńka had become dangerous due to "frequent inspections and manhunts." Probably in November 1942, Franciszek Mróz took the boy to his mother's house in Mierzeń. From there, Aleksander was picked up by his uncle Jan Federgrün and taken to Rajmund and Aniela Ptak, who lived in the same village. His aunt Maria Federgrün was already hiding at their place.⁵⁶

It also happened that after parents decided to hide on the "Aryan" side, they left their children on former neighbours' or strangers' doorstep. Such was a case

⁵⁵ Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Stanisława Boratyn regarding the aid provided by her and her husband to Mordka Szajer in Husów (Jarosław county), Rzeszów, 15 April 1970 in *Relacje o pomocy*, pp. 143–144.

⁵⁶ OKŚZpNP Kr, S 1/87, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Emilia Bergel née Münzer, Cracow, 15 January 1986, pp. 17–22; *ibid.*, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Aleksander Mirecki, Cracow, 12 February 1986, pp. 65–69; E. Polończyk-Moskał, *Świece zgasła wojna... Historia społeczności żydowskiej w Dobzyczach / Candles were blown out by the war... History of the Jewish community in Dobczyce* (Dobczyce, 2020), pp. 112–115, 217–222.

of Majer Zalcman, a Jewish fugitive from Dylągówka. Feliks Dziak testified after the war: “Majer left the child on the doorstep of one woman’s house in the hope that she would take care of raising [the child].”⁵⁷ Until the end of the occupation the child was looked after by Katarzyna Rożek from Dylągówka.⁵⁸ A similarly dramatic decision was made also by spouses Dora and Jakub Künstlich. They were hiding in a dugout under the threshing floor of a pigsty in the farm of Józef and Józefa Gibes in Jadowniki Mokre. When their daughter was born, the father left her on a bench under the window of the house of the childless spouses Maria and Stanisław Szatkowski, who took care of the girl.⁵⁹

I have described various circumstances under which children were handed over to new guardians in the Cracow district. Additionally, it is important to include the situations where much depended on the determination, choices, and actions of the children themselves, particularly those who were older and more self-reliant.

Children Seeking Help on Their Own

In the early 1990s, Maria Krawczyk, daughter of Dr. Juliusz Feldhorn, born in Cracow on 4 November 1934, recalled:

The moment the Blue Policemen came to our house to arrest my parents – my mother ordered me to run to my aunt – it was unequivocal. It was 11 August 1943 and I managed to escape and reach Łagiewniki by country roads. In Augusta Trammer’s and her mother’s house I found shelter and care.⁶⁰

At the time of the arrest, the Feldhorn family lived in Swoszowice in a house at 35 Chałubińskiego Street: “they used the surname Krawczyk at that time.”⁶¹

⁵⁷ Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Feliks Dziak regarding the murder perpetrated by Germans on Jan Ślęmp for helping Majer Zalcman in Dylągówka (Rzeszów district), Rzeszów, 7 December 1970, in *Relacje o pomocy*, p. 105.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ A. Brożek, “Losy żydowskiej rodziny Künstlichów z Jadownik Mokrych w latach 1939–1946. Przyczynek do relacji polsko-żydowskich na obszarze przedwojennego powiatu Dąbrowa Tarnowska,” *Zeszyty Historyczne WiN-u* 49/50 (2019), p. 145. See also AYV, M.31.2/6331, Statement by Adam Merc (Adolf Künstlich) for the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw, Copenhagen, 23 August 1991, n.p.

⁶⁰ AYV, M.31.2/4817, Statement by Maria Krawczyk (Feldhorn), Warsaw, 7 August 1990, n.p.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

Maria went to Łagiewniki because her parents had instructed her to flee to Augusta and her mother Elfryda in case of “misfortune”: “At the time, these were the only people I had known since early childhood with whom my parents maintained social contacts.”⁶² In the ensuing months, the girl remained under their care.

Jewish children sometimes had to seek or make their way to a shelter on their own. On 14 August 1942, during the execution of the Jews gathered in Bobowa, teenager Samuel Oliner, instructed by his stepmother Esther, hid in one of the houses: “In a state of daze and horror I hid on a roof and hide for a number of hours,” he recalled.⁶³ In the action, German functionaries executed summarily Jews gathered in the nearby Garbacz forest. According to Samuel’s memoirs, his parents and grandparents were murdered there. After leaving his hiding place, the boy went to Balwina Piecuch, who lived in the village of Bystra. Thanks to this decision, he survived.⁶⁴

There are documented instances of children surviving the occupation by finding shelter with individuals who employed them for farm work. We should add that the hosts did not always know about their employees’ Jewish identity. A ten-year-old boy Benedykt Rosenblum had probably already in 1940 escaped from his home in Ispina. Then, through the Atlas spouses, he ended up at Jan and Magdalena Gas’s farm⁶⁵ in Żerkowice where he worked for two years. The family initially did not know that “Benek” (as they called him) was Jewish. They only found out from his uncle, who was looking for him. However, the boy did not want to leave. “Benek stayed with us and helped on the farm,” testified Helena Gas, “and we treated him as a household member.”⁶⁶ After some time (probably after the start of deportation operations and the liquidation of the ghettos), fearing for the family’s safety, Helena Gas and her brother Sylwester took Rosenblum in the night to Chorążyce, to her sister Genowefa Bochenek. Her house was on

⁶² *Ibid.* See also AYV, M.31.2/4817, Testimony of Augusta Szemelowska, Cracow, 20 July 1990, n.p.

⁶³ AYV, M.31.2/4691, Testimony of Samuel Oliner, Arcata, 9 November 1989, n.p.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ They were the parents of Ludwik Atlas’s wife.

⁶⁶ AIPN, 392/4, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Helena Skalska née Gas, Cracow, 3 October 1984, p. 11.

the outskirts of the village and seemed safe.⁶⁷ The boy stayed there until the end of the occupation.⁶⁸

Very similar was the fate of a teenager Michał Pinkas, who, looking for shelter for himself and being completely on his own, arrived in Radgoszcz in 1942 or 1943. “There I told them that I was lost, I didn’t know where I was from, when the war broke out I got lost and I had no one,”⁶⁹ he testified in September 1945. After spending a few days “as servant” at some woman’s household, he was taken in by a farmer “from Gruszów Wielki who was searching for a shepherd and heard about the lost boy.”⁷⁰ He stayed with him for two years. “I had a very good time there,” he assessed, “I mostly grazed two cows and two horses. I ate well and as much as I wanted. He was also very fond of me.”⁷¹ Towards the end of the war, the farmer and other villagers found out that Michał was a Jew.⁷² Nevertheless, his guardian told him to stay: “Since you have been here until now, just stay further,”⁷³ he said to Pinkas. Unfortunately, in his post-war testimony, Michał Pinkas did not mention the name of his host.

A New Child

Taking in a Jewish child presented challenges and risks. In the case of young children who had only just met their new guardians, already an accidental encounter with a German functionary could end in disclosure. One summer day in 1942, Natalia Pyrkowska’s husband told his wife after returning from work that he had agreed to look after his colleague Süsskind’s son for a few days. Artur Süsskind was two years old. Pyrkowska recalled: “I took him in my arms, he didn’t defend himself at all, and I brought him from Żydowska Street to Rzędzin. The child was so terrified that upon seeing a German, it screamed at the top of its voice: ‘I[’m] afraid, I[’m] afraid’ [‘Ja boję, ja boję’].”⁷⁴

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 7–11.

⁶⁸ Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Benedykt Wesołowski regarding the aid he received from the members of the Gas family and Genowefa Bochenek in Chorążyce and Żerkowice (Miechów district), Cracow, 25 September 1984, in *Relacje o pomocy*, pp. 69–70.

⁶⁹ AŻIH, 301/767, Testimony of Michał Pinkas.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² In his testimony, Michał Pinkas did not mention why his identity had been compromised (*ibid.*).

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ Testimony of Natalia Pyrkowska regarding the aid provided by her and her husband Stanisław Bernal-Olecharski to Artur Süsskind in Rzędzin (Tarnów district), Brzeg, 1 August 1985, in *Relacje o pomocy*, p. 392.

One of the initial challenges for guardians was helping Jewish children adapt to new living conditions. Caregivers of older children undoubtedly encountered different issues compared to those caring for younger children. A fragmentary picture of the difficulties the latter may have faced was provided by the statement by Pesa Terkieltojb. Her daughter Sabina Kac (born 26 October 1939 in Klimontów) was hidden from June 1942 until January 1945 by Anna Kowalczyk, who lived in Rzeszotary:

“Anna Kowalczyk had a lot of trouble with the child,” wrote Terkieltojb, “because, knowing his real mother, it did not want to stay with her and the separation from his mother was very hard for it. The child’s longing, desperate crying and screaming at night, turning into spasms, adversely affected its mental health and created a situation that threatened the safety of Anna Kowalczyk. The child was frail and needed proper nutrition, and Anna Kowalczyk denied herself everything to provide food for her. She also went to the doctor with the child and she paid him in kind, and even bought medicines as long as she was able to pay for them.”⁷⁵

The new charge had to be cared for, a minimum of hygiene had to be provided in addition to daily food and the necessary medical care.⁷⁶

* * *

When analysing the aid provided to Jewish children, it is essential to consider the social networks in which their new guardians lived. Family members did not always agree to take in a Jewish child. Conflicts were arising against this background. Stanisława Suska worked for a Jewish doctor on Limanowskiego Street in Cracow as a household maid and a nanny for his children. When the German authorities established the ghetto, Suska decided to hide the doctor’s daughter⁷⁷

⁷⁵ Undated statement by Pesa Terkieltojb regarding the aid provided to her daughter Sabina Kac by Anna and Jan Kowalczyk in Rzeszotary (Cracow district), in *Relacje o pomocy*, pp. 384–385.

⁷⁶ Cf. E. Rączy, *Pomoc Polaków*, pp. 116–108.

⁷⁷ According to Bronisław Koper, the Jewish girl’s name was Ewa, but in Bieńkówka they called her Marysia (AIPN, 392/970, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Bronisław Koper, Bielsko-Biała, 13 June 1989, p. 1v).

in her family home in Wieprzec. However, her husband was against it. Eventually, Stanisława Suska and the girl found shelter with Bronisław Koper (Suska's cousin) in the nearby Bieńkówka. At first, Koper's father also did not want to agree to take the girl in, but he ultimately left the decision up to his son. Bronisław Koper recalled: "I was over 20 years old and I was the one who ran the farm, and I decided that they should stay with us."⁷⁸

Guardians were not always able to conceal the presence of their Jewish charges, and some consciously decided to have them stay with them openly, pretending they were Christian children. Franciszka Bala recalled that at the request of Henryka Zollman⁷⁹ she took in her several-year-old daughter Salomea ('Salusia'). On the evening of 1 September 1942, Franciszka brought the girl to her home in Rabka. At first, she hid her from other people. After some time, however, she added her to the four children of her sister Ludwika Buksa: "The girl was just the right age to fit into the age difference among these children," recalled Franciszka and added: "during the time when this child was kept, various searches by the Germans were frequent. However, they never asked about the child."⁸⁰ Jewish children (especially the older ones), in order not to raise suspicions about their origin, had to have a "good appearance," be proficient in Polish, and practice the Christian religion (know prayers, church holidays and traditions). Balbina Piecuch's son, Stanisław Pyrek, remembered: "Oliner lived with us, I remember that my mother taught him how to pray and we went to church together so that no one would suspect that he was a Jew."⁸¹ Some guardians even sent the children staying with them to school.⁸²

Jewish children (as well as adults in hiding) had to be vigilant against outsiders, which sometimes did not work. The mere suspicion of a child being Jewish could pose a danger to the child and the guardians. In the case of boys, even despite their "good" looks, suspicions could be very quickly verified by outsiders:

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 1–1v.

⁷⁹ Henryka Zollman was the owner of a tailor's shop in Rabka, where Franciszka worked from 1938.

⁸⁰ Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Franciszka Bala regarding the aid provided by her, her parents Aleksander and Aniela Miśkowiec and her sister Ludwika Buksa to Salomea Zollman in Rabka (Nowy Targ district), Rabka, 30 November 1984, in *Relacje o pomocy*, pp. 369–370.

⁸¹ AYV, M.31.2/4691, Testimony of Stanisław Pyrek, Gorlice, 6 March 1990, no page numbering.

⁸² AYV, M.31.2/4817, Testimony of Augusta Szemelowska, Cracow, 20 July 1990, no page numbering.

“Artuś did not resemble a Jew at all,” Natalia Pyrkowska recalled, “He had blue eyes, blond hair. It was rather my son Wirgiliusz who was black [i.e. had black hair] and his eyes were black. But Artuś was circumcised. He slept with me, in the yard he played with my sons and my daughter. The neighbours didn’t trust me. Once when he ran out without his panties on, a neighbour grabbed him by his shirt and pulled him towards the fence to have a look at him, but Artur started screaming and she didn’t manage to see him.”⁸³

Every effort was made to counteract the compromising of the charges identity.⁸⁴ To convince neighbours, friends or relatives, various explanations were invented. The frequent excuse was that it was the extra-marital child of someone in the family. Ryszard Orowski, who was hidden by Józefa and Antoni Lorenc in Cracow, recalled: “when acquaintances asked [the Lorencs – R.G.] where the child had come from, they would sometimes reply that it was the illegitimate child of their daughter Maria.”⁸⁵ Older children were learning their new identity, e.g. Zygmunt Weinreb, who was staying with Puchała, had to learn that his name was Czesław Bojda.⁸⁶ Efforts were also made to obtain baptismal certificates from the parish. Anna Poleska, who lived in Cracow, recalled that after she took in Tamara Goldstein, there was a “fear of people taking too much interest in the child and guessing that it was a Jewish child”⁸⁷ So the woman decided to portray Tamara as the illegitimate daughter of her son, “and because she bore a strong resemblance to him, it was believed.”⁸⁸ She soon obtained a baptismal certificate for the girl in the Carmelite church under the name of Helena Nowak.⁸⁹

Feliks Michalik, who looked after a several-year-old girl Henryka Reisig, did the same:

⁸³ Testimony of Natalia Pyrkowska regarding the aid provided by her and her husband Stanisław Bernal-Olecharski to Artur Süsskind in Rzędzin (Tarnów district), Brzeg, 1 August 1985, in *Relacje o pomocy*, p. 392. Artur Süsskind stayed with spouses Pyrkowski for several weeks. He was then handed over to his mother, who was in hiding together with her brother-in-law and his daughter. Both Artur and his mother survived, and after the war they emigrated (*ibid.*, p. 393).

⁸⁴ Cf. J.B. Michlic, *Piętno Zagłady*, p. 149.

⁸⁵ AYV, M.31.2/5365, Statement by Józef Ryszard Orowski, Warsaw, 3 December 1991, n.p.

⁸⁶ AŻIH, 301/406, Testimony given by Zygmunt Weinreb.

⁸⁷ AŻIH, 301/2339, Testimony given by Anna Poleska.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

I applied for documents for the child. I obtained them in the Gorlice district, because I wanted a surname similar to the original one, so that any potential mistakes made by the child would be as unnoticeable as possible. I obtained documents for Anna Radzik.⁹⁰

Sometimes forged documents were sought by parents of Jewish children even before they were transferred to the “Aryan” side. Legalizing a child (giving them a false identity) enabled their new guardians to receive food ration cards. The following example shows, how important was the authentication of the child’s new identity. On 13 March 1943, Stefania Elsner gave her tiny daughter, about six weeks old, to Helena Osika, who lived then at 24/10 Lubicz Street in Cracow. Elsner emphasised in her testimony that the money she gave Osika were very small sums, barely enough for the baby’s most essential needs. The new guardian reported the child to the Main Guardianship Council (Rada Główna Opiekuńcza, RGO) as the daughter of her killed cousin named Wojsak. However, in 1944 she was arrested on suspicion of hiding Jews. During a search of her flat, one of the officers who arrived, a Blue Policeman, asked her about the child’s mother. Helena assured him that the child was “the daughter of her cousin killed in Sarny, and that the RGO committee in Złoczów had brought the child to her.”⁹¹ Despite these explanations, the Polish woman was detained and interrogated at the Montelupich Street prison in Cracow. Due to the lack of evidence, she was released after two days.⁹²

A real threat to the Polish guardians and their charges were various spies who profited from such activity, including Jewish informers. In Cracow, Stefania Brandstätter, among others, was involved in such practices. According to Martyna Grądzka-Rejak’s research, she was seen as one of the most active and dangerous Jewish informers in the General Governorate capital. Her tasks included searching for children hiding with the so-called ‘Aryan papers.’⁹³ Unfortunately, despite the passage of years, we still do not know the extent of the phenomenon of such

⁹⁰ Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Feliks Michalik regarding the aid provided by him and other persons of Polish nationality to Henryka Reisig in Rzeszów, Gwoźnica Górna and other town in the region, Rzeszów, 17 October 1970, in *Relacje o pomocy*, p. 390.

⁹¹ AŻIH, 301/3409, Testimony of Stefania Elsner.

⁹² *Ibid.*

⁹³ M. Grądzka-Rejak, *Kobieta żydowska w okupowanym Krakowie (1939–1945)* (Cracow, 2016), p. 401.

collaboration. As Alicja Jarkowska-Natkaniec pointed out, it is difficult “to assess their actual participation in crimes committed against Jews or in activities directed against them.”⁹⁴

The fear of being reported (which all General Governorate residents were obliged to do under the German law from the end of 1942) may have led guardians to decide to move with their charge to another locality.⁹⁵ Roman Bachul, whose family hid Miriam Stern in their home in Osielec, recalled that keeping this child put them at great risk:

working as a traffic officer at the Osielec station, I once heard local women I knew telling each other that the Bachul family was keeping a Jewish girl because the child looked very much like a Jewish girl. The conversation I heard made me freeze and I passed it on to my mother.⁹⁶

Prompted by this information, Ludwika Bachul relocated with little Sara to a house in Bystra Podhalańska. During the winter, the girl returned to Osielec, likely remaining in hiding at that time.⁹⁷

In cases of extreme danger, children were placed with friends, trusted neighbours or other family members. This is what Cecylia Korzeniowska of Kalwaria Zebrzydowska did, who hid a twelve-year-old Jewish girl during the German occupation (according to Korzeniowska, she was Danusia Krochmal, bearing the surname Tigerman after the war). “It happened several times that because we feared one of the neighbours, who threatened us that we would all go to Auschwitz [KL Auschwitz – R.G.], the girl was hidden for a short time by friends or other neighbours,” Korzeniowska testified.⁹⁸

⁹⁴ A. Jarkowska-Natkaniec, *Wymuszona współpraca czy zdrada? Wokół przypadków kolaboracji Żydów w okupowanym Krakowie* (Cracow, 2018), p. 380.

⁹⁵ Cf. J.B. Michlic, *Piętno Zagłady*, p. 151.

⁹⁶ Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Roman Bachul regarding the aid provided by him, his parents Stanisław and Ludwika Bachul and his siblings: Anna, Janina, Maria and Władysław Bachul to Sara Stern in Osielec (Nowy Targ district), Cracow, 22 November 1984, in *Relacje o pomocy*, p. 330.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁹⁸ Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Cecylia Korzeniowska regarding the aid provided by her and members of the Debicki family to Danuta Krochmal in Kalwaria Zebrzydowska (Cracow district), Bielsko-Biała, 13 January 1989, in *Relacje o pomocy*, p. 165.

In similar situations, children were occasionally taken under the care of clergymen. In August 1942, during the liquidation of the Brzozów ghetto, Ela Zwick came to the home of Zofia Gubernat. Gubernat spouses decided to help her. After some time, when Zofia Gubernat was warned that there was “a lot of talk” in the neighbourhood about her hiding a Jewish child, she decided to find a new guardian for her.⁹⁹ Eventually, Fr. Jan Kuźniar, who was based in Chmielnik near Rzeszów, took in the girl. He arranged for her to have a false identity – from then on, Ela Zwick became Zofia Kuźniar.¹⁰⁰

We know that decisions were also made to hand children over to convents. This is what Józef Suchta from Raciechowice and his wife did. During the occupation, the Suchtas took care of a six-year-old girl¹⁰¹ they raised with their children. According to Karolina Ścibor’s post-war testimony, “people in the village started pointing fingers at her that this must be a Jewish child because it was different from the rest of the Suchtas’ children. Someone told the Suchtas that they were suspected of keeping a Jewish child.”¹⁰²

In this situation, Suchtas decided to place the girl in the Ursuline convent in Cracow: “They took her there and left her in the corridor, hoping that the nuns would take care of the child,” Karolina Ścibor testified; she added that Józef told her that “after they left the child, both he and his wife cried, but they had to choose

⁹⁹ The information provided by Zofia Gubernat is somewhat inconsistent. In her letter of 10 June 1984, she stated: “the presence of this child was soon noticed. We looked for some accommodation, but to no avail, no one even temporarily agreed to take her in [Ela Zwick – R.G.]. When I could no longer [hide her – R.G.], we left the house and, after walking around all day, we parted and she went by herself to an acquaintance of the parish priest in the parish of Chmielnik near Rzeszów” (AIPN, 392/524, Letter from Zofia Gubernat, Rzeszów, 10 June 1984, p. 3). On the other hand, in a testimony given a year later, Gubernat stated: “I made efforts with my husband to hide Ela in another place. I received help from Fr. Kuźniar, who resided in Chmielnik near Rzeszów at the time. She was taken there by a teacher from Izdebki, whose name I don’t remember today; after all, it was a great secrecy and I didn’t care to know her second name at the time.” Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Zofia Gubernat regarding the aid provided by her, her sister Helena Wiśniowska and other persons of Polish nationality to Ela and Barbara Zwick in Brzozów, (Krosno district), Rzeszów, 14 February 1985, in *Relacje o pomocy*, p. 58).

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁰¹ According to Sebastian Piątkowski, it was probably a girl using the false name “Ewa Zawadzka,” previously hidden in the Ursuline convent in Kołomyja. According to Karolina Ścibor, she was brought to Suchtów by the Ursuline nun Hiacenta (Franciszka Suchta), Józef Suchta’s cousin. Minutes of the interrogation of Karolina Ścibor regarding the aid provided by her and her husband Jan Ścibor to Zygmunt Dolinger in Nowy Sącz and the aid given by Stanisław and Józef Suchta to a Jewish girl of unknown identity in Raciechowice (Cracow district), Nowy Sącz, 3 May 1985, in *Relacje o pomocy*, pp. 373–374).

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 373.

between their lives and keeping the child. At the same time they were sure that no one would harm the child there.”¹⁰³

The failure to take the necessary precautions was dangerous. According to post-war witnesses’ testimonies, many neighbours knew that Gusta Goldberger’s son was hiding in the Węgrzyn family flat at 41b Emaus Street in Cracow. Some of them pressured the boy to leave the house. Therefore, after a few months, little Stefan Goldberger, through Franciszka Kałuża, a neighbour of the Węgrzyns, was placed with the Stelmach family in the village of Gnojnik. Wiktor Węgrzyn donated one thousand zlotys a month for his care, but apparently only half of this sum reached his new guardians, as Kałuża kept the rest for herself. Stefan stayed in Gnojnik for probably three months, whereafter his guardians requested that he be taken away. Perhaps they were afraid to hide him any longer. Franciszka Kałuża brought Stefan back to Węgrzyn. Most likely as a result of a denunciation in 1944, German police functionaries took the boy away and then arrested Wiktor Węgrzyn. The man left the Montelupich Street prison after a few weeks, while the boy was most likely murdered.¹⁰⁴ After the war, Józefa Gaudyn testified: “Everyone on the street knew that the Węgrzyns were sheltering the little Jewish boy. Even the children playing outside talked about it, which even I heard myself.”¹⁰⁵

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, pp. 373–374.

¹⁰⁴ AIPN Kr, 502/584, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Maria Węgrzyn, Cracow, 9 April 1945, pp. 3–3v; *ibid.*, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Wiktor Węgrzyn, Cracow, 10 April 1945, pp. 4–4v; *ibid.*, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Kamila Biczka, Cracow, 10 April 1945, fol. 5; *ibid.*, Note on the interview with the suspect Franciszka Kałuża, Cracow, 14 April 1945, pp. 6–6v; *ibid.*, Investigation report, Cracow, 16 April 1945, p. 7; *ibid.*, Minutes of the interrogation of the suspect Franciszka Kałuża, Cracow, 24 May 1945, pp. 14–15v; *ibid.*, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Janina Węgrzyn, Cracow, 23 June 1945, pp. 19–19v; *ibid.*, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Wiktor Węgrzyn, Cracow, 23 June 1945, pp. 20–21; *ibid.*, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Zofia Borowska, Cracow, 23 June 1945, pp. 22–22v; *ibid.*, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Janina Mikołajczyk, Cracow, 23 June 1945, pp. 23–23v; *ibid.*, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Józefa Gaudyn, Cracow, 23 June 1945, pp. 24–24v; *ibid.*, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Maria Węgrzyn, Cracow, 23 June 1945, pp. 25–25v; *ibid.*, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Józefa Gaudyn, Cracow, 28 December 1945, pp. 38–38v; *ibid.*, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Zofia Borowska, Cracow, 28 December 1945, pp. 40–40v; *ibid.*, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Janina Kałuża, Cracow, 28 December 1945, pp. 41–41v; *ibid.*, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Walenty Stelmach, Cracow, 15 January 1946, pp. 51–51v.

¹⁰⁵ AIPN Kr, 502/584, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Józefa Gaudyn, Cracow, 28 December 1945, p. 38.

Staying in Hiding

Sometimes it was only after an attempt to live openly on the ‘Aryan’ side failed that the guardians of a Jewish child made the decision to hide him. The aforementioned Icchak Lermer was initially placed in the home of Stefania Bilińska’s mother in Cracow. To neighbours and acquaintances he was introduced as “the nephew of an uncle from Przemyśl.” Unfortunately, continuing to stay “on the surface” could have posed the risk of his true identity being revealed. Stefania recalled:

The reason we had to take him from [my] mother’s house was that he had compromised himself to other children with his knowledge of the German language, and when the owner of the coal depot named Bobak, who was an Ukrainian, found out about this, he began to claim that he was definitely a Jewish child. So, fearing for his safety, we took the boy to Dobczyce and from then until the end of the war we hid him in our house in Dobczyce. Fearing that his presence would be detected in our house, he had a hiding place arranged in the attic where he stayed for days.¹⁰⁶

We know of cases where children lived “near the surface,” that is, depending on the circumstances, they used a false identity or stayed in hiding. Aleksander Münzer received false documents with the name Aleksander Burzowski from his guardian, a Home Army soldier, Franciszek Mróz. According to Münzer’s post-war testimony, he used those documents almost until the end of the war. In addition, Mróz prepared a hiding place for him in the Misior family’s house – a kind of a camouflaged bunker, built under the barn, with an emergency second exit. However, the boy was not completely isolated there; he stayed both in the bunker and in the Misiors’ flat.¹⁰⁷ On the other hand, abovementioned Bronisław Koper from Bieńkówka, who took Stanisława Suska and the Jewish girl into his farm, and prepared

¹⁰⁶ AYW, M.31.2/4756, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Stefania Bilińska, Cracow, 21 September 1984, n.p.

¹⁰⁷ OKŚZpNP Kr, S 1/87, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Aleksander Mirecki, Cracow, 12 February 1986, pp. 65–69.

a camouflaged hiding place as a precaution – it was a dugout hole, boarded up, with an air supply, but they were only forced to hide there once, because fortunately there was no need to do so. It was a special hiding place for case of extreme danger. In other emergency situations, which occurred several dozen times, the cousin and the girl hid in a camouflaged cellar.¹⁰⁸

Some children, however, stayed in hiding almost all the time. For example, this was the case of Janek Weber, brought to the Wierzbicki family.¹⁰⁹ “He lived in a locked room, he couldn’t go out,”¹¹⁰ recalled Wanda Styczeń, a daughter of the couple hiding him. When Janek turned up at their house at 28 Wodociągowa Street in Cracow,¹¹¹ Styczeń was in her teens. When her mother brought “a small, petite boy,” Wanda was told: “[He] will live with us [...] but no one can know about it.”¹¹² Years later, Janek Weber recalled that he had been instructed by his guardians not to make any noise or walk up to the windows. He lived in the room of his grandmother Wanda, who had died a few months earlier. Food was brought to him once a day, usually at night.¹¹³ In the light of the available sources, we know that strict secrecy was kept at home. The Wierzbickis’ youngest child, Marek, who was Weber’s peer, only found out about Janek’s stay when the war ended. Before that, he had been told that no one was allowed to enter his deceased grandmother’s room.¹¹⁴

Being constantly in hiding took a mental and physical toll on the person. Health problems were a consequence. This is how Rachela Garfunkel, born in Cracow in 1930, recalled hiding in the Gruca spouses’ house:

I spent most of my time with them standing in a corner, hidden behind a large wardrobe. My physical needs had to wait till late at night, as the only lavatory

¹⁰⁸ AIPN, 392/970, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Bronisław Koper, Bielsko-Biała, 13 June 1989, p. 1v.

¹⁰⁹ The family consisted of Michał and Anna Wierzbicki, and their three children: Wanda, Krystyna and Marek (AYV, M.31.2/6222, Statement by Jan Weber, Jerusalem, 12 July 1993, n.p.).

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, Testimony given by Wanda Styczeń née Wierzbicka, Cracow, 23 February 1994, no page numbering.

¹¹¹ Weber stated that it was “a little isolated villa” (*ibid.*, Statement by Jan Weber, Jerusalem, 12 July 1993, n.p.).

¹¹² *Ibid.*, Testimony given by Wanda Styczeń née Wierzbicka, Cracow, 23 February 1994, n.p.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, Statement by Jan Weber, Jerusalem, 12 July 1993, n.p..

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

(for all the tenants) was in the hallway. At times, I had to lie under the bed. Standing for such a length of time caused ulcerations on my legs. Also, at the same time, I was suffering from hepatitis which I contracted in the Ghetto.¹¹⁵

Unfortunately, in the available sources we do not always find information about many of the ongoing problems faced by the caregivers and children. Let us also note that remaining silent for long hours required a great deal of discipline from the young charges.

Finding a hiding place was not always a sufficient guarantee of safety. At the turn of 1942 and 1943, Rozalia Paśławska, at the request of the Kardisch spouses (who worked in the Optima factory at the time), hid two children in her flat at 15 Rękawka Street: around five-year-old Romek and around nine-year-old Rena. The Paśławski family lived in difficult conditions, in a small flat (they had only a room and a kitchen). During the day, the Jewish children would hide in a laundry basket, in a made bed, or sometimes under it; according to post-war testimonies from the Paśławski sons, only in the evening and with the lights out could they leave their hiding place.¹¹⁶ Living in towns was linked to the obligation to report the residents and fixed addresses. The new tenant could have been reported by neighbours or other outsiders. Despite the precautions taken, at the end of October or beginning of November 1944, one of the neighbours, being drunk, reported to Germans (probably gendarmes) that there were Jewish children living with Rozalia Paśławska. As a result, a German patrol arrested Paśławska and Romek Kardisch. The boy was probably murdered, while Paśławska left the Montelupich Street jail in Cracow after a few weeks.¹¹⁷

According to Rozalia Paśławska's testimony, while the Germans entered the room where Roman was, his sister Rena was led outside by her daughter Helena Paśławska, owing to which the former survived.¹¹⁸ This case demonstrates how

¹¹⁵ AYW, M.31.2/11179, Testimony given by Rachela Garfunkel, Edmonton, 16 October 2006, pp. 18–19.

¹¹⁶ Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Stefan Paśławski regarding the aid provided by his parents Rozalia and Bolesław Paśławski to Renata and Roman Kardisz in Cracow, Cracow, 7 February 1985, in *Relacje o pomocy*, p. 207; AIPN, 392/474/A, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Jerzy Paśławski, Cracow, 5 March 1985, pp. 12–14.

¹¹⁷ For more, see R. Gieroń, "Zarys problematyki pomocy," pp. 239–240.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 240.

much of a role, including in extreme situations, was sometimes played by the children of Poles caring for Jewish refugees. Jan Weber had similar experiences. In the summer of 1943 or 1944, when Germans were carrying out searches near the house where he was hiding, the Wierzbickis' youngest daughter Wanda led Janek outside the house. Her father asked her to take him "to the end of the garden, where the dense bushes made a good hiding place."¹¹⁹ Thanks to this, the boy was not found. Years later, Wanda recalled: "Poor Janek was sitting obediently in a hiding place. Happy, we took him home to feed him and eat something ourselves, as we had had nothing in our mouths since 5 a.m."¹²⁰

As we can see from the above examples (this is also confirmed by the existing literature in the field), during the German occupation, buildings, flats, houses or farms were not enclaves inaccessible to the functionaries of the German administration. They would enter to carry out arrests or searches.¹²¹ Despite taking various precautions, those caring for Jewish children were very often in fear. Ryszard Orowski, who was hiding in a Cracow flat, wrote several decades after the end of the war:

Sometimes during inspections by various authorities, because I was not registered, [the Lorenc family – R.G.] hid me in the attic or in the cellar, which was a great psychological stress for them, and only after the subsequent inspection did they breathe a sigh of relief that no one had found me.¹²²

Fear probably affected the relations within the families and behaviour towards the hidden children. Perhaps this is what an excerpt from Jan Weber's post-war testimony, who, while in hiding, came into contact mainly with Mrs Wierzbicka, indicates: "She was quite strict and even unkind to me – I remember being afraid of her, but in hindsight I cannot – of course – hold it against her."¹²³

¹¹⁹ AYW, M.31.2/6222, Testimony given by Wanda Styczeń née Wierzbicka, Cracow, 23 February 1994, n.p.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

¹²¹ Cf. A. Czocher, "Okupacyjne uwarunkowania pomocy ukrywającym się Żydom w Generalnym Gubernatorstwie," in *Kościół, Żydzi, jezuici. Wokół pomocy Żydom w czasie II wojny światowej*, ed. M. Wenklar (Cracow, 2021), p. 56.

¹²² AYW, M.31.2/5365, Statement by Józef Ryszard Orowski, Warsaw, 3 December 1991, n.p.

¹²³ AYW, M.31.2/6222, Statement by Jan Weber, Jerusalem, 12 July 1993, n.p.

Fear was rooted in the nature of the occupation policy. “The terror of the occupier creating a permanent sense of fear in Polish society was one of the decisive factors in Polish-Jewish relations at that time,” note Martyna Grądzka-Rejak and Aleksandra Namysło.¹²⁴ From the moment the ghettos were liquidated and its inhabitants deported to extermination camps, one of the aims of the system set up by the German authorities was to catch Jewish fugitives. This also applied to children in hiding. After a few months of sheltering Sonia Imerglück in their home in Zagórzany, the Łosiowski family also agreed to take care of the Liebers’ two-year-old son. The Łosiowski farm might have seemed like a safe haven. It was placed close to the forest, away from the other houses in Zagórzany. However, we know from post-war testimonies that the Łosiowskis feared denunciation. It soon turned out that their fear was not unfounded. In September 1943, most probably as a result of a denunciation, the children were murdered by a Blue Police officer, and Michał Łosiowski, his wife Maria and daughter Anna were beaten up.¹²⁵

Unfortunately, we do not know how many hidden Jewish children were captured during the third stage of the Holocaust. We do not know these figures neither for the whole occupied Polish territories nor for the Cracow province (Distrikt Krakau). It is possible that we will never know this number due to absent sources. The attitude of the neighbours was undoubtedly important; they could, for example,

¹²⁴ M. Grądzka-Rejak, A. Namysło, “Relacje polsko-żydowskie,” p. 45.

¹²⁵ A Blue Police officer, Wincenty Pałka, who was on duty at the Polnische Polizei station in Gdów at the time, was suspected of murdering the Jewish children (Sonia Imerglück and the Liebers’ son). Although he was wanted by law enforcement authorities after the end of the war, he was not tried. He continued to live under the alias Władysław Barański until his death in the late 1960s. (AIPN Kr, 010/1655, vol. 2, Memo, Myślenice, 16 April 1961, pp. 25–26; *ibid.*, Memo, Myślenice, 8 May 1961, p. 27; *ibid.*, Memo, Myślenice, 19 May 1961, pp. 28–29; *ibid.*, Full copy of the death certificate of Władysław Barański, Milicz, 15 March 1968, pp. 158–159; *ibid.*, Memo, Cracow, 4 December 1969, pp. 161–162; AIPN Kr, 502/2929, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Michał Łosiowski, Myślenice, 25 September 1945, p. 9; *ibid.*, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Anna Łosiowska, Myślenice, 22 September 1945, pp. 12–13; *ibid.*, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Józef Nawalaniec, Myślenice, 22 September 1945, pp. 14–14v; *ibid.*, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Marian Imerglück, Myślenice, 22 September 1945, pp. 16–17; AIPN Kr, 502/4161, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Anna Łosiowska, Myślenice, 17 March 1961, pp. 10–12; *ibid.*, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Zofia Nowak, Myślenice, 4 May 1961, pp. 16–17; *ibid.*, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Franciszek Maroń, Myślenice, 9 May 1961, pp. 18–19; *ibid.*, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Franciszek Rapacz, Myślenice, 12 May 1961, pp. 23–25).

have stayed favourably silent about the presence of those in hiding or reported it according to German laws.¹²⁶ In this context, the passivity of those who knew about the hidden Jewish child can be judged positively.

The Fate of the Hidden Children After the End of the German Occupation

Anna Poleska, who looked after the several-year-old Tamara Goldstein during the German occupation, recalled that after the end of the war she received

two thousand from the Voivodeship Jewish Committee for the child. Then I was told that I had to hand the child over to an orphanage. I was together with the child for four years. I loved the child as my own and found it hard to part with it. But seeing that I had no means of subsistence, that I could not secure her existence, even though I had grown attached to her with all my soul, I decided to give her up because I knew she would be better off there. At the same time, I received a message from her father, Jakub Goldstein, from Belgium, asking me to give the child to the orphanage at 38 Długa Street. After a year, Tamara Goldstein left to join her father and is in an orphanage near Paris.¹²⁷

It is estimated that one in three Holocaust victims was a child at the time of their death. After the end of the war, the surviving community of Polish Jews, through the Central Committee of Jews in Poland and Zionist organisations, made efforts to recover Jewish children hidden by Poles. Parents or other relatives of the children also tried to do so. Sometimes this was not an easy task. Danuta Beer was born in the Cracow ghetto in 1941. After a year, her parents, Felicja and Lazar, entrusted the girl to Veronica and Marian Blicharz. Her new guardians named her Anna, baptised her and most likely adopted her after the war ended. Lazar Beer, a Holocaust survivor, wanted to reclaim his child and,

¹²⁶ Cf. A. Czocher, "Okupacyjne uwarunkowania pomocy," p. 56.

¹²⁷ AŻIH, 301/2339, Testimony of Anna Poleska.

through his lawyer Norbert Salpeter, brought a case before the Cracow Municipal Court.¹²⁸ However, the court did not decide to take the girl away from the Blicharz family.¹²⁹

Some carers refused to give back their charges, motivated by emotional reasons. There were also those who wanted to be compensated for the costs incurred while providing care or to be rewarded (a specific remuneration).¹³⁰ Some asked for financial assistance, citing their difficult financial situation. This is, for example, what Janina Gosławska did, who wrote a letter to the Central Committee of Jews in Poland and received ten thousand zlotys due to the “need to cover debts” incurred while hiding Maks Weissberg and “lack of money for her own treatment.” After the war, Maks was handed over to the Jewish Committee in Cracow;¹³¹ in his written testimony he confirmed the fact of being hidden by Gosławska and added that he was “fine” there.¹³²

Cases should also be noted of the children who themselves did not want to leave their guardians. Such situations must have been extremely painful for all parties: parents, children and their wartime guardians alike. In 1945, Pesa Terkieltojb came to Anna Kowalczyk to collect her daughter. However, the girl did not see her for more than two years and did not want to leave her “foster mother.”¹³³ When she was given to Anna Kowalczyk, she was not yet three years old. Holocaust survivor Pesa Terkieltojb recalled: “The incessant crying, loud shouting, spasms and ‘you’re not my mother’ exclamations made me ask Anna Kowalczyk to bring the child to Klimontów herself.” The Polish woman brought the girl and, in order to accustom her to her new situation, stayed with her for several weeks. Terkieltojb reported:

¹²⁸ AŻIH, 303/IX/722, The letter of Lazar Beer to the Jewish Care Committee in Warsaw, Cracow, 2 July 1947, p. 19; *ibid.*, The letter of Lazar Beer to the Central Committee of Jews in Poland, date of receipt: 2 September 1947, p. 22.

¹²⁹ *Księga Sprawiedliwych wśród Narodów Świata. Ratujący Żydów podczas Holocaustu. Polska*, vol. 1, ed. I. Gutman, S. Bender, S. Krakowski (Cracow, 2009), pp. 45–46.

¹³⁰ Cf. E. Rączy, *Pomoc Polaków*, pp. 116–118.

¹³¹ AN Kr, 29/749/1319, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Janina Gosławska, Cracow, 14 November 1945, pp. 45–45v (incorrect pagination); AŻIH, 303/VIII/226, Janina Gosławska’s application, 8 August 1945.

¹³² AŻIH, 303/VIII/226, Letter of Maks Weissberg.

¹³³ Undated statement by Pesa Terkieltojb regarding the aid provided to her daughter Sabina Kac by Anna and Jan Kowalczyk in Rzeszotary (Cracow district) in *Relacje o pomocy*, p. 384.

As her efforts did not bring any results, at my request she left at night so as not to see the child again, to whom she was also extremely attached. Her departure caused the child profound psychological trauma, leaving lasting scars. Even now, during moments of mental distress, she remembers Anna Kowalczyk. She knows now about the immense dedication Anna showed in stepping into her mother's role at such a challenging time, and she knows she owes her life to Anna's care.¹³⁴

A similar situation was mentioned by Roman Bachul. In 1945, Sara Stern, who was hidden by his family, turned seven years old. The family was then to decide that the girl would be sent to school as Maria Bachul. However, in the summer of that year her mother, Miriam Stern, came to collect her. Roman recalled:

the mother who arrived followed the girl all day and said to her: 'You are mine.' The child, in turn, held my mother by the skirt and grabbed her neck and would not leave. Then the Jewish woman went away, leaving the child with us, but from then on she often came to us and the child slowly got used to her.¹³⁵

After a few months Miriam took the girl away.

Some rescuers looked for relatives of the surviving child on their own initiative. Stefania Bilińska recounted the story of Icchak Lermer: after the end of the war,

no one came forward to claim the boy, and it was then that we found out that the owner of a tannery in Dobczyce, Adolf Pistol, had survived the occupation and my mother approached him to ask what to do with the boy. Adolf Pistol went with my mother to the Jewish community in Cracow, which was based somewhere in the Kazimierz district, and there it was decided that the boy would be taken over by this Jewish community. Indeed, Yitzhak Lermer was taken by a representative of this community and, as far as I know, was sent by

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 384–385.

¹³⁵ Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Roman Bachul regarding the aid provided by him, his parents Stanisław and Ludwika, and his siblings: Anna, Janina, Maria i Władysław Bachul to Sara Stern in Osielec (Nowy Targ district), Cracow, 22 November 1984, in *Relacje o pomocy*, p. 330.

this community to France for treatment. My mother was paid twenty thousand zloty by the Jewish community as compensation for the expenses incurred while hiding the boy.¹³⁶

Some of the hidden children remained with Polish guardians after the war ended. Maria Findysz, daughter of Józefa and Antoni Lorenc, recalled: “After the war ended, we all got so used to the child [Ryszard Orowski] at home, and since he did not have a mother, because, as we found out, she had been executed by the Nazis together with her mother, he remained in our house as a foster child.”¹³⁷ We also know the stories of children who did not know their true identity for many years because they were handed over to their guardians at a very young age. For example, Jerzy Goldstein, who was born in the Cracow ghetto on 28 July 1941, was handed over to the Pietrukaniec family as a year-old child. After the German occupation ended, Anna and Stanislaw – who had no offspring – adopted him and raised him as their own son. He only learned of his fate when he was an adult.¹³⁸

After the war, Jewish children – Holocaust survivors pursued their education, worked, and built families. While many achieved success in their professional and personal lives, others faced significant challenges, including mental health issues stemming from their traumatic experiences.¹³⁹ Some also wanted to forget their wartime experiences. This is probably why they did not uphold contact with their former guardians. Sometimes they simply left Poland. Although there were also those who, despite leaving for another country, maintained contact. Danuta Tigerman, a Holocaust survivor, left for Israel in 1968, but continued to correspond with Cecylia Korzeniowska, and visited her in the late 1980s.¹⁴⁰ It was common for children who stayed in Poland to have their wartime

¹³⁶ AYW, M.31.2/4756, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Stefania Bilińska, Cracow, 21 September 1984, n.p.

¹³⁷ AYW, M.31.2/5365, Statement by Maria Findysz, no place, n.d., n.p.

¹³⁸ AYW, M.31.2/11967, Statement by Jerzy Pietrukaniec (Goldstein), no place, 27 April 2009, n.p.

¹³⁹ J.B. Michlic, *Piętno Zagłady*, p. 18.

¹⁴⁰ Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Cecylia Korzeniowska regarding the aid provided by her and members of the Dębicki family to Danuta Krochmal in Kalwaria Zebrzydowska (Cracow district), Bielsko-Biała, 13 January 1989, in *Relacje o pomocy*, p. 165.

guardians as their only relatives. They often visited them during holidays and festivities.¹⁴¹

Many years after the end of the war, some people made statements about the help they had obtained, thanks to which their caregivers received the Righteous Among the Nations titles. For example, Maria Grochowska (née Eibenschütz) in 2001, in a letter to the Department of the Righteous at Yad Vashem, applied for this honour to be awarded posthumously to Katarzyna Kijak. Katarzyna was the nanny of little Maria. Before the deportation operation of 28 October 1942, she took the two-year-old girl out of the Cracow ghetto and looked after her until the end of the German occupation. After the war they continued to live together. Maria wrote:

I remained with my guardian, who did not formally adopt me but kept my name in honour of my parents, whom she respected and valued. She became the best mother to me, loving me as if I were her own child and caring for me to the best of her very modest means.¹⁴²

In the Yad Vashem Archives collections, statements and testimonies given by the parents of the rescued children are also kept.¹⁴³

Conclusion

I presented selected aspects of the topic of Poles sheltering Jewish children on the so-called Aryan side in the wartime Cracow province (Distrikt Krakau). The cases mentioned in the text show that the decisions of individuals or families were influenced by various conditions; however, taking in Jewish children was always associated with many new challenges and dangers stemming from the terms imposed by the German occupier on the Polish territory during the World War II.

¹⁴¹ AIPN Kr, 502/4193, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Kamila Zagórska, Olkusz, 29 March 1951, pp. 22v–23; Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Antonina Czuba regarding the aid provided by her, her parents Barbara and Hieronim Mikłarz and other family members to Elza Roze-man in Pruchnik (Jarosław district), Rzeszów, 30 April 1971, in *Relacje o pomocy*, p. 351.

¹⁴² AYW, M.31.2/9662, Maria Grochowska's application for awarding Katarzyna Kijak the Righteous Among the Nations title, Cracow, 18 May 2001, n.p.

¹⁴³ AYW, M.31.2/6162, Testimony of Leon Margulies, Montreal, 29 August 1992, n.p.

It seems that the percentage of people taking care of Jewish children was small. However, this issue requires further research.

In this article, I have featured selected cases of hiding of more than forty Jewish children. Almost a hundred people were involved – mostly married couples and in some cases whole extended families. It would be worthwhile to do more in-depth research on the role of other household members, especially younger children in a family hosting a fugitive, e.g. on the issue of sharing tasks or responsibilities related to hiding Jews.¹⁴⁴

Despite the limited source material originating from the fact that not all cases of children in hiding have been documented, and that not all young fugitives survived till the end of the German occupation,¹⁴⁵ it is worth attempting to estimate the number of the rescued children and those helping them in a specific geographic area. The question of tracing the post-war fates of those who were hidden and their relationships with their former guardians is also an interesting research proposal. It would also be worthwhile to analyse the issue of the failures of aid efforts more broadly, including in-depth research on the local conditions affecting the effectiveness of hiding children (distinguishing between urban and rural specificities). Such survey could point out the differences in the situation of Jewish children in hiding, both in the Cracow province (Distrikt Krakau) itself and in comparison with the other areas of the General Governorate.

Table 1. Children Mentioned in the Article and Persons who Helped¹⁴⁶

Child	Those who helped	Locality	Child's Fate
Aleksander Münzer (aka Aleksander Mirecki)	Genowefa Misior; Franciszek Mróz and his mother; Rajmund and Aniela Ptak	Skrzynka, Mierzeń	survived
Artur Süsskind	Natalia Pyrkowska and Stanisław Bernal-Olechowski	Rzędzin (at present a part of Tarnów)	probably survived

¹⁴⁴ The research in this matter seems to be possible, as there are the memoirs and testimonies of such individuals remaining. See for example A. Radoń, *Lala. Kartki z dziejów Bystrej Podhalańskiej i okolic* (Bystra-Sidzina, 2022).

¹⁴⁵ Cf. B. Heksel, "Życie w ukryciu," p. 212.

¹⁴⁶ Further research may point out other persons who played a role in rescuing the mentioned children.

Child	Those who helped	Locality	Child's Fate
Benedykt Rosenblum	Ludwik Atlas and his wife; Jan, Magdalena, Helena and Sylwester Gas; Rozalia Bochenek	Dobranowice, Żerkowice	survived
daughter of the Anisfelds (aka Anna Dąbska)	Franciszek Kowalski and his wife	Niepołomice	at the end of 1943 she left Poland with her parents for Hungary
daughter of Stefania Elsner	Helena Osika	Cracow	survived
Danuta Beer (aka Anna Blicharz)	Weronika and Marian Blicharz	Cracow	survived
Danuta Krochmal (aka Dina Tigerman)	Cecylia Korzeniowska	Kalwaria Zebrzydowska	survived
child of Majer Zalcman	Katarzyna Rożek	Dylągówka	survived
Ela Zwick	Zofia Gubernat and her husband; Rev. Jan Kuźniar	Brzozów, Chmielnik	survived
Elza Rozeman	Hieronim and Barbara Mikłarz	Pruchnik	survived
Emilia Münzer (aka Emilia Bergel)	Twardosz; the Kaczmarczyk family	Lipnik, Dobrzyce	survived
Ewa (daughter of a Jewish doctor)	Stanisława Suska; Bronisław Koper	Bieńkówka	survived
Henryka Reising	Feliks Michalik and his mother; Zofia Kapała; Mrs Weis; a woman from Sanok ¹⁴⁷	Rzeszów, Gwoźnica Górna, Sanok	survived
Icchak Lerner	Stefania Bilińska (née Orzechowska); Józefa Głuś (née Orzechowska); Józefa Orzechowska	Cracow, Dobczyce	survived
Isidor Poser	Stanisław Matusz and his wife Katarzyna (née Dudzik)	Cracow	survived
Jan Weber	Aniela and Ludwik Nowak; Michał and Anna Wierzbicki	Cracow	survived

¹⁴⁷ She was probably a cousin or sister of Feliks Michalik's wife (AIPN, 392/1766, Minutes of the interrogation of Feliks Michalik, Rzeszów, 17 October 1970, p. 3; *ibid.*, Minutes of the interrogation of Zofia Kapała, Rzeszów, 30 October 1970, p. 15).

Child	Those who helped	Locality	Child's Fate
Jerzy Goldstein	Anna and Stanisław Pietrukaniec	Cracow	survived
Maks (aka Maciej) Weissberg	Justyna and Janina Gosławska	Cracow ¹⁴⁸	survived
Maria Eibenschütz (aka Maria Grochowska)	Katarzyna Kijak	Cracow	survived
Maria Krawczyk	Augusta Szemelowska (née Trammer) with her mother Elfryda Trammer	Łagiewniki (Cracow)	survived
Michał Pinkas	N.N.	Gruszów Wielki	survived
Mordek (Mordechaj) Szajer	Stanisława Boratyn and her husband	Husów	was probably shot together with his parents in 1943
Olga Mandel (aka Olga Kapeliuk)	Augusta Szemelowska (née Trammer) with her mother Elfryda Trammer	Łagiewniki (Cracow)	survived
Rachela Garfunkel	Marian and Maria Gruca	Cracow	survived
Rena Kardisch	Rozalia and Bolesław Paślawski	Cracow	survived
Roman Kardisch	Rozalia and Bolesław Paślawski	Cracow	was most probably murdered in 1944
Rozalia Allerhand	Roman and Kunegunda Kłosowski	Kocmyrzów (Cracow)	survived
Ryszard Orowski	Józefa and Antoni Lorenc with their daughter Maria	Cracow	survived
Sabina Kac	Anna Kowalczyk	Rzeszotary	survived
Salomea Zollman	Franciszka Bala; Ludwika Buksa	Rabka	survived
Samuel Oliner	Balwina Piecuch; Stanisław Pyrek	Bystra	survived
Sara Stern	Stanisław and Ludwika Bachul, and their children: Roman, Władysław, Anna Maria and Janina	Bystra Podhalańska, Osielec	survived
Sonia Imerglück	Michał Łosiowski with his wife Maria (née Foszczyńska) and daughter Anna	Zagórzany	shot by a Blue Policeman in September 1943

¹⁴⁸ At certain times Maks was sent to the countryside, for example to Michałowice (AIPN Kr, 502/2508, Notarial declaration concerning Ms Gosławska and Ms Tomczyk, a certified translation from French, Paris, 16 May 1950, p. 70v.)

Child	Those who helped	Locality	Child's Fate
Stefan Goldberg	Wiktor Węgrzyn with his family; Walenty Stelmach with his wife	Cracow, Gnojnik	most probably murdered in 1944 in Cracow
Sulamit Korn	Poles (no names available)	Sławkowice	survived
Liebers' son	Michał Łosiowski, his wife Maria (née Foszczyńska) and daughter Anna	Zagórzany	shot by a Blue Policeman in September 1943
Tamara Goldstein	Anna Poleska	Cracow	survived
Weronika (daughter of Dora and Jakub Künstlich)	Maria and Stanisław Szatkowski	Jadowniki Mokre	survived
Zygmunt Weinreb	Józef and Maria Puchała	Łagiewniki (Cracow)	survived
Jewish girl (aka Ewa Zawadzka)	Józef Suchta with his wife	Raciechowice	handed over to the Congregation of the Ursuline Sisters in Cracow
a Jewish boy ¹⁴⁹	Wojciech and Anna Gicala	Stary Wiśnicz	the boy and Wojciech Gicala were shot in Nowy Wiśnicz in August 1942

Source: the author's own research.

¹⁴⁹ According to the post-war testimony given by Anna Widelko (wife of Wojciech Gicala), he was the son of Pinkes from Nowy Wiśnicz (OKŚZpNP Kr, S 23.2004.Zn, vol. 2, Main Files of the Prosecution concerning the criminal activity of German gendarmerie officers in Bochnia, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Anna Widelko, Cracow, 27 May 1975, pp. 381–382; see also D. Swaltek-Niewińska, "Powiat bocheński," pp. 574–575).

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SUMMARY

The article explores various aspects of providing shelter to Jewish children by Poles on the so-called Aryan side in the Cracow province (Distrikt Krakau) during the German occupation. It delves into the experiences of several dozen Jewish children, highlighting the nature of the aid received within a broader context of the events. The article also describes how these children found their new guardians and briefly characterises their lives on the “Aryan” side. The experiences of the children illustrate that the decision to help depended on various circumstances. However, taking Jewish children into care invariably brought new challenges and dangers due to the harsh terms imposed by the German occupiers in Poland during the World War II.

KEYWORDS

Cracow province • Distrikt Krakau • Jewish children • helping Jews •
providing shelter • Holocaust

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INDIVIDUAL AID PROVIDED TO JEWS IN GHETTOS
IN THE GERMAN OCCUPATION: THE PRE-WAR STANISŁAWÓW
VOIVODESHIP (1941–1943)

Introduction

The criminal German policies led to the material and physical exhaustion of the Jews confined in the ghettos, which was a form of indirect extermination and a stage of the Holocaust. For some ghetto inhabitants, aid provided by non-Jewish people was the only chance for rescue. The article presents the scale of this phenomenon and discusses its conditions and forms.¹ The subject of the author's analyses is exclusively the individual manifestations of aid provided to Jews. Therefore, this study will not deal with cases of institutional support, such as those provided by the structures of the Polish Underground State or churches and religious associations.

¹ The article is the outcome of the author's research into aid provided to Jews in the pre-war Stanisławów Voivodeship during World War II, carried out as part of the IPN Central Research Project "The History of Jews in Poland and Polish-Jewish Relations, 1917–1990." Text is partly based on the author's doctoral thesis.

Thus the study shall draw on the definition of aid developed and adopted by the initiators of the research programme “Index of Poles Murdered and Persecuted for Aid to Jews during the Second World War.”² Thus aid is defined as:

[...] documented or verbally certified, prohibited by German law, conscious, active and positive activities undertaken for the benefit of the Jewish population, which was segregated under German law. In order for a deed to be considered as aid, the condition of its measurable efficiency must be fulfilled, and the activity in question should lead to a specific result, i.e. an improvement of the situation in which the person was before the aid arrived.³

The chronological boundaries of the article are set by the years 1941 and 1943, which is related to the period of operation of the ghettos in the area under study. The first ghetto there was established in August 1941 (in Rohatyn), and the last was liquidated in the first half of June 1943 (in Stryj, Rohatyn and Żurawno). The area under study was narrowed down to the Stanisławów Voivodeship within its boundaries of 31 August 1939. During the German occupation, the area was part of the Distrikt Galizien (Galitsia Province) of the General Governorate. Initially, the Germans established five district offices (Kreishauptmannschaft) in the pre-war Stanisławów Voivodeship, with headquarters in Horodenka, Kałusz, Kołomyja, Stanisławów and Stryj.⁴ In addition, the area of the pre-war Rohatyn district was placed under the district office in Brzeżany.⁵

The discussed geographic area was ethnically diverse. According to the results of the population census carried out in 1931, more than one million four hundred

² For more on the project, see M. Grądzka-Rejak, A. Namysło, “Indeks Polaków zamordowanych i represjonowanych za pomoc Żydom w okresie II wojny światowej” – stan badań, wyniki pierwszego etapu projektu, perspektywa badawcza,” in *Represje za pomoc Żydom na okupowanych ziemiach polskich w czasie II wojny światowej*, vol. 1, ed. M. Grądzka-Rejak, A. Namysło (Warsaw, 2019), pp. 64–73.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 72.

⁴ Over time, the occupier changed the administrative division of these areas. In 1942, the district governor's office in Horodenka was abolished, and in mid-1943, the same happened to the district governor's office in Kałusz; M. Du Prel, *Das Generalgouvernement* (Würzburg, 1942), pp. 384–385; W. Bonusiak, *Małopolska Wschodnia i Wołyń w czasie II wojny światowej* (Rzeszów, 2022), p. 46.

⁵ W. Bonusiak, *Małopolska Wschodnia i Wołyń*, p. 46; *idem*, *Małopolska Wschodnia pod rządami Trzeciej Rzeszy* (Rzeszów, 1990), p. 19; G. Mazur, *Pokucie w latach drugiej wojny światowej. Położenie ludności, polityka okupantów, działalność podziemia* (Cracow, 1994), pp. 64–65.

and eighty thousand people inhabited it. The Ukrainian population was by far the predominant one, accounting for almost 73 per cent of the voivodeship's population. The percentage of Poles was just under 17 per cent. Jews, on the other hand, accounted for 9.44 per cent of the population in 1931, with nearly one hundred and forty thousand people living in the region at the time.⁶ According to Grzegorz Hryciuk's findings, in 1939 the Stanisławów Voivodeship may have been inhabited by more than one hundred and forty-nine thousand Jews.⁷

It is difficult to estimate the number of Jews residing there during the first period of the German occupation. Under Soviet rule, the Jewish population experienced only slight circulation. Above all, it increased through the arrival of refugees from the western areas of German-occupied Poland. However, some became victims of the Soviet deportations into the USSR. In course of the evacuation of the Soviet state apparatus in June 1941, about 2 per cent of the local Jews moved eastwards. Any demographic loss, however, was offset by a wave of Jews from Hungary deported to the Stanisławów Voivodeship during the first period of the German occupation. According to the calculations of Ukrainian researchers Lyubov Solovka and Svitlana Oryshko, thirteen to fourteen thousand Jews expelled by the Hungarian authorities from Transcarpathian Ruthenia found themselves in this area.⁸

On 17 December 1941, a decree by Governor General Hans Frank came into force, which implemented the isolation of Jews in ghettos in the Distrikt Galizien that had been in force in the so-called old General Governorate Distrikts since September 1940.⁹ However, where ghettos were established and what their nature was, depended entirely on the initiative of the local German occupation authorities.¹⁰

⁶ *Drugi powszechny spis ludności z dn. XII 1931 r. Województwo stanisławowskie*, series C, fascicle 65, (Warsaw, 1938).

⁷ G. Hryciuk, *Przemiany narodowościowe i ludnościowe w Galicji Wschodniej i na Wołyniu w latach 1931–1948* (Toruń, 2005), p. 237.

⁸ L. Solovka, S. Oryshko, *150 iz 150 000... : Holokost yevreyiv Prykarpattya yak skladova etnodemohrafichnoyi Katastrofy Shkhidnoyi Halychyny* (Ivano-Frankiv'sk, 2019).

⁹ We are referring to the Fourth Regulation on the Introduction of General Administration Regulations in the Distrikt Galizien (Galicia province), which introduced, among other things, the General Governorate Residence Restriction Regulation of 13 September 1940 with the amendments contained in the Second and Third General Governorate Residence Restriction Regulations of 29 April 1941 and of 15 October 1941. See *Verordnungsblatt für das Generalgouvernement 1941*, No. 120.

¹⁰ D. Pohl, *Nationalsozialistische Judenverfolgung in Ostgalizien 1941–1944. Organisation und Durchführung eines staatlichen Massenverbrechens* (Munich, 1996); T. Sandkühler, „Endlösung“ in Galizien. *Der Judenmord in Ostpolen und die Rettungsinitiativen von Berthold Beitz 1941–1944* (Bonn, 1996), p. 154.

It is often impossible to state whether there was a ghetto in a particular town. As Dieter Pohl pointed out, to establish the facts historians often have to rely solely on the testimonies of witnesses, whose assessment of the nature of a particular place of Jewish isolation place is sometimes inaccurate. Testimonies sometimes mention the ghetto, while the place was not formally arranged as one, and Jews stayed there on other terms. For example, it served as a camp next to a forced labour establishment, or was a quarter of the city inhabited by Jews even before the war. Meanwhile, the ghettos established by the German authorities had clearly defined boundaries, from which the non-Jewish community was removed, and the Jewish population was forcibly relocated. Access to and from these ghettos was controlled by administrative regulations.¹¹

In the two-volume *The Yad Vashem Encyclopedia of the Ghettos During the Holocaust* and in the *Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos* prepared by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, the information on the fifteen ghettos established by the Germans in the former Stanisławów Voivodeship may be found, namely in Bolechów, Bursztyn, Gwoździec, Horodenka, Kałusz, Kołomyja, Kosowo, Nadwórna, Rohatyn, Stanisławów, Stryj, Śniatyn, Tłumacz, Tyśmienica and Żurawno.¹² It appears that the ghetto existing in Skole should also be added to this list.¹³ Thus, ghettos were in operation in almost every pre-war district town, with the exception of Dolina¹⁴ and Żydaczów, and apart from district towns (in Bolechów, Bursztyn, Gwoździec, Tyśmienica, Żurawno). The following table presents a list of ghettos operating in the territory of the pre-war

¹¹ T. Sandkühler, „Endlösung” in Galizien, p. 154.

¹² *The Yad Vashem Encyclopedia of the Ghettos During the Holocaust*, vol. 1–2, ed. G. Miron, S. Shulhani (Jerusalem, 2009), pp. 65–66, 95–96, 240–241, 277, 333–335, 350–352, 509–510, 660–661, 730–731, 749–754, 765–767, 834–836, 854, 992; *The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos, 1933–1945*, vol. 2: *Ghettos in German-Occupied Eastern Europe*, ed. G.P. Megargee, M. Dean (Bloomington, 2012), pp. 751–753, 766–768, 779–781, 788–789, 790–793, 797–798, 810–812, 821–822, 828–829, 831–836, 839–841, 845–846, 853–854.

¹³ The information on the ghetto in Skole is contained in the handbook *Dovidnyk pro tabory, tyurny ta hetto na okupovaniy terytoriyi Ukrayiny (1941–1944) / Handbuch der Lager, Gefängnisse und Ghettos auf dem besetzten Territorium der Ukraine (1941–1944)*, (Kyiv, 2000), p. 75. Moreover, the existence of this ghetto is mentioned by Anita Ekstein, who during the German occupation stayed with her parents in Skole (USC Shoah Foundation, 18280, interview with Anita Ekstein née Helfgott, 7 August 1996).

¹⁴ In Dolina, due to the existing natural isolation of the Jews in one part of the city, it was not necessary to demarcate a special quarter (*The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Encyclopedia of Camps*, vol. 2, pp. 773–774).

Stanisławów Voivodeship, taking into account the occupational administrative division imposed by the Germans in the General Governorate.

Table 1. Ghettos on the Territory of the Former Stanisławów Voivodeship

Location of the ghetto	District office under the German occupation (Kreishauptmannschaft)
Bolechów (Bolechow)	Stryj
Bursztyn	Brzeżany ¹⁵
Gwoździec	Kolomea
Horodenka	Horodenka (until April 1942), then Kolomea
Kałuż	Kałuż (until July 1942), then Stanisław
Kołomyja	Kolomea
Kosów	Kolomea
Nadwórna	Stanisław
Rohatyn	Brzeżany
Skole	Stryj
Stanisławów	Stanisław
Stryj	Stryj
Śniatyn	Kolomea
Tłumacz	Stanisław
Tyśmienica	Stanisław
Żurawno	Stryj

Source: The author's study based on: *The Yad Vashem Encyclopedia of the Ghettos During the Holocaust*, ed. G. Miron, S. Shulhani (Jerusalem, 2009); *The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos, 1933–1945*, vol. 2: *Ghettos in German-Occupied Eastern Europe*, ed. G.P. Megargee, M. Dean (Bloomington, 2012); *Dovidnyk pro tabory, tyurmy ta hetto na okupovaniy terytoriyi Ukrayiny (1941–1944) – Handbuch der Lager, Gefängnisse und Ghettos auf dem besetzten Territorium der Ukraine (1941–1944)* (Kyiv, 2000).

Throughout the German occupation of the Stanisławów Voivodeship, ghettos were established at various times and under differing conditions. The first one was established in Rohatyn as early as August 1941. The district governor from Brzeżany, Hans-Adolf Asbach, ordered the Jews of Rohatyn to relocate to the

¹⁵ The non-Germanised name of the district governor's office in Brzeżany is found in the *Amtliches Gemeinde- und Dorfverzeichnis für das Generalgouvernement auf Grund der Summarischen Bevölkerungsbstandsaufnahme am 1. März 1943* (Cracow, 1943), p. 3.

Jewish quarter, from where all non-Jewish inhabitants had to leave immediately. Until November 1942, Jews were allowed to move freely throughout Rohatyn, although they were only allowed to leave the town as organised groups of workers. After this date, they were ordered to stay exclusively within the boundaries of the Jewish quarter. As the extermination operation progressed from March 1942, the Rohatyn ghetto was gradually reduced, eventually shrinking to half of its original size. Despite this, Jews from nearby villages were continuously brought into its diminishing boundaries.¹⁶

Table 2 shows the estimated number of inhabitants of each ghetto at the time of its establishment. However, the number of Jews residing in the ghettos changed over time. This was due to both the relocation of the Jews from smaller towns to the ghettos and the regular anti-Jewish operations and deportations to the Bełżec extermination camp. At this stage of the research, it is impossible to establish exactly how many Jews passed through each Jewish quarter.

Table 2. Type, Period of Operation and Number of Ghetto Inhabitants in the Pre-War Stanisławów Voivodeship

Ghetto location	Type of ghetto	Approximate date when established	Period of operation	Approximate inhabitants number when established
Bolechów	open	September/ October 1942	up to 3 months	ca. 2,500
Bursztyn	open	September 1941	ca. 13 months	ca. 1,600
Gwoździec	no data available	late 1941 / early 1942	at least 4 months	ca. 1,500
Horodenka	initially open, then closed	Autumn 1941	ca. 10 months	ca. 4,500
Kałuż	open	late 1941 / early 1942	at least 5 months	ca. 6,000
Kołomyja	closed	March 1942	ca. 11 months	not less than 16,000

¹⁶ D. Pohl, *Nationalsozialistische Judenverfolgung*, p. 155; <https://rohatynjewishheritage.org/en/heritage/ghetto/>, accessed 12 December 2023.

Ghetto location	Type of ghetto	Approximate date when established	Period of operation	Approximate inhabitants number when established
Kosów	initially open, then closed	October 1941	ca. 11 months	ca. 3,700
Nadwórna	initially open, then closed	April 1942	ca. 6 months	ca. 3,600
Rohatyn	initially open, then closed	August 1941	ca. 22 months	ca. 3,000
Skole	no data available	no data available	no data available	no data available
Stanisławów	closed	December 1941	ca. 14 months	not less than 20,000
Stryj	initially open, then closed	July 1942	ca. 11 months	ca. 10,000
Śniatyn	open	March 1942	ca. 5 months	no data available (after the first deportation operation, ca. 1,500 remained in the ghetto)
Tłumacz	initially open, then closed	March/April 1942	ca. 6 months	ca. 3,500
Tyśmienica	open	March 1942	ca. 5 months	no data available
Żurawno	no data available	September/October 1942	ca. 9 months	no data available

Source: The author's research based on: *The Yad Vashem Encyclopedia of the Ghettos During the Holocaust*, ed. G. Miron, S. Shulhani (Jerusalem, 2009); *The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos, 1933–1945*, vol. 2: *Ghettos in German-Occupied Eastern Europe*, ed. G.P. Megargee, M. Dean (Bloomington, 2012); <https://teatrnn.pl>.

The period of operation of the pre-war Stanisławów Voivodeship town ghettos also varied; the average period being over 9 months.¹⁷ The longest-existing ghetto was in Rohatyn, which operated for as long as 22 months, until June 1943.¹⁸ The ghetto in Bolechów existed the shortest, from September or October 1942 until the end of November of that year; after that, the town's Jews were barracked in camps

¹⁷ Findings based on the data found on the portal "Brama Grodzka – Teatr NN" Centre, <https://teatrnn.pl>, accessed 12 December 2023.

¹⁸ For more on the Rohatyn ghetto, see <https://rohatynjewishheritage.org/en/heritage/ghetto/>, accessed 12 December 2023.

attached to their workplaces. For several months, the largest ghettos in the region fulfilled their role, separating Jews from the rest of the population: in Stanisławów (about fourteen months), Kołomyja and Stryj (about eleven months each).¹⁹

The aid provided to Jews living in ghettos in the pre-war Stanisławów Voivodeship has not yet been the subject of historians' interest, and no studies on the subject have been published. The very subject of the existence of Jewish quarters in the area under analysis has so far been treated superficially in the literature in the field. In fact, it has only appeared as one of the threads in Holocaust research discussion, where the most important works in this matter have been published outside of Poland.²⁰ In this respect, various encyclopaedic publications are useful for systematising basic information about the individual ghettos.²¹ We should also not forget the extremely valuable initiatives of institutions and associations that, in order to spread knowledge about the fate of the Jewish population, have developed portals with basic information about local communities in this regard.²²

When undertaking research into any aspect of the operation of ghettos in the South-Eastern Borderlands of the Second Polish Republic under the German occupation, one must face the serious problem of the very limited availability of sources. This applies especially to the provincial Jewish quarters established by the Germans. This is because the official documents of the German administration,

¹⁹ See <https://teatrnn.pl/ar/bolechow-akcja-reinhardt/>; <https://teatrnn.pl/ar/stanislawow-akcja-reinhardt/>; <https://teatrnn.pl/ar/kolomyja-akcja-reinhardt/>; <https://teatrnn.pl/ar/stryj-akcja-reinhardt/>, accessed 12 December 2023.

²⁰ It is worth mentioning the most complete monographs by German historians: D. Pohl, *Nationalsozialistische Judenverfolgung*; T. Sandkühler, „*Endlösung*” in *Galizien*. A publication discussing the course of the Holocaust in this area has also been published in Ukraine: L. Solovka, S. Oryshko, *150 iz 150 000*. See <https://teatrnn.pl/ar/bolechow-akcja-reinhardt/>; <https://teatrnn.pl/ar/stanislawow-akcja-reinhardt/>; <https://teatrnn.pl/ar/kolomyja-akcja-reinhardt/>; <https://teatrnn.pl/ar/stryj-akcja-reinhardt/>, accessed 12 December 2023.

²¹ *Encyclopedia of the Holocaust*, vol. 2 and 4, ed. I. Gutman (New York – London, 1990); *Dovidnyk pro tabory, tyurmy*; *The Encyclopedia of Jewish Life Before and During the Holocaust*, vol. 1–3, ed. S. Spector (New York, 2001); *The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Encyclopedia of Camps*, vol. 2; *The Yad Vashem Encyclopedia of the Ghettos*; *The YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe*, vols. 1–2, ed. G.D. Hundert (New Haven – London, 2008).

²² Particularly noteworthy is the portal <https://teatrnn.pl/>, run by the “Grodzka Gate – NN Theatre” Centre in Lublin, which provides systematised information on the course of the Aktion “Reinhardt” in individual localities in the Eastern Borderlands, as well as <https://rohatynjewishheritage.org>, a portal set up by the Rohatyn Jewish Heritage organisation, which documents the course of the Holocaust from the perspective of Rohatyn, one of the county towns. Accessed 12 December 2023.

which were presumably destroyed already at the time of the liquidation operations, are no longer extant.²³ The primary sources of information about the aid provided to Jews during the German occupation are the testimonies of the rescued and of the rescuers. The most important and most abundant material is kept in the collection of the Emanuel Ringelblum Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw.²⁴ A no less important collection is kept in the Yad Vashem Institute Archives in Jerusalem.²⁵ The testimonies within the archival collections of the Institute of National Remembrance are also noteworthy.²⁶ These testimonies are complemented by collections of the so-called oral histories. The author used recordings made available by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, as well as the USC Shoah Foundation Institute for Visual History and Education.

Conditions Affecting Aid to Jews in the Ghettos

Considering the contemporary attitudes of non-Jews towards the Holocaust, the fear of the consequences for those involved in helping Jews undoubtedly comes to the fore. In implementing their extermination policy towards Jews, the Germans aimed at their complete isolation, breaking off all relations with the non-Jewish social environment. The key piece of German legislation implementing this policy and increasing the population's fear of helping was the Third GG Residence Restriction Regulation of 15 October 1941 issued by Hans Frank. Not only did it stipulate the death penalty for Jews leaving without authorisation their designated residential districts, but it also criminalised the deliberate sheltering of Jews by non-Jews.²⁷ Wilhelm Friedrich Krüger's regulation of 10 November 1942 made these regulations even more rigorous: it also introduced the death penalty for helping to escape from the so-called Jewish residential quarters, feeding Jew-

²³ G. Berendt, "Żydzi zbiegli z gett i obozów śmierci," in *Zagłada Żydów na polskiej prowincji*, ed. A. Sitarek, M. Trębacz, E. Wiatr (Łódź, 2012), p. 125.

²⁴ Here, the key material is held in three record groups: 301 (Testimonies), 302 (Memoirs) and 349 (Awards Documentation Department of Yad Vashem at the Jewish Historical Institute).

²⁵ This particularly applies to the M.31.2 (Collection of The Righteous Among the Nations Department); O.3 (testimonies) and O.33 (testimonies, diaries and memoirs) record groups.

²⁶ The most important documents for the study of the present topic are undoubtedly those kept in the record group No. 392.

²⁷ The Third GG Residence Restriction Regulation of 15 October 1941, *Verordnungsblatt für das Generalgouvernement* 1941, No. 99, p. 595.

ish fugitives, and hiding them.²⁸ Such repressive legislation by the occupation authorities was, on the one hand, intended to discourage Jews from seeking rescue outside the ghettos and, on the other, to effectively deter non-Jews in the General Governorate from undertaking aid efforts.

Of particularly importance in the context of aid considerations was the nature of the various Jewish residential quarters. Initially, these took two forms. Some operated as open ghettos, usually confined to districts or quarters of the city where the Jews had hitherto predominated. Jews living in other areas of the city were forced to move to the demarcated ghetto. The non-Jews were also removed from it. It is this element that appears to be crucial in the distinction, which is difficult to grasp, especially for witnesses, between living in an open ghetto and existing in towns where no Jewish quarter was established.

The area of an open ghetto was usually left without any fencing, limited only to the installation of signs reading “Jewish residential quarter” (*Wohngebiet der Juden*).²⁹ In this type of residential quarter, the Jewish population therefore had incomparably more opportunities to maintain contact with the Christian neighbours. This does not imply, by any means, that they were not affected by restrictions of various kinds. Jews were not allowed to leave the designated quarters, except to go to work. Each quarter was also characterised by its peculiarities stemming from local conditions and orders from the German occupation authorities. For example, at the end of 1941, a “Jewish residential quarter” was established in Kałusz, which had the character of an open ghetto. However, the curfew was strictly observed, and Jews violating it were shot on the spot.³⁰ Apart from Kałusz, open ghettos in the pre-war Stanisławów Voivodeship operated also in Bolechów, Bursztyn, Śniatyn and Tyśmienica.

Conditions in the closed ghettos were significantly worse. In the area under study, the two largest ghettos, located in Stanisławów and Kołomyja, were of this type from the outset. These ghettos were surrounded by a wooden fence, barbed

²⁸ The police regulation concerning the establishment of Jewish residential quarters in the Radom, Krakau and Galizien Distrikts of 10 November 1942, *Verordnungsblatt für das Generalgouvernement* 1942, No. 98, pp. 683–686.

²⁹ D. Pohl, *Nationalsozialistische Judenverfolgung*, p. 157.

³⁰ M. Dean, “Gospodarka wyzysku: ‘warunki życia’ w gettach na Kresach Wschodnich,” *Zagłada Żydów. Studia i Materiały* 3 (2007), p. 118.

wire, or obstacles otherwise preventing Jews from leaving freely. In Stanisławów, the Germans created a Jewish quarter in the second half of December 1941 that was separated from the rest of the city by a wooden fence, clearly marked with the painted Stars of David, and in some places reinforced with barbed wire barricades. On the “Aryan” side, a blue and white stripe was painted along the fence on the pavement, marking the zone that could not be approached. At the entrance to the ghetto there was a sign saying “Aryans are absolutely forbidden to enter.” On the side of the ghetto, on the other hand, signs were posted that read “Leaving the Jewish quarter is strictly forbidden.” In addition, all windows facing the so-called Aryan side were boarded up.³¹ In Kołomyja, on the other hand, it was decided to divide the Jews according to their usefulness for work and to distinguish three Jewish quarters. Each of these was surrounded by a fence. In November 1942, the second and third ghettos were liquidated, and in January 1943, the Jewish quarter in Kołomyja was in practice reduced to a single street.³²

In the closed ghettos, all allowed traffic was strictly controlled through entrance gates. On the outside, the German Schutzpolizei (Schupo) officers and the Ukrainian Auxiliary Police managed the gates, while inside, the Jewish Order Service (Jüdischer Ordnungsdienst) was responsible.³³ The ghetto gates were crucial places – they were a passage between the reality of the ghetto and the “Aryan” parts of the cities and towns. Witnesses have kept memories of the detailed inspections that took place at the gates. This largely depended on the attitude of the guards, including their willingness to accept bribes and whether extra rations of food could be smuggled into the ghettos. Many times, in Jewish accounts we shall find

³¹ Yad Vashem Archives (hereinafter AYV), O.3, 6666, Testimony of David Lachin, 11 June 1990; AYV, O.3, 6391, Testimony of Menachem Darsher, 6 May 1991; Archives of the Jewish Historical Institute (hereinafter AŻIH), 302/175, Memories of Safrin Horacy, pp. 28, 37.

³² Archives of the Institute of National Remembrance in Warsaw (hereinafter AIPN), 3077/87, Documentation of the Główna Komisja Badania Zbrodni Hitlerowskich w Polsce [Main Commission for the Investigation of Hitlerite Crimes in Poland] (hereinafter GKBZHwP) concerning the crimes committed by S. Sterzl and other Gestapo officers, minutes of the interrogation of the witness Tadeusz Mariasz, 2 October 1974, p. 187; AYV, O.3, 2304, Testimony of Emil Brigg, 1 September 1963; T. Berenstein, “Eks-terminacja ludności żydowskiej w Dystrykcie Galicja (1941–1943),” *Biuletyn Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego* 61 (1967), p. 25; <https://teatrnn.pl/ar/kolomyja-akcja-reinhardt/>, accessed 12 December 2023.

³³ In the Stanisławów ghetto, for instance, its boundaries were patrolled by ten Schupo officers along with 25 members of the Ukrainian Auxiliary Police. (D. Pohl, *Nationalsozialistische Judenverfolgung*, p. 157).

references to the particularly negative attitude of the Jewish Order Service officers, who were particularly zealous and meticulous in their searches.³⁴ One testimony states that even after an inspection by a Ukrainian policeman:

[...] on the other side of the gate a Jewish militiaman stands, his inspection must also be passed. Living among the Jews in the ghetto, this militiaman is more familiar with smuggling methods, making his inspections more effective. He searches thoroughly, orders you to take your coat and jacket off.³⁵

The nature of some Jewish quarters in the examined area evolved over time. Initially open, these ghettos were later sealed by German authorities as the Holocaust progressed. The example of the Horodenka ghetto illustrates how seamless such a transition could be. The ghetto was probably established here in the autumn of 1941³⁶ and took an area of about a quarter of the western part of the town. Some specialists and farmers were allowed to live outside the ghetto.³⁷ At that time, the Jewish quarter was not fenced off, but only guarded by Jewish policemen patrolling it.³⁸ In the spring of 1942, following two major anti-Jewish operations (in December 1941 and April 1942), Jews previously living in nearby towns were concentrated in the Horodenka ghetto. (This was, by the way, a typical practice of the German authorities for the ghettos located in district towns). The Horodenka ghetto became

³⁴ AŻIH, 302/175, testimony of Safrin Horacy, p. 41; AYV, O.3, 2142, testimony of Jakub Heger, 1 November 1960, pp. 13–14.

³⁵ B. Rosenberg, *I ja tam bylam... Wspomnienia z okresu wojny i okupacji hitlerowskiej. Kolomyja 1939–1945*, 1951, a manuscript held in the library collection of the Yad Vashem Institute, p. 65.

³⁶ Various dates for the establishment of the Horodenka ghetto can be found in the testimonies of the surviving Jews and historical studies. The date of 8 November 1941, which was recalled in the detailed memories of, among others, Sabina Charasz, seems to be the most probable (AŻIH, 301/1434, testimony of Sabina Charasz, n.d.). According to Martin Dean, the ghetto was established in December 1941; M. Dean, "German Ghettoization in Occupied Ukraine: Regional Patterns and Sources," in *The Holocaust in Ukraine: New Sources and Perspectives* (Washington, 2013), p. 87. 6 December 1941 as the date of establishment of the Jewish quarter appears in the investigation of the Okręgowa Komisja Badań Zbrodni Hitlerowskich [District Commission for the Investigation of Hitlerite Crimes] (hereinafter OKBZH) in Wrocław (Archives of the Institute of National Remembrance, Warsaw, 12/6, Investigations of the OKBZH in Wrocław conducted between 1968 and 1970.)

³⁷ AŻIH, 301/1434, Testimony of Sabina Charasz, n.d.

³⁸ AYV, 0.62, 4/3732547, Testimony of Mendel Rosenkrans, 16 May 1945; recording of the testimony of Tomasz Miedziński, <https://collections.usmm.org/search/catalog/irn507769>, accessed 12 December 2023; AYV, O.3, 6429, testimony of Yaakov Issakhar, 1 May 1991.

a closed one.³⁹ However, it was not surrounded by either a wall or barbed wire. It was located in a naturally enclosed space,⁴⁰ whilst the movement of people to the “Aryan” side through the passages from the ghetto (of which there were as many as sixteen) was strictly limited.⁴¹

The Kosów ghetto, established in October 1941, was also sealed by the Germans only in April 1942, after several months of operation.⁴² In Stryj, the ghetto, which had existed since the summer of 1942, was finally closed in December 1942, when it began to function as a “secondary” ghetto.⁴³ Secondary ghettos were created by the German occupation authorities in the last phase of the Holocaust in order to concentrate the remaining Jews.⁴⁴ Pursuant to the regulation issued by Wilhelm Friedrich Krüger on 10 November 1942, residential quarters of this type were also established in Rohatyn, Stanisławów and Stryj.⁴⁵ These ghettos had a particularly high mortality rate. Huge density of residents, disastrous sanitary conditions and pervasive hunger facilitated the spread of deadly epidemics.⁴⁶

The degree of how hermetic a given Jewish residential quarter was determined by the possibility of maintaining contact between the Jews incarcerated there and the population on the “Aryan” side. The more scrupulously the ban on Jews leaving the ghetto and bringing goods into it was observed, the more difficult it became to provide aid. As time progressed, the quarters shrank rapidly as particular streets were systematically excluded following extermination operations and mass deportations. Meanwhile, gate control became increasingly stringent.

In 1942, the Germans temporarily tightened the entry checkpoint control at the Jewish quarter in Stanisławów. Julian Baczewicz recalled: “Those returning from work were searched thoroughly, there were incidents where they were stripped

³⁹ T. Berenstein, “Eksterminacja ludności,” p. 18.

⁴⁰ AŻIH, 301/1434, testimony of Sabina Charasz, n.d.

⁴¹ AŻIH, Social Court at the Central Committee of Jews in Poland (hereinafter CKŻwP), 313/78, The case of Alfred Merbaum, minutes of the hearing before the Social Court at CKŻwP, 25 January 1949, p. 92.

⁴² The Aktion Reinhardt in Kosów – an entry prepared by the “Brama Grodzka – Teatr NN” Centre, <https://teatrnn.pl/ar/kosow-akcja-reinhardt>, accessed 12 December 2023.

⁴³ A. Kruglov, M. McConnell, M. Dean, “Stryj,” in *The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Encyclopedia of Camps*, p. 835.

⁴⁴ M. Dean, “German Ghettoization,” p. 64.

⁴⁵ T. Berenstein, “Eksterminacja ludności,” p. 19.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 18–19.

naked and when the smallest thing was found, they were beaten until they bled.”⁴⁷
This had a huge impact on the conditions in the ghetto:

It is important to highlight that during this period, a severe famine occurred. Each day, sixty to eighty people succumbed to hunger, a situation that worsened as spring approached. For the first time in my life, I saw people swollen from starvation, and there were thousands in such a state. These people were dying in excruciating agony.⁴⁸

There is no doubt that the food blockade of the ghetto was planned and aimed at increasing the mortality rate of its inhabitants. Bernard Szander’s testimony confirms this:

After several days of such starving of the ghetto, Streege⁴⁹ came to the ghetto and stopped in front of the house of the chairman of the Jewish community, Goldstein, and called him out to the street for talks, which I witnessed. Then, Streege asked Goldstein what was the recent mortality rate in the ghetto. Goldstein stated that it went up from 11 to twenty-something people a day. Streege replied that the ghetto was still getting too much food and that in this way the liquidation of the ghetto would take too long, as he had calculated that by cutting off the food supply up to 500 people should die a day. From that point onward, food restrictions ceased to be applied, and regular extermination operations commenced.⁵⁰

It is also important to remember the spectrum of various factors that, in the conditions of the German occupation, affected the relationships between Jews and the Christians, including the latter’s willingness to provide aid. These factors included social distance, the pre-war past experiences (which worsened under the Soviet occupation), general desensitization and indifference due to wartime

⁴⁷ AŻIH, 301/4026, Testimony of Julian Baczewicz, n.d.

⁴⁸ AŻIH, 301/4648, Testimony of D. Bertisch, 12 April 1946.

⁴⁹ Walter Streege was the Schutzpolizei commander in Stanisławów (T. Sandkühler, „*Endlösung*” in *Galizien*, p. 150).

⁵⁰ AIPN, 164/570, vol. 2, minutes of the interrogation of the witness Bernard Szander, 14 July 1947, p. 11.

conditions, increased activity of Ukrainian nationalists, and the economic hardship faced by society as a result of the occupation.⁵¹ The process of ghettoisation led Jews to material ruin and physical exhaustion, significantly reducing their ability to act. All this meant that only a few chose to help the Jews residing in the ghettos located in the pre-war Stanisławów Voivodeship.

Forms of Aid

It is worth emphasising that each case of aid was different. For the Jews confined to the ghettos, where the provisioning situation was becoming more desperate by the month, the primary objective was to obtain additional food outside the Jewish quarter. Only regular trade with the Christian population could at least alleviate the food shortage in the ghetto. It should therefore come as no surprise that the most common form of aid directed at this group of Jews was the provision of food: both the gratuitous donation of food, as well as trade with ghetto inhabitants. Of course, commercial contacts between Jews and non-Jews flourished already before the establishment of the ghettos, and were also a characteristic feature in towns where Jewish quarters were not demarcated. Markus Willbach from Obertyn emphasised in his testimony that during the first period of the German occupation in his home town, contacts between the Jewish and Christian populations were mainly related to attempts to obtain food from the local peasants. However, only the wealthier Jews were able to exchange goods for foodstuffs at specified conversion rates that, in addition, changed over time:

In the early spring of 1942, a new suit was due for a quarter of a [cubic] metre of wheat, and for a male fur coat one could receive half a [cubic] metre of wheat. The prices for dairy and other food products were proportional to this. The purchase of these products from the Christian population by way of exchange was, of course, strictly confidential.⁵²

⁵¹ For more, see M. Grądzka-Rejak, A. Namysło, "Relacje polsko-żydowskie w okresie II wojny światowej. Kontekst i uwarunkowania," in *Represje za pomoc Żydom na okupowanych ziemiach polskich*, pp. 31–61.

⁵² As cited in M. Willbach, "Skupisko żydowskie w Obertynie podczas II wojny światowej," *Biuletyn Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego* 35 (1960), p. 115.

One of the most important ways for Jews to obtain additional, and sometimes even their only food was to smuggle goods into the ghettos. The intermediation of the Christian population was often a prerequisite for this. Of course, it was not uncommon for non-Jews to initiate trade contacts, seeing the opportunity for additional earnings. In their testimonies, the surviving Jews of the former Stanisławów Voivodeship often mentioned attempts to obtain food on the “Aryan” side and organised smuggling, but they did not pay much attention to these issues and limit themselves to laconic mentions. Thus, it is impossible to establish the scale of smuggling or the personal details of those involved. Nor is it possible on the basis of Jewish testimonies to reconstruct precisely how food was distributed to individual ghettos. Individual descriptions of such activities can, however, be found in the testimonies of Poles whose relatives traded with Jewish quarters.

Franciszka Gawlik née Mamczur outlined the practice of organised smuggling of goods into the Stanisławów ghetto, in which her parents Michał and Stefania Mamczur were involved. During the German occupation, they lived in the capital of the former voivodeship at 36 Kołłątaja St. The location of their house was crucial in this case because on the opposite side of the street was the fence of the Jewish quarter. As the author of the testimony emphasised, her family home was so conveniently “situated with its veranda facing the pavement that one could enter and leave very quickly without being noticed by anyone.”⁵³ It thus provided an ideal place for the transfer of produce destined for the ghetto:

Peasants by appointment brought about 20–30 litres of milk, 10–15 kg of butter, cheese, eggs, flour, vegetables and cereal grains, especially wheat. Always the same Jews would come to our house, of course, at an agreed time, to collect the food, and so the milk and butter would be collected early in the morning and the other articles late in the afternoon.⁵⁴

The Mamczurs’ involvement in smuggling goods may have been much greater. The quoted testimony also mentions that Stefania carried 10-kilogram parcels of

⁵³ AŻIH, 301/7026, testimony of Franciszka Gawlik née Mamczur, 29 April 1988.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

food three to four times a week to two transfer points. Such points were mainly appointed in buildings standing on the border between the ghetto and the “Aryan” side. The first one was situated in the courtyard of a street corner single-family house, where a certain “young man” would collect a package from Stefania using an agreed password. The second was in a house whose window was situated above the fence surrounding the ghetto. On a precisely specified day and at an agreed time, Stefania Mamczur would throw a food parcel through the window.⁵⁵

Kazimierz Gacki was also involved in trading with Jews from the Stanisławów ghetto. He operated a sweets shop near the gate of the Jewish quarter. Besides his main supply, he also sold butter and eggs. He would prepare a parcel with the agreed-upon contents, which an appointed individual would then collect. This person would then walk towards the ghetto gate, immediately hand the parcel to those waiting, and walked on.⁵⁶ The Ukrainian Mykaylo I. from Żurawno also mentions trade with Jews in a recorded interview.⁵⁷ He sneaked into the Jewish quarter in Stryj three times to sell food. In his testimony, he did not reveal how he came into contact with Jews, he only mentioned that he brought the goods each time to the same people, whose personal details he did not know. Crossing the ghetto border the next time, he already knew who he was supposed to go to. “The guards passed by, but I was careful [...] [The Jews] asked for butter, eggs and cheese. [...] [In return] they gave shoes, trousers, shirts, etc., everything they didn’t need. Since we didn’t have that, we took it.”⁵⁸

The described cases are undoubtedly examples of typical commercial transactions in which it is difficult to capture the boundary between aid and a mere desire to earn money. However, regardless of the motivations of the people involved in smuggling, their activity fulfils the condition of measurable effectiveness in improving the situation of Jews, which is necessary to consider the activities undertaken as manifestations of aid. Those involved in smuggling also risked their lives by breaking the occupier’s laws.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ AŻIH, 349/24/661, letter of Kazimierz Gacki to the Jewish Historical Institute, 4 June 1986, p. 5.

⁵⁷ The Yahad-in Unum organisation does not provide full details of the interviewed witnesses.

⁵⁸ Yahad-in Unum, interview with Myjaylo I., 2 September 2013, <https://yahadmap.org/#village/zhuravno-zhurawno-zuravna-lviv-ukraine.630>, accessed 12 December 2023.

A seemingly universal regularity was pointed out by Elżbieta Rączy on the basis of her research. The trade exchange had its own dynamics and changed depending on the Jews' situation. Its frequency decreased as the extermination operation progressed and the economic situation of the Jews deteriorated dramatically. Jews, who were losing their material resources, often relied solely on their contacts.⁵⁹ We can also see the correlation between the economic situation and the ability to maintain trade contacts in the case of the ghettos on the territory of the pre-war Stanisławów Voivodeship.

The food aid provided to the inhabitants of the Jewish quarters was not limited to commercial transactions and organised smuggling. In the source material we find many instances of selfless donations of food, above all by non-Jewish acquaintances of people confined in the ghetto. Franciszek Konopka testified that after the establishment of the Stanisławów ghetto, he regularly gave food to his friend from his school days, Edward Nagelberg. During the German occupation, the Pole worked as a carpenter's helper in the Stanisławów-based furniture factory Unia. In the late autumn of 1941, he was transferred to one of the factory's branches, which found itself within the boundaries of the ghetto created by the Germans. About forty Jewish workers, including Nagelberg, were employed there at the time. Konopka used to give him part of his food ration. In addition, through a man called Zynwalewicz, who worked at the mill on Halicka Street, Konopka testified he organised flour for the Jews employed at the factory:

I took the flour I received from Zynwalewicz, about 50 kg by sledge to the fence of the ghetto, where I handed it over, throwing it over the fence to Nagelberg, with whom I had already arranged it beforehand and who was already waiting on the other side of the fence. I took the flour together with my brother [Michał Konopka – T.G.]. Apart from this case, in similar circumstances, I delivered flour to Nagelberg about six more times. We delivered the flour at night, taking advantage of the atmospheric conditions – the snowfall, which covered the

⁵⁹ E. Rączy, *Pomoc Polaków dla ludności żydowskiej na Rzeszowszczyźnie 1939–1945* (Rzeszów, 2008), p. 54.

tracks. I delivered the flour [...] to the Jewish ghetto until March 1942, that is, until we were withdrawn from this branch.⁶⁰

Food aid for Jewish acquaintances is also mentioned by Ignacy Snigowski from Kołomyja. Before the war, he was a teacher in several Kołomyja schools, where he made the acquaintance of Jews who taught Jewish religion. Their names were Szeirman (first name unknown) and Jurys Mendel. Even before the Jewish quarter was sealed, Szeirman came to Snigowski and asked him for food aid while he was in the ghetto. As Snigowski testified:

For a period of one year, or more precisely during 1942, about once every fortnight at an agreed place on Wałowa Street, to which the ghetto adjoined, I carried food to Szeirman – rolls, butter, sausage, corn flour, wheat flour, vegetables, sugar, and so on. Each parcel was about 2 kg. My wife sewed special bags, I tied them on a string and tossed them discreetly to the waiting Szeirman through a hole between the corner of the house and the fence. [...] I agreed that Szeirman was to take some of the products for himself and deliver some to Mendel. Once I did not meet Szeirman at the agreed place, I concluded that he was probably dead, or had been deported, and after that I did not venture into the ghetto with food any more.⁶¹

The willingness to provide food aid obviously also depended on the economic situation of the Christian population. The above Markus Willbach, in his testimony mentioned Christians who, especially during the first period of the German occupation, gave food rations to the poorest of the local Jewish community. “Later on, however, almost no one gave these miserable people even a piece of bread gratuitously, because the Christian population also faced food shortages, and they had nothing with which they could pay for food.”⁶² Jan Budzianowski, who lived in Kołomyja during the German occupation, testified in turn that his wife:

⁶⁰ AIPN, 392/205, minutes of the interrogation of Franciszek Konopka, 16 November 1984, p. 6.

⁶¹ AIPN, 392/1663, Minutes of the interrogation of Ignacy Snigowski before OKBZH in Opole, 7 April 1970, p. 7.

⁶² As cited in M. Willbach, “Skupisko żydowskie,” pp. 115–116.

[...] systematically dropped off food in the form of potatoes, cheese, flour to agreed places, from where the Jews from the ghetto would take these products, leaving various pieces of clothing, which my wife in the countryside would exchange for food products, because otherwise, we would not be able to help the Jews for lack of provisions.⁶³

However, Budzianowski did not specify whether they charged any fees for the food or kept some of the products they acquired for themselves.

In a recorded interview, Dora Mandel née Glass referred to the favourable attitude of a part of the population, especially the Polish, towards Jews imprisoned in the Stanisławów ghetto and working outside its borders:

Polish acquaintances would come, they wanted something from us, then they would bring [food], there were good people, you cannot say that they were all bad [...] I will confirm it again. There were warm-hearted people, they risked their lives for us too. They did what they could. They would come, bring some potatoes, whatever they could, whatever they could share. And what could we give them? This miserable life that no one wanted? If an Ukrainian [guard] was good, he allowed them to cross the [ghetto] border with those bundles. If not, he confiscated [the bundles] and, worse, killed [them].⁶⁴

When discussing the issue of food aid, it is important to distinguish between forms of providing it, such as the delivery of food to those in need outside the ghetto and the delivery by the Christians directly to the Jewish quarter. Certainly, the former way was a more common practice, associated with less risk. This was the practice of Józefa Basiuk, among others, who worked on a poultry farm in Stanisławów and gave food to Jews who also worked there. It seems this aid functioned more like a commercial transaction. Food was received by, among others,

⁶³ *Relacje o pomocy udzielanej Żydom przez Polaków w latach 1939–1945*, vol. 5: *Dystrykt Galicja Generalnego Gubernatorstwa i Wołyń*, selected and edited by S. Piątkowski (Lublin–Warsaw, 2021), p. 150.

⁶⁴ USC Shoah Foundation, 16733, Interview with Dora Mandel, 12 July 1996.

Regina Fields, who then took it to the ghetto after finishing her work and delivered it to her relatives.⁶⁵

In the case of sealed and tightly controlled Jewish quarters, the sensitive moment was the very crossing of the ghetto border by Jews carrying hidden food or the transfer of food into the ghetto by non-Jews. As the examples cited above show, a variety of smuggling techniques were used. Most often food was thrown over the fence or the enclosure, but sometimes the decision was made to smuggle it through the entrance gate. Sometimes this was done by guards as middlemen. For example, Ukrainian Frania Bielska née Dedek, thanks to one of the Ukrainian guards, regularly passed food to her pre-war employers imprisoned in the Nadwórna ghetto.⁶⁶ Far more often, however, both the Jews and the Christians helping them had to outsmart the guards.

In her testimony, Franciszka Gawlik described in detail how Jews collecting goods from her parents prepared to return to the ghetto:

One of the persons collecting butter, cheese and eggs was a young 17–18 year old girl who carried the butter and cheese in her underpants – she wore 3 pairs of underpants, the second pair were special rubber underpants in which she placed the butter and cheese wrapped in a piece of cloth, and then she put on a third pair of underpants and in this way carried the dairy products to the ghetto. How she carried the eggs, my mother does not remember.⁶⁷

Blanka Rosenberg, who witnessed the Holocaust in the Kołomyja ghetto, mentioned her brother's similar method of carrying milk. He would wrap a flat rubber bag around his naked body, into which he would pour a litre of milk obtained from local peasants, then he would put on his clothes and in this way try to cross the ghetto border.⁶⁸ In Stanisławów, Jews employed at a certain furniture manufacturing plant located outside the Jewish quarter carried food obtained from Polish

⁶⁵ USC Shoah Foundation, 22256, Interview with Regina Fields, 7 May 1996.

⁶⁶ The Yad Vashem Righteous Database, https://righteous.yadvashem.org/?search=bielska&searchType=righteous_only&language=en&itemId=5652223&ind=0, accessed 12 December, 2023.

⁶⁷ AŻIH, 301/7026, testimony of Franciszka Gawlik née Mamczur, 29 April 1988.

⁶⁸ B. Rosenberg, *I ja tam byłam*, p. 65.

and Ukrainian workers in specially crafted planks into which about a kilo of grain was poured. The Jews employed as carpenters left the ghetto every day carrying work equipment; the equipment prepared for smuggling therefore did not raise the suspicions of the guards.⁶⁹

At some point during the occupation, Kazimierz Gacki worked for a German enterprise collecting recyclable materials and met the Jews employed there. He was able to enter the Stanisławów ghetto, where the company's warehouse was located, and regularly collected raw materials gathered by Jews. He noted:

When entering the area [of the ghetto] by [horse] cart, I had a flat box fixed under the platform in which I carried butter, meat and whatever Jews asked me for. I left the transported goods with my former landlord of the house at 4 Krasieńskiego Street, Adolf Singer, who distributed the articles at his own discretion.⁷⁰

Occasionally, when Jews secured additional food independently, they required assistance from non-Jewish individuals to transport it into the ghetto. This was true for Blanka Rosenberg, who was confined in the Kołomyja ghetto with her young son and her brother Roman. She succeeded in reaching out to her parents, who were living under better economic conditions in the Jewish quarter in Gorlice.⁷¹ On hearing of the dramatic plight of their children, they decided to regularly send them food parcels. A friend of the Jewish siblings was involved in this venture. In her memories, Rosenberg noted:

[...] we started receiving one-kilogram food packages from home at the specified addresses. Each week two to three loaves of bread, some groats or sugar. Our material situation becomes truly royal. The question of how to smuggle these treasures into the ghetto [...] becomes the only problem. And to this my brother [...] finds such an answer: at an appointed time in the night, he crawls to the ghetto fence. His principal's elderly maid, a Polish woman, appears to be

⁶⁹ AŻIH, 301/7026, Testimony of Franciszka Gawlik née Mamczur, Mamczur, 29 April 1988.

⁷⁰ AŻIH, 349/24/661, Letter of Kazimierz Gacki to the Jewish Historical Institute, 4 June 1986, p. 5.

⁷¹ They met her parents through non-Jewish friends of her brother Roman, with whom he worked in one of the enterprises employing Jews from Kołomyja (B. Rosenberg, *I ja tam byłam*, p. 65).

casually walking by on the Aryan side adjacent to the fence and swiftly tosses a parcel over it.⁷²

Clearly, this was fraught with extreme risk. Rosenberg emphasises:

Each such escapade wrecks my nerves. I count the minutes that pass and they seem to last an eternity. Occasionally, the Ukrainian night watchmen of the ghetto open fire and put an end to more than one life. Many a slice of bread is paid for with a human life. No non-Jew dares to go near the fence surrounding the ghetto, he knows well that the penalty for doing so is death. This makes us even more able to appreciate the humane attitude of the young Ukrainian woman – the principal of Romek – and her elderly servant, who with so much sacrifice [...] saved me and the child from death by starvation.⁷³

Among other cases of food aid provided to Jews imprisoned in ghettos in the former Stanisławów Voivodeship, mention is due to Jan Dłudziak (or Duczak), who, working as a butcher, regularly delivered meat to the Jewish quarter in Śniatyn.⁷⁴ In this case, however, there is no information as to under what circumstances he provided aid or how he delivered meat to the ghetto. Bronisława Iwanicka (née Torbiak) from Stanisławów, indicated in her testimony that together with her grandmother, who before the war worked in a restaurant run by a Jewish woman, she delivered food to the ghetto for her former employer. In this case, too, there are no details available.⁷⁵

Sometimes in the source records the information could be found about small gestures related to the donation of food, which cannot be verified. For example,

⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 66.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ AIPN, 392/1625, the case of Michał Halkiew and Weronika Halkiew-Kamińska, minutes of the interrogation of Bolesław Antoni Bielecki before OKBZH in Opole, 23 April 1970, pp. 8–10; Archives of Modern Records (hereinafter referred to as AAN), Aid for the Jewish Population, 1521/3, Documentational Questionnaire of the Związek Bojowników o Wolność i Demokrację [Society of Fighters for Freedom and Democracy] (hereinafter ZBoWiD), (concerning the witness Bolesław Bielecki), 1 August 1968, fols. 219–221.

⁷⁵ The KARTA Centre, Oral History Archives, Poles in the East, 511, Testimony of Bronisława Iwanicka, 9 September 2007.

Łucja Werstler (née Cieślik), born in 1935, reported that when she saw the dramatic conditions in which her peers lived in the Nadwórna ghetto, she threw apples over the fence of the Jewish quarter. As she emphasized, this required a child's cleverness, as the guards patrolling the streets did not allow her to stand near the fence.⁷⁶

The tangible support given to Jews also included helping them to escape from the ghetto, either by getting someone out directly or by arranging conditions that would enable them to escape on their own. Of course, only a handful of Jews chose to leave the ghetto. Not everyone could be helped either. Many factors were of importance there. It was definitely easier to leave the ghetto for people who spoke Polish or Ukrainian, knew the customs that allowed them to find their way among the non-Jews and had the so-called "good looks" [i.e. appearance similar to "Aryan" – facial features, eyes and hair colour, etc.] – than for representatives of the traditional, orthodox Jewish community. Due to circumcision, it was much easier to help women than men.

In most cases, the testimonies regarding assistance in escaping the ghetto are so brief that it is impossible to reconstruct the circumstances or the course of the rescue operation. For instance, the minutes of the interrogation of Karol Kuluszko from Łysiec reveal that many years after the war, he testified that at the request of Bernard Kandel, who had been hiding in his father's house for some time, who had led his two sisters, Nusia and Salka, out of the Stanisławów ghetto.⁷⁷ However, there is nothing more mentioned in detail.

Escapes increased significantly during the anti-Jewish operations conducted by Germans. In November 1942, in Stryj, Emilia Korlatowicz helped her Jewish friends from the Dubowy family to escape. Again, it is impossible to reconstruct the events that led to them leaving the Jewish quarter.⁷⁸

Joanna Cyniak's testimony provides slightly more information that helps us reconstruct a broader picture of the aid activities. After the Germans sealed the Jew-

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 2395, testimony of Łucja Werstler, 25 July 2011.

⁷⁷ OKŚZpNP in Katowice, S 45/02/Zn, main files of the investigation concerning the case of a homicide in 1943 in Łysiec, the Stanisławów district, of three persons of Jewish nationality, minutes of the interrogation of Karol Kuluszko before OKBZH in Bydgoszcz, 1 February 1977, p. 1394.

⁷⁸ AŻIH, 301/1676, testimony of Mojżesz Dubowy, 22 May 1946.

ish quarter in Stanisławów, she secretly sewed an armband with a Star of David to visit her friend Ludka Weseli of the Rost family in the ghetto and as she recounted:

It was a crazy idea, but at the time I didn't realize that I was endangering not only myself but also my whole family. I heard that some elderly people [from the area taken by the ghetto] did not leave their homes and stayed. That these grandmothers and grandfathers [were] so old [that they] didn't leave their homes. So I thought to myself, and there was an Ukrainian I was acquainted with on guard duty, and I said, "Listen, let me through. My grandmother stayed there. I want to visit her." And he says: "Yes, I'll let you through, but remember, I finish my duty at 5pm. So you have to be back in time." So I put on that armband that I had embroidered, with the Star of David, and went to visit my friend Ludka. They, mother and Ludka, were touched, how I got in and everything.⁷⁹

Ludka's mother asked for help in getting her daughter out. Ludka had an agreed place to hide with a relative in Lwów, but she needed help to get to the city safely. Joanna Cyniak recounts:

So I got Ludka out, but I didn't make it on time because that Ukrainian on guard, on the ghetto border, was already gone. So we went to the river [Bystrzyca Nadwórniańska, demarcating the ghetto boundary from the east – T.G.] [...], [continued] along the bank, and [passed] under the wires. Mother [of the Jewish girl] also gave us a few pennies, because I didn't have any. We went on foot to the railway station. There was a train to Lwów, [...] we bought a ticket and got on the train. But in a moment two uniformed Germans came to our compartment and sat down opposite us. And Ludka was a pretty girl, very pretty, and she knew German. [...] I could see that they were flirting with her, because she was a really pretty girl. We arrived at the train station. They let us go in front of them and walk, and at the station the German guards stopped us. They [the

⁷⁹ Museum of the Second World War, oral history interviews, 103, Interview with Joanna Cyniak, 4 July 2014.

Germans from the train] replied that we were with them. That's how we managed to arrive in Lwów.⁸⁰

A resident of Turka, Józef Beck, at the request of his Jewish acquaintance Milbauer, got the latter's daughter Rachela⁸¹ and her cousin Lucia Blaufeld out of the Kołomyja ghetto. Under the pretext of taking the bodies of people who had died in the ghetto to the cemetery, a Pole made his way into the Jewish quarter on a horse-drawn cart. He hid the girls under a pile of corpses collected on the platform and in this way bypassed the gate control.⁸² Maria Rosenbloom also escaped from the Kołomyja ghetto with the help of Poles. In her testimony, however, she did not reveal the personal details of the people who helped her escape. Instead, she emphasised that they were a married couple, and they were landowners before the war, well known to her parents. She had not known them personally before. Before the war, they had probably been linked to Maria's father through business, and according to her, their help could have been a form of repayment for some favour. The escape from the ghetto was planned for Christmas 1942. Maria changed into the provided outfit, in which she could pretend to be an Ukrainian, and jumped over the ghetto fence at an agreed place. On the "Aryan" side, the aforementioned couple were waiting for her. She was taken by sleigh to the railway station, from where she continued her journey alone.⁸³

As has been demonstrated, getting someone out of the ghetto often required a coordinated plan and special preparations. In a letter sent in 1986 to the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw, Józef Trziszka described how his parents Władysław and Maria from the village of Krechowice (Dolina district) managed to get out of the ghetto the daughter of their Jewish acquaintance, Irena Enis, born in 1933 or 1934. Władysław Trziszka went there first to find her. It was probably then that he initiated her into the escape plan. After a few days, Maria Trziszka entered the ghetto, led the girl to the "Aryan" side with the help of her relatives and handed

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ After the war her name was Rachela Shtibel. USC Shoah Foundation, 57243, Interview with Rachela Shtibel, 6 November 2011.

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, RG-50.030.0379, Interview with Maria Rosenbloom, 17 September 1996.

her over to her father.⁸⁴ The task was not too difficult, as the ghetto there was open. Nevertheless, even trying to get someone out of such a place, especially spontaneously, without a plan, was fraught with risk.

Nor was it always the case that attempts to get acquaintances out of the place of concentration of Jews were successful. This is evidenced by the case of Bronisława Docenko. During the occupation she lived with her mother in Delatyn. A German was accommodated in their house. Once Bronisława overheard him reveal in a conversation with her mother that an anti-Jewish operation was planned for the next day. This prompted Bronisława, then 17 years old, to make a spontaneous decision to try to rescue her Jewish friend, probably named Jenta (surname unknown). Many years after the war, the Polish woman reported: "I think to myself – what will be, will be, I take this Jewish girl by the hand and run home with her [...] A German saw us and started shooting. And he shot her [...] He thought I was Jewish too, but he didn't shoot me."⁸⁵ The German soldier followed her to her family home, convinced that he was dealing with a Jewish fugitive. Bronisława's mother managed to alleviate the situation and assured the soldier that they were a Christian family.

Definitely more often, which the examples above also prove, aid was provided to long-standing, pre-war acquaintances. However, there were also cases of supporting Jews who were complete strangers or whom one had only met under wartime circumstances and with whom some kind of a deeper bond had not yet been established. An example is the story of the rescue of the Lazar family from Stryj by the Polish couple Zofia and Władysław Strzelecki. In October 1942, two months before the Jewish quarter in Stryj was sealed, Zofia Strzelecka entered it to trade. At that time, she regularly sold milk to Jews. When she found her way to Sabina Lazar's flat, the latter asked her to find someone ready to shelter her family. After a few days, Strzelecka returned to the ghetto and informed Lazar that she would hide her in her own home.⁸⁶

⁸⁴ AŻIH, 349/24/743, letter of Józef Trziszka to the Jewish Historical Institute, 3 March 1986.

⁸⁵ The KARTA Centre, Oral History Archives, Poles in the East, 2380, Testimony of Bronisława Docenko, 24 November 2011.

⁸⁶ Leon and Sabina Lazar and their three sons: Jakub, Marek and Slotor, decided to escape from the ghetto on the eve of the day it was sealed (30 November 1942) and found shelter in the home of Zofia and Władysław Strzelecki, where they stayed until the Red Army entered Stryj (AYV, M.31.2/4412, Statement

Józef Matusiewicz did the same. He came from the village Rozdół in Żydaczów district. During the German occupation, he was employed in a warehouse in one of the factories where Jews worked. One day, Fiszel Helfgott, previously unknown to him, in an act of desperation, asked him to rescue his daughter Anita, who was then in the ghetto in Skole. Several decades after the war, Anita Ekstein née Helfgott reported:

I have a letter that Matusiewicz wrote to me in 1956. He wrote that my father was absolutely distraught, he didn't know where to turn and what to do after losing my mother, he feared that any day soon, he would come home from work and I wouldn't be there. And it was as if my father was asking him for help.⁸⁷

Matusiewicz agreed, completely selflessly. He made his way to the ghetto in Skole, from where, under the cover of darkness, he got the girl out and hid her in his own house in Rozdół.⁸⁸ Anita Ekstein described the moment she left the Jewish quarter:

He took me out in a potato sack. He warned me not to make any noise, move or draw attention to myself. It was not a closed ghetto. He had a pass, he was able to go in and out. He [...] carried me to some horse-drawn cart, covered me with straw and drove me to his town.⁸⁹

In reviewing the forms of aid provided to Jews imprisoned in the ghettos, mention should also be made of the situation when someone made their way into the Jewish quarter to provide medical care. It has been possible to establish one case of such aid in the analysed area. Abraham Shtertzer in the *Księga pamięci Rohatyna* (The Community of Rohatyn and Environs Memorial Book) noted: "The Jews had a friend in Rohatyn, Dr. Runge, who shared their suffering and wanted to help

by Jacob Lazar, 21 January 1988 r. n.p.; *Księga Sprawiedliwych wśród Narodów Świata*, vol. 2, ed. I. Gutman, Cracow 2009, p. 701).

⁸⁷ USC Shoah Foundation, 18280, Interview with Anita Ekstein née Helfgott, 7 August 1996.

⁸⁸ *Księga Sprawiedliwych*, vol. 2, p. 449.

⁸⁹ USC Shoah Foundation, 18280, Interview with Anita Ekstein née Helfgott, 7 August 1996.

them. He would come to the ghetto very often to treat the sick, to comfort them.”⁹⁰ That was presumably a Pole, Witold Runge, who served as a district physician in Rohatyn before the war.⁹¹

Of great importance for Jews in the ghettos was to maintain contact with family members living outside the Jewish quarter. This, too, in some cases, required the involvement of non-Jewish acquaintances. For example, Jurko Dun, an Ukrainian from Stryj, regularly passed information between the Fiksel family, who were confined in the Stryj ghetto, and their niece Lea Grossman (later Szternberg), who was in forced labour in Germany under a forged identity. He facilitated their communication until the Fiksel family’s death in 1943.⁹²

It is worth noting that, in many cases, aid was not limited to one form. Władysław Bruniany from Nadwórna not only smuggled food regularly for an acquaintance staying in the local ghetto, but also organised his escape and gave him shelter.⁹³ Maria and Florian Wojnerowski from Kołomyja did the same. Initially, they donated food to the befriended Goldstein family, imprisoned in the Kołomyja ghetto. They then selflessly helped their relatives, Fannie Gitterman and her minor son, Aleksander, to escape from the ghetto.⁹⁴

In Emil Brigg’s testimony, we find information about the multi-faceted help provided to Jews in the Kołomyja ghetto by a Pole named Tomasziewicz. Brigg and his father prepared a hideout (“bunker”) for his family in the Jewish quarter. Initially, Tomasziewicz helped them gather the provisions necessary to survive in the shelter. He bought the food with the money obtained through the sale of the Briggs’ possessions. At the time of the danger, three Jewish families were hiding in the bunker, while Tomasziewicz acted as a liaison between the hiding place and the outside world.⁹⁵

⁹⁰ A. Shtertzer, “How Rohatyn Died,” www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/rogatin/roh032e.html, accessed 11 December 2023.

⁹¹ Z. Stós, “Zapomniany grobowiec dra Witolda Rungego na cmentarzu parafialnym w Brzesku,” <https://brzesko.ws/DesktopModules/Articles/ArticlesView.aspx?tabID=0&ItemID=11269&mid=10640>, accessed 10 December 2023.

⁹² AYV, M.31.2/5258, statement by Lea Szternberg née Grossmann, n.d.

⁹³ *Księga Sprawiedliwych*, vol. 1, p. 67.

⁹⁴ AYV, M.31.2/2815, statement by Fanny Gitterman, 20 September 1983, n.p.; AYV, M.31.2/2815, statement of Maria Rosenbloom, 25 October 1983, n.p.; AYV, M.31.2/2815, statement by Menek Goldstein, 11 May 1983, n.p.; *Księga Sprawiedliwych*, vol. 2, pp. 822–823.

⁹⁵ AYV, O.3, 2304, testimony of Emil Brigg, 1 September 1963.

In order to obtain additional food, Jews often had to sell their belongings. The participation of non-Jews in this endeavour was also invaluable. Albin Tyll, a Pole of German origin, regularly delivered provisions to the Kołomyja ghetto from February 1942, aiding the Sanberg family and other Jews, and also acted as an intermediary in exchanging Jewish belongings. He exchanged the clothing and household items he collected from the ghetto inhabitants among the local peasants for food.⁹⁶

It happened that this multidimensional aid was not limited to one ghetto. An example of how far it could reach is the attitude of Maria Dziańkowska from Stanisławów, who was befriended with the Jewish family named Kohn. When Zofia and Emanuel Kohn and their daughter Irena (Irit) ended up in the Stanisławów ghetto, the Polish woman offered to help. She regularly provided them with food and medicines. After Emanuel's death, she made efforts to get the two women out of the Jewish quarter. On 1 February 1942, she helped them to escape and hid them in her house.⁹⁷ At the same time, she financially supported Zofia's parents, Leon and Esther Breuer, who were confined in the Kołomyja ghetto. In addition, she delivered medicines to the Jewish quarter in Rohatyn, where Zofia's brother Saul Breuer was imprisoned, and distributed medicines to Jews in need.⁹⁸

The Ukrainian Tekla Korba, on the other hand, helped the Jewish Winkler family from Kałusz in two different ghettos. After the death of her husband, Barbara Winkler and her three young children found themselves in the Kałusz ghetto. It was an open ghetto, which enabled the Ukrainian woman to sneak in every evening for six months and deliver food to them. Just before the ghetto was liquidated, in the autumn of 1942, Tekla Korba managed, under unknown circumstances, to move the Winklers to the Jewish quarter in Stryj, which was also an open ghetto

⁹⁶ AYV, M.31.2/12381, mail message of Mila Mesner to the Yad Vashem Institute's Righteous Among the Nations Department, 7 June 2011, n.p.; The Righteous Database, https://righteous.yadvashem.org/?search=Tyll&searchType=righteous_only&language=en&itemId=9493932&kind=0, accessed 14 January 2022.

⁹⁷ She acted as an intermediary in obtaining false documents for Jewish women and organised a safer shelter for them in Bukaczowice.

⁹⁸ AYV, M.31.2/89, Statement by Zofia Kohn, 17 September 1947, p. 1; *Księga Sprawiedliwych*, vol. 1, pp. 150–151; N. Aleksun, "Historia pomocy – Dziańkowska Maria i Bizion-Horysławska Józefa", <https://sprawiedliwi.org.pl/pl/historie-pomocy/historia-pomocy-dziankowska-maria-i-bizior-horyslawska-jozefa>, accessed 12 January 2022.

until December 1942. Moreover, she rented a flat near the established ghetto to provide shelter for the Winklers in case of danger. She subordinated her life to caring for this Jewish family. Among other things, she took on several casual jobs to raise funds to buy food, which she then regularly delivered to the Winklers in the ghetto. In June 1943, Barbara and her youngest daughter, whose name is unknown, were killed in a liquidation operation. The other two girls, Pnina and Ruta, managed to escape. Korba hid them in her flat, where they stayed until the end of the German occupation.⁹⁹

The consequences of providing aid cannot be overlooked. Two persons who provided aid to Jews living in ghettos in the former Stanisławów Voivodeship suffered reprisals from the Germans. The first was Jan Dudziak (Duczak), arrested by the Germans under unknown circumstances in the spring of 1942 in connection with the delivery of food to the Jewish quarter in Śniatyń. He was initially imprisoned in Śniatyń, then transferred to a prison in Kołomyja, where he was presumably executed at the end of the hostilities.¹⁰⁰ Stanisław Mostowiak was arrested by the Gestapo on 1 October 1942 in Tłumacz for supplying food to Jewish acquaintances from his school days who were imprisoned in the Tłumacz ghetto,¹⁰¹ and was taken to a prison in Stanisławów, from where he was sent to KL Lublin. He died there on 2 June 1943.¹⁰²

Aid Statistics

In the course of the research, 72 individuals who helped Jews in ghettos within the studied area were identified. Although Ukrainians were the majority in the Stanisławów Voivodeship, sources indicate that Poles were the primary helpers. Specifically, 57 Poles (including one of German descent), 11 Ukrainians, and three

⁹⁹ The Righteous Among the Nations Database, https://righteous.yadvashem.org/?search=Korba&searchType=righteous_only&language=en&itemId=4015736&ind=1, accessed 12 December 2023.

¹⁰⁰ AIPN, 392/1625, the case of Michał Halkiew and Weronika Halkiew-Kamińska, minutes of the interrogation of Bolesław Antoni Bielecki before OKBZH in Opole, 23 April 1970, pp. 8–10; AAN, Aid for the Jewish Population, 1521/3, Documentational Questionnaire of ZBoWiD (concerning the witness Bolesław Bielecki), 1 August 1968, pp. 219–221.

¹⁰¹ In addition, he delivered food parcels also for the father of Ludwika Czechowicz who lived in the ghetto in Lwów (AIPN, 392/819, letter of Ludwika Czechowicz to GKBZHWP, 27 June 1988, p. 12).

¹⁰² AIPN, 392/819, letter of Beata Opoczyńska to Żanetta Maria Knobloch, 20 September 1988, p. 13; *ibid.*, letter of Ludwika Czechowicz to GKBZHWP, 27 June 1988, p. 12; *ibid.*, letter of Żanetta Knobloch to GKBZHWP, 14 January 1985, p. 7; www.straty.pl, accessed 13 December 2023.

persons from Polish-Ukrainian families were involved. The nationality of one person could not be determined. Of those identified, men provided slightly more aid (42) compared to women (30).¹⁰³

The number of 72 persons who helped should be regarded as the lower limit of the phenomenon. They account for less than 9 percent of all verified cases established in the course of research on the overall issue of aid provided to Jews in the pre-war Stanisławów Voivodeship.¹⁰⁴ It follows that the clear majority of gestures of aid were shown to Jews who had left the ghettos or had not moved to them at all.

The geographical distribution of the source-confirmed cases of aid is as follows. The largest number of people helping Jews in ghettos lived during the German occupation in the Kołomyja district (19). Slightly fewer in the Stryj (15) and Stanisławów (12) districts. Before the war, these were the most populous areas in the voivodeship and had the highest percentage of the Jewish population. During the occupation the above-mentioned districts became areas of the highest concentration of Jews during the period of ghettoisation where the largest Jewish quarters in this part of occupied Poland operated. Markedly fewer people involved in this type of aid were recorded in the other districts: Kałusz (7), Nadwórna (5), Rohatyn (4), Kosów (3), Dolina (2), Tłumacz (2), and Horodenka, Śniatyn and Żydaczów (one in each).

Analysis of the source material also makes it possible to answer the question about which ghettos received aid from non-Jews in the examined area. Table 2 shows the number of people providing aid to Jews staying in ghettos in each locality.

Table 2. Number of Persons Involved in Helping Jews in Pre-War Stanisławów Voivodeship Ghettos

Ghetto location	Number of persons involved in helping
Kołomyja	22
Stryj	14
Stanisławów	11

¹⁰³ The author's findings.

¹⁰⁴ The author's findings.

Ghetto location	Number of persons involved in helping
Kałuż	7
Rohatyn	5
Nadwórna	4
Śniatyn	3
Kosów	2
Skole	2
Tłumacz	1
Horodenka	1

Source: The author's research.

Interestingly, the data in the table do not overlap with the data on the place of residence of the people involved in aid activity, from which it is clear that the aid sometimes crossed the borders of the district where the person providing it lived. In the case of two individuals, it was not possible to establish which ghettos their aid went to. In two cases, residents of the pre-war Stanisławów Voivodeship helped Jews staying in the Lwów ghetto.

Among the forms of aid provided to Jews incarcerated in the ghettos, food aid, in the broadest sense, comes to the fore. No fewer than 48 people were involved in this, accounting for 67 per cent of all established cases of aid to Jews incarcerated in ghettos. On the other hand, various activities aimed at smuggling Jews out of the Jewish quarters were undertaken by no fewer than 17 non-Jewish residents of the Stanisławów Voivodeship. In the case of 44 people, their aid was not limited to only one form and often aid to Jews imprisoned in ghettos was an additional manifestation of their broader aid activity.¹⁰⁵ Most of the people listed (38) knew the Jews they were helping. Only 14 helped strangers. In the case of 20 people, the sources do not provide such information.¹⁰⁶

Of the inhabitants of the pre-war Stanisławów Voivodeship honoured by the Yad Vashem Institute with the Righteous Among the Nations title, 29 persons (12 per cent) provided aid to Jews imprisoned in ghettos. This group included

¹⁰⁵ The author's findings.

¹⁰⁶ The author's findings.

22 Poles (including one of German origin), 4 Ukrainians and 3 persons from a Polish-Ukrainian family. For most, this was only one type of aid they provided. The remaining 43 people referred to in this article were not awarded The Righteous Among the Nations title. Due to the nature of the aid provided to Jews imprisoned in the ghettos, particularly food aid, which may have reached a wider group of recipients, it is impossible to determine how many Jews actually benefitted from it.

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SUMMARY

The article examines the aid provided to Jews in ghettos established between 1941 and 1943 within the territory of the pre-war Stanisławów Voivodeship. It outlines the Jewish quarters established by the German occupiers and focuses on the conditions and forms of support offered by non-Jews. Drawing on numerous testimonies from both recipients and providers of aid, the article presents various instances of this support and concludes with a statistical overview of the phenomenon.

KEYWORDS

Stanisławów Voivodeship • ghetto • aid to Jews

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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: *Spółczesność 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-ḳodesh she-hushmedah hi"ḳ. Seyfer Zembroye: tsum ondenḳ der fartiliktter kehila hi"ḳ*, 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-Jańbrzyków Stok, located in the Zambrów municipality. It is a village of petty nobility. Originally, Jańbrzyków 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 Waław: 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. Stronictwo 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. *Stronictwo 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 Ostrołęckim i Łomżyńskim 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. Machcewicz (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 Grądowski also found rescue in the surrounding villages.³¹ In the town itself, Bolesław Olszewski hid Rubin Kosacki and his son.³² Józef Żyłuk, 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 Grądowski concerning aid exhibited to him and members of his family by Feliks Żyłuk and Franciszek Karwowski in Jedwabne and Janczewko, 15 November 1967, Łomża, in *Relacje o pomocy*, p. 188. The fates of Szmul Wasersztejn 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 Żyłuk 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 Drażek, 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. Drażek), *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 Podróżnik 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, Podróżnik 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. Podróżnik did not give the name of his helper.⁵⁶ A resident of Łomża named Przechodzień helped the family and friends of Rachela Drażek. 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 Podróżniks did not know what to do next. In the end, they used the hosts’ daughter’s idea of going to Warsaw (N. Podróżnik, *Pozorowana tożsamość. Historia przetrwania pod okupacją niemiecką* (Warsaw, 2020), pp. 61–62).

⁵⁷ P.M. Malczewska (R. Drażek), *Historia splełanej 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 Podróznik 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 ognie 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 Dróżnik'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 splełtanej nici*, p. 114.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 115.

⁷⁹ "Opowieść siostr Holcman," p. 388.

⁸⁰ P.M. Malczewska (R. Drażek), *Historia splełtanej 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 Cieciorci, 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, Waclaw 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 Kukielka 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 Grunland. 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, "Niedopałek 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 Rzańnik, 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 Drażek, 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 Drażek 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 Rozensztejn 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 AYW, M.31.2/4760, Krajewski Jakub and Krajewska Janina; “Ocalona z Trebinki – 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 Kołakowski 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 Waclaw 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 AYY, M. 31.2/4598, Dobkowski Bolesław and Dobkowska Apolonія; 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 Fiszal 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 Szarfszajns 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 Grądownski, Jankiel Kubrzański and Lea Sosnowska	21 November 1993
The Wyrzykowskis Antonina and Aleksander	Janczewek	Mojżesz and Berek Olszewicz, Szmul Wasersz- tejn, Elka NN, Izrael Grądownski, 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

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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

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RESISTANCE AND STRUGGLE FOR THE SURVIVAL OF GARBATKA JEWS UNDER THE GERMAN OCCUPATION

Introduction

This article aims to explore the attitudes and behaviour of the Jewish inhabitants of Garbatka towards the German occupiers, with a particular focus on resistance. It examines the various forms of resistance and the circumstances under which these actions were undertaken.¹ Repressive German policies and the omnipresent terror brought about a variety of phenomena and attitudes, both positive and negative, and had an overwhelming impact on relations between the Poles and Jews. The terms of the German occupation put human characters

¹ In this article, the term ‘resistance’ refers to the conscious actions taken by Jews, both individually and collectively, to survive the Holocaust. This includes the “illegal” (in terms of German occupation laws) activities, i.a. acquisition of food, passive resistance directed towards the German occupation orders, escapes from ghettos, aid to those in hiding, using aid from Poles, and participation in underground and partisan activities. These are only some of the possible forms of resistance aimed to defy the German occupier’s will and violence. See, among others, J. Nalewajko-Kulikow, *Strategie przetrwania. Żydzi po aryjskiej stronie Warszawy* (Warsaw, 2004), p. 174; “O pomocy, o ratowaniu Żydów i o badaniu Zagłady – z profesora Nechamą Tec rozmawia Małgorzata Melchior,” *Zagłada Żydów. Studia i Materiały* 4 (2008), p. 542.

to the toughest test. It intensified and sharpened social attitudes and divisions, phobias and resentments (including those of an anti-Semitic background), and the egoism of particular social groups. The testimonies and recollections of Jews – Holocaust survivors, and of Poles who provided them with aid make it possible to look at certain events from different points of view. In this case, the testimony of an anonymous Jewish woman who lived in Garbatka for five months in 1941 (until the end of December of that year) proved extremely valuable.² It is worth noting, however, that the use of testimonies and memories as indirect sources means that there often emerges a “competition [...] between the ‘scholarly truth’ and the ‘truth of memory.’”³ The inability to verify a substantial part of the information⁴ only exacerbates this problem.

By showing the relationship between Jews and Poles in the context of the dramatic experiences of the Second World War, the article broadens the knowledge of Garbatka’s recent history and contributes to the development of research into the history of local communities.

² Anonymous testimony entitled “Pozdrowienia z prowincji [Opis sytuacji ludności żydowskiej w Garbatce od wybuchu wojny do grudnia 1941 r.],” in *Archiwum Ringelbluma. Konspiracyjne Archiwum Getta Warszawy*, vol. 6: *Generalne Gubernatorstwo. Relacje i dokumenty*, ed. A. Bańkowska (Warsaw, 2012), pp. 321–326. This testimony stands out among the other first-hand sources researched there. The number of events outlined, as well as the attitudes and behaviour of both individuals and groups of Garbatka’s inhabitants, make possible to present many previously unknown problems concerning the first years of the German occupation. Taking up the subject of relations between Poles and Jews, the anonymous author of the testimony tried to approach it not only from the perspective of the sensitivity and experience of the Jewish community. When describing the excesses directed against the Jewish population, she paid attention to the causes and conditions of the negative behaviour of the inhabitants of Garbatka. This provides an insight into the state of awareness and understanding of the behaviour of Poles and Jews in the conditions created by the German occupier. This testimony contains a great deal of information about the occupation terms and the living conditions of Garbatka’s Jews. The subjective nature of the source calls for the researcher’s caution, but this does not diminish its importance in the discussion on the relations between the inhabitants of Garbatka, representing different nationalities, and problems that have been forgotten or passed over in silence.

³ M. Woźniak, *Przeszłość jako przedmiot konstrukcji. O roli wyobraźni w badaniach historycznych* (Lublin, 2010), p. 12.

⁴ Only a few of the testimonies referred to in this article were written just after the war. Most, like the majority of the memoirs, were penned many years later. The same problem applies to the interviews published since the 1990s in the periodical *Moja Garbatka*.

Garbatka and its Inhabitants before 1939

Garbatka⁵ is located on the south-eastern edge of the Kozienice forest,⁶ and its resort part is placed in a forested area. In the inter-war period, it belonged to the Policzna municipality in the Kozienice district, which was 35 per cent forested. Before 1939, it had a population of about two thousand people, which made it the most populous village in the municipality. Garbatka's traditions as a summer resort date back to the end of the 19th century. Due to its specific microclimate, the inhabitants of Warsaw, Lublin, Radom, Kielce or Łódź used to come here for holidays. They lived in numerous summer villas built before World War I and in the interwar period. Garbatka's residents and the surrounding area benefited from this financially. Before the outbreak of World War II, it was the only village in the municipality with electricity. Garbatka's major advantages were its good railway connection (location on the Radom–Dęblin line) and road access (proximity to the Kozienice–Zwoleń road).⁷

A brochure published in 1930 extolled the value of this tourist destination, well-known in the region:

The railway station is conveniently located on the Dęblin–Radom line, being the third station from both Dęblin and Radom, offering a 45-minute ride in either direction. Daily, eight passenger trains towards Skarżysko pass through Garbatka, including five from Warsaw to Cracow, and seven towards Dęblin, four of which come from Cracow to Warsaw, along with numerous cargo trains.

Garbatka is nestled in a serene pine forest, its landscape gently undulating with hills that shield it from strong winds, resulting in a remarkably steady

⁵ In sources produced during the German occupation, several neighbouring villages (including Garbatka Podlas, Garbatka Długa, Garbatka Nowa) in the Policzna municipality may have appeared under the name Garbatka. Currently, Garbatka-Letnisko is the seat of the municipality in the Kozienice district. Moreover, Garbatka-Letnisko municipality includes the abovementioned villages, and also Garbatka Zbyszyn and Garbatka Dziewiątka.

⁶ See *Lasy Puszczy Kozienickiej. Monografia przyrodniczo-leśna*, ed. R. Zielony (Warsaw, 1997), pp. 9–47.

⁷ E. Januszewicz, “Wiek XX – między II a III Rzeczpospolitą,” in *Policzna. By czas nie zaczął i niepamięć*, ed. E. Januszewicz (Sycyna, 2004), p. 31; M. Wierzbicki, “Postawy mieszkańców Garbatki w czasie II wojny światowej (refleksja badawcza),” in *Od zniewolenia do wolności. Studia historyczne*, ed. A.F. Baran (Warsaw–Białystok, 2009), pp. 455–456; K. Zając, “200 lat powiatu kozienickiego,” *Ziemia Kozienicka* 23 (2010), p. 86.

temperature. [...] The picturesque surroundings are truly delightful, with woods stretching to Kozienice, just 16 km away. The ground is highly permeable, ensuring no mud even after heavy rain, and the water from wells over 18 metres deep is exceptionally pure and refreshing. [...] The Vistula River flows about 12 kilometres away, while a small creek meanders through the forest on its western bank. The air is pristine and therapeutic, particularly beneficial for those with weak lungs. [...] The summer season, lasting from 1 May almost to November, attracts around eight thousand visitors. [...] There are over four hundred rental houses available for seasonal guests, with new ones constantly being built. The local community is known for its friendliness, hospitality, and helpfulness towards visitors. Guesthouses offer comfortable accommodation with all-day catering. Essential services like the post office, telegraph, and telephone are readily available on site. [...] The forest paths provide ample opportunities for long walks. [...] Excursions [can be made], both on horseback and on foot, to favourite destinations such as Czarnolas, Policzna, Zwoleń, and Kozienice, as well as by rail to Sandomierz, the Świętokrzyskie Mountains, Janowiec with the ruins of the Firlej castle, Puławy, and Kazimierz on the Vistula River.⁸

A large population, two industrial plants (the State Sawmill with a furniture workshop employed 160 people in 1939, and the State Resin Distillery employed about a hundred), a railway station, a post office, a State Police station, the Garbatka Forestry District (which included two forestry administration regions: Krasna Dąbrowa and Molendy), a seven-class public primary school (some of the pupils continued their education in secondary schools, e.g. in Radom), a pharmacy and a doctor's practice, numerous shops, a coal depot, agricultural tools and cement products storehouse, a municipal slaughterhouse and fairs regularly held on Wednesdays "gave it the characteristics of an urban-type settlement."⁹ In Garbatka – as Marek Wierzbicki notes:

⁸ W. Wojtaśkiewicz, *Garbatka-Letnisko* (n.p., 1930), pp. 14–17.

⁹ E. Januszewicz, "Wiek XX," pp. 32–34; S. Meducki, *Przemysł i klasa robotnicza w dystrykcie radomskim w okresie okupacji hitlerowskiej* (Warsaw–Cracow, 1981), pp. 100–101; K. Stalmach, *Rozwój terytorialny i przemiany osadnicze miejscowości Garbatka od XV wieku do wybuchu II wojny światowej* (Radom, 2010), pp. 129, 138; M. Wierzbicki, "Postawy mieszkańców Garbatki," p. 455; W. Wojtaśkiewicz, *Garbatka-Letnisko*, pp. 14, 17.

favourable climatic conditions caused the settlement of many valuable individuals from the intelligentsia (teachers, doctors, clerks) and petty bourgeoisie (merchants, craftsmen) circles, as well as an influx of summer visitors, who shaped the mentality of the settlement's inhabitants through personal contacts.¹⁰

Three land estates (in Policzna – owned by Count Stefan Przeździecki, Czarnolas, and Świetlikowa Wola), along with mills, a brickyard, and a distillery in Policzna, provided employment for the municipality's residents. Seasonal work was also available in the forest, at road paving, and with wealthy farmers. Garbatka residents found jobs in Pionki and Radom, while some sought livelihoods in Warsaw.¹¹ The municipality of Policzna was inhabited by Catholics, Protestants and Jews.¹² The majority of Jews lived in Garbatka and Jabłonkowo, which had a synagogue. In other localities, only just a few families resided.¹³

In the interwar period, about 500 Jews resided in Garbatka. They made a living from farming, small crafts and trade. Some of them earned additional income by renting rooms during the summer season.¹⁴ Bolesław Talar from Garbatka, whose family maintained close contacts with Jewish acquaintances, stated that “the Jews in Garbatka maintained their distinct national identity” and “did not inter-marry with the Poles living there.”¹⁵ Many years later, only fleeting memories of the relationships from that time remained in the minds of other residents:

Ajzyk, a Jew, had a grocery shop selling “everything from pumpkin seeds to herrings,” and was licensed to sell cigarettes and vodka. His brother-in-law Piniek

¹⁰ M. Wierzbicki, “Postawy mieszkańców Garbatki,” p. 455.

¹¹ E. Januszewicz, “Wiek XX,” pp. 31–32.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 31; K. Urbański, *Gminy żydowskie małe w województwie kieleckim w okresie międzywojennym* (Kielce, 2006), p. 217.

¹³ E. Januszewicz, “Wiek XX,” p. 31. According to the findings of Krzysztof Stalmach (*idem*, *Rozwój terytorialny*, p. 112), Jews were among the first to buy holiday home plots in this village. Between 1918 and 1939, the Orthodox Jews of Garbatka belonged to the Jewish community in Gniewoszków, and the community board was dominated by Zionists and Orthodox Jews (K. Urbański, *Gminy żydowskie*, pp. 216–218).

¹⁴ “Listy, polemiki, opinie,” *Dziennik Radomski*, 8–11 November 1996, p. 10. Adam Rutkowski estimated the size of the Jewish community in Garbatka before 1 September 1939 at 300 people (*idem*, “Martyrologia, walka i zagłada ludności żydowskiej w dystrykcie radomskim podczas okupacji hitlerowskiej,” *Biuletyn Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego* 15/16 (1955), p. 156).

¹⁵ M. Dziedzicka, *Kronika Garbatki-Letnisko* (Pionki, 1998), p. 111.

had a slightly more modest shop, also selling victuals. Abuś, on the other hand, ran a fabric shop. Jewish butchers sold veal and beef. Jews kept a firm grip on the services: Szlama, Josek, and Kapusta were shoemakers. Brajtman was the most sought-after tailor, while Pruchnik was somewhat less valued. Szulim was a boot maker.¹⁶

Our neighbours included the Kielman family (a household of five?). They owned a grocery shop, as well as a bakery. Mr. Kielman, well-regarded in the Jewish community for his honesty and helpfulness, managed the grocery where he also sold bread. I frequently visited his shop, and he would note down our purchases on credit (he gave on credit), which we settled every two weeks. Idka Wajsborg, the watchmaker's daughter, was the prettiest. Abramek was the best at football.¹⁷

The atmosphere of Polish-Jewish relations in Garbatka is well captured in Regina Renz's description of everyday life in towns in the Kielce Voivodeship during the interwar period:

Poles and Jews living in the same town formed two distinct communities. [...] Jews had a unique approach to each buyer, excelling in persuasion and business dealings compared to Polish merchants. [...] Many Poles and Jews grew up together in the same courtyards, fostering friendships that often lasted for years. The intelligentsia interacted with educated Jews. [...] Both communities adhered to a model of peaceful isolation, living without conflict but also without deep friendships.¹⁸

The political sympathies of the townspeople of Garbatka oscillated around the Piłsudski camp (*Bezpartyjny Blok Współpracy z Rządem*, the Non-Partisan Bloc for Cooperation with the Government, BBWR, then *Obóz Zjednoczenia Narodowego*, the Camp of National Unity, OZN), *Polska Partia Socjalistyczna* (Polish Social-

¹⁶ M. Baran, "O strachu, podłości i miłości," *Moja Garbatka* 1/2 (2007/2008), p. 190, as cited in E. Mudrak, *Garbatka – udreka, życie, raj utracony. Z historii rodu Wagów* (Łomża, 2022), p. 79.

¹⁷ *Z pamięci Ojca*, notes from the conversations with Adolf Śmietanka dated: 28 March 2004, 16 May 2004, 27 August 2005 and 30 August 2005, p. 1.

¹⁸ R. Renz, *Życie codzienne w miasteczkach województwa kieleckiego 1918–1939* (Kielce, 1994), pp. 87–91, 93–94.

ist Party, PPS)¹⁹ and the agrarian party (*Stronnictwo Ludowe*, SL). The left-wing current of the PPS was relatively strong.²⁰ Socialism garnered significant support among the Jews. It was within left-wing parties that Polish and Jewish political activists collaborated most effectively.²¹ Representatives of left-wing groups and organisations organised May Day rallies and marches in Garbatka. They were protected by police due to attempts by members and sympathisers of the National Democrats to break them up. Striving to improve the living conditions, and in defence of the workmates, a PPS cell organised a sit-down strike in March 1937 at the sawmill and distillery that lasted about a week. A “workers guard” was formed to keep order and defend the plants against strike breakers. The strike was successful.²² Also a strike organised at the distillery in June 1938 resulted in a wage increase.²³

One of Garbatka inhabitants was Dr. Jan Jaworski, a prominent activist in the agrarian movement and the *Związek Młodzięży Wiejskiej RP “Wici”* (Union of Rural Youth, ZMW RP “Wici”) in the Kielce Voivodeship.²⁴ Another well-known agrarian

¹⁹ In the interwar period, PPS had a strong political influence in the Koziencice district, especially in Koziencice, Pionki and Garbatka. The district’s residents worked, i.a., in the armaments factories in Radom and Pionki, where the activity of socialist organisations had a long tradition (J. Zdrojkowski, *Rola partii robotniczych w życiu społeczno-politycznym ziemi radomskiej w latach 1930–1939* (Radom, 1982), pp. 42–45; K. Dunin-Wąsowicz, *Polski ruch socjalistyczny 1939–1945* (Warsaw, 1993), p. 81).

²⁰ A. Barzycki, “Pamiętnik (fragmenty),” *Moja Garbatka* 2016, pp. 45–46 (memoirs written in 1964); E. Januszewicz, “Wiek XX,” p. 35.

²¹ S. Piątkowski, *Dni życia, dni śmierci. Ludność żydowska w Radomiu w latach 1918–1950* (Warsaw, 2006), pp. 98–99, 101. PPS’s fight against anti-Semitism played a non-negligible role (P. Tusiński, *Postawy polityczne mieszkańców Radomia w latach 1918–1939* (Radom, 1996), pp. 138, 140, 144).

²² J. Hatys, S. Iwaniak, “Z dziejów ruchu robotniczego na Kielecczyźnie w latach 1918–1939,” in *Z dziejów ziemi kieleckiej (1918–1944)* (Warsaw, 1970), p. 55 (striking workers won a 20 per cent pay rise); R. Śmietanka, *Szkice z dziejów Garbatki* (Garbatka-Letnisko, 1992), pp. 26–27.

²³ J. Zdrojkowski, *Rola partii robotniczych*, p. 151.

²⁴ J. Borkowski, “Ruch ludowy na Kielecczyźnie w latach międzywojennych,” in *Z dziejów ziemi kieleckiej (1918–1944)* (Warsaw, 1970), p. 74. After leaving Poland in September 1939, Jan Jaworski became a member of the Rada Narodowa (National Council, parliamentary body at the Polish government-in-exile) on behalf of the agrarian party (Stronnictwo Ludowe, SL). He was a close associate of Polish Prime Minister and Commander-in-chief in exile General Władysław Sikorski. While in exile, he was instrumental in bringing Jan Prot, the pre-war director of the State Gunpowder Plant in Pionki and a leader of the pro-government camp in the Kielce Voivodeship, before a commission to investigate the reasons for Poland’s defeat in September 1939 (E. Duraczyński, R. Turkowski, *O Polsce na uchodźstwie. Rada Narodowa Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej 1939–1945* (Warsaw, 1997), pp. 22, 25, 28–29, 35, 40, 56–57, 87, 96, 131, 144, 161, 163, 311–314; M. Wierzbicki, *Z Polską pod rękę. Jan Prot (1891–1957) i odbudowa niepodległego państwa polskiego*, (Lublin–Warsaw, 2017) pp. 97–99, 115, 122).

activist was Łukasz Kumor – a school teacher in Garbatka and also a member of the main board of *Towarzystwo Oświaty Demokratycznej “Nowe Tory”* (Democratic Education Society.)²⁵ The supporters of the Piłsudski and pro-government *Sanacja* camp²⁶ were particularly visible among teachers.²⁷ The school in Garbatka, attended by dozens of Jewish pupils, was a place for the creation of the cult of Józef Piłsudski and the “Legionnaires’ deed” of World War I.²⁸ Very popular among the school-aged youth were *Związek Strzelecki “Strzelec”* (Rifle Association) and *Związek Harcerstwa Polskiego* (Polish Scouting and Guiding Association).²⁹

The Kozienice district was also influenced by communist organisations – *Komunistyczna Partia Polski* (Communist Party of Poland, KPP) and *Komunistyczny Związek Młodzieży Polskiej* (Communist Union of Poland’s Youth, KZMP).³⁰ According to the opinion of the Kielce Voivode, in the 1930s, Kozienice had “the busiest [communist] organisation in the entire Radom-Kielce Circuit.”³¹ In this context, Jewish milieus underwent a process of political radicalisation.³² In August 1936, a policeman in Kozienice detained “Motek Grynspan, known for his

²⁵ J. Grzywna, *Związek Nauczycielstwa Polskiego na Kielecczyźnie 1905–1939* (Kielce, 1993), pp. 148–149. Among the organisations operating in Garbatka between the wars, it is also worth mentioning the *Narodowa Organizacja Kobiet* (National Women’s Organisation), the *Stowarzyszenie Katolickiej Młodzieży Polskiej* (Association of Polish Catholic Youth), the *Ochotnicza Straż Pożarna* (Volunteer Fire Brigade), the *Kasa Stefczyka* credit union, the *Kasa Koleżeńska “Bratnia Pomoc”* (Bratnia Pomoc Peer Support Fund “Brotherly Help” Peer Support Fund), the *Spółdzielnia Spożywców “Dom Ludowy”* (“Dom Ludowy” Food Cooperative), the *Stowarzyszenie Spożywców “Społem”* (Społem Food Association), *Zrzeszenie Rzemieślnicze* (Craftsmen’s Association), *Zrzeszenie Drobnych Kupców* (Small Merchants’ Association) and *Koło Przyjaciół Garbatki* (Friends of Garbatka Circle) (W. Wojtaśkiewicz, *Garbatka-Letnisko*, pp. 12–14; M. Dziedzicka, *Kronika*, p. 71; E. Januszewicz, “Wiek XX,” p. 35).

²⁶ P.A. Tusiński, *Postawy polityczne*, p. 237.

²⁷ J. Grzywna, *Związek Nauczycielstwa Polskiego*, pp. 173–174.

²⁸ *Kronika szkolna szkoły powszechnej w Garbatce (gm. Policzna, pow. kozienicki)* ([Garbatka], n.d.), *passim*, copy held by the author of the article. See also H. Wójcik-Łagan, *Kult bohatera narodowego. Józef Piłsudski w szkolnej edukacji historycznej w latach trzydziestych XX wieku* (Kielce, 2012).

²⁹ A. Barzycki, “Pamiętnik,” p. 46; M. Dziedzicka, *Kronika*, p. 71; E. Januszewicz, “Wiek XX,” p. 35.

³⁰ M. Urynowicz, *Żydzi w samorządzie miasta Kozienice w okresie międzywojennym 1919–1939* (Warsaw, 2003), p. 39, 72. In Gniewoszków, not far from Garbatka, the first communist organisation in the Kozienice district was reportedly established in January 1919. (J. Zdrojkowski, *Rola partii robotniczych*, p. 32).

³¹ As cited in M. Urynowicz, *Żydzi w samorządzie*, p. 39. Cells of the General Jewish Labour Bund existed i.a. in Gniewoszków and Kozienice. (J. Zdrojkowski, *Rola partii robotniczych*, pp. 46–47). Moreover, the Zionist Organisation operated in Gniewoszków. In 1927, its branch was headed by the community secretary Josek Kuropatwa (E. Słabińska, *Inteligencja na prowincji kieleckiej w latach 1918–1939* (Kielce, 2004), p. 237).

³² P.A. Tusiński, *Postawy polityczne*, pp. 39, 73–74, 208.

communist activities, and another unidentified individual, who raised suspicion.” The latter turned out to be Sumer Perelstajn from Garbatka-Letnisko, a secretary of the four-person KZMP cell in that locality.³³ During a search of his flat, police officers found many “books and magazines with leftist viewpoints.”³⁴

It should be emphasised that the county did not witness such a radicalisation of anti-Jewish attitudes as seen in other areas of the Kielce Voivodeship in the second half of the 1930s, where there were riots or anti-Jewish incidents.³⁵ In Garbatka itself, even the slogans of an economic boycott of Jews did not gain many supporters:

We were on good terms with the Jews. However, after 1935, when national parties in Poland “attacked” there was in Garbatka some bullying of the Jews from the resort. My father read an article in a Radom newspaper warning that such behavior would harm Garbatka, as many locals relied on the income from Jewish summer visitors. The article suggested that Jews might boycott Garbatka if mistreated. Parents disciplined their children. Children were breaking windows in Jewish houses because their fathers were glaziers...³⁶

Incidents occurred among school-aged youth.³⁷ Fr. Wincenty Wojtaśkiewicz, the parish priest who taught religion lessons at the school, played an infamous role in

³³ J. Zdrojkowski, *Rola partii robotniczych*, p. 32.

³⁴ M. Chęć, “Metody i efekty zwalczania środowiska komunistycznego Polski międzywojennej przez władze państwowe (na przykładzie Radomia i regionu),” *Radomskie Studia Humanistyczne* 3 (2016), p. 68. There was a communist cell in Garbatka in the 1930s that supposedly had contacts with “the Soviet envoy in Königsberg in East Prussia” and received money from there. It consisted of “five people from Garbatka, four from Pionki, two from Kozienice and two from Brzóza.” It was based in Garbatka because in Kozienice and Pionki the communists were closely watched by the counter-intelligence (M. Baran, “Wspomnienia,” Part 2: “O czasach budowy nowego kościoła pw. Nawiedzenia NMP w Garbatce,” *Moja Garbatka* 4 (2003), p. 59).

³⁵ See M.B. Markowski, J. Gapys, “Konflikty polsko-żydowskie w województwie kieleckim w latach 1935–36,” *Biuletyn Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego* 4 (1999), pp. 41–94; P.A. Tusiński, *Postawy polityczne*, pp. 140–144.

³⁶ “Byli tu mniejszością,” ed. E. Dziedzicka, *Moja Garbatka* 1 (2005), p. 32 (oral account of Bronisława Szczepaniak, 21 May 2004). About Radom’s Jews summer vacations in Garbatka, see D. Zaidenweber (nee Eiger), “Wspomnienia z Radomia,” ed. J. Mitek, *Biuletyn Kwartalny Radomskiego Towarzystwa Naukowego* 45 (1/2) (2011), p. 61: „Up to eleventh year of my life, we have spent every summer in Garbatka [...] we have rented a small cottage, as almost every our acquaintances from Radom.”

³⁷ Between 1935 and 1936, 706 Christian and 50 Jewish children attended the school in Garbatka; between 1937 and 1938, 752 children – including 45 Jewish children – attended it; for the 1939 school year, 768 children – including 52 Jewish children – were enrolled. (M. Dziedzicka, *Kronika*, pp. 32, 34–35).

this. He fostered anti-Semitic attitudes among the pupils and deepened anti-Jewish prejudice on religious grounds. In the *Kronika szkolna* (School chronicle) we read:

This year [1936], after returning from a trip to Palestine, [...] Fr. W. Wojtaśkiewicz began inciting children against the Jews. After his lessons, the children engaged in disruptive antics toward their Jewish peers. The headmistress confronted the priest, demanding he stop creating disorder on the school premises.³⁸

The German Occupation in Garbatka

The outbreak of World War II marked the most tragic period in Garbatka's history. The German army's immense technical superiority meant that hostilities had spread to the Kozienicka forest by the second week of war. On 8 September, the Wilno Cavalry Brigade attempted to halt the German advance towards the Vistula River on the Radom-Kozienice road, but after heavy fighting, they were dispersed and eventually defeated on the outskirts of Maciejowice. After capturing Kozienice on 9 September, the German 13th Motorised Infantry Division (13. Infanterie-Division (motorisiert)) took control of the Radomka River near Głowaczów and Ryczywół, while the 1st Light Division (1. Leichte Division) secured the road from Kozienice to Dęblin, turning west to encircle the advancing dispersed Polish units. Soldiers from the 3rd and 36th Infantry Divisions of the Polish Army fought in the Garbatka area. Several were killed during the air raid on the railway station in Garbatka.³⁹ On 14 September, near Laski (a few kilometres from Garbatka), a large group of soldiers of the Polish 3rd Infantry Division were taken prisoner by the Germans. Another group tried to cross the Vistula near Sieciechów, but they were also taken prisoner.⁴⁰

³⁸ *Kronika szkolna*, p. 237. The circumstances of the events indicate that the priest's behaviour stemmed from a tradition of anti-Judaism, see A. Cała, *Wizerunek Żyda w polskiej kulturze ludowej* (Warsaw, 2005), p. 26.

³⁹ The list of the fallen kept in the State Archives in Radom contains 13 names (APR, Records of the Municipal National Council in Policzna, 58/254/0/21, List of Polish soldiers killed during the war against the Germans on 5 September 1939 in Garbatka, the Policzna municipality, p. 27). According to Maria Dzedzicka (*eadem*, *Kronika*, p. 171), eleven Polish soldiers died at the time. However, there are fifteen names on a symbolic plaque at the cemetery in Garbatka-Letnisko.

⁴⁰ M. Porwit, *Komentarze do historii polskich działań obronnych 1939 roku*, vol. 2: *Odwrót i kontrofensywa* (Warsaw, 1983), pp. 335–338, 340–341, 343–344; R. Śmietanka, *Szkice z dziejów*, p. 27.

A girl from Garbatka thus recalled the outbreak of the war:

The first bombs in Garbatka fell already on Sunday, striking the railway station and in front of the stairs of the Skorupski aunt and uncle's villa, which was opposite the station [...]. Fortunately, no one was killed, but people fled in panic to the nearby forests as the bombardments continued. [...] My father and other officials from Garbatka were housed in barracks in Radom. Mum [...] was engaged at the railway station, not only with colleagues from school, organising help, drinks, and cigarettes for the troops heading to the front. [...] On the fifth day of the war, father found us in Garbatka Długa. [...] Returning from Radom, he saw the torments of people fleeing beyond the Vistula, as institutions and offices were being evacuated. Terrified families with children lay near bombed trains, in forests, bushes, and potato fields, dragging or losing their belongings. [...] Numerous refugees passed through the school in Garbatka Długa, asking for food or accommodation. At night, demobilised or still armed soldiers shone torches in windows, which filled us, children, with dread and terror. After the German army entered, we returned to our flat to find the furniture moved across the staircase and signs of the presence of tenants from Pionki. My embittered mother, fearing subsequent lawlessness of those uncertain times [...] accepted the invitation [...] of a teacher friend and decided to move us [...]. Meanwhile, my father's family [...] upon their return from the forester's lodge found the wooden villa partly ruined, without windows and, unfortunately, much of it looted. Through the broken windows, the kitchen door torn off by a bomb blast, [...] mattresses from the bedrooms, bedding, clothes, part of the tableware had been taken away. With the help of friendly neighbours, my uncle managed to recover some of the stolen property.⁴¹

In the German-occupied area, military authorities were installed, executions and crimes occurred, numerous arrests were made, and hostages were taken. The mood of depression caused by the defeat of the defensive war, fear of bombardment and artillery barrage, fear of losing all life's possessions amidst the chaos of

⁴¹ E. Bojakowska-Pikul, "Garbatka jest też i moja," *Moja Garbatka* 1 (2005), p. 27.

war were further intensified by reports of the German army's incomprehensible and unprecedented terror and cruelty, including the deliberate killing of civilians, Poles, and Jews from both villages and towns. On 13 September 1939, in the village Cecylówka, near Kozienice, German soldiers from the 13th Motorised Infantry Division locked up 56 people (43 Poles and 13 Jews) in a barn. The barn was set on fire and those trying to escape were shot at. Only three men managed to escape.⁴² The people were horror-stricken. "My father kept bringing home news of German repressions against the Poles. One day, when he came back from the market [...], he told us about the burnt men in Cecylówka";⁴³ "terrible news spread through the village: in the not so distant Cecylówka, the Germans burned more than fifty men alive in a barn. People were overwhelmed with horror. My father stopped sleeping in the room and sent my brothers out into the fields on any pretext."⁴⁴ In Zwoleń, the Germans also burned a group of Jews in a barn.⁴⁵

In mid-September, a transit camp was set up in Kozienice, in the parish church and the park surrounding it. Thousands of men passed through it: civilian refugees, Polish soldiers trying to hide, men detained in their homes. In the camp, on the church square, German soldiers committed atrocities against Jews.⁴⁶ It seems

⁴² T. Domański, A. Jankowski, *Represje niemieckie na wsi kieleckiej 1939–1945* (Kielce, 2011), p. 55; B. Jasek, "Szkice do historii Powiśla Kozienickiego," ed. M. Grabarczyk, *Ziemia Kozienicka* 21 (2009), p. 98. According to Grzegorz Kocyk's findings, the sequence of events was as follows: "They locked the detainees at the end of the village in Kazimierz Gzowski's barn. They surrounded the building with machine guns, doused it with petrol, then opened the gates and, throwing grenades at the people, set them on fire. Fifty-four people died, including forty-two Poles and twelve Jews. One Jew, who was later murdered in the ghetto, and three Poles managed to escape from the burning barn." (G. Kocyk, "Wrzesień 1939 r. w północnej części powiatu kozienickiego," *Ziemia Kozienicka* 12 (2005), p. 35).

⁴³ "Samoloty nadleciały od strony Radomia. Wspomnienia spisane przez Dominika Kucińskiego na podstawie rozmowy z panem Stanisławem Kucharskim urodzonym w 1926 r.," *Ziemia Kozienicka* 20 (2009), pp. 109–110.

⁴⁴ F. Mazur, "Byłam wtedy nastolatką. Okruczy wspomnień z lat okupacji niemieckiej w Stanisławicach i Kozienicach," ed. B. Mazur, *Ziemia Kozienicka* 20 (2009), p. 60. Cf. T. Domański, A. Jankowski, *Represje niemieckie*, pp. 54–55.

⁴⁵ T. Domański, A. Jankowski, *Represje niemieckie*, p. 56.

⁴⁶ *Archiwum Ringelbluma*, vol. 6, pp. 334–336; A. Skibińska, "Połowa miasteczka," *Karta* 47 (2005), pp. 41–42: "Men were subjected to the first degrading acts – their beards were cut off, they were ordered to "sweep" the monastery courtyard with them. In retaliation for Rabbi Perlov's escape to the east, the local wealthy man Shmuel Moshe Korman was publicly tortured, Dr. Gąsior's daughter was raped, and he himself was beaten to death. A few days later, the palace [of King Stanisław August Poniatowski], Rabbi Magid's synagogue and his house were burnt down, the cemetery with the ohel (grave chapel) was desecrated; earlier, the holy books of the Talmud and the Torah scrolls were ordered to be carried into the synagogue courtyard, set on fire and the Jews were forced to dance around the bonfire."

that “the main aim of organising this camp was to intimidate the population right at the beginning of the occupation. [...] this objective was then achieved.”⁴⁷ The inhabitants of Garbatka probably also received the tragic news of the murder of 250 Polish prisoners of war on 8 September 1939 near Ciepiałów (about 30 km south of Garbatka) by German soldiers from the 15th Regiment of the 29th Motorised Infantry Division.⁴⁸ A few weeks later, wagons with soldiers taken prisoner after the Battle of Kock (2–5 October 1939) passed through the railway station in Garbatka from Dęblin towards Radom.⁴⁹ German guards shot at prisoners escaping from the transport, but it is difficult to determine the number of the victims.⁵⁰

The experiences of the inhabitants of Garbatka and the surrounding areas (an irregular quadrangle bounded by Koziernice, Pionki, Zwolen, and Dęblin) during the first months of 1939 can be illustrated by a passage from a study by Jacek Chrobaczyński, an expert on the German occupation:

It was a novel type of war and occupation. Total war and occupation. [...] in place of existing rules, customs, and habits, there emerged widespread argument of criminal strength and violence, combined with extraordinary brutality, ruthlessness, and hatred. [...] From the outset, this new total war and occupation not only shattered and shook society’s daily life and privacy but also traumatically brutalised it to an incredible extent. Everyday life became perilous and uncertain.⁵¹

German Occupation Authorities

After the German army occupied Garbatka on 10 September 1939, the Wehrmacht field command, located in the school building, took over the control. It implemented directives on maintaining “order” and all aspects of society func-

⁴⁷ B. Jasek, “Szkice do historii,” p. 23.

⁴⁸ T. Domański, A. Jankowski, *Represje niemieckie*, p. 39.

⁴⁹ It was the last battle fought by the Samodzielna Grupa Operacyjna “Polesie” (“Polesie” Independent Operational Group, SGO “Polesie”) under the command of General Franciszek Kleeberg, and very last battle of the September 1939 campaign. SGO “Polesie” attempted to reach the Vistula River and, after the crossing, to break through to the Świętokrzyskie Mountains, to continue the guerrilla warfare there. Three soldiers from Garbatka fought in SGO “Polesie” (M. Dziedzicka, *Kronika*, pp. 95–97).

⁵⁰ P. Siliniewicz, “Od Suwałk do Stalagu IV C Mülberg,” *Przegląd Historyczno-Wojskowy* 3 (2009), p. 161.

⁵¹ J. Chrobaczyński, *Czas nieszczęść, cierpień, oporu i walki. Przegrani zwycięzcy? Społeczeństwo polskie między wrześniem 1939 a majem 1945* (Cracow, 2017), pp. 131, 133.

tioning. Numerous houses were seized as quarters for German soldiers. As part of the German civilian authorities' network, pre-war local administration structures began to operate, under the supervision of the occupier and with limited powers. However, the occupiers sought to fill key positions with *Volksdeutsche*.⁵² The mayor of Policzna was Adolf Jeske and his deputy Adolf Rap, both German settlers from Władysławów.⁵³ Roman Gruzel, a *Volksdeutscher* from Danzig, was appointed as the head of the sawmill and the forestry railway.⁵⁴ The situation was similar at the post office and the railway station. After signing the *Volkliste*, Garbatka resident Roman Waldeker became the stationmaster.⁵⁵ In autumn 1939, German forestry administration, and Polish foresters deported from Poznań province and Pomerania were brought to Garbatka. The Forest Inspectorate (*Forstinspektion*) was soon established there, which supervised the forests and forest management in the entire Kozienice Forest. It was headed by Baron von Keysserling, a German from Latvia. Both he and Hellebrandt, who managed the Forest Inspectorate, are negatively remembered by Poles.⁵⁶

The Radom District and the individual municipalities were under the constant supervision of the German security police (including the Gestapo) and the

⁵² S. Meducki, *Wieś kielecka w czasie okupacji niemieckiej (1939–1945). Studium historyczno-gospodarcze* (Kielce, 1991), p. 27, 31. "Municipal and district officials, as well as police officers, following the orders of the occupiers, were obliged to immediately return to their former workplaces and take up their previous activities." (*ibid.*, p. 27). In the Kozienice District, which was merged with the Radom District as part of the Distrikt Radom in the General Governorate, lived numerous German settlers. They held key positions in the German occupation local administration and joined the gendarmerie, demonstrating, as the future showed, ruthlessness and cruelty towards Poles and Jews. According to Stanisław Meducki (*ibid.*, p. 40), there were 4,863 Germans in the Radom District at the beginning of March 1940, representing 1.5 per cent of the total population. See also S. Piątkowski, "Ludność niemiecka w województwie kieleckim w okresie międzywojennym (1918–1939). Szkic do portretu," in *Spoleczność ewangelicka Radomia podczas okupacji niemieckiej*, ed. J. Kłaczków (Radom, 2009), pp. 29–45.

⁵³ E. Januszewicz, "Wiek XX," p. 31. In the Policzna municipality, larger numbers of German settlers lived in Józefów and Władysławów.

⁵⁴ M. Dziedzicka, *Kronika*, pp. 46–47, 90. It is important to stress that in the memory of the employees of the sawmill Gruzel had a positive record. He tried to help Poles in various ways.

⁵⁵ Archiwum Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej Delegatura w Kielcach (Archives of the Institute of National Remembrance, Delegation in Kielce hereinafter AIPN Ki), 013/2041, Files of investigation against Roman Waldeker, minutes of the interrogation of the suspect Roman Waldeker, Kozienice, 31 October 1946, pp. 29–31.

⁵⁶ P. Kacprzak, "Nadleśnictwo Garbatka – zarys historii jednostki i gospodarki leśnej," *Moja Garbatka* 1 (2006), p. 44; M. Dziedzicka, "Nadleśniczy Hellebrandt," *Moja Garbatka* 1 (2006), p. 49.

order police. As part of the latter, German gendarmerie operated in rural areas. The Policzna municipality, including Garbatka, was patrolled by gendarmes from stations in Kozienice and Zwoleń. These stations, manned by a dozen gendarmes each, were located several kilometres north and south of Garbatka. They were supported by a special platoon of gendarmerie.⁵⁷

The gendarmerie controlled a several-person station of the *Polnische Polizei* (the Polish Police of the General Governorate, called “Blue” because of the colour of their uniforms) in Garbatka.⁵⁸ The duties of the “Blue” policemen mainly included countering criminal offences and illegal trade, as well as maintaining order in the subordinate area. However, they were also deployed to assist in operations carried out by the German police, including those against Jews.⁵⁹ At the Garbatka station, as at other Blue Police stations in the Radom District, policemen from the Polish lands annexed to the Third Reich (Greater Poland and Pomerania Provinces) were employed, transferred there with their families.⁶⁰ The years of occupation showed that there were officers serving at the Garbatka station, both cooperating with underground organisations and overzealous in carrying out official duties or orders from their German superiors.⁶¹ The published memoirs of Aleksander Barzycki include information about the killing of two policemen serving at the

⁵⁷ S. Meducki, *Wieś kielecka*, p. 34. “Moreover, three companies of gendarmerie were deployed in the Distrikt, operating in the so-called protected areas [...], formed at the beginning of June 1943, which were later increased to battalions. At the same time, the mobile reserve unit of the police headquarters initially consisted of a company of motorised gendarmerie and one platoon of gendarmerie. During the period when larger manhunts were conducted in the district, this reserve was increased, with up to three battalions of 450–500 men each.”

⁵⁸ S. Piątkowski, “Policja polska tzw. granatowa w Radomiu i powiecie radomskim (1939–1945),” *Między Wisłą a Pilicą. Studia i materiały historyczne* 2 (2001), p. 111. According to the author, the number of Blue Policemen in particular stations in the area of interest in July 1942 was as follows: Garbatka – 3 policemen, Zwoleń – 8, Kozienice – 4, Pionki – 5, Gniewoszków – 3, Sieciechów – 2.

⁵⁹ W. Borodziej, *Terror i polityka. Policja niemiecka a polski ruch oporu w GG 1939–1944* (Warsaw, 1985), p. 26; J.A. Młynarczyk, “Pomiędzy współpracą a zdradą. Problem kolaboracji w Generalnym Gubernatorstwie – próba syntezy,” *Pamięć i Sprawiedliwość* 1 (14) (2009), pp. 114–117.

⁶⁰ S. Piątkowski, “Policja polska tzw. granatowa,” p. 112.

⁶¹ W. Borodziej, *Terror i polityka*, p. 27; M. Dziedzicka, *Kronika*, p. 110; W. Molenda, *Adam, Bilof... Tomasz... Zygant i inni. Wspomnienia oficera, organizatora i dowódcy konspiracyjnego Wojska Polskiego* (Radom–Warsaw, 1992), pp. 71, 73, 94, 112, 118, 121, 153–154, 161, 163–164, 168; S. Piątkowski, “Dwie narracje. Tematyka policji granatowej na łamach niemieckiej prasy polskojęzycznej i polskiej prasy,” in *Policja granatowa w Generalnym Gubernatorstwie w latach 1939–1945*, ed. T. Domański, E. Majcher-Ociesa (Kielce–Warszawa, 2019), p. 261; S. Piątkowski, “Policja polska tzw. granatowa,” pp. 125–126.

Garbatka police station, carried out following the “sentence of the Court of Underground Poland.”⁶²

Until mid-1942, the German 51st Police Battalion was stationed in Pionki, about a dozen kilometres west of Garbatka. The gendarmerie station in Zwoleń was reinforced at the end of 1942 by sixteen new men (Germans and Ukrainian nationalists).⁶³ In turn, strong German military units were stationed in Dęblin, also several kilometres East from Garbatka and on the other side of the Vistula River, who manned the Dęblin fortress and protected an important railway junction, an airfield and a military training ground. There was also a POW (Polish, Soviet, French, and, later on, Italian) camp there.⁶⁴

An SS detachment of several dozen men was stationed in the German-occupied country estate in Policzna, and the occupying forces in Garbatka were supplemented by members of the Werkschutz (factory guards) at the distillery, and the Bahnschutz (railway guards who secured trains and inspected the condition of the tracks and other railway facilities).⁶⁵

The fear and dread of meeting members of the occupying forces was overwhelming:

There were gendarmes, *Volksdeutsche*, Blue Police and various confidants hanging around everywhere. [...] They were rooting around for meat and pork fat from the secret slaughter, sniffing out traders. They often went to the Vistula harbour

⁶² A. Barzycki, “Pamiętnik,” p. 55.

⁶³ J. Franecki, *Hitlerowski aparat policyjny i sądowniczy i jego działalność w dystrykcie radomskim ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem ziemi radomskiej* (Radom, 1978), pp. 29, 32 and p. 33: “The activity of the gendarmes was all the more dangerous because many of them were recruited from among the [local] German settlers, who knew both the Polish language and the local relations very well. Therefore, every gendarmerie station was a place of torture and murder of hundreds of Poles. [...] During the occupation, at least 500 people were killed at the post in Zwoleń.” For more on the effectiveness of the measures taken by the German gendarmerie, see T. Domański, “Prześladowania Żydów na prowincji Kreishauptmannschaft Kielce w latach 1939–1941,” *Res Historica* 54 (2022), pp. 487–489. In Sucha, a village at the Pionki–Zwoleń road, a German SS unit of several dozen men was stationed to protect a horse stud and cattle farm (S. Meducki, *Wieś kielecka*, p. 72).

⁶⁴ D. Sula, “Kontekst,” *Karta* 99 (2019), pp. 96–97. For more, see J. Trzaskowski, *Twierdza Iwangołod-Dęblin 1937–1944* (Dęblin, 2011). The importance of Dęblin for the Germans was emphasized in the reports of the Polish underground (*Armia Krajowa w dokumentach 1939–1945*, vol. 1, Part 2: *Wrzesień 1939 – czerwiec 1941* (Warsaw, 2015), pp. 576, 792, 800–803, 809).

⁶⁵ M. Dziedzicka, *Kronika*, p. 65; E. Januszewicz, “Wiek XX,” p. 39.

in the village of Łoje [a dozen or so kilometres east of Garbatka – R.Ś.K.], where they robbed ships sailing with food to Warsaw. They also tracked down young people, intending to capture them and send them to forced labour in Germany.⁶⁶

Despite the great danger, the residents of the Kozienice district began to collect weapons left behind by Polish soldiers in the forests and fields after the September battles. The Germans, realising this, sent provocateurs to suspected milieus. As a result of successful provocations (several Garbatka residents were misled by such) and actions taken after neighbour denunciations, many people were repressed.⁶⁷ Provocations against patriotic circles, which undertook various actions breaking the regulations introduced by the occupying forces, were a dangerous weapon in the hands of the Germans. This was pointed out in the reports of the Polish independence underground:

Particularly harmful for us was the method used by the Germans of using provocateurs pretending to be Hubal's [partisan unit] recruiters.⁶⁸ They lured many people into a trap. [...] The occupiers also took good care of the larger parts of the forests, where [German] forest guards were set up.⁶⁹

⁶⁶ J. Abramczyk, *Partyzanci z Kozienskiej Puszczy. Wspomnienia dowódcy oddziału partyzanckiego BCh* (Warsaw, 1971), p. 35. The informers were suspected to be among the German settlers: "The Polish relationships, right from the first days of captivity, were seriously affected by German settlers [...]. In the Kozienice District, there were whole concentrations of Germans living in the villages of Karolin, Janów, Władysławów, Leokadiów, Ługów, Holendry Kuźmińskie, Chinów, Kępa Wólczyńska, Polesie, Żabianka, Sosnow, Józefów, Grabów nad Wisłą, Zielonka Nowa and others. Their families served as outposts for German information and intelligence." (B. Nowac, *Wspomnienia z lat wojny i okupacji* (Radom, 1998), p. 57).

⁶⁷ M. Dziedzicka, *Kronika*, p. 36: "In March 1940, Garbatka was shocked by the execution in a sand gorge next to the forest railway engine house, of a farmer from Wólka Policka for hiding weapons. He was accused by his own wife." See also p. 98.

⁶⁸ This passage concerns the activity of the partisan unit *Oddział Wydzielony WP* (Detached Unit of the Polish Army) commanded by Major Henryk Dobrzański (also known by his *nom-de-guerre* "Hubal") in the Kielce and Opoczno districts in the autumn of 1939 and the spring of 1940. In the first days of October 1939, a mounted unit of several dozen men under Dobrzański's command was advancing through the Kozienice Forest towards the Świętokrzyskie Mountains; L. Ksyta, *Major Hubal. Historia prawdziwa* (Warsaw, 2014), pp. 122–123. In the early spring of 1940, the German occupying forces carried out in retaliation for support to this unit a repressive action against the rural population in the region of Skarżysko-Kamienna and Szydłowiec. Over seven hundred people were murdered, and several villages were burnt down; T. Domański, A. Jankowski, *Represje niemieckie*, pp. 123–159.

⁶⁹ Semi-annual organisational report of the Commander-in-chief of the *Związek Walki Zbrojnej* (Armed Struggle Union, ZWZ) General Stefan Rowecki to General Kazimierz Sosnkowski, Warsaw, 21 November 1940 in *Armia Krajowa w dokumentach 1939–1945*, vol. 1, part 2, p. 633.

The stringent terms of the German occupation also applied to labour regulations. According to Stanisław Meducki, who researched industry functioning in the Radom district, the goal was “to systematically harness the labour resources of the Polish population in the General Governorate.”⁷⁰ The Germans effectively thwarted attempts to evade employment in industrial plants.⁷¹ Already at the very beginning of the German occupation, abandoning work was treated as “sabotage and passive resistance,” as “an act directed against the [German] armed forces.” Compulsory work was introduced for all able-bodied persons between the ages of 18 and 60. In Distrikt Radom (Radom Province), a decree on “compulsory labour” for young people aged between 14 and 18 came into force in December 1939. From mid-March 1940, the occupiers implemented regulations restricting the possibility of changing the employer, and from 15 January, personal ‘work cards’ (*Arbeitskarten*) issued by the *Arbeitsamt* (German labour offices) were introduced as compulsory documents. From February of that year, only the *Arbeitsamt* was entitled to hire Poles to work or allow them to take up apprenticeships. Due to the people’s resistance to forced recruitment, the *Arbeitsamt* began issuing personal summons, with severe penalties for failure to appear. Employment in armaments factories, on the other hand, offered protection from deportation to forced labour in Germany.⁷² The residents of Garbatka and the surrounding villages (such as Molendy, Ponikwa) sometimes managed, through various tricks, to avoid being deported to Germany.⁷³

Agricultural production came under the control of the occupying forces and peasant farms under the supervision of German agronomists. The aim was ruthless, colonial-type exploitation of the countryside. Garbatka’s residents who were engaged in agriculture had to hand over quotas in kind (including meat, grain and potatoes) in addition to paying taxes. There was a “food office” in Garbatka, which was subordinate to the Municipal Office in Policzna. Several people worked

⁷⁰ S. Meducki, *Przemysł i klasa robotnicza*, p. 41.

⁷¹ The German-imposed low wages and high free (and black) market prices, along with insufficient food rations on ration cards (also imposed by Germans), led to a significant increase in the number of people engaging in trade.

⁷² S. Meducki, *Przemysł i klasa robotnicza*, pp. 41–43, 62–63. For information about the German occupation-era reality, see S. Piątkowski, *Okupacja i propaganda. Dystrykt radomski Generalnego Gubernatorstwa w publicystyce polskojęzycznej prasy niemieckiej (1939–1945)* (Radom, 2013).

⁷³ A. Barzycki, “Pamiętnik,” p. 48.

in the “office” under German control.⁷⁴ The gathered grain quotas were stored in the classrooms of the local school. A ‘ringer’ recorded the animals in the particular farms for the occupiers’ needs.⁷⁵ The size of the quotas, which increased dramatically from year to year, led to the drastic impoverishment of peasant farms, with severe penalties imposed for failing to meet the deadlines for giving away the goods. To make matters worse, agricultural products were frequently confiscated on various pretexts; in fact, it was common looting.⁷⁶

In August 1940, Garbatka was “flooded with German soldiers coming from the Western Front to take a rest.” By the time of the German attack on the Soviet Union, i.e. almost until the end of June 1941, there were to be “more than four thousand” of them there.⁷⁷

The arrival of thousands of Poles deported from areas incorporated into the Reich also affected the living and working conditions of the population of the Radom Province (Distrikt Radom), including the residents of Garbatka. At the end of 1939 and the beginning of 1940, around one thousand deportees had to be resettled in the Gniewoszów and Kozienice municipalities (in the Kozienice district within its pre-1939 borders). The arrival of the deported persons took place at the station in Garbatka, and some of the newcomers from Greater Poland remained there for a longer stay.⁷⁸ It is possible that the influx of people from elsewhere contributed to Garbatka-Podlas having a population of 2,276 and Garbatka-Letnisko of 1,720 in 1940, according to Maria Dziedzicka’s findings.⁷⁹

Later, the strength and ruthlessness of the German occupier was demonstrated by the resettlement of thousands of rural dwellers from several dozen villages in the Radom District, carried out for the needs of the military.⁸⁰

⁷⁴ AIPN Ki, 013/2041, Investigation files compiled against Roman Waldeker, Testimony of the witness Konrad Kudłowski, Kozienice, 5 October 1946, fol. 18.

⁷⁵ M. Dziedzicka, *Kronika*, p. 116.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.* For more, see T. Domański, “Niemiecka polityka okupacyjna wobec wsi w dystrykcie radomskim (stan badań i postulaty badawcze),” *Zeszyty Historyczne WiN-u* 40 (2014), pp. 25–38; W. Jastrzębski, “Dzień powszedni na wsi polskiej pod okupacją niemiecką,” in *Represje wobec wsi i ruchu ludowego (1939–1945)*. *Więś polska między dwoma totalitaryzmami*, vol. 3, ed. J. Gmitruk, E. Leniart (Warsaw, 2009), p. 150.

⁷⁷ M. Dziedzicka, *Kronika*, p. 37.

⁷⁸ S. Piątkowski, *Okupacja i propaganda*, p. 22; M. Baran, “Pan Profesor. Wspomnienie o prof. dr. Stanisławie Ziemeckim,” *Moja Garbatka* 2 (2004), p. 37; E. Bojakowska-Pikul, “Garbatka,” pp. 28–29.

⁷⁹ M. Dziedzicka, *Kronika*, p. 193.

⁸⁰ T. Domański, A. Jankowski, *Represje niemieckie*, p. 317; S. Meducki, *Więś kielecka*, pp. 72–73.

The Situation of Jews until the Establishment of the Garbatka Ghetto

From the onset of the war, German soldiers, along with police and paramilitary units across Poland, perpetrated violent crimes against Jews. This included beatings, humiliation, forced labour, the burning of synagogues and Jewish property, and murders. In the first several months of the occupation, German policy was marked by the “breaking of economic strength and the pauperisation of the Jews.”⁸¹ Laws were enacted to isolate Jews from the rest of the population (such as removal from public service, exclusion from economic life, gradual restriction of movement, obligation to wear the identifying sign – the armband with the Star of David, exclusion from legal protection) and to expropriate and plunder them. This was accompanied by discrimination in all areas of life, as well as stigmatisation through intensive and widespread anti-Semitic propaganda (depicting Jews as parasites, usurers, spreaders of disease and plague).⁸²

Alarming news of cruelty towards Jews was coming from the surrounding villages. In Sieciechów, east of Garbatka, a few kilometres from the Vistula, a German soldier ordered a Jew to climb a ladder up a tall tree. He then took the ladder and ordered him to jump down. The man suffered death on the spot. In Wola Klasztorna, on the road from Sieciechów to Gniewoszów, passing Jews were abused and humiliated by German gendarmes. They were told to “get down and get up.” The Germans beat them and “made them shave their beards.”⁸³ The Jews of Garbatka also experienced the brutality of the German gendarmes from Zwolenie.⁸⁴ The

⁸¹ C. Madajczyk, *Polityka III Rzeszy w okupowanej Polsce*, vol. 2 (Warsaw, 1970), p. 213. The planned process of physical extermination of the Jews was spread out over time. As a result of ghettoisation and then mass deportations to death camps in 1942, most Jews were exterminated. Relatively few survived by being sent to (and then often escaping from) forced labour camps. A period of deportation in the summer and autumn of 1942 was followed by the third phase of the Holocaust as part of the “Judenjagd” (“Hunt for Jews,” see *ibid.*, pp. 213–231, 306–348). For information about the Holocaust in the Kielce Voivodeship, see, i.a., K. Urbański, *Zagłada Żydów w dystrykcie radomskim* (Cracow, 2004), pp. 24–207; T. Domański, *Stan badań nad pomocą świadczoną Żydom przez ludność polską w okresie II wojny światowej na okupowanych terenach województwa kieleckiego* (Kielce, 2021), pp. 20–25.

⁸² See, among others, B. Musiał, *Kto dopomoże Żydowi...* (Poznań, 2019), pp. 29–30.

⁸³ S. Siek, K. Zajac, *Sieciechów. Szkice do dziejów miejscowości. Od czasów najdawniejszych do współczesnych* (Kozienice–Sieciechów, 2009), p. 66.

⁸⁴ *Z pamięci Ojca*, pp. 1–2.

Volksdeutsche who lived and worked in Garbatka also took part in the beating and humiliation of Poles and Jews.⁸⁵

Adam Rutkowski noted that the Jewish population in Garbatka counted 384 people in June 1940, increased to 571 by May 1941, and reached 1,300 by October 1941.⁸⁶ Their representation was the Jewish Council of Elders (*Żydowska Rada Starszych, Judenrat*), set up by the occupier and chaired by Icek Perelsztajn. In 1940, the Jewish Social Self-Help (*Żydowska Samopomoc Społeczna, ŻSS – Jüdische Unterstützungsstelle, JUS*), established by a decision of the German occupation authorities, took charge of organising aid for the Jews. The county committees and delegations of the ŻSS collected available financial and material resources, organised soup kitchens, hospitals, orphanages and old people's homes. On many occasions, dry provisions (mainly bread and potatoes) were distributed instead of hot meals due to the lack of other possibilities. The Garbatka ŻSS Delegation, which was subordinate to the Radom Committee of ŻSS, provided a variety of aid to the poor: clothes, food, medicines and sometimes money. Several hundred zloty were received from Radom for this purpose every month. However, this aid was clearly insufficient.⁸⁷ According to a 1940 document, the Judenrat in Garbatka had one hundred charges under its care. There was no soup kitchen, but dry provisions were distributed to 41 people.⁸⁸

Jews from Garbatka were exploited as unpaid labour, working in logging, earth-works, and drainage works,⁸⁹ as well as on the estate of Count Antoni Przeździecki

⁸⁵ AIPN Ki, 013/2041, Investigation case-file concerning Roman Waldeker, minutes of the interview with the witness Mieczysław Ostrowski, Kozienice, 1 October 1946, p. 23.

⁸⁶ A. Rutkowski, "Martyrologia, walka i zagłada," pp. 100, 156. Michał Grynberg highlighted a crucial aspect of the relocation of Jews: "From the onset of the occupation, Jews were repeatedly moved from one place to another. This strategy of transferring them from smaller ghettos to larger ones was designed to undermine any potential plans to organise a resistance movement with the help of non-Jews. The unfamiliar surroundings, changed conditions, and the urgent need to secure shelter and food in new locations made it exceedingly difficult to resist the occupiers." (M. Grynberg, "Ruch oporu Żydów podczas okupacji hitlerowskiej," in *Studia z dziejów Żydów w Polsce*, ed. Z. Borzymińska, A. Żbikowski (Warsaw, 1995), pp. 37–38).

⁸⁷ S. Piątkowski, "Pomoc społeczna i działalność charytatywna w gettach dystryktu radomskiego (1939–1942)" in *Dobroczynność i pomoc społeczna na ziemiach polskich w XIX, XX i na początku XXI wieku*, ed. M. Przeniosło (Kielce, 2008), pp. 165–166, 169–170, 173.

⁸⁸ S. Piątkowski, "Pomoc społeczna i działalność charytatywna," p. 173; K. Urbański, *Zagłada Żydów*, pp. 108–109.

⁸⁹ S. Piątkowski, "Wytwórnia prochu w Pionkach w latach wojny i okupacji hitlerowskiej (1939–1945)," in *Szkice z dziejów Pionek*, vol. 4: *Państwowa Wytwórnia Prochu – Wytwórnia Chemiczna Nr 8 – Zakłady Tworzyw Sztucznych „Pronit”*. *Ludzie – fabryka – miasto (1922–2000)*, ed. M. Wierzbiński (Pionki, 2009), p. 39.

in Policzna taken over by the Germans (there was also a sanatorium for SS men established there). In winter, they cleared roads. Under the supervision of German soldiers, they shovelled snow from the several-kilometre-long road from Garbatka to Policzna.⁹⁰ In the memoirs of a Garbatka resident we read:

The winters of 1940–1941 and 1941–1942 were extremely cold, marked by heavy snowstorms. The road stretching from Kozienice to Zwoleń, and from Garbatka to Policzna, was buried under so much snow that a large military vehicle couldn't be seen in the passage dug through it. This tunnel through the snowdrifts was excavated in a single day, obviously by hand, by local Jews.⁹¹

Towards the end of 1940, they probably also worked at the construction site of two railway sidings and ramps at the railway station in Garbatka.⁹²

It seems that almost until the end of 1941, the situation of the Jewish community in Garbatka was bearable, given the rigours and the terror of the German occupation.⁹³ However, in the autumn of 1941, due to a large influx of Jews removed from other towns and villages (including the nearby Jabłonkowo) and the spread of diseases, living conditions in Garbatka deteriorated significantly. Overcrowding and resulting sanitary issues led to the spread of infectious diseases such as typhus and dysentery. The insufficient supply of medicines further

⁹⁰ E. Januszewicz, "Wiek XX," p. 38.

⁹¹ M. Baran, "Przyspieszone dorastanie," *Moja Garbatka* 3 (2002), p. 8. Forcing Jews to shovel the snow from the roads was a widespread practice among the German administration. See i.a. T. Domański, "Prześladowanie Żydów na prowincji. Kreishauptmannschaft Kielce w latach 1939–1941," *Res Historica* 54 (2022), p. 507; S. Piątkowski, "Żydzi w Szydłowcu w latach wojny i okupacji (1939–1945)," in *Żydzi szydłowieccy. Materiały sesji popularnonaukowej 22 lutego 1997 roku*, ed. J. Wijaczka (Szydłowiec, 1997), p. 117; W. Rządkowski, *Staszów w latach okupacji hitlerowskiej* (Staszów, 2017), pp. 24, 42–43.

⁹² *Armia Krajowa w dokumentach 1939–1945*, vol. 1, part 2, p. 576.

⁹³ The situation of Jews in Kozienice in the first two years of the German occupation was similarly assessed by Marcin Urynowicz in his chapter "Chaima Bermana życie i śmierć. Z dziejów pomocy Żydom," in *„Kto w takich czasach Żydów przechowuje?...” Polacy niosący pomoc ludności żydowskiej w okresie okupacji niemieckiej*, ed. A. Namysło (Warsaw, 2009), pp. 257–258. Cf. T. Domański, "Prześladowanie Żydów," p. 497 (regarding the situation in Chęciny). Another perspective on the situation in Garbatka should also be made note of. According to an anonymous author of an interesting text published in *Dziennik Radomski*, 8–11 November 1996 ("Listy, polemiki, opinie" column, p. 10), already before the end of 1941, a vast majority of Jews in Garbatka found themselves in very difficult living conditions, and about 90 per cent of them were "extremely poor."

worsened the situation.⁹⁴ The German demand for an infectious diseases hospital, a delousing room and a bathhouse was beyond the financial means of the local Jewish population.⁹⁵

The life of the Jewish community in Garbatka, particularly their living conditions before the establishment of the ghetto by the Germans, is outlined in the testimony of a Jewish woman who stayed in the village for five months in 1941 and returned to Warsaw at the end of this year. Much of the information she provides is quite surprising. It is difficult to determine whether her testimony reflects the experiences of the majority of Jews living in Garbatka, or just of a certain group with which the author of the testimony was connected. It is intriguing that she mentions the lack of hostility on the part of the German soldiers stationed in Garbatka:

The Jewish population in Garbatka consisted mostly of craftsmen and hard-working labourers. Until the end of that month, i.e. December 1941, the Jews lived off work and trade in the countryside. Hunger was unknown in that area. The poorest Jew baked challah bread and cakes and cooked fish every Friday. They had meat for dinner every day, often a piece of poultry. No Jewish shop or stall was open during the entire German occupation, that is since September 1939. On market days, however, Jews traded their goods. The Germans accommodated there did not do anything bad to the local Jews until the outbreak of the German-Russian war. They got along with Jews quite well. Many Jews lived off the Germans. For baking a cake, the Germans gave a bucket of sugar, flour, petrol and wood. For making a pair of shoes or boots with uppers from entrusted leather, they paid with leather for several [more] pairs of shoes. For coffee, they gave wood at low prices: 10 zloty a metre.⁹⁶

The anonymous author also described the relations between Poles and Jews:

⁹⁴ Medicines and dressings were delivered to the ghetto by Włodzimierz Skrzyński, owner of a pharmacy in Garbatka ("Garbatka w listach Danuty Skrzyńskiej z Ciechocinka do Marii Dziedzickiej," *Moja Garbatka 2* (2006), pp. 139–140).

⁹⁵ "Listy, polemiki, opinie," *Dziennik Radomski*, 8–11 November 1996, p. 10. The undertakings mentioned above were expected to cost several tens of thousands of zlotys.

⁹⁶ Anonymous testimony entitled "Pozdrowienia z prowincji," p. 321.

The Poles there also lived on fairly friendly terms with Jews. [...] The aid provided by the local Jews and Christians to the expelled refugees, many of whom passed through Garbatka, was very considerable. The Jewish refugees stayed overnight with the Christians, ate with them and were often clothed by them. The Jewish community organised a kitchen used exclusively by the refugees. For breakfast they were given bread with marmalade and half a litre of coffee, for dinner one litre of soup, for supper again bread with coffee. Refugees from Góra Kalwaria, Piaseczno and Grójec settled in Garbatka. They settled there quite well and felt like permanent residents of the town. Every Jew prepared provisions for the winter. For example, a simple Jew, who before the war barely had enough to survive a day, prepared for himself for the winter: ten metres of potatoes, two to three metres of wood, ten kilogrammes of lard, a bag of flour, groats, four to five metres of coal, two barrels of cabbage, beans and so on.⁹⁷

However, not all Polish residents behaved decently. A group of residents unfriendly to the Jews supported the German idea of removing them from Garbatka:

Immediately after the armistice [after the end of the 1939 September campaign – R.Ś.K.], the Germans were going to expel the Jews from there. They only demanded a few hundred signatures from Poles. After a few weeks they collected about 100 signatures. The date for the expulsion was approaching. The signature of the local priest [the parish priest Wincenty Wojtaśkiewicz – R.Ś.K.], who was a well-known anti-Semite before the war, was still missing. However, this anti-Semitic priest did not want to sign the list. Although he did not like Jews, he refused to sign. Thus this order was annulled.⁹⁸

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 321–322. For more information on the movement of the groups of Jews in the Radom district, see S. Piątkowski, “Stan opieki społecznej wśród Żydów dystryktu radomskiego w świetle sprawozdania American Joint Distribution Committee z 1941 roku,” *Między Wisłą a Pilicą. Studia i materiały historyczne* 4 (2003), p. 120: “The Radom district, located on the border of the Distrikt Warschau [Warsaw province], has seen an influx of refugees both from within this Distrikt and from Warsaw itself. These refugees, typically wandering on foot from village to village with no means of support, rely solely on the assistance of Jewish welfare organizations, placing a heavy burden on these institutions. Often wandering without a plan, they frequently gather in very numerous groups in towns completely unprepared to accommodate them. Unable to find support, they move on after a few hours or days, aided only by a small allowance.”

⁹⁸ Anonymous testimony entitled “Pozdrowienia z prowincji,” p. 321. The testimony also mentions the restrictions on the type of food: “The German gendarmerie carry out frequent searches in Christian

The German initiative was thwarted, but it revealed a group of people (a few per cent of the total population of the village) inclined to engage in some form of collaboration with the occupier. This behaviour targeted the Jewish population and put the list signatories on the brink of collaboration with the German administration.⁹⁹ Indeed, nothing indicates that these actions were coerced. It was therefore a conscious, circumstantial and opportunistic attitude of cooperation that undermined loyalty to the community of Polish citizens. At most, one may speak of German engagement as an instrument of indirect influence of the occupying power on the conquered population. Such behaviour had the effect of weakening the “patriotic potential” and social bonds within the local community.¹⁰⁰ Such behaviour could have been a harbinger of other crisis situations in relations between Poles and Jews. However, two things should be paid attention to when analysing the described incident: firstly, the situation occurred at the beginning of the occupation, when there were still no clearly defined and unambiguous rules of conduct in relations with the German occupier (reference is made to the codes of conduct soon developed by the Polish Underground State), and secondly – and more importantly – the overwhelming majority of the Polish residents of Garbatka rejected the German plan to remove the Jews from the village.

It can be presumed that pre-war influences and mutual political sympathies between the two nationalities played an important role. These were so strong that

and Jewish homes to determine whether meat is cooked or whether dry potatoes are eaten. Both things are strictly forbidden. Finding a grater in any dwelling is an evidence that potatoes are being grated and potato noodles or fried potato pancakes are being made. This is contrary to the German order: potatoes may be eaten only in a soup. Because of this offence, many residents have been severely punished. During searches, meat is sought for in pots. If they find it, it is seized.” (*ibid.*, p. 325).

⁹⁹ For information about the definition of collaboration, the different typologies of this phenomenon and the evaluation of negative social attitudes during the German occupation, see, i.a., C. Madajczyk, *Faszizm i okupację 1938–1945. Wykonywanie okupacji przez państwa Osi w Europie*, vol. 2: *Mechanizmy realizowania okupacji* (Poznań, 1984), pp. 335–387 (pp. 335–337 in particular); *idem*, “Między neutralną współpracą ludności terytoriów okupowanych a kolaboracją z Niemcami,” *Studia nad Faszyzmem i Zbrodniami Hitlerowskimi* 21 (1988), pp. 181–196; P. Madajczyk, “‘Zdrada i kolaboracja’ jako polskie ‘Flucht und Vertreibung,’” *Dzieje Najnowsze* 4 (42) (2010), pp. 91–103; P. Majewski, “Kolaboracja, której nie było... Problem postaw społeczeństwa polskiego w warunkach niemieckiej okupacji 1939–1945,” *Dzieje Najnowsze* 4 (36) (2004), pp. 59–71; J.A. Młynarczyk, “Pomiędzy współpracą a zdradą,” pp. 103–107; T. Strzembosz, *Rzeczpospolita podziemna. Społeczeństwo polskie a państwo podziemne 1939–1945* (Warsaw, 2000), pp. 88–89.

¹⁰⁰ J. Chrobaczyński, *Czas nieszczęść*, p. 165.

both Polish and Jewish residents of Garbatka took part in an “illegal” political action organised in Garbatka in 1939 or 1940:

The anniversary of Poland’s independence, 11 November, was celebrated in Garbatka in this way: Polish eagles were drawn in chalk on all state buildings and the inscription: ‘Long live the free, independent Poland of peasants and workers.’ Flags made of red paper were hung in several places. The cemetery where Polish soldiers lie was covered with red paper garlands.¹⁰¹

In the second half of 1941, the people of Garbatka helped Soviet prisoners of war escaping from railway transports:

On the Dęblin-Radom route, Polish railwaymen, transporting prisoners of war, unhooked two wagons at each station where the train with the prisoners stopped. All Russian soldiers who were still able to stand on their feet fled into the fields and forests. The Polish and Jewish population helped them with money, food and clothing.¹⁰²

Retrospectively, it can be stated that this manifestation of the patriotic attitude and the will of anti-German resistance was a rather risky behaviour. This is because it could have drawn the attention of the German security police to the “rebellious” village. In August 1941, there was a problem with the spread of infectious diseases in Garbatka. According to the anonymous account, already been quoted several times above, the mortality rate among those who contracted typhus was two per cent. Once again, prejudices and anti-Jewish sentiments emerged. A group of Poles [in the account called “endeks” – from National Democracy (*Narodowa*

¹⁰¹ Anonymous testimony entitled “Pozdrowienia z prowincji,” p. 325.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, pp. 325–326. The testimony further reads: “During the journey, Red Army soldiers [i.e. Soviet POWs] jumped out of the carriages of passing trains, many saving themselves this way. One soldier, however, leapt onto an iron pillar and died instantly. The commander [possibly Krawczyk? – RŚK] did not permit a [public] funeral to be organised, ordering a secret burial in the Christian cemetery instead. He provided a red runner, and ordered bury the killed soldier in it. The entire population of Garbatka, solemnly and quietly, with bowed heads, accompanied the deceased Russian soldier to his final resting place. The next day, his grave was adorned with red flowers and garlands. The grave is maintained continuously.”

Demokracja, ND)] blamed them for the spreading of the disease. Accusations were directed at Jewish refugees, who were said to have “brought typhus.” These were, according to the author, “false accusations,” but they reached the commander of the local Blue Police station (the author describes him as a “*Volksdeutscher* from Poznań”). He announced that “all non-local Jews who settled in Garbatka of their own accord, i.e., not refugees, must quickly and immediately leave the health resort (Garbatka is a health resort).”¹⁰³ The testimony lacks data on the impact of this decision. Given the police chief’s propensity for taking bribes, it can be assumed that the expulsion was halted.¹⁰⁴ However, the information contained in the testimony raises some doubts. This is because it brings up the question of the possibility that the chief of the post could have taken the decision to evict a group of Jews on his own. Such a decision would have collided with the authority of the German occupation administration.

After a few months, a “group of anti-Semites” resumed their activities, not only spreading anti-Jewish propaganda (which also affected the local church), but also “going from one German office to another to enforce the confinement of Jews in the ghetto and their separation from Christians.”¹⁰⁵ The full circumstances of the incident remain unclear, as the description relies on a single source. Therefore, it is challenging to determine whether this was a consequence of the German plans to establish closed quarters for Jews or an isolated, selfish act by individuals demoralized by the violent laws imposed by the German occupation. Either way, the action taken was directed against the Jewish population.

In the middle of December 1941, the situation was becoming increasingly tense. After the conference of “all village headmen and mayors” organised by the Germans in Radom, the implementation of the plan to create closed quarters for Jews gathered pace. In anticipation of the inevitable events, representatives of the

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 322. For information about the typhoid epidemic in the Kielce district, see T. Domański, “Prześladowanie Żydów,” pp. 499–501.

¹⁰⁴ Anonymous testimony entitled “Pozdrowienia z prowincji,” p. 324. “He is a big bribe taker and a drunkard, an alcoholic. For a glass of vodka you can do anything with him. He does a lot of good for the Jews. At the beginning of the winter [1941] he borrowed, without a penny [of reward], the military from the barracks, which had been built there and had been standing empty since the German-Russian war. He also distributed a quota of wood for the poor at 11 groszy per metre. At every opportunity, he catches Jews in the street and makes them stand him a vodka.”

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 322.

Judenrat in Garbatka sought to influence the location of the ghetto by offering a substantial bribe to Commander Krawczyk (ten thousand zloty and several furs). They selected a site located entirely on the outskirts, adjacent to the road [the Kozienice-Zwolen route? – R.Ś.K.], aiming to maintain contact with the outside world.¹⁰⁶ However, they greatly overestimated the possibilities of the police station's commander.¹⁰⁷ The site they had indicated was not approved by the Radom district governor Friedrich Egen, who arrived in Garbatka on 28 December, together with "ghetto specialists," and stated: "in this place Jews will be too comfortable. They will have too many opportunities to move freely and breathe fresh air." He designated another location, in the central part of Garbatka, and set a deadline for the move "by 30 December" 1941. He warned that "Christians and Jews who do not move [in and out of the planned ghetto] by that hour would be shot."¹⁰⁸

The site chosen by the Germans for the ghetto and the short timeframe for the relocation provoked strong emotions and violent reactions from the inhabitants of Garbatka, who were directly affected (the displaced Poles were to receive much poorer buildings from Jewish families in exchange for the property taken from them). Anti-Jewish sentiment was fuelled by statements made by the "leader of the National Democrats," who, as the author of the account noted, stated that the Jews had obtained the ghetto site by bribing the German district governor, because "they do not want to move out of here [...] they just want to live with Christians." It is worth citing a longer passage from this account (which has already been quoted several times):

In this way, an antagonism arose rapidly and unexpectedly. This seed of hatred fell on fertile ground. To understand this, the following still needs to be explained: The Jews of Garbatka, numbering about 500, have lived here for several generations and live more or less in one concentrated area. Due to a lack of space, the Jews who settled here a few years ago live somewhat further away from the other Jewish residents. There are 17 families of them. And these 17 families have to move into the ghetto, to join the other Jews who are supposed to stay in their previous

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷ Aleksander Barzycki in his memoirs ("Pamiętnik") noted: "He [Krawczyk] spoke German and got along easily with the German authorities" (p. 53).

¹⁰⁸ Anonymous testimony entitled "Pozdrowienia z prowincji," pp. 322–323.

places. On the other hand, the number of Christian families who should leave the quarter designated for the Jews is 70. These are the richest peasants, who have the richest estates in the area. So, firstly, they have nowhere to move to, because the houses of these 17 Jewish families would only be enough for a small number of peasants. Secondly, the Jewish houses are not suited to their needs because they lack essential adjacent buildings, such as stables and barns for both livestock and non-livestock purposes. Therefore, they all shouted with one voice: at no price, even if there were human casualties, would they give up their land and their properties. And they would take revenge on the Jews who supposedly chose this place and not another. “The Jews will starve to death in the ghetto; we will not allow any food to reach them because they want to ruin us!” shouted the peasants.¹⁰⁹

Jankiel Perelsztajn was beaten, and stones were thrown at Jewish flats. A group of “young boys from among the school children” threatened “to attack the Jews if they dared to move.” How the events unfolded and when tempers eventually cooled remains unknown.¹¹⁰ The testimony states that by 30 December 1941, seventeen Jewish families had moved in with other Jews already living in the designated area.¹¹¹ The author herself, because of the “tense situation, tried to leave” and eventually left the village on 30 December 1941. She arrived in Warsaw, “where she has her family and a home.”¹¹²

Resistance of the Ghetto Residents

In January 1942, the ghetto in Garbatka was already operational.¹¹³ The creation of a closed quarter in a village along the railway route fitted well with German plans to concentrate Jews in ghettos and forced labour camps. According to

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 323–324.

¹¹⁰ It may be only presumed that more serious riots were prevented by the attitude of those Garbatka residents who were associated with the pre-war left-wing groups (especially PPS). Some of them lived in the centre of Garbatka. Nearby, there were two factories – a distillery and a sawmill – where left-wing influences were particularly strong. See also J. Lachtara, “Z działalności Gwardii i Armii Ludowej w powiecie Kozienice w latach 1942–1944,” *Wojskowy Przegląd Historyczny* 3 (1988), pp. 221–222.

¹¹¹ Anonymous testimony entitled “Pozdrowienia z prowincji,” p. 324.

¹¹² *Ibid.*

¹¹³ According to Adam Rutkowski, the Garbatka ghetto was established “in the first days of January 1942” (*idem*, “Martyrologia, walka i zagłada,” p. 85). In another publication, we find the exact date of the establishment of the ghetto in this village: 18 January 1942 (“Listy, polemiki, opinie,” *Dziennik Radomski*, 8–11 November 1996, p. 10).

Maria Dziejicka, author of *Kronika Garbatki-Letnisko*, 25 Polish families were displaced from the area designated for Jews. The area was fenced off with barbed wire and was patrolled – under German supervision – by the Blue Police and the *Jüdischer Ordnungsdienst* – the Jewish Order Service, popularly known as the Jewish Police. Garbatka was regularly visited by German gendarmes from Zwolen. ¹¹⁴ The establishment of the ghetto altered the dynamics of relations between Poles and Jews. Attempting to leave the ghetto without a permission was punishable by imprisonment or even death. Poles who helped Jews in escaping faced the same severe penalties. ¹¹⁵

The Jewish inhabitants of Garbatka were not passive in the face of the anticipated, subsequent restrictions imposed by the occupier. Based on the testimonies, admittedly scant, it can be assumed that some planned to hide or blend in with the Polish community. ¹¹⁶ Bolesław Talar recalled:

I was acquainted with several Jewish families in Garbatka, such as the tailor Brajtman and the Menażka family. Menażka owned an abattoir and had three fine-looking daughters. Marysia Menażkówna, one of the daughters, was a close friend of my sister-in-law. During the war, she asked me to teach her about our faith, knowing that I had studied at a Higher Seminary. I agreed and tested her knowledge of the catechism. She knew the Scriptures of both the Old and New Testaments almost by heart. However, she was not baptised. ¹¹⁷

Others, fleeing persecution, hid with their Polish neighbours.

¹¹⁴ M. Dziejicka, *Kronika*, pp. 65, 109. See also “Byli tu mniejszością,” p. 32; K. Urbański, *Zagłada Żydów*, p. 151.

¹¹⁵ S. Piątkowski, “Polacy wobec eksterminacji ludności żydowskiej (1939–1945). Próba określenia postaw i ich źródeł na przykładzie dystryktu radomskiego,” *Biuletyn Kwartalny Radomskiego Towarzystwa Naukowego* 1 (34) (1999), p. 132; A. Rutkowski, “Martyrologia, walka i zagłada,” pp. 84–85.

¹¹⁶ M. Dziejicka, *Kronika*, pp. 110–111. Two young Jewish women are mentioned in this context: Lola Manys and Marysia Menażkówna. They spoke Polish well and had a chance to live a “normal life.” It is clear that the “desire to thwart the plans of the occupying forces” by means of hiding (or even planning such an undertaking), escaping from the ghetto or transport was a form of resistance against the Germans (M. Cobel-Tokarska, *Bezludna wyspa, nora, grób. Wojenne kryjówki Żydów w okupowanej Polsce* (Warsaw, 2012), p. 171).

¹¹⁷ M. Dziejicka, *Kronika*, p. 111. For more on “learning” Christian religion and habits, see J. Nalewajko-Kulikov, *Strategie przetrwania*, pp. 87–93.

In September 1939, when we escaped beyond the Vistula [...] it was in our flat that Kielman stored 2 suitcases of his belongings for some time. Mr. Świtka, as the landlord, gave him the keys to our flat. In 1940 or 1941 [...] the Germans (who came from Zwolen) entered the Kielmans' house. They were probably gendarmes [...]. They set fire to Kielman's beard, who was praying at the time. He escaped to our house, to the dining room, he did not stop praying. He prayed for a long time. The Germans were looking for him, maybe they wanted to kill him, but they did not enter our house. They did not do searches in the houses. [...] He stayed in our house for about 1–1.5 hours. We went outside and there was no one there anymore. He also looked around and went back to his house.¹¹⁸

In one of the Polish houses designated as part of the established ghetto for Jewish residence, there were three hiding places, prepared by a member of the Union of Armed Struggle-Home Army (ZWZ-AK) underground who had previously lived there. At least one of these was used by the Jews staying there until the ghetto was liquidated.¹¹⁹

It is difficult to determine exactly when the numerous Jewish escapees, in defiance of the German prohibitions,¹²⁰ began to seek refuge in the Kozienice forest. They also hid in various places along the Vistula River and among the Poles.¹²¹ In a forest near the village of Ruda (about 6–7 km from Garbatka), a group of Jews from Kozienice hid in a shelter.¹²² Among those seeking shelter were also refugees

¹¹⁸ *Z pamięci Ojca*, pp. 1–2.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

¹²⁰ S. Krakowski, “Żydowski opór w Generalnym Gubernatorstwie,” in *Akcja Reinhardt. Zagłada Żydów w Generalnym Gubernatorstwie*, ed. D. Libionka (Warsaw, 2004), pp. 286–287.

¹²¹ M. Cobel-Tokarska, *Bezludna wyspa*, p. 164. The author cited excerpts from the testimony of a Jewish boy, Szajka Nussenbaum (b. 1934) from Nowa Sól near Kozienice, who recalled hiding in many homesteads – “sometimes [...] in some attic, sometimes in a barn, sometimes in some dungeon.” See also B. Engelking, *Jest taki piękny słoneczny dzień... Losy Żydów szukających ratunku na wsi polskiej 1942–1945* (Warsaw, 2011), pp. 57–58, 119, 123, 176, 182–183, 190, 201; J. Hera, *Polacy ratujący Żydów. Słownik* (Warsaw, 2014), pp. 172, 307, 320, 340, 408; B. Jasek, “Szkice do historii,” p. 23; S. Piątkowski, “Polacy wobec eksterminacji,” p. 137; M. Tokarczyk, “Okupacja hitlerowska i pierwsze miesiące po wojnie w swojej rodzinie i wsi,” *Ziemia Kozienicka* 20 (2009), pp. 92–93.

¹²² S. Janeczek, “Kozienice pod okupacją hitlerowską w latach 1939–1945,” *Ziemia Kozienicka* 14 (2006), pp. 71–72.

from the Warsaw ghetto.¹²³ Fourteen-year-old Mordka Papirblatt, after his father's death by starvation in the Warsaw ghetto, came to "an aunt living in the village of Garbatka" (i.e. in the Garbatka ghetto?). After some time, his mother arrived with the other children.¹²⁴

There were several locations in Garbatka that facilitated "saving lives," including emergency shelters and both temporary and permanent hiding places.¹²⁵ Such hideouts were located in the houses (and other outbuildings) of Garbatka residents, both Poles and Jews, and in the nearby woodlands. Abram Lancman, a teenage escapee from the Warsaw ghetto, upon reaching the Garbatka railway station in late April 1942, learned from an accidentally met person about a "nearby Jewish hideout."¹²⁶ It later turned out that he was not the only one who used temporary accommodation in the Garbatka ghetto before moving on. Many years later Lancman recalled:

In the ghetto [in Garbatka – R.Ś.K.] I was assured that I did not have Semitic features, and this woman realised at a glance who I was. [...] For some time I wandered around the town [this is how he describes Garbatka – R.Ś.K.], until finally a young couple took me in. The man was a tailor. [...] In return, they described the conditions here. Here, too, there were round-ups for forced labour for the Germans, but there was no shortage of food. Someone who came from the Warsaw Ghetto might have had the impression of finding themselves in a holiday retreat. [...] In the evening, I learned from them that a young girl, also a refugee from the Warsaw Ghetto, lived nearby. [...] My hosts, respectable people, were unable to support me, so they offered to look for work for me. Among the residents, there were some who could afford to pay someone for doing their forced labour for them. [...] I went to work. It was a gruelling job

¹²³ J. Hera, *Polacy ratujący Żydów*, pp. 169–170, 266, 307, 316; M. Melchior, "Uciekinierzy z gett po 'stronie aryjskiej' na prowincji dystryktu warszawskiego – sposoby przetrwania" in *Prowincja noc. Życie i zagłada Żydów w dystrykcie warszawskim*, ed. B. Engelking, J. Leociak, D. Libionka (Warsaw, 2007), p. 346, footnote 106.

¹²⁴ A. Żbikowski, "Żydowsy przesiedleńcy z dystryktu warszawskiego w getcie warszawskim 1939–1942 (z pogranicza opisu i interpretacji)," in *Prowincja noc*, p. 229, footnote 15.

¹²⁵ M. Cobel-Tokarska, *Bezludna wyspa*, pp. 50, 262.

¹²⁶ A. Lancman, *Młodość w czasie Zagłady*, trans. A. Przedpelska-Trzeciakowska, introduction by W. Bartoszewski (Warsaw, 2002), p. 93.

consisting in carrying heavy stones. But the money I got for it was not enough to live on. A respectable tailor and his wife advised me to try my luck in Zwoleń, Radom or Koźienice. So one day I set off.¹²⁷

It is very likely that there was a contact point (a “hideout”) in the Garbatka area (in the ghetto?)¹²⁸ on the escape route of the Jews from Koźienice through the woods of the Koźienice Forest towards the south (the vicinity of Gniewoszków? Zwoleń? – R.Ś.K.).¹²⁹ The route led through Janików near Koźienice and the village of Molendy – villages located a few kilometres from Garbatka – the guides were Poles.¹³⁰ It also cannot be ruled out that the destination was the railway station in Garbatka. It is possible that some of the fugitives tried to get to Warsaw by train. Garbatka was located on a railway route used by members of various underground formations, including the communist Gwardia Ludowa (People’s Guard, GL) and couriers of various organisations.¹³¹ Six Jews, probably fugitives from Koźienice, hid for many months in the farm buildings of Władysław Amanowicz in Anielin, a village a few kilometres from Garbatka in the direction of Pionki.¹³² There are also sources mentioning escapes from the Gniewoszków ghetto, both in the direction of Zwoleń and northbound, towards Koźienice.¹³³

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 93–94.

¹²⁸ A. Rutkowski, “Martyrologia, walka i zagłada,” p. 129: “Numerous groups escaped from [...] Koźienice [...]. It can be stated with utmost certainty that there was not a single rural municipality in the Radom District, not a single village, not a single forest where Jews were not hiding in 1942, 1943 or even 1944.”

¹²⁹ Minutes of the interview with the witness Władysław Bak concerning the murder of Józef Suchecki and Jan Wolski committed by the Germans due to the aid they provided to persons of Jewish nationality of unknown identity in Zwola (Sarnów municipality, Radom district), Kielce, 28 May 1987, in *Relacje o pomocy udzielanej Żydom przez Polaków w latach 1939–1945*, vol. 4: *Dystrykt radomski Generalnego Gubernatorstwa*, selected and edited by S. Piątkowski (Lublin–Warsaw, 2020), pp. 299–300.

¹³⁰ Testimony of Tadeusz Rydel regarding his death sentence passed by the Germans for aiding Joel and Herszka Litman, Chaja and Selig Berman and other persons of Jewish nationality in the vicinity of Janikowo (Brzeźnica municipality, Radom District), Suwałki, ca. 3 May 1979, in *ibid.*, p. 103.

¹³¹ J. Piwowarek, “Powstanie i działalność bojowa oddziału partyzanckiego GL im. Ziemi Kieleckiej,” *Wojskowy Przegląd Historyczny* 22 (1962), p. 320. See also A. Bikont, *Cena. W poszukiwaniu żydowskich dzieci po wojnie* (Wołowiec, 2022), p. 1023; K. Dunin-Wąsowicz, *Polski ruch socjalistyczny*, p. 228.

¹³² “Historia z Anielina. Rozmowa Marii Dziedzickiej ze Stanisławą Budzisz. Anielin, 15 sierpnia 2010 r.,” *Moja Garbatka* 2016, pp. 292–293.

¹³³ Minutes of the interview with the witness Bolesław Paciorek regarding the aid he provided to Lipa Winnykamień, Frederick Weinstein and other persons of Jewish nationality in Gniewoszków (Sarnów municipality, Radom District), Radom, 8 April 1970, in *Relacje o pomocy*, vol. 4, pp. 95–96.

Bolesław Górniak, who worked in the forest near Garbatka and Molendy during those years, recalled: “ghetto escapees and Soviet prisoners of war who had fled from camps were hiding in our forests.”¹³⁴ Over time, the fugitives who survived the German raids began to form groups. These groups frequently resorted to forcibly obtaining food, which led to accusations of banditry from the local population.¹³⁵ Among others, Jewish escapees from the forced labour camp at the gunpowder factory in Pionki were hiding in the nearby forests. During the second half of 1944 one of the Jewish groups, which included Elias Waingarten from Jabłonowo (Policzna municipality), hid for several months in a bunker built in the forest near Pionki.¹³⁶

More often than not, due to serious problems with provisions, these people found themselves in dramatic situations.¹³⁷ In addition, Jewish groups hiding in the forests were seen as “communist” and associated with Soviet partisans.¹³⁸ The Home Army’s main press organ, *Biuletyn Informacyjny*, repeatedly warned against supporting “Soviet diversion,” which provokes brutal German reprisals and heavy

¹³⁴ B. Górniak, “Las w moim życiu. Przetrawanie okupacji hitlerowskiej, praca..., dorastanie... (1939–1944),” *Ziemia Kozienicka* 20 (2009), pp. 29, 47.

¹³⁵ P.M. Majewski, J. Vajskebr, “Sytuacja w Generalnym Gubernatorstwie w świetle niemieckich statystyk policyjnych. Próba analizy ilościowej,” *Przegląd Historyczny* 4 (2016), pp. 594–595. See also S. Piątkowski, “Bandytyzm i inne formy przestępczości kryminalnej na obszarach wiejskich Generalnego Gubernatorstwa w początkach okupacji niemieckiej (październik 1939 – czerwiec 1941),” in *Polska pod okupacją 1939–1945*, vol. 1 (Warsaw, 2015), pp. 64–121. In the Garbatka area, a typical bandit group consisting of several Poles, including two locals, operated. This group was known for its violent activities and had committed several robberies. In June 1942, it was liquidated by German gendarmes and Blue Policemen from Garbatka (A. Barzycki, “Pamiętnik,” pp. 49–50). See also M. Brzeziński, *Armia Izaaka. Walka i opór polskich Żydów*, trans. M. Habura (Cracow, 2013), pp. 343–344.

¹³⁶ Minutes of the interview with the witness Antoni Karaś regarding the aid he provided to Elias Waingarten in Pionki (Radom district), Kozienice, 24 June 1970, in *Relacje o pomocy*, vol. 4, p. 172. See also S. Piątkowski, “Wytwórnia prochu w Pionkach,” pp. 41–42.

¹³⁷ S. Piątkowski, “Oprawcy, prześladowcy, ratownicy. Problematyka Zagłady w aktach radomskiej ekspozytury Prokuratora Specjalnego Sądu Karnego w Lublinie,” *Zagłada Żydów. Studia i Materiały* 4 (2008), p. 492.

¹³⁸ A. Puławski, “Postrzeżenie żydowskich oddziałów partyzanckich przez Armię Krajową i Delegaturę Rządu RP na Kraj,” *Pamięć i Sprawiedliwość* 2 (2003), pp. 278, 295–296, 300; S. Krakowski, “Podziemie polskie a Żydzi w latach drugiej wojny światowej,” *Biuletyn Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego* 2 (2000), pp. 173–177; W. Łukaszun, “Ratunek czy niebezpieczeństwo? Obszary leśne w Generalnym Gubernatorstwie jako miejsce schronienia ludności żydowskiej,” in *Okupowana Europa. Podobieństwa i różnice*, ed. W. Grabowski (Warsaw, 2014), pp. 124–138; W. Molenda, *Adam, Bilof*, pp. 128–133.

civilian casualties.¹³⁹ To make matters worse, between Kozienice and Garbatka, in the village of Kociołki, German provocateurs showed up. Pretending to be “agricultural workers” looking for work, they attempted to get into touch with the “forest people.” The provocation ended with the arrests of people suspected of links with underground organisations.¹⁴⁰

It is not known whether the Jews of Garbatka fled to the partisans. There is no evidence of this, but it cannot be ruled out. Especially since in the Kozienicka forest, close to Garbatka, actions were carried out by a partisan unit of the *Socjalistyczna Organizacja Bojowa* (Socialist Combat Organisation) under the command of Lt. Kazimierz Aleksandrowicz pseud. “Huragan.”¹⁴¹ Julian Aleksandrowicz pseud. “Twardy” and several other Jews belonged to this unit.¹⁴² It should be added, however, that in the same area there was a Home Army unit under the command of Lt. Ignacy Pisarski pseud. “Maria.” Negative opinions circulated among the Jewish population about the partisans from this unit. It was believed that the commander of the unit and his subordinates were hostile towards Jews.¹⁴³

From the summer of 1942, an independent partisan unit made up of Jews operated in the forests in the Ciepeliów and Zwoleń area. In 1943, it became part of a GL unit under the command of Jan Kowalik pseud. “Janek” (later the unit

¹³⁹ See i.a., “Cudzemi rękoma,” *Biuletyn Informacyjny*, 11 June 1942, 23 (127) (1942), p. 2; K. Sacewicz, “Gwardia Ludowa w świetle opracowania Biura Informacji i Propagandy Komendy Głównej Armii Krajowej pt. ‘Informacja o działalności agentur Kominternu w Polsce (sierpień – wrzesień 1942 r.)’” in *Polska pod okupacją 1939–1945*, vol. 3 (Warsaw, 2019), pp. 237, 248.

¹⁴⁰ T. Domański, A. Jankowski, *Represje niemieckie*, pp. 237–238. See also W. Molenda, *Adam, Bilof*, p. 149.

¹⁴¹ K. Aleksandrowicz, “Wspomnienia ‘Huragana,’” in *Polska Partia Socjalistyczna w latach wojny i okupacji 1939–1945. Księga wspomnień*, vol. 1, ed. E. Haloń (Warsaw, 1994), pp. 22–24. The unit was formed in 1943. According to the memoirs of Lt. “Huragan,” apart from Poles, it included Russians, Georgians, Italians, French, Austrians and Jews. As part of the unification action, the unit came under the command of the Home Army’s Kozienice District. Major skirmishes with the forces of the German occupier took place in the vicinity of Pionki, Polica and Garbatka. See also J. Aleksandrowicz, *Kartki z dziennika doktora Twardego* (Cracow, 1983), pp. 61, 99; K. Dunin-Wąsowicz, *Polski ruch socjalistyczny*, pp. 166–167; E. Stec, “Polska Partia Socjalistyczna Okręgu Radomskiego w walce z okupantem w latach 1939–1944,” *Dzieje Najnowsze* 1/2 (1983), p. 341; J.D. Zimmerman, *Polskie Państwo Podziemne i Żydzi w czasie II wojny światowej*, trans. M. Macińska, ed. M. Rusiniak-Karwat (Warsaw, 2018), pp. 402–403.

¹⁴² J. Aleksandrowicz, *Kartki z dziennika*, p. 99.

¹⁴³ S. Piątkowski, “Oprawcy, prześladowcy, ratownicy,” p. 492; M. Wierzbicki, „Pierwsza Kadrowa” *Inspektoratu Radomskiego AK. Zarys dziejów oddziału partyzanckiego „Cezara” – „Harnasia” – „Marii”* (Pionki, 1994), pp. 151, 159, 179; J.D. Zimmerman, *Polskie Państwo Podziemne*, pp. 402–403.

took the name “Dionizy Czachowski”).¹⁴⁴ It is likely that a group from this unit (which included Jewish partisans) carried out an attack on the railway station in Garbatka in 1943.¹⁴⁵

Carrying out anti-German operations or undertaking activities against the occupier’s orders required great caution and adherence to the rules of conspiracy, especially secrecy. Any shortcomings cost dearly, as the occupation conditions also encompassed activity of German informers watching local communities. On 4 June 1942, in Garbatka (in a forest called Choinka), the Germans killed, for unknown reasons, three Jews.¹⁴⁶ At an unspecified time (June 1941 or August 1942) and in unspecified circumstances, 17-year-old Sura Leizer was raped and murdered.¹⁴⁷

The Jews from Garbatka were sent, i.a., to forced labour in a factory camp at the gunpowder factory in Pionki. During their work they interacted with Polish workers with whom contact, admittedly, was limited and controlled by Werkschutz guards. There were then “illegal” contacts (transfer of food, trade, exchange of information) between workers of both ethnic groups. These activities were carried out in defiance of German orders, the violation of which was punishable by flogging, arrest or even death.¹⁴⁸ Polish residents of Garbatka also worked at the gunpowder factory in Pionki. Among them was Zofia Drózdź, who took part in such “illegal” activities alongside her friends:

During the occupation, I was married and had a one-year-old son. My husband was deported by the Germans to forced labour in the Reich. [...] I mostly walked to work, as the trains ran erratically. [...] Joskowa, a Jewish woman from Garbatka, worked with me, as well as Hersiek and Josek, both brothers of Dorcia, my best childhood friend. [...] Her brothers from the Garbatka ghetto were transported with a large group of young Jews to the Pionki ghetto. Dorcia could not be helped because the ghetto was guarded. Working in a gunpowder

¹⁴⁴ S. Krakowiak, “Żydzi w oddziałach partyzanckich Gwardii Ludowej i Armii Ludowej na Kielecczyźnie,” *Biuletyn Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego* 65/66 (1968), pp. 65–66.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 57.

¹⁴⁶ *Rejestr miejsc i faktów zbrodni popełnionych przez okupanta hitlerowskiego na ziemiach polskich w latach 1939–1945. Województwo radomskie* (Warsaw, 1980), p. 53.

¹⁴⁷ M. Hamela, “Działalność Posterunku Policji w Garbatce Letnisku,” *Moja Garbatka* 3 (2003), p. 6.

¹⁴⁸ S. Piątkowski, “Polacy wobec eksterminacji,” p. 138.

factory, Joskowa turned to me with a request: “Zosia, bring me groats, bread, onions, garlic – we are starving.” I organised help, initiating a circle of trusted people. When we crossed the factory gate, each of us had small portions of food prepared for the Jews, so that they would not be conspicuous, because Ukrainians were standing at the gate, and they applied severe penalties for smuggling. They warned that a court would be assembled for any help given to the Jews. Working with me was Kołakowska, a woman from Poznań deported to Garbatka, who was caught by the Ukrainians at the gatehouse smuggling food to Jews. As punishment, they stuck splinters between her fingers. There were a lot of people from Garbatka working at the factory. As we entered the first gate, insulting words rang in our ears: “Attention: here come the bandits from Garbatka!” After the extermination of the Jews in “Choinka” [after the execution on 12 July 1942 – R.Ś.K.], Joskowa approached me again with a request: “Zosia, pluck and bring me a pine branch from the place where my husband was killed.” I complied with her wish, bringing a broken pine branch from the place of the extermination. She hugged it to her heart and wept heavily.¹⁴⁹

The establishment of the ghetto drastically reduced the freedom of movement and, above all, of getting food – though it was not impossible.¹⁵⁰ However, one had to be courageous and clever, exploit loopholes in the ghetto system and have good connections with other Garbatka residents. Neighbourly, collegial, friendly or even working relationships between Poles and Jews played a major role. Ryszard Gieruszka recalled:

My father, Władysław Gieruszka, leased a square to the Jews. They built two wooden houses on this lot. Three families lived there: the Aron, the Abuś and the Lejbuś families. They would have been fine had it not been for the war. The Jews were deprived of food rations [...]. They [...] took risks, going out at night, looking for their livelihood. The Blue Police turned a blind eye to this. Even though it was an isolated area, Poles helped the Jews. My parents, Apolonia

¹⁴⁹ M. Dziedzicka, *Kronika*, p. 111. See also S. Piątkowski, “Oprawcy, prześladowcy, ratownicy,” p. 495.

¹⁵⁰ “Byli tu mniejszością,” p. 32: “One could not enter the ghetto, but if one persisted – one could” – a passage from an oral testimony by Marian Baran of 6 June 2003.

and Władysław, were farmers and had a permanent pass with the right to enter their property. My mother intentionally left the cellar with potatoes open so that the Jews could feed themselves. Very brave were Franciszek Maj and Bolesław Michalak from Wygwizdów. They brought food to the ghetto.¹⁵¹

Franciszek Maj described how he had business dealings with ghetto residents:

I used to deliver flour to the Jew Aron. He baked bread and sold it. At night, I brought meat, potatoes, groats, whatever I could. At night, because during the day there were lots of German and Polish spies. One time I brought half a cow. I was spotted by a Blue Policeman, Krawczyk. This encounter ended quite happily. The station's commander accepted a "piece of meat" and let Maj go – "nothing bad happened to me, nothing bad happened to the Jews either."¹⁵²

The Pacification of Garbatka

On the night of July 11 to 12, 1942, Garbatka was encircled by strong German police and army units. Anyone attempting to breach the cordon was shot. Security police officers, organised into special groups, conducted a meticulously planned operation within the village. Garbatka was divided into sectors, and every house with someone on the proscription list was surrounded by the Germans. Thorough searches were conducted multiple times. Detainees, after brief interrogations, were classified into a specific group of "criminals" (marked 1 to 5). For the majority of the detainees, the pacification operation, which lasted for many hours, ended with them being put on a freight train standing at the railway station. The transport was diverted via Radom to Auschwitz concentration camp. A few dozen people remained at the site. They were placed in a school building and subjected to an intensive investigation for many days.

The pacification of Garbatka was conducted in a similar manner both in the sectors inhabited by the Polish population and in the ghetto. According to the official report made after the operation, 297 people (221 Poles and 76 Jews) were arrested.

¹⁵¹ M. Dziedzicka, "Holocaust w Garbatce," *Dziennik Radomski*, 25–27 October 1996, p. 10.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*

On 12 July 1942, 217 people (141 Poles and 76 Jews) were sent to Auschwitz. The authors of a study on the transports of Poles to Auschwitz wrote that this was “the only instance in the camp’s history where prisoners were arrested in a single village and immediately transported directly to the camp.”¹⁵³ At least a dozen people were shot while trying to escape or get through the roundup cordon. In the ghetto and in the nearby “Choinka” forest, the Germans killed dozens of Jews.¹⁵⁴

Aleksander Barzycki – a pre-war policeman, who served at the Garbatka’s Blue Police station during the German occupation and cooperated with the Home Army intelligence service – wrote in his memoirs:

There were four Gestapo men, two of whom were probably from Godów near Radom (surname Kreutz). They were the ones who carried out the massacre of Jewish families. They went with the gendarmes from house to house in the ghetto and whoever was in the house they killed. In this way, they killed sixty-two people, mostly men, and a few days later – with a shot to the back of the head – they killed two Jewish women and two Jews who were temporarily assigned to maintain order (i. e. to take care of cleaning) in the school building where the hostages arrested by the Nazis were detained. I was among them [i.e. hostages] as well.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵³ *Księgi pamięci. Transporty Polaków do KL Auschwitz z Radomia i innych miejscowości Kielecczyny 1940–1944*, vol. 2, ed. F. Piper, I. Strzelecka (Warsaw–Oświęcim, 2006), p. 735. On Garbatka pacification see also W. Borodziej, *Terror i polityka*, p. 27, 118–119, 217 (note 210); T. Domański, A. Jankowski, *Represje niemieckie*, pp. 120–121; M. Dziedzicka, *Kronika*, pp. 117–119; W. Molenda, *Piekło w raju* (Radom, 1992), pp. 13–17; J. Pawlak, *Pięć lat w szeregach armii podziemnej* (Warszawa, 1967), pp. 39–46; S. Piątkowski, “Pacyfikacja Garbatki,” <https://zapisyterroru.pl/dlibra/context?id=1760-2>, accessed 7 May 2024.

¹⁵⁴ According to S. Piątkowski, “Pacyfikacja Garbatki,” in the ghetto, the Germans killed about thirty and in the woods about sixty Jews, whereas in a publication by T. Domański and A. Jankowski, *Represje niemieckie*, p. 120, the total figure of 59 Jews killed that day in Garbatka is mentioned. The authors also stated that “no fewer than 314 [people], including 238 Poles and 76 Jews,” had been sent to a concentration camp. It should be noted that the authors of the memoirs give a much higher number of persons detained during the pacification, ranging from seven hundred (J. Pawlak, *Pięć lat w szeregach*, p. 39) to over 970 (W. Molenda, *Piekło*, p. 36). The authors of the information, which appeared in the underground *Biuletyn Informacyjny* in July 1942, stated that the pacification in Garbatka was one of the largest operations of this type conducted by the German occupier; they also emphasised that the Anti-Semitic riot was a part of it (“Oblawa w Garbatce,” *Biuletyn Informacyjny*, 30 July 1942, 30 (134) (1942), p. 5; S. Piątkowski, “Prawda w trybach propagandy. Okupacyjne losy regionu świętokrzyskiego w publicystyce ‘Biuletynu Informacyjnego’ Związku Walki Zbrojnej – Armii Krajowej (1940–1945),” *Świętokrzyskie Studia Archiwalno-Historyczne* 6 (2017), p. 151).

¹⁵⁵ A. Barzycki, “Pamiętnik,” p. 50.

The immediate cause of the pacification was the results of an investigation into attacks on military freight trains on the Radom-Dęblin route, which were used to transport food and various supplies for German soldiers on the eastern front. The German investigation established that the assaults were organised between Pionki and Garbatka. Probably in the spring of 1942, a group of informers started observing the inhabitants of Garbatka. As a result, several hundred people were put on proscription lists. Meetings between the informers and representatives of the German police took place in the house of the village leader.¹⁵⁶ The German security police obtained information that the village was the seat of an underground structure, being an “Inspectorate of the Polish Insurgent Union” (*Polski Związek Powstańczy*, PZP), with which police officers from the Garbatka’s Blue Police station were cooperating. It was also suspected that an underground youth organisation was operating in Garbatka.¹⁵⁷ It should be added that at that time Garbatka was indeed the headquarters of the ZWZ-AK’s Kozienice District.

According to the memoirs of Polish authors, it used to be assumed that the train robberies were the work of a group of a dozen or so young people, including school-age youth. One of the inspirers or leaders was supposed to be a Radom secondary school student living in Garbatka named Nalazek. However, the actual leader of the group was probably Stanisław Jezuita. The group had no links with underground organisations operating in the area: ZWZ-AK, *Bataliony Chłopskie* (Peasant Battalions, BCh) or earlier with the *Polska Organizacja Zbrojna* (Polish Armed Organisation). However, railway employees from Pionki and Garbatka cooperated with this group. The son of the commander of the Garbatka police station belonged to the group of attackers; the commander himself, Andrzej Krawczyk, also benefitted from the actions.¹⁵⁸ However, there may have been many more associates, which might have included, for example, those who were involved in hiding or transporting seized materials and then selling them.

Since at least January 1942, the Germans had been investigating train robberies. As a result of interrogations of several individuals detained by gendarmes

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 55.

¹⁵⁷ W. Borodziej, *Terror i polityka*, pp. 27, 118–119, 217 (note 210); T. Domański, A. Jankowski, *Reprezje niemieckie*, pp. 120–121.

¹⁵⁸ M. Dziedzicka, *Kronika*, pp. 117–118; W. Molenda, *Piekło*, p. 13.

from Zwoleń and surveillance by German informers, including some Poles from Garbatka, many people were identified as acting against the German occupiers, and a threat of compromising the local Home Army structures occurred.¹⁵⁹ The group's exposure by the Germans was facilitated by the nonchalance and disregard for basic secrecy rules, such as the public flaunting of wealth by several robbery participants. The initially random arrests eventually led to the identification of the entire group and the false admissions by some detainees of cooperation with an unidentified underground organisation.¹⁶⁰

Years later, Captain Władysław Molenda pseud. "Grab" of the AK's Kozenice District command recalled that "the activities of the Jezuita and Nalazek group were widely known," and that the group's leadership, led by "various motives, considered robbing German trains as one of the ways of gaining a livelihood." However, he further stated that "it may have been about sabotage,"¹⁶¹ and that among those in charge of the underground organisation in the area, consideration was given to the possibility of taking over the initiative to stop the "insane activity" and to control the group "as a disciplined organisation" in order to "direct it to fight effectively against the occupying forces."¹⁶² Conversely, Capt./Mjr Józef Pawlak pseud. "Bartosz," "Brzoza," who commanded the Home Army's Kozenice District from July 1942 to August 1944 after Capt. Adam Bielawski's death during the pacification of Garbatka, wrote in his study on the history of the underground in the Kozenice district during World War II: "The local population and the District's Command responded positively to the daring actions of this group, as they were detrimental to the enemy."¹⁶³

Bronisław Nowa , one of the organisers of the BCh and the underground agrarian party (Stronnictwo Ludowe, SL) in the Kozenice district, was highly negative in his opinion of the events. In his memoirs, published several decades after the war, he stated:

¹⁵⁹ K. Solek, "Tragedia Garbatki za okupacji hitlerowskiej w roku 1942," *Wrocawski Tygodnik Katolik w* 14 (1979), pp. 5–7.

¹⁶⁰ W. Molenda, *Piekło*, pp. 14–15.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 13–14. Captain Władysław Molenda was the second deputy commander of the AK's Kozenice District, and from May 1944 to January 1945 the head of the District Directorate of Diversion (*Kierownictwo Dywersji, Kedyw*).

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 15.

¹⁶³ J. Pawlak, *Pięć lat w szeregach*, p. 40.

In Garbatka, underground activity was practised almost openly, and Garbatka was not Stawki, Ursynów, Wilczowola or Wola Klasztorna [villages in Kozienice district – R.Ś.K.], where everyone had lived together since childhood and knew each other inside out. It was a mixed bunch of various local and transient people here – farmers, traders, smugglers, Jews, gypsies, etc. Among the organised there were quite a few reckless and over self-confident people, letting others know that “you know who I am...,” “we won’t allow it,” “we will show,” “we will deal,” etc. This inevitably led to a disaster. Garbatka was a convenient village, everyone went there, and among them, early on, also our organisation [the BCh – R.Ś.K.]. One did not have to wait long for the consequences of this not very prudently conducted action. Garbatka paid a high blood sacrifice for it.¹⁶⁴

It is difficult to conclude whether the group from Garbatka had contacts or cooperated with the “sabotage-diversion railway group” described by Edward Stec, organised by members of the *Socjalistyczna Organizacja Bojowa* (Socialist Combat Organisation) and *Związek Walki Zbrojnej* (Union of Armed Struggle, ZWZ) from Pionki and other towns near Garbatka. Operations were also carried out on the Pionki-Garbatka railway line, and weapons, ammunition, military equipment, clothing and food were taken from German transports heading eastwards.¹⁶⁵ Nor

¹⁶⁴ B. Nowac, *Wspomnienia z lat wojny i okupacji*, p. 151. Among historians dealing with the history of the underground in the Kozienice District after the outbreak of World War II, Marek Wierzbicki was the most critical of the group’s activity. Describing the behaviour of Garbatka’s inhabitants under the German occupation, he distinguished three categories of attitudes: egoistic-antisocial, adaptive, and civic. He considered the activity of the group attacking German trains as “the most harmful manifestation of the egoistic attitude.” In his view, this activity led to the July 1942 tragedy: “At this point, the questions irresistibly spring to mind: why did local society fail to prevent the reckless assaults that led to the brutal intervention of the occupying forces? Why did the local elite behave passively in this matter? What can explain the lack of reaction of the Home Army underground to the activity of the robbery group? The absence of adequate sources forces one to rely on conjectures, which can be considered research hypotheses that necessitate further verification. It can be assumed that the attacks on German trains generated sympathy [for the robbers], as they objectively harmed the enemy and, albeit to a small but nonetheless significant extent, weakened its military potential. Furthermore, these attacks provided material benefits to a particular, albeit hard to precisely identify, segment of the local community. They enriched not only those directly involved in the robberies but also some railway workers, Blue Policemen, traders, and others who were able to gain additional income, which was of no small importance during those difficult times. However, there seemed to be a lack of restraint and imagination to foresee the likely consequences of this robbery-based activity. Consequently, the ‘sins’ of a few brought misfortune upon Garbatka, affecting many of its inhabitants.” (M. Wierzbicki, “Postawy mieszkańców Garbatki,” pp. 449–450).

¹⁶⁵ E. Stec, “Polska Partia Socjalistyczna Okręgu Radomskiego,” pp. 338–339, 345.

can it be ruled out that it possibly would be the same organisation under which both groups that attacked German trains operated.

In the literature, there are also references – probably unnoticed by contemporary researchers – to the involvement of a group of Jews in “the first half of 1942” in attacks on “German military trains passing through Garbatka towards the Eastern Front.”¹⁶⁶

It should be noted, however, that the statement following this information that in retaliation “an SS punitive expedition [...] arrested [...] 350 Poles and 75 Jews” who were then “all sent to [Auschwitz],”¹⁶⁷ goes too far and is partly untrue. This thesis is based on the testimony of Mordka Papirblat, a fugitive from the Warsaw Ghetto, detained and deported to Auschwitz during the pacification of Garbatka. However, in the light of the current research, this testimony is not considered a reliable source for describing the pacification action, its causes and all the circumstances.¹⁶⁸

Nonetheless, it can be argued that the entry of the Germans into the ghetto was not accidental, it was an integral part of the pacification of Garbatka. The Jews killed on the spot or deported to Auschwitz were not accidental victims of German terror, but were singled out, at least in large part, by the German security police. The aim of the repressions was to eliminate those involved in various forms of resistance and to intimidate the entire Jewish community residing in the Garbatka ghetto.¹⁶⁹

The repressed Jews may have been linked in various ways to the Poles who took part in the assaults. They may have acquired information about the transports or

¹⁶⁶ A. Rutkowski, “Martyrologia, walka i zagłada,” p. 128. According to the author, between 1940 and 1941 on the Dęblin-Radom railway line, “Polish railway workers practised systematic sabotage,” including throwing “large quantities of coal from passing wagons” to the surrounding “Polish and Jewish population.” In connection with this sabotage, “the German gendarmerie conducted numerous searches on Poles and Jews.” (p. 125).

¹⁶⁷ A. Rutkowski, “Martyrologia, walka i zagłada,” p. 128.

¹⁶⁸ See also M. Dean, S. Piątkowski, “Garbatka-Letnisko,” in *The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos*, vol. 2, ed. M. Dean (Bloomington, 2011), p. 221. The authors noted that on 12 July 1942, the German police conducted an anti-partisan retaliation operation, following an attack on a German supply train by forces of the Polish resistance. Daniel Brewing, on the other hand, placed the information on the pacification of Garbatka – which is intriguing in this context – directly before Heinrich Himmler’s statement of 24 May 1944 that “ghettos, however sealed they may have been, were the headquarters of every partisan and band movement” (D. Brewing, *W cieniu Auschwitz. Niemieckie masakry polskiej ludności cywilnej 1939–1945*, trans. R. Dziergwa, Poznań, 2019, pp. 236–237).

¹⁶⁹ In October 1941, there were one thousand and three hundred Jewish people in Garbatka.

hidden the materials they seized and then traded them. It should be remembered that for ghetto inhabitants acquiring food and other necessities was part of the struggle for physical survival.

The activities of the underground community described by Adam Rutkowski on the basis of an anonymous testimony of a Jewish woman who spent five months in the Garbatka ghetto¹⁷⁰ still requires further research. It can be stated that the resistance in the Garbatka ghetto was not the work of individuals, but rather a group effort with organised characteristics, likely involving several dozen people.

Poles Helping Jews after the Liquidation of the Ghetto

After the pacification of Garbatka and the subsequent liquidation of the ghetto (18 August 1942),¹⁷¹ several Jews were still hiding in the village.¹⁷² In all known cases, those in hiding obtained one-off or long-term aid of the Polish residents of Garbatka. A notable case is that of Professor Stanisław Ziemecki (formerly Landau), a physicist and university teacher who fled there from Warsaw due to the threat of arrest. After some time, he began tutoring several young people, and Leszek Kołakowski (later a world-famous philosopher), who was living in Garbatka at the time, would go to him for physics and mathematics lessons. In 1943, his wife Anna and his son Stanisław joined the professor, and together they lived in a small house in the resort part of Garbatka.¹⁷³

Stanisław Ziemecki's case is peculiar in that, by tutoring, he could have been "discovered." Did he trust the people around him that much? It is not known whether his background had been recognised and whether anyone was interested.

¹⁷⁰ Anonymous testimony entitled "Pozdrowienia z prowincji," pp. 321–326.

¹⁷¹ "Listy, polemiki, opinie," *Dziennik Radomski*, 8–11 November 1996, p. 10; A. Rutkowski, "Martyrologia, walka i zagłada," p. 156; K. Urbański, *Zagłada Żydów*, pp. 165, 207. The Jews of Garbatka were formed into two columns on 18 August 1942 and marched to Pionki and Zwoleń. It is likely that six Jews were killed on this day during the liquidation of the ghetto (while trying to escape?).

¹⁷² E. Bojakowska-Pikul, "Garbatka," pp. 27–29; M. Dziedzicka, *Kronika*, pp. 109–111; E. Fąfara, *Gehenna ludności żydowskiej* (Warsaw, 1983), p. 542–543; R. Śmietanka-Kruszelnicki, "Matka zostawiała otwartą piwnicę z ziemniakami," *Rzeczpospolita-Plus Minus*, 23–24 March 2019 (supplement: *Nieznane historie. Z dziejów ratowania Żydów pod okupacją niemiecką*), pp. 32–33.

¹⁷³ M. Baran, "Pan Profesor. Wspomnienie o prof. dr. Stanisławie Ziemeckim," *Moja Garbatka* 2 (2004), pp. 36–37; Z. Mentzel, *Kołakowski. Czytanie świata. Biografia* (Cracow, 2022), p. 62. Among others, the doctor Janina Pietrusiewicz, Leszek Kołakowski's aunt, helped Professor Stanisław Ziemecki ("Byli tu mniejszością," p. 35).

Perhaps what we have in this case is a “benevolent tolerance for a person trying to hide.”¹⁷⁴

There were probably more stories like this, as another story testifies:

I knew one of the Jews in hiding from my work at the distillery. At one time a man appeared there, as Zaleski, with a little boy. There were rumours that he was an insurgent from the Warsaw Ghetto. He worked with us for a while; I think he was employed fictitiously. I heard about another one, that he was hiding at Jagodziński's, near the “construction site.”¹⁷⁵

The abovementioned “construction site” is what the locals referred to as a place in the wooded area of the holiday part of Garbatka, by a stream flowing not far from the first buildings; it is possible that the aforementioned escape route of the Jews from Kozienice passed through this place.

In 1943, a young woman and her two children arrived in Garbatka. According to Zbigniew Karpala, this occurred “after the outbreak of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising.” Stanisława Denkiewicz “brought three people to our house.” Shortly thereafter, Zbigniew Karpala’s mother obtained “fictitious baptismal certificates for the names Lucjan and Edward Rakoczy” from the parish priest, Father Józef Kuropieska (the previous parish priest, Father Wincenty Wojtaśkiewicz, had died in Auschwitz). The boys, aged 5 and 7, and their mother lived with the Karpalas until January 1945. “I heard from the mother of these boys in 1968. As a gift, she gave my mother a gold chain with a cross and the inscription ‘Jeruzalem’. At that time, they lived in Israel, in Haifa,” Zbigniew Karpala concludes his memoirs.¹⁷⁶

The same Jewish family was helped by Jan Krekora from Garbatka. In Eugeniusz Fąfara’s book outlining the fate of Jews under the German occupation, a letter sent many years later from Israel to Jan Krekora, one of the carers of the rescued family, is cited as follows:

¹⁷⁴ M. Cobel-Tokarska, *Bezludna wyspa*, p. 66.

¹⁷⁵ *Z pamięci Ojca*, p. 4.

¹⁷⁶ Z. Karpala, “Pamiętna noc 12 lipca 1942 r. w Garbatce. Wspomnienia o ojcu,” *Moja Garbatka* 2 (2004), pp. 11–12.

One such spot, where fate tossed me at the cruellest of times, was Garbatka. It left memories that cannot be erased. Knowing no one, helpless, with two children, relying solely on instinct, I was unable to even keep my secret. And yet I survived. I know how much I owe to people like Mrs. Karpala, with whom I had a kind of a second home: the lady who made it possible for me to exist, even though it entailed risk, and many other people who tried to help me selflessly. It was a source of great moral support for me at that time, when you let me in as if I were like everyone else.¹⁷⁷

In 1943, for a few months, under the protection of the priests and “under the care of Mrs Łaganowska,” a young Jewish woman, Nina Wilczyńska, lived in the vicarage. She later hid “at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Kądzierski”¹⁷⁸ (Kędzierski?).

Other recollections from Polish residents indicate that several more Garbatka Jews survived the German occupation. The survivors included Icek Manys, who was supposed to serve in the “Jewish guard” in Pionki, and Brejtman, “the best tailor in Garbatka.” There was also a Jewish woman who survived (no further details are available; she was an acquaintance of Ryszard Gieruszka’s family), who “miraculously managed to escape from the ghetto.” She reportedly hid with Polish acquaintances until the end of the German occupation, and then left for Łódź.¹⁷⁹ In the villa “Piotrówka” (in the resort part of Garbatka), the Hornberger family hid a Jewish woman named Pawłowska until the end of the occupation (she came from “Choinki,” the central part of Garbatka).¹⁸⁰ A Jew whom Polish acquaintances nicknamed Kapusta (“Cabbage”) survived Auschwitz. His father was a shoemaker. He returned to Garbatka and lived there for some time. In 1945 or 1946, he left

¹⁷⁷ E. Fąfara, *Gehenna*, pp. 542–543.

¹⁷⁸ E. Bojakowska-Pikul, “Garbatka,” p. 30.

¹⁷⁹ M. Dziedzicka, “Holocaust,” p. 10. Cf. M. Baran, “Obrazek z dzieciennych lat. Ułani w Garbatce,” *Moja Garbatka 2* (2006), p. 125: “Two neighbours, my older friends, served in the cavalry in Vilnius before the war: Antoni Bachanek and Icek Cymerman, called Manes, because that was his father’s name. [...] Icek survived the camp [...] in Pionki and then [Auschwitz], returned to Garbatka for a short time after the war and immediately emigrated to Palestine. He lived in Jerusalem, where he was a magistrate’s official. He had a son and a daughter. [...] But until the end he corresponded with Antoni Bachanek, a friend from his childhood and cavalry service years.”

¹⁸⁰ “Byli tu mniejszością,” p. 35 – from the letter of Irena Kordyasz-Bojanowska to Elżbieta Dziedzicka, Wrocław, 14 March 2001.

for Cracow, and later for Vienna.¹⁸¹ A young Jewish boy, Fuks, who had previously lived in the centre of Garbatka, also returned from Auschwitz (his father was a watchmaker and was killed on 12 July 1942 during the pacification). He did not visit his hometown until many years later, already as a Belgian citizen.¹⁸² There is also a mention of Lola Manys being in hiding (she married Ajzyk Flamenbaum), but she probably did not live to see the end of the German occupation.¹⁸³

Estera Flamenbaum (daughter of the shoemaker Symucha Flamenbaum) hid with Aleksander Barzycki for a few days, then moved on “with her siblings to Pionki.” After the war, she personally thanked Barzycki for the help he had given her. The second Jewish woman (who was supposed to be Estera’s cousin), who hid at his place for several dozen days in the late autumn of 1944 (from 4 November to 14 December), left a less glorious record in the memory of this Garbatka resident. Before leaving, she robbed him (took his “most valuable” items). “I found her in Jedlnia in one of the three houses as you approach Jedlnia on the left side of the railway track,” Barzycki wrote in his diary, “I took back only part of [the stolen items] and donated the rest. [...] in Jedlnia, after me, she robbed some teacher.”¹⁸⁴ In another place of his account, he noted: “she survived the war.”¹⁸⁵

There is also talk among Garbatka residents of an unsuccessful escape into the forest by a Jew in July 1942 (is this about the pacification of 12 July 1942?). He was

¹⁸¹ “Byli tu mniejszością,” pp. 32–33.

¹⁸² M. Dziedzicka, “Holocaust,” p. 10.

¹⁸³ M. Dziedzicka, *Kronika*, p. 110.

¹⁸⁴ A. Barzycki, “Pamiętnik,” pp. 45, 50. It seems that such situations – in the time of the brutal and cruel Anti-Semitic action – occurred more frequently. Various records from the occupation era contribute to such a picture. However, the accounts of the people, who acted like that, trying to survive the Holocaust, are extremely unique. In the moving letter of a young Jewess, written in the winter of 1942 to the family in Wodzisław (Jędrzejów district) which was robbed by her, she explains: “Dear Ladies and Gentlemen! I do not know if you ever forgive me for my hideous deed, but fate forced me to do what I did. I am an Israelite and I am pursued like a wild animal, I resort to lies, deceit and meanness, I steal in order to survive this terrible war, I want to live because I am young, I want to live, but will I survive when so many of my brothers have already died and are dying constantly? I am not sure of a single day or hour of my life. At the moment I am writing this letter, I am already far away from you, I am fleeing to the border, if I survive this hell of war, I will make up to you for the wrongs you have suffered because of me. I am very, very unhappy, and my unhappiness is due to the fact that my mother gave birth to me as a Jewess. I thank you for all the good things you have done and I am very sorry. I hope you survive the war and... that you won't have to hide like I have to.” As cited in: Z. Jezierska-Koźlicka, “Nieznajoma,” *Przyjaciel Wodzisławia* 27 (2010), p. 124.

¹⁸⁵ A. Barzycki, „Pamiętnik,” p. 58.

reportedly shot where there is now a “chapel in the birch alley behind the ‘Polanka’ reservoir” (a place on the outskirts of the forest near the holiday part of Garbatka).¹⁸⁶ At the end of September 1942 (probably on 23 September¹⁸⁷), transports of Jews from the Zwoleń ghetto (and from Pionki?) were sent from the railway station in Garbatka to Treblinka. Adolf Śmietanka recalled: “When the Jews were going to the transport, the people in Garbatka, above all women, gave them water and food. This was done in secret, because the Germans did not allow it.”¹⁸⁸

Garbatka was the site where various attitudes of Poles towards Jews during the German occupation were observed. Aid in supplying food and medicines to the Jewish quarter, hiding fugitives from the Garbatka ghetto and other localities (sources contain descriptions or references to a dozen cases of long-term hiding or helping) as well as cooperation in political and diversion operations. Hostile behaviour towards the Jews, caused primarily by the German occupier policy, was also present. It is likely that several dozen people who were already known for their prejudice and dislike of Jews before 1939 took part in these activities.

¹⁸⁶ “Byli tu mniejszością,” p. 34.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁸ *Z pamięci Ojca*, p. 1. Bronisław Nować, who witnessed the march of the Jews from Zwoleń, could not understand their passive attitude in the face of the dramatic events: “They marched down the road from Zwoleń to Garbatka (17 km) in groups of about three hundred people. Usually such a group was escorted by five – six black-uniformed Ukrainians or maybe Latvians and a few Jewish militiamen. The whole route after the group had passed was covered with corpses. Every few dozen metres, the soldiers would drag their chosen victims out of the line, lay them on the ground on their faces and shoot them in the back of the head. They did this slowly, unhurriedly repeating the gun, pulling the trigger while the victims waited for their bullet. They did everything in front of the group. It was puzzling. Three hundred convicts against six soldiers. No one managed to show even a hint of despair, no one tried to save themselves by running away. They died on a mass scale, they died without resistance. One day, I was riding my bicycle from Wilczowola to Zwoleń, 8 kilometres away, and I counted thirty-seven corpses on that route, in [groups of] three or four of them in roadside ditches. I thought to myself: why don’t these people, knowing after all that they are going to perdition, lash out at their tormentors and claw at them? The transports passed through Strykowice Górne, Wilczowola, Policzna and Garbatka, from which villages it was not far to the forests. Garbatka is situated in a forest. So why did they not overpower the murderers and try to escape in between the buildings and from there into the fields and forests, as far away from the routes as possible? After all, I myself – certainly under different circumstances – tried to escape from a transport of prisoners of war [in 1939 – R.Ś.K.]. [...] There were, after all, cases where our soldiers tried to escape from under the bullets of the firing squads, and some succeeded.” (B. Nować, *Wspomnienia z lat wojny i okupacji*, pp. 100–101). However, the author of these recollections may be mistaken in his assessments. He probably did not spend all his time watching the road from Zwoleń to Garbatka and did not witness all the events. Despite his claims, the number of deaths may indicate the number of attempts at resistance or escape.

Conclusion

The German occupiers failed to fully isolate the Jewish residents of Garbatka from their Polish neighbours. They also did not succeed in paralysing the spirit of struggle and resistance. Jewish resistance, both of individuals and groups, took the form of a variety of ventures that broke occupation laws, from smuggling food (and other necessities), preparing hiding places and obtaining false documents (e.g. baptismal etc. church certificates), up to participating in sabotage and diversionary operations. Some activities, such as participating in “illegal” political activities or taking part in attacks on German trains, went beyond the priority fight for physical survival. Manifesting patriotic attitudes together with the Polish inhabitants of Garbatka was an expression of great civil courage. Even greater courage was required to participate, even indirectly, in sabotage actions on the railways (robbery of German military supplies). The latter activities are unusual and distinguish the Jews of Garbatka against the background of other known forms of resistance of the Jews in the Radom district under the German occupation. On the other hand, taking advantage of the opportunity to bribe officials of the occupation administration (including Blue Policemen), despite its moral ambiguity, was a common practice in the ghettos. This allowed individuals to better prepare themselves for unexpected German repressions.

The current state of research does not allow to precisely determine the extent of the Jews’ involvement in various forms of anti-German resistance in Garbatka. However, it is estimated that several dozen Jews consciously and actively participated. They do not appear to have formed a local survival group, but individual participation in Polish partisan activities cannot be ruled out. Hiding was a common form of resistance, as well as using temporary hiding places (either personally prepared or encountered by chance), receiving one-off help from acquaintances or strangers, and often getting long-term aid provided by Polish residents of Garbatka. Many instances of resistance likely went undocumented, with only difficult-to-verify references remaining.

The involvement of Garbatka’s residents in “illegal” activities did not avoid the attention of the German security police. Garbatka was recognised as a centre for the organisation of resistance and secret activity, and for the collaboration of Jews and Poles. Surveillance by German agents and Polish local collaborators led to the

brutal pacification of the entire village. Among those murdered and deported to Auschwitz were probably the most active members of the Jewish community of Garbatka. The collected material allows us to hypothesize the existence in Garbatka before the pacification of a group of conspiring Jews with left-wing (communist?) views and collaborating with local Poles having similar views.¹⁸⁹ Arguably, pre-war contacts and political sympathies played a major role.

Neither the Poles nor the Jews in Garbatka were prepared for such a large-scale repressive operation as was carried out on 12 July 1942. In addition to disregarding the warnings of the Home Army intelligence service, carelessness and disregard for the basic rules of secret activity were also evident.¹⁹⁰ This led to the tragedy of hundreds of Garbatka residents. It was only after many months that a Home Army task group captured most of the informers. They were led to a forester's lodge in the village of Śmietanki (between Garbatka and Kozenice) and subjected to "examinations" there. They were all sentenced to death; "they were hanged – one hung the other." The sentence was carried out in the forest "between Garbatka and the road to Leśna Rzeka and Molendy." The traitor (the village headman) was not apprehended at the time, but after a provocation involving planting of deliberately stolen goods as evidence objects and the sending of an "anonymous letter," he was arrested by the Germans and taken to Auschwitz. There – as we read in the testimony – he was probably "finished off by prisoners from Garbatka."¹⁹¹

Did the pacification in July 1942 thwart the possibility of survival for a larger group of Jewish residents of Garbatka? Did Garbatka have a chance to become a base of secret activity, survival groups or combat groups for the local Jews? This is something we will never know. The terrain conditions, the tradition of resistance and the leftist influence would have been conducive to this.¹⁹² Perhaps the tragedy in Garbatka harmed the activities undertaken in other localities. Fear may have

¹⁸⁹ See the program catchwords of the PPS (including those of the socialist left), in J. Tomicki, *Lewica socjalistyczna w Polsce 1918–1939* (Warsaw, 1982), pp. 291, 305, 400, 406–408.

¹⁹⁰ W. Molenda, *Adam, Bilof*, pp. 68–69.

¹⁹¹ A. Barzycki, "Pamiętnik," p. 56.

¹⁹² J. Lachtara, "Z działalności Gwardii i Armii Ludowej w powiecie Kozenice w latach 1942–1944," *Wojskowy Przegląd Historyczny* 3 (1988), pp. 221–222; K. Styś, "Zwycięstwo będzie Twoją nagrodą..." in *Szkice z dziejów Pionek*, vol. 2: *Miasto i region*, ed. S. Piątkowski, M. Wierzbicki (Pionki, 2001), pp. 204–205, 215–216, 218, 220–221, 225.

paralysed bold plans for cooperation between Poles and Jews in the nearby local communities. It is worth mentioning a document published by Alina Skibińska concerning an unusual event in Gniewoszków at the beginning of May 1942. In the local synagogue, Poles and Jews met “covertly” to discuss the possibilities of engaging Jews in “diversion” activities in cooperation with the Polish underground, as well as the possibilities of hiding with the help of Poles.¹⁹³

In towns lying not far from Garbatka (Gniewoszków, Kozienice, Pionki, Zwolen), the most common manifestation of Jewish resistance was escapes from the ghettos and obtaining food on the “Aryan side.” The escapees usually tried to hide at the homes of their Polish acquaintances; sometimes they used hiding places and bunkers built in the woods. When obtaining food and forged documents, aid from the Poles was essential.¹⁹⁴ According to Adolf Misiuna, a member of the Pionki AK structures, there was a ten-member Jewish resistance group consisting of seven men and three women in the Pionki factory camp. On the premises of the gunpowder factory, they collaborated with AK soldiers. Some members of the group possessed “revolvers and 50 rounds of ammunition each.”¹⁹⁵ Krzysztof Urbański is of the opinion that this group belonged to the Żydowska Organizacja Bojowa (Jewish Combat Organisation, ŻOB), and fled to the forest during the liquidation of the camp in 1944.¹⁹⁶ Near Pionki, in the Kozienice Forest, there was also another group of armed Jews. Little is known about its activities.¹⁹⁷ However, there’s a known case of several escapees from a forced labour camp in Pionki, who joined the unit of Lt. Kazimierz Aleksandrowicz “Huragan.”¹⁹⁸ Further away south from Garbatka, in

¹⁹³ A. Skibińska, “Życie codzienne Żydów w Kozienicach pod okupacją niemiecką,” *Zagłada Żydów. Studia i Materiały* 3 (2007), pp. 84–85.

¹⁹⁴ Minutes of the interview with ‘the witness Bolesław Paciorek regarding the aid he provided to Lipa Winnykamień, Frederick Weinstein and other persons of Jewish nationality in Gniewoszków (Sarnów municipality, Radom District), Radom, 8 April 1970, in *Relacje o pomocy*, vol. 4, p. 95–97; G. Berendt, “Cena życia – ekonomiczne uwarunkowania egzystencji Żydów po ‘aryjskiej stronie,” *Zagłada Żydów. Studia i Materiały* 4 (2008), pp. 122, 131; B. Engelking, *Jest taki piękny słoneczny dzień*, pp. 123, 176, 201; *Relacje o pomocy*, vol. 4, pp. 50, 67–68, 70–71, 170–175; S. Piątkowski, “Oprawcy, prześladowcy, ratownicy,” p. 495.

¹⁹⁵ A. Misiuna, “Pionki w latach II wojny światowej – wspomnienia,” in *Szkice z dziejów Pionek*, vol. 1, ed. M. Wierzbicki (Pionki, 2000), pp. 199, 202–203. The author also mentions several Jews who survived the German occupation by hiding in Pionki and the surrounding area.

¹⁹⁶ K. Urbański, *Zagłada Żydów*, p. 210.

¹⁹⁷ S. Piątkowski, “Oprawcy, prześladowcy, ratownicy,” p. 492.

¹⁹⁸ J.D. Zimmerman, *Polskie Państwo Podziemne*, pp. 402–403.

the forests of Iłża in 1942, an armed group of Jewish fugitives from Iłża, Kazanów, Ostrowiec, Sienna and Szydłowiec was active.¹⁹⁹ Another “independent group of Jews” operated until mid-January 1945 in the forests near Szydłowiec.²⁰⁰

It seems that after the pacification in July 1942 and the murder of a group of the most active people, the majority of the Jews residing in the Garbatka ghetto took a passive attitude towards the German plans, including the deportation operation. During this time, adaptation was the primary tactic to follow in the hope of survival.

It should be remembered that the residents of Garbatka and the surrounding area still lived in an atmosphere of the occupation-era terror. Between 1943 and 1944, German gendarmes and soldiers killed more than three hundred people from villages in an approximately twenty kilometres radius from Garbatka. In the municipality of Policzna, to which Garbatka belonged, several dozen people were killed as a result of pacifications and executions, including in Molendy, where on 22 July 1943 and 7 April 1944, Germans killed thirty people.²⁰¹

In Policzna alone, on 12 June 1943, German gendarmes killed thirty two of its inhabitants, including “four families with children and old people.” In addition, four young men, who were probably hiding from being sent to forced labour in the Baudienst (Construction Service, German-organised compulsory service for Polish youth),²⁰² were arrested and sent to Auschwitz. From time to time, German manhunts combed the forests of the Kozienice Forest in search of partisans.²⁰³

Following the pacification, despite the dire circumstances and the constant threat of death, several Jews went into hiding in Garbatka with the assistance of Poles. They survived until the end of the German occupation.

¹⁹⁹ K. Urbański, *Zagłada Żydów*, p. 210.

²⁰⁰ S. Piątkowski, “Żydzi w Szydłowcu,” p. 131. Piątkowski does not rule out the existence of an underground organisation in the Szydłowiec ghetto and the possession of weapons by dozens of Jews (p. 129).

²⁰¹ *Rejestr miejsc i faktów zbrodni*, pp. 14, 26, 28–29, 52–54, 60, 70, 74, 87–89, 112, 118, 129–130, 140, 190, 192–193, 196–197.

²⁰² E. Gajda, “Krwawy dzień w Policznie,” in *Zbrodnie hitlerowskie na wsi polskiej w latach 1939–1945. Wspomnienia, pamiętniki i relacje*, ed. S. Durlej, J. Gmitruk (Kielce–Warsaw, 2008), pp. 80–81. For more, see M. Wróblewski, *Śłużba Budowlana (Baudienst) w Generalnym Gubernatorstwie 1940–1945* (Warsaw, 1984).

²⁰³ J. Abramczyk, *Partyzanci z Kozienickiej Puszczy*, pp. 137–138.

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SUMMARY

The article aims to present the attitudes and behaviour of the Jewish inhabitants of Garbatka towards the German occupier, particularly the attitudes of resistance. The conditions set by the occupation-era reality and Polish-Jewish relations are discussed. Jewish resistance, both of individuals and groups, took the form of a variety of ventures that broke the German occupation laws, from smuggling food (and other necessities), preparing hideouts and obtaining forged documents (e.g. baptismal etc. other church certificates) to participation in sabotage and diversion actions. Some activities, such as participating in “illegal” political actions or taking part in attacks on German trains, went beyond the priority fight for physical survival. Manifesting patriotic attitudes together with the Polish inhabitants of Garbatka was an expression of great civil courage. Even greater courage was required for participation, even indirectly, in sabotage actions on the railways (robbery of German army property). These latter activities distinguish the attitude of the Jews of Garbatka from other known forms of resistance of the Jews in the Radom District during the German occupation. The current state of research does not enable determining the exact scale of the involvement of Jews of Garbatka in various forms of anti-German resistance. However, it can be assumed that several dozen Jews took part in resistance consciously and actively. They do not seem to have formed a local survival group, but the participation of individu-

als in the Polish partisan movement cannot be ruled out. The records researched allows us to hypothesise the existence in Garbatka before the pacification of the village on 12 July 1942 of a community of Jewish secret activists with left-wing (communist?) views, who collaborated with local Poles with similar views. Pre-war contacts and political sympathies probably played a major role. After the pacification and killing of the most active individuals, the majority of the Jews in the ghetto adopted a passive attitude towards the German plans. During this time, adaptation was the primary tactic to follow in the hope of survival.

By showing the relationship between Jews and Poles in the context of the dramatic experiences of World War II, this article seeks to broaden the knowledge of Garbatka's recent history and thereby contribute to the development of research on the history of local communities under the German occupation.

KEYWORDS

World War II • Garbatka • ghetto in Garbatka • resistance of Jews •
German repressions • Polish-Jewish relations • Jews in hiding

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EVERYDAY LIFE AND LIVING CONDITIONS OF JEWS
IN THE NOWY SĄCZ GHETTO 1940–1942

The theme of the extermination of the Jews in the Nowy Sącz district (Kreishauptmannschaft Neu Sandez) has already been dealt with in several scholarly and popular interest articles.¹ They focused on the activities of the Judenrat in Nowy Sącz, the attitude of the Jewish elite of that city towards the Holocaust and the direct extermination of the Jews. None of the authors described the everyday life and living conditions in the Nowy Sącz ghetto (*Der jüdische Wohnbezirk in Neu Sandez*) in greater detail.² “The Jewish Quarter” in Nowy Sącz was established by an order of town commissioner Ernst Hein on 12 August 1940 and ceased to exist on 23–28 August 1942, when German functionaries deported its inhabitants and then murdered them in the Bełżec extermination camp.

¹ See i.a., T. Duda, “Eksterminacja ludności żydowskiej Nowego Sącza w okresie II wojny światowej,” *Rocznik Sąddecki* 19 (1988–1990), pp. 209–250; Ł. Połomski, “Elity nowosąddeckich Żydów wobec Zagłady,” in *Elity i przedstawiciele społeczności żydowskiej podczas II wojny światowej*, ed. M. Grądzka-Rejak, A. Namysło (Cracow–Katowice–Warsaw, 2017), pp. 69–82; *Pamiętając dla przyszłości. Historia Żydów na Sądectczyźnie. Konteksty – nawiązania – refleksje* (Nowy Sącz, 2016).

² References to the living conditions can be found in T. Duda’s study, „Eksterminacja ludności żydowskiej.”

The aim of this article is to fill the above-mentioned research gap. Information on daily life and conditions in the Nowy Sącz ghetto can be found mainly in post-war survivor testimonies held in the Archives of the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw and in other archives and academic institutions in Poland and abroad involved in the study of the Holocaust, and in collected Holocaust testimonies. In addition, there are several memoirs of the Jews of Nowy Sącz published.³ Elements of everyday life appear in the records concerning the activities of the Judenrat and other institutions providing assistance to those in need. This whole set of sources – supplemented by records concerning the relationship between the ghetto and the so-called “Aryan side” – shows the living conditions that the German authorities created for the Jews in Nowy Sącz.⁴

The First Months of the German Occupation

Before World War II, Nowy Sącz was an important regional centre of political, economic, social and cultural, and religious life of the Jewish community. About eleven thousand Jews lived in the town (about sixteen thousand in the Nowy Sącz District). According to the 1931 census, the percentage of the Jews residing in Nowy Sącz was 30%.⁵ The census considered only religion and language, not nationality. Followers of Judaism declared speaking Yiddish and Hebrew, while assimilated Jews spoke Polish.

As a result of the German Reich's aggression against the Second Polish Republic at the beginning of September 1939, the Nowy Sącz District was captured by the German troops. As a consequence of administrative divisions imposed by the occupation authorities, the structure of the local administration changed. The town of Nowy Sącz became part of the Nowy Sącz District (Kreishauptmannschaft Neu-

³ See for example, M. Lustig, *Skrwawiony puch. Wspomnienia ocalonego z Zagłady Markusa Lustiga*, trans. E. Świdorska (Nowy Sącz, 2016); Jakub Müller's memories captured on film: “Nowy Sącz to jest moje życie – Wspomnienia Jakuba Müllera,” pt. 1, YouTube channel of the Museum of Nowy Sącz land <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dIclaxcBvM0>, accessed 10 January 2024.

⁴ For information on the Jesuits' aid to the ghetto, see A. Franczak, “Śąsiedzkie relacje w godzinie próby. Pomoc jezuitów udzielana Żydom w czasie Zagłady na terenie Nowego Sącza,” in *Kościół, Żydzi, jezuici. Wokół pomocy Żydom w czasie II wojny światowej*, ed. M. Wenklar (Cracow, 2021), pp. 199–215.

⁵ K. Samsonowska, *Wyznaniowe gminy żydowskie i ich społeczności w województwie krakowskim (1918–1939)* (Cracow, 2005), p. 104.

Sandez).⁶ The function of the District governor from December 1939 until the end of the German occupation was held by Reinhard Busch, and before him, for only a few months, by Walter Hübschmann (initially as the district commissioner). In Nowy Sącz, the office of the town commissioner (Stadtkommissar) was held by Ernst Hein (until October 1940), Friedrich Schmidt (October 1940–January 1942) and Herbert Hüller (until the end of the German occupation). In October 1941, the German occupation authorities formally changed the name of town Nowy Sącz to the Germanised Neu-Sandez.⁷

After the Wehrmacht troops entered the town on 6 September 1939, looting and harassment of the Jews began. Markus Lustig, born in Nowy Sącz in 1925, wrote several decades after the end of the German occupation that for Jews the beginning of the war was associated with increasing persecution and their isolation from the rest of the population.⁸ Already in September 1939, the Germans plundered synagogues and Jewish houses of prayer.⁹ In the weeks and months that followed, German actions against Jews in Nowy Sącz were similar to those in many other towns and cities in occupied Poland. Samuel Kaufer recalled:

It began with incidents which, compared to the crimes of the following years, seem like innocent jokes, pranks. Men were seized and sent to work, from which they often returned bruised and bleeding. We were mistreated in a bestial way, but there were no casualties, and for us this was always a fundamental issue.¹⁰

⁶ The Nowy Sącz District (Kreishauptmannschaft Neu-Sandez) was part of the Distrikt Krakau (Cracow Province) of the General Governorate. In 1942, it had an area of 2,510 square kilometres and a population of about 315 thousand, and included seven towns: Nowy Sącz (Neu Sandez), Krynica (Bad Krynica), Stary Sącz (Alt Sandez), Piwniczna, Muszyna, Grybów and Limanowa – and 26 rural municipalities: Chelmiec, Dobra, Grybów (village), Jodłownik, Kamienica, Kobyle-Gródek, Korzenna, Krynica (village), Limanowa (village), Łabowa, Łącko, Łososina Dolna, Łukowica, Mszana Dolna, Mszana Górna, Muszyna (village), Nawojowa, Nowy Sącz (village), Niedźwiedź, Piwniczna (village), Skrzydlna, Stadło, Stary Sącz (village), Tylicz, Tymbark and Ujanowice.

⁷ D. Golik, „Powiat nowosądecki pod władzą Niemców. Starostwo powiatowe i cywilne instytucje okupacyjne,” www.wojennysacz.pl/powiat-nowosadecki-pod-wladza-niemcow/#_ftn6, accessed 18 January 2024.

⁸ M. Lustig, *Skrwawiony puch*, p. 55.

⁹ S. Lehrer, L. Strassman, *The Vanished City of Tsanz* (Southfield, MI, Nanuet, NY, 1997), pp. 260–261. For an outline of the religious life in Nowy Sącz ghetto, see below in this paper.

¹⁰ Archives of the Jewish Historical Institute (hereinafter AŻIH), collection Zbiór relacji Żydów Ocalałych z Zagłady [Collection of the Holocaust Survivors Testimonies], 301/1703, testimony of Samuel Kaufer, p. 1.

Religious Jews, easily recognisable by their challahs, hats, and sidelocks, were particularly targeted for public harassment.¹¹ The Germans ordered them to perform in the Nowy Sącz Market Square in strange poses: jumping, dancing or walking on all fours. Germans also took photographs. In addition, they forced the Jews to do the humiliating work of cleaning up the streets and toilets.¹²

Round-ups of Jews for forced labour soon began.¹³ At the same time, the first anti-Jewish decrees were promulgated, which covered the entire General Governorate. The legal acts excluded the Jews from the social and economic life of the region.¹⁴ The process of stripping people of their livelihoods and property, which frequently fell into the hands of the German terror apparatus, commenced.¹⁵ These measures led to the far-reaching pauperisation of a large part of the Jewish community. As a result of the German-occupation policy, money was losing its value and, as Markus Lustig recalled, people tried to cope by trading in kind. As time passed, the people of Nowy Sącz began to feel the shortage of provisions.¹⁶

In the autumn of 1939, a Judenrat (Jewish Council) was established in the city, which in accordance with the instructions of the Germans, arranged life in the so-called Jewish residential quarter in Nowy Sącz, which had been under organisation since 1940; among other things, it was in charge of drawing up lists of workers, organising money collections and paying contributions to the occupier. It had its seat initially at 44 Kraszewskiego Street, then in the centre of the Piekło quarter, on Lwowska Street. The Council consisted mainly of middle-class merchants, craftsmen and the intellectual elite: lawyers, clerks and educated citizens.¹⁷ Markus Lustig noted that the Council initially focused on helping Jews and was seen in

¹¹ E. Rączy, *Zagłada Żydów w dystrykcie krakowskim w latach 1939–1945* (Rzeszów, 2014), p. 259.

¹² S. Lehrer, L. Strassman, *The Vanished City*, pp. 258–259.

¹³ See B. Engelking, “Życie codzienne Żydów w miasteczkach dystryktu warszawskiego,” in *Prowinjacja noc. Życie i zagłada Żydów w dystrykcie warszawskim*, ed. B. Engelking, J. Leociak, D. Libionka (Warsaw, 2007), p. 125.

¹⁴ For more, see M. Grądzka-Rejak, A. Namysło, “Relacje polsko-żydowskie w okresie II wojny światowej. Kontekst i uwarunkowania,” in *Represje za pomoc Żydom na okupowanych ziemiach polskich w czasie II wojny światowej*, vol. 1, ed. M. Grądzka-Rejak, A. Namysło (Warsaw, 2019), pp. 12–23.

¹⁵ “Wrzesień 1939 roku i kilka dalszych wspomnień Władysława Wajdy,” ed. I. Zaciewska, *Almanach Sąddecki* 1/2 (66/67) (18) (2009), p. 140.

¹⁶ M. Lustig, *Skrwawiony puch*, p. 57.

¹⁷ To use the phrase used by a survivor from Łowicz, D. Fligelman, it could be said that its members constituted the “aristocracy of war” (cited after: B. Engelking, “Życie codzienne Żydów,” p. 163).

a positive light. However, in the following months, it was taken over by individuals who were clearly viewed negatively.¹⁸ The change in the perception of the Judenrat may have been linked to the establishment of the ghetto and the new duties that were imposed on the Jews.

Establishment of the Ghetto

The Germans organised the first ghetto in the occupied Polish lands as early as in October 1939 and it was in Piotrków. In April 1940, a large ghetto was established in Łódź, located in the Polish territories incorporated directly into the Third Reich. In the same year, ghettos were established in the Distrikt Warschau (Warsaw Province) (Góra Kalwaria, Parysów, Łowicz).¹⁹ In the Distrikt Krakau (Cracow Province), most of the ca. 70 “Jewish residential quarters” were set up between 1941 and 1942.²⁰

According to these data, it can be concluded that the ghetto in Nowy Sącz was established relatively early, as it was created on 12 August 1940.²¹ According to German regulations, “Christians” living in the residential district designated as the Jewish quarter had to leave their flats and find new accommodation. As a result, there were frequent exchanges of accommodation with Jewish families who were compelled to move into the ghetto.²² The order establishing the Jewish quarter stipulated that the dwellings must not only be vacated, but also emptied of possessions. In addition, the owners of houses in the ghetto were placed under an immediate obligation to make repairs, including repairing damage caused by warfare. The Jewish Council was burdened with the leasing of flats and the maintenance of order. Any change of accommodation within the Jewish quarter had to be reported to the town hall and to the power plant.²³ It’s worth noting that most of the elegant and modern Jewish houses outside the ghetto, similar to those in Cracow

¹⁸ M. Lustig, *Skrwawiony puch*, p. 56.

¹⁹ B. Engelking, “Życie codzienne Żydów,” p. 168.

²⁰ R. Hilberg, *Zagłada Żydów europejskich*, vol. 1, trans. J. Giebułtowski (Warsaw, 2014), p. 248.

²¹ National Archives in Cracow, Branch in Nowy Sącz, files of the town of Nowy Sącz (hereinafter ANKrNS), 31/15/316, order of the town commissioner and the Town Directorate in Nowy Sącz, p. 49. Residents of Nowy Sącz were able to get acquainted with the city plan with the demarcated boundaries of the new district for a fee of one zloty.

²² Archives of Sądecki Sztetl (hereinafter ASS), Testimony of Tadeusz Rychlak, 2021.

²³ ANKrNS, 31/15/316, order of the town commissioner and the Town Directorate in Nowy Sącz, p. 97.

and many other cities, were taken over by the Germans.²⁴ The process of resettling the Jews in Nowy Sącz to a designated quarter probably ended in August 1941.²⁵

From the beginning, the ghetto was divided into two parts: for the working and the non-working. Nowy Sącz was not an exception. The Germans applied a similar solution also in other towns of the Distrikt Krakau (Cracow Province) such as Sanok.²⁶ An “inferior ghetto,” as it was called, was located in the centre of Nowy Sącz, because those who were unable to work were placed there, including mainly the elderly, children, the sick and unskilled individuals. Initially, this ghetto was open. Most probably at the end of June or the beginning of July 1941, construction work was started to separate it from the so-called “Aryan side.”²⁷ In the following months, it was largely surrounded by a wall and in some parts by barbed wire.²⁸ According to Jakub Müller’s testimony, the construction of the wall caused a kind of panic. Some people attempted to escape, feeling they were locked in a death trap.²⁹

Eventually, this part of the ghetto overlapped with the pre-war Jewish quarter: it was enclosed to the north by the castle, to the south by the northern frontage of the Market Square, to the east by Piotra Skargi Street, which was, however, excluded from the ghetto. Therefore, from the eastern side, the Jewish quarter was separated from the “Aryan city” by the wall enclosing Franciszkańska Street, Trzeciego Maja Square, and the entrance to Kazimierza Wielkiego Street. The quarter had two entrances. At the corner of Bóżniczka and Piotra Skargi Streets was the main gate of the ghetto (right next to the station of the Jewish Order Service, or the *Jüdischer Ordnungsdienst*, popularly known as the Jewish Police). The other, unofficial one,³⁰

²⁴ A. Bieberstein, *Zagłada Żydów w Krakowie* (Cracow, 1985), p. 48.

²⁵ A. Wiśniewski, “Losy ludności żydowskiej na terenie Sądeckiego w okresie okupacji niemieckiej,” in *Okupacja w Sądeckim* (Warsaw, 1979), p. 171; A. Franczak, M. Grądzka-Rejak, “Tylko mur nas dzieli, tylko kilkadziesiąt kroków, a tu życie, tam śmierć. Mury wokół gett w Warszawie, Krakowie i Nowym Sączu,” in *Ciemności kryją ziemię. Wybrane aspekty badań i nauczania o Holokauście*, ed. M. Grądzka-Rejak, P. Trojański (Cracow – Nowy Sącz, 2019), p. 123.

²⁶ In the autumn of 1942 the ghettos in Bochnia, Przemyśl, Rzeszów and Tarnów were reduced in size and divided into two parts. In Cracow, it was not until the end of 1942 that the ghetto was split into parts for working and non-working residents (E. Rączy, *Zagłada Żydów*, pp. 112, 115; A. Bieberstein, *Zagłada Żydów w Krakowie*, p. 80).

²⁷ A. Franczak, M. Grądzka-Rejak, “Tylko mur nas dzieli,” p. 123.

²⁸ It is likely that the wall was built between July and September or October 1941 (*ibid.*, p. 124).

²⁹ ASS, testimony of Jakub Müller, 2009.

³⁰ It was through this gate that the Germans led the ghetto residents to the headquarters of the German border guard, popularly known in Nowy Sącz as the Gestapo.

was opposite the Lutheran church at the Pijarska Street. Pijarska Street up to the Lutheran church did not belong to the ghetto, because the Germans who considered themselves Lutherans went to the church here. At the western borders of the ghetto, there were no walls, but barbed wire fences.³¹ Because of the fence, escape from this part of the ghetto was difficult, but it did happen.³² Trade between the Polish and Jewish populations and any aid provided by Poles was also very limited.

The second part of the ghetto was established in an area of the city called Piekło³³ and was intended for the working residents. Jews could only move between one ghetto and the other (for the working and the non-working) via Pijarska, Szwedzka and Wałowa Streets and the bridge over the Kamienica River. The boundaries of the ghetto for the working residents were: the Kamienica River to the south and west, Paderewskiego Street to the east, and Zdrojowa and Głowackiego Streets to the north. As there were a lot of orchards and farmland here, it was called the “rural ghetto.” Living conditions were better than in the city centre. Residents could grow vegetables and fruit. In addition, there were no walls, only formal boundaries. Contact with the Polish population was therefore more frequent, and there were greater opportunities for escape than in the ghetto for the non-working.

Resettlements

The majority of the pre-war eleven thousand strong community of Nowy Sącz Jews ended up in the ghetto in the very first year of its existence. In addition, there were refugees from Germany and Austria who had made it to Nowy Sącz before the outbreak of war. On 23 August 1942, when the ghetto was liquidated, there were approximately seventeen thousand people in it. This was the result of the resettlements and migration of the Jewish population carried out on the initiative of the German authorities. As early as in 1940, the German authorities resettled Jews from Cracow, Lwów, Łódź and even the German Reich to Nowy Sącz. Poles

³¹ ASS, Records provided by Władysław Żaroffe.

³² Among others, Jakub Müller escaped from the ghetto. He crossed the boundary of the sealed quarter near the Evangelical church (ASS, Testimony of Jakub Müller, 2009).

³³ The etymology of the quarter's name (“Piekło,” i.e. Inferno, Hell) is not entirely clear. One of the versions suggests that the name is linked to the fact that non-Catholics (Arians, i.e. Unitarians, and later Jews) lived there, the first brothels were established there, and it was the scene of many crimes. Another tradition refers to the “Piekło” inn, which was located on the main street in this part of Nowy Sącz.

watched the arriving railway wagons full of people. They were particularly struck by the state of Jews brought from Łódź, who were sent to the barracks in Nowy Sącz: “Their fate was sad,” noted Maria Zielińska, who came from an intelligentsia family. “The transports travelled slowly because of the frost and snow (early March 1940) [...] Jews in a terribly deplorable condition. Their wounds were dressed until dark.”³⁴ Almost every month, the Judenrat turned to organisations such as Joint (American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, JDC) in Cracow for help. A letter sent in mid-1940 stated that the situation “is deplorable.”³⁵

In 1940, the Germans also started the operation of resettlement of Jews from the surrounding villages. This resulted in the deterioration of living conditions in the Nowy Sącz ghetto. The resettled and refugees, however, were in a particularly bad situation. There was no housing for them, so they were housed in synagogues, smaller Jewish houses of prayer called *bóznica*³⁶ and schools. Some came to Nowy Sącz voluntarily, but their number is difficult to estimate.

“The quarters inhabited by Jews are shrinking steadily,”³⁷ wrote Samuel Kaufer, one of the Holocaust survivors who gave an extensive post-war testimony of his experiences. Jews residing in Nowy Sącz before the war thought that there were actually a lot of newcomers.³⁸ The Judenrat stated in its reports to the JDC in Cracow that 75 per cent of the displaced were people deprived of their livelihoods.³⁹ At the same time, and it is worth emphasising, in the testimonies none of the survivors formed complaints or accusations against the newcomers claiming e.g. that they deprived them of space or food. Arguably, the Jews who had resided in Nowy Sącz for generations saw the newcomers as people who suffered as much as they did themselves.

Initially, when the first transports arrived in the town, the local Jews tried to take care of those arriving. They were allocated flats with furnishings, bedding

³⁴ *Z pamiętników Marii Matyldy Zielińskiej*, ed. B. Celewicz (Nowy Sącz, 2021), p. 82.

³⁵ American Joint Distribution Committee Archives (hereinafter JDC), Letter of the Judenrat to the JDC in Cracow, 6 June 1940, http://search.archives.jdc.org/multimedia/Documents/W_3941/W_3941_017/W_3941_017_0872.pdf#search=, accessed 16 April 2021.

³⁶ There were two major synagogues in Nowy Sącz before the war and ca. 20 smaller Jewish houses of prayer called *bóznica*.

³⁷ AŻIH, 301/1703, testimony of Samuel Kaufer, p. 3.

³⁸ AŻIH, 301/4694, testimony of Kiplowa, p. 1.

³⁹ JDC, letter of the Judenrat in Nowy Sącz to the JDC in Cracow, 21 November 1940, http://search.archives.jdc.org/multimedia/Documents/W_3941/W_3941_017/W_3941_017_0925.pdf, accessed 16 April 2021.

and necessary items. If someone lacked clothing, they could count on the others' kindness. The public kitchens served food, often even two-course dinners.⁴⁰ Unfortunately, as time passed, the ghetto became poorer and the Judenrat could not afford to run the kitchen. Funds for food were dwindling. According to witness testimonies, the ghetto residents looked at those arriving and wondered how many more people could be accommodated in Nowy Sącz.

On 12 November 1941, the town commissioner Friedrich Schmidt introduced an order on the duties of the ghetto residents. It concerned, among other things, the routes by which Jews could move between the two parts of the "Jewish residential quarter." Under the Third GG Residence Restriction Regulation of 15 October 1941, the death penalty was introduced for leaving the area designated for Jews without permission.

Terror in the Ghetto

Anxiety and fear of German repressive actions had a huge impact on the living conditions of the Jews of Nowy Sącz. The participant and inspirer of many anti-Jewish actions was Heinrich Hamann,⁴¹ the commander of the town's German Border Police (Grenzpolizei-kommissariat Neu Sandez).

In his testimony, Samuel Kaufer distinguishes between two types of German operations in the ghetto. The first type were "wild" operations, when literally anyone who stood in the way of the Germans could be killed – for example, when Hamann at the ghetto gate shot at Jews passing by it.⁴² The second type are "or-

⁴⁰ "Pamiętnik Poli Mordkowicz (Mordkiewicz), 1940 r.," in *Archiwum Ringelbluma. Konspiracyjne Archiwum Getta Warszawy*, vol. 24: *Obozy pracy przymusowej*, ed. M. Janczewska (Warsaw, 2015), p. 81.

⁴¹ Heinrich Hamann (1908–1993) was a native of Brodesholm (Schleswig-Holstein). He attended a primary school in Neumünster, then a secondary schools in Lütjenburg, Petersdorf, and Kiel. He became a tradesman and ran a shop owned by his mother. In 1931, he enrolled in the NSDAP, then in the SS. He worked in Munich, serving as adjutant in Reinhard Heydrich's office from 1936. Subsequently, he was the commander of the Regina Hotel in Vienna, which was the headquarters of SS Reichsführer Heinrich Himmler. Between 1939 and 1943, he was the commander of the Border Police in Nowy Sącz, later working in Jasło and Cracow. In 1945, he fled to Germany, where he was captured only in 1960. In 1966, he was sentenced to life imprisonment (D. Golik, "Struktury niemieckiej policji bezpieczeństwa i służby bezpieczeństwa w Nowym Sączu," www.wojennysacz.pl/struktury-niemieckiej-policji-bezpieczenstwa-i-sluzby-bezpieczenstwa/, accessed 16 April 2021; K.-M. Mallman, "Heinrich Hamann, Leiter des Grenzpolizei-kommissariats Neu-Sandez," in *Karrieren der Gewalt. Nationalsozialistische Taterbiographien*, ed. G. Paul, K.-M. Mallman (Darmstadt, 2011), pp. 104–112).

⁴² A. Franczak, M. Grądzka-Rejak, "Tylko mur nas dzieli," p. 128.

ganised” operations, usually carried out on the basis of lists, very often with the zealous participation of the Jewish Order Service officers.⁴³ In the first case, the operation resulted in death on the spot; in the second, it also resulted in being sent to a concentration camp, usually KL Auschwitz, or to labour camps in Pustków or the Police School in Rabka.⁴⁴

The pattern of most organised operations was similar: Commander Hamann’s decision, then the victims were brought by the Jewish police and sent to a German camp or executed in the local cemetery.⁴⁵ This was the course of the bloodiest April operation that took place in 1942,⁴⁶ when four hundred people were killed in one day. An extension of this was the May operation.⁴⁷ A year earlier, on Hamann’s orders, forty Jews from Russia were shot.⁴⁸ It should be mentioned that the Jewish police were also the cause of terror of the Nowy Sącz ghetto residents. This was not an isolated case, the situation was similar also in other ghettos.⁴⁹

Crimes also occurred on a daily basis. Mojżesz Bergman – a Nowy Sącz resident and a Holocaust witness – described how, before his very eyes, around thirty young Jews were thrown out of the trucks in front of Ameisen’s house (located at 30 Jagiellońska Street) in 1940. Several of them, perhaps five, were dead: “They looked horrible. It is simply difficult to describe it. Faces massacred, clothes in shreds or [people] dressed only in trousers and without shoes.”⁵⁰

The spreading news of the crimes instilled horror and raised the atmosphere of terror in the ghetto. It seems that at first those crimes shocked, but over time

⁴³ AŻIH, 301/1703, Testimony of Samuel Kaufer, p. 5.

⁴⁴ The School of Commanders of the Security Police and Security Service, located in Rabka, was a place of execution for many Jews – officers were shown here how to act towards the “subhumans.” More in G. Moskal, M. Rapta, W. Tupta, *Mroczne sekrety willi „Tereska”* (Rabka-Zdrój, 2008).

⁴⁵ AŻIH, 301/1703, testimony of Samuel Kaufer, p. 6.

⁴⁶ The April action began on 28 April 1942. It was targeted at ghetto residents belonging to Zionist and left-wing organisations. Heinrich Hamann compiled a list of victims on the basis of lists of members of the M. Rosenfeld Library. Those arrested were often random people and not connected with the library, but the number of detainees added up. They were all shot in the Jewish cemetery, then Hamann and the Germans entered the ghetto and killed about a hundred people in a street shooting.

⁴⁷ Throughout May 1942, people were also murdered under the pretext of belonging to left-wing organisations (ASS, Copy of the minutes of the testimony of Kalman Holzer, p. 42).

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 41.

⁴⁹ J.A. Młynarczyk, *W cieniu Zagłady. Losy kieleckich Żydów w czasie drugiej wojny światowej* (Toruń, 2020), pp. 131–137; A. Bieberstein, *Zagłada Żydów w Krakowie*, p. 165.

⁵⁰ Yad Vashem Archives (hereinafter AYV), 88-0192F, Michał Bergman-Winter, *Memorandum. Nowy Sącz – Sambor 1939–1945*, manuscript, n.d., n.p., p. 18.

became commonplace. Jews in Nowy Sącz talked about who and where the Germans had killed, how many people had been taken away to camps. “Gestapo men – as various representatives of the German occupation authorities were commonly referred to – would walk the streets, shoot, drag people out of their homes and shoot them,” testified Steinlauf.⁵¹ Historian Tadeusz Duda wrote that death could befall Jews for virtually anything that the Germans interpreted as transgressing the law.⁵²

Housing and Sanitary Conditions

The Jewish quarter in Nowy Sącz was unimaginably overcrowded due to the constant influx of deported persons.⁵³ Some of the houses were poorly maintained: they lacked floors, were old and wooden, and ridden with mould, which enhanced the spread of many diseases.⁵⁴ Similar conditions existed also in other ghettos. The inhabitants were economic with furnishings, and some furniture was sold to obtain money for essential needs. The lack of running water and sanitary facilities worsened the already disastrous hygienic conditions.⁵⁵

The richer and relatively privileged Jews were better off than the majority of the ghetto’s residents. This is shown by the case of Esther Elenberg, who came to Nowy Sącz from Cracow in 1941, and was able to rent a flat. She was a fairly wealthy person, coming from a merchant family with a high financial status:

“We lived at my sister’s for a short time, then we rented a flat [...]” – she recalled. – “I was engaged at the time, my fiancé lived in Warsaw. His name was Roshar. Then the ghetto thing started in Warsaw, he ran away and came to us in Nowy Sącz. Since my father would not allow us to live in one flat without getting married, we took a silent wedding and rented a room for ourselves.”⁵⁶

⁵¹ AŻIH, 301/1338, Testimony of Emil Steinlauf, p. 2.

⁵² T. Duda, “Eksterminacja ludności żydowskiej,” p. 217.

⁵³ It should be noted that the last groups of Jews arrived in Nowy Sącz in August 1942, a few days before their deportation to the death camp in Bełżec.

⁵⁴ T. Duda, “Eksterminacja ludności żydowskiej,” p. 215.

⁵⁵ Cf. A. Kopciowski, *Zagłada Żydów w Zamościu* (Lublin, 2005), p. 57.

⁵⁶ AYV, O.3/2136, testimony of Estera Elenberg, p. 5.

However, as time went by, also their situation deteriorated. In a short time, it became apparent that paying for housing was pointless, because new people were constantly arriving in the ghetto and the Germans were quartering them in the already inhabited flats.⁵⁷

Those with some connections were able to obtain better accommodation. Emil Steinlauf, who moved to the ghetto in accordance with the German orders in 1941, thus relatively late, described how he got a flat for himself: thanks to a relative in the Judenrat, he chose a flat and paid the property owner. As he recalled, he placed “his two daughters there at once, a 16-year-old and a 12-year-old, so that no one would take the flat away from me.”⁵⁸

The situations outlined here concerned a small group of people. As already mentioned, some Jews got in touch with Poles, who had to leave the area of the “Jewish quarter,” about exchanging their dwellings. Samuel Kaufer reported: “More often than not, Jews have to pay fat sums of money in order to exchange their beautifully furnished flat with an “Aryan” for a stinking cubbyhole, located, however, in a district where we were allowed to continue to vegetate.”⁵⁹ The rental of a flat on Kochanowskiego Street was mentioned by Abe Holcer, who moved with his family to Nowy Sącz from the village of Białawoda in 1941.⁶⁰

After each resettlement of the next group of Jews to the ghetto in Nowy Sącz, the situation of its residents worsened. In the testimony of Mrs. Kiplowa (first name unknown) from Nowy Sącz, we read that in 1941 there were on average 4–5 families per room with a kitchen.⁶¹ The total was about twenty people per flat, making the population density similar to that in the Warsaw ghetto. In the “sealed quarter” in Łódź, six to seven people had to share a room. Similarly, in Miechów, it was about five people per room, and in Radom, around five people. In Lwów, a dozen or so people shared one room.⁶² In the Cracow ghetto, there were five people per room

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

⁵⁸ AŻIH, 301/1338, testimony of Emil Steinlauf, p. 1.

⁵⁹ AŻIH, 301/1703, testimony of Samuel Kaufer, p. 3.

⁶⁰ AYV, 033c/6433, testimony of Abe Holzer, n.p.

⁶¹ AŻIH, 301/4694, testimony of Kiplowa, p. 1.

⁶² M. Grądzka-Rejak, “‘Zdobywczyni życia.’ Wybrane aspekty codzienności dziewcząt i kobiet żydowskich podczas okupacji niemieckiej,” in *Ciemności kryją ziemię*, pp. 56–57.

and up to even ten per flat.⁶³ Similar figures for the final period of the operation of the Nowy Sącz ghetto were given by Salomon Lehrer.⁶⁴ “People slept in gate passages, on the ground, with bundles that rats and mice would pick at,” Kiplowa recalled.⁶⁵ Holcer estimated that in the sealed ghetto, where his parents stayed, between ten and fifteen people could live in a single flat; it should be added that the average dwelling consisted of a kitchen and a room.⁶⁶

The flats of the deceased – sometimes the rooms of people who died in them from the bullets of Germans – were occupied by new tenants. The allocation of the flats was handled by Judenrat officials. Lustig recalled that when their neighbour died, they got her room, broke through a wall and thus enlarged their flat.⁶⁷ After Markus Lustig’s family was murdered on 29 April 1942, the Germans quartered a family from Łabowa in his home, whom he did not know at all.⁶⁸ The living conditions in the Nowy Sącz ghetto contributed to the breakdown of previous family ties and intimacy. Social roles were also reversed, and it was not uncommon for children to try to provide food for the family or to maintain it.⁶⁹

Food and Ways of Obtaining Food

The Jewish inhabitants of Nowy Sącz first experienced famine in the winter of late 1939 and early 1940, following the mass arrival of refugees.⁷⁰ Hunger soon became an integral part of their daily lives. In the spring of 1940, the weekly food ration per person was seven hundred grams of bread, fifty grams of meat and twenty grams of sugar. In Przemyśl, it was two hundred grams of bread, in Nowy Targ one hundred and sixty grams. One year later, there was five hundred grams per person in Dębica and one hundred grams in the Cracow ghetto. Despite that, as the list shows, in the initial period of the German occupation, the food rations

⁶³ E. Rączy, *Zagłada Żydów*, p. 142.

⁶⁴ S. Lehrer, L. Strassman, *The Vanished City*, p. 286.

⁶⁵ AŻIH, 301/4694, testimony of Kiplowa, p. 2.

⁶⁶ AYD, 033c/6433, testimony of Abe Holcer, n.p.

⁶⁷ M. Lustig, *Skrwawiony puch*, p. 61.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 69.

⁶⁹ B. Engelking, „Życie codzienne Żydów,” p. 186.

⁷⁰ S. Lehrer, L. Strassman, *The Vanished City*, p. 279.

for Jews in Nowy Sącz were higher than in other localities, they still did not meet human needs.⁷¹

Food shortages led to the development of many diseases. As early as August 1940, the Nowy Sącz Judenrat reported to the JDC: “Their families are formally starving, there is an increasing number of illnesses in Jewish homes.”⁷² Epidemic typhus was prevalent in Nowy Sącz and in ghettos in other towns.⁷³ For example, in the “sealed quarter” in Żółkiew, the disease was claiming dozens of lives a day, including young people.⁷⁴ In 1940, fearing diseases, the Germans opened a small hospital, consisting of just three rooms, in the Nowy Sącz ghetto. Only three doctors worked there at the time. In the Krakau Distrikt (Cracow Province), hospitals also operated in ghettos in Bochnia, Dębica, Jasło, Rzeszów and Przemyśl. All of them struggled with similar financial and supply problems.⁷⁵

Until the ghetto walls were erected, contacts with the “Aryan side” were easier and there were more opportunities to get food. Among those looking for it outside the ghetto was Markus Lustig, for example, who in 1941, together with his neighbour Reinhold, travelled around the surrounding villages in a horse-drawn cart:

We had a permission from the authorities to collect debts from the peasants for the flour, which had already been bought before the outbreak of war. I agreed. We started the journey on a Sunday, going to the villages of Trzetrzewina, Wysokie and others. Each evening we stayed overnight with a different farmer. The farmers had no money to pay, but they gave us food. For example, we were given flour, grain, potatoes, vegetables and fruit.⁷⁶

Lustig recalled that the expeditions lasted from Sunday to Thursday. Through such journeys they obtained food for their families. If they had more food, they shared it with their neighbours and closest relatives.

⁷¹ E. Rączy, *Zagłada Żydów*, p. 140.

⁷² JDC, Letter of the Judenrat in Nowy Sącz to the JDC in Cracow, 13 August 1940, http://search.archives.jdc.org/multimedia/Documents/W_3941/W_3941_017/W_3941_017_0891.pdf, accessed 16 April 2021.

⁷³ E. Rączy, *Zagłada Żydów*, p. 153.

⁷⁴ G. Taffet, *Zagłada Żydów żółkiewskich*, ed. N. Aleksy, S. Eckert (Warsaw, 2019), p. 62.

⁷⁵ E. Rączy, *Zagłada Żydów*, p. 148.

⁷⁶ M. Lustig, *Skrwawiony puch*, p. 61.

Emil Steinlauf, anticipating the deportation from Krasne Potockie, had already arranged for a flat in the “better ghetto” at Piekło in May 1941. He took a cow there, with which he could feed his family: “I stole one cow from my own farm and smuggled it into the ghetto in Nowy Sącz,” he wrote.⁷⁷ Raising animals in the ghetto was illegal, and it is most likely that Steinlauf was able to do so because someone close to him belonged to the Judenrat.

According to witness testimonies, hunger was among the dominant experiences in the Nowy Sącz ghetto. As a result of the German economic policy, the value of money was declining and funds were running out over time. Samuel Kaufer recalled how Jews tried to survive the difficult conditions: “Many surrendered their last garment, their last shirt, just to get some potatoes, a loaf of black bread.”⁷⁸ Food prices rose rapidly⁷⁹ so when money was running out, groceries were bought with valuables or clothes.⁸⁰

In 1942, very low food rations were established in the occupied Polish territories; among other things, meat ration cards were taken away from Jews and extra rations for children and working people were abolished. According to Raul Hilberg, this was part of the preparation for “The Final Solution” (*Endlösung der Judenfrage*).⁸¹ By the end of the operation of the ghetto in Nowy Sącz (1942), food rations were catastrophically small; seven hundred grams of bread, fifty grams of meat, twenty grams of sugar “is a regional weekly ration per person,” Kaufer reported.⁸² The result of this policy was deaths due to starvation or “physical exhaustion.” In January 1942, for example, nine such cases were recorded in the ghetto.⁸³ Whole families and individuals died of famine. In 1941, the Goldfinger family, who lived on Czarna Street, died of starvation, and in 1942, Pessla Dagan from Czysza Street.⁸⁴ The young Mina Gotlieb starved to death on Bandurskiego

⁷⁷ AŻIH, 301/1338, testimony of Emil Steinlauf, p. 1.

⁷⁸ AŻIH, 301/1703, testimony of Samuel Kaufer, p. 7.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.* For more, see G. Berendt, “Cena życia – ekonomiczne uwarunkowania egzystencji Żydów po ‘aryjskiej stronie,” *Zagłada Żydów. Studia i Materiały* 4 (2008), pp. 110–143; I. Kostrowicka, Z. Landau, J. Tomaszewski, *Historia gospodarcza Polski XIX i XX wieku* (Warsaw, 1984).

⁸⁰ AŻIH, 301/1703, testimony of Samuel Kaufer, p. 7.

⁸¹ R. Hilberg, *Zagłada Żydów europejskich*, pp. 172–173.

⁸² AŻIH, 301/1703, Testimony of Samuel Kaufer, p. 8.

⁸³ E. Rączy, *Zagłada Żydów*, p. 145.

⁸⁴ ASS, A. Kac, *Żydzi – prześladowanie i Zagłada*, manuscript, p. 99.

Street despite family care.⁸⁵ The same deaths befell 78-year-old Chaskiel Fisch from Lipie and Golda Goldfinger from Barska Street.⁸⁶ They all died in the ghetto at Piekło. It was unfenced, with more green space, but even this did not protect many of the people placed there from starvation.

Probably the number of famine victims in the Nowy Sącz ghetto would have been higher had it not been for Polish-Jewish smuggling.⁸⁷ “So smuggling flourishes, practised within the ghetto itself by Jews who are in contact with Poles, lured by the possibility of great profits,” Kaufer recounted.⁸⁸ Berta Korenman recalled that inside the ghetto the food trade was practically non-existent. Food only arrived from outside, shopping could be arranged through Poles.⁸⁹ According to Izak Goldfinger, food was delivered to the ghetto at Piekło, where his parents lived, by Stanisław Pawlik, his father’s pre-war employee. The Goldfinger family came from the village of Tropie. Help from others, Izak claims, depended on selling what his parents had taken from home.⁹⁰

The commodity that the ghetto offered in barter was saccharine. Janina Maćkowiak, then a school-age girl, recalled that she once bought bread and went with it to the Nowy Sącz ghetto. As soon as she crossed the threshold of a Jewish house, the senior of the family shouted that there was bread. It was a great sensation:

Persons in the room crowded around – three pairs of little dirty hands reached out to me. One pair, probably the largest, started to tinker near the lock of the briefcase, but my mother chased the attackers into a corner with a flutter of a cloth, and asked me to sit on a chair wiped down with a cloth.⁹¹

After about 15 minutes, the man returned with saccharine and exchanged it for bread. Maćkowiak remembered:

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 102.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 99.

⁸⁷ For more in this matter see B. Musiał, *Kto dopomoże Żydowi...* (Poznań, 2019), pp. 35–55.

⁸⁸ AŻIH, 301/1703, testimony of Samuel Kaufer, p. 8.

⁸⁹ B. Korenman, “Relacja z okresu okupacji,” *Almanach Sądecki* 1/2 (66/67) (18) (2009), p. 148.

⁹⁰ A. Gieniec, *Młodość za drutem kolczastym. Dzieje Izaka Goldfingera w czasie II wojny światowej*, M.A. thesis written under the direction of Dr A.K. Link-Lenczewski, Jagiellonian University, Cracow 2003, p. 15.

⁹¹ J. Gołosińska-Maćkowiak, “Najważniejszy dzień życia – Nowy Sącz 1941,” *Almanach Sądecki* 1/2 (86/87) (23) (2014), p. 47.

On my way out, I looked back. Squatting on the floor, three curly-haired children were busily tugging at slices of bread with their teeth. The bread was sprinkled with a little sugar. The smallest one in the cradle also got a piece of crust, which it turned in its toothless mouth.⁹²

It is worth noting that in 1940 in Nowy Sącz on the “Aryan side,” a kilogram of the cheapest meat cost four zloty (veal) or ten zloty (pork). The price of pork fat reached as much as twenty zloty, and butter thirty-four zloty per kilogram.⁹³ In Warsaw at the same time, a kilogram of meat cost thirteen zloty, butter thirty zloty and in 1941 pork fat cost eight zloty.⁹⁴ The prices of groceries for the Jews who were concentrated in the Nowy Sącz ghetto were higher than on the “Aryan side” due to the risk borne by the seller.

The lack of food was debilitating people. Due to the lack of vitamins, people grew weaker, shuffling through the streets like shadows or carelessly dressed skeletons. Clothing became a secondary or even a tertiary importance issue, the Jews concentrated only on having in possession the obligatory item, the armband with the Star of David. Clothing was taken from them all the time anyway. A collection of clothes was conducted in December and November 1940, and the negligible number [of clothing items] that was obtained showed the scale of the shortage. In a report to Joint, the Judenrat recorded: “in this regard the situation was desperate.”⁹⁵ There was particularly a shortage of shoes, especially children’s shoes. At the beginning of January 1942, the winter campaign was underway, the Germans were taking warm clothes from the Jews, and many people were murdered in the process.⁹⁶ The Germans began such requisitions in the General Governorate at the end of 1941 (in Cracow, for example, Jews had to surrender fur coats and ski equipment).⁹⁷

⁹² *Ibid.*

⁹³ *Z pamiętników Marii Matyldy Zielińskiej...*, p. 92. It is worth noting that prices in the Warsaw Ghetto in 1941 were even higher. Horsemeat cost 9 zloty per kg, lard nearly 35 zloty, and bread 8 zloty (R. Hilberg, *Zagłada Żydów europejskich*, p. 313).

⁹⁴ B. Engelking, J. Leociak, *Getto warszawskie. Przewodnik po nieistniejącym mieście* (Warsaw, 2001), pp. 486–487.

⁹⁵ JDC, Letter of the Jewish Social Self-Help in Nowy Sącz to the JDC in Cracow, 12 January 1941, http://search.archives.jdc.org/multimedia/Documents/W_3941/W_3941_017/W_3941_017_0966.pdf, accessed 16 April 2021.

⁹⁶ M. Lustig, *Skrwawiony puch*, p. 62.

⁹⁷ A. Bieberstein, *Zagłada Żydów w Krakowie*, p. 54.

Due to the famine, some Jews decided to escape from the ghetto. Unfortunately, there is no information how many people attempted this. Neither the fate of most of the escapees is known. For instance, the escape of the Breindl family of three, a father with two daughters, ended tragically. In April 1942, fully determined, they left the ghetto, heading for the countryside. Otherwise, they would have shared the fate of people who died on the street, begging for a slice of bread. The Germans apprehended them in Przetakówka town district⁹⁸ with six other Jews. The Breindls were killed in the street, while the others were murdered in houses nearby, after which their bodies were thrown onto the roadway.⁹⁹

Forced Labour

On 26 October 1939, Governor-General Hans Frank issued a regulation introducing forced labour for the Jews residing in the General Governorate. Soon, subsequent occupation legislation was issued normalising other questions and imposing new obligations. Jews were forced to work beyond their strength, for unimaginably low wages or completely for free.¹⁰⁰ This applied throughout the German-occupied area, and the German Labour Office (Arbeitsamt) played an infamous role in many towns in compiling lists of forced labourers and registering the population. Everyone, including their occupations and professions, was meticulously recorded. This applied also to minors, because forced labour was to be provided from the age of fourteen onwards.¹⁰¹

The Judenrat handled the organisation of Jewish labour. Many Jews were anxious to get into the part of the ghetto designated for the working people, its residents performing various work for the Germans. Getting a suitable job, however, was not easy; it required contacts or bribes. In Nowy Sącz, as in Zamość, for example, the wealthier ghetto inhabitants bought their way out of hard work, while others hoped for a better assignment.¹⁰² Some gained a new social position through

⁹⁸ Przetakówka – the name of a part of Nowy Sącz which is located between the Kamiénica and Lubinka rivers, in the area of the Jewish cemetery at Rybacka Street.

⁹⁹ ASS, A. Kac, *Żydzi – prześladowanie i Zagłada*, manuscript, p. 99.

¹⁰⁰ The German Ministry of Labour issued the applicable documents on 31 October 1941 (R. Hilberg, *Zagłada Żydów europejskich*, p. 166).

¹⁰¹ E. Rączy, *Zagłada Żydów*, p. 161.

¹⁰² A. Kopciowski, *Zagłada Żydów w Zamościu*, p. 257.

employment. Mosze Kanengeiser was a “handyman” (he took on the tasks of a mechanic, plumber, locksmith, carpenter, etc.). The Jews, the Germans and the Judenrat needed him. Lustig recalled that Kanengeiser did not complain about a shortage of work and always brought something home – sometimes food, sometimes a little money.¹⁰³

A considerable problem for the Judenrat was the organisation of groups sent to do physical labour.¹⁰⁴ Already in the first months of the Nowy Sącz ghetto’s operation, Jews were used for labour in nearby quarries (Klęczany, Dąbrowa, Kamionka), river regulation in Marcinkowice and Chełmiec, and road construction.¹⁰⁵ Such workers had more contact with the “Aryan side.”

In 1941, the district *Polski Komitet Opiekuńczy* (Polish Welfare Committee) in Nowy Sącz calculated that, working for ten hours a day, fifteen-year-old Jews should earn 26 grosz per hour, and the wages of Jews who were older should increase by 5 grosz for each year of age. A 40-year-old worker would therefore earn more than 1.20 zloty per hour, and about 256 zloty per month (on average). The actual situation, however, was different. Workers at the labour camp in Lipie were paid around 88 zloty per month, and 24 zloty net after various fees had been deducted. In other towns, the rates were similar: in Miechów 1.76 zloty for ten hours of work, in Tarnów even 5 zloty, in Pychowice 2 zloty.¹⁰⁶

In addition to the above-mentioned places, the Jews of the Nowy Sącz ghetto also worked in factories and workshops and in cleaning. The Association of Jewish Craftsmen (*Verband der Judischen Handwerken Neu Sandez*) was established at 25 Poprzeczna Street. In 1942, it had eight hundred members. Just as before the war, the craftsmen found employment in a wide range of businesses from carpentry to textiles.¹⁰⁷

In some testimonies, we find descriptions of the conditions under which Jews worked:

¹⁰³ M. Lustig, *Skrwawiony puch*, p. 60.

¹⁰⁴ See B. Engelking, “Życie codzienne Żydów,” p. 138.

¹⁰⁵ JDC, letter of the Judenrat in Nowy Sącz to the JDC in Cracow, 13 August 1940, http://search.archives.jdc.org/multimedia/Documents/W_3941/W_3941_017/W_3941_017_0891.pdf, accessed 16 April 2021.

¹⁰⁶ E. Rączy, *Zagłada Żydów*, p. 165.

¹⁰⁷ T. Duda, “Eksterminacja ludności żydowskiej,” p. 219.

The winter of 1940 was harsh and snowy at our place. As usual, we were rushed to work on the railway in very modest, torn summer clothes, without any underwear. We felt the merciless cold and were emaciated from the excess of hard work and malnutrition. All of this made us unfit for work, Bergman wrote.¹⁰⁸

The temperature sank to as low as minus thirty degrees. Bergman worked on the railway together with Poles who helped the Jews – they gave them warmer underwear and clothes. In Bergman’s opinion, without these things the Jews would have frozen to death.

In addition, the work was an opportunity for persecution by the Germans. Bergman recalled that starting in 1941, he, along with two hundred other Jews, had to tear up the asphalt on Pierackiego Street (now known as Grodzka Street). They did this at night so that, as the Germans claimed, the traffic would not be obstructed. They worked hard even until three o’clock in the morning. Bergman described how people were intimidated: “they would sift us like through a sieve and every tenth of us would be sent to the “himelkomando”¹⁰⁹ [...] six Jews were bumped off, many were injured.”¹¹⁰ The people who worked, even in the camps in Rożnów or Lipie, even though they were exposed to harassment and persecution, nevertheless felt that they were valuable because they had a job.¹¹¹

Philip Friedman indicated the social revolution that took place in the ghettos. The hierarchy of the pre-war world was shattered. Work was an important part of this transformation, as it offered a chance for survival. Friedman wrote metaphorically: “in the jungle, money and education don’t mean much – only strong teeth and claws.”¹¹² There was a kind of a transformation in the perception of forced labour by the inhabitants of the Nowy Sącz ghetto. At first, people did not want it; they rejected the jobs, seeing them as an instrument of terror and escaping the dire conditions. Then they asked for it themselves; they reported to the Arbeitsamt,

¹⁰⁸ AYV, 88-0192F, M. Bergman-Winter, *Memorandum. Nowy Sącz – Sambor 1939–1945*, manuscript, n.d., n.p., p. 17.

¹⁰⁹ “The heavenly commando,” i.e. deployment ending in death.

¹¹⁰ AYV, 88-0192F, M. Bergman-Winter, *Memorandum. Nowy Sącz – Sambor 1939–1945*, manuscript, n.d., n.p., p. 37.

¹¹¹ T. Duda, “Eksterminacja ludności żydowskiej,” p. 214.

¹¹² Cited after B. Engelking, “Życie codzienne Żydów,” p. 175.

where everything was decided by corrupt Jewish officials – Mozes Grun and Izak Ropper.¹¹³ Kaufer testified that the closer 1942 was, “there was no payment for the work, on the contrary, one often had to chip in towards the work.”¹¹⁴ There was a belief that productive people would be needed by the Germans. After the war, Samuel Kaufer testified that the Germans at first murdered those Jews who were not useful: “as a rule, the first to go to the front line are those who are unable to show a “Zuweisung,” i.e. a card stating that the individual works under an employment contract.”¹¹⁵

In order to “legally” work outside the ghetto area, one had to have a pass:

I could only go to work with a pass, Emil Steinlauf recalled, but the Germans didn't want to issue passes, so I went every day in secret, every day I risked my life. However, we had to live on something, because there were a lot of us [...] This is how I sneaked off to work for six months, until in February 1942 I finally got a pass for six months.¹¹⁶

Religious Life under the Occupation

The first acts of repression against the Jews concerned their religion. The persecution began during the autumn holidays of 1939 (New Year, Sukkot and Yom Kippur). At that time, the devastation of synagogues and persecution spread to many towns in occupied Poland.¹¹⁷ Orthodox Jews were harassed in the streets: “The Germans were setting fire to their beards and sidelocks for fun, terrible things were happening.”¹¹⁸

The publication *The Vanished City of Tszanz* contains the testimonies of Jews in Nowy Sącz regarding Purim celebrations in 1940. It was difficult under occupation conditions to celebrate this most joyous festival, known as the “Jewish

¹¹³ The fate of these officials remains unknown.

¹¹⁴ AŻIH, 301/1703, testimony of Samuel Kaufer, p. 7.

¹¹⁵ AŻIH, 301/1703, testimony of Samuel Kaufer, p. 7.

¹¹⁶ AŻIH, 301/1338, testimony of Emil Steinlauf, p. 2.

¹¹⁷ D. Silberklang, *Bramy też. Zagłada w dystrykcie lubelskim*, trans. M. Metlerska-Colerick (Lublin, 2022), p. 249.

¹¹⁸ AYV, 88-0192F, M. Bergman-Winter, *Memorandum. Nowy Sącz – Sambor 1939–1945*, manuscript, n.d., n.p., p. 10.

carnival.” Instead of dressing up in colourful costumes, the Jews started to ridicule the Germans in the ghetto, and for a few hours they forgot about the problems of everyday life and all the evil that was happening behind the walls of their houses.¹¹⁹ The only element of Jewish tradition that the Germans allowed to be cultivated in the ghettos of occupied Poland was the baking of matzah for Passover and its distribution to the needy.¹²⁰ The Judenrat in Nowy Sącz always tried to provide the right amount of it.¹²¹

Kaufer noted the changes in the religious life of the Jews living in the Nowy Sącz ghetto: “The houses of prayer stand empty, it is forbidden to gather for communal prayers.”¹²² Due to the prohibitions imposed, religious rites began to be practiced in secret.¹²³ Lustig noted: “The Minyan¹²⁴ for a prayer at Rabbi Shmuel Prawer’s son’s attic was convened easily from among the residents who lived in the same building.”¹²⁵ Gatherings took place, therefore, mostly in private homes, as in other ghettos.¹²⁶

According to Samuel Lehrer, religious Jews observed their religious duties, including the readiness to help others, despite difficult conditions, poverty and pauperisation. In 1940, the Bochner family of ten was resettled to Nowy Sącz from Krynica.¹²⁷ They had nothing to eat, so the Hasidim decided to collect bread for them in the ghetto on the Thursday before Shabbat. This was not easy given the prevailing famine. Thanks to the generosity of society, they managed to collect a basket of bread. “When we entered the ruined room, we were greeted by shouts of joy from the hungry children, their faces pale and fastened with hunger,” Lehrer recalled.¹²⁸

¹¹⁹ S. Lehrer, L. Strassman, *The Vanished City*, p. 261.

¹²⁰ D. Silberklang, *Bramy łez*, p. 250.

¹²¹ JDC, letter of Ing. Reinberg to the Judenrat in Nowy Sącz, 17 April 1940, http://search.archives.jdc.org/multimedia/Documents/W_3941/W_3941_017/W_3941_017_0859.pdf, accessed 16 April 2021.

¹²² AŻIH, 301/1703, testimony of Samuel Kaufer, p. 10.

¹²³ D. Silberklang, *Bramy łez*, p. 250; A. Bieberstein, *Zagłada Żydów w Krakowie*, p. 224.

¹²⁴ A Minyan is a quorum of ten Jews over thirteen years old, required for a common religious service.

¹²⁵ M. Lustig, *Skrwawiony puch*, p. 49.

¹²⁶ G. Taffet, *Zagłada Żydów żółkiewskich*, p. 49.

¹²⁷ The Bochners arrived in the Nowy Sącz ghetto like many other residents of this resort town, as the Germans had no plans to create a sealed Jewish quarter there.

¹²⁸ S. Lehrer, L. Strassman, *The Vanished City*, p. 266. The bread was meant for the Sabbath, but the children ate a piece each when they saw the gifts. The rest was set aside for the feast day. Bochner thanked the donors with tears in his eyes.

Due to anti-Jewish orders issued by the German occupation authorities, the observation of religious commandments was made very difficult.¹²⁹ A Mohel worked illegally,¹³⁰ Religious Jews cared about keeping kosher.¹³¹ The function of the unofficial head of the Hasidim was performed by the previous rabbi of Sary Sącz, Awigdor Halberstam. It was he who circumcised the last child before the ghetto was liquidated. When he was on his way to attend the rite, he was caught by the Germans, who cut off his beard and moustache.¹³²

For the Hasidim, it was a tragedy to give up their traditional vestments and to cut off their sidelocks. This happened, among other things, when they were taken to work. Lehrer, who was humiliated by the Germans in this way, was deeply affected by this. When he returned home, he was told by his pious father that now he had to survive the war, the hair would grow back by itself later.¹³³ Despite all the persecution, ghetto residents needed faith. Some persevered in it till the end, even in the face of death. Estera Elenberg reported that Klein, sitting in confinement after the liquidation of the ghetto at Piekło, asked his daughter to deliver him a tallit.¹³⁴ He knew that staying in the sealed ghetto augured the worst for his future. All that was left for him to do was to have faith in God and resign himself to his fate.¹³⁵

Social Life

In the available testimonies we do not find much information about the cultural life or the use of leisure time by the residents of the Nowy Sącz ghetto. At the beginning of the German occupation, even after the regulation on wearing an armband with a Star of David was issued, Jews spent time at the beach on the Dunajec River and tried to entertain like in the pre-war period. It seems that despite the atrocities that occurred in the subsequent years, they tried to adapt to the new situation. Meetings with other people, music, games, pleasures could distract

¹²⁹ For more on anti-Jewish regulations, see E. Rączy, *Zagłada Żydów*, pp. 118–136.

¹³⁰ S. Lehrer, L. Strassman, *The Vanished City*, p. 279. A mohel is a person who is trained to perform the Jewish circumcision rite.

¹³¹ ASS, A. Kac, *Żydzi – prześladowanie i Zagłada*, manuscript, p. 99.

¹³² S. Lehrer, L. Strassman, *The Vanished City*, p. 117.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, p. 274.

¹³⁴ A tallit is a shawl worn during Jewish prayers and religious ceremonies.

¹³⁵ AYW, O.3/2136, testimony of Estera Elenberg, p. 14.

them for a while from the thoughts about their tragic situation. We know that there were restaurants in the ghetto (which was not uncommon),¹³⁶ traditional weddings took place (albeit in secret), people loved each other, entered into relationships of all kinds. In Lustig's house a certain Dorenter married Beck's daughter, and they had a child.¹³⁷

Fragmentary information about the social life of Jewish youth in the ghetto is provided by a small number of witness testimonies:

On one opportunity we plunged into activities that occupied us beyond curfew and we couldn't go home, Markus Lustig recalled. We stayed up all night at one of the friends' house until the morning. At home they didn't know what had happened to me because there was no phone. In the morning, when I came home, I got a due telling-off from my parents.¹³⁸

The same Holocaust survivor recalled the interest of some ghetto residents in spiritualism:

In one of the rooms in the building, we used to meet in the evenings, whether to pray or to talk about the current situation. In this room, there was a wooden table that was made without nails. A couple of religious Hasidim knew something about spiritualism and arranged a séance using this table. Once or twice I participated in this ceremony. We sat around the table with both hands on the table and asked the table questions. Somehow the table would rise and fall to one side according to the questions.¹³⁹

People made new friends in the ghetto, started intimate relationships and had a sex life. Szalom Weinberger recalled that a young, "physically developed" girl worked in a shop in the ghetto at Piekło. He himself was 16–17 years old at the time. Once, after shopping, the girl dragged him to the back room, where

¹³⁶ D. Silberklang, *Bramy łez*, p. 249.

¹³⁷ ASS, testimony of Markus Lustig, 2012 (marked with an F).

¹³⁸ M. Lustig, *Skrwawiony puch*, p. 58.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 61.

they had sexual intercourse. He did not resist, even though he was afraid of the consequences, for the girl's uncle was an officer of the Jewish Police in Mielec or Rzeszów.¹⁴⁰ Another survivor, Markus Lustig, recalled an acquaintance with Ela Szejnfeld, who was his neighbour (she lived with his mother and brother Bole): "we used to sit with [...] Ela by the tiled oven, we kissed and hugged, it was lovely."¹⁴¹ Also prostitutes worked in the ghetto. Thanks to their services, they acquired food and expected protection.¹⁴²

There were changes in customs in the Jewish quarter. After the April German action, due to the large number of the dead, traditional mourning (shiva) continued in many Jewish families. The survivor testimonies show that it was not, however, practised by everyone:

The situation in the ghetto was a bit strange. The youth lived with the feeling that they were heading towards perdition. Anyone who had even a little money was partying day and night. Imagine that after the great massacre, members of the Wint family opened the Holland family hall and converted it into a hall for dancing, drinking and partying. Young people did not think about the future,

– noted Lustig, who took part in the parties himself, even though he had lost his parents and all his siblings in the aforementioned action;¹⁴³ "People wanted to dance, they knew that tomorrow could be the end,"¹⁴⁴ he noted years later, when he was already able to see not only the tragedy of his family, but also the attempt to live a normal life and to de-escalate war situations.

Closing Remarks

The so-called Jewish residential quarter in Nowy Sącz was not very different from the other ghettos of the Distrikt Krakau (Cracow Province). The available testimonies confirm that this ghetto was affected by similar processes that led to

¹⁴⁰ ASS, testimony of Jacek Weinberger, 2016.

¹⁴¹ M. Lustig, *Skrwawiony puch*, p. 61.

¹⁴² ASS, testimony of Jacek Weinberger, 2016.

¹⁴³ M. Lustig, *Skrwawiony puch*, p. 69.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

impoverishment and the slow extermination of its inhabitants. Jews were abused by the Germans with various orders and acts of terror. The Nowy Sącz ghetto, however, had its own peculiarities that made it somewhat different from the other ghettos in the area. It had already been established in the summer of 1940, so it was one of the first ghettos created in the Distrikt Krakau (Cracow Province). It was divided into two parts: for the working and the non-working residents. Although it was not completely unique among the ghettos in German-occupied Poland, it was a rare type of a ghetto in this Distrikt, especially in the first stage of the setting up of the ghetto. The Nowy Sącz ghetto differed from others of a similar size the most in that it was enclosed by a wall. In the south of German-occupied Poland such ghettos did exist (Cracow), but on the scale of the occupied country, they were not common. Most of the ghettos in the Distrikt Krakau were enclosed by a wooden fence, barbed wire fences or had only marked boundaries. The wall surrounding a part of the ghetto in Nowy Sącz must have had an effect on the mental state of those imprisoned. However, due to the lack of sources, we are not able to fully outline this issue.

Heinrich Hamann had a significant impact on the daily lives of the Jews in Nowy Sącz during the war. As a zealous Nazi, he followed his superiors' orders without hesitation, particularly those targeting Jews. While every town under occupation had its executioner, Hamann stood out for his ruthlessness. He committed murders himself, executed orders, and even issued his own on his own initiative. He was one of the most sinister figures of World War II and the Holocaust in the Sącz region.

Those imprisoned in the "Jewish quarter" faced many hardships on a daily basis. There was terror, hunger and discrimination. Historical knowledge on the subject has so far mainly focused on the sanitary conditions, especially the activity of the Jewish hospital. Researchers have also mentioned forced labour and actions conducted by the Germans against the ghetto residents. However, the issues of food, religious life and housing conditions were not addressed before. The information and accounts cited in this article outline a more detailed picture of living conditions in the ghetto.

The Nowy Sącz Ghetto, which existed between 1940 and 1942, was a place of fear and terror. The numerous accounts, descriptions and memories of the crimes

committed there are available today. The crimes committed there, in the memory of the Holocaust survivors, marked the stages of the ghetto's existence. Alongside all these dramatic events, however, life went on as usual, as much as it could under wartime conditions. People were born, loved and died, tried to mourn their dead or rejoice at weddings and the birth of children. From today's perspective, the word "normality" does not correspond to the Holocaust, yet a kind of hope is visible in the survivors' testimonies. People quickly adapted to their living conditions and sought this normality. This could be seen in the everyday life of the Nowy Sącz ghetto.

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SUMMARY

The article focuses on the daily life and living conditions of the Jews in the Nowy Sącz ghetto from 1940 to 1942. The establishment of the so-called Jewish quarter is outlined here, as well as the matters of housing and sanitary conditions in the ghetto, food and way of obtaining it, the terms of Jewish labour, and religious and social life. A crucial aspect of the daily existence of Jews imprisoned in the ghetto was the omnipresent German terror, whether organised or spontaneous.

KEYWORDS

Nowy Sącz • living conditions • Jews • ghetto • Holocaust



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POLISH EVANGELICALS HELPING JEWS. TWO LETTERS
OF CELINA REŃSKA NÉE KAWECKA TO YAD VASHEM
CONCERNING AID PROVIDED IN WARSAW
BY THE SZULC AND STECHBART FAMILIES

The involvement of the Polish Protestants in helping Jews in the face of the Holocaust is still an under-researched issue, although attempts are being made to create a collective portrait of the helpers, specifically the Righteous Among the Nations. The persons who helped are characterised by such categories as the country of origin,¹ motivations,² and circumstances of help,³ gen-

¹ M. Klempner, *The Heart Has Reasons: Holocaust Rescuers and Their Stories Of Courage* (Cleveland, OH, 2006); P. Henry, *We Only Know Men: The Rescue of Jews in France During the Holocaust* (Catholic University of America Press, 2007).

² A. Grunwald-Spier, *The Other Schindlers: Why Some People Chose to Save Jews in the Holocaust* (The History Press, 2014).

³ For more on this, see, above all, the stories of diplomats M. Dick and “Raoul Wallenberg. Making of an American Hero,” in *Unlikely Heroes: The Place of Holocaust Rescuers in Research and Teaching*, ed. A. Kohen, G.J. Steinacher (University of Nebraska Press, 2019), pp. 110–138; A. Haska, “‘Proszę Pana Ministra o energiczną interwencję’. Aleksander Ładoś (1891–1963) i ratowanie Żydów przez Poselstwo RP w Bernie,” *Zagłada Żydów. Studia i Materiały* (hereinafter ZŻSM) 11 (2015), pp. 299–309; H. Levine, *In Search of Sugihara: The Elusive Japanese Diplomat Who Risked His Life to Rescue 10,000 Jews from the Holocaust* (Plunkett Lake Press, 2019).

der, or religion. In this regard, Polish researchers highlight the significant role of the Catholic Church in aiding Jews, noting the involvement of priests, nuns,⁴ and ordinary believers. The denominational aspect is consistently emphasised when discussing their motivations for providing help.

Of particular note here is the example of the Ulma family⁵ or the writer Zofia Kossak-Szczucka.⁶ The latter wrote about the imperative for Polish Catholics to oppose the crimes against the Jews on behalf of the Front for the Rebirth of Poland (*Front Odrodzenia Polski*) in *Protest* – a leaflet issued on 11 August 1942 and distributed in five thousand copies during the so-called great liquidation *Aktion* in the Warsaw Ghetto.⁷ Polish and Catholic identity remained crucial to the cause: “We, Polish Catholics, therefore take the floor. [...] Whoever does not support this protest with us – is not a Catholic.” Only in one place in the brochure was a reference made to broader concepts: “The Christian conscience demands the protest [...]”⁸

Elle Linde researched motivations for helping Jews on the basis of 41,149 files of Polish Righteous Among the Nations, and one of the categories she mentioned was “religious motivations.” This applied to the 89 cases she examined without specifying which religion and denomination they represented. It can only be assumed that these were not persons of a single religion because then this category would have been named differently.⁹ It is difficult to find traces of scholarly interest in Poles of non-Catholic faiths, including Evangelicals, who helped and saved Jews.¹⁰ Few

⁴ M. Grądzka, “Kościół katolicki w Krakowie w pomocy Żydom. Zarys problematyki badawczej,” in *Kościół krakowski 1939–1945*, ed. Ł. Klimek (Cracow, 2014), pp. 125–154; E. Kurek, *Dzieci żydowskie w klasztorach. Udział żeńskich zgromadzeń zakonnych w akcji ratowania dzieci żydowskich w Polsce w latach 1939–1945* (Zakrzewo, 2012); R. Tyndorf, *Wartime Rescue of Jews by the Polish Catholic Clergy: The Testimony of Survivors and Rescuers*, vol. 1–2 (Lublin, 2023).

⁵ J. Szarek, M. Szpytma, *Rodzina Ulmów. W hołdzie miłosiernym. Przejmująca historia polskiej rodziny, która poświęciła swoje życie, ratując Żydów* (Cracow, 2014).

⁶ C. Tonini, *Czas nienawiści i czas troski. Zofia Kossak-Szczucka – antysemitka, która ratowała Żydów*, trans. T. Jekiel, W. Jekiel (Warsaw, 2007).

⁷ I. Gutman, “Polscy Sprawiedliwi wśród Narodów Świata,” in *Księga Sprawiedliwych wśród Narodów Świata. Ratujący Żydów podczas Holocaustu. Polska*, vol. 1, ed. I. Gutman, S. Bender, S. Krakowski (Cracow, 2009), p. XXXI.

⁸ *Polacy – Żydzi. Wybór źródeł*, ed. A.K. Kunert (Warsaw, 2001), pp. 212–216 (doc. II/10).

⁹ I. Gutman, “Polscy Sprawiedliwi wśród Narodów Świata,” p. XXXIX.

¹⁰ Seven Protestant Churches operated in the Second Republic, hence the use of the term “Evangelicals” in the text is a deliberate simplification. For more information, see E. Alabrudzińska, *Protestantyzm w Polsce w latach 1918–1939* (Toruń, 2004), pp. 70–89.

studies deal with the help provided by Mariavites¹¹ or the Greek-Catholic clergyman Archbishop Andrey Sheptytsky.¹² Against this background, the work by the long-time director of the Department of the Righteous Among the Nations at Yad Vashem, Mordecai Paldiel, stands out slightly, and it does not deal only with occupied Polish lands (the author's aim was to be cross-sectional) or only with cases of aid, but presents the attitudes of various Christian Churches towards the Holocaust. When listing examples of helping Poles, among non-Catholics, the author mentions only (after Emanuel Ringelblum) a former Evangelical priest, Mr. Z., who hid four Jewish children.¹³

More numerous references to other Polish Evangelicals who provided aid to Jews during the World War II can be found mainly in studies on Warsaw-based Evangelicals. The biographical dictionary *Ewangelicy warszawscy w walce o niepodległość Polski 1939–1945* (Evangelicals of Warsaw in the fight for Poland's independence 1939–1945) mentions, for example, nineteen such people.¹⁴ Memory has remained of, among others, Fr. Ludwik Zaunar, a pastor at an Evangelical-Reformed parish in Warsaw, who issued forged certificates to Jews.¹⁵ In 1978, the title of Righteous Among the Nations was awarded to Józef and Anna Bank, who rescued the Jewish family Dratwer from the Holocaust.¹⁶ Józef was of Protestant faith; his wife was Orthodox.¹⁷ These mentions and basic descriptions merely indicate the presence of a research topic. However, only through the examination of archival documents, particularly ego-documents, such as the ones described below, can the research problem be defined and questions formulated by future researchers.

¹¹ U. Grabowska, "Mariawici i Żydzi – rzecz o pomocy," *ZŻSM* 4 (2008), pp. 442–465.

¹² S. Redlich, "Moralność i rzeczywistość: metropolita Andriej Szeptycki i Żydzi w czasach Holocaustu i II wojny światowej," *ZŻSM* 4 (2008), pp. 241–260.

¹³ M. Paldiel, *Churches and the Holocaust: Unholy Teaching, Good Samaritans, and Reconciliation* (KTAV Publishing House, 2006), pp. 204–205.

¹⁴ A. Sękowska, "Zbór Ewangelicko-Reformowany w Warszawie w latach drugiej wojny światowej," in *Ewangelicy warszawscy. Wspomnienia i relacje*, pp. 30–31.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

¹⁶ "Banek Józef & Anna (Bystrzycka)," in "The Righteous Database," Yad Vashem, <https://collections.yadvashem.org/en/righteous/4034455>, accessed 16 May 2024.

¹⁷ *Zwiastun Ewangeliczny*, 6, 7 February 1937, p. 58, <https://sbc.org.pl/Content/618739/PDF/ii352478-1937-06-0001.pdf>, accessed 16 May 2024. In "The Righteous Database" on the YV website both are erroneously entered as Catholics. "Banek Józef & Anna (Bystrzycka)," in "The Righteous Database," Yad Vashem, <https://collections.yadvashem.org/en/righteous/4034455>, accessed 16 May 2024.

The scholarly edition of the two documents from the Archives of Yad Vashem, Department of the Righteous Among the Nations, presented below, is intended to contribute and encourage further research. For the history of the help given to the Jewish Kawecki family in Warsaw, the Evangelical thread has a double significance. Firstly, religion shaped the Szulc family's aid motivations; secondly, Emil Szulc's position as the intendant of the Evangelical cemetery significantly influenced the location and conditions of the aid.

The author of both letters published below is Celina Reńska née Kawecka, born in Bydgoszcz, daughter of Helena and Jan Kawecki. She was 17 at the outbreak of World War II, and at the age of 60, in 1982, she decided to contact the Righteous Among the Nations Department at Yad Vashem and initiate the procedure for honouring two families: The Szulcs and the Stechbarts. Her parents were no longer alive at the time, but she indicated that her brother Adam was one of the witnesses with whom contact was still possible. The first letter from Celina Reńska was sent on 8 August 1982; the second one is undated, but we know that it was written as a reply to a letter from an employee of Yad Vashem of 9 August 1982. As Celina Reńska's testimony concerns the help of two unrelated families, it became the basis for two procedures, successfully concluded on 7 July 1983. It was then that the decision was made to award the Righteous Among the Nations medal to Emil and Amalia Szulc, their children Eugeniusz (son) and Alicja (daughter),¹⁸ and also Maria Stechbart and her son Tadeusz. They were honoured for their help to the Jewish Kawecki family: Helena and Jan and their children Celina and Adam.¹⁹ It is worth noting that in The Righteous Among the Nations Database available from the Yad Vashem website, next to the persons mentioned above, "Catholic" was erroneously entered under the "Religion" heading, and the brief description of the history of aid omitted the aspect of religious motivation.²⁰

Meanwhile, it is clear from Celina Reńska's testimony that the Szulcs were "religious evangelicals adhering to high moral standards." Moreover, although they were

¹⁸ "Szulc Emil & Amalia; Son: Eugeniusz; Daughter: Kutte Alicja (Szulc)," in "The Righteous Database," Yad Vashem, <https://collections.yadvashem.org/en/righteous/4039809>, accessed 16 May 2024.

¹⁹ "Stechbart Maria; Son: Tadeusz," in "The Righteous Database," Yad Vashem, <https://collections.yadvashem.org/en/righteous/4039804>, accessed 16 May 2024.

²⁰ The descriptions in the two entries mentioned above are identical.

of German origin, they considered themselves Poles, did not accept the *Volksliste*, and were active in the Polish underground.²¹ In the Second Polish Republic, approximately three hundred thousand Germans and two hundred thousand Poles belonged to the Evangelical-Augsburg (Lutheran) Church. Already at the beginning of the German occupation, some Polish Protestant clergy were removed from their parishes or arrested. The initial intention to resettle all *Volksdeutsche* from the General Government to the territories incorporated to Reich meant that the problem of rebuilding Evangelical churches as communities potentially bringing together Polish Evangelicals was not important to the German authorities. On the other hand, according to the key assumptions of the German occupation policy in this area, nationality-based division in the Evangelical Churches was pursued. The first step towards this was determining the number of people of a given nationality in individual parishes.²² In the biographical entries on various Evangelical clergymen, there is information about their being summoned to Szucha Avenue [Warsaw Gestapo headquarters – t.n.] to sign the *Volksliste*. Pastor Otto Friedrich Krenz was arrested for refusing to declare his German nationality and put in the Central Prison on Daniłowiczowska Street.²³

According to Celina, her father and Emil Szulc were friends “from their youth.”²⁴ Szulc was born in Turek in 1893, so perhaps the beginning of the two men’s acquaintance should be linked to their stay on the borderland of the Kujawy and Wielkopolska regions. Eugeniusz, the eldest of the three Szulc children, was also born in Turek in 1919. The family settled in Warsaw around 1923, at which time Emil became the intendant of the Evangelical-Augsburg cemetery in Warsaw and took over the duties related to the administration of the necropolis, which involved moving to a house at 54 Młynarska Street adjacent to the cemetery. Szulc, as a Polish Evangelical, was engaged in Polish underground activity from the first days of the war; at the cemetery, he gathered and hid weapons.²⁵ His sons, Eugeniusz and Janusz, also followed in his footsteps. All three fought in the “Kiliński” Home

²¹ Document no. 1.

²² J. Sziling, *Kościół chrześcijański w polityce niemieckich władz okupacyjnych w Generalnym Gubernatorstwie (1939–1945)* (Toruń, 1988), pp. 94–106, 158.

²³ <https://www.1944.pl/powstancze-biogramy/otton-krenz,24446.html>, accessed 28 June 2024.

²⁴ Document no. 1.

²⁵ D. Dąbrowska, “Szulc Emil ‘Tur’” in *Ewangelicy warszawscy. Słownik*, p. 548.

Army battalion during the 1944 Warsaw Rising. Janusz Szulc, the youngest of the siblings (born in 1929), does not appear in Celina Reńska's testimony. Probably as a child, he was not aware of hiding Jews. After the war, the family moved to Łódź.²⁶ Nevertheless, their ties with Warsaw did not cease, as demonstrated by Eugeniusz Szulc's books on Warsaw Evangelicals, including the most famous one, *Cmentarz ewangelicko-augsburski w Warszawie* (The Evangelical Augsburg cemetery in Warsaw).²⁷

In this publication – in his father's biographical entry – Eugeniusz Szulc mentions Emil's persecution by the Gestapo, who repeatedly summoned him to their headquarters on the Szucha Avenue, "where they would give him the *Volkliste* to sign."²⁸ Although Emil Szulc feared the consequences of constant refusals, he did not give in and, despite the fear, did not decline to help others. We learn from the biographical entry that the Szulcs gave help to, among others, an escapee from a prisoner of war camp and that they managed to rescue a Jewish family of four who had escaped from the Warsaw Ghetto. However, the biographical entry in a study by one of the rescuers does not bring any further information about the history of this help. It neither provides the name of the Jewish Kawecki family nor of the other family helping them – the Stechbarts.²⁹ Furthermore, none of the members of the Stechbart family is listed in this or other available dictionary publications on Warsaw Evangelicals. All that is known is that Tadeusz Stechbart is buried in the same Evangelical–Augsburg cemetery in Warsaw as members of the Szulc family.³⁰

Celina Reńska's testimony focuses on the aid effort and contains little information on the earlier fate of her family. We only know that the Kaweckis escaped from Bydgoszcz in 1939, but we know neither the date nor the circumstances of this escape.³¹ The Jews of Bydgoszcz became victims of German persecution already in

²⁶ H. Halweg, "Ewangelicy w batalionie AK 'Kiliński,'" in *Ewangelicy warszawscy w walce o niepodległość Polski w latach drugiej wojny światowej. Wspomnienia i relacje*, ed. A. Janowska et al. (Warsaw, 1997) (hereinafter *Ewangelicy warszawscy. Wspomnienia i relacje*), p. 204; D. Dąbrowska, "Szulc Emil 'Tur,'" pp. 548–549; D. Dąbrowska, "Szulc Eugeniusz 'Dobry,'" in *Ewangelicy warszawscy. Słownik*, pp. 550–551; D. Dąbrowska, "Szulc Janusz 'Pik,'" in *Ewangelicy warszawscy. Słownik*, p. 551.

²⁷ E. Szulc, *Cmentarz ewangelicko-augsburski w Warszawie. Zmarli i ich rodziny* (Warsaw, 1989).

²⁸ "Szulc Emil," in *ibid.*, p. 552.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ Born in 1922, died in 1999, <https://wawamlynarska.grobonet.com/grobonet/start.php?id=detale&idg=3218&inni=0&cinki=5>, accessed 16 May 2024.

³¹ Document no. 1.

the first week of the war. On 5 September, the Germans started arresting local Jews and, a few days later, began executing them. Some, anticipating the danger, had already fled the city (and the part of Poland where a German attack was expected first) before the war broke out. By autumn, these escapes had become a common occurrence. In his situational report of 11 November 1939, the commander of Einsatzkommando 16, Jakob Lölgén, noted that the vast majority of Jews had fled and were not expected to return.³² According to the December 1940 data, the largest number of refugees from Bydgoszcz was taken in by Warsaw; many Jews returned to their hometowns in the former Congress Kingdom of Poland.³³ According to Reńska, her family went to Warsaw and visited the Szulcs there. Crucial to this contact was the figure of Emil.³⁴ His situation during the occupation was not simple: the repeated summoning by the Gestapo and pressure to sign the *Volksliste* have already been mentioned, and it should be added that he was also persecuted by Poles on account of his German origin, even though he had taken part in underground activities.³⁵

Regardless of their personal difficulties, Emil and his family were favourably inclined toward the Kaweckis from the beginning and were ready to help them. In the autumn of 1940, the Kaweckis, together with the rest of the Jewish population of Warsaw, were taken to the ghetto, but they maintained telephone contact with the Szulcs.³⁶ Despite the successive restrictions and impediments to communication between the Aryan and non-Aryan sides, the telephone – according to Justyna Gregorowicz – remained a legal means of communication between Warsaw’s “sealed quarter” and the outside world until the 1943 Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. It was of great importance, among other things, for organising smuggling.³⁷ Also, Jewish refugees from Bydgoszcz used to arrange the pickup of parcels at the Evangelical

³² Z. Biegański, *Mniejszość żydowska w Bydgoszczy 1920–1939* (Bydgoszcz, 1999), pp. 138–144. For more information on Lölgén’s post-war trial, see T. Ceran, *Zbrodnia pomorska 1939. Początek ludobójstwa niemieckiego w okupowanej Polsce* (Bydgoszcz–Warsaw, 2024), pp. 344–345.

³³ T. Kowski, “Eksterminacja ludności żydowskiej z Bydgoszczy w latach II wojny światowej,” in *Servitium Klio. In honorem Professoris Alberti Kotowski*, ed. M.G. Zieliński, Z. Biegański (Bydgoszcz, 2021), pp. 180–183.

³⁴ Document no.1.

³⁵ *Ibid.*; “Szulc Emil,” in E. Szulc, *Cmentarz ewangelicko-augsburski w Warszawie*, p. 552.

³⁶ Document no.1.

³⁷ J. Gregorowicz, “Komunikacja telefoniczna w życiu społeczności getta warszawskiego,” *ZŻSM* 10 (2014), pp. 409–410, 413–414.

cemetery by phone.³⁸ The location was not accidental. As this Warsaw necropolis on Młynarska Street was adjacent to the Jewish cemetery on Okopowa Street, which belonged to the ghetto (until December 1941), and the Catholic Powązki cemetery,³⁹ it was a popular point for the illegal transfer of food from the “Aryan” side of the city. For the Kawecki and Szulc families, this location was all the more evident because Emil Szulc, as the intendant of the Evangelical Augsburg cemetery, occupied a flat with his family in a house adjacent to the cemetery.⁴⁰ What is more, there was an Evangelical enclave in the ghetto area. The building belonging to the Evangelical-Reformed Church at Leszno Street, the Protestant hospital, and other parish buildings were separated from the surrounding ghetto by a wall – the Warsaw press reported on the boundary on November 16–17, 1940. The enclave existed until the ghetto area was reduced in 1942.⁴¹

According to Celina Reńska, it was at the instigation of Emil Szulc that her family decided to escape from the ghetto. She does not specify when exactly this happened, but based on the subsequent chronology of the events, we can presume that it was in the first half of 1942. The Kaweckis found their first shelter in the Szulc’s house near the cemetery, but their stay there lasted only a few weeks. Emil found other (“suitable,” as Celina described it) accommodation for them with the Stechbart family, with whom they stayed for two years until the outbreak of the 1944 Warsaw Rising.⁴² Perhaps it was the proximity to the ghetto that made the flat at 54 Młynarska Street too dangerous a location and thus “unsuitable” for hiding a Jewish family. As Halina Helweg, who, as a girl, visited the buildings there, recalled years later, children were forbidden “to stay in the part of the yard adjoining the flat of the cemetery intendant, Emil Szulc,” and even adults “did not pass through there unnecessarily. A mysterious peace and silence reigned there.” It was only after the war that she found out the reasons for this and learned that

³⁸ Document no.1.

³⁹ P. Wieczorek, “Cmentarz żydowski na Okopowej – trzy perspektywy (cz. 1),” Muzeum Getta Warszawskiego (Warsaw Ghetto Museum), 13 April 2021, <https://1943.pl/arttykul/cmentarz-zydowski-na-okopowej-trzy-perspektywy-cz-1/>, accessed 16 May 2024.

⁴⁰ D. Dąbrowska, “Szulc Emil ‘Tur,’” p. 548.

⁴¹ A. Sękowska, “Zbór Ewangelicko-Reformowany w Warszawie,” p. 27; *Getto warszawskie. Przewodnik po nieistniejącym mieście*, ed. B. Engelking, J. Leociak (Warsaw, 2013), p. 94.

⁴² Document no. 1.

a Soviet prisoner of war and a Jewish family had been hiding there at various times. It is possible that the only source of information on this subject for her were references in biographical notes by Eugeniusz Szulc that were older than her written memories.⁴³

The next part of the story of the rescue of the Kaweckis, that is, their hiding by the Stechbart family, is more nuanced than the altruistic help of the Szulcs who befriended them. In this case, the helpers and the help recipients did not know each other. Moreover, the help was initially paid for. Celina herself emphasized the difficult material situation of Maria Stechbart, a poor widow who lived with her son Tadeusz and her mother (unknown by name). However, it is not entirely clear what role money played in arranging this hiding place. The testimony goes on to say that the Stechbarts received money each month to support the Kaweckis, but the term “remuneration” also appears, which suggests an extra amount over and above the cost of living itself. Reńska’s testimony also highlights a particular dynamic in the relationship between those in hiding and those offering them shelter: although initially, the basis of the decision to help was to be paid, over time, deeper motivations became apparent. In moments of trial, when the Germans were looking for escapees from the ghetto, the Stechbarts did not betray their charges.⁴⁴ In the context of the ongoing discussions in historiography on the meaning and interpretations of the financial aspect of hiding Jews,⁴⁵ the above example – as a more complex one – seems particularly interesting.

During the Kaweckis family’s two-year stay with another family, Emil Szulc continued to visit them, brought them newspapers published in the underground once a month (if not more often), and gave them the money needed for their upkeep. Earlier, Jan Kaweckis had left a certain amount with him, and these funds were then used. The Szulc family’s help remained completely selfless from the beginning to the end. Edwin Kutte, Alicja’s husband, who visited the Jews in hiding together with his father-in-law Emil Szulc, also participated.

⁴³ H. Helweg, “Mieszkańcy domu przy Cmentarzu Ewangelicko-Augsburskim w Warszawie,” in *Ewangelicy warszawscy. Wspomnienia i relacje*, p. 204.

⁴⁴ Document no.1.

⁴⁵ See J. Grabowski, “Ratowanie Żydów za pieniądze – przemysł pomocy,” *ZŻSM* 4 (2008), pp. 81–109; G. Berendt, “Cena życia – ekonomiczne uwarunkowania egzystencji Żydów po ‘aryjskiej stronie,” *ZŻSM* 4 (2008), pp. 110–143.

The 1944 Warsaw Rising marked another turning point in the history of the Kawecki family, as well as that of other Jews staying in hiding in Warsaw.⁴⁶ According to Celina, her brother and father were taken into care by the Stechbart family, and it is an open question where she and her mother were staying at that time. The Szulc family, whose members were sent to a camp after the fall of the Rising, could no longer shelter them. However, it was not a concentration camp (as Reńska claims)⁴⁷ but a POW camp: Stalag XI A in Altengrabow.⁴⁸

Also, the second of Celina's letters to Yad Vashem, published below, did not dispel the doubts about her survival in post-war Warsaw. In it, she was answering questions from an employee of the Department of the Righteous Among the Nations. This unit collects documentation about specific cases of Jews being rescued by non-Jews during the Holocaust, and it is only on this basis that a committee at Yad Vashem decides whether to award (or not to award) the title of the Righteous Among the Nations. Celina mentioned friends who had met the Szulcs after the war and knew they had rescued the Kaweckis. Both families lived in Łódź, which was conducive to their meetings.⁴⁹ As for the Stechbarts, it is known that they kept up a correspondence with the rescued Jews.⁵⁰ The Yad Vashem official was also interested in how old the Szulcs' children were. Celina was able to clarify that two of them were of a similar age to her and had come of age during the war. It is unclear why Reńska mentioned "Lilian" next to Eugeniusz's name, although the Szulcs' daughter's name was Alicja.⁵¹ Age information, on the other hand, may have been important in assessing the siblings' involvement in helping a Jewish family and thus in awarding them Israel's highest civilian award for non-Jews.⁵²

⁴⁶ For more, see G.S. Paulson, *Utajone miasto. Żydzi po aryjskiej stronie Warszawy* (Cracow, 2009), pp. 247–286; B. Enkelking, D. Libionka, *Żydzi w powstańczej Warszawie* (Warsaw, 2009).

⁴⁷ Document no. 1.

⁴⁸ D. Dąbrowska, "Szulc Emil 'Tur,'" p. 549; D. Dąbrowska, "Szulc Eugeniusz 'Dobry,'" p. 550; <https://www.porta-polonica.de/pl/wojenne/stalag-xi-altengrabow>, accessed 16 May 2024.

⁴⁹ Document no. 2.

⁵⁰ Document no. 1.

⁵¹ Alice was born in 1923, so her age also corresponds to Reńska's memories, <https://wawamlynarska.grobonet.com/grobonet/start.php?id=detale&tidg=2146&inni=0&cinki=0>, accessed 16 May 2024.

⁵² Document no. 2.

The following source text edition is based on two letters from the case file of Maria and Tadeusz Stechbart;⁵³ they were probably also included in the dossier concerning the Szulc family. Apart from this, the file holds only a letter from the long-time director of the Righteous Department at Yad Vashem, Mordecai Paldiel, who informed the applicant of the favourable decision relating to the two families she nominated for the title,⁵⁴ as well as a copy of the certificate of honour dated 17 September 1984.⁵⁵ The file, therefore, does not contain the complete correspondence – even the letter from the Yad Vashem employee referred to by Celina Reńska in her reply is missing. There is also no indication that the witnesses she mentions were contacted, that she was requested to send the correspondence she mentions between her parents and the rescuers, or the photographs in her possession. After Celina sent her first written testimony, she was requested to clarify several points, and her explanations apparently proved sufficient. Both of Reńska's letters were typed in Hebrew. I am publishing their translations in full [here translated in English], without alteration or interference with the content. It was only decided to omit the address details because of the short time that had elapsed since they were written. The letters were sent by post in Tel Aviv. As a result of the anti-Semitic policy of the communist authorities, their author was forced to emigrate from Poland.⁵⁶ The translation of the letters from Hebrew into Polish was done by Anna Klingofer-Szostakowska.

⁵³ Yad Vashem Archives in Jerusalem, The Righteous Among the Nations Department, M.31.2/2643, Files concerning the case of Tadeusz and Maria Stechbart (n.p.).

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, Mordecai Paldiel to Celina Reńska, 28 July 1983 (n.p.).

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, Certificate of honour for Maria Stechbart and her son Tadeusz (n.p.).

⁵⁶ Archives of the Institute of National Remembrance, 1218/32017.

No. 1

*8 August 1982, Tel Aviv (Israel) – Letter of Celina Reńska née Kawecka
to Yad Vashem concerning the aid provided by Emil & Amalia Szulc
and Maria & Tadeusz Stechbart.*

[...] ^a

Tel Aviv, 8 August 1982

To The Righteous Among the Nations Department,
Yad Vashem

Re: Application for awarding the title “Righteous Among the Nations”

My name is Celina Reńska, ^b née Kawecka. I was born in Bydgoszcz, Poland, on 18 September 1922.

On behalf of myself and my late parents, Helena and Jan Kawecki, I would like to ask you to immortalize the memory of the people who saved my life and that of my family during the Nazi occupation.

In 1939, after fleeing my hometown, I arrived with my family (my father, mother and brother) in Warsaw. There, we visited a friend of my father’s from his youth – Emil Szulc. From the first moment, even before the ghetto was closed, Emil Szulc and his family showed great interest in our fate and readiness to help us. At this point, it should be emphasised that Emil Szulc, although he was of German origin and was persecuted by Poles because of this, at that time refused to accept the “Volkslist” (*Volksliste*) and felt himself to be a true Pole, belonged to the Polish underground and clearly opposed the Nazis. Szulc and his family were religious evangelicals adhering to high moral standards and a deep inner conviction that it was a duty to help one’s neighbor. During the time we were in the ghetto, Emil Szulc maintained a constant telephone contact with my father and passed parcels

^a *The address details of the sender and recipient have been omitted.*

^b *Surnames in the original are uninflected.*

from the Evangelical cemetery to the Jewish cemetery,¹ that was adjacent to it. When the persecution in the ghetto began, Szulc arranged false papers for me and my whole family (he used his contacts with the Polish underground for this purpose). He convinced my father to leave the ghetto. We took our first steps on the “Aryan” side with his help and moved into his flat at 54 Młynarska Street² for several weeks until he found suitable accommodation for us. I would like to point out that at that time, Szulc was suffering from *angina pectoris*.³

Szulc found us paid accommodation with Mrs. Maria Stechbart, a widow without means, who lived with her mother and son Tadeusz. For the entire period of our stay (about two years) with Mrs. Stechbart, until the Polish uprising in Warsaw, Emil Szulc visited us in our hiding place at least once a month, sometimes with his father-in-law Edwin Kutte.⁴ He brought the underground press and money for upkeep from the amount my father had left with him. The entire Szulc family, including his wife Amalia, their son Eugeniusz and daughter Lilian, had an extremely friendly attitude towards us and showed readiness to help us despite the threat of death stipulated for those helping Jews – they did all this without expecting any compensation in return. The Stechbart family, who at first took care of us based on the remuneration we paid them, showed a very good attitude towards us in the end and, in a few cases, when the police conducted a hunt for hiding Jews, did not turn us in.

After the Warsaw Uprising, on the Polish side, the Stechbart family took my father and brother (Adam Kawecki) under their care, and this also involved a threat to their lives.

It should be added that the entire Szulc family was sent to a concentration camp after the Warsaw uprising due to their refusal to accept the “Volklist.”

In conclusion, from the bottom of my heart, I ask that the late Emil Szulc and his wife Amalia be awarded the title of “The Righteous Among the Nations.” In my

¹ We are referring to the Jewish cemetery on Okopowa Street, to which the Catholic and Protestant cemeteries were adjacent. During the occupation, it was a place for Jews from the Warsaw Ghetto to smuggle food from the “Aryan” side.

² The address of the house is also that of the Lutheran cemetery in Warsaw.

³ A disease manifested by, among other things, chest pains.

⁴ Incorrect use of the word “father-in-law” instead of “son-in-law.” Edwin Kutte was married to Emil’s daughter, Alice.

opinion, the conduct of the members of the Stechbart family (Tadeusz and Maria Stechbart) also justifies their recognition with this esteemed title.

As witnesses to all that is written above can serve: Ewa Madfes, Magdalena Relirad, Magdalena Fagot, Adam Kawecki [...].^c

In my possession is a photograph showing Emil Szulc with my late father, along with correspondence with the Szulc and Stechbart families. [^d]

Yours faithfully,
Celina Reńska [...].^e

Source: Yad Vashem Archives in Jerusalem, The Righteous Among the Nations Department, M.31.2/2643, Files concerning the case of Tadeusz and Maria Stechbart, n.p., Hebrew, manuscript.

^c *The address details of all persons mentioned have been omitted.*

^d *The correspondence and photographs mentioned were not attached to the letter in the available records.*

^e *The address details have been omitted.*

No. 2

1982 [after 9 August], Tel Aviv (Israel) – Letter of Celina Reńska née Kawecka to
Yad Vashem concerning the aid provided by Emil & Amalia Szulc
and Maria & Tadeusz Stechbart

To Yad Vashem
The Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Authority

Re: Szulc Emil and [Szulc] Amalia – Poland (3530)¹
Stechbart Maria and her son Tadeusz – Poland (3531)²

Dear Ms. Prausnitz,

In reply to your letter dated 9 August [19]82, I beg to inform you that:

1. As far as Ms. Chawa is concerned [...]^a, the deeds of the Szulc family are known through the stories shared by my late parents and my own accounts.

2. The additional witness, Magdalena Fagot, was a friend of the family and knew the Szulc family well as the persons who rescued us during the Holocaust. We often met with the Szulcs at our home in Łódź after the war.

3. The two children of the Szulc family, Eugeniusz and Lilian, were about my age (I was born in 1922). Eugeniusz was about two years older than me, and Lilian was a year younger than me, meaning they were both over 17 during the war.

Eugeniusz Szulc [...]^b

Lilian Kutte [...]^c

^a Name illegible. Presumably, the reference is made to Eve Madfes mentioned in the first letter.

^b Address details have been omitted.

^c Address details have been omitted.

¹ The original number of the file relating to awarding the title to Emil and Amalia Szulc.

² The original number of the file relating to awarding the title to Maria and Tadeusz Stechbart.

Additional details will be submitted upon request.

With kind regards,
Reński Celina [...] ^d

Source: Yad Vashem Archives in Jerusalem, The Righteous Among the Nations Department, M.31.2/2643, Files concerning the case of Tadeusz and Maria Stechbart, n.p., Hebrew, manuscript.

Translation of the documents from Hebrew: Anna Klingofer-Szostakowska

^d *Address details have been omitted.*

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SUMMARY

In 1982, Celina Reńska née Kawecka wrote two letters to the Righteous Among the Nations Department, Yad Vashem. In the letter she outlines how her family – Jewish refugees from Bydgoszcz – were rescued by two families of Polish Protestants in Warsaw. The publication of both letters gives an insight into the aid's circumstances, the helpers' motivations, and the procedure leading to the award.

KEYWORDS

Holocaust • Warsaw ghetto • Bydgoszcz Jews • Jewish refugees •
World War II • Polish-Jewish relations • helping Jews •
The Righteous Among the Nations



REVIEWS/ POLEMICS

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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 Herzl 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–Grodko–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 Lądowych* 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 Sowieckich 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, "Dezercje 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. Bussgang (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 zajęć 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, "Dezercja żołnierzy-Żydów z Polskich Sił Zbrojnych w Wielkiej Brytanii w 1944 roku jako zagrożenie destrukcyjne w przededniu inwazji w Normandii," *Acta Universitatis Lodzianensis. 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).

(Nielatwa 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 percent 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.

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*WARTIME RESCUE OF JEWS BY THE POLISH CATHOLIC CLERGY:
THE TESTIMONY OF SURVIVORS AND RESCUERS.*
COMPILED AND ANNOTATED BY RYSZARD TYNDORF WITH
THE ASSISTANCE OF ZYGMUNT ZIELIŃSKI*

In 2023, the Catholic University of Lublin's publishing house published Ryszard Tyndorf's book *Wartime Rescue of Jews by the Polish Catholic Clergy*. The publication is promoted by the Abraham J. Heschel Centre for Catholic-Jewish Relations at the Catholic University of Lublin.¹ This monumental work numbers 1,278 pages and consists of two volumes. Its author, Dr. Richard Tyndorf, is a Canadian lawyer and documentary filmmaker. He has collected material for many years, yet – as he emphasizes – the book is only a contribution to subsequent work, as many sources still need to be properly processed. “Moreover, numerous archives – Polish, Israeli, German, Lithuanian, Ukrainian, and American – remain untapped. Many of the stories found herein would benefit from expansion or further validation,”² states Tyndorf (p. 16).

* *Wartime Rescue of Jews by the Polish Catholic Clergy: The Testimony of Survivors and Rescuers*, compiled and annotated by Ryszard Tyndorf with the assistance of Zygmunt Zieliński (Lublin, 2023), 1278 pp.

¹ With the financial support of the Toronto District of the Canadian Polish Congress.

² “Moreover, numerous archives – Polish, Israeli, German, Lithuanian, Ukrainian, and American – remain untapped. Many of the stories found herein would benefit from expansion or further validation.”

The study was undertaken at the initiative and with the collaboration of Fr. Prof. Zygmunt Zieliński, historian of the nineteenth- and twentieth-century Catholic Church, retired lecturer at the Catholic University of Lublin, member of the Commission for Modern History, the Committee for Research on Polish Diaspora Abroad, and the Committee of Historical Sciences of the Polish Academy of Sciences. Fr. Prof. Zygmunt Zieliński is also the author of approximately 850 academic publications, including many on the history of Polish-Jewish relations.³

Ryszard Tyndorf's work is the first comprehensive English-language publication of this kind, focusing on the institutions of the Catholic Church, its clergy (members of congregations and religious orders, including women religious orders, and diocesan priests), and the laypersons involved in the Church life and aid provided to Jews during World War II in German-occupied Poland. It is based primarily on the testimonies of Jews rescued by or with the assistance of the Polish clergy, the testimonies of both the clergy and laypeople involved in the Church, along with archival documents (2023, p. 16). The author has, of course, also taken into account academic studies on the subject, including the results of many years of research by Franciszek Kącki,⁴ Franciszek Stopniak,⁵ Paweł Rytel-Andrianik and

³ See, among others, *Życie religijne w Polsce pod okupacją hitlerowską 1939–1945*, vol. 1, ed. Z. Zieliński, (Warsaw, 1982), vol. 2 (Katowice, 1992); Z. Zieliński, *Problem ratowania Żydów przez polskie zgromadzenia zakonne w okresie okupacji hitlerowskiej. Stanowisko polskie i żydowskie* (Warsaw, 1983); *idem*, "Activities of Catholic Orders on Behalf of Jews in Nazi-occupied Poland," in *Judaism and Christianity under the Impact of National Socialism (1919–1945)*, ed. O. Dov Kulka, P.R. Mendes-Flohr (Jerusalem, 1987), pp. 381–394; *idem*, "Polska w oczach Żydów amerykańskich," *Więź* 6 (34) (1991), pp. 9–29; Z. Zieliński, "Żydzi w społeczeństwie Polski międzywojennej," *Dzieje Najnowsze* 4 (27) (1995), pp. 39–65.

⁴ F. Kącki, *Dzieło miłosierdzia chrześcijańskiego. Polskie duchowieństwo katolickie a Żydzi w latach okupacji hitlerowskiej* (Warsaw, 1968); *idem*, *Udział księży i zakonnic w holokauście Żydów* (Warsaw, 2002).

⁵ F. Stopniak, "Pomoc kleru polskiego dla dzieci w II wojnie światowej," in *Kościół katolicki na ziemiach Polski w czasie II wojny światowej. Materiały i studia*, ed. F. Stopniak (Warsaw, 1981), pp. 3–63; *idem*, "Duchowieństwo katolickie i Żydzi w Polsce w latach II wojny światowej," *Acta Universitatis Wratislaviensis. Studia nad Faszyzmem i Zbrodniami Hitlerowskimi* 11 (1987), pp. 195–215; *idem*, "Katolickie duchowieństwo w Polsce i Żydzi w okresie niemieckiej okupacji," in *Polskie podziemie polityczne wobec zagłady Żydów w czasie okupacji niemieckiej. Referaty z sesji, Warszawa, 22 IV 1987*, ed. I. Borowicz (Warsaw, 1988), pp. 66–84; *idem*, "Duchowieństwo katolickie z pomocą Żydom w II wojnie światowej," *Saeculum Christianum* 1 (2) (1995), pp. 89–99; *idem*, "Katolickie duchowieństwo w Polsce i Żydzi w okresie niemieckiej okupacji," in *Spółczeństwo polskie wobec martyrologii i walki Żydów w latach II wojny światowej. Materiały z sesji w Instytucie Historii PAN w dniu 11 III 1993 r.*, ed. K. Dunin-Wąsowicz (Warsaw, 1996), pp. 19–55.

Edward Kopówka,⁶ Martyna Grądzka-Rejak,⁷ Grzegorz Chajko,⁸ Ewa Kurek-Lesik,⁹ Agata Mirek,¹⁰ Daniel Wojciechowski,¹¹ as well as Zygmunt Zieliński, who helped in the creation of this monograph.¹²

The first volume consists of an introduction, two maps,¹³ and five chapters (it should be added that the content of the fifth chapter – probably due to the breadth of the study – has been divided between two volumes). The first chapter reviews the findings of other researchers and documentation of scholars to date. The quoted authors include Philip Friedman,¹⁴ Władysław Bartoszewski,¹⁵ Ema-

⁶ E. Kopówka, P. Ryteł-Andrianik, *Dam im imię na wieki (Iz 56,5). Polacy z okolic Treblinki ratujący Żydów* (Warsaw, 2011).

⁷ M. Grądzka-Rejak, “Od dłuższego czasu straciłem wszelki kontakt z żydami i żydostwem. Neofici w okupowanym Krakowie w świetle materiałów Archiwum Kurii Metropolitalnej w Krakowie,” *Zagłada Żydów. Studia i Materiały* 13 (2017), pp. 342–371; *eadem*, “Kościół katolicki w okupowanym Krakowie w pomocy Żydom. Zarys problematyki badawczej,” in *Kościół krakowski 1939–1945*, ed. Ł. Klimek (Cracow, 2014), pp. 125–154.

⁸ G. Chajko, “The Clergy of the Archdiocese of Lviv of the Latins in Aid of the Jewish Nation during the Years of the German Occupation from 1941–1944. An Outline of the Events,” *The Person and the Challenges: The Journal of Theology Education Canon Law and Social Studies Inspired by Pope John Paul II* 2 (3) (2013), pp. 143–155.

⁹ E. Kurek-Lesik, “The Conditions of Admittance and the Social Background of Jewish Children Saved by Women’s Religious Orders in Poland from 1939–1945,” *Polin: A Journal of Polish-Jewish Studies* 3 (1988), pp. 244–275; *eadem*, *Gdy klasztor znaczył życie. Udział żeńskich zgromadzeń zakonnych w akcji ratowania dzieci żydowskich w Polsce w latach 1939–1945* (Cracow, 1992); *eadem*, “The Role of Polish Nuns in the Rescue of Jews, 1939–1945,” in *Embracing the Other: Philosophical, Psychological, and Historical Perspectives on Altruism*, ed. P.M. Oliner et al. (New York, 1992), pp. 328–334; *eadem*, *Your Life Is Worth Mine: How Polish Nuns Saved Hundreds of Jewish Children in German-Occupied Poland, 1939–1945* (New York, 1997).

¹⁰ A. Mirek, “Udział siostr zakonnych w ratowaniu ludności żydowskiej w Polsce w latach 1939–1945 na przykładzie wybranych zgromadzeń,” in *Polacy ratujący Żydów. Historie niezwykle*, ed. J. Żaryn, T. Sudoł (Warsaw, 2014), pp. 135–160.

¹¹ D. Wojciechowski, *Duchowni kieleccy i wierni wobec eksterminacji Żydów* (Kielce, 2006).

¹² It is also worth mentioning the conference proceedings used in the above publication, which is the aftermath of an academic conference held in 2018 at the Ignatianum Academy in Cracow (its co-organiser was the IPN Branch in Cracow): *Kościół, Żydzi, jezuici. Wokół pomocy Żydom w czasie II wojny światowej*, ed. M. Wenklar (Cracow, 2021).

¹³ Map 1 shows the archdioceses and dioceses of the Roman Catholic Church of the Latin rite in Poland as of 1930, while Map 2 shows the administrative division of the Polish lands occupied by the Third Reich, but with an erroneous caption (boundaries of the archdioceses and dioceses of the Roman Catholic Church of the Latin rite in Poland in 1939).

¹⁴ P. Friedman, *Their Brother’s Keeper* (New York, 1957).

¹⁵ *Ten jest z ojczyzny mojej. Polacy z pomocą Żydom 1939–1945*, ed. W. Bartoszewski, Z. Lewinówna, (Cracow, 1966), second edition 1969, third edition 2007; English edition: *Righteous Among the Nations: How Poles Helped the Jewish, 1939–1945* (London, 1969); abbreviated American edition: *The Samaritans: Heroes of the Holocaust*, ed. W. Bartoszewski, Z. Lewinówna, (New York, 1970).

nuel Ringelblum,¹⁶ Mordechai Paldiel¹⁷ and David Silberklang.¹⁸ This group also contains scholars critical of Polish involvement in helping the Jews such as Jan Tomasz Gross, who argued that the definition of collaboration should also include collaboration by omission and include people, and institutions that remained passive towards the occupier's policies. Ryszard Tyndorf states that "armed" with this definition, Gross accuses the Polish clergy as a whole of engaging in such "collaboration" (2023, p. 27).¹⁹

The second chapter outlines the situation of the Polish clergy during World War II against the background of the decidedly more lenient treatment of representatives of the Church in other countries occupied by the Germans. The author gives examples of the persecution to which priests, monks and nuns, and lay faithful involved in the life of the Church were subjected in particular dioceses. He also cites reports on the persecution of the Church in the former territories of the Second Polish Republic (Fr. Zygmunt Kaczyński, Zenon Fijałkowski, Jonathan Huener, Roman Dzwonkowski, Andrew Turchyna – regarding Catholic clergy of Ukrainian origin – and others). It also analyses the size and structure of the pre-war Polish clergy.²⁰ In doing so, Tyndorf outlines the conditions imposed by the Germans in the occupied Poland, with particular emphasis on the brutal repression to which the Poles were subjected. This seems particularly important for readers unfamiliar with the actual terms of the German occupation of Polish lands. The chapter also mentions the death of Jan Semik. According to Władysław Bartoszewski, quoted by Tyndorf, this would be the first known case of execution for helping Jews. Bartoszewski wrote that on 6 September 1939, in Limanowa,

¹⁶ E. Ringelblum, *Polish-Jewish relations during the Second World War* (Jerusalem, 1974); E. Ringelblum, *Kronika getta warszawskiego. Wrzesień 1939 – styczeń 1943*, introduction written and edited by A. Eisenbach (Warsaw, 1983).

¹⁷ M. Paldiel, *Sheltering the Jews: Stories of Holocaust Rescuers* (Minneapolis, 1996).

¹⁸ D. Silberklang, "Refleksje na temat losu Żydów w okupowanej Polsce 1939–1945," *Pamięć i Sprawiedliwość* 1 (2008), pp. 113–126.

¹⁹ See also J.T. Gross, "O kolaboracji," *Zagłada Żydów. Studia i Materiały* 2 (2006), pp. 407–416.

²⁰ On the eve of the war, there were about 18,600 priests, monks and nuns and about twenty thousand nuns working in Poland (p. 54). In contrast, in 1939 there were 9,700 priests, 12,700 monks and 49,600 nuns in a much smaller Belgium; see B. Moore, *Survivors: Jewish Self-Help and Rescue in Nazi-Occupied Western Europe* (Oxford – New York, 2010), p. 169). In 1929, France had almost fifty thousand priests, about seven thousand monks, and one hundred and seventeen thousand nuns; Italy in 1936 had about one hundred and twenty-nine thousand nuns.

the postman Jan Semik was shot together with the nine arrested Jews he stood up for.²¹ According to the investigation materials of the District Commission for the Investigation of Hitlerite Crimes in Cracow and the research of the Office for Commemorating Polish Struggle and Martyrdom of the IPN Branch in Cracow, the story was most likely different. On 12 September 1939, the Germans arrested and then shot twelve Jewish inhabitants of Limanowa, craftsmen and merchants, as well as a Pole, Jan Semik, who ran a chimney sweeping shop. According to the testimony of Zofia Semik, the wife of the murdered man, given ten years later, one of the executioners informed her that the arrested Jews were accused of providing funds for the purchase of armaments for the Polish Army and that her husband was accused of building anti-tank entanglements.²²

Chapter two also attempts to outline an answer to the question about rabbis' reactions to the persecution of the Polish clergy at the beginning of the war (either those shared by the public or recorded in the pages of memoirs).

The third chapter illustrates the attitude of the Polish Catholic clergy to the deteriorating situation of the Jews from September 1939 to June 1941, i.e., until the attack of the German Reich on the Soviet Union. Among the well-documented cases described are those of Fr. Wincenty Mieczysław Zawadzki and Sr. Rufina (Tekla) Świrska, along with many other members of the Polish clergy who either stood up for Jews or provided them with direct aid. This aid included feeding, sheltering, and organizing support for Jews, including refugees in Soviet-occupied territories. The activities of Fr. Maximilian Maria Kolbe, at the time the guardian of the Franciscan monastery at Niepokalanów, where many Jews found shelter and help, are described in greater detail. This is important as Fr. Kolbe is often pointed as the flagship example of an anti-Semitic Catholic (pp. 88–94).²³ The chapter also includes testimonies of efforts made by Polish bishops, including Archbishop Adam Sapieha. Examples of attempts made to persuade the Vatican to respond more firmly are outlined. Instances of less obvious assistance are also

²¹ *Righteous Among the Nations*, pp. 72–73.

²² See <https://krakow.ipn.gov.pl/pl4/aktualnosci/94275,Glaz-pamieci-Zydow-i-Polaka-zamordowanych-przez-Niemcow-we-wrzesniu-1939-r-pod-L.html>, accessed 9 April 2024.

²³ Cf. P. Treece, *A Man For Others: Maximilian Kolbe Saint of Auschwitz, in the Words of Those Who Knew Him* (San Francisco, 1982), pp. 91–93.

highlighted, such as refusing to participate in various anti-Jewish projects, issuing forged documents or false certificates, signing petitions, and expressing solidarity with those wronged or murdered. This chapter highlights the repression of Jews in the context of the persecution experienced by Poles at that time. It also juxtaposes the possibilities of aid in various countries of occupied Europe. It concludes that the assistance given to Jews by Poles was, eventually, as ineffective as the attempt to change their own tragic fate.

The situation of Jews, above all in the Polish Eastern Borderlands, altered significantly after the outbreak of the German-Soviet war. Chapter four focuses on the changes that occurred after 22 June 1941 and the reactions of the Polish clergy, especially from areas previously occupied by the Soviets. Here, too, persecution and the possibilities of assistance are shown against the background of the then situation of the ethnically diverse inhabitants of the eastern lands of Poland.

The fifth chapter concerns the persecution of the Jews in the years 1942–1945 which were the most tragic in this regard, and to the various forms of assistance provided by the Polish clergy during this period. We shall find here information concerning the involvement of priests, monks and nuns in the activities of the Council for Aid to Jews “Żegota” and above all, Mother Matylda Getter, the superior of the Warsaw province of the Congregation of the Franciscan Sisters of the Family of Mary and Sister Wanda Garczyńska, the superior of the Congregation of the Sisters of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary. The documents cited indicate that even in this tragic period, the help given to the Jews by the Catholic clergy was not always well received by some members of the Jewish community, as shown, among others, by the notes of Emanuel Ringelblum (pp. 143–144).²⁴ The author also undertakes a discussion of allegations that one of the primary purposes of the nuns’ aid to Jewish children was conversion to

²⁴ Ringelblum mentions, among other things, a discussion among a group of Jewish intellectuals about the action of sending Jewish children to monasteries and convents. One of its participants argued that although it was considered that only children between the ages of ten and fourteen would be placed in monasteries and convents – as being old enough to resist indoctrination – they would nevertheless succumb to the influence of the priests and sooner or later become Christians. He did not believe the priests’ promises not to convert the children; he believed that in time, as a result of their education, they would abandon Judaism. He maintained that Jews should follow the example of their fathers and accept martyrdom in the name of God; see E. Ringelblum, *Notes from the Warsaw Ghetto: The Journal of Emanuel Ringelblum* (New York, 1958), pp. 336–337.

Christianity. Although such a thesis is not reflected in documents or testimonies, some publications make the gravest accusations. Jan Tomasz Gross for example, refers to the baptizing of children in hiding as “ritual murder” (p. 146).²⁵

Tyndorf cites numerous testimonies of the lack of gratitude and even the harshest accusations directed at those who rescued Jews, particularly the clergy. Jan Dobraczyński and Jadwiga Piotrowska described the reaction of the “Jewish Committee”²⁶ to the handing over of a list of rescued Jewish children to its representatives:

We were also told we were worse than the Germans. The Germans only took the body; we took the soul, condemning the children to damnation. Our arguments that we were fighting for their lives were put off right away: ‘It would have been better if these children had died...’ We left completely broken. [...] Over forty years have passed, and I am still grappling with this in my conscience. Would it really have been better if we had sent those children to their deaths? (pp. 146–147).²⁷

For the reasons named by Tyndorf, baptizing Jewish children in Christian orphanages significantly increased their chances of survival.²⁸ However, there were times when Jews chose death over help from Catholic clergy (e.g., pp. 341–342).

Like the previous ones, this chapter is a rich collection of moving testimonies of the survivors mainly but also of witnesses to those events and of rescuers themselves, added with the collected research results by other researchers. When quoting subsequent stories, the author underlines that they are only examples; stories confirmed by archives and memories he managed to reach. Nevertheless,

²⁵ J.T. Gross, *Fear. Anti-Semitism in Poland after Auschwitz: An Essay in Historical Interpretation* (New York, 2006), footnote on p. 162.

²⁶ The said “Jewish Committee’s” name was in fact “Koordynacja” (The Zionist Coordination Committee for the Redemption of Jewish Children), operating between 1946 and 1949. Its aim was to find Jewish children who had survived the Holocaust hidden i.a. in monasteries and convents or with Catholic families, and to place them in a Jewish environment. The children were moved to four homes: two in Łódź and two in Silesia. More in E. Kurek, *Your Life Is Worth Mine*, pp. 111–121.

²⁷ As cited in: *ibid.*, p. 87.

²⁸ More in T. Domański, “Konwersje Żydów na katolicyzm w Generalnym Gubernatorstwie na przykładzie diecezji kieleckiej,” *Polish-Jewish Studies* 2 (2021), pp. 202–219.

they inspire respect for this “work of painstaking scholarship” – as George Weigel called Ryszard Tyndorf’s publication – which “is a major contribution to the history of the Catholic Church in the twentieth century, to modern Polish history, and to Holocaust studies. It is also inspiring reading, as the book bears witness to immense human courage, spiritually inspired, under the most draconian of circumstances.”

The first volume ends on p. 566 with a sequence of narratives about the most tragic events of 1942–1945. In the second volume, the fifth chapter continues until p. 968, with subsections devoted to the following: (1) the help given to Jews in German concentration or labour camps by their fellow prisoners – clergymen, (2) the help given to Jews during death marches, (3) the help given to Jews by Karol Wojtyła – then a seminarian, later Pope John Paul II, (4) conversion of Jews to Catholicism,²⁹ (5) people who did not remember or did not learn the names of the clergy who helped them, (6) Poles who helped Jews outside Poland, (7) the post-war return of Jewish sacred objects entrusted to the Catholic clergy (Torah scrolls, prayer shawls, phylacteries, etc.) and last, (8) a subsection, somewhat divergent from the main topic, (unfortunately only half a page) devoted to financial donations as a form of gratitude to the Catholic clergy after the war.

The second volume concludes with nine appendices (starting from p. 971). The first (A) contains a bibliography of selected titles on the subject in English, Polish, and Italian – only 50 items in total. Appendix B lists parishes and other church institutions where assistance was provided to Jews (excluding institutions run by religious orders). The next appendix contains a list of religious and monastic orders mentioned in the publication, both of women (C) and men (D), which provided assistance to Jews during the war (the author underlines the incompleteness of these lists). Appendix E is an alphabetical list of Polish Roman Catholic clergy recognized as “The Righteous Among the Nations” (only 150 persons) – a number that is constantly growing. To date, Yad Vashem has recognized 41 priests³⁰ and 72 nuns³¹ as The Righteous, as well as five Poles who were ordained as priests after the war

²⁹ For example, the story of the conversion of Shmuel Oswald Rufeisen, later Fr. Daniel, a Carmelite in Haifa, whose story this author regards as a personally close one that is included in the fifth chapter starting from p. 815 onwards and Rachel Drązek aka Maria Janina Malczewska, later Sr. Paula of the Benedictine monastery on the Mount of Olives, mentioned in only a few sentences.

³⁰ Until the book was published, the number was 39.

³¹ Until the book was published, the number was 67.

ended. To this should be added four Protestant clergymen, five Orthodox, and ten Ukrainian Greek Catholic clergymen engaged in the rescue operation in Poland. Yad Vashem awarded the first title to a Polish clergyman in 1966, to Fr. Witold Szymczukiewicz from Rukojnia near Vilnius. Interestingly, the vast majority of the nuns, monks, and priests honoured were recognized as The Righteous only after 1982. By then, the list numbered only six persons!

Appendix F is a brief reminiscence of the clergy (men and women) who lost their lives for helping Jews. Appendix G lists examples of repression experienced in occupied Poland for helping Jews; for the sake of comparison, these are contrasted with penalties imposed on helpers in other countries of occupied Europe. The rather extensive Appendix H concerns an attempt to reconstruct the scale and forms of rescue efforts of Christian Poles in occupied Poland (with comparisons to other European countries). The study is concluded by Appendix I, entitled “(Non) Recognition and (In)Gratitude.” This appendix attempts to outline the framework of how rescued Jews or Israelis refer to rescuers or their memory. Alongside beautiful behavior and expressions of gratitude, there are also starkly contrasting attitudes mentioned here – opinions that are blatantly harmful and perpetuate the worst stereotypes. Among those who defame the memory of those who rescued Jews are, unfortunately, also Poles.

The book cites documents and testimonies confirming the help given to Jews by 66 women religious orders in about 450 institutions (mainly nunneries), 25 men religious orders in about 85 institutions, and by more than 700 diocesan priests in at least 580 localities in occupied Poland. The author points out that this is only a fraction of the actual assistance and a tiny fraction. It is not just about the unknown or forgotten stories that vanished with their participants but about the sheer number of people it took to save a single Jew (and, after all, the rescue efforts were not always successful). Of course, it was also not uncommon for Jews to be rescued in the strictest secrecy by one or two people. At the same time, it should be emphasized that the repression to which the whole of Polish society, including monks, nuns and the clergy, was subjected, was significantly harsher than the persecution in other countries of German-occupied Europe.

The second limitation of this study, to which, incidentally, the author draws particular attention (Appendix H), is that the Church is not only ordained per-

sons but also the lay faithful inspired by the Church's teaching, and not only those directly involved in any of its, even if only parochial, structures. The Christian inspiration of lay people helping Jews during the Occupation is a topic that requires a separate study.

Although the data collected and presented is far from complete, it can be concluded that the percentage of nuns, priests, and consecrated persons saving Jews alone is significantly higher than the involvement of the entire population (the total number of ethnic Poles honoured by Yad Vashem according to the January 2022 data is 7,232 people, to which one should add approximately 1,500 Righteous of other nations helping Jews on Polish territory). However, as the author himself points out, "Lengthy appendices further demonstrate that clergy rescue was neither unusual nor out of character, but rather an intrinsic element in the Polish nation's response to the Holocaust" (p. 18).³²

Richard Tyndorf's study is, first and foremost, a collection of testimonies. Many of them have been processed – documented, verified, and more or less extensively and exhaustively discussed. Many others have only been cited – in cases where there are no other sources or documents to verify them or the author has not yet managed to access them. Tyndorf emphasizes that this is only the beginning of this work; many sources have not yet been compiled, and many minor archives have not even been reviewed for this purpose. It is impossible to determine how much history exists solely in collective memory without physical evidence. The example of Jan Semik highlights the need to correct errors in the literature in the field. Ryszard Tyndorf's work serves as a collection of materials for further discussion and an outline of the entire issue. It is undoubtedly a significant contribution to reconstructing a more accurate picture of the history of the Holocaust in Poland.

Anyone interested can download both volumes free from the website: <https://bit.ly/3TzWRaH>.

³² "Lengthy appendices further demonstrate that clergy rescue was neither unusual nor out of character, but rather an intrinsic element in the Polish nation's response to the Holocaust." Cf. <https://episkopat.pl/duchowni-sprawiedliwi-wsrod-narodow-swiata/>, accessed 9 April 2024.

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EMBRACING A LACK OF CONTEXT?
REFLECTIONS ON THE EXHIBITION “SOME WERE NEIGHBORS.
CHOICE, HUMAN BEHAVIOR AND THE HOLOCAUST”

In connection with the 81st anniversary of the annihilation of the Kielce Ghetto, planned and carried out by the German occupation authorities from 20 to 24 August 1942, a ceremonial opening of an exhibition entitled “Some Were Neighbors. Choice, Human Behavior and the Holocaust” was held on 19 August 2023. The initiator of the undertaking intended to mark the commemoration of this tragic event was the Jan Karski Association in Kielce. The exhibition, prepared by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM) in Washington, was displayed at Plac Artystów [Artists’ Square] in Kielce, and the occasional lecture introducing the theme of the exhibition was given by Dr. Alina Skibińska, a representative of this institution. The exhibition “Some Were Neighbors...” has previously toured many Polish cities and institutions, including the Ulma Family Museum of Poles Saving Jews in World War II. This prompts reflection on its overall message and meaning.

The questions of the reception of this exhibition become all the more pertinent when one becomes acquainted with the goals that the authors have set for

themselves. These are very ambitious; in a single exhibition, covering the whole of occupied Europe, they decided to provide an overview by way of an answer to fundamental questions that trouble many a scholar dealing professionally with Holocaust Studies, but which are also important for the average person with a limited interest in the subject of the Second World War. These rudimentary problems are indicated already on the first poster, where we can read:

The central role of Adolf Hitler and other Nazi leaders is indisputable, but they depended on countless others. What role did ordinary people play? Why were there some zealous participants in the persecution of Jews, while most simply went along or joined in? Why did so few help the victims? How did people respond to the plight of their Jewish classmates, co-workers, neighbors, and friends? What motivated or prompted them to act as they did during the Holocaust?

These questions are illustrated by a photograph depicting the humiliating forced labour of Jews scrubbing the pavements in Vienna in March 1938.¹

The Polish version of the exhibition consists of 22 posters. The entire exhibition is clearly divided into three parts: The Third Reich (including annexed territories, posters 2–8), Eastern Europe (East, posters 9–15), and the rest of the continent under German occupation or collaborating with the German state, and countries such as Norway (posters 16–21). The issues were presented in a chronological and subject order. Towards the end of the exhibition, this arrangement was slightly disrupted, and the emphasis shifted to specific topics – the clash between the smiling “Nazis” and the drama of the Jewish victims – and to the message about the possibility of choice and resisting evil (posters 20–21). The final part of the exhibition (poster 22) focuses on the USHMM’s educational efforts to oppose hatred and prevent genocide. It is important to note already at this point that although the exhibition was intended for the Polish audience, the Polish state and society under German occupation were not specifically highlighted. Instead, they were

¹ This photograph, held at the Dokumentationsarchiv des österreichischen Widerstandes (DÖW) in Vienna, is also the “nucleus” of the stories about the social attitudes of the Viennese and, more broadly, of Austrians towards the Nazi authorities and their policies.

considered part of the East, which, while objectively accurate, carries significant implications that will be discussed further.

Theoretically, the division of the exhibition into these three parts – given the challenges that the authors posed to themselves – may seem quite natural. Here, on the one hand, we have the Third Reich, the “heart of darkness,” the place where the Holocaust was planned, and on the other, we follow the reactions of the occupied nations (and the collaborationist states) – those in the East and in the rest of the continent – to this unprecedented genocide. In practice, however, the authors’ attempt to cover such a wide-ranging issue universally, to build a certain generalizing message, forced them to use far-reaching simplifications and abbreviations in the sphere of concepts, facts, and in the textual layer, which was detrimental to the accuracy of the historical message and the message of the exhibition as a whole. The introduced division between the East and the rest of Europe seems artificial and adds little to the understanding of the mechanism of the Holocaust, especially the social attitudes that are at the center of the authors’ interest. The viewer who intends to get acquainted with the exhibition should have considerable knowledge of Holocaust studies and World War II. Otherwise, the juxtaposition may sometimes be illegible, unclear, and even capable of falsifying actual occurrences, especially that of the occupation, i.e., on the occupied Polish territories. For these reasons, several general and specific comments can, and indeed should, be made on the exhibition concept to determine whether the authors have answered the questions they posed.

This reviewer will begin with their presentation of objections to semantic issues or interventions that result in serious consequences in the interpretative layer. Then, the discussion will move on to strictly historical ones. In attempting to answer the questions presented in Poster 1, the authors make the fundamental historical error of using the highly controversial (and at the same time not reflective of the facts) term “domination” in the very first sentences, which does not reflect the nature of German state violence and Occupation terror in almost all of Europe and does not bring us any closer to understanding what German totalitarianism was before and during the Second World War. “Within Nazi Germany and across German-dominated Europe,” as we can read on the poster, “people behaved in a variety of ways [...]” Yes, indeed, people behaved in a variety of ways, but is it legitimate to

call the German occupation “domination”? Is this the result of a mistranslation from English, or is it a conscious effort to create a new image of the role of the Third Reich during the World War II? The introduction of the term “domination” instead of “occupation” in the case of Polish lands, e.g., in relation to the General Governorate (GG), has serious consequences for the understanding of what the German presence in these territories actually was, and the extent to which the various countries conquered by the Germans differed in this respect. The use of the term, which has much weaker overtones, clearly changes the perception of the rules and laws, which practically amount to lawlessness, introduced by German totalitarianism against conquered nations. The question must, therefore, be asked how the authors want to explain individual social attitudes towards the Holocaust if they present them in isolation from German policy as if it had not been instrumental in shaping the types of behaviour of European societies. The general and factually incompatible thesis of German “domination” has thus created the possibility of developing a vision of unified social attitudes towards the Holocaust, in which similarities and differences have become blurred, and pointing them out is no longer relevant. This was clearly expressed by Dr. Skibińska:

The problems that affected the inhabitants of this land also affected other people, and these are universal problems. We are an exception when it comes to the course of the Holocaust; we are not an exception when it comes to people's attitudes, and this is the main theme of the exhibition.²

The second issue in the semantic layer is the problem of the scrupulous avoidance of the terms “Germany” and “German” in favour of “Nazis” and “Nazi.” This perhaps unintentional procedure implies serious consequences in the reception of the exhibition: the element of a state's – read German – responsibility for the Holocaust disappears, and the phrase about “the role of Adolf Hitler and other Nazi leaders” quoted in the introduction does not change this. The self-imposed regime of political correctness (or perhaps German historical policy) has led the authors

² <http://jankarski.org.pl/obchody-81-rocznicy-zaglady-kieleckiego-getta/>, accessed 13 September 2023.

to build a narrative that completely falsifies the causes and course of the second stage of the Holocaust. The following peculiar sentence appears: "After Nazi leaders decided to annihilate all the Jews of Europe, Germans deported the inhabitants of ghettos in occupied Poland to the SS-run killing facilities at Chełmno, Belżec, Sobibór, Treblinka, Auschwitz and Majdanek." The visitor to the exhibition learns of the existence of some unspecified "Nazis" who give the Germans the order to deport Jews to extermination camps, "run" also by an unidentified "SS" unit. All of this unfolds in front of Poles, and – as will be elaborated further – with their widespread indifference (insensitivity). With this interpretation, the question can be raised as to who is actually the perpetrator of the Holocaust. Are the perpetrators the Germans or, on the contrary, are they not?

The disproportion in terms of causality is even more pronounced at the structural level. Now, here we come to remarks unrelated to the linguistic layer. Neither in the section of the exhibition dedicated to the Third Reich nor in the one focused on occupied Europe is the German terror apparatus responsible for the Holocaust, and the repression of the conquered nations systematically distinguished or presented. The names of the various formations do appear sporadically, but their descriptions are neither orderly nor precise. A poster in the section on Eastern Europe would have been particularly valuable. The authors also made some significant omissions. When discussing the Holocaust carried out by the Third Reich in the Eastern territories after the German attack on the Soviet Union in 1941, they failed to mention the *Einsatzgruppen* (Security Police Operative Groups), which were the primary formation responsible in this context. This omission is notable, especially since the main focus of this part of the exhibition (posters 9–15) was on German crimes against Jews in 1941 and the public's response to these events. An indication of the German forces and their deployment would have shown the total dimension of the occupation in the East in 1941–1944. It would have clearly highlighted the differences in the course of the Holocaust between different parts of Europe, determining the attitudes of the occupied societies towards the Holocaust.

It is astonishing moreover, to find that the symbolic term *Aktion "Reinhardt"* (Operation "Reinhardt"), referring to the murder of approximately two million Jews in the GG and Bezirk Białystok, also did not appear in the exhibition. Another issue concerns the main theme of the exhibition, namely social attitudes.

The narrative begins with a description of the situation in the Third Reich. This part of the exhibition is entitled: “True Believers, Opportunists, Conformists, Dissenters.” When confronted with knowledge about the Holocaust course of events, this title is very vague and obliterates reality. One could ask: “And where are the perpetrators in all this? Where are the initiators of this genocide?”³ In addition to general statements about the persecution of Jews and representatives of other nations (Sinti and Roma) or groups (homosexuals, Jehovah’s Witnesses), the authors dwell on trying to portray the Germans’ reaction⁴ to the anti-Jewish policies of the Nazis. They rightly named in the title and elaborated upon certain types of attitudes: support for anti-Jewish ideas, opportunism, conformism, and dissent. They discussed in more detail the exclusion of Jews from the German national community (Volksgemeinschaft), the shameful marking of Jews with the Star of David, the so-called Aryanisation of property, and reactions to anti-Jewish violence and the deportation of Jews as well as Sinti and Roma from the German Reich⁵ to the occupied Polish lands. In line with the classic principles of poster exhibitions, the captions under the included photographs also contain many important additions and supplementary information.

From the descriptions and the narrative thus built, a picture emerges of a German society that, in its mass, supported or tacitly accepted the actions of the Nazi authorities towards ethnic and social minorities. Only a few were able to stand up against evil, such as policeman Erich Troch from Felsberg, who, in November 1938, defended Sigmund Weinstein and his relatives from persecution. In this context, the question can be posed about what happened to him afterward (poster 4). Did he face any harassment from his superiors, expulsion from service, etc., for this act? Among the factors motivating the Germans’ choices, the authors most often emphasise conformism, opportunism and acquiescence to persecution, and vio-

³ Paradoxically, the permanent exhibition in a place symbolic to the Holocaust – Die Gedenk- und Bildungsstätte. Haus der Wannsee-Konferenz in Berlin – does not raise such doubts.

⁴ With this term, I also refer to the Austrians, who automatically became the Third Reich’s Germans after the Anschluss.

⁵ The enclosed map shows the German Reich within its 1942 borders. The use of such a short-cut, without a detailed explanation that this also refers to deportations of Jews from the Polish western territories incorporated into the Third Reich to other Polish territories, called by the Germans the *General-gouvernement*, further obscures the course of the Holocaust.

lence. Unfortunately, in this instance, no detailed statistical data were provided to enhance the analysis in this area. Instead, the authors relied on general quantifiers like “many.”⁶

In describing the response to persecution and the Holocaust in the Third Reich, in the context of the roundups of Jews in deportation operations already organised in Germany during the war and the Holocaust, the following sentence is extremely telling: “There were few individuals who expressed solidarity or said goodbye to former friends and neighbors.”⁷ Symbolically, only one person is mentioned who dared to embrace a Jewish woman in the street and say goodbye (poster 8). The above words are illustrated by photographs of Germans calmly walking next to persecuted Jews or people standing by and watching the dramatic events. The authors of the exhibition thus convince us that on the street of an average town in the Reich in 1940 or 1942, there was no atmosphere of fear, terror, or any threat from the Nazis for a gesture of solidarity with the Jews. A shake of the hand, a smile, or any other small display of kindness towards persecuted persons was not sanctioned by any summary punishment or systemic order. Compassion, or the absence of it, stemmed from the willingness to express it rather than being influenced by external political circumstances. We are free to ask, therefore, whether the overall message of the exhibition in its “German” part lies in the observation that there was simply not enough empathy and compassion on the part of German society, which pushed aside the problem of the fate of Jews. Perhaps, however, instead of appealing to the realm of emotionality, it would have been more appropriate to explicitly address the mass support for the idea of an all-out war and its consequences in the form of the involvement of ordinary Germans in the participation in the Holocaust and the persecution (and even extermination of certain social groups, e.g., in occupied Poland) of conquered peoples?

Poster 8 concludes the authors’ reflections on the attitudes of Germans towards their authorities’ anti-Jewish policy, while the subsequent ones take the viewer to completely different areas – to annexed and occupied territories, almost to a differ-

⁶ Very important data on the exchange of medical personnel willing to implement policies against disabled persons and Jews was presented at an exhibition held at the Gedenkstätte Am Steinhof in Vienna.

⁷ As many as two posters have been focused on these issues (7–8).

ent world. The presentation of social reactions to the persecution of Jews and the Holocaust in occupied Europe begins. The first poster of this part is titled “German Occupiers, Local Recruits ▪ Neighbors.” The subtitle reads: “Nazi Terror Heightens Ethnic Conflicts, Self-Interests and Fear.” The graphical layout makes it impossible to tell whether the authors have placed an equal sign between collaborators and neighbours or whether they have placed a full stop, separating the latter from those who, for various reasons through an act of voluntary cooperation, took part of their own free will in the implementation of anti-Jewish policy. However, the territory to which the title refers is not in doubt. We have been transferred to the “epicenter of the Holocaust,” i.e., the eastern areas of occupied Europe – the General Governorate, the Reichskommissariat Ostland, the Reichskommissariat Ukraine, and further areas conquered by the Wehrmacht in the Soviet Union (posters 11–15). It is a great pity that the administrative affiliation of other territories marked in green was not given on this occasion. The less historically sophisticated viewer may not know that these are areas of the Soviet Union under German military administration.

On the other hand, posters 16–21 focus on the remaining part of occupied Europe under the general title “Leaders ▪ Public Servants Onlookers.” Once again, the graphic layout makes it impossible to determine the type of symbol placed between the public servants and the onlookers, whether it was intended to be a full stop, a dash, or some kind of equal sign. It is also unclear why the inhabitants of these areas were categorised en masse as “onlookers” rather than as “neighbours” or collaborators. Such simplifications are completely inconsistent with the reality of the Occupation. It is common knowledge among specialists, but, as can be seen not among the exhibition’s authors that in occupied Poland there was no state collaboration, only individual collaboration, unlike in Hungary or the French State (Vichy France). By the way, the latter name does not appear anywhere in the exhibition (!). One can only speculate and ask questions about the omission of the term “collaboration” in the title of the section on Western Europe.

The exhibition’s creators barely notice the differences in the policies/activities of the German state authorities towards the conquered states and peoples of Eastern Europe, treating all these areas as a kind of socio-political monolith (posters 9–15). The country-specific context is relegated to the margins of consideration.

Let us turn our attention to poster 9 with the subtitle “Nazi Terror Heightens Ethnic Conflicts, Self-Interests, and Fear,” under which the motivations of collaborators and German Holocaust helpers are listed. The attempt to generalise about these behaviours may be questionable. The last of the factors indicated is “Nationalist aspirations for independence.” So here we enter a completely different conceptual category, i.e. we move from the collaboration of individuals or groups to entire nations. Which nation (or nations), then, collaborated with the Germans in carrying out the Holocaust to regain their independence? The authors should clearly answer such questions and not leave the viewer to his or her own guesses. Similarly blurred is the category of “ethnic conflicts” in the East mentioned in the subtitle. It must be clearly emphasised that the uniqueness of the Holocaust should not obscure the antagonising of non-Jewish peoples conquered by the Germans against each other. In the occupied Polish territories, the German authorities favoured Ukrainians, Lithuanians, or Belarusians at the expense of Poles. These conflicts, and thus the occupation-era background, taking an extreme form in the case of the Volhynian massacre, had a very real impact on the sense of one’s own security and thus on the reactions to the Holocaust and the possibility of providing assistance to Jews.⁸

The authors also considerably trivialised the description of the situation in the East between 1939 and 1941, when half of Poland and other Eastern countries were entering the Soviet sphere of influence. When listing the factors that motivated locals who collaborated with the Germans, they mentioned: the “Desire to avenge suffering under Soviet rule.” The tensions, it should be noted, related to the attitudes of the various nationalities towards the Soviet occupiers that emerged at the time also had an impact on mutual relations after the Germans entered the area.

Even more incomprehensible is the omission from the analysis of the East of the Polish western lands incorporated into the Reich (the so-called “incorporated territories”), to which the authors repeatedly refer (e.g., Poster 9 and 10) but do not mention explicitly. The crimes against Polish elites mentioned on Poster 10 were committed by the Selbstschutz, mainly in the territories incorporated into the Reich

⁸ *Stan badań nad pomocą Żydom na ziemiach polskich pod okupacją niemiecką. Przegląd piśmiennictwa*, ed. T. Domański, A. Gontarek (Warsaw–Kielce, 2022).

in the autumn of 1939 (the Pomeranian crimes). Moreover, the scale of the terrorisation of Polish society in this area was far greater than in the neighbouring General Governorate, which further limited the possibility of providing any aid to Jews.

In contrast, the authors treated the rest of Europe with much greater understanding (Poster 18) and suggested, for example, the existence of a whole range of intensities of collaboration with the “Nazis,” varying from country to country. They also approached the analysis of the motivation of negative attitudes in a completely different way than in the previous posters. They did not devote any deeper thought to this issue; they merely wrote: “War and Anti-Semitism Impact the Will to Collaborate” – thus pointing out the factors motivating the collaboration of Western countries and their citizens in the context of the Holocaust, and therefore that their response to the Holocaust should be the so-called salt of this exhibition.

There is also a lack of reflection on the Occupation-era conditions under which the majority of non-Jewish citizens of the eastern territories found themselves – and these varied considerably from country to country. As the authors rightly noted, the survival strategies of Jews depended on the conditions imposed by the “Nazis” (Poster 10). However, it should be remembered that they also determined aid strategies. It is not only about German laws and penalties for helping Jews but also about everyday life under the German occupation, which consisted of widespread terror and the poor material condition of the population. To the latter issue, in the context of the occupied Polish lands, the authors devoted barely one sentence: “The Germans imposed harsh living conditions on the population, and the situation of the majority of society deteriorated.” Such a diagnosis can just as well be successfully applied to wartime France, but there were colossal differences in living conditions between, for example, the occupied Mazovia and German-occupied Burgundy. The visitor to the exhibition will learn nothing of the extremely extensive and elaborate policy of exploitation and economic plunder of the conquered Polish lands, the millions of tons of food drained from there to Germany, of the rationing of basic foodstuffs, the ration card system, high prices and of the several hundred percent increase in prices (on the black market) compared to the pre-war prices.⁹ Only

⁹ This issue is covered extensively in: G. Berendt, “Cena życia – ekonomiczne uwarunkowania egzystencji Żydów po ‘aryjskiej stronie,’” *Zagłada Żydów. Studia i Materiały* 4 (2008), pp. 110–143.

the following sentence will be remembered: “Most Jews paid for aid, housing, and food, but some individuals made helping Jews a source of income” (poster 14).

Too little space has been devoted, in the reviewer’s opinion, to the category of fear as a factor motivating human choices in the face of the Holocaust in occupied Poland. In the realities of the German occupation in Poland, fear for one’s own life and the life of one’s loved ones meant that the most common attitude towards the Holocaust was passivity (a lack of reaction); but it was the kind of passivity forced precisely by the above considerations. The authors take a slightly different view of this issue. According to them, terror led to “an epidemic of social insensitivity” and to “indifference to the suffering of others.” However, this is an overly extreme assessment. For we are not talking about free societies in democratic countries, but about the brutal reality of a war. In an extreme situation, everyone has the right to care for themselves and their loved ones first and foremost. This is not a matter of insensitivity but rather a social atomisation triggered by a powerful external stimulus – in this case, the social brutalisation of the German occupation.

In addition, many sources emphasise sympathy for the victims while not reacting due to paralysing fear. Meanwhile, the attitude of passivity towards the Holocaust, which was dominant in Polish society, was reduced to an absolute minimum in the description, and reactions were presented through the prism of extreme attitudes. On one side of the scale are those who behaved shamefully towards Jews, on the other heroes who risked their lives to save them. No attempt was made to present the scale of negative and positive phenomena, although when reading the individual descriptions on the posters, one gets the impression that the former were much more numerous and were certainly mentioned much more often by the authors of the exhibition (on seven out of eight posters). An evident example of the construction of such a narrative is Poster 15, “Two Types of Neighbors,” depicting events in the village of Gniewczyzna Łańcucka. The attitude of “the third type of neighbors,” i.e. the majority of the inhabitants of this village, paralyzed by fear, was completely ignored.

Apart from this, the authors have not attempted to explain to the reader how they actually define helping Jews, what it is that they refer to as “aid,” and what it is that they refer to as “rescue.” They state: “In the German-occupied territories of Poland, Serbia, and the USSR, hiding Jews was punishable by death; in other

conquered countries, helping Jews was also risky” (Poster 14). In the area of aid/rescue activities, they left out a rather important thread. Not only aid, as the authors themselves state, was punishable by death, but any contact with persecuted Jews, including trade. The German anti-aid regulations, the so-called Occupation law, which was brutally enforced, were crucial here. From 1941 onwards, the German authorities and their police formations not only threatened citizens with the death penalty for helping Jews in the occupied Polish territories but put this criminal law into practice by murdering entire families or individuals, often burning their buildings as well. These scenes of horror happened in public, in broad daylight, in front of “locals.” The glow of burning houses and the cries of murdered people were supposed to be enough of a warning to those trying to give any help to the pursued Jews.

A few sentences should be dedicated to the strongly exposed word “choice,” which appears on posters 14 (“Choice: Should I Take the Risk to Help?”), 19 (“Choice: Helping Victims”), and 21. The final sentence of this last poster is the statement of a Jewish woman rescued in France: “This is something that I want the post-Holocaust generation to know, that people have choices.” Unfortunately, choices are not equal. The authors are aware of this and have therefore emphasised that the risks in helping Jews in the East were greater than elsewhere. The entire exhibition, however, lacks an answer to a fundamental question: Why did the German authorities in Western Europe not impose such severe restrictions penalising aid to Jews as they did in occupied Poland and parts of Eastern Europe?

It is also worth recalling that the Germans in the occupied Polish territories, in their attempt to combat the “primary ideological enemy of the Third Reich,” i.e., Jews, built a whole mechanism to implicate Polish society in their own anti-Jewish policy. It was even punishable not to report on Jews who were hiding or being hidden.¹⁰ These essential historical circumstances are not reflected in the exhibition’s narrative regarding the realities of Polish-Jewish relations during the Occupation. Poster 9.5 states: “Others [Poles – T.D.] cooperated with the Germans, for instance, to help hunt down escapees.” However, it would also be appropriate to write that on many occasions, participation in such actions took place in an

¹⁰ More in B. Musiał, *Kto dopomoże Żydowi...*, in collaboration with O. Musiał (Poznań, 2019).

atmosphere of fear or German coercion and did not stem from anti-Jewish views. Of course, there were also voluntary actions, but without a broader background, the reader was not fully informed.

Similarly, one should be critical of abbreviations and simplifications in poster 12, “Non-German Helpers in the Supervision and Liquidation of Ghettos.” The following sentence is unclear: “Non-German auxiliaries and local police forces helped the SS and German police to empty the ghettos. Many of them supported the deportations of Jews, although some were against it.” The process of extermination of particular ghettos and deportation to death camps, although a complex phenomenon, is quite well-researched. Therefore, nothing prevented a somewhat more in-depth description and an indication of what this help consisted of. Was it voluntary or forced? Because the quoted sentence in Polish as it reads implies a far-reaching voluntariness. Who specifically, which, for example, units grouping Poles, took part in the deportation operations and the murder of Jews in the death camps voluntarily? The exhibition’s authors rightly drew attention to the forced incorporation of Slavic peoples into various German formations, but one wonders why they only referred to former Soviet soldiers. Leaving this question aside, there were indeed many former Soviet soldiers who volunteered for German service, having to choose between German service or death.¹¹ The actual situation, however, was more complex. A great number of people volunteered there completely without having had to face such dramatic choices. Even in the description of the Hungarian gendarmes deporting local Jews to the extermination camp, it was underlined that they acted on orders (Poster 18).

Such “nuances,” however, were missing when talking about the so-called “Blue Police” (*Polnische Polizei im Generalgouvernement*) operating in the GG. The authors did not devote even one sentence of explanation to the circumstances of establishing this formation and the compulsory nature of the service. In organisational terms, it was part of the German police. What is most baffling, however, is the central photograph of Poster 12, depicting – one presumes – Poles “watching” the burning ghetto in Warsaw. The subject matter and the overtones of the photo are nowhere near the leading issue of the board, which concerns “helpers in the

¹¹ Caption for the middle photograph.

supervision and liquidation of ghettos.” The civilian population, as it is widely known, did not take part in these actions. Such “flaws” build in an inexperienced viewer an alternative story of the Holocaust. Furthermore, the caption referring to the attitudes of the Polish residents of Warsaw towards the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising raises doubts. It reads: “The attitudes of Polish residents varied; some showed sympathy and were ready to help, but most were indifferent, and some were even contemptuous. In addition, ghetto escapees were in constant danger from informers and blackmailers.” In this case, we have an already classic discrepancy between the accuracy of an individual caption and the overall historical narrative presented in the exhibition. Let us ask why the majority was “indifferent” – or rather passive – and what was the reason for this. Was it due to the brutal anti-aid law and the exceptional, even by the standards of the occupied Polish lands, German day-to-day terror in Warsaw, or to a free “choice”? Juxtaposed with the drama of the burning and destroyed ghetto, this “indifference” is even a moral burden. Meanwhile, research by Gunnar S. Paulsson shows for example, that in Warsaw, having a population of about six hundred thousand non-Jewish residents, there may have been three to four thousand blackmailers, while seventy to ninety thousand were involved in helping.¹²

Finally, a few minor additional comments. On Poster 16, which depicts occupied and “German-dominated” Europe, occupied France is shown within its contemporary borders. During World War II, after France’s defeat in 1940, the long-contested regions of Alsace and Lorraine were incorporated by Germany. Another inaccuracy relates to the aforementioned Vichy State, or more precisely to its absence from the map, even though Europe’s poster refers to 1942, i.e., when it existed. One cannot create an image of France as an administrative monolith in contradiction to the facts. Another minor comment concerns the name Szczecin, which should be written as Stettin, as it was a German city at the time.

The exhibition “Some Were Neighbors...” prompts the question: is it possible to build a single coherent narrative about the social attitudes of the population towards the Holocaust, which takes almost no account of any differences between Eastern and Western Europe? Is it possible moreover, on its basis, to answer the questions

¹² G.S. Paulsson, *Utajone miasto. Żydzi po aryjskiej stronie warszawy (1940–1945)* (Cracow, 2007).

posed on the first poster about the extent of complicity in the Holocaust and to draw conclusions about the reasons for the scant assistance provided to the victims? The above-discussed over-interpretations, exaggerations, and the marginalisation and exclusion of the covered events from the German occupation context lead to a negative answer. In such an approach – to quote Dr. Alina Skibińska – it is indeed true that we are “an exception when it comes to the Holocaust course of events; we are not an exception when it comes to people’s attitudes.” What does this specifically imply for the understanding of the Holocaust process and its social context?

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ANDREW KORNBLUTH

*THE AUGUST TRIALS: THE HOLOCAUST
AND POSTWAR JUSTICE IN POLAND.**

TEMIDA IN THE SERVICE OF IDEOLOGY,
THE POLISH NATION OR JUSTICE?

THE POLISH JUDICIARY CONFRONTING CRIMES AGAINST JEWS
COMMITTED DURING WORLD WAR II

One of the first acts of criminal law in the world that dealt with responsibility for war crimes committed during the World War II was the decree of the Polish Committee of National Liberation (*Polski Komitet Wyzwolenia Narodowego*, PKWN) of 31 August 1944 concerning “The Punishment of Fascist-Hitlerite Criminals Guilty of Murder and Ill-treatment of the Civilian Population and Prisoners of War, and the Punishment of Traitors of the Polish Nation” (aka the August Decree or the *dekret sierpniowy*, *sierpniówka*).¹ An exceptional role in

* A. Kornbluth, *The August Trials: The Holocaust and Postwar Justice in Poland* (Cambridge, MA, London: Harvard University Press, 2021), 352 pp.

¹ The Decree of the Polish Committee of National Liberation (*Polski Komitet Wyzwolenia Narodowego*, PKWN) of 31 August 1944 concerning “The Punishment of Fascist-Hitlerite Criminals Guilty of

the “August Decree trials” was played by Special Criminal Courts (*specjalne sądy karne*, SSK), called to life already in September 1944 solely to adjudicate crimes covered by this decree. Of the eight courts of this type, a study has so far been written on the court in Toruń,² Gdańsk,³ and Katowice.⁴ A separate work, which is not cited by the author of the publication under review, presents the trials of persons accused of crimes in the Warta Land (Reichsgau Wartheland), who stood before the Special Criminal Courts in Poznań, Toruń, and in Warsaw (based in Łódź), as well as the Supreme National Tribunal.⁵

Although historians per se, historians of law, and legal scholars have already addressed the topic of the August Decree trials, relatively rarely have they turned to a comprehensive analysis of the trial records of the various courts hearing the August Decree cases. Such an attempt was made by, among others, Andrew Kornbluth, a research fellow at the Institute of Slavic, East European and Eurasian Studies at the University of California, Berkeley, in his book published in 2021 by Harvard University Press, *The August Trials: The Holocaust and Postwar Justice in Poland*. The August Decree Trials have been highlighted as the overarching issue in this study, only to be clarified in the subtitle, where it is mentioned that the author will be addressing the Holocaust and post-war justice in Poland (or, as one reviewer noted, “the legal response to the Holocaust”). Kornbluth’s study has been recognised and discussed in many prestigious periodicals around the world (from Canada to Australia),⁶ and has received high praise. Reviews on the publisher’s

Murder and Ill-treatment of the Civilian Population and Prisoners of War, and the Punishment of Traitors of the Polish Nation,” *Dziennik Ustaw* (1944), no. 4, item 16; A. Lityński, *Historia prawa Polski Ludowej* (Warsaw, 2013), pp. 114–116; A. Lityński, “Prawo karne Polski ‘lubelskiej’ (1944),” *Studia Iuridica Toruniensia* 2 (31) (2022), p. 136.

² J. Wojciechowska, “Przestępcy hitlerowscy przed Specjalnym Sądem Karnym w Toruniu (1945–1946),” *Studia Iuridica* 2 (6) (1965). Moreover, a short text about one category of defendants tried at the Toruń Special Criminal Court was written by Ewa Maria Rosa, see E.M. Rosa, “Procesy osadzonych w obozie pracy w Potulicach przed Specjalnym Sądem Karnym w Toruniu (1944–1946),” *Przegląd Prawa Ochrony Środowiska* 1 (2013), pp. 95–107.

³ D. Burczyk, *Renegaci przed sądem. Specjalny Sąd Karny i Prokuratura Specjalnego Sądu Karnego w Gdańsku (1945–1946)* (Gdańsk–Warsaw, 2022).

⁴ A. Dziurok, *Osądzenie przestępstw okresu II wojny światowej przez Specjalny Sąd Karny w Katowicach w latach 1945–1946* (Katowice–Warsaw, 2024).

⁵ A. Pawlicki, *Procesy osób oskarżonych o popełnienie zbrodni niemieckich w Kraju Warty przed polskimi sądami specjalnymi w latach 1945–1946*, vol. 1–2 (Poznań–Warsaw, 2019).

⁶ The following reviews of this book have been published, among others: C. Epstein, “Andrew Kornbluth, ‘The August Trials: The Holocaust and Postwar Justice in Poland,’” *Canadian Journal of History*

website leave no doubt – this is a ground-breaking, pioneering, excellent, brilliant and courageous book.

In his review, Tomasz Frydel pointed out only one mistake to the author – that the August Decree was amended five times, not three, as Kornbluth stated.⁷

While the publication has so far been assessed from the perspective of Holocaust scholars, this brief study will attempt to address it from the position of a historian dealing with the August Decree trials (hereinafter: August Trials, as in Kornbluth's work) and, more narrowly, with the operation of Special Criminal Courts.

In many places, Kornbluth goes beyond the historical and legal analysis of the August Trials and refers, among other things, to Polish historical policy, the creation of the myth of the innocence of Poles, and the depreciation of the memory of crimes against Jews. The ideological canvas of the narrative is, it may be argued, the weakest element of his study. In the introduction, entitled “The Country without a Quisling?,” the author cites, for example, the controversy surrounding the 2018 amendment to the Act on the Institute of National Remembrance, which included provisions to protect Poland's good name. In addition to criticising these solutions, he writes about the nationalist government of the Law and Justice party, which laid the foundations for an authoritarian state by remodeling the constitutional system. He stresses that these provisions were understood as a desire to stop the spread of theses about Polish involvement in the Holocaust. He then attempts to pinpoint the origins of the myth of innocence of Poles, who found that they had done everything they could to defend Jews during the war and portrayed themselves as the true victims of the war. Kornbluth argues that such an image functions in

3 (56) (2021), pp. 418–420; T. Frydel, “The August Trials: The Holocaust and Postwar Justice in Poland’ By Andrew Kornbluth,” *Australian Journal of Jewish Studies* 34 (2021), pp. 262–270; K. Person, “Gabriel N. Finder, Alexander Prusin, ‘Justice behind the Iron Curtain: Nazis on Trial in Communist Poland’; Andrew Kornbluth, ‘The August Trials: The Holocaust and Postwar Justice in Poland’,” *Zagłada Żydów. Studia i Materiały* 17 (2021), pp. 811–815; G. Finder, “The August Trials: The Holocaust and Postwar Justice in Poland’ By Andrew Kornbluth,” *Central European History* 3 (55) (2022), pp. 463–464; F. Hirsch, “The August Trials: The Holocaust and Postwar Justice in Poland’ By Andrew Kornbluth,” *Slavic Review* 3 (81) (2022), pp. 773–775; E. Stańczyk, “Book Review: ‘The August Trials: The Holocaust and Postwar Justice in Poland’ by Andrew Kornbluth,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 2 (57) (2022), pp. 507–509; L. Zessin-Jurek, “The August Trials: The Holocaust and Postwar Justice in Poland,” *Polish Review* 4 (67) (2022), pp. 158–161; L. McClintock, “The August Decree and Postwar Poland,” *American Historical Review* 1 (128) (2023), pp. 413–415; V. Petrović, “Transitional Justice Incubator: Bridging European Fault Lines,” *Contemporary European History* 4 (32) (2023), pp. 668–678.

⁷ T. Frydel, “The August Trials,” p. 268.

Poles' memory culture, whereas the memory of collaboration and violence against the Jewish people by Poles is alive among Jews. These theses are so apparent to the author that he only recalls the memoirs of Oskar Pinkus, who wrote about the hostility of Poles towards Jews, although the latter did not even expect support (since helping was punishable by death) but only counted on inactivity and absence of hostility.⁸

The author indicates that he is concerned in his work not only with the August Trials but also with the related process of creating and perpetuating the memory of the innocence and heroism of Poles during the war. The source base for these considerations is the records of more than four hundred cases from 1944–1952 of persons accused of crimes against Jews under the August Decree. This perspective was broadened by another four hundred file units of cases covered by the August Decree – this time concerning Polish-on-Polish crimes. The source base is very solid, especially as it has been supplemented by, among others, the Ministry of Justice files through a query at The Central Archives of Modern Records. The choice of sources analysed is not entirely clear. Where does the figure of four hundred trials come from? After all, these are not all the records concerning accusations of crimes against Jews. So, what criterion was used for their selection? According to what territorial key were they selected? All that is known is that they pertain to cases from the territory of the General Governorate, and from the list of the archival records we learn that the author examined files of trials under the August Decree conducted by Special Criminal Courts (Warsaw, Cracow, Lublin), District Courts (Warsaw, Siedlce, Kielce, Lublin, Radom), Voivodeship Courts (for the Warsaw Voivodeship and the Capital City of Warsaw) and Appellate Courts (Warsaw, Kielce, Lublin). There appears not to be an analysis of the prosecution files (especially of the cases that ended at this stage of the proceedings), which seems necessary when drawing such far-reaching conclusions about the work of law enforcement agencies.

The researcher points to the negligence of the historical scholarly community, as the files of the August Decree have been poorly present in the World War II research (exceptions, in his opinion, are the works of Jan T. Gross and the researchers of the Polish Center for Holocaust Research). Also, according to him, the trials of the

⁸ A. Kornbluth, *The August Trials*, pp. 5–6.

defendants under this decree themselves have not been described. Kornbluth goes on to write that the files of these trials were made available only recently(!), most of them are held in the Archives of the IPN – the “controversial Polish Institute of National Remembrance” – and access to them is limited. It is hard to agree with the above-mentioned author that these files have been discovered only recently (a part of the introduction is titled “An Overlooked Reckoning”). By making such an assertion, Kornbluth creates an additional impression of the ground-breaking nature of his research. However, these materials have been present in the research corpus of Polish historians for years, although this study agrees with the scholar that – given their source potential – to an insufficient extent. This author researched the files of the August Decree trials as early as in the 1990s when they were held in the Archives of the Head Commission for the Investigation of Crimes against the Polish Nation in Warsaw (access was limited then). There have been no restrictions on scholars’ access to these files for many years, and many have been digitised and made available in this form. Hence, one may be surprised by the statement about the limited availability of these materials at the “controversial” place where they are held (IPN), which seems to suggest to the reader that there is some mechanism for hiding embarrassing files. At the same time, one has to agree with the author that the research potential of these files is used to describe the war period rather than the post-war period. On the other hand, it seems unjustified to state that the subject of postwar reckoning with collaborators of the World War II period suffered from the inattention of researchers due to the erroneous assumption that the entire judiciary system of “People’s” Poland was a Stalinist one (i.e. extremely politicised).⁹ It should be noted, moreover, the Special Criminal Courts, for example, could not fit into this scheme since they ceased to operate in 1946, whereas Stalinism in Poland began in 1948.

Kornbluth repeats his earlier findings that Poland held more than thirty-two thousand trials for war crimes and collaboration under the August Decree, beginning in 1944. However, he is not precise, as he writes interchangeably about the number of cases, trials, and sentences. These are by no means synonymous terms since – as it is well known – in many cases, we were dealing with group trials, during which

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

the court heard the cases of several defendants. Thus, the number of cases tried, and trials held is lower than the number of persons tried. Additionally, the author assumes that the cases may have concluded with either a conviction or an acquittal. However, other possible outcomes, such as discontinuance (e.g., due to the death of the accused) or suspension of proceedings, should also be considered. In addition to the statistics known and referred to by the author, reference can be made to data published by the Ministry of Justice, which indicates the number of 16,841 adults legally sentenced under the August Decree between 1946 and 1962.¹⁰ If one adds to this group a further 1,716 people convicted under these provisions between 1944 and 1945,¹¹ we shall obtain a figure of 18,557 people sentenced under the August Decree.

In his work, the above author develops the theses previously presented, among others, in an article entitled “Jest wielu Kainów pośród nas. Polski wymiar sprawiedliwości a Zagłada, 1944–1956” (“There Are Many Cains Among Us.” Polish Administration of Justice and the Holocaust, 1944–1956), published in the periodical *Zagłada Żydów. Studia i Materiały*.¹² This is also the title of the first chapter of the book *The August Trials*, while the quotation itself – “There Are Many Cains Among Us” – was taken from an article published in *Głos Wielkopolski* in March 1947. In the context of the subject matter raised by Kornbluth, the reader may get the impression that there were “voices of conscience” in the press, admitting that there were many Cains among Poles – murderers of their Jewish brothers. Meanwhile, the press article does not refer to the Jewish question at all but takes up the theme of traitors and informers, who not only did not suffer punishment but even found work in various institutions (the philharmonic hall, a hospital) and as “SS and Gestapo plugs in our society are nevertheless a true danger,” since they act as a “fifth column of militant Germanism.”¹³

¹⁰ *Prawomocne skazania osób dorosłych w latach 1946–2018* (Warsaw, 2020), pp. 25, 43, 56. <https://isws.ms.gov.pl/pl/baza-statystyczna/publikacje/>, accessed 14 December 2023.

¹¹ *Informator sądowy za rok 1947* (The Court Guide for 1947) gives data on people sentenced for the years 1944–1946. When we deduct the number of people sentenced in 1946, we get exactly 1,716 people sentenced for the years 1944–1945. The number of approximately 1,700 people sentenced in this period is also given by Z. Biegański in “Kara śmierci w orzecznictwie Specjalnych Sądów Karnych w Polsce (1944–1946),” *Echa Przeszłości* 5 (2004), p. 191.

¹² Andrew Kornbluth, “Jest wielu Kainów pośród nas. Polski wymiar sprawiedliwości a Zagłada, 1944–1956,” *Zagłada Żydów. Studia i Materiały* 9 (2013), pp. 157–172.

¹³ “Na marginesie. Zaufany urzędnik...,” *Głos Wielkopolski*, 28 March 1947, p. 5.

Kornbluth argues that the national collective memory of collaboration in Poland is limited to the experiences of only Poles themselves. What shapes this collective memory is the collaboration of the renegade, whereas Jews had to contend “with a broad social consensus on the value of ethnic cleansing and the consequent willingness of the entire communities to join hands in their destruction.”¹⁴ Wouldn’t the results of a broader sociological study be necessary to formulate such theses?

The author distinguishes the categories of crimes outlined in the August Decree according to nationality, distinguishing between crimes of Poles against Poles and Poles against Jews. It is a pity that he does not recognise other categories, including the key crimes in the context of the postwar reckoning under the August Decree, i.e., the crimes of the Germans and Volksdeutsche against Poles and Jews. For example, of those accused by the Special Criminal Courts in Gdańsk, Toruń, and Katowice, Volksdeutsche (and Germans) accounted for 81 to 93 percent of those sentenced.¹⁵ It should be noted, when describing the judging of the crimes of the World War II, the thesis that the post-war reckoning was flawed by not including the main criminals – the Germans – should resound loudly. In Kornbluth’s work, however, the German criminals hardly feature, and the primary actors on the scene of the crimes become Poles. Doesn’t such a portrayal bring us dangerously close to presenting the war and the German occupation as events without much German involvement? To further disrupt the black-and-white picture drawn by Kornbluth (limiting the narrative to Polish-on-Jewish and Polish-on-Polish crimes), one can reference the case of Mojżesz Zabramny from Sosnowiec, who, as the chief physician at Arbeitslager Fünfteichen (a sub-camp of the Gross-Rosen Concentration Camp), mistreated the Jewish Polish citizens imprisoned there, failed to provide them with medical assistance, and even selected individuals to be burned in the crematorium. The Special Criminal Court in Katowice sentenced him to death

¹⁴ A. Kornbluth, *The August Trials*, pp. 15–16.

¹⁵ Among those sentenced by the Special Criminal Court in Gdańsk, as many as 89.6 percent were the *Volksliste* holders; see D. Burczyk, *Renegaci przed sądem. Specjalny Sąd Karny i Prokuratura Specjalnego Sądu Karnego w Gdańsku (1945–1946)* (Gdańsk–Warsaw, 2022), p. 293. In the case of the Special Criminal Court in Toruń, 93 percent of the sentenced persons had been assigned to one of the four *Deutsche Volksliste* groups (J. Wojciechowska, “Przestępcy hitlerowscy,” p. 27). In the Katowice Special Criminal Court, as many as 73 percent of the sentenced persons were *Volksdeutsche*, and a further 8 percent were of German nationality (or had German citizenship).

but at the same time invoked Article 18 of the Criminal Code (indicating that his recognition of the meaning of the act or the management of his conduct at the time of committing the offense was significantly impaired) and finally sentenced him to 10 years imprisonment. The case file is no longer extant, but from press reports, we learn that the court found that the accused committed the crime at the time of a mental breakdown (“mental shock after the loss of his loved ones”) and out of fear of losing his life. Zabramny was said to have explained to the court that “in a short period of time he lost his parents, in-laws and his son, who were killed in the gas chambers and then burned in the crematorium, and he himself feared for his own life.”¹⁶ Does this sentence fit in with the author’s thesis of leniency towards perpetrators of crimes against the Jews? A similar case involved, among others, the owner of a hotel in Katowice, who declared her religion to be Jewish and was sentenced to 7 years in prison for blackmailing and turning Jews in.¹⁷ Has the author not found cases of Jewish-on-Jewish crimes in the file material analysed?

Painting a picture of the Polish-on-Polish crimes, the author identifies three categories of criminals: local officials and Blue Policemen, random collaborators (who were coerced to commit crimes or whose crimes were unplanned), and people motivated by material motivations. While this categorization is interesting, it raises serious doubts because the overall picture is based solely on analysing court files concerning selected areas of the General Governorate. Thus, can it be applied to all Polish lands occupied by the Germans, especially to areas incorporated into the Reich?

Focusing on the issues related to the August trials themselves, this article will not address the bold and controversial assertions about the complicity of Poles in crimes against Jews (Chapter 2, “Crowdsourcing Genocide”), the placing of the Catholic Church on the side of forces that promoted racist anti-Semitism, or the participation of the Underground in the murder of Jews. These arguments seem highly debatable, and there will probably be Holocaust historians who will engage in a polemic with them. This author would just like to point out that it is an error to write that thirty thousand ethnic Jews emigrated from Poland in 1968 as a result

¹⁶ A. Dziurok, *Osądzenie przestępstw okresu II wojny światowej*, p. 242.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 348–349.

of the anti-Semitic campaign. According to Dariusz Stola's findings, the number of post-March emigrants (in 1968–1971) is 12,927,¹⁸ while Kornbluth gives the figure of thirty thousand, although, in a footnote, he only refers to an article by David Engel, which mentions the departure of about twenty-five thousand Jews.¹⁹ It is an oversimplification moreover, to indicate that approximately three million Polish citizens signed the *Volksliste* (p. 108). It is worth recalling that the basis for being classified in one of the four groups of the German nationality list (*Deutsche Volksliste*, DVL) was the submission of an application (a questionnaire form) – obligatory in Upper Silesia and Pomerania. It was the German authorities (DVL commissions) who, based on questionnaires and community interviews, decided whether a person should be registered in a particular group. The post-war cases of Polish citizens renouncing their Polish nationality did not paralyse the activities of the Special Criminal Courts, as Kornbluth suggests. These courts played the role of appellate instances in cases under the Act of 6 May 1945 on the exclusion of hostile elements from Polish society. The public prosecutor of the special criminal court was entitled to lodge an appeal against the municipal court's decision to rehabilitate the applicant, and only in such a case did the special criminal court finally decide the case.

The above author consistently writes about special courts (instead of special criminal courts), although the term also covers other categories of courts that do not fall into the category of general jurisdiction, such as Military Garrison Courts (*Wojskowe Sądy Garnizonowe*, WSG) or Military Regional Courts (*Wojskowe Sądy Rejonowe*, WSR). However, it would be worthwhile to supplement the interesting and valuable (source-based) reflections on the role of co-hearing juries in jurisprudence with specific cases of the involvement of the so-called civic factor in passing judgments. Could the author really not find any instances of disagreement between the professional judge and the juries? For example, in the Katowice Special Criminal Court, in eight cases, juries outvoted the professional judge (the judge submitted a dissenting opinion), and in four other cases, one of the juries disagreed with the verdict of the majority of the panel. Such a situation occurred,

¹⁸ D. Stola, *Kampania antysyjonistyczna w Polsce 1967–1968* (Warsaw, 2018), p. 213.

¹⁹ D. Engel, "Poland since 1939," *The YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe*, https://yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Poland/Poland_since_1939, accessed 14 December 2023.

i.a. in the case of the person accused of turning in eight Jews. The court found that the accused had acted to avert an imminent danger to his own welfare and that of his family. Under Article 22.1 of the 1932 Penal Code, a person who acted to prevent this danger was not liable to punishment for an act committed that had the characteristics of an offense unless the danger could not have been averted otherwise than by committing it. The court noted, however, that the accused, in turning in eight persons, sacrificed their lives to save himself and his family, which numbered only three persons. Therefore, in the court's view, Article 22.3 of the Polish 1932 Penal Code, which stated that "The good sacrificed must not represent a value obviously greater than the good protected," was applicable here. Therefore, the court found that the accused had exceeded the limits of a state of superior necessity and applied "only" extraordinary mitigation of the penalty (as stipulated under Article 22.3 of the 1932 Penal Code), rather than waiving the penalty. Rather than imposing the death penalty, the court (or, more precisely, the juries who outvoted the professional judge) sentenced the accused to 12 years of imprisonment. The dissenting opinion to the verdict was submitted by the presiding judge, arguing that the case could not be classified as exceeding the bounds of superior necessity, as the accused was not in imminent danger. According to the judge, the accused could have saved himself by fleeing. Instead, he reported the hiding Jews twice and revealed their hiding place to the German gendarmerie.²⁰

Kornbluth illustrates his thesis about the leniency of the justice system towards perpetrators of crimes against the Jewish population with many examples. In some cases, however, they raise doubts. Here we see in the study an identification photograph of a criminal – Bolesław Gabriel – with the caption: "Acting on the orders of the village headman, Bolesław Gabriel, and three other watchmen seized a Jew and his daughter and transported them to the ghetto at Łęczna, which was shortly thereafter destroyed. Gabriel was sentenced to five and a half years in prison and was likely paroled in 1953" (p. 60). This argument illustrates the theme of the involvement of village wardens in the extermination of the Jews. The reader is not informed, however, that of the four wardens accused in this trial, two were acquitted (the grounds for the verdict read, among other things,

²⁰ A. Dziurok, *Osądzenie przestępstw okresu II wojny światowej*, pp. 243–244.

that “upon seeing the captured Jews, they hastily moved away from the cart, thus not wishing to contribute to their capture”; one of them refused to carry out the order to take the Jews to the ghetto and only did so under threat).²¹ The defendant Gabriel demanded that this verdict be overturned, pointing out that the taking of the Jew Mordka Niski to the ghetto had been done at his own request out of fear “of the local confidant of the German authorities” (the other defendant argued that the ghetto was not yet an extermination camp at that time, but only a place of isolation, where the position of the mayor was held by a Niski relative, who, incidentally, had escaped from the ghetto). The Supreme Court rejected these arguments and upheld the “lenient” sentence²² (Gabriel was paroled on 29 April 1953), the hearing being presided over by the Supreme Court Judge Mieczysław Dobromęski – who himself was “racially persecuted” during the occupation (he was described in a report by the underground Directorate of the Association Freedom and Independence [*Zrzeszenie Wolność i Niezawisłość*] as “a Jew, a scumbag, a communist”).²³

Kornbluth also describes the most spectacular example of civilian participation in the persecution of the Jews in the examined area. It concerns the residents of Wola Przybyśławska, summoned by the village headman to bury the bodies of several hundred Jews slaughtered by the Germans in the nearby forests. During this action, the villagers uncovered a bunker with a hiding group of approximately thirty Jews (men, women, and children). A group of about one hundred villagers escorted the Jews to the village and then to Markuszów, to the German police station (where the Jews were murdered). While escorting the Jews, several people abused them. Kornbluth writes that of the more than one hundred residents of Wola Przybyśławska involved in this, only four were sentenced, and, what is more, they were sentenced to minimum sentences of between one and half and

²¹ Archives of the Institute of National Remembrance Branch in Lublin (hereinafter AIPN Lu), collection Sąd Apelacyjny w Lublinie (Appellate Court in Lublin), 311/171, Judgment of the Voivodeship Court in Lublin, 29 June 1951, pp. 134–135.

²² AIPN Lu, collection Sąd Apelacyjny w Lublinie (Appellate Court in Lublin), 311/171, Judgment of the Supreme Court, 29 April 1952, pp. 154–158.

²³ E. Romanowska, „Wkrótce już stanę przed innym sądem...” *Prawnicy II Rzeczypospolitej represjonowani w Polsce w latach 1944–1956* (Warsaw, 2020), p. 278; A. Dziurok, *Osądzenie przestępstw okresu II wojny światowej*, p. 71.

three years in prison (p. 256). It is perhaps worth mentioning, however, that by a sentence of the Voivodeship Court in Lublin in 1951, the four mentioned residents were sentenced to five and half years in prison. The court justified the sentence with the fact that the defendants acted under special conditions of terror because:

most recent massacre of Jews by the Germans in the forest horrified the local inhabitants with its monstrosity, and at the same time warned them of the same reprisals for keeping or hiding Jews. If, therefore, Jews were found by a large group of people in such conditions, the accused were in a situation that threatened them with serious consequences on the part of the Germans if they let the Jews out, for news of the Jews could even have reached the German authorities by accident.

In addition, the court took as a mitigating circumstance:

accidental nature of the crime, for the defendants had supported and helped Jews apart from this incident, and the fact that they were not the sole perpetrators, for, along with them, there were more escorts who, for various reasons, had escaped justice.²⁴

The scholar did not specify that the defendants were sentenced to between one and half and three years in prison by the Supreme Court (presided over by Mieczysław Szerer, about whom he himself writes in fact belonged to a group of several lawyers in the Supreme Court of Jewish origin). Perhaps the author did not reach the grounds of the Supreme Court's judgment, which reads, among other things, that the sentence of one and a half years' imprisonment for one of the defendants (Jan Drob) stemmed from the fact that he could not reveal himself to the mob (which displayed a threatening, "firm and unobjectionable attitude"), as he himself sheltered a Jewish family of nine in his house. The court, therefore,

²⁴ AIPN Lu, collection Sąd Apelacyjny w Lublinie (Appellate Court in Lublin), 331/158, Judgment of the Voivodeship Court in Lublin, 29 January 1951, pp. 243–245.

recognised as a mitigating circumstance “the numerous assistance provided by the accused to the persecuted Jewish population – at the risk of his freedom and even his life.”²⁵ Thus, the case appears more complex than the author presents it. When discussing the village headman’s mobilisation of all two hundred and fifty inhabitants of Wola Przybysławska (without mentioning that it was done at the orders of the German authorities), the author seems to imply that they all participated in the repression of the Jews. However, it is worth being cautious in such suggestions, which is proven not only by the case of Jan Drob but, above all, by the case of the execution by the German gendarmerie of seven inhabitants of Wola Przybysławska for sheltering Jews.²⁶

The above example demonstrates that the August Trials do not provide a good foundation for making general judgments about the behaviour of local communities. The testimonies of witnesses and defendants reveal that a small group of people took part in the direct persecution of Jews. Kornbluth writes that out of over one hundred people involved in escorting and surrendering the Jews to the German authorities, the court sentenced four people. It is worth supplementing this information with the fact that in another trial, the same sentence (five and a half years in prison) was also passed in the case of Roman Kozidrak, who is named in the case file as a person who took a direct part in leading the Jews out of the bunker and beating them during transport.²⁷ Although Kornbluth mentions that there had been a murder of a Jew earlier in Wola Przybysławska, he

²⁵ *Ibid.*, Judgment of the Supreme Court, 3 August 1951, pp. 274–279.

²⁶ Archives of the Institute of National Remembrance (hereinafter AIPN), collection Główna Komisja Badania Zbrodni Hitlerowskich w Polsce 1949–1984 (Head Commission for the Investigation of Hitlerite Crimes in Poland 1949–1984), Files concerning the murder of Aniela Aftyka and her family, the Gawrons, Władysław Abramek and Stanisław Kamiński by the German gendarmerie for hiding Jews in the village of Wola Przybysławska, Distrikt Lublin (Lublin province), on 10 December 1942, 392/1994; *Ten jest z ojczyzny mojej. Polacy z pomocą Żydom 1939–1945*, ed. W. Bartoszewski, Z. Lewinówna (Warsaw, 2007), pp. 48, 507–510.

²⁷ AIPN Lu, collection Sąd Apelacyjny w Lublinie (Appellate Court in Lublin), 331/158, Decision to suspend the investigation and send warrants of capture, 2 November 1950, p. 109; AIPN, collection Centralny Zarząd Zakładów Karnych Ministerstwa Sprawiedliwości w Warszawie (Central Directorate of Penal Institutions of the Ministry of Justice in Warsaw), 2882/1, Central card registry of prisoners sentenced by Polish courts under the Decree of the Polish Committee for National Liberation of 31 August 1944, p. 109. The case files are available in the Archives of the IPN Branch in Lublin (AIPN Lu, Voivodeship Court in Lublin, 326/75, Files in the criminal case against Roman Kozidrak, accused of capturing about 20 people of Jewish nationality and bringing them to the German gendarmerie in the town of Wola Przybysławska, as a result of which these people were murdered).

does not provide information that Bronisław Król was sentenced to death for this murder.²⁸

The case of Wola Przybyśławska was intended to illustrate the involvement of village leaders in the operation of murdering Jews. They were to act as coordinators of the persecution, set an example, and were responsible for handing over the captured persons to the German police. However, this study did not find any information that in 1942, an obligation was imposed on Polish village leaders to report on Jews hiding in their subordinate area, as well as on residents who were providing them with support.²⁹

In Kornbluth's view, the files of the August trials have remained outside the debate of historians of recent times in Poland because they would mar the vision of the heroic image of the war in Poland, and indicate that the involvement of Poles in the ethnic cleansing of their Jewish neighbors, especially in the countryside, was greater and more enthusiastic than previously thought. Subsequent governments promoted a modern Polish identity formed under the communist dictatorship, based on the idea of Poles waging an uncompromising struggle against foreign rule throughout the 1939–1989 period. These arguments are followed by an attack on an academic and bureaucratic structure subsidised by hundreds of millions of dollars (*sic!*?), namely the Institute of National Remembrance, whose mission is to uphold the state narrative and counter critical opinions and research. This is not the place to polemicise with an author who has little knowledge of the activities of the IPN and has not bothered to reflect independently and in-depth on the subject, but merely repeats muddled political assessments.

Kornbluth puts forward the bold thesis that the debate about the Holocaust is a debate about the credibility of the files of the August Trials, which did not fit into

²⁸ After hearing the defendant's review of this verdict, the Supreme Court upheld the sentence, and the president exercised his right of clemency and commuted the sentence to 15 years in prison (AIPN Lu, collection Sąd Apelacyjny w Lublinie [Appellate Court in Lublin], 331/94, Judgment of the Appellate Court in Lublin, 23 June 1950, pp. 126–128; *ibid.*, Judgment of the Supreme Court, 24 October 1950, pp. 135–136; *ibid.*, Letter from the General Prosecutor's Office of the Republic of Poland to the Voivodeship Court in Lublin, 19 January 1951, p. 148).

²⁹ A. Skibińska, "Dostał 10 lat, ale za co?: Analiza motywacji sprawców zbrodni na Żydach na wsi kieleckiej w latach 1942–1944," in *Zarys krajobrazu. Wieś polska wobec zagłady Żydów 1942–1945*, ed. B. Engelking, J. Grabowski (Warsaw, 2011), p. 352; cf. also *Dalej jest noc. Losy Żydów w wybranych powiatach okupowanej Polski*, vol. 2, ed. B. Engelking, J. Grabowski (Warsaw, 2018), p. 447.

the mechanism of political justice in the sense of being subordinate to the interests of communist power. In his view, they were more complex and democratic than they might appear. He argues that the crimes of Poles against Jews differed fundamentally from those committed against Poles in the degree of sadism, mortality rate, and social sanctions. While the “Polish-on-Polish” crimes were supposed to be covert and opportunistic, as they were met with social ostracism (in addition, they were usually lighter crimes, rarely resulting in the death of the victims), the crimes against the Jews were overt and programmed, and mobilised entire communities. These inconvenient truths allegedly caused the state, society, and the judiciary to create a denialist and exculpatory remembrance of the collusion of ethnic Poles in the Holocaust – a version of memory that is said to have prevailed to this day.

Kornbluth went on to formulate a serious accusation against the judiciary, pointing out not only the prevailing nationalism and anti-Semitism among judges but also their leniency in punishing the perpetrators of crimes against Jews. Did the author find statements in the grounds of the judgments that would confirm this thesis? The characteristics of the views of judges and prosecutors based mainly on the recollections of the prosecutor from the court in Siedlce, Władysław Grzymała, seems too simplistic. It is difficult to find in Kornbluth’s work an analysis of the careers and views of judges and prosecutors from the area in question on the basis of their personal files. Perhaps, then, it is worth waiting with a summary and general assessments of this group until these materials have been examined. The evaluation of the role of judges and prosecutors of Jewish nationality in the post-war retribution for war crimes committed on the occupied Polish lands also calls for in-depth reflection. For example, the author omitted the participation of the head of the Legal Department of the Presidium Bureau of the State National Council (*Krajowa Rada Narodowa*, KRN, Communist-nominated body replacing parliament in 1944–1947 – t.n.), Izaak Klajnerman, in the pardon procedure carried out by President Bolesław Bierut. Although Bierut usually considered the suggestions of lawyers giving opinions on the case of those sentenced for crimes under the August Decree, he was also capable of making different decisions. This was the case, for example, of Jan P., sentenced to death by the Special Criminal Court in Cracow for the murder of a Jew. Bierut ignored, among other things, the intervention of Julia Brystygier (then influential in the Communist party establish-

ment, having also a high position in the Ministry of Public Security – t.n.) and did not exercise his right of pardon.³⁰

The author attributes more credibility to interrogations taken at the pre-trial stage than in the courtroom. Thus, he considers the interrogations made by the officers of the Security Department (*Urząd Bezpieczeństwa*, UB) to be closer in its contents to the truth, even if it was retracted in court with the caveat that beatings had coerced it during the investigation. This is a somewhat risky assumption, as analysing more than one thousand files from the August Trials leads me to argue the opposite. In the study's opinion (and a similar opinion is held by, among others, another August Trials scholar, Roman Gieroń),³¹ the interrogation before the court is more credible. Should the defendants' explanation during court hearings that beatings or threats coerced their earlier testimony be considered merely a defense strategy? The judges verified the value of the testimonies and, given the discrepancies between those from the investigation and those from the courtroom, drew the appropriate conclusions themselves. The thesis of the exceptional leniency of the courts towards perpetrators of crimes committed against Jews is supported by statistics of convictions for such crimes. Kornbluth argues that while the overall conviction rate for crimes under the August Decree is about 50 percent, for cases of the individuals accused of crimes against Jews, it is about 14 percent (it is difficult to verify this statement as the author did not provide detailed statistics and the research material was selected by him according to unclear criteria).

However, in this situation, instead of writing about a certain "arrangement" influencing the jurisprudence in these cases, is it not worth considering the specifics of the trials? Has the author analysed the statistics of acquittals for denunciation and the practice of turning over persecuted and wanted individuals to the German authorities, and has this analysis included groups other than Jews? After all, the results of this reviewer's research show that charges of denunciation to the German authorities were very difficult to prove, and a significant percentage of such cases ended in acquittal. The basis for such a decision was not only the lack

³⁰ Z. Biegański, "Kara śmierci w orzecznictwie," p. 197.

³¹ Cf. R. Gieroń, *Półmrok. Procesy karne w sprawie przestępstw okupacyjnych popełnionych przez chłopów wobec Żydów w województwie krakowskim* (Cracow, 2020), pp. 330–331.

of sufficiently strong evidence of guilt, but even the recognition that personal rather than national or political issues were at the root of the denunciation (in this situation, the special criminal court even considered that the characteristics of an offense under Article 143 of the 1932 Penal Code,³² rather than crimes under the August Decree, could be seen in such acts).

In cases of crimes against the Jews, the key issue seems to be the lack of prosecution witnesses able to provide insight into the circumstances and the nature of the crime. The mass extermination of Jews also meant the annihilation of potential witnesses, who, after all, usually came from the victims' immediate family circle and environment. Kornbluth himself mentions that Jewish survivors were reluctant to report a crime and participate in trials. This was said to be caused not only by fear of militia and Security Department officers but also of the perpetrators' families, which in turn influenced the reluctance to look for witnesses to the crimes in their place of residence. Psychological reasons, such as the fear of anti-Semitic riots and the desire to forget the trauma of the war and start a new life, also played a role. An acquittal due to insufficient proof of guilt was often a verdict indicative of the court's evidentiary helplessness (and the prosecutor's excessive optimism regarding the possibility of proving the defendant's guilt). According to Kornbluth, however, holding the perpetrators of crimes against Jews accountable was far more possible since the mechanism and evidence necessary to prosecute these crimes were readily available. What was missing was the political will of the government, the judiciary, and society. These theses can be seen as unauthorised generalisations, as can the claim that the August Trials actually became another step of excluding Jews from the community of victims, for the authorities sought to highlight crimes against Poles and "minimize crimes against Jews." In this context, it is worth asking whether the author is equally critical of the "highly merciful" sentences of the German courts for committing crimes against the Jews. Further, on the other hand, how does Kornbluth view the fact that German investigators

³² The Polish 1932 Penal Code (Kodeks Karny, KK) stipulated under Article 143 that "Anyone who falsely accuses another person before an authority or office responsible for prosecution, of an act punishable by means of an action of law, an administrative or a disciplinary procedure, is liable to a penalty of imprisonment of up to 5 years or arrest" (Decree of the President of the Republic of Poland of 11 July 1932 – Penal Code, *Dziennik Ustaw* (1932), no. 60, item 571).

and prosecutors showed little interest in crimes committed in occupied Poland that were not related to the Holocaust?

If the judiciary, as Kornbluth points out, created the myth of the heroic Polish nation, then why were the heroes of World War II (Emil Fieldorf-Nil and others) sentenced, and, what is more, on charges of collaboration with the occupying forces? Notably, the author was not interested in e.g., the “criminal” Fieldorf, sentenced under Article 1 of the August Decree by the Voivodeship Court for the Capital City of Warsaw (i.e., by the court staying within the scope of author’s research) for his alleged participation in the murders of civilians through the fact that, as the head of the Home Army’s Directorate of Sabotage and Diversion (Kedyw AK) he:

[...] issued orders, instructions and guidelines to subordinate units of the Kedyw, to dissect and liquidate units of Soviet partisans and left-wing underground independence groups [...] As a result, among others, Soviet partisans, members of the Polish Workers’ Party (PPR), People’s Guard (GL) and People’s Army (AL) and citizens of Jewish nationality were liquidated in the Białystok Voivodeship – 237 (two hundred and thirty-seven people), in the Nowogródek Voivodeship – 790 (seven hundred and ninety) people, in the Lublin Voivodeship – approx. 20 (twenty) people.³³

In this context, one can ask did the author include General Fieldorf in the statistics of “Polish-on-Jewish” crimes?³⁴

Also, the very stringent regulations against *Volksdeutsche* (their cases were dealt with, among other things, by Special Criminal Courts) contradict the general thesis of excusing Polish criminals and collaborators. These were not merely marginalized individuals (this is how Kornbluth characterises Poles involved in crimes against other Poles), but a group of some three million Polish citizens in-

³³ AIPN, collection Sąd Najwyższy w Warszawie (Supreme Court in Warsaw), 2267/1, Copy of the sentence of the Court for the Voivodeship and the Capital City of Warsaw of 16 April 1951, pp. 7–15.

³⁴ For examples of accusations of alleged Home Army commanders’ orders to murder or turn in Jews, see among others: T. Domański, “Sierpniówki’ jako źródło do dziejów Armii Krajowej w Okręgu Radomsko-Kieleckim na przykładzie procesów przed Sądem Okręgowym, Sądem Apelacyjnym i Sądem Wojewódzkim w Kielcach. Wybrane problemy badawcze,” in *Z dziejów Polskiego Państwa Polskiego na Kielecczyźnie 1939–1945*, ed. J. Gapys, T. Domański (Kielce, 2016), pp. 193–196.

dicted for holding a German nationality list (punishable from mid-1946 onwards for renouncing Polish nationality).

Referring to the adjudication of wartime crimes, Kornbluth claims that the “judiciary that presided over the trials was independent and arguably even nationalistic” (?). Pointing out that the judiciary’s sentences were a testimony to its independence in adjudicating wartime crimes, he is critical of their leniency in cases of “Polish-on-Jewish” crimes, and emphasizes the courts’ participation in creating the heroic myth of the war. In Kornbluth’s argument, the Polish judiciary appears not so much as an administration of justice but rather as an administration for justifying the guilt of the Polish nation. However, do the flawed trials of retribution for wartime crimes in other communist but also democratic countries instead not point to some universal mechanism of “forgetting” and leniency? Neither Poland was an exception, nor the way the perpetrators of crimes against the Jews were treated here. After 1956, only a handful of those convicted under the August Decree remained in prison, regardless of the nationality of the victims of the crimes. Therefore, when analysing the August Trials, the nationality key of categorising perpetrators and victims does not seem adequate (and is certainly not conclusive).

Kornbluth’s work is undoubtedly an important addition to the literature, pointing to the need to make greater use of the files of the August Trials not so much when examining the period of the war but, above all when reflecting on the reckoning of the legacy of war and occupation under communist enslavement. When making sweeping judgments about the fairness of the courts’ jurisprudence moreover, it might be worthwhile to reflect on the fairness of one’s own judgments.

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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 Długolecki 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 is 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 Ładość (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 Raczyński 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 "Raczyński'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 Raczyński 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 Długołęcki 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: Raczyński’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 Długofęcki, we become persuaded that aid to Jews as a research question has a European, international and, ultimately, global dimension.

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ANDRZEJ ŻBIKOWSKI
*O NADZIEI, CIERPIENIU, BÓLU. LUDNOŚĆ CYWILNA
W CZASIE POWSTANIA W GETCIE WARSZAWSKIM**
(HOPE, SUFFERING, AND PAIN: THE CIVILIAN POPULATION
DURING THE WARSAW GHETTO UPRISING)

The year 2023 marked the 80th anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. This became the catalyst for numerous educational, artistic, journalistic, and academic initiatives prepared in honour and in memory of Jewish female and male combatants. Temporary exhibitions were created,¹ podcasts and radio programs were recorded, documentary programs, and press supplements were prepared to reach the widest possible audience with the message about the uprising. Academic

* Andrzej Żbikowski, *O nadziei, cierpieniu, bólu. Ludność cywilna w czasie powstania w getcie warszawskim* (Hope, Suffering, and Pain: The Civilian Population During the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising) (Warsaw: Żydowski Instytut Historyczny, 2023) 216 pp.

¹ One of the initiatives was a temporary exhibition at the POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews, titled "Around Us a Sea of Fire." The exhibition was accompanied by a comprehensive catalogue, published in Polish and English: *Wokół nas morze ognia. Losy żydowskich cywilów podczas powstania w getcie warszawskim / Around Us a Sea of Fire: The Fate of Jewish Civilians During the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising*, ed. Z. Schnepf-Kończak, B. Engelking (Warsaw, 2023)

conferences² and educational sessions were organized, as well as themed seminars. It is worth noting that the Senate of the Republic of Poland voted 2023 as the Year of Remembrance of the Heroes and Heroines of the Warsaw Ghetto to honour their efforts in this symbolic way. In these various activities, the organisers focused on the civilian population who remained in the Warsaw Ghetto during the Uprising. The publication of Andrzej Żbikowski's book, *O nadziei, cierpieniu, bólu. Ludność cywilna w czasie powstania w getcie warszawskim*, by the Jewish Historical Institute in 2023, is part of an initiative to restore the memory of the 'ordinary' civilian inhabitants of the ghetto who were caught in the machinery of significant historical events.

It is no coincidence that this issue has been tackled by a historian affiliated with the Jewish Historical Institute and the University of Warsaw, who has researched the history of Polish Jews for years, including the events of the German occupation, the Jewish underground and the Warsaw Ghetto. In his introduction, Żbikowski clearly states what motivated him to prepare the book: "Reflecting on the tragic fate of Warsaw's Jews during World War II, at some point we inevitably ask ourselves: what significance does Monday, 19 April 1943, hold for us?"³ This question – about the meaning of the outbreak of the Uprising, about the entanglement of both the fighters and the civilian population in the events unfolding during the revolt – accompanies the author throughout the pages of the book and is the prime cause of the subsequent research questions posed.

Writing a comprehensive account of the fate and experiences of the civilian population during the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising is a challenging task for many reasons. Already, the presentation of statistical data concerning this group poses problems. The author begins his study with this issue. Official sources indicate that from September 1942, after the end of the deportation of Jews from the ghetto to the death camp at Treblinka, approximately thirty-five thousand Jews resided in the truncated area of the quarter. Researchers estimate that another fifteen to twenty thousand lived there without permission.⁴

² One of them was a conference organised by the Institute of National Remembrance (IPN) entitled "The Jewish Resistance against the Germans in Occupied Poland," which was held on 21 April 2023 at the Janusz Kurtyka History Point Centre in Warsaw.

³ A. Żbikowski, *O nadziei, cierpieniu, bólu*, p. 10.

⁴ More in T. Berenstein, A. Rutkowski, "Liczba ludności żydowskiej i obszar przez nią zamieszkiwany w Warszawie w latach okupacji hitlerowskiej," *Biuletyn Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego* 2 (26)

Another difficulty is encountered when trying to provide more information about the gender, age, or social status of all these persons. In January 1943, the Germans began deportations and transported around five thousand people from the ghetto to the Treblinka death camp. In the following months, some people from the ghetto were sent to slave labour camps still operating in the General Government. Some tried to get out of the ghetto to the so-called “Aryan” side, others returned to the ghetto. Due to this fluctuation of the population, it is basically impossible to be precise about its size. Fragmentary information, although it can be found in various sources, does not allow estimates to be made. In mid-April 1943, just before the then upcoming Pesach (Passover)⁵ holiday, an unspecified number of people previously hiding on the so-called “Aryan” side arrived in the ghetto. Just before the outbreak of the Uprising, there may have been as many as fifty–sixty thousand Jews in the ghetto. A similar estimate of their number is given by Andrzej Żbikowski in his publication.⁶ A few hundred of them, we don’t know exactly how many, engaged in underground activities to varying degrees, while the rest tried to survive.

On the one hand, there was Jürgen Stroop’s “official report”;⁷ on the other, testimonies, diaries and memoirs. Żbikowski raises the legitimate question of whether the report made by the destroyers of the ghetto uprising can be trusted:

Opinions among historians differ on this. Some argue that he could not have lied because he was controlled by his often conflicted subordinates. Did he understate his own losses and overlook failures? Perhaps, but if so, only to a small extent.⁸

(1958), pp. 73–114; B. Engelking, J. Leociak, *Getto warszawskie. Przewodnik po nieistniejącym mieście* (Warsaw, 2013); M. Ferenc, „Každy pyta, co z nami będzie”. *Mieszkańcy getta warszawskiego wobec wiadomości o wojnie i Zagładzie* (Warsaw, 2021); R. Sakowska, *Dwa etapy. Hitlerowska polityka eksterminacji Żydów w oczach ofiar. Szkic historyczny i dokumenty* (Wrocław, 1986); R. Sakowska, *Ludzie z dzielnicy zamkniętej. Z dziejów Żydów w Warszawie w latach okupacji hitlerowskiej. Październik 1939 – marzec 1943* (Warsaw, 1993).

⁵ Pesach is the Jewish holiday that commemorates the Exodus of the Israelites from Egypt.

⁶ A. Żbikowski, *O nadziei, cierpieniu, bólu*, p. 13.

⁷ Andrzej Żbikowski is the author of the 2009 edition of this report. He has also commented many times on the content of this source, its historical value and the pitfalls it carries, see J. Stroop, *Żydowska dzielnica mieszkaniowa w Warszawie już nie istnieje!*, ed. A. Żbikowski (Warsaw, 2009).

⁸ A. Żbikowski, *O nadziei, cierpieniu, bólu*, pp. 17–18.

The answer is not clear-cut, but the extent to which this source is used in the work indicates that the author considers it important. Żbikowski frequently references source issues throughout the book, discussing their origin, cognitive value, and potential pitfalls. This is a notable strength of the reviewed publication.

The fate of the civilian population, as the subsequent pages of the book show, is reconstructed primarily based on the second category of sources used by the author – the personal documents of those who stayed in the ghetto during the Uprising. If one takes into account the aforementioned probable number of the population that was there at the time, few sources have remained, from which one can learn more about their fate during the Ghetto Uprising. Żbikowski stresses:

Almost everything we know about the experiences of civilians hiding in the Warsaw Ghetto after 19 April 1943, comes from diaries written in hiding on the Aryan side or post-war memoirs (written or recorded). These testimonies were created at different times, under various circumstances, and belong to very different diaristic discourses.⁹

In total, there are about fifty texts, written in various circumstances: in the ghetto during the actual Uprising, just after the end of the Uprising, immediately after the war, or many years after the war. It is noteworthy that among those most frequently used in the context of the fate of civilians are women's testimonies. One such source is the partially preserved diary of a woman named Maryla¹⁰ – written “there and then” about the functioning of hideouts [called “bunkers”] from the perspective of one of the people locked in them. The fragmentary nature of the notes, as she herself pointed out, was due to extreme circumstances she had to confront. Additionally, the document itself has not remained in a good state, resulting in gaps in the text. Despite these limitations, Maryla's diary remains a unique testimony to civil resistance in the ghetto.¹¹ The temporal proximity of

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 48.

¹⁰ Two editions of this source have come out: *Patrzyłam na usta... Dziennik z getta warszawskiego*, ed. P. Weiser (Cracow–Lublin, 2008); *Dziennik Maryli. Życie i śmierć w getcie warszawskim*, ed. D. Libionka (Warsaw, 2022).

¹¹ For more on this, see the article by Dariusz Libionka in the most recent edition of the diary *Dziennik Maryli*.

this glimpse of the unfolding events and the lack of an evaluative time perspective are advantages of this text. The second source is the diary of an unknown author kept in the archive of the Kibbutz of the Ghetto Fighters.¹²

The other testimonies used by the researchers come from the post-war period. Very important in this context is Stella Fidelseid's extensive diary, in which she outlined in quite some detail the daily life in the hideouts and the hiding after the fall of the Uprising.¹³ These and many other memories are quoted and analyzed by Żbikowski in the subsequent pages of the book.

In the testimonies used, there are many references not only to details related to the topography of the ghetto but also to the emotional states and everyday experiences of the women in hiding and others who stayed with them. It should be noted at this point that the aspect of the women's stories and their gender-related experiences could have been more emphasised in the book. Regarding the sources researched in the work – it is worth following the footnotes carefully, as well as the attached list of publications and archival records used. The above-mentioned offer insight into the personal sources analysed and provide an in-depth insight in the testimonies on which the author grounded his reflections. In this context there is a conspicuous lack of oral history sources such as for example, testimonies recorded for the archive of the USC Shoah Foundation – The Institute for Visual History and Education (previously known as the Survivors of the Shoah Visual History Foundation), the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, and the Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies. The use of these materials, as well as a broader reference to contemporary literature in the field, taking into account the achievements of sociology, historical anthropology, or psychology, would undoubtedly have added to the book and thus broadened its readers' knowledge of the civilian population's experiences during the Ghetto Uprising. Adopting such a broader perspective would certainly have painted an even more complete picture than the one presented. Perhaps the author felt that no material among these testimonies would have contributed more than what the selected

¹² Cf. A. Żbikowski, *O nadziei, cierpieniu, bólu*, p. 108.

¹³ This document can be found in the Archives of the Jewish Historical Institute. It has also been published: S. Fidelseid, "Pozostałam w gruzach... (Moje przeżycia po likwidacji getta warszawskiego kwiecień–grudzień 1943)," *Kwartalnik Historii Żydów* 2 (2003), pp. 227–241.

source texts had already provided. If so, the introduction should have discussed and clarified this issue.

Andrzej Żbikowski's book consists of two parts preceded by an introduction, ending with a conclusion and a bibliography of sources and publications referred to. The introduction provides the reader with key information about the history of the Warsaw Ghetto and the months leading up to the Uprising in April 1943. The first part, entitled "Walki w getcie" (Fighting in the Ghetto), provides some military background to the Uprising. The author succinctly describes the activities of the members of the Jewish Combat Organisation (*Żydowska Organizacja Bojowa*, ŻOB) and the Jewish Military Union (*Żydowski Związek Wojskowy*, ŻZW). He presents the first armed actions in the ghetto and analyzes the subsequent strategies and options available to the members of the underground. He shows up to which point in the ghetto the heaviest battles were fought and when tactics were changed. Step by step, based on the sources, the author reconstructs the battles of the fighters and the attacks of the Germans until the last moments of the Uprising. This is an important context, without which it would be difficult to understand the fate of civilians trying to survive somehow in the constantly deteriorating conditions, especially after the end of the first phase of the fighting, when the Germans proceeded to systematically set fire to the ghetto. This part of the book is relatively short, consisting of four subsections, covering a total of about 30 pages. This is understandable; after all, armed struggle is not the work's central theme. Nevertheless, it embeds the titular theme in an important context, without which subsequent discussion would not be clear.

The second part, entitled "Ludność cywilna w getcie" (The Civilian Population in the Ghetto), already focuses on the core, titular topic. It has been divided into eleven problem sub-sections. Beginning with a concise discussion of the Holocaust texts that form the basis of the analysis, the author tries to show the reader the situation in the bunkers, hiding places and shelters, describes the course of the Passover holiday, discusses the subsequent topographical spaces of the ghetto, and finally shows the possible ways of leaving the ghetto – either through the sewers to the so-called "Aryan" side or through the Umschlagplatz, which was a more uncertain direction. The book makes clear that the civilian population created an "underground city" in the ghetto from the first hours of the fighting. Ghetto

residents hid in shelters and hiding places in cellars, attics, under stairs, and in living quarters, wherever this was possible and provided a substitute for safety. They also built well-equipped and stocked hideouts or bunkers (often with the help of specialists), placed mainly underground, which could accommodate many people.

Żbikowski illustrates throughout the text, using personal documents, how the atmosphere in the hideout (bunker) became increasingly oppressive. The limited space and the necessity to stay with former neighbours, family members as well as complete strangers caused tensions and led to conflicts. Civilians were hidden in dim, cramped rooms that offered no privacy, tranquility, or personal space. The hiding places were filled with smells – of cellar rooms, unwashed bodies, sweat, unwashed clothes, buckets of faeces, smoke from the burning ghetto, as well as with fear that grew almost hour by hour. Those in hiding – relying on one another – fell into various emotional states. Night-time brought moments of calm as the number of German patrols in the ghetto decreased. During these times, people left their shelters to search for food, prepare meals, or attend to their hygiene. Żbikowski highlighted these activities, but a deeper exploration of the emotional tensions and feelings of those in hiding could have added more depth. The author could have also depicted the realities more vividly. However, it is important and valuable that the author extensively quotes witnesses to the events, often discussing the issues with their own words.

There is also the impression that the publication would have been clearer for the reader had the author proposed a slightly different structure, one that would clearly outline the topics addressed. For example, Żbikowski discusses life in bunkers and hideouts. In this context, it would have been possible to distinguish subsections on provisions, supplies, the availability of particular hiding places, everyday life in hiding, violence, sexuality, formal and informal relationships, relations between people, the situation of women, children, families, and so on. It is important to note, as the author emphasises multiple times, that after the initial fighting, the Germans systematically destroyed the ghetto and burned more tenements in the following days of the Uprising. The exact number of people who were burned alive or suffocated due to smoke or fumes released into the hideouts will never be known. Some individuals chose another path – suicide. However, this issue, along with the previously mentioned gender aspects and those related

to violence, is not further explored in the book. This opens up opportunities for more in-depth research.

The publication, *O nadziei, cierpieniu, bólu* by Andrzej Żbikowski is undoubtedly an important title in the historiography of the Warsaw Ghetto. It is based on a broad source base and bibliography, skillfully written, and most importantly, tackles a topic that has not been thoroughly analysed to date. Although many works have been written about the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, the picture of the Uprising remains incomplete without consideration of the role and dramatic situation of the civilians in the ghetto. Without the sacrifice and silent resistance of the civilians, the Uprising would not have lasted for such an extended period. The study, written in an accessible manner for both specialists and non-historians, offers a glimpse into how civilians functioned during the Uprising and, more broadly, the processes of their struggle for survival. It is also important to note that the work raises further research questions and motivates historians and other researchers to explore them.

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SYLWIA CHUTNIK AND MONIKA SZNAJDERMAN,
KWESTIA CHARAKTERU.
*BOJOWNICZKI Z GETTA WARSZAWSKIEGO**
(A MATTER OF CHARACTER. WOMEN COMBATANTS FROM
THE WARSAW GHETTO)

“**T**his book simply had to be written,¹ – with these words, Sylwia Chutnik and Monika Sznajderman begin a collective monograph devoted to Jewish women fighting in the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. It had to be written and it is good that it finally came to be published. The stories of Jewish girls – young and teenage – and women during the German occupation, including those involved in various underground initiatives, have so far not been comprehensively reflected in academic and popular science publications on World War II and the Holocaust.²

* *Kwestia charakteru. Bojowniczkki z getta warszawskiego*, ed. Sylwia Chutnik and Monika Sznajderman (Wołowiec–Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Czarne, Polin Muzeum Historii Żydów Polskich, 2023), 344 pp.

¹ *Kwestia charakteru*, p. 5.

² For more information on the presence of Jewish women in underground organisations and their involvement in the underground during different periods of the occupation and during the Ghetto Uprising, see, among others, *Archiwum Ringelbluma. Konspiracyjne Archiwum Getta Warszawy*, vol. 1–36

Their testimonies, on par with men's testimonies, served – and in many works still serve – to describe a certain universal history of the period. This makes it all the more important that the authors of the subsequent chapters of the reviewed publication did not conform to general historiographical trends and indeed posed completely different research questions as well as trying to extract as much information as possible from the biographies of the selected heroines. Sylwia Chutnik and Monika Sznajderman try to uncover the key facts from their lives and attempt to analyse their mentality, experiences, views, and activities in a given organisation and in their private sphere. This was – due to the very limited source base – not an easy task. As Chutnik and Sznajderman noted:

[...] scraps of life and information scattered across archives, witness testimonies, and publications related to the history of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising were like individual crumbs from which a story had to be pieced together. Consequently, some texts reveal the struggle with form, the inability to create a complete picture, the blank spots, and the hesitation. This is undoubtedly an asset, as are the emotions, which are not typically associated with professional, “scholarly” work.³

Similar sentences, whether about the shortage of sources, about gaps that one would like to fill but where there is a lack of information, or about emotions, appear in most of the texts included in the volume. Could the story of these

(Warsaw, 2012–2023); T. Borzykowski, *Between Tumbling Walls*, trans. from Yiddish M. Kohansky (Beit Lochamei ha-Getaot, 1972); I. Cukierman, *Nadmiar pamięci (siedem owych lat). Wspomnienia 1939–1946*, trans. Z. Perelmutter (Warsaw, 2000); M. Edelman, *Getto walczy* (Warsaw, 1945); Ch. Folman-Raban, *Nie rozstałam się z nimi...*, trans. I. Wajsbrot, D. Sternberg, ed. B. Engelking (Warsaw, 2000); D. Goldkorn, *Wspomnienia uczestniczki powstania w getcie warszawskim* (Warsaw, 1951); C. Lubetkin, *Zagłada i Powstanie*, trans. M. Krych (Warsaw, 1999); H. Rufeisen-Schüpper, *Pożegnanie Milej 18. Wspomnienia łączniczki Żydowskiej Organizacji Bojowej* (Cracow, 1996); J. Batalion, *The Light of Days: The Untold Story of Women Resistance Fighters in Hitler's Ghettos* (HarperCollins, 2022); B. Engelking, J. Leociak, *Getto warszawskie. Przewodnik po nieistniejącym mieście* (Warsaw, 2013); B. Engelking, D. Libionka, *Żydzi w powstańczej Warszawie* (Warsaw, 2009); A. Grupińska, *Po kole. Rozmowy z żydowskimi żołnierzami* (Warsaw, 1991); A. Grupińska, *Ciągle po kole. Rozmowy z żołnierzami Getta Warszawskiego* (Warsaw, 2013); A. Grupińska, *Odczytanie listy. Opowieści o powstańcach żydowskich* (Cracow, 2003); I. Gutman, *Walka bez cienia nadziei. Powstanie w getcie warszawskim* (Warsaw, 1998); D. Libionka, L. Weinbaum, *Bohaterowie, hochsztaplerzy, opisywacze. Wokół Żydowskiego Związku Wojskowego* (Warsaw, 2011); R. Sawkowska, *Ludzie z dzielnicy zamkniętej. Z dziejów Żydów w Warszawie w latach okupacji hitlerowskiej. Październik 1939 – marzec 1943* (Warsaw, 1993).

³ *Kwestia charakteru*, p. 6.

women, however, be described without commitment and a certain amount of emotion?

The stories of eleven women-combatants outlined in the reviewed work are a reminder that during the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising – the largest of all acts of Jewish armed resistance – women stood up to fight as well. They threw Molotov cocktails, fired firearms (insofar as they had them, but that is a problem for a completely different discussion), and carried out other actions of a military nature. They fought against the Germans alone or side by side with their colleagues. They were at the heart of events and behind the front lines. Some, like Dorka Goldkorn, were given the task of finding a way out of the ghetto to the so-called “Aryan” side through the sewers. This, however, was not the only aspect of their activities. Women were present and active in the underground for many months before the outbreak of the Uprising. They were given various tasks. They took care of logistics in the broadest sense of the term, and because of their contacts on the other side of the wall, they organised the so-called “Aryan” documents and premises outside the ghetto. For this, they used the knowledge and experience they had gained from their activities in pre-war Jewish Zionist organisations (for example, in Ha-Shomer ha-Cair or Ha-Noar ha-Ivri “Akiba”). During the trial of Adolf Eichmann, Icchak Cukierman spoke of them in the following manner:

The word “liaison officer” does not describe what these women did. They were not just messengers. They [...] smuggled weapons, grenades, ammunition [...] risked their lives moving between ghettos [...]. It is necessary to call these amazing girls *kashariyot*, from the word *kesher*, which means “bond.”⁴

Kashariyot – Jewish women liaison officers – acted as a link between towns/ghettos to transport documents and funds or pass on information. This required great courage, creativity, and the ability to remain calm regardless of the circumstances, comments, and situations they witnessed. Some of them played key roles in the leadership of Jewish underground organisations, while others were involved in diversion actions.

⁴ As cited in: K. Sulej, “Francia Beatus. Sziksa,” in *Kwestia charakteru*, p. 254.

Work in the underground and preparations for the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising began in the late autumn of 1942. Initially, it was mainly focused on consolidating internal structures and establishing understanding and cooperation between the various groups.⁵ This was followed by planning the necessary actions and considering whether an armed struggle against the Germans was feasible. Women took an intensive part in these planning activities. In January 1943 – in response to the subsequent deportation of part of the ghetto inhabitants to the Treblinka extermination camp – the struggle began. This first Uprising was followed by recruiting new members of underground organisations and training those already active. The civilians were encouraged to join in the preparations. Residents were urged to create a network of shelters, hideouts, and underground tunnels. Information was also distributed throughout the ghetto and leaflets and proclamations were distributed calling for and motivating people to join the resistance. Women were present and active everywhere.

Researchers and scholars from various fields are still unable to answer many seemingly basic questions about the participation of women in the Jewish underground. It is not clear exactly how many female members there were in the two largest armed organisations in the Warsaw Ghetto: the Jewish Combat Organisation (*Żydowska Organizacja Bojowa*, ŻOB) and the Jewish Military Union (*Żydowski Związek Wojskowy*, ŻZW). The most common estimate is that around five hundred members of the ŻOB and nearly two hundred and fifty members of the ŻZW took part in the uprising in April 1943. How many women were among them is still an unanswered question. These issues are not discussed more extensively in the reviewed volume either; however, that was not its purpose. The authors focused on the biographies of a few women who fought in the Uprising, possibly leaving the writing of a broader monograph on this topic to future researchers.

What is known – and is still being discovered – are a few biographies of Jewish women involved in underground activities. The literature in the field usually contains only names, pseudonyms of some women and perfunctory information about them – alongside much more extensive descriptions of the biographies

⁵ More in B. Engelking, J. Leociak, *Getto warszawskie*; D. Libionka, L. Weinbaum, *Bohaterowie, hochsztaplerzy, opisywacze*.

and activities of their colleagues in the organisation. Thanks to the book, readers have gained the opportunity to learn more about such icons of the Jewish underground as Tosia Altman, Mira Fuchrer or Cywia Lubetkin. The book also provides a wider audience with an opportunity to look at the biographies of these lesser-known women, such as Frania Beatus, Rywka Pasamonik, Bronka Feinmesser or Regina Fudem. “There were younger and older girls among them. [...] Brave or timid, determined or hesitant. “It’s a matter of character,” says the son of one of them.”⁶

Neither the choice of the biographies themselves nor of the people who reconstructed them was random. In their preface, the editors underlined:

In order to describe the female ghetto fighters, we have invited authors who deal with the Holocaust, herstory or remembrance in various ways; who speak with their own voice and, in addition to their professional competence, knowledge and talent, are also emotionally involved in the issues of reclaiming the past, especially the past of groups previously unrepresented.⁷

The book consists of a preface by the editors of the volume, an introduction by Zuzanna Hertzberg, eleven themed articles and two cross-sectional texts concerning personalities (one by Anna Szyba and Karolina Szymaniak; the other by Hanka Grupińska) whose biographies are not reproduced in such detail. The authors of the biographical texts are recognised female researchers in women’s history – herstory – and gender studies: Kalina Błażejowska, Katarzyna Czerwonogóra, Agnieszka Dauksza, Patrycja Dołowy, Agnieszka Glińska, Hanka Grupińska, Agnieszka Haska, Natalia Judzińska, Magdalena Kozłowska, Joanna Ostrowska, Karolina Sulej, Anna Szyba, Karolina Szymaniak and Monika Tutak-Goll. The cross-sectional texts on the fate of Jewish women fighters, as well as on research methodology and the authors’ own experiences with them, authored by Zuzanna Hertzberg, Anna Szyba and Karolina Szymaniak (the article entitled “Splatanie historii” [Weaving of History]), and Hanka Grupińska (the article entitled “Tak

⁶ *Kwestia charakteru*, p. 6.

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 5–6.

o nich wiem, tak slyszalam” [That’s what I know about them, that’s what I’ve heard]), also constitute an important supplement to the volume.

The paraphrased words of Dolek Liebeskind, one of the leaders of the underground organisation from the Cracow Ghetto – “We are fighting for three lines in the history textbooks” – became, so to speak, the motto of the first text in the volume (entitled “Wstęp. Więcej niż tylko trzy linijki” [Introduction. More than just three lines]) and the guiding principle of all the biographies reproduced in the volume. The author of the article, Zuzanna Hertzberg, an artist, activist, performer and researcher, shares her thoughts on how she got started with herstories of Jewish women, as well as her own experiences of working in archives – of discovering individual fates and reconstructing them from scraps of information. This is an interesting study, and many researchers undertaking work on minority history can identify themselves with the views expressed in it. The author points out that some of the previous findings on the participation of Jewish women in the ghetto uprising need to be reconsidered and re-written:

The concept of herstory needs to be clarified here. There have been many publications on women’s participation in the Warsaw Ghetto by historians, but also by women who unconsciously reproduce men’s stories or the mental maps that men outlined. On these maps, women were only tiny points in a sea of male heroism.⁸

Moreover, even if not everyone agrees with this rather radical assessment, it is worth reading the studies prepared so far with care and greater awareness. The great value of the reviewed volume is that it sensitises the reader to this kind of reading. Each article included here is marked by an open message, critical analysis, and an unconventional perspective on both sources and popular and scholarly texts.

Kalina Błażejowska, a film expert and journalist, in her text “Tosia Altman. Przebić głową mur” (Tosia Altman. To Break Through a Wall with Your Head), attempts to reconstruct the last years of the life of her protagonist, who was one of the few to leave the uncovered bunker at 18 Miła Street on her own. “Very little is known about her, although hundreds of people knew her. Most of them

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

did not survive the Holocaust.”⁹ The author analyses the available testimonies, but also photographs which show a smiling, confident young woman. She shows the networks of contacts of the Jewish underground between different ghettos. Of particular importance is her attempt to reconstruct the last moments of Tosia Altman’s life. Although we will not find answers to many questions in the volume, what is important is the author’s inquisitiveness, her ability to extract information even from scraps of sources and her ability to pose new research questions.

Agnieszka Haska, a sociologist and researcher, dedicated her article to Regina Fudem, alias “Lilit.” Her text is a flashback. The author begins with the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising and the last moments of Regina’s life. One of “Lilit’s” tasks was to lead people to the “Aryan” side through sewers. She treated her mission with great responsibility. She did not survive one of such crossings. In the subsequent pages of the book, Haska recalls earlier events in Fudem’s biography, as well as information about the people with whom she was connected. As a whole, the book is an important contribution to the history of women’s Jewish underground, which brings the profile of one of its activists closer.

From the reviewer’s perspective, the text on Mira Fuchrer by journalist and reporter Monika Tutak-Goll is particularly significant. Until now, Mira has been portrayed as merely the “girlfriend” or “partner” of Mordechai Anielewicz, the leader of the ŻOB during the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. This article, however, restores her empowerment and agency. The author shows her involvement in the Ha-Shomer ha-Cair organisation and the activities she undertook during the German occupation. All of this makes Mira Fuchrer step out of Anielewicz’s shadow, ceasing to be merely a “companion in his life” and becoming a full-blooded fighter of the ŻOB.

Agnieszka Dauksza, a researcher and assistant professor at the Faculty of Polish Studies of the Jagiellonian University, has prepared a text on Rywka Pasamonik. This personality has a complex biography. She came from a traditional, religious family, but “chose a different direction, non-religious, non-conservative, non-patriarchal, non-assimilationist and non-commercial.”¹⁰ Rywka Pasamonik became involved in

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 91.

Ha-Shomer ha-Cair before the war and lived in a kibbutz (possibly on Grochowska Street in Warsaw). She was active in many fields: in recruiting new members to the organisation, in first aid courses, Hebrew language courses, in combat training, including shooting lessons. All these activities appeared important under the Occupation. Rywka Pasamonik died on 8 May 1943 in the bunker at 18 Miła Street.

One of the key personalities in the Jewish underground in the Warsaw Ghetto was Niuta (Rywa) Tajtelbaum, and it is to her that Patrycja Dołowy, writer, artist and social activist, has devoted her extensive text. It is also one of the most fully reconstructed biographies in the reviewed publication. Niuta was a communist, a member of a “special group” of the People’s Guard (*Gwardia Ludowa*) for sabotage tasks. She survived the Ghetto Uprising, but died shortly afterwards, in July 1943. Dołowy dispels the myths that have grown up around Niuta Tajtelbaum’s biography, and shows her commitment and dedication “to the cause.”

Joanna Ostrowska, a historian, film critic and playwright, contributed with a piece about Dorka Goldkorn, an activist of the Union of Independent Socialist Youth “Spartakus” (*Związek Niezależnej Młodzieży Socjalistycznej “Spartakus”*), one of the few who wrote memoirs from the Occupation period. The author emphasised that Dorka’s biography is “a pretext for a collective history. Her biography forms the axis of the story of Jewish teenagers and young women involved in the radical leftist movement just before the outbreak of the Second World War.”¹¹ This is therefore another contextual biography included in this volume. Such contributions enable readers to gain a fuller picture of the links between individuals and organisations, and to see how far a particular fate did or did not fit into the profile of a generation. Goldkorn died tragically in 1947.

Magdalena Kozłowska, a historian, Judaist and translator, has penned an article about Chaja Bełchatowska, a member of the ŻOB in the Warsaw Ghetto, who fought in the Uprising, throwing, among other things, homemade Molotov cocktails. Together with a group of other fighters, she escaped from the burning ghetto through the sewers, then hid for some time in the forests near Wyszaków. She survived the war. Soon after war ended, she and her husband Boruch emigrated to Canada via Sweden. She stayed there for the rest of her life.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 141.

Natalia Judzińska, a cultural studies scholar, lecturer and activist, dedicated her article to Cywia Lubetkin, “a woman – legend” and one of the most recognizable personalities of the Jewish underground. It is an interesting study of another woman who still remains to some extent in the shadow of her partner, Icchak Cukierman. Although, as Judzińska noted, “Cywia Lubetkin, [is] the most important and highest-ranking soldier of the Jewish Combat Organisation who managed to survive the Holocaust, and after the Uprising, the only woman in the Command.”¹² She survived the war, co-founded the Kibbutz of the Ghetto Fighters in Israel, was a witness in the Eichmann trial, and wrote down her memories of what happened during the German occupation. Judzińska collected a great deal of information not only about Lubetkin’s activities in the Jewish underground, but also about her private life. Particularly the latter is interesting, as it shows Lubetkin, as she was, without the mask of heroism.

Two subsequent articles, one by Agnieszka Glińska, an actress, director and lecturer at the Academy of Dramatic Arts in Cracow, dedicated to Bronka Feinmesser, and the other by Karolina Sulej, a cultural studies scholar and journalist, on Frania Beatus, are works that introduce the personalities of lesser-known Jewish underground fighters. Agnieszka Glińska begins the text with the words: “She took part, but does not appear in the credits. She is the main character from only one perspective – in the son’s story about his mother, carefully cobbled together from scraps and episodes into a plot.”¹³ Bronka Feinmesser, one of the women liaison officers, not only survived the war but also documented her experiences in written testimonies. Her reconstructed biography is an important addition to the history of the ghetto uprising and a reminder that there were many such women, many more than the few most often mentioned on the occasion of successive anniversaries. Equally painstaking work has been done by Karolina Sulej, reconstructing the fate of Frania Beatus, a young ŻOB liaison officer with “good Aryan” looks, working with Icchak Cukierman. One could only wish for more such texts.

The last of the biographical articles included in the volume concerns Pnina Grynszpan-Frymer and was prepared by Katarzyna Czerwonogóra, an educator

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 188.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 211.

and researcher. The interview conducted with Pnina by Nathan Beyrak for the Holocaust Museum in Washington, D.C., plays an important role in the reconstruction of Pnina's fate. Although this is one of the shorter texts in the volume, it stands out for its narrative, the research method employed by the author, and the new findings it contributes to historiography.

It is worth noting that the article by Karolina Szymaniak and Anna Szyba includes valuable material for the biographies of the following women activists and fighters: Szoszana Kossower, Halina Balter, Miriam Hajnsdorf, and Miriam Szyfman. It offers a significant reconstruction of their fates, which can inspire further research – both to delve deeper into these biographies and attempt to reconstruct other women's lives.

There is no doubt that the reviewed book is a significant and unique contribution to the historiography of Jewish resistance, particularly the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. It presents women's stories from a herstory perspective, from a minority history point of view, in a language that fits the subject matter, free from any patriarchal bias, judgment, or condescension. Chutnik and Sznajderman emphasised this in their preface:

It seems particularly important that women hitherto overlooked in the official narrative or 'lost in memory' finally regain their place in history – and that contemporary women authors become midwives for their reintegration into the official circulation.¹⁴

The subject matter of the individual articles is based on a solid source and bibliographic foundation. Photographs are also included to show the faces of the persons outlined. The book as a whole, written with a skillful pen, is intelligible not only to specialists but also to people who do not deal with historical topics on a daily basis. We can only reiterate that the book “just had to be written” and express the hope that the work on reconstructing the fates of more women fighters from the Warsaw Ghetto and other ghettos in occupied Poland will be continued. Further publications about these women fighters “must” and should be written.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

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*WARTIME RESCUE OF JEWS BY THE POLISH CATHOLIC CLERGY:
THE TESTIMONY OF SURVIVORS AND RESCUERS, VOL. 1–2,
ED. RYSZARD TYNDORF WITH THE ASSISTANCE OF ZYGMUNT
ZIELIŃSKI, LUBLIN: WYDAWNICTWO KUL, 2023*

The case of Poland presents perhaps the most pointed of the many paradoxes of the Holocaust. On the one hand, of the more than three million Polish Jews who fell into the hands of the Nazis, only about three per cent survived, putting Poland at the very bottom of the league table amongst all the countries of occupied Europe. On the other hand, in the league table of people who are known to have risked their lives to rescue Jews, Poland stands at the very top, accounting for more than a quarter of all the “Righteous Gentiles” recognized by Yad Vashem, Israel’s official memorial to the victims of the Holocaust. By January 2022, 7,232 people in Poland have been recognized by the State of Israel as The Righteous Among the Nations. Naturally this paradox has given rise to intense polemics, characterized, unfortunately, by a great deal of jumping to conclusions. The correlation is obvious – Poland was a country of rampant anti-Semitism, and most of its Jews perished: cause and consequence. On the other hand, Poland is a country with strong Catholic traditions of hospitality, charity, and self-sacrifice;

hence the large number of Righteous Gentiles. Yet, the role of Polish Catholic and Protestant churches in rescuing Polish Jews still awaits a comprehensive study.

The first extensive work on the considerable role of Polish Catholic nuns in saving Jewish children was published by Ewa Kurek-Lesik¹ (1992); more recently Joanna B. Michlic² (2008) has updated and expanded the information available. In fact, the help given by religious Catholics (bishops, priests, nuns) is rarely considered by historians dealing with the situation of Jews in Poland. Ryszard Tyndorf, is not a historian in the sense that history is not his major occupation, but he succeeded in reassembling facts and testimonies concerning survivors and rescuers. For many years he has been collecting and verifying the nature of testimonies and information. The result is a huge book, with thousands of testimonies from all over Poland, from 1939 to 1945. Ryszard Tyndorf has produced a massive, free-to-download³ monograph that should make a considerable difference to both Holocaust Studies and current controversies within Poland, with “Wartime Rescue of Jews by the Polish Catholic Clergy: The Testimony of Survivors and Rescuers.”

The heart of this book is the author’s attempt to calculate the number of Jews hiding not only in Warsaw but also all over Poland. Ryszard Tyndorf counted more than 500 religious institutions in more than 580 localities all over occupied Poland that were involved in the hiding process of Jews that contributed to their rescue and in so doing, constructed a “giant mosaic.” His study shows how much effort was put into preparing such a work, and how information can be gathered from a variety of places, to build an extremely interesting and sometimes even exciting story on their basis.

The book is the first English monograph on the assistance of Catholic priests to Jews in Poland during the Holocaust and was published by the Publishing House

¹ E. Kurek-Lesik, *Gdy klasztor znaczył życie. Udział żeńskich zgromadzeń zakonnych w akcji ratowania dzieci żydowskich w Polsce w latach 1939–1945* (Cracow, 1992), pp. 49–54; *eadem*, “The Conditions of Admittance and the Social Background of Jewish Children Saved by Women’s Religious Orders in Poland from 1939–1945,” *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry*, vol. 3: *The Jews of Warsaw* (1988), pp. 244–275, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv1rmj5z.17>. E. Kurek, *The Role of Polish Nuns in the Rescue of Jews, 1939–1945* (New York, 1992).

² J.B. Michlic, *Jewish Children in Nazi-occupied Poland: Survival and Polish-Jewish Relations During the Holocaust as Reflected in Early Postwar Recollections* (Jerusalem, 2008).

³ See <https://repozytorium.kul.pl/items/86f916e2-4bcd-4b40-ab19-32ddd8842fc>, accessed 6 May 2024.

of the John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin in collaboration with the Abraham J. Heschel Center for Catholic-Jewish Relations of the Catholic University of Lublin. Tyndorf has found many testimonies, even if it was difficult, though these stories are not told from generation to generation, and the related documents and testimonies. Many cases of Jews rescued by the Roman Catholic clergy may never be known or fully known. In many cases, however, such stories were not told. Tyndorf tried to discover them and to reveal them to the public and by means of this unique work, he has contributed to a better understanding of the period, and revealed the courageous attitude of many Poles, especially that of the clergy.

The data provide an all too-rare example of how a historian can combine qualitative and quantitative sources to develop a fuller picture of a particular moment in time. The quantitative sources in question consist primarily of surviving lists of Jews in hiding who received assistance from aid organizations, while the qualitative sources are largely memoirs. Such an approach is not used enough and particularly in Holocaust studies there is too often an aversion to quantifying the past. Tyndorf is not trying to quantify, but presents many testimonies from which any historian or sociologist can propose new research of a more precise and detailed nature. Tyndorf demonstrates that if many nuns and priests helped Jews, it was possible because they organized networks, composed of several members or more. Socialist students, members of Żegota, (Council for Aid to Jews – a Polish underground organization that provided for the aid for Jews) as well as doctors, engineers and teachers all gave assistance to Jews. Assistance was also provided to Jews by the Sisters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul, which ran or were on the staff – often as nurses – of hospitals throughout German-occupied Poland.

In fact, there were several ways to help Jews. The most important way was to convert Jews and to furnish them new falsified documents attesting to their Catholic origins. Secondly, to find a place to shelter them and hide – especially in convents, orphanages, and religious institutions. The Dominican monastery in Lwów manufactured documents for Jews on a large scale. The Sacré Coeur Sisters (Sisters of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus) sheltered a number of Jews at their convents in Lwów. Rev. Canon Adam Łańcucki, the pastor of Brzeżany, near Tarnopol, provided a number of false identity documents that helped Jews to survive the war. The book is rich in such examples.

In the second chapter Tyndorf gives a very detailed description of the situation of the clergy in Poland. The conditions suffered by the Catholic Church in occupied Poland were incomparably worse than those in other countries occupied by the Germans, especially in Western Europe and this situation did not facilitate any activities of rescue of Jews. Many priests were sent to concentration camps. The intensity of the persecution of the Catholic Church varied significantly throughout occupied Poland, where Polish Jews were the primary victims of the Nazi Germany-organized Holocaust in Poland. Throughout the German occupation of Poland, Jews were rescued from the Holocaust by Polish people, at a risk to their lives and the lives of their families. The Catholic clergy was equally repulsed by the violence directed at Jews, as were most Poles.

In the third chapter the author focuses on the response of the Polish Catholic clergy to the plight of the Jews during the German occupation from September 1939 to June 1941, before the Holocaust got underway. In the fifth chapter, Tyndorf describes how priests and nuns throughout Poland responded to the increasingly harsh conditions faced by Jews by giving various forms of assistance to those who fled from ghettos from 1942 to 1945. One of the survival strategies of Jews especially in cities was to be baptized and live as 'newly converted' Catholics. The most widespread way of extending help was the issuance by priests of birth and baptismal false certificates. Those identity documents were variously referred to in rescue accounts and literature simply as baptismal certificates. Conditions in Poland were not at all favorable for rescue. In villages, churches were usually small and without cellars; they were not suitable as refuges. Parish rectories were hectic places that were often visited by German authorities who viewed Polish priests as natural opponents of Nazi rule. Polish nuns lived in poverty and places in orphanages became more and more limited.

Considering the percentage of clergy in society during this period, the number of people helping in this environment is very significant. In comparison to other countries, in Poland every person that helped a Jew, could be punished with death. The number of Poles murdered by the Germans for helping Jews during the Holocaust has not yet been precisely determined. On 10 November 1941, Governor Ludwig Fischer expanded the activities for which Poles faced the death penalty (in the Warsaw District) to include providing even a night's lodging, food or transportation to any Jew. Even selling food to Jews was covered by this prohibition.

Yet many Poles continued to trade with and shelter Jews. While Polish Catholic bishops encouraged and approved of rescue activities by the clergy, they did not compel their clergy to perform such deeds of heroism. They understood perfectly well that they had no moral authority to issue such commands.

In fact, a good number of priests, monks and nuns were involved in saving Jews, especially children, putting themselves in a position of severe danger. Hiding Jews was threatened with sanctions, which increased in severity over time. Every Pole, who accepted to hide a Jew or to help him, could be shot. Any kind of help to Jews was punishable by death, for the rescuer and their family, and would-be rescuers acted in an environment hostile to Jews and their protection, exposed to the risk of blackmail and denunciation by neighbors. Yet, about two thirds of all nunneries in Poland took part in the rescue, in all likelihood with the support and encouragement of the church hierarchy. These efforts were supported by local Polish bishops and by the Vatican itself. For example, Archbishop Stanislaw Gall, the Vicar Capitular and later Apostolic Administrator of the vacant Warsaw archdiocese, appealed in December 1940, after the creation of the ghetto, to help Jews. Cracow archbishop Adam Sapieha also endeavored to intervene on behalf of Jewish converts to Catholicism, and appealed to help everyone. Through the mediation of Rev. Ferdynand Machay, the pastor of the Most Holy Redeemer Parish, Sapieha supplied false baptismal and birth certificates to Jews.⁴

No doubt, this book is an important contribution to the history of Jews in Poland during the Holocaust, making mention of the many ways help was brought to Jews by the local population in various towns and villages. Not all rescue efforts ended well. From now on, however, after the publication of this study we can no longer deny the importance of the help provided to Jews by the Polish clergy. This work will encourage other research in the field and the ensuing discussion in all its broadness. Above all, it will contribute to change our perception of the attitude of Poles towards their fellow citizens during the Holocaust in the period 1939–1944. Tyndorf's study no doubt in this regard will be a milestone in Polish historiography and Holocaust studies across the World in respect to the rescue of Jews and the related attitude of Poles.

⁴ *Wartime Rescue of Jews by the Polish Catholic Clergy: The Testimony of Survivors and Rescuers*, vol. 1, ed. R. Tyndorf with the assistance of Z. Zieliński (Lublin, 2023), pp. 112–116.



CHRONICLES

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“FOR THOUGH THEY BE PUNISHED IN THE SIGHT OF MEN,
YET IS THEIR HOPE FULL OF IMMORTALITY...”^{*}
REPORT ON INSTITUTE OF NATIONAL REMEMBRANCE
ACTIVITIES IN CONNECTION WITH SOLEMN BEATIFICATION
OF THE ULMA FAMILY

On 17 December 2022, i.e. 19 years after the initiation of the beatification process of the Ulma Family, Pope Francis approved the decree on their martyrdom. He authorised the Dicastery for the Causes of Saints to publish it, which meant that soon, Józef and Wiktoria and their seven children would be beatified.¹ This Polish family was murdered on the spot on 24 March 1944 in Markowa by German gendarmes from the Łańcut police station for helping Jews. Presumably, in December 1942, the Ulmas took eight people from the

· Book of Wisdom 3:4. The Polish verse was used on one of the posters of the exhibition “Death for Humanity. The Ulma Family”

¹ On 14 February 2023, the Archdiocese of Przemyśl announced that Ulma Family’s beatification would occur on 10 November 2023 in Markowa.

Didner, Grünfeld, and Goldman families under their roof.² Józef and Wiktoria, in helping them, were aware of the enormous risks it entailed.³ In their case, as the documents collected by historians and the priests leading the beatification process show, evangelical love of thy neighbour overcame fear and strengthened their heroism and courage. For the first time in the history of the Church, a family who was murdered for helping Jews during the years of the German occupation of Polish lands was raised to the glory of the altars.

The solemn beatification mass presided over by the Holy Father's envoy, the Prefect of the Vatican Dicastery for the Causes of Saints, Cardinal Marcello Semeraro, was held on Sunday, 10 September 2023, in Markowa. The liturgy was attended by more than thirty thousand faithful from Poland, Lithuania, Ukraine, and the USA. The Eucharist was concelebrated by about one thousand priests, six cardinals,⁴ eighty bishops, including the President of the Polish Bishops' Conference, Archbishop Stanisław Gądecki, the Primate of Poland, the Metropolitan of Gniezno, Archbishop Wojciech Polak, and the main organiser – the Metropolitan of Przemyśl, Archbishop Adam Szal.⁵ It was one of the most significant religious

² The story of the Ulmas and their death is present in Polish and foreign language literature. See e.g. M. Szpytma, *Sprawiedliwi i ich świat w fotografii Józefa Ulmy*, third edition (Warsaw, 2023); M. Szpytma, *The Righteous and the Merciful: The Rescue of Jews by the Poles and the Tragic Consequences for Ulma Family from Markowa* (Warsaw, 2023); W. Burda, *Ku szczytom świętości* (Przemyśl, 2023); A. Bugała, *Ulmowie sprawiedliwi i błogosławieni* (Cracow, 2023); A. Bugała, *Ulmovci. Po stopách prvej blahoslavennej rodiny v dejinách Cirkvi* (Košice, 2023); P. Adrianik-Rytel, M. Tulli, *Uccisero anche i bambini. Gli Ulma, la famiglia martire che aiutò gli ebrei Copertina flessibile* (Milano, 2023); P. Adrianik-Rytel, M. Tulli, *Martyred and Blessed Together: The Extraordinary Story of the Ulma Family* (Huntington, 2023); J.O. Maynard, *No Greater Love: The Martyrdom of the Ulma Family* (London, 2023); E. Szulikowska, *Markowskie bociany. Opowieść o bohaterskiej Rodzinie Wiktorii i Józefa Ulmów* (Przemyśl, 2017); E. Szulikowska, *Wiktoria Ulma. Opowieść o miłości* (Cracow, 2023); P. Tołpa, *Sarmarytanie z Markowej. Błogosławiona Rodzina Ulmów* (Cracow, 2023); J. Ulma, *Józef Ulma. Opowieść pisana życiem. O moim wujku „Ulmie” słów kilka* (Cracow, 2024); W. Hanus, “Uniknęli kary. Ustalenia w sprawie Ericha Wildego, Michaela Dziewulskiego i Gustava Unbehenda, niemieckich żandarmów z posterunku w Łańcucie biorących udział w zbrodni w Markowej,” *Nasz Dziennik*, 6 September 2023 (Supplement: “Dodatek Historyczny IPN”).

³ See “The Third General Governorate Residence Restriction Regulation, 15 October 1941,” in *Ten jest z ojczyzny mojej. Polacy z pomocą Żydom 1939–1945*, ed. W. Bartoszewski, Z. Lewinówna (Warsaw, 2007), pp. 645–646.

⁴ Among them was the papal envoy, Cardinal Marcello Semeraro, and Cardinals Stanisław Dziwisz, Gerhard Müller, Kazimierz Nycz, Grzegorz Ryś and Robert Sarah.

⁵ The beatification celebration was attended by representatives of the highest Polish state authorities: President Andrzej Duda with the First Lady Agata Kornhauser-Duda, Marshal of the Sejm, Elżbieta Witek, Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki, as well as the President of the Institute of National Re-

ceremonies in Poland in recent years, an unprecedented event where an entire family, including an unborn child who was in the mother's womb at the time of death, was elevated to the glory of the altars.⁶

The President of the Republic of Poland, Andrzej Duda, following the announcement of the decision of the Holy Father Francis on the beatification, on the 79th anniversary of the death of the Ulma Family during the celebrations of the National Day of Remembrance of Poles Who Saved Jews under German Occupation on 24 March 2023 in Markowa, inaugurated the activities of the Committee of the President of the Republic of Poland for the Celebrations Accompanying the Beatification of the Ulma Family. Its aim was to popularise the knowledge about the heritage of the Ulma Family and to build a national community around them, as well as to restore the remembrance of Poles who saved Jews during the German occupation⁷ (the committee concluded its activities a year later, on 24 March 2024).

Grażyna Ignaczak-Bandych, the head of the Chancellery of the President of the Republic of Poland, explained during one of the organisational meetings that

Committee was established to coordinate and bring together various ongoing and future collaborative efforts. She emphasised that it was the President's wish that we celebrate and experience this significant event together as a community

membrance, Dr. Karol Nawrocki, and his deputies Dr. habil. Karol Polejowski, Dr. Mateusz Szpytma and Dr. Krzysztof Szwagrzyk, the Chief Rabbi of Poland, Michael Schudrich, and the Deputy Ambassador of Israel to Poland, Shani Tayar.

⁶ The Vatican Dicastery for the Causes of Saints declared the child born and blessed, assuming that it was born during the crime at the time of the mother's martyrdom. See Communiqué of the Vatican Dicastery for the Causes of Saints, 5 September 2023, <https://www.causesanti.va/it/notizie/notizie-2023/nota-ulma.html>, accessed 12 March 2024.

⁷ On behalf of the Chancellery of the President of the Republic of Poland, Grażyna Ignaczak-Bandych, Head of the Chancellery, Wojciech Kolarski, Secretary of State at the Chancellery, and Adam Kwiatkowski, Polish Ambassador to the Vatican, were appointed to the Committee comprising: Marzena Machałek, Secretary of State at the Ministry of Education and Science, Jarosław Sellin, Secretary of State at the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage, Piotr Rychlik, Head of the Foreign Service at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Barbara Socha, Undersecretary of State at the Ministry of Family and Social Policy, Ewa Leniart, Voivode of Podkarpacie; Archbishop Adam Szal, Metropolitan of Przemyśl, Mateusz Szpytma, Deputy President of the Institute of National Remembrance, Władysław Ortyl, Marshal of the Podkarpacie Voivodeship, Monika Krawczyk, Director of the Jewish Historical Institute, Adam Krzysztoń, District Governor of Łańcut and Mirosław Mac, Mayor of the Municipality of Markowa.

and as a nation. While the beatification itself is the responsibility of the Church, our group's task is to prepare the accompanying events jointly.⁸

Among the numerous initiatives undertaken by the Presidential Committee for the Celebrations in cooperation with the Institute of National Remembrance in 2023 (IPN), the organisation of popular science conferences and exhibitions should be highlighted. The IPN prepared two themed exhibitions: "Death for Humanity. The Ulma Family" and "'Blessed are the Righteous, for...': The Story of the Ulma Family."⁹

The first of these – an outdoor one – was prepared by the IPN Branch in Rzeszów. The exhibition's originators were Dr. Mateusz Szpytma, Deputy President of the IPN, and Dr. Dariusz Iwaneczko, Director of the IPN Rzeszów Branch. The authors of the exhibition's program were Dr. Wojciech Hanus (IPN Rzeszów Branch), Dr. Maciej Korcuć (IPN Cracow Branch), and Dr. Mateusz Szpytma. Katarzyna Hudzicka-Chochorowska (IPN Rzeszów Branch) was responsible for the graphic design, drawings, and typesetting. The exhibition featured several dozen photographs and documents, some presented for the first time.

Grażyna Ignaczak-Bandych¹⁰ presided over the ceremonial opening of the exhibition on 21 August 2023 in front of the Presidential Palace in Warsaw. In her speech, she emphasised that the exhibition "is a very condensed form of a story not only about the Ulma Family, but also about Poles, about those times [i.e. German occupation], and about the fact that they helped and paid the highest price for it." The Head of the Chancellery of the President of the Republic of

⁸ <https://dzieje.pl/wiadomosci/dzialania-towarzyszace-procesowi-beatyfikacyjnemu-rodziny-ulmow>, accessed 28 December 2023.

⁹ In response to the requests of the faithful in the churches that received the relics of the blessed Ulma Family during the peregrination, the IPN also created an exhibition entitled "The Blessed Ulma Family from Markowa," curated by Dr. Paweł Rokicki of the Office of National Education in Warsaw. It has been displayed in various Roman Catholic dioceses in Poland and around the world since 4 February 2024.

¹⁰ Among the guests invited to the opening were Cardinal Grzegorz Ryś, Metropolitan of Łódź and Barbara Socha, Undersecretary of State at the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy. The Institute of National Remembrance, apart from the already mentioned Dr. Mateusz Szpytma and Dr. Dariusz Iwaneczko, was represented by Marzena Kruk, Director of the IPN Archives, Dr. Adam Pleskaczyński, Director of the National Education Office, Dr. Maciej Korcuć, Head of the Office for Commemorating Polish Struggle and Martyrdom of the IPN Cracow Branch as well as numerous IPN employees.

Poland also emphasised an “optimistic note”: “It is a story also about those who survived.”¹¹ Dr. Szpytma, who spoke afterward, drew the attention of the audience to yet another aspect:

During the occupation, functionaries of the German authorities threatened Poles with death for deeds that were normal in free Poland – for welcoming someone under one’s roof, hospitality, sharing bread. Ordinary human reflexes were declared a crime by the German Reich. A simple act of humanity became an act of courage.¹²

The next speaker was Dr. Iwaneczko, who presented the exhibition. A twenty-page catalogue *Death for Humanity: The Ulma Family*,¹³ prepared by the IPN Rzeszów Branch, was handed out to all who attended. The exhibition was on display until 7 September, after which it was transported to Markowa, where its second opening took place on 9 September in front of the St. Dorothy’s parish church.¹⁴

Death for Humanity: The Ulma Family was also shown abroad, including at the Consulate General of the Republic of Poland in New York (opening of the exhibition on 23 August 2023), at the Magisterial Cathedral of St. Justus and St. Pastor in Alcalá near Madrid (23 August 2023), at the Basilica of St. John in Berlin (9 September 2023) and in the courtyard of the Church of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Vilnius (25 September 2023). The presentation of the exhibition abroad was made possible by the Polish National Foundation.¹⁵

¹¹ <https://www.pap.pl/aktualnosci/smierc-za-czlowiezenstwo-rodzina-ulmow-wystawa-przed-palacem-prezydenckim-nasze-wideo>, accessed 28 December 2023.

¹² <https://ipn.gov.pl/pl/aktualnosci/189552,W-Warszawie-zaprezentowano-wystawe-poswieconarodzynie-Ulmow.html>, accessed 28 December 2023.

¹³ The catalogue can be downloaded from the website: <https://rodzinaulmow.ipn.gov.pl/ulm/wystawy/20830,Wystawa-Smierc-za-czlowiezenstwo-Rodzina-Ulmow-PLENG.html>, accessed 31 October 2023.

¹⁴ The opening of the exhibition in Markowa was attended by Karol Nawrocki, Mateusz Szpytma, Dariusz Iwaneczko, Ewa Leniart, Władysław Ortyl and Fr. Dr. habil. Waldemar Janiga (who was representing Archbishop Adam Szal).

¹⁵ As part of an information campaign run by the Polish National Foundation to introduce the world to the Blessed Samaritans of Markowa, the exhibition “Death for Humanity. The Ulma Family” was presented in Polish schools in the USA. The tour was started on 29 September 2023 at the Blessed Father Jerzy Popiełuszko Polish Saturday School in Derby, CT. The exhibition visited a total of 22 Polish educational institutions in New York and other cities on the East Coast of the United States. The project ran until 25 March 2024, with the last stop being the John Paul II Polish Saturday School in Boston.

The second of the exhibitions, titled “Blessed are the Righteous, for...’ A Story of the Ulma Family,” was prepared by the Institute of National Remembrance Archives and the exhibition’s partner, the Ulma Family Museum of Poles Saving Jews in World War II in Markowa. Mateusz Szpytma was also the originator of this exhibition. The curators were Marzena Kruk, director of the IPN Archives, Mateusz Szpytma, and Paweł Zielony from the IPN Archives. Jarosław Kłaput and Marzena Kruk created the exhibition’s concept.

The exhibition’s opening was held on 9 September 2023 at the Museum of Poles Saving Jews in Markowa.¹⁶ Speaking at the opening, Dr. Karol Nawrocki said, among other things:

The Ulma family, their life and death, fills the entire sermon of Jesus Christ on the mountain in Galilee. They simply became the light of the world and the hope of the whole world for the preservation of humanity in the face of the situation, in the face of the hecatomb, the pandemonium unleashed by the Germans and the Soviets on the territory of the Republic of Poland. It is they who today, emphasised the President of the Institute of National Remembrance, send a signal to the whole world that it is possible to preserve humanity despite this pandemonium, despite the cruelty and evil, because in this world, all things have their value, which can be replaced, for which an equivalent can be found, but human dignity has a value that goes beyond the space of this world and is born of the Gospel, which they professed so deeply.¹⁷

The next speaker, Director Kruk, invited those present to explore the exhibition, highlighting that it depicts both the murder and the perpetrators – the

¹⁶ The guests were welcomed by Dr. Dariusz Iwaneczko, Director of the IPN Rzeszów Branch. The opening was attended by Dr. Karol Nawrocki, President of the IPN, Dr. Mateusz Szpytma, Deputy President of the IPN, Waldemar Rataj, Director of the Museum of Poles Saving Jews, as well as representatives of local authorities and the clergy. Among them were: Dr. Ewa Leniart, Voivode of the Podkarpackie Voivodeship, Władysław Ortyl, Marshal of the Podkarpackie Voivodeship, and Mirosław Mac, Mayor of the Municipality of Markowa, Fr. Dr. habil. Waldemar Janiga, representing the Metropolitan of Przemyśl, Archbishop Adam Szal, Fr. Roman Chowaniec, the parish priest of St. Dorothy parish in Markowa, as well as representatives of the law enforcement and military services (Border Guard, Polish Army, and Prison Service) and the children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren of Józef and Wiktoria Ulma’s siblings.

¹⁷ <https://rodzinaulmow.ipn.gov.pl/ulm/wydarzenia/20947,W-Markowej-otwarto-wystawe-IPN-Blogoslawieni-Sprawiedliwi-albowiem-Opowiesc-o-Ro.html>, accessed 28 December 2023.

German gendarmes – as well as those who, in terrible times, showed what humanity is.¹⁸

The exhibition had a low-key character and referred to the local culture. The authors intended to invite visitors into the private world of the Ulmas, allowing them to experience the atmosphere of their home. The display featured prayer books and books belonging to Józef and Wiktoria from the collections of the descendants of Józef Ulma's siblings: Jerzy Ulma, Agata Frendo, and Piotr Sagan, as well as original documents from the collection of the Archives of the Institute of National Remembrance and objects found during the exhumation from the grave of the Ulma Family in the cemetery in Markowa and at the crime scene (including a button from Wiktoria's blouse, which she was wearing at the time of her death, nails and fragments of the coffin, as well as a German bullet and a shell casing). It was planned that the exhibition at the Museum of Poles Saving Jews in Markowa would be open to the public until 30 November 2023, but due to enormous interest, the deadline was extended several times, and it was finally agreed that it would last until 30 November 2024, i.e., until the first anniversary of the beatification.

In addition, as part of the initiatives of the Presidential Committee for the Celebrations, an exhibition entitled "The Good Samaritans from Markowa" by Mateusz Szpytma was also presented¹⁹ that was on display for the first time on 24 March 2010 in Warsaw and has since toured many Polish and foreign cities on six continents. After six years – in connection with the opening of the museum in Markowa – it has been supplemented with additional photographs and a new graphic design.²⁰ This renewed version was prepared by the IPN Cracow Branch and the Marshal's Office of the Podkarpackie Voivodeship. In the months leading up to the beatification, the exhibition could be seen, among others, at World Youth Days in Lisbon (1–6 August 2023) or during the 32nd National Agricultural Ex-

¹⁸ A report on the opening of the exhibition can be found at the link below: <https://rodzinaulmow.ipn.gov.pl/ulm/wydarzenia/20947,Blogoslawieni-Sprawiedliwi-albowiem-Opowiesc-o-Rodzinie-Ulmo-otwarcie-wystawy-A.html>, accessed 31 October 2023.

¹⁹ The exhibition can be downloaded from the website: <https://rodzinaulmow.ipn.gov.pl/ulm/wystawy/20595,Wystawa-Samarytanie-z-Markowej-Ulmo-Polacy-zamordowani-przez-Niemcow-za-pomoc.html>, accessed 2 November 2023.

²⁰ <https://dzieje.pl/wystawy/26-krajow-odwiedzila-odnowiona-wystawa-samarytanie-z-markowej-o-rodzinie-ulmow>, accessed 7 February 2025.

hibition in Częstochowa accompanying the national harvest festival at Jasna Góra (2 September 2023), and just after the beatification ceremony, from 14 September 2023, at the Catholic University of Rosario in Argentina.

An equally important event organised by the Institute of National Remembrance in cooperation with the Chancellery of the President of the Republic of Poland through the Presidential Committee for the Celebrations Accompanying the Beatification of the Ulma Family was a popular science conference summarising previous research into the German crime in Markowa entitled “Niemiecki mord na Ulmach. Represje za pomoc ludności żydowskiej w kontekście realiów czasu Zagłady” (The German Murder of the Ulmas. The Repressions for Helping the Jewish People in the Context of the Realities of the Time of the Holocaust), held on 7 September 2023 at the Belweder Palace in Warsaw. The session was divided into three-panel discussions: “The State of Knowledge on Poles Rescuing Jews During the German Occupation,” “The German Terror and Repression of the Civilian Population for Helping Jews,” and “The German Murder of the Ulmas as an Element of the Occupier’s Terror in the Polish Lands.” The panellists for the first discussion were Dr. habil. Sebastian Piątkowski (IPN Delegation in Radom), Dr. Tomasz Domański (IPN Delegation in Kielce), and Dr. Alicja Gontarek (IPN Lublin Branch). The second discussion featured Dr. habil. Bogdan Musiał, Dr. habil. Grzegorz Berendt (University of Gdańsk, Director of the Museum of World War II), and Dr. Maciej Korcuć (IPN Cracow Branch). Dr. Mateusz Szpytma, Dr. Wojciech Hanus (IPN Rzeszów Branch), and Fr. Dr. Witold Burda (Director of the Department for Canonisation of the Metropolitan Curia in Przemyśl) participated in the third discussion. The final panel explored numerous detailed aspects. Participants had the opportunity to understand the motivations that led Józef and Wiktoria Ulma to hide eight Jews in their home, as well as the circumstances of the murder, the exact sequence of events, and the fate of the German gendarmerie officers involved in the crime in Markowa.

Summing up the conference at the Belweder Palace, Dr. Szpytma said:

[...] I would like that Germany, both as a state and as a society, to know much more about the crimes that the German Reich committed on Polish soil in 1939–45. An important signal of the willingness to learn about the realities of

those days would be the broadcasting on a German public television channel of the film *Historia jednej zbrodni* (The Story of One Crime), which recounts not only the crime committed against the multi-child Ulma Family for hiding Jews, but also the post-war fate of Eilert Dieken, who during the war commanded operations during which many Jews and Poles were murdered.²¹

Other activities of the Presidential Committee for the Celebrations include the presentation at the Warsaw Central Railway Station on 13 July 2023 of an engine with a print depicting the Ulma Family and the caption “Murdered by the Germans for Saving Jews During World War II.” Until 4 September 2023, this train ran on the Przemyśl–Berlin route. In parallel, in the main hall of the railway station until 24 July 2023, travellers could visit the exhibition “The Good Samaritans from Markowa.”

The celebrations marking the naming of the railway station in Łańcut after the Ulma Family on 30 August 2023²² and the announcement on 8 September 2023 of a competition for teachers for the best scenario of the lesson “The Righteous from Markowa” were significant events. These formed a part of the activities of the Presidential Committee and were held with the participation of the IPN who organised the competition along with the Ministry of Education and Science.

In preparation for the beatification celebrations, the IPN has created a bilingual website dedicated to the Ulma Family,²³ containing a wealth of important information on the subject. Among other objects, it contains documents of Józef and Wiktoria Ulma (including notice of graduation from the National Agricultural School in Pilsen, Wiktoria Ulma’s *Kennkarte* or the “Righteous Among the Nations” certificate of honour) and archival materials being an integral part of the IPN Archive (including the minutes of the interview with the witness Franciszek Szylar, the indictment and an excerpt from the sentence of 30 August 1958 of the Voivodship Court in Rzeszów, which sentenced Josef Kokott, one of the German

²¹ <https://ipn.gov.pl/pl/aktualnosci/189835,Konferencja-naukowa-Niemiecki-mord-na-Ulmach-Represje-za-pomoc-ludnosci-zydowski.html>, accessed 13 March 2024.

²² The ceremony also saw the unveiling of a commemorative plaque and a mural dedicated to the Ulma Family by Arkadiusz Andrejkow.

²³ <https://rodzinaulmow.ipn.gov.pl/>.

gendarmes involved in the crime in Markowa, to death). The IPN publications and exhibitions dedicated to the Ulmas could be explored on the website, the recorded discussions and films viewed, and educational folders about the Polish Righteous downloaded.

The IPN New Technology Office developed an interactive educational project about the fate of the Ulma Family, entitled „Świadectwo poMOCY” (The Testimony of Help). The project consists of two main parts: a virtual reality film etude and an immersive exhibition, housed in a custom-made mobile container. The premiere of the immersive film etude took place on 9 September 2023 in front of the IPN Branch building in Rzeszów. Each screening was preceded by a brief lecture by the Branch staff.

On the day of the beatification, the IPNtv channel broadcast (in three language versions: Polish, English, and Spanish) a short film made by the IPN International Cooperation Office. The film consists of three parts: the first tells the story of family life as seen through the eyes of Wiktoria Ulma, the second provides the historical background (occupation and German terror), and the third is a discussion of the beatification process. The soundtrack for the film is also composed of three elements: choral music, a traditional melody from the village of Markowa performed by the Folk Band “Markowianie,” and a specially composed piece reflecting the horror of the occupation.²⁴

As far as the printed word is concerned, on the occasion of the beatification process, the Institute of National Remembrance has reissued books by Mateusz Szpytma entitled *Sprawiedliwi i ich świat w fotografii Józefa Ulmy* (The Righteous and Their World in Photos by Józef Ulma) and *The Righteous and the Merciful*. It has also published the popularising text, *Nie tylko o Ulmach. O pomocy udzielanej Żydom przez Polaków podczas okupacji niemieckiej w latach 1939–1945*, edited by Tomasz Domański and Alicja Gontarek.²⁵ This latter book, to which the in-

²⁴ The film etude can be viewed at the link below: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PfjhLvsnYQg&list=PLqh0OnxCcUeSyZ-zQjaXoo5PwySwVpap2&index=4>, accessed 2 November 2023.

²⁵ *Nie tylko o Ulmach. O pomocy udzielanej Żydom przez Polaków podczas okupacji niemieckiej w latach 1939–1945*, ed. T. Domański, A. Gontarek (Warsaw, 2023). The book was also published in English under the title *Not Only About the Ulmas: Assistance Offered on Polish Territory to Jewish People During the German Occupation 1939–1945* (Warsaw, 2023).

roduction was penned by the President of the IPN, Dr. Karol Nawrocki, begins with an interview with Dr. Mateusz Szpytma, entitled “Heroizm przewycięzył lęk” (How Heroism Overcame Fear), conducted by Jan M. Ruman. The whole title is made up of five more articles: “Co wiemy o pomocy udzielanej Żydom przez Polaków w okresie II wojny światowej?” (*What Do We Know About the Aid Poles Gave to the Jews During World War II*) by Tomasz Domański and Alicja Gontarek, “Niemiecka polityka gospodarcza w okupowanej Polsce a materialne warunki niesienia pomocy Żydom” (German Economic Policy in Occupied Poland and the Material Conditions for Helping the Jews) by Grzegorz Berendt, “Rada Pomocy Żydom ‘Żegota’ w strukturach Polskiego Państwa Podziemnego” (The Council for Aid to Jews “Żegota” in the Structures of the Polish Underground State) by Waldemar Grabowski, “Pomoc uciekinierom żydowskim po stronie aryjskiej Krakowa” (*Helping Jewish Refugees on Cracow’s Aryan Side*) by Roman Gieron and “99 ofiar. Niemiecka pacyfikacja wsi Białka pod Parczewem w dystrykcie lubelskim w odwecie za pomoc ukrywającym się Żydom i jeńcom sowieckim” (*Ninety-Nine Victims. The German Pacification of the Village of Białka near Parzew in the Lublin District as Retaliation for Offering Shelter to Jews and Soviet POWs*) by Rafał Drabik.

Thanks to the efforts of the Metropolitan Curia in Przemyśl, a collective work titled *Ulmowie. Przestrzeń świętości* (The Ulma Family. A Sphere of Holiness) was published²⁶. This work provides a comprehensive look at the life, devotion, faith, and sacrifice of Józef and Wiktoria Ulma and their seven children. The more than four hundred pages publication consists of twenty-eight scholarly articles divided into three thematic blocks: historical, biblical & theological, and pastoral. Articles by the IPN staff have also been included in this book: *Polnische Polizei jako element realizacji niemieckiej polityki okupacyjnej w Generalnym Gubernatorstwie* (Polnische Polizei as an Element in the Implementation of German Occupation Policy in the General Governorate) by Tomasz Domański, “Josef Kokott ‘Diabeł Łańcucki’. Funkcjonariusz posterunku żandarmerii niemieckiej w Łańcucie, zbrodniarz niemiecki. Współsprawca zbrodni na Rodzinie Ulmów

²⁶ *Ulmowie. Przestrzeń świętości*, ed. W. Janiga (Przemyśl, 2023).

w Markowej i ukrywanych u nich Żydach” (Josef Kokott “The Devil of Łańcut.” An Officer of the German Gendarmerie Post in Łańcut, a German Criminal. A Co-Perpetrator of the Crime Against the Ulma Family in Markowa and the Jews Hidden with Them) and “Lata wojny i okupacji na terenie wschodniej części byłego woj. lwowskiego. Proces zagłady i pomoc Polaków dla tamtejszej ludności żydowskiej” (The Years of War and Occupation in the Eastern Part of the Former Lwów Voivodeship. The Extermination Process and the Assistance of Poles to the Local Jewish Population) by Wojciech Hanus; “Świadomość historyczna a kształtowanie uczuć patriotycznych” (Historical Awareness and the Formation of Patriotic Feelings) by Krzysztof Kaczmarek, “Rodzina Ulmów – wzór męstwa w nieludzkich czasach” (The Ulma Family. A Model of Bravery in Inhuman Times) by Mariusz Krzysztofiński, “Ideologia narodowosocjalistyczna w szkoleniu niemieckiej policji porządkowej w Generalnym Gubernatorstwie ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem wątków antypolskich i antykatolickich” (National Socialist Ideology in the Training of the German Police in the General Governorate with a Particular Reference to Anti-Polish and Anti-Catholic Themes) by Marcin Przegiętka, and “Samarytanie z Markowej. Słudzy Boży Ulmowie – rodzina, która oddała swoje życie za pomoc Żydom” (The Samaritans of Markowa. Servants of God, the Ulmas – a Family who Sacrificed their Lives to Help Jews) by Mateusz Szpytma.

Mention should also be made of the IPN Office for Commemorating Polish Struggle and Martyrdom (*Biuro Upamiętnienia Walk i Męczeństwa*, BUWiM), which conducted the exhumation of the remains of the Ulma Family in the parish cemetery in Markowa from 30 March to 1 April 2023. The anthropological and forensic examinations were carried out by the staff of the Chair and Department of Forensic Medicine of the Silesian Piasts Medical University of Wrocław in collaboration with the BUWiM. In addition, in the cemetery in Markowa, the IPN reconstructed the gravestone of the Ulma Family, which is an exact copy of the historical grave from the 1960s (which was completely destroyed due to the impermanence of the material).²⁷

²⁷ The written instrument entrusting care for the former grave of the Ulma Family was handed over to the parish branch of *Akcja Katolicka* (Catholic Action).

The IPN also made a new tombstone for Jan and Helena Cwynar, whose house Abraham Segal lived in to see the end of the German occupation. On 5 June 2023, on the initiative of Dr. Nawrocki, the IPN also conducted archaeological work at the site of the execution of the Ulma Family and the Jews they were hiding.²⁸

Another activity of the IPN BUWiM undertaken in preparation for the beatification was the commemoration of the Jews from the Goldman, Grünfeld, and Didner families, who were slaughtered along with the Ulmas. These Jewish families – like others murdered in Markowa – did not have a traditional Jewish gravestone at their burial site. On 10 September 2023, at the War Cemetery of the Victims of Hitlerism in Jagiełła-Niechciałki, a monument in the shape of a matzevah funded by the IPN was unveiled²⁹ in memory of the Jewish citizens of the Second Polish Republic murdered in Markowa between 1942 and 1944 by functionaries of the German state.³⁰

One of the elements of the educational activities of the Institute of National Remembrance was the preparation of three historical supplements which, after being published in the press, were posted on the IPN website. The first of

²⁸ During the archaeological works carried out at the crime scene the following items were found: a 20-grosz coin minted in 1923 in Warsaw – found in the top layer of soil behind the commemorative plaque; a 7.92 mm calibre Mauser ammunition shell, manufactured at the Märkisches Walzwerk GmbH factory in Strausberg, batch no. 7, 1941 – found in the top layer of soil, 4–5 m from the above-mentioned memorial plaque, as well as a 9 mm calibre pistol bullet – found in one of the two burial pits (140–160 cm below ground level), which were the original burial sites of the executed.

²⁹ The ceremony at the cemetery in Jagiełła-Niechciałki was attended by President Andrzej Duda with his spouse Agata Kornhauser-Duda and ministers from the Chancellery of the President of the Republic of Poland, including Grażyna Ignaczak-Bandyk, Piotr Ćwik, Wojciech Kolarski. Also present were Ewa Leniart, Władysław Ortył, Karol Nawrocki, Mateusz Szpytma and representatives of Jewish communities. The prayer in front of the monument was said by the Chief Rabbi of Poland, Michael Schudrich, and Cardinal Grzegorz Ryś, Chairman of the Committee for Dialogue with Judaism of the Polish Bishops' Conference, and Cardinal Marcello Semeraro, envoy of the Holy See, Prefect of the Dicastery for the Causes of Saints.

³⁰ The text of the inscription reads: “To the memory of the Jewish citizens of the Second Polish Republic murdered in Markowa in the years 1942–1944 by officers of the German occupation forces, exhumed from the places of execution and transferred to this cemetery in 1947. Here rest, in blessed memory, murdered with the Ulma Family, Saul Goldman, Mechel Goldman, Joachim Goldman, Baruch Goldman, Mojżesz Fajwel Goldman, Gołda (Gienia) Grünfeld, Lea Didner, Reszla (Reizel) Didner, Masia Grinbaum, Rojza Grinbaum, Ryfka Grinbaum, Szloma Loberfeld, Lejzor Lombarfeld, Hadasa Miller, Szmul Tencer and 34 unknown persons.”

these – “Rodzina Ulmów. Samarytanie z Markowej” (The Ulma Family. The Samaritans from Markowa) – was published on 16 February 2023 in the bimonthly *W Sieci Historii*.³¹ It featured the following articles: “Ukarane człowieczeństwo” (Punished Humanity) by Karol Nawrocki, “Ratując życie innych, złożyli w ofierze własne...’ Rodzina Ulmów z Markowej” (“Saving the Lives of Others, They Sacrificed their Own...’ The Ulma Family from Markowa) by Wojciech Hanus and “Samarytanie z Markowej – droga do chwały ołtarzy” (Samaritans from Markowa – the Road to the Glory of the Altars) by Fr. Witold Burda. The first text briefly describes the personality of Eilert Dieken, the commander of the German gendarmerie post in Łańcut, who gave the order to murder the Ulma Family and the Jews they were hiding. The second text presents the life story of Józef and Wiktoria Ulma and their children, from their birth to their martyrdom, and the process of their commemoration. The last text explains the history and proceedings of the Ulma Family’s beatification process.

Two other supplements were attached to widely read national dailies. On 6 September 2023, *Nasz Dziennik* published the first of them, “Błogosławieni z Markowej” (The Blessed from Markowa), with an article by Karol Nawrocki entitled “Ulmowie i ich kaci” (The Ulmas and their Executioners), and “Uniknęli kary” (They Escaped Punishment) by Wojciech Hanus, as well as an interview by Dariusz Pogorzelski with Dr. Mateusz Szpytma entitled “Waga ofiary Ulmów” (The Weight of the Ulmas’ Sacrifice). The second, published on 8 September 2023 in the daily *Gazeta Polska Codziennie*,³² featured “Przypowieść o błogosławionych Ulmach i łańcuckim diable” (Parable of the Blessed Ulmas and the Łańcut Devil) by Karol Nawrocki, “Josef Kokott – zbrodniarz niemiecki, współodpowiedzialny za śmierć rodziny Ulmów z Markowej i ukrywanych u nich Żydów” (Josef Kokott – a German Criminal, Co-Responsible for the Death of the Ulma Family from Markowa and the Jews Hidden by Them) by Wojciech Hanus, and an interview by Maria

³¹ The Supplement is available online: <https://rodzinaulmow.ipn.gov.pl/ulm/publikacje-o-ulmach/dodatki-prasowe/20652,Rodzina-Ulmow-Samarytanie-z-Markowej-dodatek-historyczny-IPN-w-magazynie-W-sieci.html>, accessed 3 November 2023.

³² The Supplement is available online: <https://rodzinaulmow.ipn.gov.pl/ulm/publikacje-o-ulmach/dodatki-prasowe/21007,Dodatek-historyczny-Institutu-Pamieci-Narodowej-do-Gazety-Polskiej-Codziennie-po.html>, accessed 3 November 2023.

Kobylińska with Dr. Mateusz Szpytma, entitled “Dziedzictwo Ulmów” (The Heritage of the Ulma Family).

Popular science articles in digital versions could be accessed on the websites: *Wszystko Co Najważniejsze* (Karol Nawrocki, “Martyrdom is Testimony”³³; Mateusz Szpytma, “What Makes the Ulma Family Special?”³⁴) and *Przystanek Historia* (Wojciech Hanus, “Josef Kokott. Funkcjonariusz żandarmerii niemieckiej współodpowiedzialny za śmierć rodziny Ulmów” (Josef Kokott. German Gendarmerie Officer Co-responsible for the Death of the Ulma Family); Wojciech Hanus, “Michał Dziewulski. Funkcjonariusz żandarmerii niemieckiej współodpowiedzialny za śmierć rodziny Ulmów” (Michał Dziewulski. German Gendarmerie Officer Co-responsible for the Death of the Ulma Family); Agnieszka Szajewska, “Ulmowie – Błogosławieni z Markowej” (The Ulmas – The Blessed from Markowa); Mateusz Szpytma, “Błogosławieni Sprawiedliwi. Życiorys Józefa i Wiktorii Ulmów oraz ich rodziny” (The Blessed Righteous. A Biography of Józef and Wiktoria Ulma and Their Family).

At the end of 2023, the IPN produced 20 podcasts, each several minutes long, dedicated to Poles murdered for helping Jews. These podcasts were recorded by IPN employees, including participants of the Central Research Project “The History of Jews in Poland and Polish-Jewish Relations in the Years 1917–1990.” Each podcast told the story of one family or one person. The themes of particular episodes included the cases of the Kowalski or Baranek families. The recordings, added with iconographic and archival material, were successively published on the IPN website.³⁵

³³ <https://wszystkoconajwazniejsze.pl/karol-nawrocki-wiktoria-i-jozef-ulmowie/>, accessed 3 November 2023.

³⁴ <https://wszystkoconajwazniejsze.pl/mateusz-szpytma-wyjatkowosc-rodziny-ulmow/>, accessed 3 November 2023.

³⁵ The recordings featured IPN employees: Tomasz Domański (IPN Delegation in Kielce), Roman Gieroń (IPN Cracow Branch), Tomasz Gonet (IPN Katowice Branch), Martyna Grądzka-Rejak (IPN Headquarters), Wojciech Hanus (IPN Rzeszów Branch), Janusz Kłapeć (IPN Lublin Branch), Maciej Korcuć (IPN Cracow Branch), Edyta Krężolek (IPN Delegation in Kielce), Aleksandra Namysło (IPN Katowice Branch), Sebastian Piątkowski (IPN Delegation in Radom) and Damian Sitkiewicz (IPN Warsaw Branch).

During the months of preparations for the beatification, IPN employees delivered lectures,³⁶ papers,³⁷ and talks³⁸ concerning the Holocaust, Poles rescuing Jews, and the history of the Ulma Family. They took part in workshops³⁹ and

³⁶ On 28 June 2023, a conference entitled “Rodzina Ulmów – świadectwo i testament” (Testimony and the Legacy of the Ulma Family) was held at the Warsaw Archbishops’ House (See of the Warsaw Archbishop Metropolitan). The event was organised by the Fundacja na Rzecz Wymiany Informacji Katolickiej (Foundation for Catholic Information Exchange) in cooperation with the Katolicka Agencja Informacyjna (Catholic News Agency). The conference was attended by Waldemar Rataj (Director of the Museum of Poles Saving Jews in Markowa), Fr. Dr. Witold Burda (the postulator in the Ulma Family’s beatification and canonisation process), as well as employees of the Institute of National Remembrance – Dr. Martyna Grądzka-Rejak (IPN Historical Research Office), who delivered a paper on “Represje za pomoc Żydom na okupowanych ziemiach polskich w czasie II wojny światowej” (Repressions for Helping Jews in Occupied Polish Territories during World War II), and Dr. Mateusz Szpytma (Deputy President of the IPN) with a paper entitled “Ulmowie, Szylarowie i inni – jak wieś Markowa pomagała Żydom” (The Ulmas, the Szylars and Others – How the Village of Markowa Helped Jews).

³⁷ On 31 August 2023, in the course of a training course for teachers entitled “Pomoc Żydom w czasie II wojny światowej na przykładzie Ulmów” (Helping Jews during the Second World War Using the Example of the Ulma Family) organised by the Voivodeship Methodology of Teaching Centre in Rybnik, Dr. Marcin Chorążki delivered a lecture entitled “Wieś polska podczas niemieckiej okupacji na przykładzie Markowej. Codzienność w rzeczywistości okupacyjnej” (The Polish Countryside During the German Occupation Using the Example of Markowa. Everyday Life in the Occupation-Era Reality). The same historian, in course of another training course for teachers, organised online, this time by the Silesian Board of Education, Delegation in Gliwice, on 12 October 2023, introduced the audience to the topic of “Polacy Ratujący Żydów podczas II wojny światowej na przykładzie rodzin z Markowej” (Poles Rescuing Jews During World War II Using the Example of Families from Markowa) and on 22 November 2023 at the Muzeum Mieszkańców Ziemi Oświęcimskiej (Remembrance Museum of the Land of Oświęcim Residents) he delivered the lecture “Sytuacji polskiego społeczeństwa pod okupacją niemiecką ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem położenia ludności żydowskiej” (The Situation of Polish Society under the German Occupation with Particular Reference to the Position of the Jewish Population).

³⁸ Lectures for high school pupils: “Rodzina Ulmów. Bohaterowie z Markowej” (The Ulma family. Heroes from Markowa) in Bydgoszcz, 7 September 2023, “Samarytanie z Markowej. Ulmowie – Polacy zamordowani przez Niemców za pomoc Żydom” (The Good Samaritans from Markowa. The Ulma Family – Poles Murdered by the Germans for Helping Jews) at the opening of the exhibition in Gietrzwałd, 8 September 2023, “Nasi sąsiedzi, Żydzi... Losy Żydów, obywateli polskich z Kreis Jaroslau (1939–1944)” (Our Neighbours, Jews... The Fate of Jews, Polish citizens from the Kreis Jaroslau (1939–1944)), 11 November 2023 by Dr. Marcin Chorążki for pupils of grades 7 and 8 of the Stefan Żeromski Primary School No. 4 in Jaroslau and “Rodzina Ulmów jako przykład Polaków ratujących Żydów” (The Ulma Family as an Example of Poles Saving Jews) for schools in Szczecin, Koszalin, Kraków, and Gorzów Wielkopolski.

³⁹ On 6 September 2023, the IPN Lublin Branch organised a workshop for secondary school pupils at its headquarters on Wodopojna Street. The workshop’s title was *Fotografia życia rodziny Ulmów* (A Photography of the Life of the Ulma Family). Employees of the IPN Białystok Branch on 11–22 September 2023 conducted workshops with teachers on the basis of an educational portfolio, “Polacy ratujący Żydów” (Poles Rescuing Jews.) On 6 October 2023, the IPN Gdańsk Branch held a seminar for teachers entitled “Ulmowie i inni Sprawiedliwi. Na ratunek Żydom w czasie II wojny światowej” (The Ulmas and Other Righteous. Rescuing Jews During the Second World War) with the participation of Dr. Tomasz Domański (IPN Delegation in Kielce).

discussions,⁴⁰ were interviewed by the media, provided consultation to film directors and participated in recordings.⁴¹ On 9 June 2023, the premiere of *Historia jednej zbrodni* (A History of One Crime), directed by Mariusz Pilis and featuring Dr. Maciej Korcuć and Dr. Joanna Lubecka, took place. On 25 August 2023, the film *Ulmowie. Błogosławiona rodzina* (The Ulmas. A Blessed Family), directed by Dariusz Walusiak, premiered. Finally, on 9 September 2023, *Przykazanie miłości. Historia rodziny Ulmów z Markowej* (The Commandment of Love. The Story of the Ulma Family from Markowa), directed by Marta Pietrasiewicz, was showcased.

It would be impossible to omit the activity of the Organising Committee of the Year of the Ulma Family in the Podkarpacie Region, which brought together the following partners: the local government of the Podkarpackie Voivodeship, the local government of the Łańcut district, the local government of the Markowa municipality, the St. Dorothy Parish in Markowa, the primary school in Markowa, the Society of Friends of Markowa, the SOAR Ulma Family Foundation, the Subcarpathian Philharmonic, the Museum in Przeworsk, the Museum of Poles Saving Jews in World War II in Markowa and the Institute of National Remembrance

⁴⁰ On 4 September 2023, the film *Historia jednej zbrodni* (A History of One Crime) was screened at the Iluzjon cinema in Warsaw. The screening was followed by a discussion attended by director Mariusz Pilis, Dr. Mateusz Szpytma, Dr. Maciej Korcuć and moderated by Marcin Wikło. On 5 September 2023, the screening of the film and a discussion with Mariusz Pilis, Mateusz Szpytma, Eldad Beck (correspondent of the Israeli daily *Israel Hayom*) and Florian Peters (Silent Heroes Memorial Center – German Resistance Memorial Center Foundation in Berlin) took place at the headquarters of the Pilecki Institute in Berlin. On 18 September 2023, the film was also shown at the Dolnośląskie Centrum Filmowe (Lower Silesian Film Centre) in Wrocław. This time the debate – along with the film’s director – was attended by Dr. Marcin Chorążki (Historical Research Office, IPN Cracow Branch), Dr. Wojciech Hanus (Historical Research Office, IPN Rzeszów Branch) and Dr. Michał Siekierka (Historical Research Office, IPN Wrocław Branch). The National Education Office, IPN, organised the latter event in Wrocław. Another event that provided an engaging educational experience was prepared by the IPN Rzeszów Branch on 5 October 2023, within the framework of the Congress of National Remembrance in Podkarpackie Voivodeship. It was a panel discussion entitled “Miłość bliźniego w nieludzkich czasach – świadectwo rodziny Ulmów z Markowej” (Love of the Neighbour in Inhuman Times: Testimony of the Ulma Family from Markowa) with the participation of Dr. Aleksandra Namysło, Dr. Mateusz Szpytma, Fr. Dr. Witold Burda, Dr. habil. Sebastian Piątkowski and Mateusz Dzieduszyci.

⁴¹ The author of the present article was a content consultant for a film produced by TVP Polonia entitled *Przykazanie miłości. Historia rodziny Ulmów z Markowej* (The Commandment of Love. The story of the Ulma Family from Markowa) directed by Marta Pietrasiewicz, which premiered on 9 September 2023 on TVP Polonia. In addition, the historians of the Institute of National Remembrance: Dr. Elżbieta Rączy, Dr. Mariusz Krzysztofiński, and Dr. Wojciech Hanus participated in the shooting of a film recorded by TVP Historia and TVP Rzeszów entitled *Porzucone kwiaty* (Abandoned Flowers) directed by Fr. Józef Brzostowski, telling the story of the Ulma family.

Rzeszów Branch. The Committee met monthly at the offices of the Podkarpackie Voivodeship's Marshal's Office in Rzeszów. As a part of its activities, the IPN, in collaboration with the Department of Promotion, Tourism, and Economic Cooperation of the Podkarpackie Marshal's Office, prepared a brochure titled *Błogosławieni i miłosierni. Rodzina Ulmów z Markowej* (The Blessed and the Merciful. The Ulma Family from Markowa). The brochure was authored by Marcin Bukala (IPN Rzeszów) and Wojciech Hanus (IPN Rzeszów Branch), with graphic design and typesetting by Katarzyna Hudzicka-Chochorowska (IPN Rzeszów Branch). The brochure was distributed on 8 June 2023, the Corpus Christi feast, during the *Jednego Serca, Jednego Ducha...* (One Heart, One Spirit...) concert in Rzeszów, during various other events preceding the beatification, and on the day of the beatification.

* * *

To sum up – the Institute of National Remembrance, up to the date of beatification, undertook a great many different initiatives and activities aimed at commemorating the Ulma Family and Poles rescuing Jews on Polish soil under the German occupation and popularising knowledge on this subject. The above article describes mainly those carried out up to 10 September 2023 by the IPN Headquarters in Warsaw and the Rzeszów Branch, whose territorial responsibility range covers also the village of Markowa. It should be emphasised that the IPN has not ceased in its efforts to uphold the remembrance of the Ulma Family as a symbol of sacrifice and martyrdom of all Poles who rescued Jews and importantly, it both organises and supports other projects to this end.

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INSTITUTE OF NATIONAL REMEMBRANCE:
RESEARCH, EDUCATIONAL AND COMMEMORATIVE ACTIVITIES
DEVOTED TO GERMAN “OPERATION REINHARDT” EIGHTIETH
ANNIVERSARY EVENTS. REPORT¹

Research on the Holocaust has been present in the activities of the various divisions of the Institute of National Remembrance (*Instytut Pamięci Narodowej*, IPN) since its inception. The Institute actively participates in commemorating anniversaries, playing a significant role in Polish culture, fostering knowledge and remembrance of important, often tragic, historical events. One could use as examples the anniversaries of the beginning of World War II, the transformation of the Union of Armed Struggle (*Związek Walki Zbrojnej*, ZWZ) into the Home Army (*Armia Krajowa*, AK), the outbreak of

¹ The activity of the IPN Cracow Branch, which has been most involved in the commemoration of the victims of crimes against humanity perpetrated during *Aktion Reinhardt*, was discussed by Dr. Roman Gieroń in the previous issue of *Polish-Jewish Studies*, and is therefore dealt with only briefly in this text (see R. Gieroń, “Lest We Forget the Victims.’ Report on the Activity of the Institute of National Remembrance Branch in Cracow in Connection with the Eightieth Anniversary of the *Aktion Reinhardt*,” *Polish-Jewish Studies* 4 (2023), pp. 481–489, DOI 10.48261/PJS230417en).

the 1944 Warsaw Rising, or the 1943 Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. IPN is naturally one of the main guardians of public remembrance of victims in respect to the above. It also fulfilled this mission in 2022–2023 during the commemoration of the 80th anniversary of *Aktion Reinhardt*,² carried out by the German occupation authorities in the General Governorate and Bezirk Białystok (Białystok province), which was part of the *Endlösung der Judenfrage* (“The Final Solution of the Jewish Question”).

The most criminal stage of the extermination of Jews in the German-occupied Polish territories began in 1941 in the former Eastern Borderlands of the occupied Second Republic of Poland and its western territories incorporated into the Reich (e.g. in Kulmhof extermination camp). It culminated in *Aktion Reinhardt*, which began in the General Governorate in March 1942. The genocide resulted in the deaths of nearly 2 million Jews, mostly Polish citizens, but also citizens of other European countries. On the night of 16–17 March 1942, German police officers, headed by Odilo Globocnik, commander of the SS and police in Distrikt Lublin (Lublin province), carried out the first “deportation” of Jews to the SS-Sonderkommando Belzec (extermination camp in Belżec). From that moment on, for the next year and a half, the German occupation authorities systematically deported Jews from cities, towns and villages in death transports also to other extermination camps, such as SS-Sonderkommando Sobibor and SS-Sonderkommando Treblinka. Immediately upon arrival, Jews were murdered in gas chambers. The liquidation of ghettos action extended to Warsaw, where the largest ghetto in occupied Europe existed. It began on 22 July 1942 and ended on 21 September that year. Over two hundred and fifty thousand Jews were sent from there to Treblinka extermination camp. Many of them – above all the sick, the elderly and children – died already at the deportation site from the bullets and blows inflicted by the members of the German formations, because they could not join the marching columns and thus “disrupted the deportation plan.” *Aktion Reinhardt* came to an end in November 1943, when a total of approximately forty-two thousand Jews were murdered in several locations in Distrikt Lublin – Majdanek concentration camp in Lublin, in

² In German: *Aktion Reinhardt* (series of mass deportations to extermination camps). Hereinafter all such referred to as Aktion.

camps in Poniatowa and Trawniki – over the course of a few days in an operation codenamed cynically *Erntefest* (“Harvest Festival”).

Since, in structural terms, the IPN through its branches and delegations, is organised according to the administrative (and judicial) division of the Polish state within the borders established in 1945, it is obvious that the events accompanying the anniversary of *Aktion Reinhardt* were organised in a special way in the respective units of IPN, which now cover the areas where the Holocaust was carried out by the Germans: the IPN branches in Cracow, Lublin, Łódź (the part covering the former occupation-era province, Distrikt Radom), Rzeszów and Warsaw, as well as the delegations in Kielce and Radom. To a minimum extent – also due to the war in Ukraine – the commemorations covered the area of the former occupation Distrikt Galizien (Galicia province), which now lies almost entirely on Ukrainian state territory. The anniversary commemorations took place at various times according to the local timeline of the Holocaust course of events. For example, the IPN Delegation in Radom was involved in the commemorative events from August 2022 to January 2023, because *Aktion Reinhardt* in this area developed from August 1942 to January 1943.

Three main spheres can be distinguished in the Institute’s efforts to expand knowledge of the genocide perpetrated by Germany: research, educational and commemorative.

The anniversary celebrations with the participation of the representatives of the Polish government, local authorities, churches and religious denominations as well as social and state organisations, including the IPN President Dr. Karol Nawrocki, were started by the Institute and the State Museum in Majdanek on 15 March 2022, on the eve of the 80th anniversary of the first deportation from Lublin.³ Paying respect for the victims, IPN representatives organised or co-organised solemn commemorations of the liquidation of ghettos in particular locations in central and eastern Poland. Often, initiatives already undertaken before, in which the IPN participated, were continued and because of the anniversary the commemoration events were given a special setting and expanded to include accompanying events.⁴

³ See R. Gieroń, “Lest We Forget the Victims,” p. 482.

⁴ This includes the ceremony on 8 December 2021 in Chełmno on Ner commemorating the victims of Kulmhof (Chełmno) extermination camp, whose 80th anniversary fell in 2021. During World War II,

The Cracow Branch of the Institute of National Remembrance was exceptionally active in this field, as its employees co-organised commemorations in eighteen towns in the Małopolska Voivodeship. Similar events were held i.a. in Białystok, Chmielnik, Jędrzejów, Kielce, Radom and Tykocin.

On 9 March 2022, in the Janusz Kurtyka Central History Point of the IPN in Warsaw, the conference “Aktion ‘Reinhardt’ i Zagłada polskich Żydów – w kręgu mechanizmów i sprawców” (*Aktion Reinhardt* and the Genocide of Polish Jews – Mechanisms and Perpetrators) was held. In this way, the Institute of National Remembrance began a research commemoration of the victims of *Aktion Reinhardt*. The meeting was opened by IPN Deputy President, Dr. Mateusz Szpytma and also attended by IPN Deputy President Dr. Karol Polejowski and the Director of the IPN Historical Research Office, Dr. Sebastian Pilarski. The speeches introduced the profiles of the main Holocaust perpetrators (and presented attempts at holding them accountable after the war): Odilo Globocnik (Dr. Soraya Kuklińska, IPN Historical Research Office) and Hans Frank (Dr. Paweł Kosiński, IPN Historical Research Office), as well as the little-known but extremely important handlers of the *Endlösung* machine on a local scale: Wilhelm Josef Blum (Dr. Sebastian Piątkowski, IPN Delegation in Radom), Wilhelm Haase (Dr. Roman Gieroń, IPN Cracow Branch), Wilhelm Atenloh and Fritz Friedel (Dr. Paweł Kornacki, IPN Białystok Branch), the officers of the 1st SS Motorised Gendarmerie Battalion (Dr. Sebastian Drabik, IPN Historical Research Office), and the perpetrators of the crimes against the Jews in Ponary and the Vilnius region (Dr. Monika Tomkiewicz, IPN Historical Research Office).⁵ The speakers’ presentations were preceded by a panel discussion with the participation of Prof. Grzegorz Berendt (University of Gdańsk, Museum of the Second World War), Dr. Martyna Grądzka-Rejak (IPN Historical Research Office, Warsaw Ghetto Museum) and Dr. Aleksandra Namysło (IPN Katowice Branch, Polish History Museum in Warsaw), during which the most important stages of German anti-Jewish policy and the Holocaust in occupied Poland were discussed.

the Germans murdered around two hundred thousand people there, the vast majority of them being Jews from the Warta Land (*Reichsgau Wartheland*).

⁵ See <https://centrumedu.ipn.gov.pl/ph/archiwum-1/2022/28879,Aktion-Reinhardt-i-Zaglada-polskich-Zydow-w-kręgu-mechanizmow-i-sprawcow-9-marca.html>, accessed 7 March 2024. The conference and the issues raised there are outlined in this volume by Paweł Kornacki. Some of the papers were published in *Polish-Jewish Studies* 4 (2023).

Another conference discussing the Holocaust, this time on a micro scale – “Akcja ‘Reinhardt’ w regionie kieleckim” (*Aktion Reinhardt* in the Kielce Region) – was held on 7 October 2022 in the town of Chmielnik (Świętokrzyskie Voivodeship) and prepared by the IPN Delegation in Kielce and the “Świętokrzyski Sztetl” Educational and Museum Centre in Chmielnik. The papers delivered by Prof. Waław Wierzbieniec (University of Rzeszów), Dr. Tomasz Domański (IPN Delegation in Kielce), Dr. Alicja Gontarek (IPN Lublin Branch, Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin), Prof. Edyta Majcher-Ociesa (Jan Kochanowski University in Kielce), Dr. Karolina Trzeskowska-Kubasik (IPN Historical Education Office), Dr. Agnieszka Dziarmaga (Świętokrzyski Shtetl centre), Dr. Marek Maciągowski (Centre of Patriotic and Civic Reflection in Kielce), and Dr. Jacek Andrzej Młynarczyk (Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń) dealt primarily with local themes of German anti-Jewish policy during World War II, such as: living conditions in the ghettos of the Kielce region, the course of the Holocaust in Distrikt Radom, the end of Jewish towns in the light of *Zwoliner Yizkor Buch* (Zwoleń memorial book), *Aktion Reinhardt* as remembered in the testimonies of Poles on the basis of the materials gathered during the “Nasi sąsiedzi Żydzi” (Our Jewish Neighbours) competition, the destruction of the Chmielnik ghetto and the persecution of Jews between 1942 and 1945. The conference was also accompanied by a concert, *Sztetl. Życie i śmierć miasteczka* (Shtetl. The Life and Death of a Small Town) with an introduction on the Jewish community at that time.⁶

The commemoration of the victims of *Aktion Reinhardt* was in parallel with the 80th anniversary of the outbreak of the 1943 Warsaw Ghetto Uprising on 19 April 2023. To mark the anniversary, the IPN organised a conference entitled “Jewish Resistance Against the Germans in the Occupied Polish Territories,” which was held on 21 April 2023 at the Janusz Kurtyka Central History Point, which was opened by Dr. Mateusz Szpytma. The speeches delivered dealt, among others, with issues related to various forms of Jewish resistance in the Dąbrowa Coal Basin (Dr. Aleksandra Namysło), the Warta Land (Dr. Kinga Czechowska), Polesie (Prof. Grzegorz Berendt), the HASAG factories (Dr. Alicja Bartnicka) and the

⁶ See www.swietokrzyskiszetel.pl/asp/pl_start.asp?typ=13&menu=10&artykul=905&akcja=artykul, accessed 7 March 2024.

Białystok Ghetto (Dr. Paweł Kornacki). Partisan activities of Jews were discussed with the use of individual examples (Wojciech Hanus, Sebastian Piątkowski). In one of the papers, Dr. Tomasz Domański and Dr. Alicja Gontarek presented previously unknown Home Army intelligence documents concerning the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising – the largest Jewish uprising in occupied Europe.⁷

An extremely valuable event from the point of view of research commemoration of the anniversary of *Aktion Reinhardt* was the publication by the IPN of Marek Bem's monograph *SS-Sonderkommando Sobibor. Niemiecki obóz zagłady w Sobiborze 1942–1943* (SS-Sonderkommando Sobibor. The German Extermination Camp in Sobibor 1942–1943) (Warsaw, 2023). In a comprehensive study, the author (recently deceased) described the period of the camp's construction, its operation and crew, the living and working conditions of the prisoners and their uprising. In the final part of the book, Marek Bem also presented, on the one hand, the fates of the survivors and on the other, the history of attempts to hold the perpetrators of the genocide in Sobibor accountable.⁸

A noteworthy contribution of IPN researchers to Holocaust research and remembrance was their participation in the events hosted by other institutions. Dr. Aleksandra Namysło (IPN Katowice Branch), Dr. Martyna Grądzka-Rejak (IPN Historical Research Office), Marta Kupczewska and Paweł Kornacki (IPN Białystok Branch) participated in the international conference “80 lat po Aktion ‘Reinhardt’ (1942–1943): reakcje społeczne i upamiętnienie” (Eighty Years after *Aktion Reinhardt* (1942–1943). Public Reactions and Commemoration) organised on 21–22 September 2022 in Warsaw by the Emanuel Ringelblum Jewish Historical Institute. Dr. Namysło delivered a paper at the International Conference “Operation ‘Reinhardt’ and the Destruction of Polish Jews,” held on 27–29 November 2022 at the initiative of the POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews. Dr. To-

⁷ For a full video recording of the conference, see <https://ipn.gov.pl/pl/nauka/konferencje-naukowe/183358,Konferencja-naukowa-Opor-Zydow-przeciwko-Niemcom-na-okupowanych-ziemiach-polskich.html>, accessed 11 March 2024. Article on the value of historical sources produced by the Home Army counter-intelligence, concerning the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising: T. Domański, A. Gontarek, “Polskie relacje o walce w getcie. Nieznane dokumenty VI Brygady Kontrwywiadowczej Obszaru Warszawskiego Armii Krajowej o powstaniu w getcie warszawskim,” *Biuletyn IPN* 11 (2023), pp. 101–112.

⁸ See <https://ipn.gov.pl/pl/publikacje/ksiazki/194545,SS-Sonderkommando-Sobibor-Niemiecki-oboz-zagłady-w-Sobiborze-1942-1943.html>, accessed 8 March 2024.

masz Domański and Dr. Martyna Grądzka-Rejak participated in the conference “Żydowscy obywatele polskich miast i ich żydowskie dziedzictwo. Rok pamięci Żydów kieleckich” (Jewish Citizens of Polish Cities and Their Jewish Heritage. The Commemoration Year of the Jews of Kielce) organised by the National Museum in Kielce, the Jan Karski Association and the Institute of Jewish Studies at the Jagiellonian University. In addition, Dr. Grądzka-Rejak took part in the conference of the Polish Association for Jewish Studies entitled “Żydzi i judaizm we współczesnych badaniach polskich” (Jews and Judaism in Contemporary Polish Research, Cracow, 28–30 September 2022). Researchers from the Institute of National Remembrance have also dealt with Holocaust matters in scholarly articles published in research journals and collective studies.⁹

A number of popular science and educational works have been produced under the auspices of the IPN. Prof. Sebastian Piątkowski compiled a brochure entitled *Zagłada ludności żydowskiej regionu radomskiego w latach 1939–1945* (The Extermination of the Jewish Population of the Radom Region in 1939–1945),¹⁰ published by the IPN Delegation in Radom. The IPN Delegation in Kielce prepared supplements for the local press: “Życie i śmierć żydowskich Działoszyce. W 80. rocznicę *Aktion Reinhardt* – niemieckiego ludobójstwa Żydów na okupowanych ziemiach polskich”¹¹ (The Life and Death of Jewish Działoszyce. On the 80th Anniversary of *Aktion Reinhardt* – German Genocide of Jews in Occupied Polish Lands) prepared by Dr. Tomasz Domański of the IPN Delegation in Kielce and Dr. Agnieszka Dziarmaga from the Kielce Countryside Museum, and “Niemiecka *Aktion Reinhardt* w regionie kieleckim” (*Aktion Reinhardt* in the Kielce region), as well as an informative text “*Aktion Reinhardt* na okupowanych ziemiach polskich 1942–1943” (*Aktion Reinhardt* in Occupied Polish Lands 1942–1943) prepared by Dr. Tomasz Domański.¹² The IPN Rzeszów Branch produced a history supple-

⁹ These included texts in the academic journals *Polish-Jewish Studies* and *Studia Łomżyńskie*, on the przystanek.historia.pl website and in articles in the local press.

¹⁰ S. Piątkowski, *Zagłada ludności żydowskiej regionu radomskiego w latach 1939–1945*, Lublin, 2022.

¹¹ A. Dziarmaga, T. Domański, “Życie i śmierć żydowskich Działoszyce. W 80. rocznicę ‘*Aktion Reinhardt*’ – niemieckiego ludobójstwa Żydów na okupowanych ziemiach polskich,” *Echo Dnia*, 2 November 2022.

¹² Text prepared for a leaflet promoting the IPN’s participation in the 30th History Book Fair at the Royal Castle in Warsaw, 24–27 November 2022.

ment for the local press concerning Operation Reinhardt in the Rzeszów region and the eastern part of the former Lwów Voivodeship. It consisted of articles by Prof. Elżbieta Rączy (IPN Rzeszów Branch, University of Rzeszów), Dr. Waław Wierzbieniec (University of Rzeszów), Dr. Wojciech Hanus (IPN Rzeszów Branch) and Andrzej Krępa, as well as photographs and archival materials.¹³ The IPN Cracow Branch, in cooperation with local researchers and history enthusiasts, prepared four supplements for the local press. The first presented the Holocaust in Distrikt Krakau (Cracow province) against the background of events in the occupied Polish territories, while the other supplements dealt with the extermination of Jews in Tarnów, Nowy Sącz, Mszana Dolna and Podhale.¹⁴ In addition, a popular science booklet with a map of the Cracow Ghetto should be mentioned, authored by Jerzy Sokołowski and Michał Zajda from the IPN Cracow Branch that outlines the history of the ghetto and enables visitors to find its traces in contemporary Cracow. The booklet was published in Polish and English. All the publications mentioned were distributed free of charge during events organised or co-organised by the IPN.¹⁵

The Archives of the IPN Lublin Branch published on its website and its Facebook profile a selection of archival records related to *Aktion Reinhardt*. Thus, in March 2022, on the eve of the anniversary celebrations in Bełżec, documents from the IPN archival collections concerning the liquidation of the Lublin ghetto on the night of 16–17 March 1942 and the deportation of Jews to the SS-Sonderkommando Belzec, and the photographs from the ghettos in Lublin and Lwów (Lviv) and from Bełżec death camp, were published in the IPN social media. In May 2022 and October 2023 (on the 80th anniversary of the uprising in SS-Sonderkommando Sobibor), another part of the documents was to be presented, this time concerning the German extermination camp in Sobibor.

The heightened public interest, which is natural for such an anniversary, prompted IPN staff to undertake exceptionally extensive activities in the field of Holocaust historical education. With the help of a network of specialised IPN Branch National Education Offices and “History Point” educational centres and

¹³ See <https://rzeszow.ipn.gov.pl/pl8/aktualnosci/161179,Dodatek-Institut-Pamieci-Narodowej-80-lat-od-Akcji-Reinhard.html>, accessed 11 March 2024.

¹⁴ More in R. Gieroń, “Lest We Forget the Victims,” pp. 485–486.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 486.

collaborating with other institutions, often in smaller towns, IPN employees have offered a diverse array of resources to teachers, students, and individuals interested in the Holocaust and World War II issues. Notably, the discussion panels on the history of the Holocaust, organised by the IPN or with the participation of its employees, deserve special mention. Such were held in Szczecin (26 May 2022), Kielce (19 August), and Bodzentyn (16 September), and in Warsaw on 14 April 2023 during the Congress of National Remembrance organised by the IPN. During the latter event a panel was held, entitled “Walka i opór społeczności żydowskiej podczas okupacji niemieckiej w Polsce” (Struggle and Resistance of the Jewish Community During the German Occupation in Poland) and attended by Prof. Grzegorz Berendt, Dr. Sebastian Piątkowski, Dr. Alicja Gontarek and Dr. Tomasz Domański. The commemoration of the anniversary of *Aktion Reinhardt* was accompanied by the opening of thematic exhibitions. The Institute of National Remembrance promoted the so-called elementary exhibition entitled “*Aktion Reinhardt 1942–1943*” (in two language versions: Polish and English), which was prepared by Sebastian Piątkowski of the IPN Delegation in Radom. It was opened on 15 March 2022 at the Centre for the Meeting of Cultures in Lublin. This exhibition was also displayed in Radom, Piaski, Tarnów, Nowy Sącz, Bochnia, Wolbrom, Dąbrowa Tarnowska, Żabno, Jędrzejów, Chmielnik and Koźnice. Another exhibition, “Zagłada Żydów europejskich” (The Holocaust of European Jews) was displayed in Kielce, Tarnów, Lublin, Olkusz, Nowy Sącz and Żabno. The events of *Aktion Reinhardt* were also referred to in the exhibitions “Niemieckie obozy zagłady” (German Extermination Camps) and “Zagłada Romów i Sinti w Europie” (The Genocide of the Roma and Sinti in Europe). The displays were typically accompanied by a keynote speech delivered by a IPN researcher or educator, along with a commemorative ceremony that included the lighting of candles or the laying of flowers in tribute to the victims. The ceremonies at the monument to the victims of the Lublin Ghetto on 30 January 2023 in Lublin were attended by both students and government authorities (municipal and local) and on 4 August 2022 on the anniversary of the Radom Ghetto liquidation, also by representatives of the Polish Army and the Polish Territorial Defence Force.

Particular units of the IPN also prepared exhibitions on local or biographical themes. The IPN Łódź Branch employees prepared the exhibition “Zagłada

żydowskich miasteczek” (The Holocaust in Jewish Small Towns) shown in fifteen towns in the Łódź Voivodeship (Bełchatów, Kalisz, Kutno, Łask, Łowicz, Łódź, Opoczno, Ozorków, Pabianice, Piotrków Trybunalski, Radomsko, Rawa Mazowiecka, Sieradz, Skierniewice, Tomaszów Mazowiecki, Warta, Widawa, Wieluń, Zduńska Wola, Zgierz, Żychlin). It presented the fate of the Jewish communities of the pre-war Łódź Voivodeship, including the history of the ghettos in the Końskie, Piotrków, Radom and Tomaszów districts, which found themselves within the borders of the General Governorate and were liquidated in the course of *Aktion Reinhardt*. The IPN Delegation in Kielce prepared the exhibition “Nieobecni – z dziejów społeczności żydowskiej w Sandomierzu” (The Absent – from the History of the Jewish Community in Sandomierz), whereas the IPN Cracow Branch presented the exhibition “Przerwana historia. Losy krakowskich Żydów w czasie II wojny światowej” (Interrupted History. The Fate of Cracow’s Jews During World War II.) The IPN Warsaw Branch in turn prepared an open-air exhibition entitled „Prosimy Cię Boże o walkę krwawą...” (We Beg You, God, for a Battle to the Last Man Standing...), marking the 80th anniversary of the outbreak of the 1943 Warsaw Ghetto Uprising.¹⁶ The exhibition was opened on 19 April 2023 by the President of the Institute of National Remembrance, Dr. Karol Nawrocki and Dr. Tomasz Łabuszewski, Director of the IPN Warsaw Branch. In addition, the staff of the IPN Warsaw Branch National Education Office prepared a biographical elementary exhibition devoted to the eminent Jewish educator Janusz Korczak, murdered together with children under his care during *Aktion Reinhardt*.

In the area of educational activities, two competitions addressed to school pupils should be mentioned, organised by the IPN Białystok Branch: “Historia najnowsza Polski w poezji dzieci i młodzieży” (Poland’s Recent History in the Poetry of Children and Young People) and “Wiem, upamiętniam. Zagłada ludności żydowskiej województwa białostockiego w czasie II wojny światowej” (I Know and I Commemorate. The Holocaust of Jews of the Białystok Voivodeship during World War II). The result of the former is an anthology of poems on the Holocaust. As the organisers of the competition argue, the Holocaust is a topic well known

¹⁶ See <https://wystawy.ipn.gov.pl/wys/aktualne/ii-wojna-swiatowa/zaglada-zydow/192652,Prosimy-Cie-Boze-o-walke-krwawa.html>, accessed 10 March 2024.

among young people, evoking unchanging interest and compassion. Participants of the second competition were asked to create a multimedia project describing a place related to the extermination of the Jews in their region, and to design a plaque informing about the history of a specific place in the city space where the Holocaust occurred. The competition winners took part in an educational visit to remembrance sites in the former German extermination camp in Treblinka and concentration camp Stutthof. The final stage of the competition was the lighting of candles at the remembrance sites on 2 November 2022; on that day 80 years earlier, the Germans began the liquidation of smaller ghettos in Bezirk Białystok and the deportation of the Jews to the extermination camps, and on 16 August 1943 they liquidated the Białystok Ghetto, putting an end to the existence of the Jewish community of the pre-war Białystok Voivodeship. The IPN representatives along with the competition laureates lit candles and placed flowers at the remembrance sites.

The educational projects of the IPN Lublin Branch: “Na granicy dwóch światów” (On the Edge Between Two Worlds) and “Na granicy życia, śmierci i nadziei” (On the Edge Between Life, Death and Hope), in which more than a hundred school pupils took part, also encouraged their involvement in the commemoration of the anniversary of German crimes against humanity. Participants in the second project on 13 October 2023 visited Chachmei Lublin Yeshivas (The Yeshiva of the Sages of Lublin), once the largest Talmudic university in the world. They were introduced to the history of the site, the daily life of the Jewish community in Lublin prior to 1939 and its traditions and culture. The young people were then invited to join an educational walk along Lubartowska Street, which used to be the longest artery of the Jewish quarter in Lublin. Historical Jewish buildings were shown, including the former hospital, the family home of the writer Anna Langfus née Szternfinkiel, and the Chevra Nosim synagogue (now the Lublin Jewish Memorial Chamber). The participants watched also the documentary film *Lubelskie ślady akcji “Reinhardt”* (Lublin Traces of *Aktion Reinhardt*), and took part in the workshop entitled “‘Ostatni przystanek na ziemi’ – SS-Sonderkommando Sobibór w relacjach byłych więźniów” (‘Last Stop on Earth’ – SS-Sonderkommando Sobibór in the Testimonies of Former Prisoners). A similar educational walk – “Getto warszawskie. Śladami Janusza Korczaka” (The Warsaw Ghetto. In the footsteps of Janusz Korczak) – was organised on 7 June 2022 by the staff of the IPN Warsaw Branch in Warsaw.

The IPN Lublin Branch National Education Office organised two educational tours. One tour, for students, followed the route from Lublin to Włodawa and Sobibór, under the motto “Ci z Was, którzy przeżyją, niech dadzą świadectwo. Niech świat się dowie, co się tutaj działo” (Those of You Who Survive, Give Witness. Let the World Learn What Took Place Here). The other tour, for teachers, followed the route from Lublin through Wojsławice and Chełm to Sobibór, and was entitled “Śladami zagłady Żydów na Lubelszczyźnie” (Following the Traces of the Holocaust of Jews in the Lublin Region).

The remembrance of the Holocaust and *Aktion Reinhardt* was also present in the IPN activities in media, both traditional (television, radio and press) and modern (internet portals and social media). On 27 January 2022, the National Education Office of the IPN Białystok Branch in cooperation with the Museum in Tykocin, prepared a screening of a video clip about the extermination of the Jewish community in that town during World War II. It was also made available on the website and social media of the IPN Białystok Branch. Dr. Tomasz Domański of the IPN Delegation in Kielce spoke on several opportunities on Radio eM Kielce and TVP3 Kielce about the extermination of Jews – on the general (discussion of the Jewish genocide process in the General Governorate) and local contexts (the Holocaust in Kielce and Chmielnik). He also appeared as an expert in the documentary programme *Aktion Reinhardt w Chmielniku* (*Aktion Reinhardt in Chmielnik*) produced by TVP Kielce and the Świętokrzyski Sztetl association. The press assistant of the IPN Delegation in Kielce, Dariusz Skrzyniarz, prepared a series of posts for the Delegation’s Facebook profile dedicated to the victims of *Aktion Reinhardt* in the Kielce region. Internet users were able to learn about the history of the ghettos in Radom, Szydłowiec and Kielce, and about the tragedy of the Jews on the basis of a unique – on a worldwide scale – testimony of Dawid Rubinowicz, a Jewish boy from Bodzentyn near Kielce, or about the fate of Leon Szpilman, born in Ostrowiec Świętokrzyski – the brother of the famous pianist.

Further, employees of the National Education Office of the IPN Lublin Branch prepared an audio recording on the uprising in SS-Sonderkommando Sobibor (downloadable audio files are accessible on the IPN website under the *Komunikaty w 80. rocznicę* – 80th Anniversary Press Releases tab). In addition, knowledge

about the Holocaust was promoted by the IPN by means of multimedia presentations in the trains of the Łódź Agglomeration Railway.¹⁷ In addition, the Institute's employees recalled the Holocaust during many lectures, open lectures and meetings, which were also held in areas not geographically connected with *Aktion Reinhardt*, such as Gdańsk or Wejherowo. Some of those event recordings are available on the IPN TV Youtube channel. An event accompanying the commemoration of the victims of *Aktion Reinhardt* was the implementation of the IPN international educational project "Obraz Treblinka w oczach Samuela Willenberga" (The Image of Treblinka in the Eyes of Samuel Willenberg). In January 2020, as part of International Holocaust Remembrance Day, the IPN brought from Israel an exhibition of bronze sculptures by Samuel Willenberg – a testimony of a prisoner of the SS-Sonderkommando Treblinka and part of the world heritage of the Holocaust. The exhibition, supplemented by information boards in Polish, English and Hebrew, was the basis for an educational project, including a screening of the film *Treblinka's Last Witness* (in English and Polish), workshops for young people, information boards and a virtual walk through the sculpture exhibition (accessible on the website lastwitness.eu). Ada Willenberg, Samuel Willenberg's widow and Holocaust survivor, contributed to the creation of the exhibition. Between 2020 and 2023, the IPN organised the exhibition in its premises in Warsaw, Lublin, Krakow, Kielce, as well as in the Museum of the Second World War in Gdańsk, Museum of Częstochowa, the Depot History Centre in Wrocław, and in smaller towns, which were important sites of Jewish settlement in the past, such as Chmielnik and Opatów in today's Świętokrzyskie Voivodeship.

On 2 August 2023, in connection with the ceremonies commemorating the 80th anniversary of the uprising of SS-Sonderkommando Treblinka prisoners, the IPN International Cooperation Office prepared its own open-air exhibition, "Obraz Treblinka w oczach Samuela Willenberga" (The Image of Treblinka in the Eyes of Samuel Willenberg), which was displayed on the grounds of the Treblinka

¹⁷ Meanwhile, thanks to the efforts of the IPN Cracow Branch, the documentary film *Aktion Reinhardt w dystrykcie krakowskim* (Aktion Reinhardt in Distrikt Krakau), directed by Jarosław Migoń, was produced and screened in many schools in the region (R. Gieróń, "Lest We Forget the Victims," p. 485).

Museum. The anniversary celebration was attended by numerous representatives of the state authorities, many organisations, churches and religious associations from Poland and Israel. The Institute of National Remembrance was represented by Prof. Karol Polejowski, who stressed in his commemorative speech that the mission of the Institute is to preserve the memory of heroes and victims of 20th century totalitarian states. In addition, the IPN International Cooperation Office initiated the commemoration of the Peretz and Samuel Willenberg family in Warsaw. The cooperation between the IPN International Cooperation Office and Office for Commemorating Polish Struggle and Martyrdom resulted in the preparation of a commemorative plaque (in Polish, English and Hebrew), which was placed on the building on Marszałkowska Street, where Peretz Willenberg painted an image of the Merciful Jesus on the wall during the 1944 Warsaw Rising. As residents of this tenement house believe, this saved the building from German bombardment and saved the lives of the tenants.¹⁸

A discussion of the IPN contribution to the commemoration of the anniversary of *Aktion Reinhardt* would not be complete without mentioning commemorative initiatives in public spaces aimed at paying respect to the victims of the genocide caused by Germans. Commemorative or informative plaques make a lasting mark in individual and collective memory. This is why many such objects have been funded by or with the participation of the IPN. On 9 March 2022, a memorial plaque was unveiled in Mielec. The ceremony was attended by Dr. Dariusz Iwaneczko, director of the IPN Rzeszów Branch and Dr. Piotr Szopa, head of the IPN Branch Office for Commemorating Polish Struggle and Martyrdom. Director Iwaneczko read out a letter from IPN President Dr. Karol Nawrocki, who stated that “it was in Mielec that the *Aktion* began, which lasted 2 years and claimed 2 million human lives – above all, of Jews who were citizens of the Second Republic of Poland.”¹⁹ The IPN Rzeszów Branch also funded a plaque concerning *Aktion Reinhardt*, un-

¹⁸ The ceremonial unveiling of the plaque was attended, among others, by Samuel Willenberg’s widow Ada Krystyna Willenberg, Israeli Ambassador Jacov Livne, Deputy Speaker of the Polish Sejm Małgorzata Kidawa-Błońska, Chief Rabbi of Poland Michael Schudrich, representatives of the military authorities and residents of the tenement house at 60 Marszałkowska Street. The IPN was represented by IPN Deputy President Dr. Mateusz Szytma.

¹⁹ See <https://ipn.gov.pl/pl/aktualnosci/160930,Odsloniecie-pamiatkowej-tablicy-poswieconej-ofi-arom-niemieckiej-Akcji-Reinhardt-.html>, accessed 11 March 2024.

veiled on 11 August 2023 in Jasienica Rosielna.²⁰ A plaque commemorating Jewish victims in Nasielsk was unveiled on 3 December 2023 with the participation of the Director of the IPN Warsaw Branch Dr. Tomasz Łabuszewski. In cooperation with the Warsaw Ghetto Museum, a ceremonial unveiling of a memorial matzevah (tombstone) monument, dedicated to the Jews of Żyrardów and the surrounding area murdered by the German occupiers in 1940–1943, took place in Żyrardów on 21 February 2024. The Director of the IPN Office for Commemoration of Polish Struggle and Martyrdom, Adam Siwek attended the event. Another memorial matzevah was unveiled on 21 March 2024 in Łowicz with the participation of the Deputy President of the IPN, Dr. Mateusz Szpytma.²¹

Historical remembrance also includes non-material commemorations in the form of cultural events. To commemorate the heroes of the ghetto, the IPN Białystok Branch together with the Danuta Siedzikówna “Inka” Historical Association, organised the concert *Psalmy Dawidowe* (Psalms of David) on 18 August 2023 at the Ton cinema, an idea conceived by Bogdan Romaniuk of the Ulma Family Foundation “SOAR” and developed by musician, composer, multi-instrumentalist and arranger Mateusz Pospieszalski.²² In turn, in Lublin, on 19 April 2022, employees of the IPN National Education Office took part in a commemorative walk

²⁰ See <https://rzeszow.ipn.gov.pl/pl8/aktualnosci/189193,Odsloniecie-tablicy-upamietniajacej-81-rocznice-Akcji-Reinhardt-Jasienica-Rosiel.html>, accessed 11 March 2024. The Office for Commemorating Polish Struggle and Martyrdom of the IPN Cracow Branch, in collaboration with the Mayor of Pińczów, funded the plaque commemorating Jewish citizens of the Second Polish Republic murdered by the Germans. Commemorative plaques were mounted also in Zakliczyn and Maków Podhalański – in collaboration with the Mayors of these towns (R. Gieroń, “Lest We Forget the Victims,” p. 484).

²¹ See <https://ipn.gov.pl/pl/upamietnianie/biezaca-dzialalnosc-biu/182346,Odsloniecie-tablicy-poswieconej-mieszkancom-Nasielska-ktorzy-zgineli-z-rak-Sowie.html>; <https://ipn.gov.pl/pl/upamietnianie/biezaca-dzialalnosc-biu/197944,Odsloniecie-Macewy-Pamieci-Zyrardow-21-lutego-2024.html>; <https://1943.pl/artykul/osloniecie-macewy-pamieci-w-lowiczu>, accessed 12 March 2024.

²² On 12 March 2023, on the eve of the 80th anniversary of the commencement of the liquidation of the Cracow ghetto by the Germans another March of Remembrance was organised, in which a delegation of the Institute of National Remembrance took part, headed by the director of the IPN Cracow Branch, Prof. Filip Musiał. Similar in its character, the 9th March of Remembrance for the Victims of Kulmhof extermination camp in Chełmno on Ner, organised by the museum of this camp and the District Governor’s Office in Koło, took place on 21 April 2022. A special commemoration was held for the Jews deported from more than 50 ghettos established by the Germans in the pre-war Poznań, Łódź, Pomerania and Warsaw Voivodeships. The ceremonies were attended by representatives of the local administration, numerous schools, cultural institutions, military and law enforcement services, clergy, and representatives of the Wielkopolska Region MPs. The IPN Poznań Branch was represented by the Head of the Branch Historical Research Office, Prof. Konrad Białecki (Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań).

organised by the State Museum in Majdanek. It was part of the museum's project entitled "Pamiętamy... 17 marca – 19 kwietnia" (Lest We Forget... 17 March – 19 April), which aimed to show the history of Lublin (including KL Lublin) under the German occupation.

Finally, it should be mentioned that many themes concerning the Holocaust on occupied Polish lands were reflected in the educational activities conducted by the IPN in connection with the commemoration of the Day of Remembrance for Poles who Rescued Jews during World War II. The celebrations had a special dimension in 2023 due to the beatification of the Ulma family and the interest of Polish and world public opinion in the history of this family and the Polish Righteous (Rescuers). On the day of the beatification of the Ulma family, President of the Republic of Poland Andrzej Duda unveiled a matzevah, funded by the Institute of National Remembrance, in the cemetery in Jagiełła that was dedicated to the Jews murdered in Markowa, including those hidden by the Ulma family killed along with them.²³

The above brief outline highlights the significant contribution and involvement of the Institute of National Remembrance, its authorities, and staff of its various divisions and branches in promoting knowledge and fostering remembrance of Holocaust victims, particularly those of the German *Aktion Reinhardt*, most of whom were Polish citizens.

²³ See the report by Dr. Wojciech Hanus in the present volume.

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SYMPOSIUM REPORT: “*AKTION REINHARDT*
AND THE HOLOCAUST OF POLISH JEWS:
EXPLORING THE MECHANISMS AND PERPETRATORS,”
WARSAW, 9 MARCH 2022

On 9 March 2022, the Janusz Kurtyka Central “History Point” educational centre in Warsaw hosted the symposium “*Aktion ‘Reinhardt’ i zagłada polskich Żydów – w kręgu mechanizmów i sprawców*” (*Aktion Reinhardt* and the Holocaust of Polish Jews: Exploring the Mechanisms and Perpetrators).¹ The opportunity was the 80th anniversary of the start of Operation “Reinhardt” (*Aktion Reinhardt*) by the Germans,² i.e., the mass extermination of Jews residing in the General Governorate (GG). Research related to various aspects of the op-

¹ Some of the papers presented at the symposium were published in *Polish-Jewish Studies 4* (2023).

² The codename *Aktion Reinhardt* was used for the first time in June 1942. However, the deportation from the Lublin ghetto in mid-March 1942 is considered to be the beginning of this operation and the murder of 42,000 Jews from the Majdanek concentration camp, and the labour camps in Trawniki and Poniatowa on 3 and 4 November 1943, as part of the *Erntefest* (Harvest Festival) operation, is considered to be the end.

eration has been conducted for many years.³ Despite this, relatively little is known about the Holocaust perpetrators, both those who gave the orders at various levels of the German apparatus and the people who carried them out. The symposium aimed to fill this research gap, at least to some extent. The papers presented dealt with specific individuals, as well as the effectiveness of post-war efforts to punish these criminals.

The symposium was opened by IPN Deputy President Dr. Mateusz Szpytma, who outlined the chronology of Operation “Reinhardt” and went on to define it as the most genocidal action that ever took place on Polish soil. He explained that it began in March 1942 and ended in November 1943, claiming two million lives. In this context, he stated that one of the objectives of the IPN is to commemorate the victims of this genocide and appealed to local government officials and social organisations to become involved in activities related to this anniversary.

The first paper, entitled “Zagłada Żydów w ‘Dzienniku’ Hansa Franka” (The Extermination of Jews in Hans Frank’s ‘Diary’), was delivered by Dr. Paweł Kosiński from the IPN Historical Research Office. The speaker first presented a biography of the Governor-General and his unique “Diary,” comprising of forty volumes and over eleven thousand pages. There are more than three hundred passages in this source that refer to Jews or Jewish affairs, but only about thirty are related to the Holocaust. To illustrate this, Dr. Kosiński presented a few extracts from 1942 and 1943. These mentioned, among other things, the “resettlement” of Jews and their use as a workforce in the armaments industry, but not once was it mentioned what their fate was. Moreover, in the excerpts cited, there is no information about the Governor-General’s direct involvement in the Holocaust. This theme only appears in a document called Hans Frank’s “confession.” The Governor wrote it down

³ In 2022, several research conferences were specifically dedicated to *Aktion Reinhardt*. On 23 and 24 May, the conference entitled “Infrastruktura akcji ‘Reinhardt’. Miejsca, źródła i postulaty badawcze” (“The Infrastructure of *Aktion Reinhardt*. Places, Sources and Research Postulates”) was held at the Majdanek State Museum in Lublin (followed by the publication of a volume of conference proceedings: *Infrastruktura akcji „Reinhardt”*, ed. T. Kranz, Lublin, 2023) on 21 and 22 September, the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw hosted the conference, “80 lat po Aktion ‘Reinhardt’ (1942–1943): reakcje społeczne i upamiętnienie” (“80 Years after *Aktion Reinhardt* (1942–1943): Social Reactions and Commemoration”) and between 27 and 29 November the Polin Museum in Warsaw organised the international conference “Akcja ‘Reinhardt’ i zagłada Żydów polskich” (“Operation ‘Reinhardt’ and the Destruction of Polish Jews”).

shortly before his execution in 1946 and in it stated that he stood before the court as it were, in place of Hitler. He acknowledged the legitimacy of the punishment the court inflicted on him and admitted his complicity in the Holocaust and the crimes committed against other people; to which Dr. Kosiński avers:

This is the best proof that functionaries at this level, even if they were not the ones who gave orders directly concerning the extermination of the Jews, knew perfectly well that the Jews were being murdered and not transported to the East, and unfortunately continued to serve in their positions, fulfilling various functions in the apparatus of the Third Reich. As we know, there was no collective protest.⁴

The second speaker was Dr. Soraya Kuklińska from the Historical Research Office, with a paper entitled “Odilo Globocnik – zarys biografii” (Odilo Globocnik. An Outline of Biography), in which she summarised the current state of knowledge about this SS-Brigadeführer. His colleagues fondly called him ‘Globus’ (Globe); they remembered him as a good boss and a kind man who threw monthly parties for his colleagues. This stood in contrast to his activities as an officer. A native of Carinthia, Globocnik was the SS and Police Commander in the Distrikt Lublin (Lublin Province) from the autumn of 1939, where he directed many criminal activities, including organising the first labour camp in Lublin. He was possessed by the idea of Germanising the areas entrusted to him and settling Germans there. His ideas aroused Heinrich Himmler’s enormous interest – however, it was *Aktion Reinhardt* that was the most significant operation in which Globocnik participated. In November 1941, the construction of the Bełżec extermination camp began and in the following months, camps were set up at Sobibor and Treblinka. As Kuklińska emphasised, in the spring of 1942, Globocnik became particularly concerned about the low efficiency of the extermination camps under his authority and the overloading of the railway lines – factors that caused delays in carrying out the tasks assigned

⁴ A set of 33 documents from the first volume of Governor General Hans Frank’s diary of activities and three documents from the first volume of the minutes and transcripts of various meetings of the GG leadership bodies have been made available to readers in the publication *Rok 1939 w dzienniku Hansa Franka*, trans. V. Grotowicz, ed. P. Kosiński, Warsaw, 2019.

to him. Mass-murder efficiency increased with the use of Zyklon B, which in turn was applauded by the SS-Brigadeführer. For a long time, Globocnik's effectiveness was admired by the Nazis. However, in the autumn of 1943, he lost Himmler's favour and was posted to Trieste. There, he also organised the extermination of Jews.

The next paper, "Wilhelm Joseph Blum – koordynator Aktion 'Reinhardt' w dystrykcie radomskim" (Wilhelm Joseph Blum – Coordinator of *Aktion Reinhardt* in the Distrikt Radom), was delivered by Dr. Sebastian Piątkowski from the IPN Delegation in Radom. The historian stated that initially, Blum was only accused of crimes committed against Poles. His involvement in the Holocaust only came to light after his extradition to Poland in 1945, when, in response to an announcement placed in the press, Jewish witnesses began to come forward and testify before the court. Blum was born in Essen in 1890 and ended his participation in World War I as a hero. In 1930, he joined the NSDAP and the SS. In 1941, he joined Odilo Globocnik's staff and was one of the organisers of the Sobibor extermination camp. On 1 August 1942, he was sent to Radom. There, on the night of 4–5 August, as SS-Hauptsturmführer, he took part in the liquidation of the ghetto. As he already had experience from the liquidation of ghettos in the Lublin region, the operation was a training exercise for the German officers in Radom. Blum instructed them on how to subdue a crowd of many thousands of those doomed to extermination. He also participated in the liquidation of other ghettos and later supervised the labour camps in the Distrikt Radom (Radom Province). As a reward, he was promoted to the rank of SS-Sturmbannführer. According to Piątkowski:

In the hierarchy of executioners, Blum was somewhere in the middle. He was the implementer and originator of certain actions against the Jews, but if there was a need to take a weapon in his hand and participate in the liquidation of the ghetto, he did not hesitate and did it.

Blum was sentenced to death. The sentence was carried out on 10 April 1948, and his body was handed over to the Medical Academy in Lublin. Sebastian Piątkowski summarised his paper by stating that although Blum was only a small cog in the Holocaust mechanism, his life's journey confirms that the environment of the implementers of Operation "Reinhardt" consisted of just such people.

Dr. Roman Gieroń from the IPN Cracow Branch Historical Research Office, spoke of Wilhelm Haase and his trial. SS-Sturmbannführer Wilhelm vel Willi Haase was the chief of staff of the SS and Police Commander in Cracow, Julian Scherner, from 1942 to 1944. During Operation “Reinhardt” he commanded two liquidation operations in the Cracow ghetto (28 October 1942 and 13–14 March 1943), the liquidation of the so-called Jewish quarter in Bochnia, and the camp in Szebnie. Many witnesses remembered him as a “murderer in white gloves,” elegant and polite. In early 1944, Haase and Scherner were dismissed from their posts for bribery and other abuses. In 1948, a British court sentenced him to two years imprisonment for membership in the SS and NSDAP. He was extradited to Poland in 1950, that is, at a time when the Allied authorities had essentially already stopped transferring people accused of war crimes to Polish law enforcement authorities. When brought before the Voivodeship Court in Cracow, Haase defended himself in a similar way to other German criminals. He explained that he had acted on orders and did not have full knowledge of the Holocaust. He tried to convince the court that he was not a zealous Nazi party functionary. However, witness testimony left no doubt about his role in the Nazi crime machine, and Haase was sentenced to death. The sentence was carried out on 23 May 1952 in Cracow’s Montelupich Street prison.

Paweł Kornacki from the Historical Research Office, IPN Białystok Branch, delivered a paper entitled “Herbert Zimmerman, Wilhelm Altenloh, Fritz Friedel – ukarani współsprawcy Zagłady w okręgu białostockim?” (Herbert Zimmerman, Wilhelm Altenloh, Fritz Friedel – Punished Co-Perpetrators of the Holocaust in the Białystok District?) The purpose of this presentation was to present a certain paradox. On 26 October 1949, Fritz Gustaw Friedel, known as the “executioner of the Białystok ghetto,” was sentenced to death in Białystok. According to the testimony of Jewish witnesses, he was responsible for most of the crimes committed in the so-called closed Jewish quarter in Białystok. There is no doubt that he was a murderer, and the sentence passed by the court was just. Nonetheless, in the hierarchy of German security structures, Friedel occupied a subordinate position. Meanwhile, the main architects of the Holocaust in the Bezirk Bialystok (Białystok Province) both in the immediate post-war years and later remained beyond the reach of the Polish courts, as their extradition did not come to fruition. It was not

until the 1960s that the German justice system attempted to try them. The trial in Bielefeld, which dragged on for many years, finally led to the sentencing of Wilhelm Altenloh, head of the Białystok Security Police (Sicherheitspolizei) and SD, to eight years in prison, of which the criminal served only a few weeks. His successor, Herbert Zimmerman, co-accused in the same proceedings, committed suicide while in custody. In contrast, the Białystok SS and Police Commanders Werner Fromm and Otto Hellwig were not brought to justice at all. Almost no one in Białystok today recollects these functionaries that were jointly responsible for the deaths of nearly three hundred thousand people because, in the common historical consciousness, it is Friedel who personifies the German crimes committed against Jews. Correcting this picture seems essential.

This was followed by Dr. Monika Tomkiewicz, from the IPN Historical Research Office in Warsaw, who has for many years researched the Ponary crime. Dr. Tomkiewicz delivered a paper entitled “Ściganie i karanie sprawców zbrodni popełnionych na Żydach w Ponarach i innych miejscach straceń na Wileńszczyźnie” (The Prosecution and Punishment of Perpetrators of Crimes Committed against Jews in Ponary and Other Execution Sites in the Vilnius Region). Although the presentation did not deal with the acts committed during Operation “Reinhardt,” it showed – in a comparative perspective – a certain field of post-war reckoning with the perpetrators of crimes against the Jews. The speaker briefly discussed several post-war legal systems, including Soviet, Lithuanian, Polish, and German, according to which defendants were tried for crimes committed in the former Wilno Voivodeship. While the war was still raging, Allies agreed that war criminals would be tried by the courts of those countries on whose territory they committed their crimes. In the Soviet Union, various judicial bodies dealt with the prosecution of war criminals, including the perpetrators of the Ponary massacre, mainly members of the *Ypatingasis būrys* execution commando; they were sentenced to death or 25 years in a labour camp. In proceedings in Germany, the commander of this unit, SS-Hauptscharführer Martin Weiss, received a life sentence but was released after 27 years. After 1958, several proceedings were initiated by the Central Office of the Land Judicial Authorities for Investigation of National Socialist Crimes in Ludwigsburg. Three members of the *Ypatingasis būrys* were also brought before the courts in Poland. Monika Tomkiewicz discussed the interesting case of Władysław

Butkun, convicted in 1974, who was interviewed several decades after the war as a witness by prosecutor Elżbieta Rojowska from the Branch Committee for the Prosecution of Crimes against the Polish Nation (*Oddziałowa Komisja Ścigania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu*, OKŚZpNP) in Gdańsk during the investigation she was responsible for. Asked if he regretted being in the *Sonderkommando*, he stated that he apologised to those he had wronged. According to Tomkiewicz, however, this elderly man at his life's end showed little remorse. Of the other participants of the Ponary massacre, Aleksandras Lileikis, extradited from the United States in 1996, the former head of the Lithuanian *Sauguma* in the Wilno circuit, was the last to stand trial in Lithuania but died before the verdict was passed.

The last speaker, from the Warsaw Historical Research Office, Dr. Rafał Drabik, delivered the paper entitled "Udział funkcjonariuszy I Zmotoryzowanego Batalionu Żandarmerii SS w *Aktion 'Reinhardt'*" (The Participation of 1st Motorised Battalion Officers of the SS Gendarmerie in *Aktion Reinhardt*). Dr. Drabik concluded that during the German occupation of the Lublin region, pacifications took place constantly and that the historian's fundamental problem is the limited possibilities of identifying the units that took part in these crimes. Their affiliation could not be determined by Polish and Jewish witnesses who testified after the war, while what is known comes from German documentation. One of the units that participated in pacification operations here was the 1st Motorised Battalion of the SS Gendarmerie that was formed in Warsaw in June 1942, and numbered about six hundred men, seventy-five percent of whom came from Austria and twenty-five percent from Germany. It consisted of four companies, stationed at various locations and its primary role was to reinforce local German forces. During its two years of activity, battalion members took part in the pacification of around one hundred and sixty towns and other settlements. Anti-Jewish operations usually followed a similar pattern – the soldiers surrounded a given village, separated Jews from Poles and slaughtered the former. Not counting their participation in the Operation "Erntefest" and the liquidation of large ghettos, the gendarmes of the 1st Battalion are responsible for the deaths of some seven thousand Jews. The site of their first crime was the huge village of Aleksandrów. Seventeen Poles, forty-one Jews and one Soviet soldier were then killed. Another important operation mentioned by the speaker was conducted in December 1942 in the Parczew forests. At least sev-

eral dozen shelters were located there, where Jews and fugitive Soviet prisoners of war were hiding. The Germans surrounded the area and fought for several days, during which several hundred people in hiding were killed. The operation was repeated in January 1943, resulting in the deaths of at least a few dozen people. In retaliation for aiding Jews and Soviet prisoners of war, the Germans also murdered ninety-eight Polish men from the village of Białka. After the war, Germany and Austria made several attempts to bring the battalion members to justice. As a result of the proceedings, which lasted many years each, only one of them was sentenced to death, and several were imprisoned. Most of the perpetrators of the crimes remained unpunished.

The conference was summarised by Dr. Sebastian Piątkowski. He observed that, despite extensive research and a plethora of publications, historians still have a lot of work ahead of them, especially as little is known about specific criminals and units that carried out pacification operations. A biographical dictionary, including the biographies of among others, the German captains and lieutenants who commanded in the various operations and sometimes also pulled the trigger, is severely lacking. Monographs about German police units sowing terror in the occupied Polish territory are needed as well. "It is worth delving into this subject," Piątkowski argued and added, "it is worth conducting research while being aware that queries will never be closed." The various aspects of the events discussed at the symposium should be continuously explored in order to pass on the memory of the crimes and their victims to future generations.

The symposium discussed the perpetrators of the Holocaust, functionaries of the German state, and their fates. Some of them such as Frank, Blum or Friedel did not evade punishment and others, Globocnik and Zimmerman, committed suicide. Most of the functionaries of the German Reich, however, who took part in various types of crimes, remained unpunished.