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Polish Literature on Organized and Individual Help to the Jews (1945–2008)

You could be a nation so devoid of greatness that your greatest artist might be Tetmajer or Konopnicka, yet if you talked about them with the ease of people spiritually liberated, with the proportion and sobriety of a mature people, or if your words could encompass the horizon of not some poor backwater but the world . . . then even Tetmajer would be cause for pride.

(Witold Gombrowicz, *Diary*, vol. I: 1953–1956)¹

Even though Polish literature concerning the Holocaust has been discussed at length, little attention has been drawn to the way in which the phenomenon of “Polish help to the Jews”² has been described – and this despite the fact that it unquestionably was (and still is) the most important and the most characteristic motif of Polish historical narratives. I focus on all kinds of texts on the subject published between 1945 and 2008, including publications in Polish of the Jewish Historical Institute (*Żydowski Instytut Historyczny*, ŻIH) and émigré literature. I am interested not only in historical works, but in popular literature and memoirs as well. This pa-

¹ W. Gombrowicz, *Diary*, vol. I: 1953–1956 (Evanston, Ill., 1988), 6.

² S. Krakowski, “The Holocaust of Polish Jewry in Polish Historiography and Polish Émigré Circles,” in *The Historiography of the Holocaust Period. Proceedings of the Fifth Yad Vashem International Conference, March 1983*, ed. I. Gutman and G. Greif (Jerusalem, 1988); L. Dobroszycki, “Polska historiografia na temat Zagłady: przegląd literatury i próba syntezy,” in *Holocaust z perspektywy półwiecza* (Warsaw, 1994); J. Tomaszewski, “Historiografia polska o Zagładzie,” *Biuletyn Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego* (later: *ŻIH*) 2 (2000): 155–170; I. Gutman, “Stosunki polsko-żydowskie w świetle żydowskiej historiografii i literatury,” *Biuletyn ŻIH* 1 (2000): 3–11; Recently: Natalia Aleksyńska, “Historiografia na temat Zagłady i stosunków polsko-żydowskich w okresie drugiej wojny światowej,” *Zagłada Żydów. Studia i Materiały* 1 (2005): 32–51. There is no bibliography concerning this issue either; the only title of this kind is dramatically outdated: J. Gajowniczek, *Pomoc udzielana Żydom przez Polaków w okresie okupacji hitlerowskiej. Materiały do bibliografii. Piśmiennictwo polskie* (Warsaw, 1983).

per is not only a presentation of the content of the individual publications but also a critical analysis.

Immediate Post-War Years

The first debate on the attitudes and behavior of the Poles towards the Jews during the German occupation started before the end of the war and lasted, with varying intensity, until mid-1947.³ The debate was conducted under the pressure of the current political situation, of the installation of the “new regime,” repressions and increasingly acute censorship. Clearly, the dynamics of this discourse were affected by the situation of Jewish Holocaust survivors, who were trying to rebuild their post-war existence. Significantly, Jewish organizations sympathized with the “new authorities” in the ongoing political struggle. This also included the “historical policy” of the communists. The enunciation of the Central Committee of Polish Jews (*Centralny Komitet Żydów w Polsce*, CKŻP) of February 1945 contains the policy’s interpretation with regard to Polish-Jewish relations. The enunciation claims that “The rescued Jewish population will never forget the help given by friends, and sometimes by complete strangers – Poles, who were risking their own lives. Also, the Jews will never forget criminals from the National Armed Forces (*Narodowe Siły Zbrojne*, NSZ) and the Home Army (*Armia Krajowa*, AK), who – serving the Nazi bandits – took active part in murders of the defenceless Jewish population and killed Jewish partisans. They have the blood of many Jews on their conscience.”⁴ In this dichotomous vision of the occupation reality, on the one hand, there was the “progressive camp,” sensitive to the Jewish fate. On the other, there was hostile, or at best indifferent, “reaction” (the government in London and its representatives in Poland, the AK and the Catholic Church).⁵ Faced with an anti-Semitic atmosphere in the country, the Jewish milieus believed that only the communists could guarantee

³ On this discussion see D. Libionka, “Antysemityzm i Zagłada na łamach prasy w Polsce w latach 1945–1946,” *Polska 1944/45–1989. Studia i Materiały* 2 (1997): 151–190; K.P. Friedrich, “Der nationalsozialistische Judenmord in polnischen Augen: Einstellungen in der polnischen Presse 1942–1946/47” (typescript of Ph.D. dissertation, Cologne, 2003 in author’s archive); A. Żbikowski, *U genezy Jedwabnego. Żydzi na Kresach Północno-Wschodnich II Rzeczypospolitej wrzesień 1939–lipiec 1943* (Warsaw, 2006), 264–271; recently: J.T. Gross, *Fear: Anti-Semitism in Poland after Auschwitz, an essay in historical interpretation* (New York, 2006), Polish edition: *Strach. Antysemityzm w Polsce tuż po wojnie. Historia moralnej zapaści* (Cracow, 2008), 207–215.

⁴ For this and other statements see August Grabski, *Żydowski ruch kombatancki w Polsce w latach 1944–1949* (Warsaw, 2002), 21ff.

⁵ This tendency is noticeable in the guidelines of the Organizational Department of the CKŻP, containing theses for articles and speeches for the second anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising: one needs to emphasize the link between the ŻOB and the PPR, help from the GL and condemnation of the policy of the “NSZ, AK and the Delegate,” which did not really help the insurgents. “The only help was given by the fighting Polish democracy” (quoted in A. Grabski, op. cit., 196).

the safety of the Jews. However, this explanation is not sufficient. The disappointment of Jewish activists (as well as of a large number of rescued Jews) with the London government and its representatives in Poland had many causes and stemmed not so much from the pro-communist attitude, but from the war and occupation experiences. Not only did former Jewish partisans from the Lublin region assess Home Army units' behavior extremely critically, but such opinions were also voiced by Icchak Cukierman, "Antek," representative of the Jewish Fighting Organization (*Żydowska Organizacja Bojowa*, ŻOB) on the Aryan side, who kept in touch with representatives of the Polish Underground State and "Żegota" activists, as well as being a combatant in the Warsaw Uprising.⁶

But the Holocaust and the attitude of Poles toward the Jews were not particularly important from the point of view of communist propaganda. Nothing was done to publicize accounts of Poles collaborating with the occupier in persecution of the Jews (the so-called "August decree" trials); only the role of the Polish Workers' Party (*Polska Partia Robotnicza*, PPR) and the People's Guard (*Guardia Ludowa*, GL) in the action to help Jews was emphasized. Interest in this subject increased after the Cracow pogrom (11 August 1945), and especially after the Kielce pogrom (6 July 1946). The communists noticed the possibility to exploit the situation and to disgrace their political enemies, not only in Poland, but on the international scene as well. However, for the broad circle of Polish intellectuals, outbursts of anti-Jewish violence, shocking in their brutality and barbarity, called for reflection, explanation and counteraction. One of the main motifs of press debate, apart from the origin and scope of Polish anti-Semitism, was the issue of occupation. The attacks of the communist and left-wing press on the "reaction" provoked defensive actions from the opposition and Catholic milieus.⁷ An article by Jerzy Zagórski, a poet involved in action to help Jews, published in *Tygodnik Powszechny*, deserves attention as it contains a thesis concerning significant participation of the Polish right-wing milieus and the clergy in the action to save the Jews.⁸ The statement of *Tygodnik Powszechny's* editorial staff after the Kielce pogrom said that had it not been for the Polish Catholics' help "hardly any Jew in this country would have survived."⁹ Other texts published in the newspaper also presented the thesis regarding the large scale of help to the Jews by the Catholics, the [Catholic] orders and the clergy. In Stefania Skwarczyńska's article, which was the most important text published by *Tygodnik Powszechny*, reference to the recent

⁶ As early as March 1954, the former ŻOB commander appealed at a CKŻP Presidium session to demand that the Polish government fight the "AK bands" more energetically; he was found responsible for the promotion of anti-Jewish violence (quoted in K. Kersten, *Polacy - Żydzi - komunizm. Anatomia półprawd 1939-68* [Warsaw, 1992], 106).

⁷ The underground press was not interested at all in the question of Polish-Jewish relations during the German occupation.

⁸ J. Zagórski, "Żydzi, Polacy i zaminowane dusze," *Tygodnik Powszechny* 26 (1945). Zagórski and his wife were awarded the Righteous among the Nations medal in 1977.

⁹ "Zbrodnia kielecka," *Tygodnik Powszechny* 29 (1946). Similar accents can be found in the Primate August Hlond's enunciations from the same period.

past was to offset what had happened in Kielce: "One thing needs to be stated clearly, something hitherto understated, perhaps out of modesty. It will be in part our defence, but at the same time our program A small percentage of the Jews evaded the mass murder either on their own or by accident. The majority were saved by Poles – Christians, Catholics They saved the majority directly But let us not forget that this attitude deserved to be called heroic There are not many people in Poland who did not risk everything It was almost a common attitude; it cannot be attributed to any social group But in this action to save human beings, representative Catholics led the way. The [Catholic] orders, the clergy These things have not been written about. Perhaps it was because it is silly to boast about something obvious." Then, in a situation where Poland's reputation was threatened, there appeared a suggestion for the rescued Jews to publicly express their gratitude to the Poles. The response to this appeal turned out to be less than modest.¹⁰ Similar interpretations appeared in other Catholic magazines as well. Stanisław Grabski in *Tygodnik Warszawski* treated the Kielce massacre as a sensation. In his opinion, during the occupation, Poles had written a beautiful page in history by saving 100,000 Jews: "they helped only Jews in their desperate ghetto defence . . . and every Polish Jew alive today owes his life to a Polish Catholic family."¹¹ The whole Catholic press commented on this in much the same manner, i.e. emphasizing help for the Jews provided by Polish society. Catholic columnists were bound to exploit this subject further. It was difficult to refute the arguments about pre-war anti-Semitism of the Church, and the attitude of the hierarchy towards the murder in Kielce was, to say the least, ambiguous.

The texts published in left-wing literary weeklies *Odrodzenie* and *Kuźnica* (by literary critic Kazimierz Wyka, writer Jerzy Andrzejewski, poet Mieczysław Jastrun, and sociologist Stanisław Ossowski) were definitely more critical on that subject (universal solidarity with the dying Jews). For example, in Jastrun's opinion, despite the help to the Jews offered by anti-Semites, the Jews were helped mainly by "the left, the Polish democrats," who were saving "society's dignity," and by artists.¹² Generally, however, the texts concerned mainly the pre-war context and its relation to the wave of anti-Semitism at that time.

Even before the Kielce pogrom, references to organized help to the Jews appeared in *Gazeta Ludowa*, the press organ of the opposition Polish People's Party (*Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe*, PSL). Here, Władysław Bartoszewski (a recent employee of the Jewish section at the Office of the Delegate of the Government in

¹⁰ S. Skwarczyńska, "In tenebris lux," *Tygodnik Powszechny* 32 (1946); letters in ibidem 36 (1946); 10 (1947). Skwarczyńska was deported to Kazakhstan in 1940, from where she came back thanks to the intercession of Professor Juliusz Kleiner; she spent the occupation in Lvov. After the occupation started, thanks to Skwarczyńska's mediation, Kleiner left for the Lublin region, where he was hiding until 1944.

¹¹ S. Grabski, "Groźna przestroga," *Tygodnik Warszawski* 33 (1946).

¹² M. Jastrun, "Potęga ciemnoty," *Odrodzenie* 29 (1945). Polemics against this text, vital as far as the issue of help is concerned: Z. Przygórski, "Przeciw potędze ciemnoty," *Odrodzenie* 34, 22 July 1945.

Exile) published his first texts about “Żegota” (Council for Aid to Jews).¹³ The author’s starting point was the statement that both in Poland and abroad no one knew about the activity of the Polish Underground State in this field. The article described the structure of “Żegota,” including its local branches (Lvov and Cracow), listed names of its employees and discussed the main forms of activity, which were to have been supported by “dozens and hundreds of anonymous men and women,” regardless of their political views, and including People’s Guard and People’s Army members. Another text was Bartoszewski’s interview with Stefan Korboński, the former head of the Leadership of the Civil Struggle (*Kierownictwo Walki Cywilnej*). He talked about the Leadership’s “Statement” of 17 September 1942, condemning crimes against Jews issued in the name of all the political forces and Polish society, the telegrams about the extermination of the Jews and the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising sent to the Polish government in London and the fight with the blackmailers (*szmalcownicy*) carried out by the Home Army and the Delegate Office.¹⁴ Those texts caused two characteristic reactions. Bartoszewski’s recent superior, Witold Bieńkowski, pseudonyms “Kalski” and “Wencki,” head of the Jewish Affairs Section of the Delegate Office, expressed his discontent in Bolesław Piasecki’s (before the war, he was the leader of ONR-Falanga, an organization leaning towards fascism, and at that time the head of an organization that collaborated with the communists) weekly *Dziś i Jutro*. He protested against the perfunctory treatment of the Konrad Żegota Provisional Committee to Aid Jews. According to Bieńkowski it was “morally the most important and the most beautiful period,” which was a starting point in establishment of “Żegota.”¹⁵ He also claimed that the dilatoriness of international Jewish organizations was to be put down to the too small subventions for “Żegota.” He criticized the Polish Underground State (and Karboński personally) for “taking political advantage of a good, human deed, fulfilling an ordinary duty.”¹⁶ Another polemic was published in the Polish Workers’ Party’s (PPR) press organ, *Głos Ludu*.¹⁷

¹³ W. Bartoszewski, “Prawdziwe oblicze akcji ‘Żegoty’. Jak Polska Podziemna ratowała Żydów,” *Gazeta Ludowa*, 7 April 1946; idem, “Konspiracja polska alarmowała świat,” *Gazeta Ludowa*, 9 April 1946.

¹⁴ By contrast, a note published on the third anniversary of the Warsaw ghetto uprising resembled an appeal of Prime Minister Władysław Sikorski to Polish society, calling for help to the Jews, and also a statement of Prime Minister Stanisław Mikołajczyk on the first anniversary of the uprising. See (bart), “Wielki tydzień 1943 w łunie pożarów,” *Gazeta Ludowa*, 9 April 1946.

¹⁵ Bieńkowski had already talked about that and underlined the meaning of the fact that an “underground Catholic group was the first one to start actions to help the Jews”: see Jan Kalski [W. Bieńkowski], “Z czasów walki,” *Tygodnik Powszechny* 33, 4 November 1945. Some time earlier Ferdynand Arczyński commented on this subject in the organ of the pro-Communist Peasant’s Party (*Stronnictwo Ludowe*), “Z historii Rady Pomocy Żydom w Polsce,” *Dziennik Ludowy*, 6 September 1945.

¹⁶ Jan Kalski [W. Bieńkowski], “Przyczynek do wspomnień o wojennej ‘AKCJI ŻEGOTY,’” *Dziś i Jutro* 19, 19 May 1946.

¹⁷ “Jak ‘konspiracja polska alarmowała świat’. Działalność ‘Żegoty’ w świetle raportu (Zakrzewskiego),” *Głos Ludu* 10 (1946).

An anonymous journalist complained about Bartoszewski's underestimation of the role of the People's Guard/People's Army and the Polish Workers' Party. But more important was an attack on the Armed Combat Union – Home Army (ZWZ-AK). To support his argument, he used a report on the activity of the Jewish affairs section of the Home Army High Command (*Komenda Główna Armii Krajowej*, KG AK), which, together with other documents of the Home Army and the Delegate Office, fell into the hands of the communist security service.¹⁸ This document, signed by Henryk Woliński, a complete, matter-of-fact description of the relations between the Home Army, the Jewish Fighting Organization and the Jewish National Committee (*Żydowski Komitet Narodowy*, ŻKN), written in late 1944, was used to condemn the “armed and ready” Home Army. The article in *Głos Ludu* presented the canonical version, according to which, during the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, only communist formations helped the Jews, while the “London underground” remained completely passive. This interpretation was supported by Bernard Mark's article, published two days later.¹⁹ Much closer to reality were assessments of Józef Kermisz, who (apart from passivity during the fights in the ghetto) took note of different forms of help to the Jews provided by the Home Army (including transfer of weapons).²⁰

The above-mentioned Bartoszewski's text also concerned the behavior of the rural population. The author referred to Szymon Datner's words, which came from the pamphlet on the Białystok Ghetto Uprising: “in the Białystok Province, several hundred Jews, who were saved and survived, owe it most of all to the courage, the dedication and the mercy of Polish peasants.” Datner also claimed that the people who rushed to help the Jews “deserved the highest distinction, which will be awarded some day: the Order of Humanity.”²¹ But the picture of Polish-Jewish relationships in Datner's work was much more complicated. Not only did there appear references to murders of Jews committed “with German approval by local black reaction and hoodlums” in summer 1941, but it included references to saving Jews as well. Datner claimed that in the circumstances “mass action to save the Jews” was impossible, but “the percentage of rescued Jews would have certainly been higher if there had existed favorable external psychological conditions.” He attributed this state of affairs not only to the activity of the National Democrats and the National Radical Camp (*Obóz Narodowo-Radykalny*, ONR), but to the “fascist *sanacja*” as

¹⁸ For a discussion of this issue see D. Libionka, ed., “Wokół korespondencji Henryka Wolińskiego z Adolfem Bermanem,” *Zagłada Żydów. Studia i Materiały* 4 (2008): 367–391.

¹⁹ B. Mark, “W trzecią rocznicę powstania w getcie,” *Głos Ludu* 108 (1946). The same theses in: “Powstanie w getcie warszawskim,” *Głos Ludu* 109 (1946). Here, the legacy of the anti-Semitism (used by the “landowners' and capitalist” forces) in Polish society was pointed out. In both quoted issues of *Głos Ludu* there also appeared texts about help to the Jews given by the GL.

²⁰ J. Kermisz, *Powstanie w getcie warszawskim (19 IV–16 V 1943)* (Łódź, 1946), 54–55. Perhaps nothing was known about that. The first remembrance text on the issue was published in *Odrodzenie* in late 1947 (by Jacek Mackiewicz).

²¹ W. Bartoszewski, “Prawdziwe oblicze.”

well. What is more, in a note to the fragment quoted by Bartoszewski, he stated: "The names of people, one day to be written in golden letters in the history of the Polish Nation, cannot be published at the moment. They are equally persecuted by the National Armed Forces as the rescued Jews. Some of them paid for their nobleness with their own lives."²²

The fear motif of Poles who saved Jews also appeared in the text of Maria Hochberg-Mariańska, working in the Jewish Historical Commission in Cracow, who encountered the phenomenon when she prepared testimonies of rescued Jewish children for publication: "in many testimonies, there are mentioned names of people who saved Jewish children, while in others only initials were used. Why - if the surnames are known?" And she asserted: "I do not know whether any man outside Polish borders can understand and comprehend the fact that saving the life of a helpless child pursued by a criminal might bring disgrace and shame on somebody or expose them to tribulation."²³ Hochberg-Mariańska, who used Aryan papers herself and co-operated with the Cracow branch of "Żegota," did not point directly to the cause of such a state of affairs. According to the memoirs of Michał Borwicz (head of the Jewish Historical Commission in Cracow), it was a much more extensive phenomenon: "Soon after the first Jewish Historical Commission volumes (Documents of Crime and Martyrdom) were published, paradoxical visits started. People whose names were mentioned there (and those were the benefactors!) came dejected with the reproach that, by publishing their 'crime', ... we were leaving them to the revenge of their neighbors ... and not only neighbors. Then, with similar grudges, some of the saved Jews appeared, sent to us by their benefactors. Others (authors of written testimonies, which were not published for the time being) came preventively to forbid us to announce them in future ... My co-workers and I were supposed to square the circle."²⁴ But this issue cannot be examined without introducing a broader context, as not only those who helped Jews were afraid to admit their occupation-time activity. Although their motives were surely different, those were mainly underground and Home Army soldiers as well as those from other formations.²⁵

²² S. Datner, *Walka i zagłada białostockiego getta* (Łódź, 1946), 14, 22, 48. In 1946 the Białystok Jewish Committee was to have helped 180 people threatened by anti-Communist partisans. Filip Friedman reports it after an article of an American correspondent of *Forward* (texts of 20 May 1946 and 12 January 1947) J. Pata, present at the meeting on this issue (P. Friedman, *Their Brother's Keeper* [New York, 1957], 19, 186). He also gives some more examples of harassment.

²³ *Dzieci oskarżają*, ed. M. Hochberg-Mariańska and Noe Grüss (Cracow-Łódź-Warsaw, 1947), p. XXXII.

²⁴ See review of the volume *Ten jest z ojczyzny mojej*, *Kultura* 9 (1967), published in *Ten jest z ojczyzny mojej. Polacy z pomocą Żydom 1939-1945*, ed. W. Bartoszewski, Z. Lewinówna (Warsaw, 2007), 3rd edition, 784. Earlier, the same was included in Borwicz's letter to the editor of the Paris *Kultura* (*Kultura* 11 [1958]: 147).

²⁵ Faced with the problem was e.g. Zygmunt Klukowski, while gathering testimonies on partisan activity in the Zamość region - some of the recollections concerning partisan

In the immediate post-war years, memoirs concerning people of indisputable merit in helping the Jews were published in the Jewish press issued in Polish. Yet this subject awaits in-depth study,²⁶ as do publications of the All-Polish League to Combat Racism (*Ogólnopolska Liga do Walki z Rasizmem*),²⁷ established by former members of the “Żegota.” Memoirs of people active in the action to help Jews were also printed in the publications of the Jewish Historical Commission.²⁸ In particular, memoirs of the convert Dr Ludwik Hirszfeld’s about the Warsaw ghetto and hiding on the Aryan side (*The Story of One Life*) received a lot of publicity in the press. Catholic milieus referred to it quite eagerly as it provided arguments to all those who emphasized the active participation of the clergy (e.g. priests from the All Saints parish in Warsaw) and Polish Catholic society as an argument against accusations of anti-Semitism brought against the Poles. A reviewer of *Tygodnik Powszechny* asserted that the author “decidedly and categorically affirmed the positive attitude of Polish society towards the persecuted.”²⁹

All the discussions were smothered after 1948. In the 1950s the “only proper” interpretation scheme was repeated, according to which the only force rushing to help the Jews was the communists, and – with their blessing – the “patriotic part of Polish society.” As Franciszek Łęczycycki, an activist of the Warsaw branch of the Polish Workers’ Party (PPR), put it on the tenth anniversary of the ghetto uprising: “For ages [*sic!*], the Polish reaction, using anti-Semitism, helped the Nazi perpetrators in the ‘work’ to trace and uproot the Jews during the occupation. But the reaction is not the nation. The reaction persecuted and handed over to the Gestapo also Polish patriots, PPR members.” In the next part of the text is discussed the selfless help of workers, peasants and intelligentsia in the action to help the Jews, for which many of them paid with their own lives.³⁰ An anniversary issue of the scientific organ of the Jewish Historical Institute provided more materials on the communist

activity are signed with pseudonyms as their authors were pursued by the Security Office (Urząd Bezpieczeństwa, UB). Z. Klukowski, ed., “Zamojszczyzna w walce z Niemcami 1939–1944,” *Wydawnictwo materiałów do dziejów Zamojszczyzny 1939–1944*, vol. 2 (Zamość, 1946).

²⁶ B. Temkin-Bermanowa, “Pierwsza Irena. Wspomnienie o Irenie Sawickiej,” *Przełom* 10, 15 December 1947; E. Krasucki, “Kronika podchorążego Kazimierza,” *Nasze Słowo* 5, 31 August 1946; “Relacje najbliższych przyjaciół ŻOB: Ireny Adamowicz, Anny Borkowskiej, Henryka Grabowskiego,” *Mosty* 46, 19 April 1948. For other worthwhile texts see R. Auerbach, “Pani Janina z Miodowej,” *Nowe Widnokreśli* 13 (1945).

²⁷ The composition of the provisional presidium formed in April 1946 included six former “Żegota” activists: Marek Arczyński, Władysław Bartoszewski, Adolf Berman, Stanisław Dobrowolski, Tadeusz Rek, Irena Sendlerowa.

²⁸ E.g. memoirs of Tadeusz Seweryn (the head of the KWC Cracow branch) “Chleb i krew” on the Cracow Council for Aid to Jews and combatting blackmail, published in the volume *W trzecią rocznicę zagłady Żydów w Krakowie* (Cracow, 1946), 163–173.

²⁹ J. Cichocki, “Człowiek – pojęcie najtrudniejsze,” *Tygodnik Powszechny* 41 (1947).

³⁰ F. Łęczycyński, “Z moich wspomnień,” *Biuletyn ŻIH* 1 (1953): 111.

underground's help to the ŻOB.³¹ With that in mind source material was selected. At best, the activities of the Polish Underground State were not mentioned.³² This attitude found its final expression in the ghetto uprising monograph by Bernard Mark (two editions, differing in details: 1953 and 1954). The thesis was simple: only the communists offered help (charitable and supplying weapons) to the Jews. The existence of "Żegota" was noted in a few perfunctory sentences, e.g.: "Democratic activists (assembled in the Council for Aid to Jews "Żegota") also participated in the action to help and buy weapons." The Konrad Żegota Provisional Committee was not mentioned at all. Combat missions by the Home Army near the ghetto walls were treated as grass-roots activities, inspired by the communist example.³³

The image of Polish-Jewish relations presented in the émigré literature was obviously different. Both in the memoirs and in the historical studies, not much space was devoted to this issue and the prevailing theme was the help to the Jews offered by the AK and the whole Polish society.³⁴ Those texts, written at the time of a witch-hunt against independence milieus, unfortunately contained many simplifications and exaggerations. Apart from the testimonies of AK and Delegate Office members, Zofia Kossak's opinion published in a London magazine is worth mentioning. She

³¹ E.g. W. and S. Legec, "Żołnierze ŻOB-u i ich przyjaciele," *BŻIH* 1 (1953): 117-155. Among other things, the text deals with the evacuation of ŻOB fighters from the ghetto. The name of Kazik Ratajzer (Rotem) is not mentioned, although he was one of the main organizers of the action.

³² In this issue, fabricated fragments of Ludwik Landau's chronicle were published (the editor's foreword implies that Landau was murdered by the NSZ!). E.g. when Landau writes about the silence of the official (i.e. German) press on the uprising in the ghetto, the footnote tells the reader that it was "the press of the Delegate Office and of the AK." This is an obvious example of manipulation (p. 102).

³³ B. Mark, *Powstanie w getcie warszawskim na tle ruchu oporu w Polsce. Geneza i przebieg* (Warsaw, 1953); 2nd extended edition Warsaw, 1954. In the second edition more names appeared, even the names of the political parties, but the PPS-WRN was not included; the quoted fragment about "Żegota," respectively: p. 132 and 167, about "the actions by the ghetto walls": p. 231 and 268).

³⁴ Undoubtedly, the most important are still the memoirs of the AK Commander T. Bór-Komorowski *Armia Podziemna* (London, 1951) and the KWC head (S. Korboński, *W imieniu Rzeczypospolitej* [Paris, 1954]; see chapter "Żydzi pod okupacją"; thanks to the help of Polish society 300,000 Jews were to have survived). The study *Polskie Siły Zbrojne w drugiej wojnie światowej*, vol. 3: *Armia Krajowa* (London, 1950) written by the Historical Commission of the former General Staff of the Polish Armed Forces (*Komisja Historyczna b. Sztabu Głównego Polskich Sił Zbrojnych*) contains the following statement: "Polish society profoundly felt the tragedy of the Jews. Thanks to the help of Poles many Jews were saved from certain death and many Poles paid with their lives for this help" (p. 47). In another paragraph, based on an account of the Chief of Staff of the AK in Warsaw, Colonel Weber, they wrote that ŻOB had been given, apart from small arms (90 pistols), 1 LMG and 1 SMG (p. 327). The reports sent from Poland, which are now in the archives of the Polish Underground Movement (1939-1945) Study Trust (*Studium Polski Podziemnej*) in London, present a completely different picture of the attitudes of Polish society towards the Holocaust.

claimed that help to the Jews was “the most dangerous and at the same time the least rewarding conspiratorial task,” expressing the view that “but for the help and sacrifice of Poles, not a single Jew would be alive on Polish ground. Obviously, vultures using the Jewish tragedy appeared as well, but the entire society risked their own and their families’ lives selflessly and out of pure love of their neighbor. Characteristically, those who called most vehemently for ruthless struggle against the Jews before the war led the way in aid and there was a widely popular saying: ‘Each Pole in the General Government has his own Jew, apart from national democrats and national radicals, who have two Jews.’”³⁵ This description varies considerably from Kossak’s text of 1942–1943 published in the underground monthly *Prawda*.

Toward a Synthesis

Following the changes of the political climate during the de-Stalinization period after October 1956, the press published texts on the military aspects of help given to the Jews by the AK, especially the armed operations of the Warsaw Kedyw (*Kierownictwo Dywersji Komendy Głównej Armii Krajowej*, Directorate of Sabotage and Diversion of Home Army High Command) near the ghetto walls and actions to liquidate the blackmailers (*szmalcownicy*).³⁶ It was crucial to restore appropriate proportions in dealing with these matters in the context of the above described manipulations. Unfortunately, at that time, former members of small underground organizations started to trumpet their “services,” while they had little to do with helping the Jews.³⁷

The issues of Poles’ help to the Jews during the occupation were discussed differently in the monthly *Kultura* published in Paris. A distinguished émigré intellectual, Konstanty A. Jeleński, in reply to a survey on Polish anti-Semitism conducted in September 1956, wrote: “The Polish liberal and Christian [faced by the anti-Semitism that survived the Holocaust – D.L.] clutches as if at straws the well-known episodes of rescue of Jewish friends or Jewish children by Poles who were risking their lives. But those exceptional episodes (their rarity is demonstrated in the number of Jews who survived the war) do not compensate for the passive responsibility that falls on the Polish nation for the destruction of three million people.” Jeleński, who was abroad during the occupation, knew this from “the sto-

³⁵ Z. Kossak, “Krzywdząca ocena,” *Życie* 21–22, (1950), London, quoted in: eadem, *W Polsce podziemnej. Wybrane pisma dotyczące lat 1939–1944*, ed. S. Jończyk, M. Pałaszewska (Warsaw, 1999), 354. Zofia Kossak left Poland in August 1945. It was the only public voice on the issue. She wrote a testimony on the subject in 1954, which was published in *Tygodnik Powszechny* as late as 1995.

³⁶ E.g. W. Bartoszewski, “Likwidacja konfidenta Karcza,” *Stolica* 49, 2 December 1956; idem, “Akcja solidarnościowa pod murami getta,” *Stolica* 5, 3 February 1957; “Gdy getto chwyciło za broń... Zapomniane akcje AK,” *Świat* 16 (1957).

³⁷ On this issue, see D. Libionka, “Apocrypha from the History of the Jewish Military Union and its Authors,” *Holocaust Studies and Materials* 1 (2008): 147–176.

ries of Polish and Jewish eyewitnesses.”³⁸ Maria Czapska’s voice sounded equally poignant: “During the destruction of the Jews, Polish seminaries and monasteries gave many of them a safe place to hide. Several dozen thousand Jews survived the Nazi years in Poland; how many of them owe their survival to the Poles who risked their lives to save the Jews? How many paid their protectors and for their hideouts? And how many died because of Polish informers and blackmailers? No one knows that and it cannot be estimated anyhow . . . the blood of those murdered weighs on Catholic Poland’s conscience for the lack of love that transforms the human soul, for the indifference of some and the involvement in crimes by others.”³⁹ But such voices were exceptional – the vast majority of those questioned (in People’s Poland and abroad) in the survey expressed critical opinions,⁴⁰ and what is more important, similar attitudes towards the problem did not reappear until the 1980s.

In 1958 the question of Polish military help to the ghetto was raised once more by Bernard Mark in the new edition of his monograph on the ghetto uprising. In the self-critique he gave in the preface, he dissociated himself from many mistakes and misrepresentations he made under the influence of the “spirit of the times.” He admitted that he “treated those forces of Underground Poland which helped, militarily and morally, the fighting ghetto with some bias” and that he “insufficiently showed the part of Warsaw activists and soldiers of the AK, SOB [*Socjalistyczna Organizacja Bojowa*, Socialist Combat Organization] and democratic groups in the aid action and solidarity speeches by the ghetto walls.” He also admitted that he had blurred the differences between Polish political forces in their attitudes towards the Jews. This edition included discussion of the activity of the Jewish affairs section in the AK High Command and the co-operation between the ŻOB-ŻKN and the Polish Underground State.⁴¹

In the second half of the 1950s, in *Biuletyn ŻIH* an important source material was printed, dealing with the help issue from a broader perspective. I have in mind the fragments of Basia Berman’s⁴² diary as well as a fragment of Emanuel Ringelblum’s essay *Stosunki polsko-żydowskie w czasie drugiej wojny światowej* [*Polish-Jewish Relations during the Second World War*], which contained his analysis and reflection on organized and individual aid.⁴³ Still there were no new, comprehensive perspectives

³⁸ K.A. Jeleński, “Od endeków do stalinistów,” *Kultura* 9 (1956). The survey was published in the same issue.

³⁹ Quoted in: “Problem antysemityzmu” (editorial), *Kultura* 1-2 (1957). The same motif appeared in Czapska’s polemics with Jerzy Turowicz, editor-in-chief of *Tygodnik Powszechny* (“W odpowiedzi redaktorowi Turowiczowi,” *Kultura* 6 [1957]).

⁴⁰ The most interesting polemic was written by a socialist, Adam Uziębło.

⁴¹ B. Mark, *Walka i zagłada warszawskiego getta* (Warsaw, 1959), 9-10.

⁴² B. Temkin-Bermanowa, “Akcja pomocy Żydom w okresie okupacji hitlerowskiej,” *Biuletyn ŻIH* 22 (1957): 61-84.

⁴³ E. Ringelblum, “Stosunki polsko-żydowskie,” *Biuletyn ŻIH* 28 (1958), 29-31 (1959) (English language edition: *Polish-Jewish Relations during the Second World War*, ed. J. Kermish and S. Krakowski [Evanston, Ill., 1974]).

of the subject. The first text of that kind, by ŻIH historians Tatiana Berenstein and Adam Rutkowski (“O ratownictwie Żydów przez Polaków w okresie okupacji hitlerowskiej”), was published in 1960.⁴⁴ This issue was discussed against a background of comparison: the inspiration and the point of reference was beyond doubt, apart from Ringelblum’s essay, the pioneering work of Philip Friedman.⁴⁵ Much space was devoted to the situation in the Netherlands, France, Denmark and Bulgaria, especially to protests against anti-Jewish legislation. It was pointed out that rescuing Jews in the individual states depended on the scale of pre-war anti-Semitism, as well as the intensity of terror in each of the occupied countries. The most intensive anti-Semitism was present in Poland and in the occupied part of the USSR.

In Poland, according to the authors, strong pre-war anti-Semitism was exploited by the occupier, who won “many active and passive supporters” especially in the country. On the one hand, there was a threat of draconian punishments hovering over the Poles, but on the other, they were induced to co-operate by various forms of reward, and later, also anti-communist propaganda. The conditions for hiding Jews, both objective (German terror, anti-Polish activities of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army in Volhynia, deportation action in the Zamość area and high numbers of Volksdeutsche) and subjective (pre-war anti-Semitism or the plague of blackmailers and informers), were recognized as “generally adverse.” In spite of that, the number of those helping (from different milieus) was relatively large. Help from the Delegate Office, to a considerable extent, was perceived as motivated by the political context. The left-wing parties (the Polish Workers’ Party, the Polish Socialist Party – Freedom Equality Independence, Polish Socialists and the Polish Socialist Workers’ Party), workers and the intelligentsia were considered to have been most sensitive to the Jewish fate.⁴⁶ The Catholic Church, despite its many individual actions (e.g. rescuing children), partly motivated by missionary activity “did not make

⁴⁴ T. Berenstein, A. Rutkowski, “O ratownictwie Żydów przez Polaków w okresie okupacji hitlerowskiej,” *Biuletyn ŻIH* 35 (1960): 3–46. In the texts by the two authors published earlier in *Biuletyn ŻIH*, which dealt with the extermination of Jews in the individual districts, this issue was not really distinguished. We cannot find much about the help to the Jews in Artur Eisenbach’s monograph. Only general opinions on the GL and the AK actions by the ghetto walls are included. We also find the motif borrowed from Mark’s book: the Soviet raid on Warsaw on the night of 13/14 May 1943 should be linked with the PPR initiative. But there is no chapter concerning the attitudes and the behavior of the Polish population with respect to the extermination of the Jews (see A. Eisenbach, *Hitlerowska polityka zagłady Żydów* [Warsaw, 1961], 509–510).

⁴⁵ His work, already quoted, about help to the Jews in occupied Europe (*Their Brother’s Keeper*) was published in New York in 1957 (the chapter concerning Poland was entitled “For your freedom as well as ours”). Friedman claims that in occupied Poland, unlike Western Europe, opposition to anti-Semitism was not one of the elements of patriotism (*ibidem*, 111). However, Friedman’s text has a highly illustrative character. There are not many analyses. In the footnotes to Berenstein’s and Rutkowski’s text there also appear other foreign publications.

⁴⁶ Friedman saw it differently. He thought that GL actions by the ghetto wall had little importance, although he mentioned the weapons supplied to the ghetto (*ibidem*, 128).

the grade.” This is basically a repetition of Ringelblum’s thesis. Generally however, help from the Poles was to be disinterested or included reimbursement of the costs incurred. Armed help for the ghettos and Jewish partisan units was considered an exceptional occurrence. But one must note a puzzling fact: absolute omission of the “Żegota.” The source material, on whose basis the above theses were formulated, included memoirs, to a large extent testimonies from the Archive of the Jewish Historical Institute given immediately after the war. As for the materials of the Polish underground, only press publications and some of the documents from the so-called “Antyk” archive were used.

Adolf Eichmann’s trial⁴⁷ in Jerusalem and the twentieth anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising in April 1963 enhanced interest in Holocaust issues all over Europe. Among the publications released on various anniversaries in the People’s Republic of Poland, new texts of ŻIH historians should be mentioned in the first place. The first is another work of Bernard Mark about the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, which brought many interesting documents on the co-operation of the Polish underground, the ŻOB and the ŻZW (*Żydowski Związek Wojskowy*, Jewish Military Union). As for the Jewish military organizations, the author uncritically adopted “testimonies” of the alleged “brothers in arms” – Zionists-Revisionists from the Korpus Bezpieczeństwa (Security Corps) including Henryk Iwański as the leader.⁴⁸ As a matter of fact, the book met with poor reviews – both in Poland and abroad.⁴⁹ From the point of view of the text’s subject matter, the work by Tatiana Berenstein and Adam Rutkowski was more important. It was an attempt to comprehensively present the problem of Polish help.⁵⁰ The differences between the text by the same authors published three years earlier in *Biuletyn ŻIH* and the book edition of their

⁴⁷ Kazimierz Kąkol’s reportage about the process is worth attention, especially the references to Poles’ attitudes towards the Jews in the text. Cywia Lubetkin, Antek Cukierman, Rachela Auerbach, Aba Kowner, Adolf Berman and others spoke about Polish help. There were also references to crimes against Jews committed by “people who considered themselves Poles . . . NSZ terrorists, marauders and bandits.” Kąkol did not deny these facts, but he claimed that “after the war, we treated many of those brutes with maximum severity of law.” In Kąkol’s book no “anti-Polish” scheming was mentioned, which is surprising, especially as during that period a real obsession about it started (K. Kąkol, *Adolfa Eichmanna droga do Bejt Jam* [Warsaw, 1962], 275–277).

⁴⁸ B. Mark, *Powstanie w getcie warszawskim. Nowe uzupełnione wydanie i zbiór dokumentów* (Warsaw, 1963). Small edition – 4,000 copies. In the main text, the head of the Jewish Section of the KG AK, Henryk Woliński, was mentioned once, and Iwański six times.

⁴⁹ Especially in the MSW circles: this concerned some unpublished documents, and increasing criticism of the version promoted by the communists. Mark in his private conversations, at least according to the SB, promoted the view of a lesser importance of help to the Jews given by the communists. On the other hand, Radio Free Europe accused the author of numerous manipulations and unjust charges against the AK, the Delegate Office and the government (program of 6 May 1964).

⁵⁰ T. Berenstein and A. Rutkowski, *Pomoc Żydom w Polsce 1939–1945* (Warsaw, 1963). Circulation: 8,000 copies.

work appear significant. The comparative context almost completely disappeared and the judgements regarding the range of pre-war anti-Semitism in Poland and its results were considerably alleviated. It was also pointed out that the scholars poorly familiarized themselves with the subject and the source basis was random and fragmentary, which caused difficulties in forming general judgements. The book was based on Jewish testimonies, chronicle notes and memoirs, materials of the Main Commission to Investigate Nazi Crimes in Poland (*Główna Komisja Badania Zbrodni Hitlerowskich w Polsce*, GKBZHWP), and some materials of the Polish underground (in the archives of the Historical Institute of the Polish United Workers' Party), "Żegota's" files and underground press among them. In the introduction, the brutal character of German occupation was indicated. The factors hindering Polish-Jewish solidarity also included anti-Semitism, fuelled by the occupying German authorities and the policy of reward and punishment. Three short chapters constituted the fundamental part of the text: "Help During the Deportation and Extermination," "The Attitude of the Polish Resistance Movement towards the Jews" and the chapter about "Żegota." Yet the text lacked more profound analyses of the phenomena in question. A brief characterization of each topic was illustrated by several or more examples. The tempered opinion on the attitude of the Catholic Church is noticeable. The authors describe the role of each professional group in the aid action (workers, railwaymen, the intelligentsia, welfare workers, the clergy – not only Catholic). The conditions in the country were treated even more vaguely. It also included estimates concerning the scale of repressions in the provinces as a result of help to the Jews – 200 people were murdered from September 1942 to May 1944. According to the prevailing tendency, communists' merits were emphasized at the expense of the pro-independence underground's. In the sections devoted to "Żegota," there had to appear a statement that organized help was also provided by the PPR and GL, which were not members of the Council. Clearly some of the sources were treated selectively (the published *Stosunki polsko-żydowskie* by Ringelblum and Zygmunt Klukowski's diaries, as well as the manuscripts of Aurelia Wyleżyńska and Halina Krahleska, still in longhand) and only fragments of them referring to the subject of help were quoted. In general, there was no motif of danger looming over the rescuers and the rescued in the country. But the fight with blackmail carried out by "Żegota" and the activity of the Civil Special Courts (*Cywilne Sądy Specjalne*) were mentioned. Finally, the authors emphasized that hiding Jews was a complex activity, spread over time and dangerous, dependent on many factors and frequently accidental, whilst the danger was not only caused by the occupier, but also by Polish blackmailers (*szmalcownicy*). Against this background the figures of helping Poles, so valued by Ringelblum, the "modest and silent heroes," seem much brighter. The fragments of testimonies and memoirs from the ŻIH archives were printed in the appendix. At the same time, English, German and French versions of the book were prepared.⁵¹

⁵¹ All the foreign issues were published by the Polonia Publishing House (T. Berenstein and A. Rutkowski, *Assistance to the Jews in Poland 1939-1945; Aide aux Juifs en Pologne*

The act symbolising a definite change in the attitude of the Peoples' Republic of Poland towards the issue of helping the Jews was the decoration of several Poles during the anniversary celebration in April 1963. Kazimierz Rusinek, the Secretary General of the Society of Fighters for Freedom and Democracy (*Związek Bojowników o Wolność i Demokrację*, ZBoWiD), said in his speech during the ceremony: "The names of the communists and socialists, the names of the Polish patriots, including Polish priests, symbolize the unity of the fight and symbolize the nobleness of hearts, which was expressed in helping the fighting Jews."⁵² High state decorations were granted to Zofia Kossak, a few former officers of the AK (including Zbigniew Lewandowski, who co-ordinated "solidarity actions" by the ghetto walls) and the activists of different political parties.⁵³ The candidates for decorations were selected by various institutions, including the ŻIH.⁵⁴

In this context, interesting is the attitude of PRL (*Polska Rzeczpospolita Ludowa*, People's Republic of Poland) authorities towards the Righteous among the Nations medals granted to Polish citizens by Yad Vashem.⁵⁵ The first several Poles were awarded the medal in 1964. But the decoration of the Righteous took place only two years later in the Israeli Embassy in Warsaw. Only the *Polityka* weekly reported this fact (although after *The New York Times*!), but failed to publish the names of the awarded (including Irena Sendlerowa and Władysław Bartoszewski), except Henryk Iwański, who was being built up as a national hero.⁵⁶ The Polish press, following directives from the top, did not emphasize that the Poles were awarded by a state with which Poland had increasingly tense relations. It was agreed with the Israeli ambassador that the decoration ceremony would pass "without any publicity or promotion."⁵⁷

1939–1945; *Hilfsaktion für Juden in Polen 1939–1945* [Warsaw, 1963]). When compared to the original edition, the source appendix was deleted.

⁵² Rusinek's speech "Przypomnienie i ostrzeżenie," *Życie Warszawy* 93, 18 April 1963.

⁵³ "XX rocznica powstania w getcie. Odznaczenia za pomoc i udział w walkach," *Życie Warszawy* 93, 19 April 1963, 1, 5. Even the daily *Trybuna Ludu* wrote at length about "Żegota" and AK members who opposed "the most reactionary factions of the London underground," and even about some distinguished Catholic clergymen (16 April 1963).

⁵⁴ The last word belonged to the ZBoWiD. On 19 April 1963, Bernard Mark (as noted by the SB by means of a bug installed in his office) complained to one of his guests that the Polish Council of State (*Rada Państwa*) rejected 10 of the most important people deserving the award (Archiwum Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej [Archive of the Institute of National Remembrance], later: AIPN, 01224/993, microfilm 11922/2, microfiche 9, frame D8). Among them might have been the priests Jan Zieja and Antoni Czarnecki from the All Saints parish.

⁵⁵ From the SB point of view, the Israeli embassy in Warsaw was treated as a sabotage institution, and those who contacted it were kept under surveillance [see W. Bartoszewski, *Moja Jerozolima. Mój Izrael* (Warsaw, 2004), 44–46].

⁵⁶ "Dwunastu bohaterów z Warszawy," *Polityka* 47 (1966). The *Polityka* weekly also published an interview with one of the awarded, which later led to the paper's profuse apologies during the "anti-Zionist campaign."

⁵⁷ B. Szaynok, *Z historią i Moskwą w tle Polska a Izrael 1944–1968* (Warsaw, 2007), 366.

He is from my Homeland

On 24 March 1963, an appeal to send materials (testimonies and documents) concerning help to the Jews, signed by the indefatigable Bartoszewski, was published in *Tygodnik Powszechny*. Its title (“Ten jest z ojczyzny mojej” – “He is from my Homeland”) referred to a famous poem by Antoni Słonimski. The documentation was to counterbalance unjust and unfair generalizations of Poland’s image that were appearing abroad.⁵⁸ It does not mean, however, that this kind of viewpoint was motivated only by the political correctness of that time. The sense of danger then was common to Poles living in their country as well as for émigrés.⁵⁹

Before Bartoszewski’s appeal was published, it was subject to bizarre intervention of the censors. A paragraph concerning “Żegota” activity as part of the Polish Underground State subordinated to General Władysław Sikorski’s government was deleted, as well as a sentence about cases when fervent anti-Semites rescued Jews. This operation was, it seems, an attempt to counteract the impression that the role of the communists (who were not mentioned in the text at all!) was disproportionate to the importance of other groups (socialists, democrats, Catholics and peasant activists). It is more difficult to understand the reasons behind the deletion of a paragraph concerning editorial issues, including the assurance of “respect of potential reservations concerning, e.g. not revealing certain surnames.”⁶⁰ As a matter of fact, Bartoszewski felt anxious to the very end that his action could be torpedoed at the last moment.⁶¹ In reply to the appeal numerous letters came to *Tygodnik Powszech-*

⁵⁸ “The issue of Polish-Jewish relations during the occupation is one of those historical problems around which a great deal of misunderstanding has grown up, especially abroad. In recent years, we have witnessed some unfair speeches and publications in the West, which undoubtedly influenced the formation of completely incorrect opinions about the state of affairs in Poland during 1939–1944. . . . The well-known books of the American writer Leon Uris, ‘Exodus’ and ‘Mila 18’, certain statements published in magazines in America, Great Britain and West Germany, and even some television programs in the US (in principle painting a favorable picture of those who helped the Jews in occupied Europe) – they all ignore the participation of Poles in the action, recalling at the same time that it was in our country that the death camps were located.” *Tygodnik Powszechny* 12 (1963).

⁵⁹ In May 1963, Bartoszewski’s appeal was printed, among other papers, in the Paris *Kultura*. In its circles, people also considered undertaking some strategies aimed at overcoming the negative image of Poland in the US (“Apel Władysława Bartoszewskiego,” *Kultura* 5 [1963]: 93–95). Among the initiators of the action there was Aleksander Hertz, an outstanding sociologist living in the US. More on the issue in the author’s article: *Stosunki polsko-żydowskie z perspektywy paryskiej “Kultury”* (forthcoming).

⁶⁰ The original text of the appeal with censorship interferences marked, see *Ten jest z ojczyzny mojej* (3rd edition), pp. XXII–XXIII. It also includes information on the origins of the volume (W. Bartoszewski interview with M. Turski, pp. VII–XIX).

⁶¹ On 18 March 1963, Bartoszewski (as revealed by the wire tap from the ŻIH head office) gave him the first proof of the article-survey. If the text had been banned, the first proof was to remain in the ŻIH (see AIPN, 01224/993, microfilm 11922/2, microfiche 10, frames A10–A12).

ny, with some of them being published as they arrived. In spring 1967, following strenuous efforts, a small edition for PRL standards (7,000 copies) of the volume *Ten jest z ojczyzny mojej. Polacy z pomocą Żydom 1939–1945* was issued by the Znak publishing house.⁶² It opened with Bartoszewski's essay "Po obu stronach muru" (On both sides of the wall), which dealt mainly with organized help to the Jews and the activity of the Polish Underground State.⁶³ As for the factual aspect, it did not bring any new findings, but it systematized the described issues. Crucial theses were included there as well. One of them was a statement about the relaxation of pre-war anti-Semitism during the German occupation: "the community of fate of the persecuted, the suffering and the fighting people contributed to the arousal of a sense of solidarity and the will to help the dying." It meant "neither negation nor concealment of the harm done to the Jews during the occupation in Poland by those Poles who were on the margins of their own community and collaborated with the occupier against the Jews as well as the Christians who were helping them" (actually, this sentence had already appeared in the appeal published in *Tygodnik Powszechny*). But the authors clearly emphasized that their present publication did not aspire to describe the overall character of Polish-Jewish relations. The editors made a reservation that while editing the materials for the publication, they did not delete "all the references to blackmail, denunciations and similar dark aspects of life under the occupation ... we remembered that such cases are not as such a part of the issue that we dealt with."⁶⁴ They also did not aspire to exhaust the topic, as the presented material was primarily illustrative: "we did not feel entitled to carry out an analysis from the sociological, or any other, angle; nor did we aim to draw generalized conclusions."⁶⁵

The principal part of the volume consisted of about 200 statements (testimonies, memoirs, scientific and press texts or their fragments). Some of them were reprints from Polish and Jewish press (published in Polish in the immediate post-war years), foreign press (including Israeli) and *Biuletyn ŻIH*; others came as answers to the

⁶² *Ten jest z ojczyzny mojej. Polacy z pomocą Żydom 1939–1945*, ed. W. Bartoszewski and Z. Lewinówna (Cracow, 1966), 1st edition. Despite the year of publication given (1966), printing was not finished until April 1967.

⁶³ For a discussion of this issue see also Bartoszewski's article "Żegota - zapomniana karta z dziejów podziemia," *Tygodnik Powszechny* 18 (1960).

⁶⁴ Sometimes the editorial effort was quite far-fetched. For example the shocking fragments from Krystyna Modrzewska's memoirs about the local population's participation in capturing Jews, which the author observed from a close distance as she worked in a district office near Lublin, were deleted. On the other hand, a story of a Jewish boy hidden by a "blue" policeman was left untouched. For Modrzewska's text, also in an "edited" version, see *Biuletyn ŻIH* 31–32 (1959). The original is in ŻIH archives, diaries collection (302). For more on censorship interventions into the text see J. Leociak, "Censorship Keeping Guard Over the Church. Krystyna Modrzewska's Censored Memoir," *Holocaust Studies and Materials* 2 (2010): 298–311].

⁶⁵ *Ten jest z Ojczyzny mojej* (1st edition), 69, 73–74.

survey.⁶⁶ Ten testimonies were signed with initials, with some individual accounts signed with surnames. According to the editors' interpretation, the decision to remain anonymous stemmed from "a psychological inhibition to promote one's services." The volume contained the accounts concerning organized help (e.g. Adolf Berman, Irena Sendlerowa,⁶⁷ Stefan Sendłak and members of the AK, GL/AL and other units), but – most of all – the statements of those living in the Polish provinces. A substantial part comprised materials concerning the attitudes of the Catholic clergy. The accounts contained an enormous amount of knowledge about the conditions of hideouts in the towns and in the country, the dangers, the motives of the rescuers and of the helpers. Whenever possible, the accounts were briefly annotated with footnotes. Unfortunately, not only did some of the materials contain misinformation, but they contained evident forgery as well. This was the case with the account concerning the multi-faceted help to the Jews given by a clandestine organization, the Security Corps (*Korpus Bezpieczeństwa*, KB), and especially by the aforementioned "Major" Iwański. Eventually, in some works (but not in texts written by W. Bartoszewski!), the "achievement" of the KB, concerning the amount of weapons delivered to the ghetto or participation in military activities, began to obscure the actions of both the AK and the GL.⁶⁸ The state of knowledge at that time made it impossible to verify those revelations critically. An integral part of the volume was the fragments regarding the works of Jewish historians (e.g. Ringelblum or Friedman) and fragments of memoirs (e.g. Julian Aleksandrowicz, Władysław Smólski, Basia Temkin-Bermanowa)⁶⁹ or press articles. The third part of the volume featured a selection of documents from the archives in Poland and the Polish Underground Movement Study Trust in London, as well as W. Bartoszewski's private collection.

The importance of the publication went far beyond it being a collection of several hundred known and unknown sources. The volume was warmly welcomed in Poland and by the émigré milieu (reviews were published in the Paris *Kultura*, *Tygodnik Powszechny*, *Polityka*, *Znak*, *Argumenty*, and *Kwartalnik Historyczny*). Michał Borwicz, writing in *Kultura* about the one-sidedness of the subject's handling, emphasized the values of the book, including the diversity of viewpoints presented: "we see those events through the eyes of many different rescued people, as well as their different protectors: soldiers and help organizers, participants, chroniclers and even journalists." On the other hand, Jerzy Turowicz, apparently against Bartoszewski's intention, treated the volume as an interpretation of Polish-Jewish relations: "the book ... proves once more that the number of Poles collaborating with the Germans was (in comparison with analogical situations in Western countries) ...

⁶⁶ The materials, omitted for different reasons, were discussed in the appendix (pp. 573–582).

⁶⁷ Reprint from *Biuletyn ŻIH* 45–46 (1963): 234–247.

⁶⁸ On this issue, see D. Libionka, "Apocrypha from the History of the Jewish Military Union and its Authors," *Holocaust Studies and Materials* 1 (2008): 147–176..

⁶⁹ J. Aleksandrowicz, *Dziennik doktora Twardego* (Cracow, 1962).

very scarce and that those people were automatically excluded from Polish society and severely punished by the organs of the Polish underground.” And further on: “If I were to say what the highest value of the book is it would be what it says about the Polish nation. About the people among whom we live, who we constantly meet in the streets of our towns, on trams, in the cafés and offices. Despite the well-known faults and vices, we are a great nation, capable of almost superhuman deeds in exceptional situations.”⁷⁰

Approximately at the same time, preliminary estimations, prepared by Szymon Datner, concerning the scale of repression of help to the Jews, were published in the organ of the Main Commission to Investigate Nazi Crimes in Poland (GKBZHWP). The estimations were made on the basis of the “Questionnaires on mass executions and mass graves” prepared soon after the war. Datner presented 38 cases of repression, in which 97 Poles died between June 1942 and December 1944. But the data were not verified against other sources and the context and circumstances of the described occurrences were not indicated. Instead, the following declaration was added: “The cognitive, moral and political significance of the help given to those who had been sentenced to death by people who paid the highest stake [*sic!*] – their own lives – is too obvious to just signal the phenomenon. Those studies should be and will be continued.” In no way less important was the presented estimation of the 80–100,000 Jews saved in Poland, a great majority of whom were said to owe their lives to the “help of hundreds of thousands of Poles.”⁷¹

The March Campaign: “the Merciful Pole” and “the Ungrateful Jew”

The debate on Polish help to the Jews during World War II entered a new stage with the anti-Semitic campaign unleashed in March 1968. Yet all the important threads of the campaign were already present in the infamous publication of Tadeusz Walichnowski’s *Izrael i RFN* published in October 1967. The main thesis of the author, a Ministry of the Interior officer with “scientific aspirations,” and his employers was outlined in the chapter entitled “Antypolska akcja ruchu syjonistycznego jako część składowa kampanii rehabilitowania RFN i kampanii antykomunistycznej” [Anti-Polish Action of the Zionist Movement as an Element of the Campaign To Rehabilitate the German Federal Republic and the Anti-Communist Campaign]. The Poles did what was to be done: “Despite the dedicated activity, full of sacrifice, of members of the Polish resistance movement engaged in the rescue of Jews by a part of the Polish population,” the Nazis murdered in Poland 2.5 million Poles of Jewish descent and over half a million foreign Jews. The leitmotiv of the author’s line of argument was accusing the “Zionist politicians” of striving to “overcome the Nazi past in a direction convenient for the circles governing in Bonn” and slandering the

⁷⁰ Both reviews were published in *Ten jest z ojczyzny mojej* (Warsaw, 2007), 783–789.

⁷¹ S. Datner, “Niektóre dane o zbrodniach hitlerowskich na Polakach ratujących Żydów,” *Biuletyn Głównej Komisji Badania Zbrodni Hitlerowskich w Polsce* 16 (1967): 158–170.

People's [Republic of] Poland and the Poles.⁷² Walichnowski presented a new stage of party patriotism: not only did he rebuke charges levelled at Polish society, but he stood in defence of the Polish Underground State and the government in London as well. By doing so, he referred to the volume *Ten jest z ojczyzny mojej* and also to the émigré press.

It was a harbinger of instrumental treatment of historical materials in the following months. The theme of Polish help turned out to be extremely popular in terms of propaganda. In his speech of 19 June 1967 (which gave the green light for the "anti-Zionist campaign") during the Congress of Polish Trade Unions, Władysław Gomułka, the First Secretary of the Polish United Workers' Party, condemning "Israeli aggressors," said that among the Polish Jews only "those were rescued who were sheltered by Poles risking their own lives."⁷³ It launched an avalanche of texts about (unappreciated) Polish heroism. Another tide of texts concerning occupation matters followed between March and April 1968. In the texts published at that time, there were a number of recurrent motifs: on the one hand, the condemnation of "Zionists," the selflessness and the mass character of Polish help given regardless of the political affiliations; and on the other, the picture of Jewish passivity and inclination to collaborate.⁷⁴ In his classical analysis, Michał Głowiński identified the texts about "Jewish ungratefulness and Polish mercy" in the March 1968 propaganda. "It was an obligatory thread in the March narrative: the ingrates accuse us of anti-Semitism and do not remember what we did for them."⁷⁵ The statement that the Jews could only rely on the Poles was repeated like a mantra.⁷⁶ The Warsaw Documentary Film Studio instantly set about working on a film about help to the Jews.⁷⁷

The 25th Anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising in April 1968 was a chance for many different memoirs and historical studies to appear, including extremely biased ones⁷⁸ and even pseudo-historical works. The best example of this tendency was Tadeusz Bednarczyk's booklet, published in May 1968 in 40,000 copies, which

⁷² T. Walichnowski, *Izrael i RFN* (Warsaw, 1967), 172–175.

⁷³ He kept silent about his merits in this field, and wrote about his links with A. Ber- man and A. Wilner only in his memoirs. W. Gomułka, *Pamiętniki*, vol. 2, (Warsaw, 1994), 274–281.

⁷⁴ On this issue see A.B. Jarosz, "Marzec w prasie," in *Marzec 1968. Trzydzieści lat później. Referaty*, ed. M. Kula, P. Osęka, M. Zaręba (Warsaw, 1998), 117–120.

⁷⁵ M. Głowiński, "Marcowe fabuły (Rzecz o propagandzie roku 1968)," in idem, *Pismak 1863 i inne szkice o różnych brzydkich rzeczach* (Warsaw, 1995), esp. 79–81.

⁷⁶ Typical: Ryszard Gontarz, "Samotni wśród współbraci," *Kurier Polski*, 29 March 1968.

⁷⁷ "Film o pomocy Żydom w czasie okupacji. Apel Wytwórci," *Życie Warszawy*, 31 March–1 April 1968. Film dir. by Janusz Kidawa, *Sprawiedliwi*, completed in 1968. Ryszard Filipiński's monodrama *Ja i mój brat* was later written on the basis of the film.

⁷⁸ For example, Waclaw Poterański's booklet (*Warszawskie getto. W 25-lecie walki zbrojnej w getcie w 1943 r.*, Warsaw, 1968, 2nd edition) published on ZBoWiD's initiative. According to the daily *Życie Warszawy*, it was a "dignified rebuff of dishonorable lies of various Zionist and reactionary institutions" – *Życie Warszawy*, 17 April 1968.

gained some legitimacy in the discourse on the issue of help to the Jews.⁷⁹ It must be added that already in 1962 Bednarczyk had written an article about help to the Jews given by the Catholic Church, which was printed in the Catholic monthly *Więź*.⁸⁰

The need for new scientific research was also recognized. Attention was drawn to the above-mentioned Datner's publication in the GKBZHWP organ. In March and April 1968, Datner's statements were printed several times in the party press and in the publications of the PAX Association. Datner, whose motives resist unequivocal assessment,⁸¹ appealed for information to be sent to the GKBZHWP about the repressions of fellow citizens of Jewish origins, which would help in investigations against the perpetrators. His book on help to the Jews was already announced then.⁸² ZBoWiD was to provide patronage over "the consolidation of remembrance of Poles saving Jews" – such a resolution was passed by the Warsaw Presidium of the Central Board, headed by Mieczysław Moczar. The discussants "gave simply shocking facts regarding omissions in our historiography." They particularly reviled the editorial policy of *Biuletyn ŻIH*, which, allegedly, failed to deal with the subject at all. Now, the GKBZHWP and "possibly the largest circle of organizations and institutions" were to handle the matter.⁸³ The need to present "the real history of our heroic effort" was the leitmotiv in the April interviews of Moczar during the Month of National Remembrance. He expressed his conviction as follows: "All the ZBoWiD members, i.e. people from the AK, AL, BCh (*Bataliony Chłopskie*, Peasants' Battalions), all the combatants, former prisoners of concentration camps, those who fought and suffered for the homeland – they all make a common front now against

⁷⁹ T. Bednarczyk, *Walka i pomoc. OW-KB organizacja ruchu oporu w getcie warszawskim* (Warsaw, 1968). Bednarczyk announced in the preface that the publishing house of the Ministry of National Defence would soon print another of his books – but he had to wait for that until 1982.

⁸⁰ On the other hand, Bednarczyk attacking Bartoszewski publicly, and also in his talks with the SB, was not mentioned in the volume *Ten jest z Ojczyzny mojej*, although his "account" was published by *Tygodnik Powszechny* in 1963.

⁸¹ On this issue see Helena Datner's statement: A. Bikont, *My z Jedwabnego* (Warsaw, 2004), 20–21.

⁸² Datner published his first texts on the subject before the Six Days' War broke out (*Fołks Sztyme*, 29 March 1967 and 1 April 1967 and *Zielony Sztandar*, 6 April 1967). For the anti-Semitic campaign see "Polacy wobec problemu żydowskiego zachowywali wysoką godność narodową i ogólnoludzką. Rozmowa z Sz. Datnerem," *Wrocławski Tygodnik Katolików*, 10 March 1968; "Ginęli, ratując Żydów. Wypowiedź dr. Szymona Datnera," *Trybuna Ludu*, 5 April 1968 (a similar text in *Życie Warszawy*, 5 April 1968); S. Datner, "Homo Homini – Homo," *Tygodnik Demokratyczny* 16, 14 April 1968. Despite the fact that Datner wrote about the need "for all those who were close to these matters to co-operate" former democratic activists who rendered great services in the action to help the Jews remained silent; at least, their texts did not appear in the SD organ (the only text, M. Łubkowski's "Uratowani," *Tygodnik Demokratyczny* 25, 16 June 1968, concerns individual help). Another text by Datner ("Wspólna walka, XXV rocznica powstania w getcie warszawskim," *ibidem* 17, 21 April 1968) is about everything but the democratic activists engaged in help to the Jews.

⁸³ *Życie Warszawy*, 6 April 1968.

the slanderers, who are more and more actively involved in their foul anti-Polish campaign.” He found the state of knowledge on Polish attitudes during the occupation not so much insufficient as distorted and biased.⁸⁴ The texts published in the periodicals actively involved in the March campaign were signed by people involved in the action to help the Jews. Although, traditionally, the communists’ outstanding merits were stressed,⁸⁵ in accordance with the prevailing atmosphere, there was also an attempt to emphasize the AK origins of those engaged in the action to help. Some of the statements were most probably manipulated, but some of them included artificial or simulated outrage towards the Zionists.⁸⁶ Another group of the testimonies published then was the statement of the saved Jews and Poles of Jewish descent, who – as we can presume – were forced into such expiation. The huge, three-piece text by Adam Rutkowski, acting ŻIH head, published in *Polityka*, and ending with a condemnation of the “Zionists,” turned out to be delayed and did not change the difficult situation of the Institute.⁸⁷ Rutkowski managed to publish the accounts of “Żegota” activists, edited by Berenstein and himself, in *Biuletyn ŻIH*. It was to be an introduction to a larger volume of documents provisionally entitled *Pomoc Żydom w Polsce (1939–1945)*, but it was never finalized.⁸⁸

⁸⁴ Quoted in: *Życie Warszawy*, 15 April 1968; *Kurier Polski*, 13 and 15 April, 1968; *Trybuna Ludu*, 13, 14, 15 April 1968.

⁸⁵ E.g. “Płk. Józef Sęk-Matecki, b. członek sztabu GL i AL o obronie ludności żydowskiej przez Polaków,” *Życie Warszawy*, 4 April 1968 (he reacted to the Zionists’ activity with “outrage if not repulsion”); “Sprawiedliwi. Wspomnienia Polaków członków KPP a potem PPR,” *Walka Młodych*, 21 April 1968.

⁸⁶ E.g. “Polacy z pomocą Żydom w latach hitlerowskiej okupacji. Wypowiedź W. Bartoszewskiego,” *Życie Warszawy*, 2 April 1968 (it was a statement for the Polish Press Agency); “Polacy z pomocą Żydom w latach hitlerowskiej okupacji,” *Trybuna Ludu*, April 1, 1968; “Polska krew pod murami getta. Doc. Z. Lewandowski, b. wysoki oficer KG AK, o pomocy walczącym Żydom,” *Życie Warszawy*, April 3, 1968 (the text was printed on the first page; Lewandowski, a distinguished Kedyw officer in the AK Warsaw District, commander of engineers, who organized armed actions by the ghetto walls, said what the journalists wanted to hear); “Fakty demaskują kłamstwa. Jan Dobraczyński o akcji ratowania dzieci żydowskich z warszawskiego getta,” *Życie Warszawy*, 6 April 1968; “Z pomocą spieszyły tysiące. Mówią działacze Żegoty,” *Żołnierz Wolności*, 6 and 7 April 1968, and many others. Henryk Iwański was also allegedly an AK member (“Fakty mówią. Polacy w akcji na terenie getta,” *Życie Warszawy*, 5 April 1968). “Obrona ludności żydowskiej przez BCh,” *Życie Warszawy*, 10 April 1968.

⁸⁷ A. Rutkowski, “Szczególna sytuacja Polski,” *Polityka*, 13 April 1968; “Musiałbym dziękować całym gminom,” *Polityka*, 20 April 1968, “Pomoc Żydom podczas okupacji. Część ogólnego ruchu oporu,” *Polityka* 19, 11 May 1968). In the conclusion, Rutkowski wrote with contempt about those who slander the Polish nation: “The Polish nation, the martyr-nation and a hero of World War II, although doomed to extermination by the occupier, offered all kinds of dedicated help to the sons of this land – the Jews.”

⁸⁸ “Rada Pomocy Żydom w Polsce (“Żegota”). Wspomnienia centralnych i terenowych działaczy RPŻ,” *Biuletyn ŻIH* 65–66 (1968). There are fragments of memoirs by: Arczyński, Rek, Witold Bieńkowski, Stefan Sendłak, Ewa Wąsowicz, Jan Żabiński and others.

The Canon

In October 1968, a booklet by Szymon Datner, *Las sprawiedliwych. Karta z dziejów ratownictwa Żydów w okupowanej Polsce* [Forest of the Righteous. A page in the history of rescuing Jews in occupied Poland]⁸⁹ was published in 30,000 copies. The booklet could have been written with a view to rescue the ŻIH, weakened by the “anti-Zionist” campaign, which Szymon Datner was to head from 1 February 1969. Among the motives to start the work on the title issue, there were obviously no allusions to the current political context. When he wrote about the poor knowledge of the matter among historians, not once did Datner mention the work of Tatiana Berenstein and Adam Rutkowski. It might have been due to the censor’s instructions.⁹⁰ The main thesis of the book was as follows: “A small percentage of Jews owe their salvation solely to themselves. The vast majority of the rest survived because of the help of thousands of Poles, who in violation of the German ‘law’, risking their lives and those of their loved ones, extended a helping hand to the persecuted and sentenced to extinction at the moment of gravest hardship.”⁹¹ The book raised many controversial issues, which is illustrated in the titles of the chapters: “The motives of rescuing the Jews,” “Attitudes of people and rescue possibilities,” “Long-term rescue – collective and mass” and “Organized help, armed rescue.” But the specific character of the subject directed research efforts to individual help. Datner’s theses had to match the atmosphere of the era. Selfless help was to be a mass phenomenon: “This indisputable rule (‘simply a human being’) as a decisive motive in the rescue cannot be obscured by the rare cases when the motive of financial interest was at play.” Accepting payment by “professional rescuers” was to have stemmed from an objective situation (e.g. the need to pay for upkeep). Notwithstanding some validity of his argument, Datner argued that the moral assessment of such deeds cannot be formulated in isolation from the context of “the times of contempt.”⁹² But his argument went much further: he claimed that one could not disapprove of such behavior, but “we need to place in the same category people who deserve recognition for their work to rescue the threatened lives of human beings. Only in the hierarchy of dignity, perhaps, should we make some distinction.”⁹³ There also appeared the

⁸⁹ S. Datner, *Las sprawiedliwych. Karta z dziejów ratownictwa Żydów w okupowanej Polsce* (Warsaw, 1968).

⁹⁰ Rutkowski, who headed the Institute after A. Eisenbach’s resignation (28 June 1968), expressed his desire to leave Poland in September of that year (see M. Horn, “Działalność Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego w Polsce w latach 1967–1979,” *Biuletyn ŻIH* 3, 1979).

⁹¹ Datner, *Las sprawiedliwych*, 7.

⁹² Ringelblum’s influence is visible as he wrote: “Undoubtedly, money plays an important role in the hiding of the Jews. There are poor families who base their subsistence on the funds paid daily by the Jews to the Aryan landlords. But is there enough money in the world to make up for constant fear of exposure, fear of the neighbors, the porter, manager of the block of flats, etc.?” E. Ringelblum, *Polish-Jewish Relations*, 226.

⁹³ Datner, *Las sprawiedliwych*, 12–13.

assurance that mundane motivation had no great importance, especially when the rescuer possessed appropriate financial means. There was also obviously a warning that delving into the subject further might cause some serious confusion: "Thus the great cause of rescuing the Jews in occupied Poland cannot be overshadowed by events of incidental nature, of secondary importance. The problem of motivation lies solely in the moral sphere (in all or almost all cases), in which it is impossible to apply units of measurement." Because those very ethical and moral imperatives dominated over others, including the sense of danger. Despite the perils, "great masses of Poles rescued Jews sentenced to extinction, until the end." Yet, the body of evidence supporting this thesis was not very convincing. Datner illustrates his argument with opinions of people engaged in the action to help and, taken out of context, quotes from Emanuel Ringelblum's essay.

Datner presented a typology of Poles' behaviors towards the fugitives from the ghettos: the handing over [of people] to the murderers, passivity, temporary and long-term help.⁹⁴ Their characterization is far more interesting. Collaboration in the persecution of the Jews, the domain of "social dregs," was to be "as a rule rejected, because it was extremely rare, an exceptional instance." The Polish nation suffered to no extent less from the activity of Gestapo denunciators and informers; and traitors, blackmailers (*szmalcownicy*) and informers of all kinds "were commonly despised and condemned" as well as mercilessly and ruthlessly fought. Thus, generalization based on individual cases would distort the truth. Presented as equally rare was also a complete disassociation from help. Given the threat of repression, this attitude should not be unequivocally condemned, but rather treated as "evasion of the obligation of collaboration to chase the persecuted, Jews in this case, which had been imposed by the occupier." It was a form of passive resistance, which enabled proper action of active help given by "dozens of thousands" of Poles.⁹⁵ Further on, Datner indicates the practical and the psychological significance of temporary help. In this case, yet again however, he is unable to abandon a striving for unjustified generalization and didacticism: "After short-term shelter and temporary help had been given, the fugitive was transferred from one hand to another, which created a 'spontaneous transportation chain,' one of the most fascinating and effective forms of rescue organized not only in Poland, but in the whole of occupied Europe for the most diverse categories of fugitives prosecuted by the apparatus of the Third Reich." There are also deliberations on the number of Poles involved in saving one Jew. But Datner does not settle this question. And finally, the rescue itself – in the text there is a distinction between individual and organized help with some general observations on the subject. Instead of a more profound analysis, there are two extended examples. Unfortunately, one of them

⁹⁴ Ibidem, 27.

⁹⁵ Viewing silence as an act of courage and a form of help had already appeared earlier. See e.g. *Wrocławski Tygodnik Katolików* 10 (1968).

does not seem to be well chosen.⁹⁶ The author draws particular attention to cases of collective rescue; and again, instead of analysis there are a few examples (three from Warsaw and two from the Eastern Borderlands – the *Kresy*), which are to demonstrate that the rescuers “were recruited from all the social classes, from all milieus,” and the action to help covered the entire territory of pre-war Poland. The rescue was to be most common in Warsaw and in the Cracow Province. Datner pointed to the difficulties concerning research into cases of helping in the Eastern Borderlands due to “post-war migration.” The case of the Białystok region was discussed in detail. Among several dozen cases of people saving Jews, he mentions Antonia Wyrzykowska. She rescued seven Jews, who escaped with their lives during the massacres of summer 1941, but Datner shifted the time of her involvement to November 1942!

As we know, Datner was one of the few who knew the truth about the murders and pogroms of Jews in this region in June and July 1941. The reason for his silence is obviously censorship, but his determination to consolidate the simplified image of occupied Poland is – to say the least – intriguing.⁹⁷ The chapter on organized help does not offer much new in comparison compared, for instance, with Władysław Bartoszewski’s texts. The only passage which deserves attention is the extended one on Stefan Sendłak, head of the “Żegota” local section, previously founder of the Zamość-Lublin Committee to Help the Jews in Warsaw (*Zamojsko-Lubelski Komitet Niesienia Pomocy Żydom w Warszawie*). Datner lists his co-workers in the “work to save the Jews” without even giving the information that most of them were Jews in hiding.⁹⁸ A separate chapter discusses armed help, “the most noble” and, at the same time, “the most effective form of rescue.” And here again, the selection of examples is striking. Henryk Iwański’s activity comes to the foreground. Yet the most important issue is that of estimations. It was Szymon Datner who consolidated in the scientific circulation the number of 100,000 Jews saved thanks to the “dedicated help of Polish society, its finest sons and daughters.” He failed to specify on what grounds he made such a calculation (in his previous text – let me recall – he gave the number of 80–100,000 but not all of them were said to

⁹⁶ Datner refers to Teodor Niewiadomski, a rather opaque person, and solely on Niewiadomski’s personal account, published in the weekly *Stolica* (December 3, 1967).

⁹⁷ In a study on the Holocaust in the Białystok District published two years earlier, Datner mentioned the participation of “dregs of the local population” in murders of Jews (see S. Datner, “Eksterminacja Żydów w Okręgu Białystok,” *Biuletyn ŻIH* 60 [1966]: 22–23). A careful reader could spot the allusions in this sentence, and also refer to archival materials indicated in the footnotes. Immediately after the war, as an employee of the Jewish Historical Commission in Białystok, Datner collected various shocking accounts, and was even preparing a study on the issue, but it was never published. On the other hand, perhaps some answers might be found in his own occupation experience – a group of Białystok ghetto fugitives led by him survived thanks to the help of Polish peasants.

⁹⁸ Datner, *Las sprawiedliwych*, 72–73.

owe their lives to Poles). This figure was much higher in comparison with the data from the ŻIH archives.⁹⁹

The number of people repressed for helping the Jews was much more thoroughly documented. Here, the point of reference was the materials collected by the GKBZHWp, the information included in the volume *Ten jest z ojczyzny mojej* and the author's own research. On these grounds, Datner established that 343 people died, of whom only 242 surnames were identified. Those names were listed in alphabetical order, supplemented with basic data concerning each event. This method of presentation became the model for the similar subsequent publications. Datner seemed not to notice the connection between the plague of denunciations in Poland and the repressions resulting from help given to the Jews. That there is such a connection is indicated in the sources: some judgments published in the underground press noted that Poles were victims of the denunciators' repressions.¹⁰⁰ This theme recurred in post-war trials.¹⁰¹ Datner – of all people – was aware of the situation in the Białystok region and he was familiar with the fate of Antonina Wyrzykowska,

⁹⁹ Based on a list of people registered before 15 July 1945, Filip Friedman estimated that in occupied Poland 40–50,000 Jews survived, 11,000 prisoners of the Hasag camp and Częstochowa among them (“Zagłada Żydów polskich,” *Biuletyn Głównej Komisji Badania Zbrodni Niemieckich w Polsce* 1 (1946): 203–205). Despite the fact that the registers are certainly incomplete (after all, Friedman himself wrote clearly that the data given by him require “critical analysis and elucidation”), it is difficult to agree with Paulsson's observation that there could have been “dozens of thousands” unregistered. The question remains: how many dozens? It is true that many Jews were sent to forced labour in the Reich – according to Polish documents – as “Aryans.” See S.G. Paulsson, “Stosunki polsko-żydowskie w okupowanej Warszawie (1940–1945),” in *Akcja Reinhardt. Zagłada Żydów w Generalnym Gubernatorstwie*, ed. D. Libionka (Warsaw, 2004), 297–298. But Paulsson does not refer to the issue raised by Friedman – that some people registered several times.

¹⁰⁰ We can find such a statement in three sentences published in the underground press: Jan Grabiec was accused of “blackmailing villagers, threatening to denounce hiding Jews” and other crimes (*Biuletyn Informacyjny* 35, 2 September 1943); Wacław Naworol was sentenced for denouncing “Polish citizens of Jewish descent and Poles who hid them” (*Rzeczpospolita Polska* 18, 1943). Antoni Pajor was sentenced for “denouncing Poles who hid Jews” (*Rzeczpospolita Polska* 20, 1943).

¹⁰¹ Such a note was printed in *Gazeta Lubelska* 83, a newspaper published in Lublin, on 1 November 1944. It concerned a case of a denunciation of two Polish families who were hiding Jews. Both of them were murdered on the spot. The accused was Jadwiga Jankowska, a deportee from the Poznań region. The names of the murdered Poles were not given (probably it was the trial of Janina Jaszczewska, a Gestapo informer, AIPN, Lublin District Court no. 37 [Sąd Okręgowy Lubelski 37]). It is difficult to establish whether those denounced by her were on Datner's list. It might only be established by a preliminary research of court materials. A text by a Jew hiding in the Lublin region was published in the same issue of the paper. He estimated that the cause of 90 percent of “blown” hiding Jews and their protectors was denunciation. Feliks Tych pointed at: “Ocaleni z Zagłady i ich ocena postawy społeczeństwa polskiego w okresie okupacji. Zapomniane świadectwo z 1944 r.,” in F. Tych, *Długi cień Zagłady. Szkice historyczne* (Warsaw, 1999), 60–61.

harassed by her neighbors.¹⁰² His book, despite its modest size, played a role which cannot be overestimated in the Polish historical discourse.¹⁰³ It led to many unjustified generalizations, simplifications and mistakes. The issue of studies on Polish help to the Jews was also an important element in Datner's activity as ŻIH director. Memoirs of "Żegota" activists and monographs written by Datner¹⁰⁴ were published in *Biuletyn ŻIH* at the turn of the 1960s and 1970s.

The year 1968 was a visible turning point in the treatment of the Polish-Jewish issue, not only in Poland, but in the Polish émigré milieus as well. In late 1968, Kazimierz Iranek-Osmecki's work, *He Who Saves One Life (Kto ratuje jedno życie... Polacy i Żydzi 1939-1945)*, was published in London. Two of its chapters ("Military Help" and "Financial Help") were printed in the Parisian *Zeszyty Historyczne*.¹⁰⁵ The author was a Polish Army and ZWZ-AK officer, an emissary, and - what is most important - the head of the KG AK (Home Army High Command) Department II (intelligence and counter-intelligence) from January 1944. Therefore his knowledge of occupied Poland was vast. Initially, he was thinking about writing only a series of articles for the London weekly *Tygodnik Polski*. What spurred him to carry out more extensive research was a series of international conferences of resistance movement historians in Turin and Brussels, where, according to Tadeusz Bór-Komorowski and Tadeusz Pełczyński, present during the sessions, a "uniform anti-Polish front" was formed. Bór-Komorowski inspired the writing of the book.¹⁰⁶ The work was published in English in the US in 1971 and was subsidized by the Polish American Congress. Józef Lichten, a lawyer living in New York and a proponent of Polish-Jewish reconciliation, who had written the preface to the original edition, contributed to its publication.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰² Datner helped Antonina Wyrzykowska move from Bielsk Podlaski to Milanówek in the early 1960s (see A. Bikont, op. cit., 254).

¹⁰³ It is difficult to understand that it was scarcely noted in the text discussing Polish literature concerning Jews. Lucy Dawidowicz, extremely critical of Polish historians, does not mention Datner's work. Dobroszycki accuses him only of formulating a "peculiar thesis" that in the early stage of the occupation German persecution covered the Poles in the first place (L. Dobroszycki, op. cit., 181). J. Tomaszewski speaks about "exaggerated estimates" of the number of those saved and censorship pressure on researchers, but does not mention Datner's name (J. Tomaszewski, op. cit., 165).

¹⁰⁴ S. Datner, "Polki warszawskie z pomocą Żydom," *Biuletyn ŻIH* 70 (1969):113-116; "Materiały z dziedziny ratowania Żydów przez Polaków. Mjr. Henryk Iwański (pseudonym "Bystry")," ibidem, 117-119 (those were fragments of Chaim Lazar's book *Muranowska 7* selected by Datner); T. Czarnomorski, "Pomoc Żydom udzielona przez pracowników Wydziału Ewidencji Ludności zarządu miasta stoł. Warszawy," *Biuletyn ŻIH* 75 (1970).

¹⁰⁵ K. Iranek-Osmecki, *Kto ratuje jedno życie... Polacy i Żydzi 1939-1945* (London, 1968); *idem*, "Polacy i Żydzi 1939-1945," *Zeszyty Historyczne* 14 (1968): 5-37.

¹⁰⁶ According to his son: Jerzy Iranek-Osmecki, "Pułkownik Kazimierz Iranek-Osmecki (5 IX 1897-22 V 1984). Wspomnienie syna," in K. Iranek-Osmecki, *Powołanie i przeznaczenie. Wspomnienia oficera Komendy Głównej AK* (Warsaw, 2004), 522-524.

¹⁰⁷ K. Iranek-Osmecki, *He Who Saves One Life* (New York, 1971).

The book consisted of two main parts: the first one concerned the background (*The Jewish Gehenna*) and the second covered different aspects of help (*Polish Help*). From our point of view, the most interesting are the fragments concerning military aid and “Żegota.” As for the number of weapons handed over to the ŻOB, the above-mentioned account of 1961 of the Chief of Staff of the AK Warsaw District, Stanisław “Chirurg” Weber, has it that ŻOB was given, apart from five pistols, some machine guns as well. None of the independent sources, neither Polish nor Jewish ones, confirm this fact. Aware of that, Iranek-Osmecki took quite a risky step: namely, he joined Weber’s account with the story of “Major” Iwański (which he knew from the literature) and called as witness . . . Ringelblum, who was present during the purchase of machine guns in the ŻZW quarters at no. 7 Muranowska St.¹⁰⁸ Weber’s account, however, does not mention purchase of weapons, but free-of-charge transfer. Although it concerns two contacts to buy weapons given to the ŻOB representative on the Aryan side, Weber mentions neither Iwański, nor – much less – the ŻZW. The incoherence and distorted character of Osmecki’s argument is thus obvious. An equally strange manipulation was applied in the description of the biggest action carried out by the AK near the ghetto walls: accounts published by Bartoszewski were quoted, not the account of the commander of the action, Captain Józef Pszenny, pseudonym “Chwacki,” kept in the Polish Underground Movement Study Trust (PUMST).¹⁰⁹ Other pieces of information raise doubts as well. For example, Weber’s account mentioned the AK “saving several dozen ŻOB fighters.” This did not happen. In conclusion of his discussion of “solidarity actions,” the author, in a brief paragraph, mentions one combat action of the GL, referring the reader to the work of Bernard Mark. Thus, we deal with a reversal of the situation with respect to a segment of Polish literature.

A lot of space was devoted to “Żegota” financing, the efforts of the Polish government in London to inform the free world about the Holocaust, the contacts with the Jewish underground and fighting the blackmailers. Existing memoirs and historical studies were used (written by Polish authors, as well as the volume *Ten jest z ojczyzny mojej*, and Jewish historians such as Friedman or Mark were referred to, often in a polemic manner). A novelty was the use of the documents from the PUMST archive in London and from the Władysław Sikorski Institute, including ŻOB and ŻKN documents. But the most important were Polish documents: reports and telegrams, and documents concerning the transfer of funds from London to the occupied country. Based on the author’s calculations 37,250,000 zlotys from the state budget were allotted for the needs of “Żegota.” Additionally, the Jewish organizations, via the Delegate Office, were to receive over one million dollars.¹¹⁰ The delays

¹⁰⁸ K. Iranek-Osmecki, *Kto ratuje*, 151–152.

¹⁰⁹ Content of this testimony of 1946, i.e. the earliest of the existing ones, was published in the appendix to “ZWZ-AK i Delegatura Rządu PR wobec eksterminacji Żydów polskich,” in *Polacy i Żydzi pod okupacją niemiecką*, 206–207.

¹¹⁰ K. Iranek-Osmecki, *Kto ratuje*, 234–235 and 243.

in transferring the monthly subsidies were not mentioned. The concluding parts of the book, concerning the repression for help given to the Jews, were written on the basis of Polish sources and might have been unknown only to an émigré reader. In Iranek-Osmecki's opinion, hundreds of thousands of Poles helped the Jews. The lack of the author's professional preparation as well as the motivation which drove him – the defence of Poland and the reputation of the Poles – left an imprint on the book's content. Frequently the argument and the source material were adjusted to the theses formulated in advance, while the controversial episodes were presented in a proper light. The author strongly opposed the accusations of ZWZ-AK indifference to Jewish demands. He claimed that in the first years of the occupation, the Jews were passive, which caused the lack of interest of the ZWZ-AK in the situation in the Warsaw ghetto or in Jewish matters in general.¹¹¹ Like Datner's book, the work of Iranek-Osmecki became a part of the canon of Polish literature concerning the occupation.

An important event was the publication of the second, supplemented edition of *Ten jest z ojczyzny mojej* in late 1969. Again, the circulation was small – 10,000 copies. But its size was bigger (not 635, but 1108 pages). The layout was clearer – the texts were divided into those concerning organized help (79 texts), individual help (203 ones) and the repressions (22). The sections were grouped by theme, regarding the clergy's and the villagers' help or aid given to children. Many new materials were published in the press in March and April 1968 (but they were printed without any “anti-Zionist” overtones). Moreover, fragments of memoirs published in Poland and abroad were added.¹¹² The source appendix was substantially extended. A total of 100 documents were published (compared to about 30 in the previous edition), including: German sources, pronouncements of Polish underground organizations and clandestine press enunciations, “Żegota” documents, sources concerning contacts of the Polish and Jewish underground, and finally those documenting the diplomatic activity of the Polish government. An extensive bibliography was added. What is surprising from today's perspective is the omission of a few thousand accounts from the ŻIH archives. The volume included only the accounts published in *Biuletyn ŻIH*. The collection of ŻIH accounts, one of the most important corpuses of sources concerning the occupation experience of Jewish survivors, was to sink into complete oblivion in the years to come. Primacy was to be assigned to Polish accounts, including those given in the immediate post-war years but mostly given many years after the described events.

¹¹¹ Ibidem, 147. A similar motif appeared in *Polskie Siły Zbrojne*, vol. 3.

¹¹² This book was also soon translated into English: W. Bartoszewski, Z. Lewin, *The Righteous Among the Nations* (London, 1969); eidem, *The Samaritans. Heroes of the Holocaust* (New York, 1970).

1970s

I have already mentioned the suggestions appearing in spring 1968 to the effect that the ZBoWiD and the GKBZHwP should coordinate the academic and educational action which aimed at proving that Poles had helped the Jews. Another effect of this work, after *Las sprawiedliwych*, was the volume *Polacy Żydzi 1939-1945* edited by Stanisław Wolski and Maria Zwolakowa (1971). In the introduction, we will find an echo of the “March 1968 campaign”: the book was designed as a “testimony to the truth” for those “who slander the Polish nation.” It was intended to demonstrate the ties of the Polish and the Jewish occupation fate, as well as the enormous scale of aid given regardless of political persuasion. German repressions of the Poles and the Jews were compared and illustrated by ample photographic and archival materials, as well as by post-war accounts. However, the documents were carefully selected – from the underground press only those voices were chosen that talked about the compassion to the Jews of the Polish government, the Polish Underground State and individual political parties. One of the principal theses of PPR propaganda was reiterated: the only possibility of rescue for the Jews was, allegedly, “relentless fight and resistance.” Difficult subjects were “diluted,” e.g.: the hiding Jews and the Poles who helped them were threatened by informers and denounciators “of German, Polish, Ukrainian, Lithuanian and Jewish descent,” punished severely by the London and the left-wing underground. It was said that the Poles saved 120,000 Jews and that the number of those whom they tried to help was “several times higher.” Apart from that, the canonical theses were repeated: thousands of people offered their help, and one of the main obstacles to the selfless helping action was “the passivity of the Jews themselves.” Those truths were to be illustrated by the accounts provided by the ZBoWiD, the testimonies collected by the prosecutors of the GKBZHwP or the other, already published accounts. The novelty was the publication of the fragments of Jewish children’s accounts from the ŻIH archives. In the last section of the book the authors published a supplementary list of Poles repressed as a consequence of their help offered to the Jews.¹¹³

The Institute of History of the Polish Academy of Sciences (*Instytut Historii Polskiej Akademii Nauk*, IH PAN) began to deal with the issue of aid to the Jews. Among the motions put forward in April 1968 by the Institute’s party activists, there was one regarding the “necessity in the IH PAN to make efforts to prepare a Polish version and an abbreviated one (in English, French and German) of the documents and accounts concerning the help to the Jews during the occupation.”¹¹⁴ This idea, however, was never implemented. Moreover, the director of the IH PAN, Prof. Tadeusz Manteuffel, interviewed by *Życie Warszawy*, distanced himself completely

¹¹³ *Polacy Żydzi 1939-1945*, ed. S. Wolski and M. Zwolakowa (Warsaw, 1971), especially 112, 176, 324-339.

¹¹⁴ “Sprawozdanie Mariana Drozdowskiego na temat sytuacji w IH PAN,” in *Marzec ‘68. Między tragedią a podłością*, preface, selection and editorial work G. Sołtysiak and J. Stępień (Warsaw, 1998), 374.

from the expectations directed at him. Talking about the need to “broaden the knowledge about history and its promotion in society” as far as the occupation was concerned, he did not even once allude to the current political context. Pointing out the achievements of the Institute and of other Polish research institutions, he said: “Our task, as historians, is to present the truth about events in the past. This aim cannot be achieved without a profound study of numerous archival materials, documents, personal accounts, etc., which are very helpful in the analysis of the facts, problems and roles of the people who created recent history.” Answering the question about priorities, he indicated the necessity to research the underground, both right-wing and left-wing, especially its origins, the civilian population, the role of the Union of Polish Patriots (*Związek Patriotów Polskich*, ZPP), and also the émigrés – all those issues require a complete elaboration, in accordance with historical truth. At the same time, he said he hoped that the researchers would have access to “more and more archival resources.”¹¹⁵

The most important book referring to helping the Jews was a monograph written by Czesław Madajczyk (1970). He pointed out the fragmentary character of the knowledge on the scale of help in the individual regions of the country and the repressions that ensued: “ostensibly, the intelligentsia helped the most, but the peasant population received the most painful blows for the aid” (a dozen cases of repression were described in the text, but without a more profound analysis of the problem). Madajczyk emphasized that “no other country paid such a sacrifice of blood for the help given to the Jews as did Poland. It was incomparably easier to demonstrate in defence of the Jews, as was the case in some Western countries, than to hide a Jew in Poland for years.” He mentioned complex determinants of hiding in the country and in the city, the occupier’s terror as a factor determining the issue of help, and finally, the organized (“Żegota”) and military (AK and GL) help. The economic dimension of the phenomenon was barely mentioned (“in the cities it was not easy to carry the burden of long-term hiding given the salaries and food rations of the Polish population”). Madajczyk’s narrative, apart from the interpretative minimalism, is characterized by significant contradictions. On the one hand, he pointed out the diversity of Poles’ attitudes (“starting with those ready to help at the expense of their lives; those ready to help for some sort of compensation; sympathizing, but not willing to take the risk; indifferent – especially when the Holocaust was far away; showing stupid curiosity, incompatible with the tragedy of the moment; susceptible to one or another reward from the occupier; finally to those few, but very dangerous, vermin, especially the blackmailers, called *szmalcownicy* during the war”). On the other hand, he severely opposed both the negative image of Polish-Jewish relations, which was present in some of the texts written immediately after the war, and the foreign memoirs and historical literature. In his opinion, “a number of death sentences” executed on the blackmailers recruited from the underclass effectively limited this practice. He argued at the same time that the moral de-

¹¹⁵ “Wywiad z prof. dr. T. Manteufflem,” *Życie Warszawy*, 18 April 1968.

cay was stronger in the ghettos than among the Poles. He also noted that in Poland there were fewer Jews in the resistance movement than in Western Europe. He did not explain the causes of this phenomenon apart from some repeated references to Jewish “passivity” (and referring to Raul Hilberg and Hannah Arendt). He found the help of the Polish underground organizations (GL, AK, KB – in that order) important from the point of view of the course of the ghetto uprising (“it was not merely a form of demonstration”).¹¹⁶

At the same time, the problem of help was taken up by the Institute of the Peasant Movement History, of the Chief Committee of the United People’s Party (*Zakład Historii Ruchu Ludowego, Naczelny Komitet Zjednoczonego Stronnictwa Ludowego, NK ZSL*). Already in the first text published in this circle, there was a typical tendency – the use of material created only by peasant activists.¹¹⁷ This was also the case in the literature concerning the Catholic Church.¹¹⁸ In the 1960s¹¹⁹ and the 1970s, there appeared numerous texts, monographs and memoirs (e.g. about the All Saints’ parish in the Warsaw ghetto) regarding the help given to the Jews by the Catholic Church. In the studies concerning individual Catholic orders, there appeared chapters about help to the Jews, especially to children, which were based on nuns’ accounts, collected for this very purpose. In 1973, there appeared a historical study about the Franciscan Sisters of the Family of Mary (*Zgromadzenie Sióstr*

¹¹⁶ C. Madajczyk, *Polityka Trzeciej Rzeszy w okupowanej Polsce*, vol. 2 (Warsaw, 1970), 329–341.

¹¹⁷ The first text on the issue: J. Nowak, “Wieś w akcji pomocy Żydom w okresie okupacji,” *Roczniki Dziejów Ruchu Ludowego* 12 (1970). This text, intended to be a supplement to the volume *Ten jest z ojczyzny mojej*, contains 194 cases of help to Jews in the villages noted in surveys on aid by the ZHRL and ZBoWiD Historical Commission. The author of the text, a BCh commander in the eastern provinces, also admitted that he helped the Jews. T. Rek’s memoir was published in the same organ [“Ludowcy w akcji *Żegota*,” *Roczniki Dziejów Ruchu Ludowego*, 9 (1967)]. It is also worth mentioning the memoirs of Białystok District BCh commandant [J. Antoniuk, “Pomoc działaczy ludowych i organizacji BCh dla ludności żydowskiej w okolicach Białegostoku w latach 1941–1943,” *Biuletyn ŻIH* 89 (1974): 127–131]. An order, signed by Antoniuk, for the activists of “Chłóstra,” given during the Białystok ghetto uprising, comprising an appeal to help the fugitives, was placed in the appendix. The problem is that it is not possible to confirm this on the basis of other materials. The published material is a fragment of memoirs, as we can surmise, from the editorial preface; the fragment on pogroms in June/July 1941 was omitted (Radziłów, Wąsosz, Szczuczyn, Wizna were mentioned).

¹¹⁸ I discuss in detail the Church discourse on the aid to the Jews: “Kościół w Polsce wobec Zagłady w świetle polskiej publicystyki i historiografii,” *Biuletyn ŻIH* 3 (2000): 329–341. Extended version: “Die Kirche in Polen und der Mord an den Juden im Licht der polnischen Publizistik und Historiographie nach 1945,” *Zeitschrift für Ostmitteleuropa – Forschung* 2 (2002).

¹¹⁹ A wave of such materials appeared during the “anti-Zionist campaign,” with numerous materials of this kind appearing in press organs of the PAX, the Catholic Association “Caritas” and the Christian Social Association (*Chrześcijańskie Stowarzyszenie Społeczne, ChSS*).

Franciszkankę Rodziny Marii), most distinguished in rescuing Jews.¹²⁰ From the mid-1970s, texts on the involvement of the secular and monastic clergy began to be published regularly.¹²¹ Unfortunately, the revelations coming from the biased study *Dzieło miłosierdzia chrześcijańskiego. Polskie duchowieństwo a Żydzi w latach okupacji hitlerowskiej* were quoted too often. It was written in autumn 1968 and was replete with unjustified generalizations and exaggerations.¹²² Although it was based on sources of unknown origin and lacked academic merit, the text entered academic circulation (precisely thanks to Church historians) and became the ground on which the image of mass clergy commitment to save the Jews was created.¹²³

In 1972, IH PAN in co-operation with the ŻIH organized several academic conferences on the Holocaust, where issues of help were discussed. In 1973, at the symposium held on the 30th anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, several papers on the organized and military help were delivered.¹²⁴ The same happened five years later.¹²⁵ In the discussion, Marian Fuks of the ŻIH pointed out the absurdity of anniversary publications concerning the number of Jews saved, as well as the Poles who rescued them. He gave the example of Bednarczyk's lucubrations in the weekly *Życie Literackie*, in which he wrote that the number of those rescued was nearly 400,000 and the number of Poles who saved them was ten times higher. Such state-

¹²⁰ T. Frącek, "Zgromadzenie Sióstr Rodziny Marii w latach 1939–1945," in *Kościół katolicki na ziemiach polskich w czasie II wojny światowej. Materiały i Studia*, ed. F. Stopniak (Warsaw, 1973), 109–129; M. Mistecka, p. CR, "Zakonnice w obronie Żydów," *Chrześcijanin w Świecie* 9 (1979).

¹²¹ Ks. [Father] F. Stopniak, "Kościół w Polsce wobec Żydów w latach II wojny światowej," *Roczniki Teologiczno-Kanoniczne* 22 (1975); idem, "Uwagi o efektach pomocy duchownych dla Żydów w okresie II wojny światowej" in *Studia nad Faszyzmem i Zbrodniami Hitlerowskimi* 14 (1991).

¹²² E.g. most bishops issued a directive ordering help to Jews, who were collectively hidden in the presbyteries and in church buildings; most parishes supplied the needy with fake birth certificates, in every parish people could receive help and there was a rapprochement between the Jewish population and the Catholic clergy, with several hundred priests repressed as a consequence of their help to the Jews.

¹²³ It was published in 2002 under a peculiar title: *Udział księży i zakonnic w holokauście Żydów* [The Participation of Priests and Nuns in the Holocaust], with the author's name given (Father Franciszek Kącki).

¹²⁴ Materials published in *Biuletyn ŻIH* 2–3 (1973). On help to the Jews: W. Bartoszewski, *Polska podziemna a walka getta warszawskiego* and K. Dunin-Wąsowicz, *Polski ruch socjalistyczny wobec walki i zagłady warszawskiego getta*; T. Prekerowa, *Rada Pomocy Żydom a getto warszawskie* (communiqué). The tried-and-tested "Righteous Man" of the PRL – Iwański, and Bednarczyk took part in the discussion.

¹²⁵ K. Dunin-Wąsowicz, *Polski ruch socjalistyczny wobec problemów getta warszawskiego*; M.M. Drozdowski, *Polonia a powstanie w getcie warszawskim*; R. Nazarewicz, *PPR wobec powstania w getcie warszawskim*, communiqués: S. Datner, *Udział polskich jeńców wojennych w ratowaniu Żydów w okresie II wojny światowej*; T. Prekerowa, *Nowe karty z historii Rady Pomocy Żydom*. The discussion also featured interesting information on the functioning of organized help. *Biuletyn ŻIH* 3–4 (1978).

ments were considered detrimental to the cause and the remedy was to be found in thorough research.¹²⁶

The issue of help for the fighting Warsaw ghetto was raised once again in Tomasz Strzembosz's publication. It did not contain much new source material (the account of a participant of minor-scale AK actions deserves some attention) and lacked new interpretations of the earlier publications of Mark, Bartoszewski and Iranek-Osmecki. After the latter Strzembosz adopted the highest figures concerning arms transferred to ŻOB published in Poland. He also emphasized that the number of transferred guns (90) constituted 8 percent of the AK Warsaw District arsenal. Strzembosz estimated that the AK had carried out five actions by the ghetto walls and he also found some traces of two more. The other actions were carried out by the GL (3), *Socjalistyczna Organizacja Bojowa* – the Socialist Combat Organization (2) and *Milicja Ludowa RPPS*, the People's Militia of the Polish Socialist Workers' Party (1).¹²⁷ In his assessment, the Kedyw action of 19 April 1943 had real significance for the Jews, as a "visible sign" of solidarity, as well as military significance ("the unsuspected stab in the back subsequently forced the besiegers to disperse the effort to safeguard their actions from a possible attack from the streets surrounding the ghetto"). Allegedly, it had substantial importance from the point of view of Warsaw inhabitants.¹²⁸ Strzembosz's estimations were more radical than those of Bartoszewski, who talked rather about the "serious moral, psychological and political significance" of the AK actions. Unfortunately, Strzembosz, the best expert on the Warsaw underground, legitimized Iwański's and Bednarczyk's accounts. It is worth mentioning that the passage on fights in Muranowski Square (these actions were called "especially sensational") was not footnoted at all!¹²⁹ In another text, he claimed that the battle on 27 April 1943 in Muranowski Square, in which "Bystry" participated, was "probably the largest clash in the Warsaw Ghetto in terms of its length and the forces deployed."¹³⁰

Other aspects of the problem were taken up by a historian from Poznań, Czesław Łuczak, in his synthesis on the German population and economic policies in Poland. However, this subject was treated superficially and schematically. We can find here vague statements concerning the social context of help, but we learn nothing about the economic aspects. The author did not carry out any analyses of the issue and relied only, as we can see in the bibliography and footnotes, on the existing academic studies and even journalistic texts. Instead of broadening the knowledge on the subject, he repeats propaganda clichés: "Polish society did not limit itself only to condemning and manifesting indignation, but whenever possible, despite the modest means, Poles risked their own lives and rushed to help the Jewish popula-

¹²⁶ M. Fuks statement, *ibidem*, 143. *Biuletyn ŻIH* did not publish Bednarczyk's response.

¹²⁷ T. Strzembosz, *Akcje zbrojne podziemnej Warszawy* (Warsaw, 1978), 445.

¹²⁸ *Ibidem*, 195–196.

¹²⁹ *Ibidem*, 208–210.

¹³⁰ T. Strzembosz, "Tragedia i chwała warszawskiego getta," *Więź* 4 (1979): 65–82, particularly p. 76.

tion in various ways.” A few derelicts and depraved individuals were lured by Nazi propaganda. Despite draconian punishments, “most political organizations active in the underground and a considerable part of the Polish population not associated with them” were engaged in helping the Jews. The enumeration of merits began with the PPR and the GL. A longer passage was devoted to the work of “Żegota.” The author claims that as far as individual help was concerned, its scope is impossible to establish, if only due to its underground character. But it is known that “thanks to the dedication and sacrifice of Polish society, over 100,000 Jews were saved in occupied Poland.” Strzembosz, however, does not give any grounds for these estimations. But he claims: “probably at least several times this number were given food, clothes and other goods.”¹³¹

1980s

In late 1979, just before his death, Marek Arczyński, in co-operation with the historian Wiesław Balcerak, published a book on the history of “Żegota.”¹³² It included a lot of interesting information concerning the Council’s functioning. He writes, for example, that “Żegota” was 70 percent financed from government money from the summer of 1943, and that the remaining 30 percent was paid by the Bund and the ŻKN. The data are credible, at least because the author was the treasurer of “Żegota.” Not all of them are equally important, as Arczyński based his estimates not only on documents (often from his home archive – about 30 were attached in the appendix), but on his own memory and literature as well. For instance, the estimation regarding the number of Jews hiding in Warsaw before the uprising (50,000) is not factual. As for individual help, the work does not go beyond the traditional scheme developed by Datner. Arczyński pointed out the significance of “Żegota’s” informative and educational activity to overcome pre-war anti-Semitism reinforced by the occupier, as well as the significance of the activation of political forces to aid the Jews. “Żegota’s” action was presented as “an expression of the ambition representative of the Polish nation.”

The time of the legal existence of “Solidarity” (August 1980–13 December 1981) is a turning point in the treatment of recent Polish history, including Polish-Jewish relations. But as for the issue we are interested in, the discourse would still have to be examined in the publications of that time, and then in “underground publishing.” The turning point for literature concerning “Żegota” was Teresa Prekerowa’s monograph published in 1982.¹³³ The book was a summing up of many years of

¹³¹ C. Łuczak, *Polityka ludnościowa i ekonomiczna hitlerowskich Niemiec w okupowanej Polsce* (Poznań, 1979), 95–96 and 588–591.

¹³² M. Arczyński and W. Balcerak, *Kryptonim “Żegota.” Z dziejów pomocy Żydom w Polsce 1939–1945* (Warsaw, 1979).

¹³³ T. Prekerowa, *Konspiracyjna Rada Pomocy Żydom w Warszawie 1942–1945* (Warsaw, 1982). Circulation: 10,000 copies. There is also a French edition, revised without censorship interference (*Żegota. Commission d’aide aux Juifs* [Paris, 2000]).

research.¹³⁴ It was based on documents from Polish archives, private collections, the underground press and post-war accounts and memoirs. An important place is given to accounts of “Żegota” activists and its collaborators collected by Prekerowa. The appendix contains a sizeable selection of documents. Some of them were published for the first time. A sign of the changes is the treatment of the leaflet *Protest* (Objection) by Zofia Kossak. Although it was quoted in the text as before,¹³⁵ in a fragment devoid of any commentary, its reproduction was printed in the book. Should we treat it as an oversight of the censors? In any case, the text appeared in academic circulation for the first time (the full text was printed in Władysław Bartoszewski’s *Losy Żydów Warszawy 1939–1943*, published in London the following year).¹³⁶ But many documents had still not been used – most probably due to censorship interference.

Prekerowa’s theses did not diverge from the main course of Polish literature. Even though anti-Semitic propaganda of the occupier directed at Polish society and the “deeds of social dregs” were discussed, many Poles believed that providing help was their moral obligation. Numerous examples of such actions were presented, including from before “Żegota” was established, yet most of them were from Warsaw. The most important parts of the book deal with the origin and beginnings of organized help for the Jews, the organizational structure and the details of its functioning, and finally the financial resources of the Council, the amounts of material aid, the ways of their redistribution and the number of beneficiaries. Separate chapters were dedicated to the local branches. In Prekerowa’s opinion, the main sources of financing were government subsidies, and to a smaller degree subsidies of international Jewish organizations (ratio of 9:1). Based on existing reports, she estimated that 3–4,000 people used “Żegota’s” help in the General Government in 1944, against 6,000 supported by the Bund and the ŻKN funds. In some earlier studies, the efforts of underground Jewish organizations were minimized, in addition to the unjustified overstated number of the protected.¹³⁷ The details of “Żegota’s” struggle to enlarge the budget, delays in transfer of resources and futile efforts to

¹³⁴ See also T. Prekerowa, “Komórka Felicji,” *Rocznik Warszawski* 15 (1979).

¹³⁵ This text was censored for the first time in November 1942 by deputy Prime Minister Mikołajczyk. On this subject see my text: “Kwestia żydowska w Polsce w ocenie Delegatury Rządu RP i KG ZWZ-AK w latach 1942–1944,” in *Zagłada Żydów: pamięć narodowa a pisanie historii w Polsce i we Francji. Materiały z Colloquium polsko-francuskiego w Lublinie (22–23 I 2004)*, ed. B. Engelking, J. Leociak, D. Libionka, A. Ziębińska (Lublin, 2006), 41–44.

¹³⁶ W. Bartoszewski, *Los Żydów Warszawy 1939–1943. W czterdziestą rocznicę powstania w getcie warszawskim* (London, 1983); the book was published in samizdat in 1985. But in the study edited by Y. Gutman and S. Krakowski *Unequal Victims. Poles and Jews During World War II* (New York, 1986), the entire text was not presented, but only a fragment quoted after *Ten jest z ojczyzny mojej* (1st edition, 255).

¹³⁷ Even as many as 30,000; see *Encyklopedia Drugiej Wojny Światowej* (Warsaw, 1975), 528, s. v. “RPŻ.” In this volume, we can find other fantastic data: the Poles supposedly saved 200,000 Jews and 350 machine guns and pistols were delivered to the Warsaw ghetto. On top of all that, the feats of Henryk Iwański were enumerated (ibidem, 493, s. v. “Polski wkład w humanitarną akcję pomocy i ratownictwa 1939–1945”).

intensify the fight against the blackmailers were rarely mentioned. As to the latter issue, it was typically stated that the position of the Polish Underground State was of a fundamental nature. An extremely important part of the book concerns the efforts promoting the question of help to the Jews in society and contacts (sometimes difficult) with the representatives of the civil division of the Polish underground. In the formerly published texts it was implied that “Żegota” was an integral and crucial part of the Polish Underground State. A careful reading of Prekerowa’s book leads one to rethink this issue. As far as the statistical data are concerned, Prekerowa writes that 80–120,000 Jews survived on occupied Polish territory. But she gave neither an estimation of the number of Jews rescued by Poles, nor an estimation of the number of Poles engaged in the aid actions.¹³⁸ There was no discussion with Israeli historiography, either.¹³⁹ In the summary, we can find a general comparison of help to the Jews in occupied Poland and other occupied countries (except the USSR). Nonetheless, it is hard to agree with S. Krakowski’s assessment that Prekerowa’s work emphasizes the bright side of Polish-Jewish relations and “Żegota’s” activity, but at the same time omits the negative aspects.¹⁴⁰ Direct contacts and discussions took place later – the first joint conference was held in Oxford in September 1984. Władysław Bartoszewski and Teresa Prekerowa talked about Polish-Jewish relations during the occupation.¹⁴¹

In the 1980s, the church-related aspect of the help to the Jews found a permanent place in the programs of sessions on Polish-Jewish relations. The texts of Franciszek Stopniak and Zygmunt Zieliński, written for this very occasion, further consolidated the image of deep commitment of the Church on behalf of the Jews.¹⁴² According to Stopniak’s list, 17 bishops and 309 priests helped the Jews in 165 towns in 16 dioceses. The largest numbers of clergymen engaged in this action were said to have come from the following dioceses: Przemyśl (80), Warsaw (68), Tarnów (26), Lublin (20) and Vilna (18). On the other hand, the smallest numbers (except church provinces incorporated into the Reich) were involved in the following dioceses: Płock (1), Pińsk (5) and Kielce (6). But the credibility of these data is seriously problematic, not only with respect to the representatives of the hierarchy, but to ordinary members of the clergy as well. They come either from *Dziela miłosierdzia*

¹³⁸ T. Prekerowa, *Konspiracyjna Rada*, 323.

¹³⁹ Kermisz’s text (“The Activities of the Council for Aid to Jews, “Żegota” in Occupied Poland”), published in 1974, was actually never mentioned at all.

¹⁴⁰ S. Krakowski, “The Holocaust of Polish Jewry,” 128–129.

¹⁴¹ W. Bartoszewski, “Polish-Jewish relations in occupied Poland,” in *The Jews in Poland*, ed. Ch. Abramsky, M. Jachimczyk, A. Polonsky (Oxford, 1986), 147–160; T. Prekerowa, “The Relief Council for Jews in Poland, 1942–1945,” *ibidem*, 161–176.

¹⁴² Ks. [Father] F. Stopniak, *Kościół w Polsce wobec Żydów w latach II wojny światowej*; Z. Zieliński, *Problem ratowania Żydów przez polskie zgromadzenia zakonne w okresie okupacji hitlerowskiej*. Papers presented at a conference in Warsaw in 1983. The issue of help appeared in collective publications: *Życie religijne w Polsce pod okupacją hitlerowską*, ed. Z. Zieliński, vol. 1 (Warsaw, 1982), vol. 2 (Katowice, 1992).

chrześcijańskiego discussed above or from late accounts. Moreover, help to converts and to Judaism believers was not clearly distinguished. By contrast, according to a breakdown prepared by Father Zieliński, based on monastic historiography, 23 convents and 12 male orders helped the Jews. Those numbers were provided with the reservation that they were considerably underestimated due to an “enormous lack of materials.” A discussion on this text, and more broadly on the attitude of the Church towards the Holocaust, took place at an international conference in Jerusalem in 1982.¹⁴³ Yet it had no bearing on how the issue was presented in Poland. Historians’ limited access to church archives still seriously hinders academic work on the subject.

In the 1980s, the GKBZHWP continued its work to assess the scale of repressions for help given to the Jews. In 1981, a publication was released, edited by Prosecutor Waclaw Bielawski and with a preface by the then head of the GKBZHWP, Czesław Pilichowski. The estimated number of saved Jews increased (100–120,000), as did the number of Poles who took part in “direct action to help the Jews” (3 million!), and the only form of repression was considered to have been the death penalty. Pilichowski referred to unspecified “ŻIH data,” according to which “for every individual case of detected help for the Jews, at least 3 Poles gave their lives.” An old thesis returned: Jewish resistance was possible to a large extent thanks to the “financial, moral, military and political help given by Polish society, through organized forces of the Polish underground of all the political camps.” Pilichowski juxtaposed leniency for the Nazi criminals in the Federal Republic of Germany and the way these matters were dealt with in the PRL (“prosecuting the perpetrators of these crimes [on Jews and Poles helping them] has not been and must not be diminished or limited in time”). Thirty-eight volumes of files from the GKBZHWP, including 2086 records of witnesses’ interrogations and hundreds of other documents, were used to compile the list of names of people murdered as a consequence of their help to the Jews.¹⁴⁴ But the way in which these materials were presented was not altered at all. Next to each name, the person’s age and the date of the event was given. A list of towns where unknown Poles died was prepared as well (e.g. several hundred Poles from Lvov were said to have been murdered in the Bełżec death camp). A source appendix with occupation directives and announcements was attached to the publication. In another study published in 1987 by Bielawski, as many as 872 repressed people were listed. The estimated number of people unknown by name also increased (1400).¹⁴⁵

¹⁴³ Z. Zieliński, “Activities of Catholic Orders on Behalf of Jews in Nazi-Occupied Poland,” in *Judaism and Christianity under the Impact of National Socialism (1919–1945)*, (Jerusalem, 1987), 381–394; polemics: S. Krakowski, “The Polish Church and the Holocaust,” *ibidem*, 395–399.

¹⁴⁴ W. Bielawski and C. Pilichowski, *Zbrodnie na Polakach dokonane przez hitlerowców za pomoc udzielaną Żydom* (Warsaw, 1981), see particularly 6–9.

¹⁴⁵ W. Bielawski, *Zbrodnie na Polakach dokonane przez hitlerowców za pomoc udzielaną Żydom* (Warsaw, 1987).

That some tendencies in the treatment of the help issue, characteristic of the second half of the 1960s, remained unchanged was demonstrated at a symposium organized by the GKBZHwP in April 1987. Kazimierz Kąkol, the then head of the Main Commission, in his foreword made a stand against the “activity of the German lobby, dragging into the circle of its distortions some unexpected allies, either ignorant of the truth, or manipulating it consciously.” In his speech, references to “Jewish passivity” were quite inevitable: help, according to Kąkol, could be given only to those who “had made initial steps in that direction” (i.e. had left the ghetto), those who “understood the situation” and “respected the rules of underground activity.” The existence of extremely limited means of help was also regarded as unquestionable. The subjects of the papers concerned the attitude towards the Holocaust of the Polish socialist movement, the communists, the Democratic Party and the peasants’ movement. A separate paper, although it diverged from the symposium’s subject, was devoted to the help of the Catholic Church to the Jews. In principle, these texts did not offer anything new in their interpretative and source-related aspects, as far as the author’s earlier statements were concerned; Polish accounts remained the basic sources, at the expense of documents and records.¹⁴⁶ This is obvious, particularly in the text devoted to the villages, full of unjustified generalizations made on the basis of individual cases and omissions (for instance, the problem of threats to those who helped the Jews).¹⁴⁷ A more nuanced picture of the attitudes of Polish society appeared in Michał Grynberg’s speech, which pointed out the modest achievements of historiography with regard to individual help, and stressed the moral decay caused by the occupier’s policy. He also recollected fragments of Zofia Kossak’s brochure of late 1942, *Dzisiejsze oblicze wsi*, which had not been referred to since the late 1950s. He spoke about the poor utilization of Jewish materials (accounts, memoirs and memorial books). He observed that based on lists created immediately after the war, it was not possible to determine the number of Jews who survived in occupied Poland. Grynberg also informed about the Institute’s participation in research on those who saved Jews, carried out by Samuel Oliner,¹⁴⁸ as well as about ŻIH’s actions to reward the Polish Righteous.¹⁴⁹ The symposium was held with the approval of the newly formed Polish Society of the Righteous among the Nations (*Polskie Towarzystwo Sprawiedliwych wśród Narodów Świata*).

¹⁴⁶ *Polskie podziemie polityczne wobec zagłady Żydów* (Warsaw, 1988). The papers were presented in the following order: Krzysztof Dunin-Łasowicz, Ryszard Nazarewicz, Wiesław Balcerak, Eugeniusz Fąfara.

¹⁴⁷ Similar theses can be found in: E. Fąfara, *Gehenna ludności żydowskiej* (Warsaw, 1983).

¹⁴⁸ S.P. Oliner and P.M. Oliner, *The Altruistic Personality: Rescuers of Jews in Nazi Europe* (New York, 1988).

¹⁴⁹ M. Grynberg, “Pomoc udzielana Żydom w okresie okupacji niemieckiej w Polsce. Uwagi i refleksje,” in *Polskie podziemie*, 85-98. Kossak’s booklet was quoted by B. Mark, *Walka i zagłada*, 166.

The studies, published by Polish émigré circles for an American audience, also presented a traditional image of help to the Jews. Above all, we need to note here a book published in 1989, written by Stefan Korboński, mentioned several times here, who was awarded the medal of the Righteous among the Nations in 1980.¹⁵⁰ It contained the same elements as his earlier historical and commemorative works.¹⁵¹ Unfortunately, due to the author's polemic intentions and his completely uncritical reliance on literature, his book is of minor cognitive value. But the estimations of numbers of Jews rescued thanks to hundreds of thousands of Poles, of whom more than two and a half thousand were to have died, he gave were lower than before (about 85,000). He contrasted the masses saving Jews with the few blackmailers (*szmalcownicy*) and denunciators and units of the "Nazi NSZ faction," organizing manhunts for Jews. He noted cases of help offered by fervent nationalists. The data concerning the numbers of those repressed for helping Jews that appeared in Korboński's text came from Waław Zajączkowski's publication released in the USA in 1988. Those numbers were obtained by a biased "count" of cases of repression that appeared in the historical literature. The work lacks any cognitive value and we need to make a note of it only due to its presence in academic circulation.¹⁵²

¹⁵⁰ S. Korboński, *The Jews and Poles in World War II* (New York, 1989). Polish issue was entitled: *Polacy, Żydzi i Holokaust* (Warsaw, 1999), 76–77.

¹⁵¹ S. Korboński, *Polish Underground State - a Guide to the Underground, 1939–1945* (New York, 1978). The most recent Polish issue: *Polskie państwo podziemne. Przewodnik po podziemiu z lat 1939–1945* (Warsaw, 2008). One of the chapters was devoted to the issue of Polish-Jewish relations (pp. 126–144). Korboński claimed that, according to the KWC estimations, 200,000 Jews were rescued in Poland. The significance attached to the issue of help by the author is reflected in the fact that he included an appendix containing a list of Poles awarded the Righteous medal (as of 31 May 1974).

¹⁵² W. Zajączkowski, *Martyrs of Charity* (Washington, 1988). The book was published by the publishing house of the Maksymilian Kolbe Foundation (*Fundacja Maksymiliana Kolbego*). The intentions that motivated the author and the editors are reflected in the complaint that in Jerusalem there was a square named after Hitler's heir – Konrad Adenauer – and at the exhibition in Yad Vashem, the communist provocation, i.e. the Kielce pogrom, was presented tendentiously, while there was no monument of the Christian "martyrs of charity." From the author's preface, we can learn that Yehuda Bauer was a "Holocaust ideologist" while the criteria introduced by Yad Vashem have the character of persecution, as the "goyim" are being judged on the basis of Jewish testimonies. There should not be 2,000 Righteous (as Yad Vashem wants), but 2 million (*ibidem*, 79). The peak of absurdity was the publication of a facsimile of an anti-Jewish libel by Father Justyn Pranajtis (p. 105). Zajączkowski dealt with the issue for two reasons: his family history (his mother saved a Jewish mother and her child) and due to "some circles' promulgation of harmful opinions on the attitude of Poles towards the Jews" (see "O potrzebie odfałszowania historii, rozmowa z dr. Zajączkowskim," *Słowo Powszechne*, 21 April 1983).

A Different View of Those *From my Homeland*

In the mid-1980s, the image of the occupation period created by Polish historiography began to crack. Poland was shocked by the screening of a monumental film by Claude Lanzmann – *Shoah* (premiered in April 1985). From the Polish point of view, the most important aspect of the film was the way of presenting the Poles as poor and indifferent bystanders of the Holocaust. The press (official, Catholic and samizdat) unanimously protested against the allegedly deliberate exaggerations, especially in the sequences showing peasants and diminishing the range of Polish help. One example was considered to have been the editing of the words of Jan Kar-ski, who was the only Polish Righteous shown in the film.¹⁵³

The paradigm of help and compassion as predominant phenomena among Polish society was soon shaken by Jan Błoński in his text “Biedni Polacy patrzą na getto” published in *Tygodnik Powszechny*.¹⁵⁴ This text became a turning point in the treatment of the Holocaust and Polish-Jewish relations, including the aid phenomena. Błoński, who not only was not a historian, but had not dealt with the subject before, revealed in his speech an important social fact: over forty years after the war, the issue of Polish reaction to the Holocaust was poorly and one-sidedly presented in historical writing. Another fact worth mentioning was the helplessness of the historians.¹⁵⁵ Still, their voice, although not dominant, turned out to be significant. Błoński’s main opponent, the lawyer Władysław Siła-Nowicki, was proud of the attitude presented towards the Jews by “the Polish nation,” that is, of everything possible having been done. This conclusion, given the image of the occupation presented in Polish historical literature, was absolutely justified. Teresa Prekerowa polemicized with him. Indicating the difficulties in assessing the numbers of rescuers and the rescued, she assumed that in pre-war Poland 80-120,000 Jews were hiding, of whom half survived;¹⁵⁶ thus we can talk about 160-360,000 of those helping (not only ethnic Poles, but also Belorussians and some Ukrainians), assuming two helping persons per one hiding on average. That would mean 1-2.5 percent of the adult population of the General Government. Twenty percent of help was paid for. Prekerowa presented memorial books unknown in Poland, containing the surnames of people who, using help as a pretext, took advantage of the Jews to later turn them over to certain death or murder the Jews themselves. Even if some of the cases were not true, there are so many of them that it would be difficult to

¹⁵³ A review of the discussion is beyond the scope of this text. General remarks: M.C. Steinlauf, *Bondage to the Dead: Poland and the Memory of the Holocaust* (Syracuse, 1997); Polish edition: *Pamięć nieprzyswojona* (Warsaw, 2001), 127-129, therein references to the most important texts: pp. 140-141.

¹⁵⁴ J. Błoński, “Biedni Polacy patrzą na getto,” *Tygodnik Powszechny* 2 (1987).

¹⁵⁵ The debate’s record: *My Brother’s Keeper? Recent Polish Debates on the Holocaust*, ed. A. Polonsky (London-New York, 1990).

¹⁵⁶ Note that in her book on “Żegota” Prekerowa wrote about 80-120,000 of the rescued.

accept that they were all made up. In her opinion, crimes of this kind had their roots not in anti-Semitism, but in greed. Siła-Nowicki repeated the thesis about ruthless punishment administered to the blackmailers (*szmalcownicy*); Prekerowa recalled that the fight with blackmail started as late as in 1943 and the effects of this activity were paltry: five people in Warsaw and several in Cracow were shot. She rejected categorically the Jewish passivity stereotype, which allegedly made help difficult or impossible.¹⁵⁷ From the point of view of these deliberations, Błoński's statement entitled *Polak-katolik i katolik-Polak* was more important. This time, the starting point of the reflection on Polish attitudes towards the Holocaust was the text of the *Protest* leaflet.¹⁵⁸ Thus, 46 years after its publication, a vicious circle of dodging and oblique statements was broken and a world view of a person who had laid the foundations of organized help to the Jews was in the very center of public debate.

Another significant event was an article by a sociologist who lives and lectures in the US, Jan T. Gross, published in the London periodical *Aneks*.¹⁵⁹ His essay changed the perspective of treatment of Polish-Jewish relations, restored source texts hitherto absent from public discourse, presented sharp theses and openly formulated important and troublesome questions (e.g. why so few Jews survived the occupation in Poland). The text was written in opposition to the tendencies dominant in Polish historical literature as, according to Gross, the "interpretative canon on Polish-Jewish relations" is completely at odds with the facts emerging from the sources. Gross totally departed from the current interpretative canon. The title of his essay, "*Ten jest z ojczyzny mojej... ale go nie lubię*" ["He is from my Homeland... but I do not like him] referred to Bartoszewski's and Lewin's book. Gross emphasized the fragments of the accounts published in the volume which escaped the attention of most reviewers and readers. He had no doubts that hostility towards the Jews was a factor which made helping the Jews difficult and sometimes even impossible: "The Jews were told to sit in the proverbial closet and they were not allowed to go outside or even approach the window. It was not because people feared that they would meet a German walking by (as there were few of them), but most of all, they were afraid that a caretaker, a neighbor, a child playing with a ball in the yard or any passerby might denounce them to the police." Helping the Jews, unlike the affirmative attitude towards the underground activity, did not enjoy social support. According to Gross, the logic dominant in Polish literature, which reduced Poles' behavior to fear ("thinking in terms of the cost"), not only avoids the ethical dimension of the phenomenon, but also fails to convincingly explain "general social phenomena at a collective level." He highlighted that apart from the analysis of the conduct, it is

¹⁵⁷ T. Prekerowa, "The 'just' and the 'passive'," in *My Brother's Keeper?*, 72-80 (title of the original: "Sprawiedliwi i bierni").

¹⁵⁸ Paper presented at the conference *Jews and Christians in a Pluralistic World* organized in Vienna on 28-30 November 1988.

¹⁵⁹ J.T. Gross, "'Ten jest z ojczyzny mojej...' ale go nie lubię," *Aneks* 46-47 (London, 1986). My quotes come from the edition: idem, *Upiorna dekada. Trzy eseje o stereotypach na temat Żydów, Polaków, Niemców i komunistów 1939-1948* (Cracow, 1998).

necessary to examine the attitudes of Poles towards Jews. The widespread existence of anti-Semitism, confirmed by different credible sources, helps to understand the causes of social isolation of those helping. This indifference and lack of readiness to help influenced the scope and brutality of repressions for this kind of activity. The only prohibition imposed by the occupier to be obeyed was that of helping the Jews. These theses completely opposed current literature, in which help to the Jews was presented as a mass phenomenon, taking place in a supportive or neutral environment. Gross stated that the question of help to the Jews could not be isolated from the occupation context and everyday reality. He referred here to the testimony left by Doctor Zygmunt Klukowski, a doctor from Szczebrzeszyn, who wrote in his diary "in what circumstances the Jews were killed" in his home town and its vicinity in 1942. This shocking record, published in 1958, quickly sank into oblivion. And what is more, it was quoted selectively. In the volume *Ten jest z ojczyzny mojej* the fragments of *Dziennik okupacji Zamojszczyzny* were mentioned twice – two cases of help to the Jews were taken from it.¹⁶⁰ Klukowski's text, however, was not a proper building block strengthening the heroic myth. It describes complete indifference of the local community to the fate of the Jews, sealed before their own eyes, and also with the depravation, corruption and collaboration with the occupier in persecution of the Jews. Reading this text, one can easily understand the fear of the Righteous diagnosed by Maria Hochberg-Mariańska in 1947. According to Gross, it had two dimensions. The first one was real, stemming from anxiety about the stereotypical link between Jews (and in this case, also their occupation-time protectors) and money. A more important dimension was the awareness that helping the Jews was a breach of the existing rules of behavior in the local community, which put them in opposition to it. "Such people were dangerous for the neighborhood as they could give testimony about how others behaved towards the Jews." When it was published, Gross' essay passed practically unnoticed in Poland.¹⁶¹ Although widely read, it was not generally commented on. The discussion over the text started in fact only after it was republished in an extended version in the late 1990s.¹⁶²

¹⁶⁰ *Ten jest z ojczyzny mojej. Polacy z pomocą Żydom 1939-1945*, ed. W. Bartoszewski, Z. Lewinówna (Cracow, 1969), 2nd edition, 645, 868. Zygmunt Mańkowski, who helped to establish *Dziennik*, did not refer to him in his publications of the 1970s, writing on the attitudes towards the Jews, and he did not quote the document creating an idealized picture of Polish-Jewish relations (e.g. *Między Wisłą a Bugiem. Studium o polityce okupanta i postawach społeczeństwa* [Lublin, 1978]).

¹⁶¹ In the same issue of *Aneks* where J.T. Gross's text was published there is also an extremely interesting text by Aleksander Smolar about the Polish remembrance of the Holocaust. The author also raised the question of help to the Jews, and noted that it was mainly surreptitious and motivated by mercy, but not by a sense of civil community ("Tabu i niewinność," *Aneks* 46-47 [London, 1986]).

¹⁶² See the still inspiring discussion "Polacy i Żydzi w upiornej dekadzie z udziałem W. Borodzieja, H. Datner, A. Friszke, D. Stoli, J. Borkiewicz, A. Magdziak-Miszewskiej, W. Wieczorka," *Więź* 7 (1999): 3-22. In the same issue: also other statements on Gross's essay.

Dilemmas of Historiography after 1989

In the early 1990s, new ways of presenting the subject emerged: the question of organized and individual help to the Jews was discussed in a broader context. Such an approach can be found in the chapter on the occupation in a new synthesis of the Polish Jews' history in the 20th century written by Teresa Prekerowa. Besides descriptions of solidarity actions by the Warsaw ghetto wall, she wrote about conflicts between the Polish underground and ghetto refugees, and about various fears of transferring weapons to the Jews. The discussion of cases of help was accompanied by the issue of indifference of a large part of society to hiding Jews, the corruption and behavior of the "blue" police, and finally, references to paid help, although according to the author the number of those who wanted to make a fortune on Jewish fate could not be large as "after a few years of occupation, not many people were able to pay such sums." Rational estimates of the number of rescued Jews in occupied Poland began to emerge. According to Prekerowa, 30–60,000 Jews were saved among the Polish population. An important conclusion was drawn: the survivors included both those saved thanks to Polish help and those who were not helped.¹⁶³ Earlier on, even if this thesis was not formulated directly, there was a general belief that each Jew owed his or her life to a Pole. Józef Adelson recalled, on the grounds of archival data, that within the borders of post-war Poland until June 1945, out of the 72,000 people registered by the CKŻP the number of those who survived the war on the Aryan side did not exceed 20,000.¹⁶⁴ Even if this was just a part of the rescued, it becomes clear that the thesis about 100,000 Jews saved by Poles was a propaganda construct, relatively easy to disprove. But in the newly written syntheses of Polish history of the occupation period, the interpretation of the problem remained fairly unmodified.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶³ T. Prekerowa, "Wojna i okupacja," in *Najnowsze dzieje Żydów w Polsce (w zarysie do 1950 roku)*, ed. J. Tomaszewski (Warsaw, 1993). See particularly the chapter "Ludność i podziemie polskie wobec Żydów w latach 1941–1945," 348–364.

¹⁶⁴ J. Adelson, "W Polsce zwanej ludową," in *ibidem*, 388–389.

¹⁶⁵ A typical, outstandingly disappointing example, given the author's competence, is Łuczak's synthesis. Further, he talks about 100,000 Jews who "avoided the Holocaust" in occupied Poland, about the condemnation of the German policy by society and the working class, as well as comprehensive help from the government, its representatives in Poland and the PPR, Church and individual help. "Żegota" and the ŻKN (the Bund was not mentioned) were to have helped over 30,000 needy. They were to have obtained, apart from Polish subsidies, "small amounts" from "foreign Jewish associations." "A fraction of a percent" recruited from the social dregs decided to collaborate with the occupier. The author was not interested in the details of help given in the occupied country; he decided to devote more attention to the diplomatic activity of the Polish government (C. Łuczak, *Polska i Polacy w drugiej wojnie światowej. Polska. Dzieje państwa narodu i kultury*, vol. 5 [Poznań, 1993] 128–131). A similar treatment of the subject can be found in a book by the same author: C. Łuczak, *Zagłada* (Warsaw, 1989), 86–92. On the other hand, Wojciech Roszkowski, the author of the paramount synthesis of Polish history written in the samizdat circulation, wrote briefly on

Statistical questions also appeared in Ewa Kurek's study on hiding Jewish children in convents printed in 1992.¹⁶⁶ This publication, prefaced by Jan Karski, was very well received. The book discusses the ways in which Jewish children reached the convents, the conditions of hiding, the motives of the rescuers, the numbers involved, and the territorial range of the action. Despite the author's declarations, the book was not devoid of emotions, which is demonstrated by the repeated accusations of Israeli historiography and Jewish organizations. Kurek, based on the sources she gathered (mainly accounts collected by herself), revealed that 37 out of 74 existing convents participated in saving the children (there was "indirect evidence" that 6 more were engaged in that activity and 6 other convents were said to have hidden adults only) in 180 nunneries and educational and care institutions, most of which were in the General Government, and 1/3 of them in Warsaw and its vicinity.¹⁶⁷ The method of interpreting these data must raise certain doubts: the author claims that 2/3 of the convents took part in the action to help, while 37 constitutes exactly 50 percent of them. Obviously, adding the 12 mentioned above gives 2/3, a fraction desired from the propaganda point of view, but it also shows a strong attachment to wishful thinking. More important is that, largely, the calculations were made on the basis of late accounts, and thus their accuracy must raise well-founded doubts. As a matter of fact, the author is being inconsistent here; after all, she is aware of the different cognitive value of the accounts, and of the apologetic tendencies of historical literature aimed at serving the interests of the individual convents. Five convents were reported to have saved one child and 17 to have saved more than 10. The highest numbers of children saved were by the Sisters of the Family of Mary (five hundred) and the Daughters of Charity (several hundred). Kurek accepts the number of 1,200 saved children as the lower limit. It would be an enormous number given that only about 5,000 Jewish children survived the Holocaust.¹⁶⁸ Those esti-

matters of help as well as on the Holocaust. He mentioned a "sequence of relief activities" of the Polish underground "facilitating the fight of the ŻOB command or escape outside the ghetto walls" and the murder of "thousands of Poles" by the Germans as a consequence of their hiding Jews. The government and society, "although there were cases of blackmailing and the NSZ units sometimes attacked hiding Jews" – except the anti-Semites – made heroic efforts to save the Jews. Mentioning Stanisław Piasecki and Adolf Nowaczyński here is surprising to say the least, not only because the people omitted were actually key figures for the action; quoted in A. Albert [i.e. W. Roszkowski], *Najnowsza historia Polski 1918–1980* (London, 1991), 4th edition, 408–409.

¹⁶⁶ Her first text on the subject was published several years earlier: E. Kurek-Lesik, "Udział żeńskich zgromadzeń zakonnych w akcji ratowania dzieci żydowskich w Polsce w latach 1939–1945 (Zarys problematyki)," *Dzieje Najnowsze* 3–4 (1986).

¹⁶⁷ E. Kurek, *Gdy klasztor znaczył życie. Udział żeńskich zgromadzeń zakonnych w akcji ratowania dzieci żydowskich w Polsce* (Cracow, 1992), 118–119, and 124. A new edition, supplemented with a collection of accounts, was published in 2001 in Lublin.

¹⁶⁸ Prekerowa, based on the statement of I. Sendlarowa and of three other female "Żegota" activists, wrote about 500 Jewish children, who (thanks to "Żegota" and the Department of Social Welfare of the City of Warsaw) had been sent to nunneries and institutions

mates are confirmed neither by post-war Jewish materials nor by other Polish sources.¹⁶⁹ On the other hand, Ewa Kurek, as she writes, did not receive permission from Yeshiva University in New York to conduct preliminary research in the archives of the “Rescue Children” organization. The applied categorization also raises doubts – in the separate convents and their affiliated institutions only a few people knew about the hiding of Jews. Sometimes people were not aware of the true identity and descent of the children. Meanwhile, Kurek ascribed the merits to entire convents. Much space is devoted to the motivation of the rescuers. The nuns’ motives were supposedly only humanitarian, and occasionally the financial question played a certain role; perhaps that is the picture that emerges from accounts given after some years, but the collections from Poland and Israel were completely overlooked. Some fragments of the book give the impression that the main opponents of saving Jewish children were their parents, submissive to the nationalists and religious zealots (the Warsaw ghetto elite “did not cherish children’s lives as a value in itself”).¹⁷⁰ The argument that the hidden children asked to be baptized seems to reflect a lack of psychological knowledge. Kurek answers “no” to the question whether missionary motives played a decisive role in the convents’ joining the action to help the Jews. The reality, it seems, must have been more complicated, especially as Kurek assessed very severely the reclaiming of children by Jewish institutions after the war: it was, allegedly, an action motivated by ideology, harmful for the children. Many questions remain unanswered. Hiding the children in the convents and their affiliated institutions is certainly quite a phenomenon – the nuns undertook dangerous activity of this kind on their own initiative, behind their superiors’ backs (Kurek quotes only one account of asking a bishop on the matter, and writes about the lack of insight among the hierarchy), and sometimes contrary to their opinion (although such a situation, described in the work of Nechama Tec, is not quoted by Kurek). It is difficult not to notice that in the 1960s the episcopate decided to dismiss the involvement of nuns as propaganda and carry out an appropriate examination.¹⁷¹

The fiftieth anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising (1993) brought more interesting texts on the issue. During a conference in the Institute of History of the

run by the nuns (*Konspiracyjna Rada*, s. 215). Obviously, some of the children could have reached the nunnery institutions in a different, individual way.

¹⁶⁹ The Israeli author polemicizing with Kurek seems to be closer to the truth when he writes about several hundred saved children (see N. Bogner, “The Convent Children: The Rescue of Jewish Children in Polish Convents during the Holocaust,” *Yad Vashem Studies* 27 [1999]: 235–285).

¹⁷⁰ To support this opinion, she refers to a well-known fragment from Ringelblum’s notes of 14 December 1942. But she is unaware of “Żegota’s” appeals of January 1943 to save Jewish children (e.g. Kermisz wrote about it, *Activities of the Council*, 375). On the other hand, Ringelblum, quoted by Kurek, after all states clearly that the idea to lead a larger group out of the ghetto came to nothing due to the lack of interest on the Polish side.

¹⁷¹ The Department of Monastic Affairs of the Secretariat of the Primate of Poland carried out a survey on the question of help given to the Jews by the nuns. On this initiative, see: *Ten jest z ojczyzny mojej* (1st edition), 573.

Polish Academy of Sciences, a paper was presented on help to the Jews given by the AK, the Catholic Church, the socialist movement, the peasant movement and the communists.¹⁷² Although some of the texts mentioned 100,000 saved Jews, it seems that the inclination was to accept the lowered estimate of 50-60,000. Contrary to the title of the symposium, the main subject was still organized help, which was made not only the starting point for the analysis of Polish-Jewish relations, but a central issue as well. There were no new topics and no new interpretations. In some of the texts we can find unfounded generalizations (e.g. about the sentences carried out on 60 blackmailers) and some simply bizarre theses. For example, in a paper on the attitude of the AK, the author mentions “armed help” of an AK partisan unit to the Jewish prisoners who started a rebellion in Treblinka on 2 August 1943.¹⁷³ The starting point in the presentation of the situation of the Jews in the country was the statement that “help and protection of Jews” met a “particular difficulty,” i.e. the difference between the Jews and the Poles. The author wrote that the BCh started “action to help the Jews” in 1941. Moreover, the BCh made “serious achievements” in the fight against the blackmailers – there was, allegedly, a special cell in the BCh, which was in contact with the ŻOB in the Warsaw ghetto. But Jews were not admitted to the partisan units, because of “the increasing risk at that time.” What the risk was, they did not specify. Although there were anti-Semites in the AK and the BCh, “both organizations implemented government policy and offered all kinds of help to the Jews.” As for the statistics, the author’s position is not clear – at one point he writes about 100,000 “saved thanks to the patriotic attitude of the Poles,” and on the next page – about 50,000 “hidden by Poles.” Different forms of help to the Jews were cautiously identified (food supplies, hiding, etc.), but there are no analyses of any aspect of hiding in the country. Instead, there are generalizations, e.g. that in some regions, help had a mass character. A reference to money is present in the text (“it was easier to hide . . . for the rich Jews, who had gold and foreign currency”), as well as a statement that medical and craft skills proved useful. When dealing with repressions, the author does not mention the dangers to the neighbors; in several passages there is a motif of “complexity” of Polish-Jewish relations, and even “peasant-Jewish” relations during the occupation, but the reader is left to guess here. The

¹⁷² *Spółeczeństwo polskie wobec martyrologii i walki Żydów w II wojnie światowej. Materiały z sesji w Instytucie Historii PAN w dniu 11 III 1993*, ed. K. Dunin-Łasowicz (Warsaw, 1996). The editor laments in the preface that for reasons beyond his control, it was impossible to print two texts “on important subjects” in the volume on OW-KB help for the ŻZW and the attitude of the government in London towards the Jews. One can sadly conclude that, in this story, Iwański is as important as Władysław Sikorski. This, however, was not all; those subjects were considered “exhausted to some extent” by T. Bednarczyk and D. Stola. This juxtaposition in a publication printed by the PAN Institute of History is odd.

¹⁷³ P. Matusak, “ZWZ i AK w akcji pomocy Żydom,” in *Spółeczeństwo polskie wobec martyrologii...*, 128. Such a thesis appeared earlier in a study of the AK Warsaw District history: J. Gozdawa-Gołębiowski, *Obszar warszawski Armii Krajowej. Studium wojskowe* (Lublin, 1992), 350–357.

paper reiterated the theses of the peasant movement's historiography of the 1970s and 1980s, which presented a one-dimensional picture of the Polish countryside of the occupation period, emerging on the grounds of post-war accounts collected in the archive of the Institute of the Peasant Movement History. But the expression of some doubts was absolutely up-to-date.¹⁷⁴

A landmark paper from the point of view of armed help for the Jews was presented by Paweł Szapiro at another symposium on the 50th anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. He emphasized the concealment of "solidarity actions" by the ghetto walls carried out by the AK in the Polish underground press. Despite quite extended analyses of the underground press, no one paid attention to this phenomenon until then. On the contrary – Strzembosz, as we remember, wrote about the propagandistic and moral significance of the actions from the point of view of Warsaw inhabitants. Although Szapiro was primarily interested in the press discourse, he focused on the serious "motivational difficulties" encountered by the Kedyw command in the implementation of the armed actions after 20 April 1943. From the accounts collected by Strzembosz, it appeared that, evidently, soldiers refused to fight for the Jews. It was precisely the anti-Semitism of the AK grass roots that was to have been the reason behind the lack of information about "solidarity actions" in the underground press.¹⁷⁵ Szapiro showed the possibility of an innovative approach to a subject treated in a strongly routine way.

Another kind of innovative undertaking was *Księga Sprawiedliwych (The Book of the Righteous)* edited by Michał Grynberg. It contained 550 notes concerning 1,200 people honored with the medal of the Righteous among the Nations during 1963–1989. The notes comprise data of the rescuers and rescued, the circum-

¹⁷⁴ T. Kisielewski, "Wieś i ruch ludowy wobec tragedii Żydów," in *Spółeczeństwo polskie wobec martyrologii*, 57. The text was based on the studies of K. Przybysz and A. Wojtas, *Bataliony Chłopskie*, vol. 2 (Warsaw 1985), especially 257–271 (presenting several examples of help to the Jews without any analysis of the issue) and K. Przybysz, *Chłopi polscy wobec okupacji hitlerowskiej* (Warsaw, 1983) (on the issue: 221–227, the author's thesis: "a beautiful episode in the history of the Polish countryside during the occupation was also help to the Jewish population. It was a response of the peasants to the terror of the occupier applied to the Jews." Ibidem, 221. Help to the Jews was obviously selfless. Conclusion: "tens of thousands of Jews owe their survival to the patriotic attitude of the peasants" (p. 227). An analogous opinion was presented later as well: see J. Gmitruk, P. Matusak, W. Wojdyło, *Bataliony Chłopskie* (Warsaw, 1987) (theses: "Mass help organized by the peasant movement could be implemented only thanks to the heroic attitude of almost all Polish villages"; not only those who were helping were exposed to danger, but also those who knew; about 120,000 Jews were rescued; and finally, the conclusion: "help given to the POWs and Jews is an expression of a profound anti-Nazi and international attitude as well as heroism of our nation." Ibidem, 251–253); J. Fajkowski, "Wspólny los. Z problematyki żydowskiej na okupowanych ziemiach polskich," *Zeszyty Muzeum Polskiego Ruchu Ludowego* 5 (1991).

¹⁷⁵ P. Szapiro, "Problem pomocy dla warszawskiego getta w publicystyce Polski Podziemnej," in *Holocaust z perspektywy półwiecza*, ed. D. Grinberg, P. Szapiro (Warsaw, 1994), 289–231.

stances of help given, e.g. the neighbors' behavior or the dangers involved in this kind of activity, and the post-war fate of the Poles and the Jews. They were compiled on the basis of ŻIH and Yad Vashem documents. The book also contained biographical notes of those who symbolize help to the Jews (e.g. "Żegota" activists), intellectuals and people of culture (e.g. Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz), but first of all the stories of people from all over occupied Poland who rescued Jews individually.¹⁷⁶

Extremely important was Warsaw historian Dariusz Stola's work published in 1995, on the activity of Ignacy Schwarzbart, the Jewish representative in the National Council of Poland in London, which dealt in a new way with many aspects of the issue of help to the Jews. The fragment which deserves most attention concerns the sums transferred to "Żegota," the ŻOB and the ŻKN from London (subsection *Pieniądze* [Money]). Based on an analysis of telegrams, signed receipts, reports and other documents from the AAN and the PUMST, Stola demonstrated that the addressees did not receive half of the sums allotted for them by the Polish government and international Jewish organizations (only 600,000 dollars were received out of the 1,300,000 sent since autumn 1942). 430,000 dollars were allocated to "Żegota" alone (including about 200,000 dollars as part of monthly subsidies of the Delegate Office, 124,000 dollars commissioned to be sent by London, 95,000 from the Joint and 10,000 from the Dutch government), of which only 220,000 were collected. For the period in question the author uses a black market dollar exchange rate, 100 PLN to the dollar, which seems to be an oversimplification. Budgetary subsidies to "Żegota" were given in zlotys, while the dollar exchange rate was volatile. In 1943 and 1944, i.e. exactly when "Żegota" was financed, paper dollars were sold at 160–220 zlotys).¹⁷⁷ Part of the subsidies for the ŻKN and the Bund was paid in zlotys.¹⁷⁸ At that stage of research, it was not possible to carry out a more profound analysis of the state of affairs or track the fate of all the lost parcels. In part, it seems, these could be "virtual" sums, which were not sent to Poland, especially in the second half of 1944. Another question to be explained is the issue of delayed payment of funds for the ŻKN and the Bund transferred via the government. Describing the efforts of the Jewish population representative in the National Council in London to expand "Żegota's" budget, the author concluded as follows: "Until the end, the government provided 'Żegota' with means disproportionate to the needs and promises."¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁶ M. Grynberg, *Księga Sprawiedliwych* (Warsaw, 1993).

¹⁷⁷ See *Polskie Siły Zbrojne*, vol. 3, 327. In 1942 35–70 zlotys (ibidem, 336). According to a telegram sent by Stefan Rowecki it appears that at the beginning of the "Great Action," the dollar exchange rate in the Warsaw ghetto fell to 23 zlotys, on 16 August it was already 10–14 zlotys (on the Aryan side 28 zlotys), and the price of a gold dollar fell to 140 zlotys.

¹⁷⁸ See "Sprawozdanie finansowe ŻKN w Polsce za okres od 1 I do 31 X 1943 [ŻKN in Poland financial report for 1 January–31 October 1943]," published in *Ten jest z ojczyzny mojej* (2nd edition), 1001.

¹⁷⁹ D. Stola, *Nadzieja i zagłada. Ignacy Schwarzbart – żydowski przedstawiciel w Radzie Narodowej RP (1940–1945)* (Warsaw, 1995), 207–222.

According to the data published in the book, it is irrefutable that international Jewish organizations allotted larger amounts to the action to help the Jews than the government and the Polish authorities (the same is reflected in the data presented by Iranek-Osmecki a few years before). Stola made public a number of documents that had been hitherto overlooked concerning the perception of Jewish matters in the civil and the military sectors of the Polish Underground State.

Let Us Count Them Again (It's Important Who Does The Counting)

In 1997 the Institute of National Remembrance, GKBZHWP, together with the Polish Association of the Righteous among the Nations, prepared another publication concerning those repressed for helping the Jews. This time it was published in English (*Those Who Helped. Polish Rescuers of Jews During the Holocaust*), probably to neutralize Zajązkowski's biased compendium. It contains 704 surnames.¹⁸⁰ It is not difficult to discern that Bielawski's findings were verified (by Teresa Prekerowa), apart from the cases which could be verified through independent sources. A similar rule was applied in the review of the towns said to have fallen victim to pacifications because of helping the Jews. One needs to treat those activities as preliminary, as there are many doubtful cases left. A list of the people who received the medal of the Righteous was attached to the publication. The book was prefaced by Prekerowa, who wrote about "Żegota." Given that a vast majority of the repressed did not have any links with "Żegota," this was somewhat unintelligible. Again, the publication was not given an academic character. The way of presenting the problem was different – the context of repressive actions was not in the scope of interest. This gap is filled by Teresa Prekerowa's text, published almost at the same time in the niche journal *Acta Poloniae Historica*. It was the first attempt to analyse the rescuers statistically and historically (obviously, if we do not count Nechama Tec's analysis written 10 years before¹⁸¹). Two groups of materials were her starting point: the documents in ŻIH archives concerning those who were awarded the Medal of Righteous, as well as materials concerning those repressed for helping the Jews. Prekerowa observed that only 20 out of 704 murdered Poles were posthumously honored (hiding Jews died with Poles and thus there were no witnesses of their activity). The analysis included 3,300 people who were deemed "typical" representatives of the Poles "providing help to the Jews." How many Poles were there? Considering Prekerowa's earlier statements on this issue, it must be surprising that there had to be 300–400,000 of them, but not all of them helped to the extent which deserved a Yad Vashem medal. In a footnote, it was emphasized that due to lack of space it was impossible to present detailed calculations. The largest number of

¹⁸⁰ *Those Who Helped. Polish Rescuers of Jews During the Holocaust* (Warsaw, 1997), pt. 3.

¹⁸¹ N. Tec, *When Light Pierced the Darkness. Christian Rescue of Jews in Nazi-Occupied Poland* (New York, 1986).

people engaged in saving Jews were 30–39 years old (29 percent), 19 percent were 25–29, 19 percent were 40–49, and the smallest number were 20–24 years old (8 percent). Fifty-eight percent were married, of whom 42 percent were in childless marriages, and 20 percent in marriages with small children. Forty percent of the rescuers lived in the country, and 15 percent in small towns. A small number of young people made their mark in saving Jews (contrary to their engagement in underground activity). Half of the rescuers from the big cities lived in Warsaw. As for the repressions – 85 percent of people murdered for helping Jews lived in the country and small towns. The biggest mass execution (Ciepielów) claimed 33 victims. It was also said that denunciations motivated by anti-Semitism, fear and neighbor antagonisms were more frequent in the country than in the towns (there were no percentage data for that). Among the rescuers, the biggest groups were the peasants (50 percent) and the intelligentsia (32 percent). Contrary to previously held opinions, there was a comparatively small number of workers (13 percent), and, what is more, domestic servants were dominant in this group; industrial workers constituted only a small percentage. At this point, attention was drawn to the contradiction between these data and the dark picture of Polish peasants and the petite bourgeoisie in Jewish accounts, as well as the negligible significance of political views (only 5 percent of those awarded the medal had any liaison with the underground). In 140 testimonies, contacts with the AK are predominant (100), but the small number of references to the AL (15) may be surprising. Twenty people declared having had contacts with the BCh. Organizational membership of those people, for most of them, had no direct connection with their activity in an underground organization. Another conclusion is equally interesting – 50 percent helped their neighbors or contractors from before the war, another 25 percent did so on the request of their acquaintances, and 10 percent helped complete strangers.¹⁸² Many of these calculations, as was stressed, did not tally with Tec's research. Some conclusions are also different: Prekerowa does not agree with the opinion that people who saved Jews were characterized by individualism, and above all, with their dissimilarity from their neighbors (this involves not only national differences). She claims that widespread anti-Semitism could not be the only factor at play in hiding their help from their neighbors (and sometimes family members), as the need to keep the secret was typical of any underground activity (including activity on behalf of the Jews). Therefore she does not agree with the thesis about the alienation of the rescuers from their own society. Yet her study confirms a greater openness to the Jewish fate in the pre-war south-east provinces, but not in Lithuanian and Belarusian areas. It would be difficult to indicate qualities characteristic of this group: "Those who helped were ordinary people who differed greatly from each other, as ordinary people do, and I do not think it is possible to find any characteristics they

¹⁸² T. Prekerowa, "Who helped Jews during the Holocaust in Poland?," *Acta Poloniae Historica* 76 (1997): 153–170.

shared in common.”¹⁸³ Unfortunately, Teresa Prekerowa’s death (in 2000) stopped this research and her text passed unnoticed.

The study *Those Who Helped* makes some more generalizations possible. As it turns out, most victims (as many as 242) came from the Cracow District. In the Radom District there were 175 such people, in the Warsaw District 141, in the Lublin District 66. We might wonder whether we are dealing with a different scale of help in the individual regions or a different detectability by the Germans, or perhaps they are just a result of different criteria adopted by the employees of the separate district commissions. From an analysis of the investigation and inquiry materials on whose basis lists of the repressed were compiled, one can come to the conclusion that the credibility of the notes in many cases raises serious doubts.¹⁸⁴ The prosecutors who interrogated the witnesses, a fact I have already mentioned several times, neither in the 1960s nor in the 1980s were interested in the circumstances of these crimes. Meanwhile, the picture arising from the testimonies collected by them is not black and white. In many cases, the Poles hiding Jews were victims of denunciations of their neighbors, of the activity of the “blue” policemen as well as of known and unknown armed perpetrators. The latter were not noted at all, which calls for reflection on the criteria applied in those studies. Thus it appears as if the Poles persecuted by their fellow countrymen do not deserve remembrance and honoring.¹⁸⁵

¹⁸³ Ibidem, 170.

¹⁸⁴ E.g. the case of Wola Przybysławska, where on 10 December 1942 19 people were to be shot for helping the Jews, *Those Who Helped*, pt. 3, 50. The source of this information is the documentation made as part of a survey concerning German crimes conducted in 1945. But the investigative material of this case (1969) does not corroborate this interpretation, as only 2 of 13 witnesses linked the death of three people with help to the Jews. On the other hand, it is difficult to explain why Professor Franciszek Raszeja is included here; it is a well-known fact that he was murdered in the ghetto, where he legally came to visit his patient. The presence of Father Roman Archutowski, who died at Majdanek, is doubtful. Friedman (and, after him, Polish authors) writes that the reason for his arrest was help given to the Jews. But Archutowski was detained in the Pawiak prison after mass round-ups of 11 November 1942 (cf. W. Bartoszewski, *Warszawski pierścień śmierci* [Warsaw 1970], 220). Father Zygmunt Surdacki, administrator of the Lublin Diocese, is also listed. Meanwhile in the first study on the martyrdom of the Lublin Church, written by a well-informed person, we can find information that he was arrested for his contacts with the underground (see ks. [Father] Z. Goliński, *Biskupi i kapłani Lubelszczyzny w szponach gestapo 1939-1945* [Lublin, 1946], 13). We can quote more similar cases. There is also the case of Iwański’s sons, who could not have died in battles which never took place.

¹⁸⁵ I conducted a critical analysis of the discussed studies in the article: “Polska ludność chrześcijańska wobec eksterminacji Żydów – dystrykt lubelski,” in *Akcja Reinhardt*, 322–324. In Gutman’s and Krakowski’s book a characteristic case was pointed out. Two women, named Koneczny, from the town of Giebułtów, were murdered either by a Polish unit (the sources mention the NSZ or the AK) or by the Germans who arrived following an attack of armed Poles on the house of people who were hiding Jews. The Jews, no doubt, died at the hands of the Poles (see *Unequal Victims*, 205–206 and *Those Who Helped*, 79). On the other hand, Stefan Sawa from the village of Brzechów in the Kielce Province is not on the list; while

Soon, there appeared efforts in completely different directions. Tomasz Strzembosz, in his crucial work *Rzeczpospolita Podziemna*, published in 2000, doubted both the statistics of the GKBZHWP concerning the Poles murdered as a consequence of the help they gave to the Jews, and the procedures of awarding the medal of Righteous among the Nations. In his opinion, the number of 7,000 murdered is “undoubtedly only a part of those murdered,” whereas there were to have been “thousands” of them. It is not known, however, on what grounds this estimation was based, as Strzembosz himself did not conduct any research on the subject, nor did he (apart from the military aspect of help) publish any texts concerning the Holocaust. It is surprising that: “nobody . . . in Poland carried out systematic and multi-layered research this far, and matters of saving the Jews, which the GKBZHWP encountered, resulted from the trials concerning German crimes.” In fact, as I have already mentioned a number of times in this text, extensive research aiming at establishing the accurate number of Poles repressed for helping the Jews had been conducted by this institution since the mid-1960s. Special investigations were initiated and thousands of witnesses were interrogated. Another issue which appears in the context of Strzembosz’s publication is the lack of any methodological suggestions concerning such research. As for the number of the Righteous, Strzembosz claimed that over 5 percent of Polish citizens saving Jews “was just a small fraction of the masses participating in the helping action.” In his belief, there were “many tens of thousands” of “rescuers.”¹⁸⁶ And again, one has to guess on what grounds this conclusion is based. It is obvious that the number of people awarded the medal is lower than the number of those who saved Jews (Prekerowa and other authors highlighted that), but the method of addressing the problem used by the author of *Oddziały szturmowe konspiracyjnej Warszawy* was a harbinger of the forthcoming regression in the research.

And indeed, even though Strzembosz’s demands had little to do with the topic of his book or mainstream academic interest (moreover, they also appeared in the footnotes), they became the creed of a new research program. It also turned out that the program already existed in a budding form. As early as 1999, the Committee to Commemorate Poles Who Saved Jews (*Komitet dla Upamiętnienia Polaków Ratujących Żydów*) was established. Strzembosz was its co-founder and its initiator was the Polish émigré activist Anna Poray-Wybranowska, who was living in Canada.¹⁸⁷

helping Jews, he was murdered by an AK unit, on the order of the commander - the legendary partisan Marian Sołtysiak, pseudonym “Barabas.” The hiding Jews were murdered as well. In any case, Sawa received the medal of the Righteous posthumously.

¹⁸⁶ T. Strzembosz, *Rzeczpospolita podziemna. Społeczeństwo polskie a państwo podziemne* (Warsaw, 2000), 151.

¹⁸⁷ The opinions and competence of Poray-Wybranowska can be established on the basis of her statements. On 28 February 2008, during a meeting in the Consulate General of the Republic of Poland in Montreal, during a lecture with musical intervals by Chopin, she “spoke about Poles, almost one million of them, who somehow helped Jews to avoid the Holocaust. According to her, although the Poles were sometimes very inventive, the Germans

The purpose of this initiative was to gather accounts concerning help, and, most of all, promotion of Polish merits. The stimulus to increase such efforts was undoubtedly the publication of the book *Neighbors* by Jan T. Gross, which dealt with the murder in Jedwabne. Strzembosz became one of Gross's main antagonists, but his simultaneous engagement in documenting help to the Jews did not bring forth any academic publications. The accounts collected by the committee were submitted to the Archive of New Records (*Archiwum Akt Nowych*, AAN) after Strzembosz's death, and are quoted in many texts concerning Polish help to the Jews.

In 2006, the IPN (*Instytut Pamięci Narodowej*, Institute of National Remembrance) published the volume of studies *Polacy i Żydzi pod okupacją niemiecką 1939-1945*, which included an interesting study by Marcin Urynowicz, on organized and individual help.¹⁸⁸ The study brought many unknown or hitherto unused source materials (both in Prekerowa's work and other texts), but it also was controversial in many aspects. In the first part, the analysis of "Żegota's" financial matters deserves special attention, as it continues Prekerowa's and Stola's research. The author formulates an interesting hypothesis that the subsidies given to "Żegota" constituted 10 percent of the overall budget of the Delegate Office welfare department, which could correspond with the number of Jews in Poland before the war. The problem is that such presumptions are difficult to prove convincingly. It seems more likely that, even if we assume that these calculations are accurate (especially considering that they seem to include sums sent by Jewish organizations for the Bund and the ŻKN!), this accuracy seems totally accidental.¹⁸⁹ Urynowicz also challenges Prekerowa's view that 90 percent of "Żegota's" funds came from the government budget. In his opinion, the proportion coming from Jewish organizations was bigger. All this shows that the opaque financial questions require further examination (for instance, researchers ignored the fact that financial support increased while the number of Jews of the occupied Polish lands decreased dramatically), as they did with other aspects of

captured and murdered about 30,000 Poles for hiding Jews." This, in my opinion, does not require any comments.

¹⁸⁸ 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* (Warsaw, 2006), 209-279 and a source appendix containing 16 hitherto unpublished documents concerning "Żegota's" functioning and over 30 testimonies on individual help, mainly accounts from the ŻIH archive. The volume also contains regional studies (especially those concerning the Białystok and Rzeszów regions), in which large passages are devoted to the help issue.

¹⁸⁹ One could also argue that the sums transferred to "Żegota" were the same as the subsidies for the political parties. The Delegate of the Government, Jan Stanisław Jankowski, told the emissary Tadeusz Chciuk, pseudonym "Celt": "For a long time now, the Jews have been receiving one million zlotys a month from the Delegate Office, i.e. the same amount as each of the four big parties" (The Polish Institute and Sikorski Museum in London, later: PISM, kol. 25/9, *Sprawozdanie Celta*, pp. 4-5, "Uwagi, sugestie i dezyderaty Delegata rządu . . . [Remarks, suggestions and desiderata of the Government Delegate based on author's conversations with him from mid-April to 17 July 1944]."

paid help. Urynowicz points out difficulties in “Żegota’s” activity and the care of the Delegate Office for its “proper” political composition, and finally formulates the thesis that “saving human lives was not its most important goal” but considerations of a political nature were (in another paragraph, he claims that humanitarian considerations played the same role as political calculations, but several pages later that “the sense of loyalty towards exterminated fellow citizens” played the “smallest role” in finalization of the concept of “Żegota” by the Delegate Office). The ambivalence can be seen in the decisions taken by the civil sector of the Polish underground in financial questions, in the attitude towards armed combat of the Jews and, finally, in the way anti-Semitism and blackmailers (*szmalcownicy*) were fought. It is difficult not to agree with the postulated demand to depart from “idealization” of the Delegate Office, the political groups represented in it and even the very action to help.¹⁹⁰ Another justified observation concerns distorting the proportion of different forms of help by Polish historiography, i.e. the tendencies to accentuate organized help actions at the expense of various dominant individual actions. In the second part of his text, Urynowicz attempts a statistical analysis of cases of help, their forms and motivation of those who helped. He was inspired by Gunnar S. Paulsson’s work.¹⁹¹ Urynowicz, like Paulsson, expresses his conviction that the key to understanding the issue of Polish help to the Jews lies in the statistics.¹⁹² His analysis was based on the 2,473 motions kept in the ŻIH archives addressed to the Righteous Department of Yad Vashem concerning the granting of the medal (30 percent of them were not awarded). Urynowicz collates his conclusions with the findings of Nechama Tec (he does not take a position on Prekerowa’s text from *Acta Poloniae Historica*, based to a considerable extent on the same materials), and finds conformity of the estimates concerning selfless and paid help (according to him, 12 percent is the upper limit of those helping motivated by financial considerations).¹⁹³ One could argue about the validity of the selection of source material forming the starting point for those analyses, as the motions to grant the medal had a specific character (the Jews who applied for the award to be granted to the Poles who helped them adjusted their testimonies to the criteria of Yad Vashem). This can be seen, for instance, in the case of Mr and Mrs Krzyczkowski, who (if we are to trust the documents from their file) saved the Jews “not expecting

¹⁹⁰ Ibidem, 224, 234.

¹⁹¹ G.S. Paulsson, *Secret City. The Hidden Jews of Warsaw 1940-1945* (New Haven, 2002); Polish edition: *Utajone miasto* (Cracow, 2007). This book, as it does not belong to Polish historiography, is not discussed in my article.

¹⁹² Actually, the precursor of this method was Emanuel Ringelblum, who wrote in the conclusion of his essay on Polish-Jewish relations “Probably no more than 15,000 Jews are hiding in Warsaw, probably with 2-3,000 Polish families. Given that those 2-3,000 Polish families act with knowledge and approval of their closest relatives, we can conclude that at least 10-15,000 Polish families in Warsaw are helping to hide Jews, which equals 40-60,000 people, assuming that a family consists of four members (E. Ringelblum, *Polish-Jewish Relations*, 247).

¹⁹³ M. Urynowicz, op. cit., 253.

anything in return.” (This case is discussed in this issue of *Holocaust Studies and Materials*.) The reality, however, was radically different. If we took the accounts of the ŻIH and/or Yad Vashem archives as the starting point, the ratio of paid help to selfless help would certainly be different (what exactly – we will learn from future findings of historians).¹⁹⁴ The same is the case with the majority of the remaining calculations made in the text. Urynowicz’s approach shows the dangers related to the overuse of the statistical method, which, in my opinion, makes understanding of the occupation reality more difficult. To treat as equal the merits of each person awarded the medal of the Righteous who “helped” the Jews is also unjustified. The criticism of Yad Vashem, already mentioned in this context, for its tardiness, rigorism and formalism (actually, it is a reiteration of arguments repeated for years) seems morally ambiguous (if only in the context of overdue awards to people who really merited them, let alone the probably unconscious reference to the motif of “Jewish passivity”) and pointless as well. It is as if one were to demand from the AK command to award each underground soldier the order of *Virtuti Militari*, based only on the evidence of heroism provided by the person in question. Urynowicz, after Prekerowa and Paulsson, claims that “the most probable number” of Poles engaged in helping the Jews was “about 300,000.” But historians clearly were not dealing with the situation in the provinces, but with hiding the Jews in Warsaw.¹⁹⁵ By repeating such opinions, Urynowicz disregards the occupation context, and ignores the fact that, for example, the number of Poles “helping” the Jews would be close to the number of sworn AK soldiers! Moreover, it would have to be a parallel “underground army” as (which we assume from the previous research) the great majority of people helping the Jews in one way or another, especially in the provinces, were not in the underground structures. In Polish texts, we find the repeated opinion that, on average, several or several dozen Poles rescued one Jew. It appears that it was the other way round. If we carefully read the biographical notes of the Righteous,¹⁹⁶ we will see

¹⁹⁴ Paulsson claims that the numbers are the key to solving fascinating dilemmas which face historians dealing with this field. Such an approach is aimed at “maintaining proportions” (*Secret City*, 48), but this is possibly provided that we deal with activities based on verifiable data (figures), not on arbitrarily obtained quantities, which must yield an expected result (it is clear especially in his polemics with Agnieszka Haska’s findings about the Hotel Polski affair, where he quotes only those estimates which fit his assumptions, *ibidem*, 50–51). Statistics and interpretations, as Paulsson’s book shows, can be freely juggled, e.g.: in Warsaw, apart from the 28 percent of hosts with an altruistic attitude, there were “70 percent honest, but paid” (*ibidem*, 188). What that means in A.D. 1943, the author does not explain. Nor does he say on what grounds he came up with such an equation.

¹⁹⁵ Urynowicz also refers to Paulsson’s speculations in the text published in *Tygodnik Powszechny*. “Liczenie z pamięci. Polskich Sprawiedliwych mogło być nawet 200 tysięcy,” *Tygodnik Powszechny* 43 (2007). The polemics with the text: J. Leociak, D. Libionka, “Żonglerka liczbami,” *Tygodnik Powszechny* 47 (2007).

¹⁹⁶ The notes of the Righteous awarded the medal in 2000 printed in a publication prepared by Yad Vashem (*The Encyclopedia of the Righteous Among the Nations. Poland, Jerusalem*, 2004). More precise calculations in I. Gutman’s preface (*ibidem*, XL–XLI).

that in many cases a single person saved one or several Jews. It does not seem likely that it was different in the case of those who, for various reasons, were not awarded the medal of the Righteous. Yet, this is not the end of generalizations. Urynowicz claims that it is inappropriate to include only the activity of the Council to Help the Jews under the name of “Żegota.” In his opinion, individual help should be treated as a part of “Żegota” action as well. It is difficult to treat it as anything but semantic abuse. After all, it is impossible to talk about “Żegota’s” activity with reference to the period before the establishment of the Provisional Committee to Aid Jews under the “Konrad Żegota” code name in September 1942. It is also difficult to accept inclusion under “Żegota’s” actions those who were never aware of the existence of the Council, i.e. a great majority of people living in the provinces (as there was only one note about “Żegota” in the underground press, which is, as a matter of fact, mentioned by Urynowicz), or running independent activity of Jewish organizations. On the other hand, something already highlighted by Teresa Prekerowa, in colloquial use in the underground circles people used the name to describe different forms of activity on behalf of the Jews, including individual help. We do not know how widespread such an approach was. Despite all the controversies, Urynowicz’s study constitutes a new quality in the Polish literature.

After 2000, there also appeared popular publications about people distinguished in the action to help the Jews. Two books were devoted to the activity of Henryk Sławik, a PPS activist, the chairman of the Citizens’ Committee for Care Issues over the Polish Refugees in Hungary, who organized help for Jewish refugees hiding there from the German persecutors. A popular biography of Irena Sendlerowa was also published.¹⁹⁷ Apart from that, one should note a few collections of accounts and interviews concerning help to the Jews prepared by journalists from the right-wing media.¹⁹⁸ A volume of documents that only in its title concerned “Żegota” was also printed. Most of them are materials published a number of times, and only a few of them deal with “Żegota’s” activity. There is also no academic editing whatsoever.¹⁹⁹

Dictating the *Correctly Understood Historical Policy*

The nationwide hysteria concerning the books *Neighbors* and *Fear*²⁰⁰ started the Righteous “fashion wave.” There appeared further mutations of the existing

¹⁹⁷ G. Łubczyk, *Polski Wallenberg. Rzecz o Henryku Sławiku* (Warsaw, 2003) (the book contains memoirs and documents about Sławik’s activity); E. Isakiewicz, *Czerwony ołówek. O Polaku, który ocalił tysiące Żydów* (Warsaw, 2003); A. Mieszkowska, *Matka dzieci Holocaustu. Historia Ireny Sendlerowej* (Warsaw, 2004).

¹⁹⁸ B. Stanisławczyk, *Czterdzieści Twardych. Wojenne losy Polaków i Żydów. Prawdziwe historie* (Warsaw, 1997; new edition: Warsaw 2008); E. Isakiewicz, *Ustna harmonijka. Relacje Żydów, których uratowali od Zagłady Polacy* (Warsaw, 2000).

¹⁹⁹ A.K. Kunert, ed., *“Żegota” Rada Pomocy Żydom 1942–1945. Wybór dokumentów* (Warsaw, 2002). In this volume we can find an interesting interview of Andrzej Friszke with Władysław Bartoszewski (pp. 7–36).

²⁰⁰ I do not elaborate on these discussions due to lack of space.

research programs or totally new initiatives (e.g. “Index”).²⁰¹ Substantial budgetary funds were made available for some of them. We can often hear the statement that until quite recently the issue of help to the Jews was completely forgotten, while now a handful of idealists are restoring it to collective memory. This is part of a more general phenomenon of collective memory manipulation, manifesting itself, for example, in the promotion of the thesis that after 1989 no valuable research of the national past was conducted and that the commemoration of the Warsaw uprising was not sufficiently supported, etc. In this context one should stress that the above-mentioned thesis applies in full to the present advocates of honoring the Righteous; indeed, those people have never dealt either with the Holocaust or with Polish-Jewish relations.

This is true of Jan Żaryn, who, in fact, exercises control over a large part of academic and educational programs regarding Polish help to the Jews. He is a historian who has never concealed his political sympathies (during 1995–1998 he was the editor-in-chief of *Szaniec Chrobrego*, the NSZ veterans’ organ). A researcher of the Church’s history in the PRL era, before joining the Committee to Commemorate the Poles in 1999, he did not announce any works of his on the help to the Jews. An attempt to monopolize academic and educational activity under the auspices of the IPN became possible after the coalition of the political parties Law and Justice (*Prawo i Sprawiedliwość*), Self-Defence (*Samoobrona*) and the League of Polish Families (*Liga Polskich Rodzin*) was formed. Żaryn’s appointment as the head of the IPN Public Education Office (*Biuro Edukacji Publicznej*) marked a radical shift in the treatment of the Polish-Jewish issues of the occupation period by this institution. By the decision of the Institute’s new management, the work on the attitudes of Poles during the Holocaust was abandoned, explicitly departing from the previously ongoing research conducted in the Institute. It was not only to be narrowed, but, most of all, “properly” oriented. In the preface to the volume *Polacy i Żydzi pod okupacją niemiecką 1939–1945*, which was published during Żaryn’s term, he declared “closure of a certain stage of research,” thus outlining a new vision. The subject of historical interest was to be the relations between the Poles and the Jews during 1939–1941 and after 1944, as well as the scale of repressions for helping the Jews.²⁰² On the one hand, this was a clear harbinger of dealing with “the Jewish treason” in the Eastern Borderlands and the “Jewish communists” (Pol., pejor. *żydokomuna*)

²⁰¹ The starting point for this program, created on the initiative of the Institute for Strategic Studies (*Instytut Studiów Strategicznych*) in 2004, was the thesis that several dozen people were repressed as a result of helping Jews. This estimation was to have come from Martin Gilbert (see “Ilu Polaków zginęło za pomoc Żydom,” *Rzeczpospolita*, 18 November 2005). An extensive archival search is being conducted as part of this program. J. Młynarczyk’s and S. Piątkowski’s book, published in the “Index” program, about a mass execution in Ciepeliów (*Cena poświęcenia. Zbrodnie na Polakach za pomoc udzielaną Żydom w rejonie Ciepeliowa* [Cracow, 2007]).

²⁰² Żaryn explained it unequivocally in the preface to the volume: *Polacy i Żydzi pod okupacją niemiecką*, p. 6.

in the PRL, and on the other, a deliberate return to instrumental treatment of the aid question. In Żaryn's enunciation we find a characteristic declaration: "in the future, we will particularly care for scientific accuracy and liberation of the scientific inquiries from current pressures and contexts unrelated to the subject, including those overtly and secretly political." In the second volume of materials concerning the Kielce Pogrom, published by the IPN in autumn 2008, Żaryn specified: "As part of a well-understood historical policy, cultivated by the IPN, as the Institute's management we decided to join, in a special manner, the efforts to commemorate Poles saving Jews during the war." The aim of this program "is not only to commemorate the heroism of our ancestors, but also to convey to a wide audience the historical truth [emphasis D.L.] during the particularly dramatic ... Nazi occupation period."²⁰³ Although the team supervised by Żaryn has not yet made public the results of their efforts, there is no doubt that the "historical truth" is already known. To remove any doubts in this field, in the above-mentioned volume, five texts by the extremely biased Jerzy R. Nowak were published. It is difficult not to get the impression that the advocates of Polish historical policy did not mean this kind of approach.

The time for a comprehensive assessment of the research conducted by the IPN, and above all, of the implementation of its research strategies, will come after the results are published. In any case, we cannot exclude the possibility that they will bring some new quality. As for now, two titles in the book form have been published as part of this project.²⁰⁴ The main objective of the IPN is to verify the data collated by the GKBZHWP. According to the press, not much has been done.²⁰⁵

²⁰³ J. Żaryn, "Przedmowa," in *Wokół pogromu kieleckiego*, vol. 2, ed. L. Bukowski, A. Jankowski, J. Żaryn (Warsaw, 2008), 8.

²⁰⁴ The first volume of a new IPN series is an album concerning the Ulma family from Markowa, murdered in March 1944 (M. Szpytma, *Sprawiedliwi i ich świat. Markowa w fotografii Józefa Ulmy* [Warsaw-Cracow, 2007]). See also M. Szpytma, *The Risk of Survival* (Warsaw, 2009).

Similarly to Żaryn, Szpytma adjusts to the expectations of the listeners of Radio Maryja, suggesting that the Ulma family was a typical Polish family of the occupation times (about the help given to the Jews by Poles during the war see the broadcast *Rozmowy niedokończone* on *Radio Maryja* and *TV Trwam* with Mateusz Szpytma, program of 6 May 2006). Elżbieta Rączy's volume on the help to the Jews in the Rzeszów region is of a different character, and is a more thoroughly documented publication by this acknowledged researcher. Elżbieta Rączy, *Pomoc Polaków dla ludności żydowskiej na Rzeszowszczyźnie 1939-1945* (Rzeszów, 2008).

²⁰⁵ The Institute claims that from approximate data which are constantly verified, it appears that thanks to the Poles, 40-100,000 Jews survived the war (M. Szpytma, *Nasz Dziennik*, 5-6 July 2008). In his book about the Ulma family, Szpytma quotes Datner's statement about 100,000 rescued Jews, and referring to Datner, Zajączkowski and the research conducted as part of the "Index" program, he claims that by virtue of helping the Jews "about 2,500,000 people could have died or gone to the concentration camps" (*Sprawiedliwi i ich świat*, 16).

All the doubts about the direction in which the research on Polish help to the Jews is going have been dispelled by the works of Żaryn himself. The motives and formulations characteristic for the 1960s reappear in them. For example, he explains “the relative [*sic!*] indifference of a considerable part of the Polish population” towards the Jewish fate with objective causes: the self-isolation of the Jews (“natural barriers”) and the “Polish-Jewish competition in the economic field in the 1930s” and especially the Jewish treason in the Eastern Borderlands in September 1939 (a euphemism is employed here: “lack of support from the Jews for the Poles”). A following statement might surprise – “Polish authorities entered into the catalogue of their war aims . . . , if power and means sufficed, also organizing the necessary help for the Jews.” The means to complete it was to be “Żegota,” which “coordinated the action of thousands of underground activists” recruited mostly from the left, but also from the Christian democrats and the national camp. Żaryn devoted a separate study to the latter question (help to the Jews from Polish nationalists)²⁰⁶. It is hard to resist the impression that it is a hackneyed idea. Starting from the mid-1940s, GL and PPR apologists were trying to outdo one another in proving that the communists outside “Żegota” made a greater (or at least equal) contribution to the organized action to help than those who took part in it. Currently, similar approaches are tried with respect to the national camp. But there is a fundamental difference: help for the Jews from the communists was indeed serious. And most of all, PPR members could not join “Żegota,” and nationalists, apart from several exceptions, distanced themselves from the Council. Żaryn’s statements on individual help also cause dismay. He writes: “The occupation period made many Poles face difficult choices. People protecting the Jews were dangerous to the Poles around them, not so much because of their aversion to ‘strangers,’ as because of the responsibility towards loved ones exposed to the occupier’s repression. The borderline between protectiveness of one’s own children and the role of those informing on neighbors who were hiding Jews or possessed secret weapons was (in a conscience that year by year had undergone relativization) increasingly fluid.” After all, Żaryn is not the first historian to openly try to justify the “home disgrace cases.” Besides, he immediately moves on to reassure that “social pathologies . . . also developed among the Jews.” The third subject absorbing Żaryn is the attitude of the Catholic clergy towards the Jews. He writes: “The attitude of the Catholic Church towards the Holocaust was not only declaratively unambiguous. The priests and the nuns . . . helped the Jewish population, praying [*sic!*], smuggling food into the ghettos, forging baptismal certificates, supporting the fugitives financially, and, most of all, hiding Jewish children, e.g. those left at the convent and monastery gates by the persecuted parents.” In another paragraph, he claims: “The Catholic teaching and the commandments were for many Poles the foundation that enabled them to make the right choice at a critical moment,” and also: “Numerous accounts by Poles

²⁰⁶ J. Żaryn, “Elity obozu narodowego wobec zagłady Żydów,” in *Polacy i Żydzi pod okupacją niemiecką*, 365–428.

prove that there is a link between Catholic and patriotic upbringing and helping the Jews.”²⁰⁷ He illustrated these theses with individual examples. The author of these words did not conduct any archive research; he based his statements, apart from the accounts given half a century after the events, only on the existing studies. He treats equally the documents with the late accounts, including those sent after the appeal of Radio Maryja.²⁰⁸

Żaryn’s world view can be seen to be translated into concrete language in the project “Życie za Życie” (“Life for Life”), carried out by the IPN and the National Center for Culture (*Narodowe Centrum Kultury*) established in 2002, promoting the program “Patriotyzm jutra” (“The Patriotism of Tomorrow”). On the IPN’s website, one can read that the objective of this action was “to make society aware (through specific scientific, educational and film initiatives) of the truth [emphasis D.L.] about the conditions of the German occupation, about the Poles who rescued Jews and about Poles of Jewish origin.” We could surmise that this “truth” was for some reasons hidden from society. “Only on Polish territory did the Germans apply restrictive laws, according to which even for giving a slice of bread or a cup of water, both a Jew and a Pole who hid him were subject to the death penalty;” “to save one Jew often as many as 20 Poles were engaged in the action to help. They helped regardless of their beliefs and political views, mainly because of their attachment to the values they had been raised in by their families and due to their Christian upbringing.” Another thesis deserves special attention: “[the punishment] for failure to denounce a neighbor who hid a suspicious resident was the concentration camp.”²⁰⁹ When we read such statements, it is hard to believe that censorship ceased to exist over a dozen years ago. A documentary film and a website were created as part of this project. The television spots prepared by the IPN and Polish Television, transmitted in prime time, as well as supplements to daily newspapers (*Rzeczpospolita* and *Nasz Dziennik*), regarding Polish help for the Jews, present a completely simplified image of the occupation reality. It is also hard to accept the abuse of left-wing activists, as illustrated by the way Irena Sendlerowa is presented.²¹⁰

²⁰⁷ J. Żaryn, “Hierarchia Kościoła katolickiego wobec relacji polsko-żydowskich w latach 1945–1947,” in *Wokół pogromu kieleckiego*, vol. 1, ed. Ł. Kamiński and J. Żaryn (Warsaw, 2006), 75–82.

²⁰⁸ *Godni synowie naszej Ojczyzny. Świadczenia nadsyłane na apel Radia Maryja* (Warsaw, 2002), pt. 1–2. He also refers to Bednarczyk’s book *Obowiązek silniejszy od śmierci* (Warsaw, 1982) (it is perhaps worth reminding that in 1986 this work was published by the Grunwald Patriotic Union [*Zjednoczenie Patriotyczne Grunwald*]).

²⁰⁹ See http://www.ipn.gov.pl/portal/pl/305/7928/Kampania_spolecznoedukacyjna_Zycie_za_Zycie.html, accessed 5 October 2010.

²¹⁰ After Sendlerowa’s death, Father Rydzyk’s organ wrote at length about her merits. See *Nasz Dziennik*, 13 March 2008. In a recent issue of *Glaukopis*, published by extremely radical milieus, an occasional text devoted to Sendlerowa appeared as well (“Z żałobnej karty,” *Glaukopis* 11–12 [2008]). The authors forgot to inform the reader about Sendlerowa’s left-wing views (she was a member of the RPPS and – after the war – of the PZPR). In May 1944 the NSZ counterintelligence issued the following opinion about her: “a decided communist

Summary

The issue described in this article has for decades been subject to manipulation and instrumental treatment. The Righteous were used as a bargaining card in disputes with political opponents, foreign historians or international media “slandering” Poland. Since the mid-1980s, we have seen a revival of academic research and debates among historians and sociologists, which often sink in the noise of press debates. In the immediate post-war years, there existed two versions of Polish help: “communist” and “opposition.” The former was characterized by emphasis on the services of the communist left and the “progressive part of society” with a simultaneous stress on the indifference, nonfeasance and crimes of “domestic reaction.” The second version, formulated above all by the Catholic press, referred to help to the Jews from the Polish underground that was related to the Polish government in London and the representatives of the entire Polish society, including the clergy and the pre-war anti-Semitic right (illegal opposition stayed mute, treating the Jews in terms of strangeness and hostility). After 1947 the debate was definitely resolved by the censors to the advantage of the “communist historical policy.” The opponents were forced to be silent, and the “proper” interpretation was imposed. In the mid-1950s, the issue of Polish help to the Jews returned on the rising tide of the “thaw,” but did not play a significant role in public discourse. There appeared articles concerning aspects of help previously denied (e.g. “solidarity” actions by the Warsaw ghetto walls carried out by the AK), most often in anniversary contexts. At the same time, the pressure of censorship eased and communist historians withdrew their most hurtful and absurd statements (the best example is Bernard Mark’s change in the approach to the issue).

The turning point in shaping Polish remembrance of help to the Jews was the 1960s. At that time several books and numerous articles were published in Polish and foreign newspapers. Until 1963, mostly the *ŻIH* published on the issue. The turning point was Władysław Bartoszewski’s initiative, which resulted in the publication of the volume *Ten jest z ojczyzny mojej*. Some time later, the GKBZHWP started to catalogue cases of German repressions against people helping the Jews, which lasted in unchanged form until the end of the 1980s. What needs to be stressed, the role of historians in these activities, apart from Szymon Datner, was limited. The testimonies were written down by prosecutors employed in district commissions. It was they who compiled statistics and lists of those repressed. The vast material collected during these proceedings (until the late 1980s), largely unused, is a very important set of sources for research concerning Polish attitudes towards the Jews, especially in the provinces. “The anti-Zionist campaign” of 1967/1968 caused com-

... posing as a democrat” (document published in *Polacy i Żydzi pod okupacją niemiecką*, 186. See also: T. Szarota, “Listy nienawiści,” *Polityka* 44 [2003]). Other people engaged in helping the Jews were also in the scope of interest of the NSZ counterintelligence, including Izabela Kuczowska and Aleksander Kamiński.

plete politicization of the historical discourse and the abandonment or, at best, re-orientation of academic research. Both Polish studies written under the censorship regime (e.g. by Szymon Datner) and émigré literature devoid of such pressure (e.g. by Kazimierz Iranek-Osmecki) painted a simplified picture of occupation reality and of the attitudes of Poles during the Holocaust. At that time, similarities between the émigré and the Polish approach to “Jewish issues,” especially regarding the issue of help, were greater than the differences. In both cases the subject of help appeared in relation to real and imaginary dangers. Documentary and archival material (evident especially in Osmecki’s study) was presented with a view to justifying theses formulated *a priori*: that the help of Poles, regardless of their political affiliation, to the Jews had a mass and selfless character. In Poland, difficulties in accessing primary sources resulted in a turn toward indirect sources. But the placement of the main focus on the newly obtained accounts, which were – furthermore – treated without the criticism characteristic of historical analysis (a fault that marred research into the German occupation as well as others), was effected at the expense of several thousand of the earliest post-war Jewish and Polish accounts. Ignorance of the Jewish sources did not stem only from the language barrier, as most accounts and memoirs in the ŻIH archive were written in Polish. This was also true of the accounts in Yad Vashem, but until 1989 Polish researchers found it hard to access them. Although these materials are now a most important source for research into the attitudes of Poles towards the Holocaust, in some milieus late accounts still have the priority (especially those sent to the Righteous Department of Yad Vashem to award the Righteous medal as well as accounts collected from people involved in helping the Jews and their families). One challenge faced by researchers is the documentation regarding those who were not awarded a medal, but this is harder to access than the dossier of those who were. Another challenge is the comparative perspective, abandoned in the second half of the 1960s. The phenomenon of help in other territories of occupied Europe was generally disregarded or the authors tried to convince the reader that outside occupied Poland help to the Jews involved limited or no risk. The situation in the pre-war Eastern Borderlands and occupied USSR were mentioned but very generally.

From the early 1970s, the issue of Polish help started to appear in studies concerning the German occupation. But most often it reappeared in the context of anniversaries. Researchers’ attention was focused on the issue of organized help and on Warsaw. Making a “stand” against the authors of publications slandering the Polish nation (“revisionists from Bonn,” “American Jews,” “Zionists” and biased historians) was typical not only of the “anti-Zionist campaign.” In the 1970s and 1980s, however, the language and the scope of those polemics changed. The hysteria returned in full the moment the book *Neighbors* was published. From the mid-1980s, there appeared a tendency to exploit the Righteous for propaganda purposes. The number of Poles awarded the medal seemed an excellent argument in the polemics with Israeli historians. Despite the statistics “favorable” to the Poles, in some circles, both in Poland and abroad, Yad Vashem procedures were considered unclear, and in

fact discriminating, and measures to widen the notion of Righteous and to increase their number were initiated. These activities did not correlate with more profound scientific reflection. But incredibly high estimates of the numbers of rescued Jews were invariably given, and on this basis the number of helpers was deduced. Although following the publication of G. Paulsson's book the method of argumentation changed considerably, a number of doubts and contentious issues were far from being adequately explained. Yet, at the same time, no mention is made that the strategy implemented in accordance with the slogan "the more, the better" depreciates the significance of the activities of those who actually helped the Jews, and after the war often had to conceal their merits from their neighbors.

From the beginning of the 1980s, research on the organized help was deepened (focusing on "Żegota," the activity of the structures dealing with Jewish matters in the Polish Underground State, the help in arming the ŻOB, the activities of the Polish government in London and, finally, help by the Catholic clergy). Interest in individual help, especially in the provinces, was incomparably lower. A peculiar kind of specialization arose here: the discussion of the occupation history of the country and of the attitudes of the Diocesan clergy – Church historiography – were dominated by employees of the Institute of Peasant Movement History. In the latter case, the obstacle for historians is difficult access to the Church's archives. It is necessary to offset this tendency and, above all, deal with the issue of individual help in the provinces, using all the available materials (the documentation of the Polish underground of all sorts, the post-war investigation and trial records – the "August decree" trials, accounts, memoirs and finally, German sources hitherto underexploited.) Increased interest in the question of Polish help to the Jews, which appeared as a reaction to the books of Jan T. Gross, has both its advantages and disadvantages. All the measures to honor those engaged in helping the persecuted Jews are difficult to overestimate. But the interventions subjected to specific propaganda strategies might be worrying, especially considering the signals coming from the IPN²¹¹, aimed at giving the "proper direction" to the research concerning the Righteous, just as it used to be the case with the GKBZHWP (in Pilichowski's and Kąkol's times) as well as with ZBoWiD.²¹²

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²¹¹ *Nasz Dziennik* (26 September 2008) published a preview of a volume of accounts sent to the Committee to Commemorate the Poles who Saved the Jews, which is being prepared by the IPN. The volume's title (*Dobre sąsiedztwo* – "Good Neighborhood"), in the context of distortions and manipulations present in the preface written by Żaryn, was rightly understood as a joke (A. Leszczyński, "Żyd, czyli obcy," *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 29 September 2008).

²¹² This text was written in 2008, and the strategy adopted by the IPN is still consistently carried out.

Abstract

The article deals with the ways of describing the issue of individual and organised help to the Jews in Polish historical discourse during 1945–2008. The author analyses press statements, academic articles, and popular articles and, finally, books published in Poland (including publications by historians from the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw) as well as émigré texts. The article also discusses the source basis used in the texts by Polish authors, their methods of analysis as well as the political conditions of the discourse concerning Polish-Jewish relations during the occupation, identifying the key time limits. Particular attention has been paid to the trends in historical writing in the immediate post-war period, in the mid-1960s (with the anti-Zionist campaign at the fore), in the mid-1980s, and, finally, during 2000–2006. The article discusses all the key publications regarding help to the Jews by: Tatiana Berenstein and Adam Rutkowski, Szymon Datner, Władysław Bartoszewski, Kazimierz Iranek-Osmecki, Teresa Prekerowa, Jan T. Gross and the research and educational activity of the Main Commission to Investigate Nazi Crimes in Poland, the Society of Fighters for Freedom and Democracy (ZBOWiD) and the Institute of National Remembrance.

Key words

German occupation, Polish-Jewish relations, Righteous Among the Nations, help to the Jews