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Polish Church Hierarchy and the Holocaust – an Essay from a Critical Perspective

In Polish literature on the history of the Catholic Church under the German occupation, the motif of help to the Jews invariably recurs.* The main issue is the involvement of individual diocesan priests and orders, primarily convents, in such help.¹ Far less attention is devoted to the attitude of the representatives of the Church hierarchy, although the general opinion is unequivocal: it is claimed that most bishops in the General Government, in one way or another, were involved in the action to help the Jews.² A good deal of information on the issue, however, comes from accounts of dubious quality, which given their replication, not only entered the scientific circulation but became part of general knowledge.³ Another problem is the issue of interpreting the attitudes of those hierarchs whose actions and statements are fairly well documented, e.g. those of the Cracow Archbishop, Adam Stefan Sapieha.

The disproportion between the knowledge of the attitudes of the Polish Catholic hierarchy towards the Jews during World War II, when compared with the studies of the pre-war and post-war period, stems from incomplete accessibility of Church archives. At the same time there is reluctance to carry out such research. Some authors who have access to Church documents have not attempted a comprehensive study of the issue (this pertains to, generally speaking, the attitude of the Polish

* I wish to thank Mr. Michał Horoszewicz for his critical and insightful remarks.

¹ For characteristics of Polish historiography see “Kościół w Polsce wobec Zagłady w świetle polskiej publicystyki i historiografii,” *Biuletyn ŻIH* 3 (2000): 329–341; “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): 188–215.

² See for example ks. [Father] F. Stopniak, “Katolickie duchowieństwo w Polsce i Żydzi w okresie niemieckiej okupacji,” in *Spoleczeństwo polskie wobec martyrologii i walki Żydów w II wojnie światowej*, ed. K. Dunin-Wąsowicz (Warsaw, 1996), 34.

³ This pertains primarily to a study prepared during the “anti-Zionist campaign” by the Christian Social Association (*Chrześcijańskie Stowarzyszenie Społeczne*), *Dzieło miłosierdzia chrześcijańskiego. Polskie duchowieństwo a Żydzi w latach okupacji hitlerowskiej* (Warsaw, 1968), copied manuscript. It was published in 2002 under a peculiar title: *Udział księży i zakonnic w holokaucie Żydów* [The Participation of Priests and Nuns in the Holocaust], with the author’s name given (Father Franciszek Kącki), pp. 21–22.

Church towards the Holocaust), and chose to write apologetic texts instead of carrying out objective research.⁴ The purpose of this text is an attempt at a recapitulation of the existing knowledge, based on printed Church sources, materials of the Polish underground, and memoirs, with the stipulation that many of the issues discussed here, due to incomplete documentation, remain an open question. We shall discuss: statements of Polish bishops on the “Jewish question” during the prewar period, actions of the hierarchy on behalf of the converts during 1940–1941 in light of pogroms in Warsaw (spring 1941), the massacres in the Łomża region (summer 1941), as well as immediate reactions to the Holocaust taking place in Poland. I am particularly interested in the information policy of the bishops regarding the terror in occupied Poland, the statements of the émigré hierarchs, and, finally, the attitude of the Church hierarchy towards the action to help the Jews.⁵

The Pre-War Context

One of the characteristics of the literature on the attitudes of the Polish Roman Catholic Church towards the Holocaust is the virtual absence of information on the manner in which the Church perceived the Jews and the “Jewish question.”⁶ Yet the teaching of the Church is one of the factors that conditions both its actions and omissions during the German occupation. This issue has not been seriously dealt with by scholars. We should not forget that during the interwar period, particularly in the 1930s, the Church was an institution that tolerated anti-Semitism in public life (regardless of the definition of the term), treating it in terms of a “healthy reflex,” a “defensive reaction” or “self-defense.” From the point of view of the majority of parish and monastic priests, not only those that sympathized with the nationalist camp, a solution of the “Jewish question” appeared to be one of the main challenges facing the Polish state. Emphasizing the distance towards radical stances (i.e. violence or extreme racism) was not tantamount to rejecting the thesis that the hatred

⁴ Recently: J. Żaryn, “Hierarchia Kościoła katolickiego wobec relacji polsko-żydowskich w latach 1945–1947,” in *Wokół pogromu kieleckiego*, ed. Ł. Kamiński, J. Żaryn (Warsaw, 2006), 75–110. In the section on the German occupation, the author does not go beyond repeating common platitudes such as “Polish bishops frequently condemned the Germans for crimes against the Polish and Jewish nation” (p. 82) or presentation of examples taken out of context.

⁵ Some of the issues I discussed in “Antisemitism, Anti-Judaism, and the Polish Catholic Clergy during the Second World War, 1939–1945,” in *Antisemitism and its Opponents*, ed. R. Blobaum (Ithaca, 2005).

⁶ It is no accident that the most important studies on the issue were published abroad (R. Modras, *The Catholic Church and Antisemitism. Poland, 1933–1939* (Reading, 1994) [Polish edition *Kościół katolicki i antysemityzm w Polsce w latach 1933–1939*, transl. W. Turpolski (Warsaw, 2004)]; V. Pollmann, *Untermieter im christlichen Haus. Die Kirche und die “Jüdische Frage” in Polen anhand der Bistumspresse der Metropole Krakau 1926–1939* (Wiesbaden 2001). A Polish study: D. Pałka, *Kościół katolicki wobec Żydów w Polsce międzywojennej* (Cracow, 2006).

of the Jews was caused by the Jews themselves. In the immediate pre-war years, the conflict with Judaism that for centuries was an immanent part of the Church's doctrine slowly gave way to a "modern" approach, one that came down to treating the "Jewish problem" in national and racial terms. The theological argument was backed by "political" analysis, with more emphasis than on the deicide motif laid on the "relations" of the Jews with Bolshevism and [their] aspirations for a worldwide revolution. The importance assigned to a solution of the "Jewish question," discussed in its political, religious, social and customary aspect, is confirmed by the contents of the Church press. Obsessions with the "Jewish conspiracy" were not merely restricted to mass publications such as *Mały Dziennik* or the relatively small group of radicals. The Catholic newspapers for the intelligentsia were no less fervent in tracing it, thus significantly contributing to reinforcing anti-Jewish stereotypes, phobias and a demonization of reality.⁷ The Jews were perceived as an objectively justified threat (in texts written in a more archaic style: evil), with emancipation and assimilation viewed as a mistake with far-reaching consequences. The specificity of the Polish situation was underlined: here we have the most numerous, alien and hostile Jewish community, whose character (the "Jewish psyche") renders impossible any kind of correct coexistence, now and in the future. No distinction was made between Polish and foreign Jews. They were seen primarily as a hostile national group, cemented by religious bonds, mental qualities and aspirations.

Such a picture was painted not only by Catholic and Church press. Polish bishops spoke about "the Jewish issue" in the context of outbursts of anti-Jewish violence as early as 1918–1919. In those statements, warnings against an escalation of ethnic conflicts were usually accompanied by interpretation of the foundation of the underpinning "objective reality." After a three-day pogrom carried out by the Polish Army in November 1918, the Jewish National Council in Vienna issued a memorandum to Bishop Adam Sapieha, where it pointed at, among others, the stirring of anti-Jewish sentiments by the clergy. But it fell on deaf ears. The Bishop not only dismissed all charges against the Church and the Poles, but also accused the Jews of importing Bolshevism into Poland, usury, controlling trade, and primarily of carrying out an anti-Polish propaganda campaign focused on accusing Poles of anti-Semitism. All that was to underpin the collapse of the traditional balance between Poles and Jews.⁸

Nevertheless, already in the first pastoral letter of the Episcopate to the faithful (10 December 1918), the bishops warned against "acts of violence against Jews," and at the same time pointed at just "charges" directed against them: "usurious price rises and exploitation." They also claimed that "Jewish agents, serving Bolshevism, sow the wind that turns against them." The responsibility for the outbursts of

⁷ D. Libionka, "Alien, Hostile, Dangerous: The Image of the Jews and the 'Jewish Question' in the Polish-Catholic Press in the 1930s," *Yad Vashem Studies* 32 (2004): 227–268.

⁸ L. Mroczka, "Przyczynę do kwestii żydowskiej w Galicji u progu Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej," in *Żydzi w Małopolsce*, ed. F. Kiryk (Przemyśl, 1991), 302–303.

anti-Jewish violence was placed on criminals and Russian prisoners of war, [at the same time] protesting against accusing the “entire nation.” “Thousands of voices,” the bishops wrote, “that reach us confirm our conviction even more that our society has nothing to do with those painful incidents, [and] that it condemns them together with us.” And, more importantly, they reminded readers that the Poles had not taken part in pogroms organized by the Russians. Warnings against involvement in riots and robberies (including those of Jewish stores) were also issued by Galician bishops, Adam Sapieha among them.⁹

The opinion of the Polish Church hierarchy on the relations of the Jews with communism was unequivocally and very poignantly expressed at the critical time of the Polish-Bolshevik war. In a letter to the “World’s Episcopate” of 7 July 1920, Primate Aleksander Kakowski and the bishops, faced with the advancing offensive of Mikhail Tukhachevsky, warned:

Bolshevism marches to conquer the world. The race that leads it has previously conquered the world with gold and banks, and today, driven by perpetual imperialist desire flowing in its veins, now tries directly to finally conquer the world [and place it] under the yoke of its rule, . . . those that are at the helm of Bolshevism carry in their blood a traditional hatred of Christianity. Bolshevism truly is a living embodiment and manifestation of the spirit of the Antichrist on earth.¹⁰

The letter did have some influence on the spread of the myth of the worldwide Jewish conspiracy, and in Poland it played a role in stirring anti-Semitic sentiments.¹¹ Furthermore, throughout the entire interwar period *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* was popular among the clergy.

The Synod of Pińsk (1929) in Statute 39 recalled: “It is the duty of clergymen to defend, wherever possible, the faithful from all kinds of dangers from the Jews.”¹² This concern was particularly strong with respect to education. The bishops specifically wanted to isolate the Christians from the Jews and from the so-called “Jewish influence.” They put forth the argument that the Jews demanded lay schools only for Christians, and wanted to leave religious schools only for the Jews. The leaders of the Polish Church never accepted the fact that the constitution of March 1921 did not mention religious schools. In 1922 Father Stanisław Adamski, subsequently the Bishop of Katowice, author of numerous publications on the issue, claimed that the educational system became, for the Jews, “a powerful instrument of depriv-

⁹ *Kronika Diecezji Przemyskiej* 8 (1918): 203. Quoted in: ks. [Father] S. Wilk, *Episkopat Kościoła katolickiego w Polsce w latach 1918-1939* (Warsaw, 1992), 393. Letter of 1 November 1918.

¹⁰ Quoted in: *Zwycięstwo 1920. Warszawa wobec agresji bolszewickiej*, ed. M.M. Drozdowski, H. Eychhorn-Szwankowska, J. Wiechowski (Paris, 1990), 42-43.

¹¹ N. Cohn, *Warrant for Genocide: The Myth of the Jewish World Conspiracy and the Protocols of the Elders of Zion* (Harmondsworth, 1970), 164-165.

¹² Quoted in ks. [Father] W. Padacz, “Żydzi w polskim ustawodawstwie synodalnym,” *Przegląd Katolicki* 39 (1936).

ing Christian children of their knowledge of religious truths of Christianity, and further of purposeful elimination of any kind of references to the role and the task of Christianity in the life of man, nation and state.”¹³ The Łomża Bishop, Stanisław Łukomski, underlined on a number of occasions that “only a Catholic could educate another Catholic,” pointing at “dangerous and negative influences that threaten Catholic children due to the introduction of infidels (Jews) to schools, [both] children and teachers.”¹⁴ The Episcopate continued to exert pressure on the government. In a memorandum to the Ministry of Religious Denominations and Public Education, Primate Hlond and Cardinal Aleksander Kakowski wrote: “Our sole purpose was and is to prevent the young generation from Judaization . . . After all, the teacher molds the pupil according to his beliefs, convictions and views, and furthermore, a Jewish teacher will never be able to influence a Polish child positively, in the spirit of Catholic principles.”¹⁵ A communiqué of the Catholic Press Agency read: “The entire Catholic society, together with the Most Reverend Episcopate, sympathizes in this matter with Catholic parents and together with them demands that Jewish teachers be dismissed from schools for Catholic children.” That defeats the purpose of “the Polish Catholic society that has got rid of the partitioners’ schools that were against its spirit, so that in the liberated Poland the education authorities surrendered the spiritual leadership of Polish Catholic children to teachers with a different psyche, and frequently hostile to Christ’s religion.”¹⁶ The postulate of religious education returned during the sessions of the First Plenary Synod (25–26 August 1936) in Częstochowa. Its resolutions mentioned the Jews only in this context. Item 122 reiterated the postulate to “safeguard the youth against religious and moral detriment of joint [education] of Catholic and Jewish youth.”¹⁷

In the years preceding the outbreak of the war, the bishops did quite a lot to keep the problem of the religious school alive and up-to-date. Their statements were full of hopes for a swift fulfillment of the Church’s postulates. The clergy MPs raised the issue in the Sejm.¹⁸ The issue was naturally related to the postulates to introduce the *numerus clausus* in universities and the so-called “Aryan paragraph” in state institutions. The Church’s representatives never spoke officially on the “table ghetto,”

¹³ S. Adamski, *Szkoła wyznaniowa czy mieszana?* (Poznań, 1922), 51. Quoted in: K. Krasowski, *Episkopat katolicki w II Rzeczypospolitej* (Warsaw-Poznań, 1992), 178.

¹⁴ K. Krasowski, *Episkopat katolicki*, 177–178. As an Episcopate clerk for schooling he carried out a survey among parish priests on Jewish pupils and teachers. *Rozporządzenia Urzędowe Łomżyńskiej Kurii Diecezjalnej* 1 (1930): 15–16.

¹⁵ Quoted in: K. Krasowski, *Episkopat katolicki*, 178.

¹⁶ Quoted in: *Prąd* 27 (1934): 142–143.

¹⁷ “Uchwały I Synodu Plenarnego,” *Wiadomości Diecezjalne* 2 (Częstochowa, 1938).

¹⁸ A priest and member of parliament Stefan Downar “in line with common sense, but at the same time with the letter of the 122nd Plenary Synod of Polish Bishops, explicit and binding for Catholics, staunchly demanded separate schools for Jews,” as a means of defense against communism. *Mały Dziennik* 52 (1938).

but their constant criticism of the educational system must have mobilized milieus interested in the change of the status quo in other areas.

In the 1930s, the recurring anti-Jewish incidents were bound to cause a reaction of the Church hierarchy. For Primate Hlond and some of the bishops, those incidents were an opportunity to express their views on the current socio-political situation. On 7 June 1934, a delegation of the Union of Rabbis of the Polish Republic submitted a memorandum to the Archbishop of Warsaw, Cardinal Kakowski, in which they pointed to the persecution of the Jews in Poland, and requested that a pastoral letter on the matter be issued. Exhibiting enormous deference towards the Episcopate, it was complained that some young people who defined themselves as nationalists “follow the example of the German pagans and organize assaults on defenseless pedestrians with a Semitic appearance in the streets of Polish towns, beating, tormenting and robbing mercilessly,” and any resistance by those assaulted led only to an escalation of violence. They expressed the hope that

the Polish youth, so shamefully persecuting the Jews, is only momentarily dazed and confused with alien, hostile slogans, but when summoned by the most reverend Polish Catholic Episcopate to restrain themselves and to return to the principles of the Christian religion, will no doubt cease to persecute the Jewish population, which smears the good reputation of Poland.

In response the Warsaw Metropolitan stated that “[he] condemns all kinds of violence and excesses, whatever their source, be it Catholic or Jewish.” But most of his statement was made up of his accusations against the Jews. He identified actual “problems” underpinning the “regrettable excesses”: “provoking and insulting religious feelings of the Christian population on the part of the Jewish elements,” “godless action” and free-thinkers’ publications “downgrading the Catholic faith,” and moral offenses and spreading pornography. Finally, he expressed the view that “the Jewish society, so uniform and solitary in the defense of their interests, should rise up to guarantee the Christian population the respect of its tradition and faith.” When he heard that those facts were the doing of the communists, he said: “They are nonetheless young Jews, whom the older ones give money, whether from Poland or from abroad.”¹⁹ Similar statements were made by Cardinal Kakowski later as well. In a letter addressed to young people he said:

May no one think . . . that we should not defend our national rights, create our own national autonomy, look after our own national benefits or that we should allow another nation or nations to overwhelm us economically, culturally or territorially; hence the conclusion that in the fight for our national rights the Catholic truth should not be lost or Christian tradition perverted.²⁰

¹⁹ *Wiadomości Archidiecezjalne Warszawskie* 6–7 (1934): 247–249.

²⁰ Quoted in: *Sodalis Marianus* 10 (1938): 471.

As the wave of anti-Jewish excesses gathered momentum, and in part influenced by the criticism coming from within the country and from abroad, faced with the growing radicalism of right-wing parties, the Church was again forced to speak. It is no accident that Primate August Hlond should have dealt with the “Jewish question” in [his] pastoral letter *O katolickie zasady moralne* [On Catholic Moral Principles] issued on 29 February 1936. Somewhat earlier on, the Catholic Press Agency, rebutting the charge of the Jewish press about the silence of the Catholic clergy after the incidents, condemned “all excesses and brutal means of combat” as “unworthy of the Christian name” and reminded that the commandment to love one’s neighbor pertains to everyone regardless of “race, nationality and religion.” At the same time their foundation was identified: the Jewish youth was badly brought up, was liable to radicalism and communist influence, [and] fought against the Church. Therefore, it is justified to strive for “cultural separation of Poles and Jews,” and for “social and economic emancipation of the Polish nation.” The authors of the communiqué said that the Jews could contribute to a “pacification of minds” without “impeding the development of natural forces within the Polish nation and eliminating the faults that make coexistence hard.”²¹ The fragment of the primate’s letter that dealt with the Jews was an elaboration of those theses. On the one hand, it poignantly warned against an “ethical stance imported from abroad” and those “who foment anti-Jewish violence,” and prohibited the use of means that contradicted Christian ethics. It is prohibited to “plunder a Jewish shop, destroy Jewish goods, smash windows, throw petards at their homes” or to carry out attacks, “beating, mutilation and slander.” On the other hand, it contained a long list of charges against the Jews: “they fight against the Church, persist in free-thinking, are the avant-garde of godlessness, the Bolshevik movement and subversive action,” have a “pernicious influence” on “manners,” propagate pornography, “resort to deceit, usury, and human trafficking.” The primate reiterated the view of the moral inferiority of Jewish youth and its “negative” influence on Christians. The significance of those charges was to be offset by an enumeration of positive qualities of the Jews: “Very many Jews are religious, honest, righteous, merciful, [and] charitable”; in many Jewish families the “family sense is sound and constructive.” Nevertheless, the letter contained a coherent anti-Jewish program of boycott and isolation. It instructed readers to “avoid Jewish shops and Jewish market stalls,” “close doors to the pernicious influence of Jewry, separate oneself from its anti-Christian culture, and – particularly – to boycott Jewish press and Jewish demoralizing publications.” There were, however, no references to the idea of Jewish emigration from Poland. Religious themes appeared only in the final parts of the fragment dealing with the “Jewish question.” The primate indicated the need to “respect the human being and one’s brother in the Jew,” [and] reminded that the Jews were the guardians of the Messianic idea and that they betrayed the Savior,

²¹ “W sprawie żydowskiej,” *Prąd* 30 (1936): 81–82.

and finally he heralded “joyful welcome” of converts in “Christian ranks.” In a different part of the letter he condemned racial ethics as materialist.²²

The primate’s words were greeted with enthusiasm by Catholic and nationalist press. The editor of the *Prosto z mostu* weekly wrote that the issue of the Church’s attitude towards the Jews was clear: Catholic ethics could accommodate both condemnation of violence and “condemnation of the pernicious influence of the Jews.” Only its elimination will liquidate the “cause of the unrest.”²³ The editor-in-chief of *Ateneum Kapłańskie*, Father Stefan Wyszynski, interpreted the primate’s words somewhat differently. Stressing the “emotional” reception of the letter by Jewish and left-wing press, he concluded that he was “firm and just” in his judgment, he “minces no words in his assessment of the advantages and disadvantages of the Jewish milieu, and at the same time, he admits that Polish interests of the state have the right to fight for economic liberation – by fair means.” In his opinion, the “issue of Jewry in Poland creates today an entire amalgamation of relations, among which a separate, non-Christian morality emerges, [and it] gains – under the influence of propaganda – legitimacy.” Meanwhile it was not only a social, economic, [and] demographic issue, but primarily a moral and religious one, and its solution “must be calculated for many years of hard work,” just as Hlond had warned against the acceptance of “non-Christian morality and alien methods.” In his opinion, the primate’s letter, an “expression of comfort and encouragement for hard combat,” was in the current situation necessary: “The enormity of evil began to undermine [our] faith in our own strength, particularly in the effectiveness of the fight by fair means.” Thus the society had to be both grateful to the primate for enhancing the value and significance of “fair means of combat” and “pouring into [our] hearts the faith that within the limits of Christian ethics the problem could be solved. The Church’s task was not only to give testimony to the truth but also to fight against evil. If the Jews did not want the fight to turn against them, they should eliminate the “roots of moral decay and fight against Christianity openly waged by various Jewish milieus.”²⁴

The fragments of Hlond’s letter regarding the “Jewish question” should be seen in the context of the Church’s rapprochement with nationalist students’ organizations, which manifested itself, for example, in the mass participation of their members in the students’ pilgrimage to Jasna Góra in 1936. Even earlier on, some bishops revealed their support for young nationalists.²⁵ Those milieus, capable of gathering thousands of young people under Catholic banners, could not be dis-

²² A. Hlond, “List pasterski. O katolickie zasady moralne,” in *August Prymas Hlond, Dzieła. Nauczanie 1897-1948*, vol. 1, ed. J. Konieczny (Toruń: TChr, 2003), 530. See also J. Marcus, *Social and Political History of the Jews in Poland, 1919-1939* (Berlin-New York-Amsterdam 1983), 363.

²³ S. Piasecki, “Czytając list pasterski,” *Prosto z mostu* 15-16 (1936): 1.

²⁴ S. W., “Sprawy społeczno-religijne,” *Ateneum Kapłańskie* 5 (1936), vol. 37, 502-504.

²⁵ In the academic St. Anne’s Church in Warsaw, a funeral service for the soul of a student who had lost his life during anti-Jewish riots at Warsaw University was celebrated by

couraged with excessive criticism. Undoubtedly, the Church strove to “civilize” them, but in the light of the subsequent activity of those groups it is evident how small its influence turned out to be: violence against the Jews continued. On the other hand, the primate’s letter was used as justification for a programmatic opposition to the Jews.²⁶ Only the Bishop of Częstochowa, Teodor Kubina, responded more vigorously. Upon hearing of the Jewish pogrom in Częstochowa on 19 June 1937 (which took place in the wake of an accidental killing of a Pole by a Jew), even though he was attending a Eucharist congress in Manila, he issued a proclamation to the city’s inhabitants, in which he called for peace. Without identifying the culprits, he said that the “evil spirit” inspired the society to acts unworthy of Poles and Catholics.²⁷

References to the negative role of the Jews kept appearing in hierarchs’ enunciations on communism. In the *Pastoral Letter to Celebrate the Holiday of Christ the King* [List Pastorski na Uroczystość Chrystusa Króla] Archbishop Sapięha said: “Many support the alien ideology produced by a race whose tendency is to deprave, and thus exploit, nations among which it is living.”²⁸ Similar allusions appeared in his address read out in churches of the Cracow Archdiocese, being a reaction to the bloodily suppressed workers’ protests in Cracow on 23 March 1936.²⁹ Sapięha lamented the exploitation of the social mood by the Jewish intelligentsia. He argued that the European socialist movement was heavily dominated by the Jews, with the Poles surrendering to their influence. He also mentioned the negative role of Jewish capitalists: “Furthermore, we have in our society a very significant number of non-Christian employers whose eyes are so obscured by greed that they cannot even see the danger to themselves and are engaged in ruthless exploitation in every field and enrich themselves on human harm.”³⁰ Other members of the hierarchy spoke in a similar tone. In a pastoral letter of the Bishop of Włocławek, Karol Radoński, regarding communism, there appeared references to the influence of “Jewry and masonry” on the press and the claim that the Jews were “supporters of upheaval

Bishop Antoni Szlagowski (“Obchód ku czci ś.p. Stanisława Waclawskiego,” *Młodzież Katolicka* 3 [1932]).

²⁶ A telling example is the publication *Spełniamy śluby jasnogórskie* by the Presidium of the Central Committee of the Academic Pilgrimage to Jasna Góra in 1937 [*Prezydium Centralnego Komitetu Akademickiej Pielgrzymki Jasnogórskiej w 1937*]. In order to justify the anti-Jewish stance of the youth, the first things to be quoted were precisely fragments of the primate’s letter (p. 66).

²⁷ V. Pollmann, *Untermieter*, p. 343.

²⁸ *Notificationes* 11 (1936), 139.

²⁹ These were the most violent incidents in interwar Cracow, following the seizure by the police of the “Semperit” factory occupied on the night of 20/21 March 1936. Clashes lasting several hours with the police began on 23 March, with 8 people killed by police bullets, 25 wounded, and 53 policemen injured.

³⁰ W. Z. [the editor-in-chief Father Jan Piwowarczyk], “Orędzie – program,” *Głos Narodu*, 31 March 1936. “Orędzie Księcia-Metropolity Sapięhy z powodu zajęć krakowskich,” *Prąd* 30 (1936): 168–170.

worldwide, naturally among Christian nations.”³¹ On the other hand, according to Łukomski: “The fear of communism is also justified because we in Poland have such a large non-Polish element, [one that is] particularly susceptible to communist agitation.” Unlike the Jews, “the native Polish people defend themselves against subversive poison.”³²

Bishops’ statements also resonated with traditional accusations. Cardinal Aleksander Kakowski in his *Pastoral Letter on Sobriety and Abstinence* [List pasterski o trzeźwości i abstynencji], read out at the Anti-Alcohol Congress (1937), asked a rhetorical question:

Can we allow . . . the representatives of alcohol capitalism, mostly alien to us in terms of religion and nationality, openly and secretly fighting against our faith and our statehood, drive to drink and poison our worker and peasant brothers with alcoholism, our beloved youth and kids – the future of the nation and of the Church, our brave soldiers, . . . our teachers – educators of the young generations, lecturers of higher and lower [learning institutions].³³

The Bishop of Podlasie, Henryk Przeździecki, in a less frequently quoted pastoral letter of 15 August 1938, presented a more complex picture of the entirety of Polish-Jewish relations. He pointed to Jewish poverty and even called to offer help to the Jewish poor. “Your shepherd,” he said, “supports Jews as well.” But he immediately added that, “It is not anti-Semitism when we now increasingly take up trade, creating all kinds of cooperatives, interest-free banks, develop crafts, set up craftsmen’s associations.” Otherwise, “the Polish nation would be rotting in squalor.” The causes of anti-Jewish sentiments should be explained to the Jews: “Your greatest enemies are your compatriots who inculcate you with hatred of other nations; who are involved in all kinds of riots worldwide, in upheavals, in the denigration and murder of people, are their executioners; who spread drinking, faithlessness, debauchery, in conversations, writings, brochures, books, in cinemas, in clothes: who cheat and drive people to poverty; who in the countries where they have found shelter strive to control the economy, and even rule those countries; who belong to masonry, communism and other similar organizations. You know what your compatriots do and did in Soviet Russia, Spain.” The fate of the Jews is in their hands: “Work, try hard so that they stop doing that. Your fate will then change. There will be no hatred of you. Anti-Semitism will disappear from the earth. And you will find it easier to have your own state, which is

³¹ “List pasterski biskupa włocławskiego,” *Kronika Diecezji Włocławskiej* 2 (1937): 40. Despite the thesis that “the duty of every Catholic Pole is to combat communism,” the letter mentioned there only the need to support the Catholic press. The Jews were not identified as creators of communism either.

³² “Prawa i obowiązki moralne. Wypowiedź biskupa Stanisława Łukomskiego w sprawach społeczno-politycznych,” *Sprawa Katolicka* 11 (1937): 5.

³³ “List pasterski o trzeźwości i abstynencji,” *Roczniki Katolickie* (1938): 284.

a necessity for you.” He also warned against “racism,” which was harmful to the converts.³⁴

To summarize, on the eve of the war, the Polish clergy was dominated by those who favored “de-Judaization” of culture and economic life, the introduction of religious schools, the *numerus clausus* at universities, the “Aryan paragraph” in public institutions, and – finally – compulsory or voluntary emigration of the Jews. In their statements the bishops failed to present any guidelines for a correct Polish-Jewish coexistence, predicting further and accelerating escalation of the conflict. As Primate Hlond put it in the quoted pastoral letter of February 1936: “the Jewish problem exists and will continue to exist as long as the Jews are the Jews.”

Occupation Context

The problem of the perception of the “Jewish question” by the Polish Church hierarchy cannot be considered outside the occupation context, from the situation in which the Polish Church found itself in. When Poland was defeated in the war with Germany, the Church’s structure was destroyed, and the clergy, like the entire Polish elite, was subjected to persecution and repression. The papal nuncio Archbishop Filippo Cortesi and Primate August Hlond had left the country. The Gniezno, Poznań, Chełmno, Włocławek, and Katowice dioceses and parts of others were incorporated into the Reich. The Warsaw, Lublin, Kielce, Sandomierz, Siedlce, Tarnów, and most of Cracow and Przemyśl dioceses and small fragments of several other Church provinces were in the General Government, established in October 1939. By June 1941 the eastern Church provinces were under Soviet occupation.

The German policy with respect to the Catholic Church was diversified. In the incorporated territories, brutal liquidation of the Polish Church structure began as early as in autumn 1939. There were mass arrests of priests, deportations to concentration camps, and closures of churches and monasteries. Bishops were arrested or forced to leave their dioceses.³⁵ The scale of repressions against the clergy in the G[eneral] G[overnment] was smaller, and all the bishops, except the Lublin bishops Marian Fulman and Władysław Goral, who had been arrested in 1939, remained in their dioceses, although their actions were severely restricted.

³⁴ H. Przeździecki, “W związku z moją chorobą,” in *Listy pasterskie 1928-1938* (Siedlce, 1938), 369, 373-375.

³⁵ The Płock bishops Antoni Julian Nowowiejski and Leon Wetmański were murdered in the concentration camp in Działdowo in 1941. Vicar General of the Włocławek Diocese, Michał Kozal, died in Dachau in June 1943. The human losses of the clergy of the dioceses were as follows: Włocławek – 50.2%, Chełmno – 46.5%, Łódź – 38%, Gniezno – 36.5%, Poznań – 35.4%, and Płock – 30.4%.

Actions in Defense of the Converts

In the early phase of the German occupation, the Church did not cease its missionary activity among the Jews. On 23 July 1940, the apostolic administrator of the Warsaw Diocese, Stanisław Gall,³⁶ issued an instruction for the clergy of the Warsaw Archdiocese that regulated the procedure of the sacrament of baptism. It reads:

Our holy Church not only cares about the strengthening of faith in the souls of the believers, but desires to win those 'led astray by erroneous beliefs or separated by discord,' who remain in the darkness of paganism, and finally the sons of the nation that used to be a nation especially loved. . . . We remind about the solemn mission given to the clergy by Christ Himself, and wish that in carrying it out the clergy be guided by uniform rules, in line with the current discipline.

He laid particular emphasis on the voluntary character of the act of baptism and the "purity of intention." In order to properly prepare converts and to test their intention, the preparatory period was to be at least six months.³⁷ Such a long catechumenate period had already been introduced before the war due to skepticism about the motives of those Jews who applied for it.³⁸ It is difficult to assess whether Gall's guidelines were issued in the light of the growing number of conversions, as some Jews decided to be baptized hoping to avoid restrictions of anti-Jewish legislation, or they were motivated by the desire to seize the opportunity and see proselytes. The data on the scale of conversions at that time are fragmentary. In the Warsaw parish of Our Lady of Loreto, between September and the end of 1939, 39 such cases were recorded, whereas in 1940 there were 46.³⁹ Without research in

³⁶ During 1910–1933, the Polish Army Bishop, in 1933 appointed archbishop after the death of Archbishop Kakowski in 1939, in 1939 Vicar General, in January 1940 appointed apostolic administrator.

³⁷ Ks. [Father] J. Wysocki, "Archidiecezja warszawska," in *Życie religijne w Polsce pod okupacją hitlerowską*, ed. ks. [Father] Z. Zieliński (Warsaw, 1982), 280–281. This document comes from the files of the Grójec parish kept in the Archive of the Warsaw Archdiocese.

³⁸ The Cracow Metropolitan Adam Sapieha stressed the importance of converts' motivations to the priests: "since there were cases of baptism for so-called 'collateral reasons,' not for religious motives, as well as [cases of] regrettable return to Judaism" ("W sprawie udzielania chrztu żydom," *Notificationes* 2–3 [1939]: 12–13). It was required that the purity of the candidate's intentions be ascertained, that there be at least a six-month preparatory period, and that individual cases be consulted by the priests with the superiors ("Obwieszczenie Ordynariusza Diecezjalnej Kapituły Duchownej," *Wiadomości Diecezjalne. Organ Kurii Diecezjalnej w Katowicach* 4 [1939]: 111; *Ateneum Kapłańskie* 44 [1939]: 58–60). Other bishops issued instructions that were similar in tone ("Z żydami trzeba ostrożnie" [One must be careful with the Jews] – read the title of an article regarding the instructions for priests of the Warsaw Archdiocese regarding the baptism of the Jews in *Mały Dziennik* 57–58, 25 February 1939).

³⁹ Ks. [Father] J. Wysocki, "Archidiecezja warszawska," 292–293. In January 1940 there were 1,540 Roman Catholics behind the ghetto walls, 148 Lutherans, 30 Orthodox Christians,

church archives, it is hard to ascertain whether similar instructions were also issued in other dioceses.⁴⁰

The ordinance of the Warsaw Governor Ludwig Fischer on the establishment of the ghetto in Warsaw (promulgated on 12 October 1940) must have caused anxiety of the Church hierarchy as to the status of Catholics of Jewish origin. Archbishop Adam Sapieha, who after Primate August Hlond had left the country became the effective head of the Polish Church, began to intercede on their behalf. What seems extremely interesting is Sapieha's argument in favor of taking a position on the matter, as laid out in a letter to the chairman of the Chief Welfare Council (*Rada Główna Opiekuńcza*, RGO) Adam Ronikier on 30 October 1940. "Baptized Jews," the Cracow Metropolitan wrote, "belong to the same community of the faithful as we do," and their motives are tested during the catechumenate. Therefore the sincerity of their intentions should not be questioned: "both the Church authorities and the faithful must behave towards them as they do towards other faithful, treating them in all respects as having equal rights, as brethren in the faith," particularly with regard to those who had converted to Catholicism some time ago. "Unfortunately," he continued, "the German authorities have taken a totally different position, treating these Catholics on a par with the entire mass of the Jews, bound by far-reaching restrictions based on racial principles." Sapieha decided that it was particularly unfavorable for Catholics because "they are again placed into a milieu they had freely left and which became fundamentally alien to them. In that milieu they encounter aversion and hatred. Their situation thus becomes exceptionally hard and morally painful."⁴¹ Taking all that into account, "one cannot fail to intercede on their behalf and attempt to explain the essence of the state of affairs. The converts from the Mosaic religion cannot be regarded as members of the Jewish community. Their family relations, concepts and customs are totally different from those of the Jews."⁴²

and 43 members of other non-Mosaic religions (see R. Sakowska, *Ludzie z dzielnicy zamkniętej. Z dziejów Żydów w Warszawie w latach okupacji hitlerowskiej, październik 1939-marzec 1943* [Warsaw, 1993], 139). Ringelblum says that between November 1939 and March 1940, i.e. even before the ghetto was sealed off, around 200 people were baptized (*Notes from the Warsaw Ghetto. The Journal of Emanuel Ringelblum*, trans. and ed. J. Sloan (New York, 1958), information from the Polish edition: E. Ringelblum, *Kronika getta warszawskiego. Wrzesień 1939-styczeń 1943*, transl. A. Rutkowski, ed. T. Berenstein et al. (Warsaw, 1983, 102).

⁴⁰ There are no such figures regarding other Warsaw churches. In Łódź, between September and December 52 Jews were baptized (after: ks. [Father] M. Budziarek, "Diecezja Łódzka," in *Życie religijne*, vol. 1, 389).

⁴¹ For the perception of converts in the Warsaw ghetto see Archiwum Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego [Archive of the Jewish Historical Institute] (later: AŻIH), Ring I/36, NN (Władko), Asymilatorzy i neofici w okresie działań wojennych i zamkniętej dzielnicy żydowskiej, no date; ibidem, Ring I, 282 [Natan Koniński?], Relacja o pogrzebie Żyda-katolika w getcie warszawskim (10 August 1941); Yad Vashem Archive, O3/5989, Relacja Stanisława Gajewskiego.

⁴² Archiwum Akt Nowych [Archive of New Records] (later: AAN), RGO (Cracow), 5, List arcybiskupa Adama Sapiehy do Ronikiera, 30 October 1940, pp. 19–20.

Several days earlier, on 25 October, the chairman of the RGO received a letter on the same matter from the Warsaw Superintendent of the Evangelical Reformed Church, Stefan Kazimierz Skierski. This fact could have had some influence on the interest in the converts on the part of the Archbishop of Cracow.⁴³ A comparison of the texts could prove useful. Both authors are concordant in their failure to condemn anti-Jewish legislation as such, but differ with respect to their perception of the converts. Sapieha wrote about them only as of members of a religious community, while to the head of the Evangelical Reformed Church their national identity was equally important. He insisted that the Germans should be required to make a “clear differentiation between a Jew and a Christian Pole of non-Aryan descent.”⁴⁴ These formulations seem to reflect the different perceptions of converts in Catholic and Protestant circles. Catholics have always been more distrustful of neophytes,⁴⁵ which in the 1930s became even deeper: a baptized Jew did not automatically become a Pole.

Having received those letters, on 4 November 1940 on behalf of the Cracow Archbishop, the Superintendent and the Evangelical Parish in Warsaw Ronikier put forth a suggestion to the occupying authorities that those persons who had been baptized before 1 September 1939 be exempted from forced labor, resettlement to the ghetto and the duty to wear an armband.⁴⁶ Initially, it seems the German authorities decided to wait. In the minutes of an RGO session, following a conversation with the head of the Internal Administration Department – Population and Care Matters, it was recorded that: “the above issue was submitted to the authorities by the RGO, with the stipulation that the RGO intended to file positive applications in individual cases, and therefore issue certificates to confirm that the applicants belong to a Christian denomination. Dr [Walther] Foehl agrees and requests that further information be filed regarding the statistical data of such persons, divided into: “*Volkjuden*, *Halbjuden* and *Mischlingen*.”⁴⁷ Soon an RGO commission for neophytes was established, with the following members: Ronikier, Henryk Kułakowski and Father Romuald Moskała. The latter was the Archbishop’s representative. Its first session was convened on 25 November 1940.⁴⁸ Unfortunately, I have not found documents of its proceedings.

⁴³ Unlike texts produced in the Church milieu that pointed to Sapieha’s role, Evangelical publications contain no references to Skierski’s intervention (see *Ewangelicy warszawscy w walce o niepodległość Polski 1939–1945*, ed. A. Janowska et al. [Warsaw, 1997]).

⁴⁴ AAN, RGO (Cracow), 5, List superintendenta Kościoła Ewangelicko-Reformowanego, 25 October 1940, p. 9.

⁴⁵ K. Lewalski, *Kościół chrześcijański w Królestwie Polskim wobec Żydów w latach 1855–1915* (Wrocław, 2002), 209, 217.

⁴⁶ AAN, RGO (Cracow), 5, An die Regierung des Generalgouvernements Abteilung Innere Verwaltung Bevölkerungswesen und Fürsorge in Krakau, 4 November 1940, pp. 5–6.

⁴⁷ Ibidem, Protokół posiedzenia Prezydium RGO w dniu 21 XI 1940 r., p. 54.

⁴⁸ Ibidem, Notatka, p. 28.

At the same time the RGO began issuing certificates of membership of the Catholic Church to the converts. This action triggered a violent reaction of the occupation administration. Foehl reprimanded Ronikier, stating that a relevant decision in the matter should have been taken first. He found the fact that the RGO issued certificates to baptized Jews, which was not in its remit, to be irresponsible and potentially detrimental to the Jews themselves. He threatened that such action would have negative consequences for the Council.⁴⁹ We do not know whether it should be linked with Hans Frank's irritation with the Church's attitude.⁵⁰ According to Ronikier's memoirs, he also talked with other dignitaries of the administration of the General Government, who tried to hide behind the requirement to follow directives from Berlin. Nevertheless, 261 certificates were issued on a form designed by Dr Witold Celichowski. That is how Ronikier wrote about it: "For a long time it seemed that they were particularly honored by the Warsaw authorities, but there came a time when the Cracow Gestapo received inquiries from different parties whether the certificates should be recognized, and then, at the end of the year, came my conflict with the Gestapo, which it seemed could turn out to be tragic for me and for my work. I experienced it myself that in the Jewish issue any resistance was of no avail and that the Gestapo authorities decided to ruthlessly quench those that would have the courage to resist." Ultimately the matter was decided on 22 January 1942 during Ronikier's conversation with the Gestapo, when he was informed in sharp words that there would be no exemptions for neophytes. Ronikier and Sapieha agreed that he would send letters regarding the issue to the Governor General and to Nuncio Cesare Orsenigo in Berlin. Neither received a reply.⁵¹

In late February 1941, 20 families on the RGO list were ordered to move to the Warsaw ghetto, among them the writer Benedykt Hertz and the physicians Ludwik Hirszfeld and Aleksander Wertheim.⁵² Hirszfeld wrote in his memoirs: "At that time the Chief Welfare Council informed that on behalf of non-Aryan Christians it applied for exemption from the compulsory wearing of armbands, and from forced labor, etc. We file the application. Not only mine and my wife's work, but primarily that of my uncle made a positive impact on Polish culture. We receive the certificate with no reservations. We did not sense at that time that the exemption would accelerate our misfortune. The licenses issued by the RGO turned out to be a trap. Even though there was no ill will of the RGO, I cannot but blame them for recklessness.

⁴⁹ Ibidem, An den Polnischen Hauptausschuss Krakau, pp. 62-63.

⁵⁰ On 19 December 1940 he stated poignantly: "I have noticed that the Church is becoming increasingly unpleasant, . . . at present - evidently due to a certain stabilization of the political situation on the continent - it is beginning to be unpleasant here and there. Let me underline with all strength that I shall declare war on the padres, by hook or by crook, and I shall stop at nothing, and even have the bishops arrested, come what may. *Dziennik Hansa Franka*, ed. S. Piotrowski (Warsaw, 1956), 148.

⁵¹ A. Ronikier, *Pamiętniki 1939-1945* (Cracow, 20010, 76-77, 95-96). It remains to be explained whether the letter to Orsenigo was actually sent.

⁵² E. Ringelblum, *Kronika getta warszawskiego*, 236.

The occupation authorities demanded . . . a list of non-Aryan Christians who had received [such] permits. And when they had [their] addresses, those persons were delivered to the [Jewish] district. As punishment for their trust in the occupiers, literally everything was taken away from them: furniture, books, underwear, paintings. They were transferred to the district stripped of everything.”⁵³ Most converts had moved to the ghetto earlier – some appealed to the RGO and the Church, asking to be exempted from the [compulsory resettlement into the] ghetto, but all such efforts proved to have been in vain.⁵⁴

On 17 March 1941 Sapieha appealed to the G[eneral] G[overnment] authorities (GG Secretary of State Ernst Kundt), this time with a request to enable the neophytes locked up in the Warsaw ghetto to fulfill their religious duties. He argued: “They must defend the general Christian rights of those members of the Roman Catholic Church until the end, and make every effort not to allow them to disappear again among the Jews, whom they had left for ever.”⁵⁵ We know nothing about measures regarding the Cracow ghetto, which was closed on 20 March 1941. In late June 1941 Ronikier conferred with Dr Foehl about the status of the neophytes, and received the assurance that “he had drafted an appropriate letter and sent it to be signed by superior authorities.”⁵⁶ But the issue was far from over; in mid-December 1941, suddenly the Germans proposed to the RGO the exemption of 30–40 “non-Aryan Catholics” from the constraints of anti-Jewish legislation.⁵⁷ The “offer,” however, in the context of previous declarations, in fear of exposure of converts remaining on the Aryan side, was rejected.⁵⁸

It should be added that the issue of the situation of the converts was not discussed at the first two conferences of the Episcopate of the General Government.

⁵³ L. Hirsfeld, *Historia jednego życia* (Warsaw, 2000), 274.

⁵⁴ Krystyna Samsonowska lists Jerzy Blay, Józef Jakubowicz, Eleonora Reicher, Jakub Wasserthal, Zofia Jetkiewiczowa (the archives of the Metropolitan Curia contain lists of those people of December 1940). The letter of the latter had attached documents to confirm that her family had been Catholic for three generations (K. Samsonowska, “Pomoc dla Żydów krakowskich w okresie okupacji hitlerowskiej,” in *Polacy i Żydzi pod okupacją niemiecką 1939–1945. Studia i materiały*, ed. A. Żbikowski [Warsaw, 2006], 847).

⁵⁵ Cf. B. Przybyszewski, “Dzieje kościelne Krakowa w czasie okupacji 1939–1945,” *Chrześcijańin w Świecie* 12 (1979): 30; K. Samsonowska, “Pomoc dla Żydów krakowskich,” 847.

⁵⁶ AAN, RGO (Cracow), 14, Protokół konferencji RGO odbytej 20 VI 1941 r. [Minutes of RGO conference on 20 June 1941], p. 4.

⁵⁷ Ibidem, Protokół posiedzenia Prezydium RGO w dniu 11 XI 1941 r. [Minutes of RGO Presidium session of 11 December 1941], p. 45.

⁵⁸ The archives of the Metropolitan Curia contain a conspectus of Sapieha’s file note for Ronikier of 15 December 1941, [to the effect] that Catholics of Jewish origin should not be subject to restrictions applied to the Jews. It also contains information that there existed a list of those persons, compiled in order to issue a relevant certificate (K. Samsonowska, “Pomoc dla Żydów krakowskich”). The summary of the document, however, is not precise enough.

The pretext to call the first one (14 November 1941) was the projected closure of diocesan seminaries. It coincided with the enclosure of the Jews in the Warsaw ghetto (16 November 1941). The second took place (5 May 1941) one month after the establishment of the Cracow ghetto. The two then drafted, but ultimately did not send, memoranda to the German authorities (one addressed to Adolf Hitler, the other to Hans Frank) describing the “sufferings of our nation” and of the Church.⁵⁹

That the fears of the hierarchs were justified is confirmed by the events that unfolded in Przemyśl. When the ordinance to establish the ghetto was issued, the local bishop, Franciszek Barda, on 6 July 1942 sent an application regarding the status of the neophytes to the German City Commissar (who issued the ordinance to establish the ghetto). The intervention was repeated on 12 July. The Germans decided that the neophytes would remain outside the ghetto provided that the Curia submitted a list of such persons. It was submitted on 16 July. But the terms of the agreement were not kept, and Jewish Catholics were resettled into the ghetto or shot.⁶⁰ There are also accounts to testify that the bishop offered [baptism] certificates to the hiding Jews.⁶¹ Earlier on the Przemyśl Gestapo demanded a list of those baptized after 1 January 1933, including full [personal] data and the current address.⁶² There exists a circular, dated 9 June 1942, which instructed the parish priests to send lists of neophytes to the Curia.⁶³ Possibly, similar letters were sent to clergymen in other dioceses.

Organized missionary action was carried out in the Warsaw ghetto. According to Father Antoni Czarnecki, of the All Saints’ parish, by Gall’s consent, the candidates took a six-week preparatory course concluded with an examination.⁶⁴ But studies on the individual dioceses do not contain much information on the issue. What has been preserved, however, are ordinances that prohibited baptizing Jews. In the Tarnów Diocese, parents were instructed to declare that the child receiving the sacrament of baptism was not a Jew.⁶⁵ The order of the GG government of 10 October

⁵⁹ At the first conference: Ks. [Father] J. Wolny, “Arcybiskup Adam Sapieha w obrobie Narodu i Kościoła polskiego w czasie drugiej wojny światowej,” in *Księga Sapieżyńska*, vol. 2, ed. J. Wolny and R. Zawadzki (collaborating) (Cracow, 1986), 258–259. Texts of the memoranda: *ibidem*, 421–433.

⁶⁰ *Diecezja przemyska w latach 1939–1945*, vol. 3: *Zakony*, ed. J. Draus and J. Musiał (Przemyśl, 1990), 394.

⁶¹ A. Krochmal, “Żydzi przemyscy w czasie II wojny światowej,” in *Pamiętam każdy dzień... Losy Żydów przemyskich podczas II wojny światowej*, ed. J.J. Hartman and J. Krochmal (Przemyśl, 2001), 273.

⁶² J. Sziling, *Kościół chrześcijański w polityce niemieckich władz okupacyjnych w Generalnym Gubernatorstwie (1939–1945)* (Toruń, 1980), 129–130.

⁶³ *Ibidem*, footnote 318.

⁶⁴ Ks. [Father] A. Czarnecki, “Przyczynek do duszpasterskiej działalności księży parafii Wszystkich Świętych w getcie warszawskim,” *Wiadomości Archidiecezjalne Warszawskie* 7–8 (1973): 303.

⁶⁵ Ks. [Father] B. Kumor, “Diecezja tarnowska,” in *Życie religijne*, vol. 1, 262. The date of the ordinance was not given.

1942 finally prohibited baptism of Jews.⁶⁶ On the other hand, false baptism certificates were of fundamental importance for hiding Jews.

A published collection of Vatican documents contains a file note in German of January 1943, sent to the Vatican by the Bishop of Katowice, Stanisław Adamski, who was then in Warsaw, about the failure of oral and written initiatives by Gall on behalf of Catholics of Jewish origin with the “Warsaw ghetto authorities” (“*an Behörden der Judenstadt in Warschau*”), as well as of other similar steps (“*sowie andere derartige Schritte*”).⁶⁷ It is, if one were to judge from the editor’s annotations, a fragment of Adamski’s letter to be discussed below. We do not know, however, whether it dealt with interventions with the German authorities or the Warsaw Judenrat. One way or another, without comprehensive access to Church archives it is hard to verify the course of events.

Controversies over Archbishop Stanisław Gall’s Attitude towards the Warsaw Pogrom

In his diary Emanuel Ringelblum mentioned rumors regarding a Jewish delegation’s visit to Archbishop Gall about a series of German-inspired anti-Jewish incidents that repeatedly took place in Warsaw on 22–29 March 1940. The Archbishop was to have expressed his indignation but declined to issue a proclamation to the Polish population.⁶⁸ Echoes of this entry can be found in a file note drafted on 11 April by Michał Weichert, heading the Jewish Social Self-help Organization (*Żydowska Samopomoc Społeczna*, ŻSS), following a conference with Artur Śliwiński, chairman of the Warsaw Self-Help Committee (*Stołeczny Komitet Samopomocy Społecznej*, SKSS). Discussing the actions of the SKSS authorities in relation to the anti-Jewish incidents (letters to Mayor Julian Kulski and SKSS committees), he also mentioned Archbishop Gall’s intervention and appeal addressed to the clergy to condemn the anti-Jewish incidents. No concrete information – date, and more importantly the office to which it was addressed – was given. We do not know whether Śliwiński failed to mention it or Weichert failed to write the detail down. There is no mention of pressure on Church representatives by the Jews. Ringelblum’s note quoted earlier came from late 1940, which means that demands for an intervention were made when the incidents were still taking place. Did Gall’s attitude change in the days to follow? Apparently Weichert himself was not aware of the intervention in the bishop’s curia. To be sure, the chairman of the Warsaw Judenrat, Adam Czer-

⁶⁶ J. Wysocki, “Archidiecezja warszawska,” in *Życie religijne*, vol. 1, 281.

⁶⁷ *Actes et documents du Saint Siège relatifs à la Seconde Guerre Mondiale* (later: ADSS), ed. P. Blet, A. Martini, R.A. Graham (since vol. 3), B. Schneider (Città del Vaticano, 1965–1981), here: vol. 9, 113, document no. 39 signed: L’*évêque de Katowice Adamski au cardinal Maglione*.

⁶⁸ E. Ringelblum, *Kronika getta warszawskiego*, 120. Entry of late March 1940.

niaków, had nothing to do with it.⁶⁹ It is possible that, for example, representatives of the converts went to the Archbishop on their own initiative. Some claim that Gall could have interceded even with the Chief of the Warsaw District, Ludwig Fischer.⁷⁰ But such an interpretation seems rather unlikely. The Warsaw Self-Help Committee appealed only to the Polish municipal authorities.⁷¹ Why then should Archbishop Stanisław Gall intercede at a higher level? Furthermore, there are no traces of such an intervention in Fischer's reports, extremely sensitive to all signs of pro-Jewish attitudes in Polish society.⁷²

Information from other sources seems to support Ringelblum's version. Archbishop Gall, as Sapieha's letter to the General of the Jesuit order in Rome, Włodzimierz Ledóchowski, of autumn 1940 shows, "is so frightened [that] he even does not have the courage to reply to letters he receives."⁷³ In such circumstances one should not expect him to dare to intercede for the Jews. A collection of Vatican documents contains a document referring to the Warsaw incidents. It is a file note of the ecclesiastical councillor of the Polish Embassy at the Holy See, Father Walerian Meysz-towicz, filed on 5 April 1940. According to the note, the pogrom of the Jews, dated 22 March 1940, was – despite what the German propaganda claimed – organized by the Gestapo.⁷⁴ This emphasizes both how quickly the information leaked from the occupied country and the lack of information about any action by Archbishop Gall. This can hardly be a decisive argument because we do not know whether the news reached the Vatican via Church channels or it was relayed by a private person who came to Rome from occupied Poland.

A different problem faced Adam Sapieha. In July 1940 the Chief Welfare Council, in agreement with the Archbishop of Cracow, requested the GG Government to stop mass deportations of Jews from Cracow.⁷⁵ The intervention brought no concrete re-

⁶⁹ At least in his diary there is no information to that effect (laconic entries about it: 24, 25, 26 March 1940. Under the last entry: "I am forwarding a report to the proper authorities"). See *The Warsaw Diary of Adam Czerniakow*, ed. R. Hilberg, S. Staron, J. Kermisz [Chicago, 1999], 132).

⁷⁰ Quoted in: T. Szarota, *U progu Zagłady. Zajścia antyżydowskie i pogromy w okupowanej Europie*. Warszawa, Paryż, Amsterdam, Antwerpia, Kowno (Warsaw, 2000), 76–77. Weichert's note is kept in AŻIH in the fond Podziemne Archiwum Getta Warszawskiego (Ring II).

⁷¹ But in the memoirs of the Polish mayor of Warsaw there is no reference to Church intervention (J. Kulski, *Zarząd miejski Warszawy 1939–1944* (Warsaw, 1964), 133).

⁷² Fischer does not mention any Jewish pogroms in March 1940 at all. He does not write much about the Catholic Church either. (See *Raporty Ludwiga Fischera gubernatora dystryktu warszawskiego*, selected and edited by K. Dunin-Wąsowicz et al. [Warsaw, 1987]).

⁷³ "List Sapiehy do Ledóchowskiego," *Księga Sapieżyńska*, vol. 2, 257. In August 1940 Gall opposed Sapieha's initiative to call a conference of the Episcopate.

⁷⁴ Cf. Ks. [Father] F. Stopniak, "Katolickie duchowieństwo w Polsce i Żydzi w okresie niemieckiej okupacji," Document no. 23 published in ADSS, vol. 3, part 1, 234.

⁷⁵ AAN, RGO (Cracow), 8, Protokół z przebiegu posiedzenia konstytuującego, 31 VII 1940 r. [Minutes of the constitutive RGO session, 31 July 1940], p. 76.

sults, and furthermore became a pretext to arrest three rabbis: Szmelkes Kornitzer, Szabse Rappaport and Majer Friedrich. They were deported to Auschwitz, where they died.⁷⁶ It is possible that this was the reason why the Church's mediation was no longer sought for efforts to improve the lot of the Jews. Behind the ghetto walls, both Jews and converts were no longer in the field of vision of the Metropolitan Curia. This did not change either, as we shall see below, when the Germans started the physical extermination of Cracow Jews.

Controversies over Bishop Łukomski's Attitude towards the Murders of Jews in Summer 1941

In his book *Neighbors* Jan Tomasz Gross pointed out the attitude of Łomża Bishop Stanisław Łukomski when murders of Jews were committed by Poles from German inspiration. According to the Jewish testimonies quoted there, Łukomski did not keep the promise made to the Jewish delegation that he would stop the pogrom wave approaching Jedwabne.⁷⁷ The bishop left his residence just before the Germans occupied Łomża on 14 September 1939. Soon, by the virtue of Soviet-German agreements most of the Łomża Diocese was situated within the borders of the USSR, with the Ostrów and Suwałki districts incorporated into the Reich, and only several parishes being part of the General Government. Unlike the territories incorporated into the Reich, where persecution of the clergy⁷⁸ started immediately, under the Soviet occupation no Church organizations were liquidated⁷⁹ in spite of the confiscation of Church property and constant surveillance of priests.

Several versions of Łukomski's involvement on behalf of the Jews appeared in Polish publications. Some claimed that he interceded with the German authorities in defense of the Jews, issued recommendations to the clergy to induce parishioners to demonstrate a positive attitude towards the Jewish population, and finally that he condemned Poles taking part in the murder of Jews from the pulpit.⁸⁰ Undoubtedly, the most intriguing version of this story is presented by Stanisław Podlewski's article "Największa ofiarność i... wielka nikczemność" published in 1967. According to this text, Łukomski "defended and rescued Jews who were often burned alive by the

⁷⁶ A. Biberstein, *Zagłada Żydów w Krakowie*, 2nd edition (Cracow, 2001), 43. Ringelblum informs about their death in the entry of 27/28 February 1941.

⁷⁷ J.T. Gross, *Neighbors. The Destruction of the Jewish Community in Jedwabne, Poland* (London, 2001), 42.

⁷⁸ In 1940, 17 priests of the Łomża Diocese died (after: *Martyrologium polskiego duchowieństwa rzymskokatolickiego pod okupacją hitlerowską w latach 1939-1945*, ed. ks. [Father] W. Jacewicz and ks. [Father] J. Woś, book 2 [Warsaw, 1977], 172).

⁷⁹ Ks. [Father] W. Jemielity, "Diecezja łomżyńska" in *Życie religijne w Polsce pod okupacją hitlerowską*, vol. 2, ed. ks. [Father] Z. Zieliński (Katowice, 1992), 67-68.

⁸⁰ Z. Zieliński, "Stanisław Andrzej Łukomski," in *Polski Słownik Biograficzny*, vol. 2 (Warsaw, 1973), 560; W. Jemielity, "Stanisław Kostka Łukomski," in *Słownik biograficzny katolicyzmu społecznego w Polsce*, vol. 2 (Lublin, 1994), 103.

Nazis in houses and barns. When the Germans started to engage rural youth in this criminal work by giving them vodka and instruments of crime, Bishop Łukomski did not hesitate to strongly condemn, from the pulpit of Łomża Cathedral, complicity with the occupiers, and he instructed priests to refuse absolution to those who were involved in the massacres and condemn them from the pulpit. The result of this action was dramatic.”⁸¹ Unfortunately, the sources of these revelations were not given.

The first information about Łukomski’s involvement appeared much earlier. Paweł Jasienica’s report published in the summer of 1948 in *Tygodnik Powszechny* reads: “when the Germans occupied Łomża in 1941, Bishop Stanisław Łukomski on his own initiative went to the field commander Dr Krüger,⁸² intervening on behalf of the Jews. He tried to obtain assurance that there would be no acts of cruelty. The German heard him out and said that he did not intend to do anything special himself. But, he said literally, ‘when the civil authorities come, your cemeteries will be too small.’ Only after this intervention was a delegation of local Jews to visit the bishop asking for help that had already been – unsuccessfully – offered to them.”⁸³ We do not know who informed the reporter of *Tygodnik Powszechny* who was gathering materials for coverage of this incident.

Łukomski, residing in the provinces (the parish in Kulesze Kościelne) since the fall of 1939, returned to Łomża on 8 or 9 July, i.e. just before the pogrom in Jedwabne (10 July 1941), which raises questions about the possibility of his contacting representatives of the Jewish Jedwabne community.⁸⁴ More important, however, is that he presented the facts described here quite differently in his memoirs. The initiative of the meeting was to have come from the German side: “because the field commander Major Krüger expressed his wish to talk to me, I went to him.” During the conversation the issue of censorship of the bishop’s future pastoral letters was discussed as well as the restitution of the bishop’s palace.⁸⁵ It is hard to believe that if Łukomski had taken any steps in favor of Jews he would have failed to mention the fact.

On the other hand, however, given the negative attitude of this hierarch towards the Jews manifested before the war, his sudden activity would be rather surprising but not impossible. After all, Łukomski was one of the bishops closely connected to

⁸¹ S. Podlewski, “Największa ofiarność... i wielka nikczemność,” *Za i Przeciw* 43 (1967): 12.

⁸² The commander of Field Command 581 subordinated to 221 Security Division. See A. Żbikowski, “Pogromy i mordy ludności żydowskiej w Łomżyńskim i na Białostocczyźnie latem 1941 roku w świetle relacji ocalałych Żydów i dokumentów sądowych,” in *Wokół Jedwabnego*, vol. 1: *Studia*, ed. P. Machcewicz and K. Persak (Warsaw, 2002), 264–265.

⁸³ P. Jasienica, “Jednym płucem,” *Tygodnik Powszechny* 26 (1948): 9.

⁸⁴ D. Libionka, “Duchowieństwo diecezji łomżyńskiej wobec antysemityzmu i zagłady Żydów,” in *Wokół Jedwabnego*, vol. 1, 126.

⁸⁵ S. Łukomski, “Wspomnienia,” *Rozporządzenia Urzędowe Łomżyńskiej Kurii Diecezjalnej* 5–7 (1974): 61.

underground activity and his patriotic attitude was noted in the documents of the Polish Underground State – he was ranked among the group of “high ethical-patriotic standards.”⁸⁶ Still he would not have been the first Catholic priest who changed his attitude because of the persecution of the Jews. Such was, although in slightly less dramatic circumstances, the case of Marcel Godlewski, the Rector of All Saints’ Church in Warsaw, who, incidentally, at the beginning of his career as a priest, was the Rector in Jedwabne. I believe a different document is crucial. Ten days after the Kielce Pogrom Bishop Łukomski wrote to Primate Hlond: “The left-wing press uses the crime in Kielce . . . to undermine your and the Episcopate’s authority. The main Jewish organizations mobilized themselves, including a certain anti-Nazi league, undoubtedly in most part Jewish, to apply pressure in the interest of the Jews . . . Where were those ‘moralists’ in 1939–1941 when the Bolsheviks murdered thousands of Poles and deported thousands to Russia? None of the contemporary Polish dictators, at that time in Stalin’s custody in Moscow, nor any Jewish organization felt the need to condemn these mass murders.”⁸⁷ This seems to be the crux of the matter – it is hard to imagine that in 1941 Łukomski felt empathy for the Jews and the need to act in their defense if he believed that they were at least indifferent towards Soviet crimes [committed] against Poles.

Controversies over Archbishop Adam Sapieha’s Intervention with the Occupation Authorities

Information about the details of the great deportation action in the Warsaw Ghetto reached Cracow fast. Ronikier, as chairman of the Chief Welfare Council to which the Jewish Social Self-Help (ŻSS) belonged, tried to intervene with the German authorities. In a conversation with the aforementioned Dr. Walther Foehl (29 July 1942) “he presented ‘the tragedy of the situation of the Jewish population and the importance of the events from the past weeks.’ At the same time he described . . . the circumstances of the death of Prof. Raszeja⁸⁸ and his assistant . . . he underlined that as the chairman of the RGO he could not take a passive stand.” The Germans’ response was predictable: “After hearing these testimonies, Dr Foehl advised the chairman against touching upon these matters, claiming that in view of the regulations of the supreme authorities he could not have an influence on either the progress or stoppage of the course of events.” The same issue was the topic of a conversation with Lothar Weinrauch, chairman of the Main Department of Social

⁸⁶ Cf. Z. Fijałkowski, *Kościół katolicki na ziemiach polskich w latach okupacji hitlerowskiej* (Warsaw, 1983), 158. The assessment comes from the report of the Office of the Delegate of the Government in Exile of January 1943.

⁸⁷ The document was found in the unsorted Archiwum Diecezjalne [Diocesan Archive] in Łomża. Published: J. Żaryn, “Podróż po archiwach kościelnych (1944–1989),” *Polska 1944/45–1989. Studia i Materiały* 6 (2003): 253–277.

⁸⁸ The Polish doctor Franciszek Raszeja was shot in the ghetto on 21 July 1942 during a visit to a patient for which he had received official permission.

Welfare in the General Government, who was to have claimed that intervention regarding these matters was beyond his authority. In those circumstances Ronikier questioned the relevance of existence of the Chief Welfare Council (*Naczelna Rada Opiekuńcza*, NRO), appealing for the creation of an institution “through which the obligations towards the Jewish population could be fulfilled.”⁸⁹ There is no evidence that the RGO conferred about this matter with Archbishop Sapieha. Besides, he does not write about this in his memoirs. Incidentally, the issue of the converts deported from the Warsaw Ghetto to Treblinka has not been unequivocally mentioned in this context.

The situation was the same in the following months. Archbishop Sapieha’s memorandum to General Governor Hans Frank of 2 November 1942, a protest against the terror in Polish lands, confirms that this was indeed the case. Although the creation of this document coincided with the beginning of another stage of the Warsaw Ghetto’s liquidation, it lacked direct references to this fact – with one exception: the Archbishop opposed the employment of Poles incorporated in the so-called “Construction Service” (*Baudienst*) during murders of Jews: “I do not want to catch myself,” he wrote, “using the construction service consisting mainly of drunk youth in the liquidation of the Jews.”⁹⁰

The issue of employing Polish *Baudienst* members in liquidation actions in the Cracow District was no secret. On 10 September the press organ of the Cracow Home Army *Biuletyn Informacyjny Małopolski*, describing cases of forcing Poles to participate in executions and appropriating the belongings of the victims, read: “The homeland needs a morally healthy generation, not sadistic executioners.” A week later, it warned about photographs of young *Baudienst* members abusing Jews published in the press in neutral countries.⁹¹ Possibly these publications played a certain role in Sapieha raising the issue. Moreover, incidents of this kind took place from the beginning of the deportations from Cracow to the Bełżec camp. Adam Kamiński, an archivist from Cracow, noted in his diary on 4 June 1942 the presence of the Construction Service during the deportations of the Jews from Cracow. He also made a significant observation about the behavior of these “Nazi servants”: “I must sadly point out that... some of them made an impression of being pleased with the functions entrusted to them.”⁹² Information on this subject could

⁸⁹ AAN, RGO (Cracow) 14, *Protokół posiedzenia członków RGO z dnia 17 VIII 1942 r.* [Minutes of the meeting of RGO’s members of 17 August 1942], p. 85. For conversation with Weinrauch see A. Ronikier, *Pamiętniki*, 191–192. The Government of the General Government dissolved the NRO on 1 September 1942. See B. Kroll, *Rada Główna Opiekuńcza 1939–1945* (Warsaw, 1985), 96 (for RGO and Jewish matters see 223–229).

⁹⁰ Full text of the memorandum, see ks. [Father] J. Wolny, *Arcybiskup Adam Sapieha w obronie narodu i Kościoła polskiego*, 435.

⁹¹ *Biuletyn Informacyjny Małopolski*, 10 September 1942, 17 September 1942.

⁹² A. Kamiński, *Diariusz podręczny 1939–1945* (Warsaw, 2001), 134. Similar practice in the Radom District in the second half of 1942 is also mentioned by Ludwik Hirszfeld (See L. Hirszfeld, *Historia jednego życia*, 410–411).

have reached the Diocese from church sources. The archivist of the Franciscan monastery in Przemyśl describes in his diary entry of 29 July 1942 the following occurrence: “trucks were pulling in, taking as many Jews as possible, who were then driven outside the cemetery and ruthlessly shot in the back of the head. They were assisted by Polish boys, so-called “*junacy*” [i.e. young *Baudienst* members], who were given vodka for encouragement.”⁹³ Without further research the scale of such incidents is hard to assess.

From the point of view of this text, it is more important that the case of “*junacy*” mentioned in Sapieha’s memorandum was not taken further. The case was not touched upon at the conference of the Secretary of State of the General Government Joseph Bühler with Ronikier on 14 December 1942, convened to discuss the matters presented in the memorandum.⁹⁴ Ronikier claimed, however, that the interventions regarding the matter of using the *Baudienst* youth to bury the bodies of murdered Jews in Tarnów⁹⁵ were successful.⁹⁶

Sapieha’s memorandum was written in a critical period for the Jews in Cracow. At the end of October 1942 the liquidation of the Cracow ghetto accelerated. On 28 October alone, 4,500 Jews were deported from Cracow and 600 murdered on the spot. Among them there were 300 children from the liquidated Jewish Orphan’s Home who were driven out of the city and killed.⁹⁷ In light of these facts, it is hard to treat Sapieha’s words regarding the employment of young *Baudienst* members as a moral protest against the liquidation of the Jews. It is also difficult to agree with the opinion of the church historian Father Franciszek Stopniak, who claims that Sapieha “touched upon the issue of murdering the Jews.”⁹⁸ It seems that the

⁹³ R. Woźniak OFM, *Przemyśl w latach II wojny światowej w relacji kronikarza klasztoru Franciszkanów-Reformatów* (Przemyśl, 1998), 96.

⁹⁴ See testimonies from this meeting prepared by Archbishop Sapieha and Adam Ronikier, *Księga Sapieżyńska*, vol. 2, 438–433.

⁹⁵ Some authors write that in the document submitted to Frank, Archbishop Sapieha “quoted” examples from Tarnów and Działoszyce. See ks. [Father] F. Stopniak, “Duchowieństwo katolickie i Żydzi w Polsce w latach II wojny światowej,” *Studia nad Faszyzmem i Zbrodniami Hitlerowskimi* 11 (1987): 201. In Sapieha’s memorandum published in *Księga Sapieżyńska* there were no specific examples of Poles being employed in executions of Jews. But in a version of the document kept in the embassy of the Polish Embassy at the Vatican one sentence was added: “In Tarnów, *Baudienst* members, assigned to road works, were given alcohol and ordered to murder the Jewish population. Those scenes were filmed and the film was distributed as a proof of Poles tormenting Jews, which found some resonance abroad.” (The Polish Institute and Sikorski Museum in London, later: PISM, A44.49/7).

⁹⁶ A. Ronikier, *Pamiętniki*, 129. Yet, he does not mention the presence of this subject in Adam Sapieha’s letter to Hans Frank.

⁹⁷ A. Biberstein, *Zagłada Żydów w Krakowie*, 72–76. For more information on the situation in the Cracow District: E. Podhorizer-Sandel, “O zagładzie Żydów w dystrykcie krakowskim,” *Biuletyn ŻIH* 15–16, 87–109; about the “October action” in the Cracow ghetto see p. 98.

⁹⁸ See ks. [Father] F. Stopniak, *Katolickie duchowieństwo w Polsce i Żydzi*, 24. It is even harder to agree with the thesis made by Sapieha’s biographer that he repeatedly appealed

Israeli historian and diplomat Pinchas Lapide, who is friendly in his approach to the Church, was right when he sarcastically commented on the words of the Cracow Archbishop: "All that Sapieha, ... had to say on this matter to Hans Frank, the German Governor General, was to complain of the moral corruption that the extermination of the Jews caused among these young Poles who carried out the massacres, ... is the terribly ambiguous sentence in his protest of November 8, 1942."⁹⁹

There is no sign of interest in the fate of the Jews on the part of the bishops in the documents from 1942–1943 that are known to historians. No echoes of the Holocaust could be heard during the Third Episcopate Conference on 1 June 1943, i.e. several days after the suppression of the uprising in the Warsaw Ghetto,¹⁰⁰ but in the opinion of the church historian, the uprising in the ghetto was to be "a call sign for the Episcopate heralding an analogical confrontation on a national scale." At least there are no allusions in this regard in the memorandum submitted to Hans Frank (and informally to the Breslau Cardinal Adolf Bertram).¹⁰¹ References to the Jews appeared during the only meeting of the Cracow Archbishop with the General Governor on 5 April 1944. It was the initiative of the Church, which counted on persuading the General Government's authorities to reduce terror measures towards the Church and the Polish nation. The Governor, however, wanted to gain Sapieha's support for anti-communist initiatives. The course of the conversation is known only from the stenographic record in Hans Frank's *Diary*. The General Governor suggested that the Church condemn "acts of violence and treacherous assassinations of Germans" as a sign of good will. The Cracow Metropolitan was to comment on this subject "in a decisive way. Murder is murder and a great sin. The Church does everything so that believers do not murder. However, it would be difficult to undertake any further measures. He says that in order to oppose it, the Church could be independent in its actions. Unfortunately, the situation of the population is very hard after five years of war. He hopes that the General Governor and the government representatives will take a moderate position towards the Polish nation; however, they do not see how badly lower instances [of the administration] treat the population. Precisely this

to the occupation authorities to "stop the terror against the Jewish population" in speeches to the German authorities; they also suggest that he did what he could when the "Jewish lobby" in the United States did not do anything to save their brothers in Western Europe. J. Czajkowski, *Kardynał Adam Stefan Sapieha* (Wrocław, 1997), 141.

⁹⁹ P. Lapide, *Three Popes and the Jews* (New York, 1967), 182. Such an approach was naturally strictly criticized by apologists: "It is hard to argue calmly with such reasoning especially when the author is driven by ill will and convulsive hatred towards the Poles for their heroic attitude and unselfish help towards the Jews." Ks. [Father] F. Kački, *Udział księży i zakonnic*, 19–20.

¹⁰⁰ According to Ronikier the matter was to have been discussed during one of the meetings of bishops with the General Government in Cracow, but no other source confirms this information. A Ronikier, *Pamiętniki*, 105.

¹⁰¹ Ks. [Father] J. Wolny, *Arcybiskup Adam Sapieha w obronie Narodu i Kościoła polskiego*, 283. The content of the memorandum: 451–453. There is no allusion to the Holocaust in the letter to Bertram (*ibidem*, 455).

kind of treatment enrages the population. He believes that many of these murders were committed by Jews. They might have been committed by young people who joined the bandits and who are regarded even by Poles as unreasonable. It might have been a success if different tactics were used and if the press could persuade the Polish population that it is not being treated worse than the Jews.” It is hard to say to what extent the stenographic record reflects the words and intentions of the Cracow Metropolitan, as there is no Church record of this conversation. In the opinion of the publisher of the fragments of the *Diary*, “Sapieha’s renunciation of the resistance movement could have been evidence for Frank and the Nazi administration that the main representative of the Catholic hierarchy condemns the resistance movement although thousands of privates died martyrs’ deaths at Nazis’ hands.¹⁰² In *Księga Sapieżyńska*, where a full stenographic record was first published, the passage devoted to the Jews was not left without a comment: “the reference to terrorist acts of the Jewish underground,” the publisher writes, “did not aim at accusing the Jews but it pointed out how complex the phenomenon was and how many reasons there were for this to have happened. The Poles and the Jews resort to terrorist acts for one fundamental reason – self-defense. Sapieha reversed the accusation aimed at him and blamed the German authorities for the terror.”¹⁰³ This is not, however, the full explanation. At that time, liquidation actions of German functionaries “earned” for their oppression of the Poles intensified. On 1 February 1944 the Home Army (the “Grey Ranks”) assassinated General Major Franz Kutschera, the SS and Police Chief in the Warsaw District. Sapieha’s distance towards the Home Army’s activity was obviously part of the tactics. On the other hand, however, his criticism regarded the People’s Guard/Army’s activity, which would have been similar to the leadership of the Polish Underground State showing disapproval of the activity of the communist underground reinforced among others by fugitives from the liquidated ghettos. He might have remembered the bomb attack on the “Cyganeria” café in Cracow, carried out by members of the Jewish Fighting Organization (ŻOB) and the People’s Guard (GL) in December 1942, with 11 Germans killed.

Controversies over the Information Policy of Polish Bishops

Open protests of the Polish Church hierarchy facing the intensification of persecution of the Jews, similar to those of French or Dutch bishops, or interventions with the authorities, given the reality of the G[eneral] G[overnment] involved an enormous risk for the Church. There were substantial grounds for fears that the situation of the lonely and persecuted Polish Church could become worse. As of 15 October 1941 any kind of help to the Jews was punishable by death. It is not hard to

¹⁰² See *Dziennik Hansa Franka*, 149–150. However, the fragment containing references to the Jews was not quoted.

¹⁰³ Ks. [Father] J. Wolny, *Arcybiskup Adam Sapieha w obronie Narodu i Kościoła polskiego*, 310.

imagine severe repressions of the clergy or even the bishops, as a result of acting in favor of the Jews. After the failed intervention for the converts, the Church milieu, at least in Cracow, must have been aware that their protests were in vain.

This does not mean, however, that it was all the Church could do. Representatives of the Church hierarchy, being in permanent contact with the Holy See through informal communication channels, could send such information, and even initiate some diplomatic actions. From the correspondence published in the Vatican in *Actes et documents du Saint Siège relatifs à la Seconde Guerre Mondiale*,¹⁰⁴ a picture of their indifference towards the Jews emerges. Among several dozen Polish bishops only a few contain any references to the Jews. The Holy See's main source of information from the occupied country was Archbishop Adam Sapieha, who was in touch with Italian clergymen in Poland as well as other persons who could reach Rome.¹⁰⁵ Thanks to his permanent contacts with the underground, he was, after all, the best informed Polish Church hierarch. In letters addressed to the Pope and Vatican dignitaries, which painted a full picture of the tragic situation of the Church and the situation in the occupied country, there were no references to the extermination of the Jews. There are not even any allusions to the situation of the converts, even though abortive attempts were made to change their situation. This is also the case with other bishops who kept contacts with the Vatican.¹⁰⁶ Such an approach is in contrast with the situation in the occupied countries of Western Europe: The hierarchs in those countries loudly demanded that the treatment of the converts be taken into consideration.

On 28 February 1942 Sapieha wrote a letter to Pius XII in which he precisely presented the tragic situation of the Church and of the Polish nation, requesting intervention.¹⁰⁷ The letter had been written even before the operation to exterminate Jews in the General Government, *Aktion Reinhardt*,¹⁰⁸ but it was dispatched on 15 April 1942. At that time people were aware of the progress of the extermination of the Jews on the territories incorporated into the Reich, which began in Kulmhof (Chełmno nad Nerem) in December 1941; it was reported, albeit laconically, in the central underground press.¹⁰⁹ Although information from the Warthegau, given the

¹⁰⁴ An eleven-volume collection of documents from the Vatican historical archives, published in 1965–1981.

¹⁰⁵ Ks. [Father] Z. Zieliński, "Polska-Watykan w latach 1939–1945," in *Historia dyplomacji polskiej*, vol. 5: 1939–1945, ed. W. Michowicz (Warsaw, 1999), 729.

¹⁰⁶ Only a letter of the Bishop of Przemyśl, Franciszek Barda, whose diocese was occupied by the Soviet Union in the autumn of 1939, contains a reference to the seizure of the Curia building for Jewish flats (ADSS, vol. 3, part 1, 117–118, document no. 39). When Germany occupied this area in summer 1941, there was no further information about the Jews.

¹⁰⁷ ADSS, vol. 3, part 2, 539–541 (document no. 357). The entire correspondence of the Cracow Metropolitan with the Vatican is available in *Księga Sapieżyńska*.

¹⁰⁸ It was launched on the night of 16/17 March 1942 in Lublin.

¹⁰⁹ See *Biuletyn Informacyjny* 7, 19 February 1942; *Rzeczpospolita Polska* 5, 31 March 1942, 16.

destruction of the local Polish church administration, was difficult to send to Cracow, this was not the case in the nearby neighborhood, although the gassing of Jews in the Auschwitz concentration camp remained unnoticed for quite some time. The first wave of deportations of Jews to the Bełżec death camp did not begin until 30 May 1942.

In one way or another there is a fundamental discrepancy between the reports of the Polish Underground State regarding the situation in the occupied country and the documents sent to the Vatican by Sapieha. The differences stem not only from different goals of the state and ecclesial reporting (the former must necessarily have been more detailed and covered all areas of life), but also from general considerations. From the point of view of Sapieha and others, for clergymen the most important were the Church issues.

On the other hand, there is a clear coincidence between the dates of Sapieha's letters and the stages of the extermination of the Jews in the subsequent correspondence sent to Pius XII and Cardinal Luigi Maglione dated 28 October 1942. The date is another watershed in the history of Cracow Jews. On that day another phase of the ghetto's liquidation took place. The action, as I have mentioned, was accompanied by unprecedented barbarism. Neither of Sapieha's letters contains a reference to the issue of deployment of Poles during the liquidation actions, which after all was made in a memorandum to Frank sent some time later.¹¹⁰ Furthermore, one of the last letters to the Vatican was sent on 18 June 1943,¹¹¹ after the Warsaw ghetto uprising and the final liquidation of the Cracow ghetto.

Another permanent informer of the Holy See was Stanisław Adamski, the Bishop of Katowice deported to Warsaw. On 18 September 1942 he sent a note, and in January 1943 a report on the fate of Polish bishops and the situation of the Church. In June 1943 he sent another report on the matter to Cardinal Maglione.¹¹² The documents were produced at a critical time for Warsaw Jews: The first one was written in the last days of the "Great Action" in the ghetto, the other one when the Germans made an attempt at a final liquidation of the ghetto, and the third one after the fall of the uprising. It is the January letter that is the source of the information on the opaque efforts by Archbishop Gall on behalf of "*der Katholiken jüdischer Abstammung*." Whether there were any other references to the Jews we do not know, as only a fragment of the document was published.¹¹³ Adamski was the only Catholic hierarch to meet with the envoy Jan Karski. He had a long conversation with him. It dealt exclusively with the situation in the Katowice Diocese incorporated into the Reich, and with the policy of Adamski – controversial in the eyes of many Poles and leaders of the Polish underground – who persuaded his faithful to sign the German

¹¹⁰ ADSS, vol. 3, part 2, 668–670 (documents no. 436 and 437).

¹¹¹ Ibidem, 813–814 (document no. 523).

¹¹² Ibidem, 639–640 (document no. 413), 728–731 (document no. 472), 818–821 (document no. 527).

¹¹³ From the editorial note: "These fragments of the letter are written by hand, on ordinary paper, unsigned and undated. They reached the Vatican in March 1943."

national list. The Jews, at least as far as we know from Karski's report, were not mentioned.¹¹⁴

To return to the correspondence of Polish bishops with the Vatican, let us add that a detailed report about the situation in his diocese was also sent by the Lvov Metropolitan Archbishop Bolesław Twardowski (12 July 1943).¹¹⁵ More than a fortnight before, the Higher SS and Police Leader in the District of Galicia reported that the district "[had been] freed" of Jews and that 434,329 Jews had been murdered.¹¹⁶ The echoes of the extermination of the Jews in the Lvov Diocese resounded in a separate file note sent by Archbishop Twardowski to the Vatican in reply to Cardinal Luigi Maglione's enquiry. It confirmed that the vicar of the chapter of the Armenian Diocese in Lvov, Dionizy Kajetanowicz, had been arrested on the charge of offering a [baptism] certificate to a Jew.¹¹⁷ The Holy See found out about it from the letter of Archbishop Andrey Sheptytsky, who interceded on behalf of Kajetanowicz, and he was subsequently released.¹¹⁸ It was the Metropolitan of the Greek Catholic Church and not the Roman Catholic hierarchs who – in spite of initial illusions related to his perception of the Germans as allies in the struggle for an independent Ukraine – warned Pius XII in late August 1942 about the mass murders of the Jews:

In Kiev, over a few days, up to one hundred thousand men, women and children were murdered. All the small towns in Ukraine were the scene of similar massacres, and this has been going on for a year now. Initially, the authorities were ashamed of those acts of human injustice and tried to secure documents that could prove that the murders were committed by the local population and militia members. Eventually, Jews were being murdered in the streets, with the entire population watching, and without a shadow of shame.

In the letter, the German regime was regarded as worse than the Soviet one.¹¹⁹ Furthermore, Sheptytsky ordered that Jews be hidden in Greek Catholic monasteries and church buildings. Many Jews seized the opportunity, i.e. about 150 people,

¹¹⁴ The Polish Underground Movement (1939–1945) Study Trust in London (later: PUMST), 3.1.2.1.3.2, "Raport Karskiego," part entitled 'Charakterystyczny problem 192' [Adamski's code name], 269–278. Nevertheless, Karski defended Adamski's stance as realist politics.

¹¹⁵ ADSS, vol. 3, part 2, 822–824 (document no. 529).

¹¹⁶ F. Katzmann, *Rozwiązanie kwestii żydowskiej w dystrykcie Galicja*, ed. A. Żbikowski (Warsaw, 2001), 38–39.

¹¹⁷ In reply to the letter of 19 June 1943, Archbishop Twardowski informed: "The priest, in April it seems, was arrested because Jews were recorded in his parish book." After release from prison he remained in hiding (ADSS, vol. 3, part 2, Bolesław Twardowski do kardynała Luigięgo Maglione, 12 VII 1943 r., 824, document no. 530).

¹¹⁸ List Andrija Szeptyckiego do kardynała Eugène'a Tisseranta, 8 V 1943 r. (ibidem, 791). More extensive information about the matter came from an Italian chaplain who arrived from Lvov, Col. Aldo Negri (see Notatka Tisseranta do Maglione, 24 V 1943 r., ibidem, 795). Kajetanowicz was to have been denounced.

¹¹⁹ Quoted in: A. Zięba, "List Szeptyckiego do Piusa XII, 29 VIII 1942," *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 3 November 2000.

among them Rabbi Dawid Kahane (the Chief Rabbi of the Polish Army after the war) and many children. The action was coordinated by the Metropolitan's brother, Klemens.¹²⁰

It is also worth emphasizing that that an Italian priest, Pirro Scavizzi, chaplain of a hospital train, who delivered Sapieha's letter of 28 February 1942 to the Pope, soon found it necessary to turn the Holy Father's attention to the issue of the extermination of the Jews. Father Scavizzi submitted a letter to Pius XII in which he stated: "With reference to the present nuncio (Orsenigo), the Cardinal (Innitzer) complained about his silence and expressed the opinion that he was too timid and not interested in so many important things. The fight against the Jews [literally 'anti-Jewish'] is merciless and increasingly worse, with deportations and mass executions. The slaughter of Jews in Ukraine has already taken place. In Poland and in Germany it is envisaged to see it through by means of a mass-killing system."¹²¹ On 7 October 1942 Scavizzi submitted a report on the situation in Poland, which contained information on the murder of two million Jews.¹²² The person to inform the Holy See about the situation of the Jews was another intermediary between Sapieha and Vatican, Count Roberto Malvezzi, an entrepreneur from the Istituto per la Ricostruzione Industriale.¹²³

It is hard not to ponder over the causes of such a great distance being maintained by the representatives of the Polish church to the mass murders committed in their dioceses. Only in part could this state of affairs be ascribed to a series of unfortunate coincidences, if only caused by the incumbents of bishops' offices. The bishops in the Lublin Diocese, where the first extermination center in the G[eneral] G[overnment] was set up (Bełżec), were in isolation, and the diocesan administrator Father Józef Kruszyński (see below) had no contact with the Vatican. The extermination centers in Sobibór and Treblinka were located in the Podlasie Diocese, administrated by Czesław Sokołowski, the only representative of the Church hierarchy deemed by the Polish underground as an opportunist and even a collaborator.¹²⁴ On the other hand, the Warsaw bishopric had at its head the ill Archbishop

¹²⁰ For Metropolitan Sheptytsky's attitude towards the Jews see K. Lewin, *Przeżyłem. Saga św. Jura spisana w roku 1946* (Warsaw, 2006).

¹²¹ ADSS, vol. 8 (Città del Vaticano, 1974), Le P. Scavizzi au pope Pie XII, Bologne, 12 05 1942, 534, document no. 374.

¹²² ADSS, vol. 8, 669–670 (footnote to document no. 496).

¹²³ On 18 November 1942 he relayed his observations to Cardinal Maglione. A summary of the conversation was published in ADSS, vol. 8 (document no. 493, footnote 2), 665–666.

¹²⁴ AAN, 202/1–32, *Nastroje i stanowisko polityczne duchowieństwa katolickiego w Polsce, 6 I 1943 r.*, p. 39. At the turn of 1943 and 1944 he was sentenced to death by the Special Military Court of the Warsaw District of the Home Army. When the sentence was not approved by the Home Army commander Gen. Tadeusz Komorowski ("Bór"), the matter was referred to the Special Civil Court, which sentenced the Bishop to infamy. See L. Gondek, *Polska karząca 1939–1945. Polski podziemny wymiar sprawiedliwości w okresie niemieckiej okupacji* (Warsaw, 1998), 87–88. This matter has not been conclusively explained. The Church historiography mentions submissiveness and passivity of the administrator (ks. [Father]

Stanisław Gall, who died on 11 September 1942, and his successor was the elderly Bishop Antoni Szlagowski, with the affairs of the Curia being in the hands of quite timid personalities.

It is certain that at least several representatives of the hierarchy, and definitely Archbishop Sapieha, who was in permanent contact with the representatives of the Polish Government in Exile, must have been aware that information on the situation in the country, including that regarding the extermination of the Jews, regularly reached the Vatican, be it only via the Government. The Polish Embassy at the Vatican filed reports on the extermination of the Jews. It is quite important that the figures quoted in some of the ambassador's memoranda came from people coming from the country, but not from representatives of the Polish Church.¹²⁵ Although the Cracow archbishop was familiar with the diplomatic efforts of the government and the embassy, he could not be deemed relieved of the duty to inform the Pope about the tragic situation of the Church and the Polish population. Clearly, no such imperative was felt in Polish Church milieus with respect to the Jews. Also, no attempts were made to use the Polish underground or private persons as intermediaries, neither Poles nor Italians, in order to convey to the Holy See any materials on the matter, be it only those that referred to the persecution of the converts. Still unanswered is the question about the reasons for the lack of information from Polish Church sources regarding the Auschwitz camp.

The lack of information from Polish Church sources could have far-reaching consequences. On 10 October 1942 the Secretariat of State, in reply to a note of the personal envoy of President Franklin D. Roosevelt at the Holy See, Myron Tylor, of 26 September, requesting confirmation of the information about the extermination of the Jews in occupied Poland, obtained by the U.S. Government via the Jewish Agency for Palestine of Geneva, used as a pretext the lack of credible information that could confirm the facts, even though "reports of ruthless measures employed against non-Aryans reached the Holy See from other sources as well, but it was impossible to verify their credibility."¹²⁶ It is hard to ascertain whether information obtained from representatives of the Polish Church hierarchy, i.e. from the most reliable source, could change the Pope's point of view and his associates regarding Jewish issues throughout 1942. After all, no one ever contacted Sapieha for a report on the mat-

T. Fręchowicz, "Diecezja podlaska," in *Życie religijne*, vol. 1, 368. It was to be contradictory with the attitude of a part of the diocesan clergy. There were also references to the depravity of villagers living near Treblinka, who were "seeking treasures" on the camp premises. The informer was the rector of the Kosów Lacki parish (*ibidem*, 437). We do not know, however, whether Church representatives tried to combat the practice. Reports of the Polish underground were highly critical of the attitude of the Podlasie clergy.

¹²⁵ I discuss the matter at length in "Against a Brick Wall. Interventions of Kazimierz Papée, the Polish Ambassador at the Holy See with Regard to German Crimes in Poland, November 1942–January 1943," *Holocaust Studies and Materials* 1 (2008): 270–293.

¹²⁶ P. Blet SJ, *Pius XII i druga wojna światowa w tajnych archiwach watykańskich* (Katowice, 2000), 243–244.

ter. We should bear in mind that neither the above-mentioned letter of Archbishop Sheptytsky nor of Father Pirro Scavizzi nor any other accounts were used either. Even later on, despite reminders for the Polish ambassador and the President of the Republic of Poland, no public announcement on the terror in occupied Poland was made, not even on the crimes against Polish priests, so excellently documented only thanks to Sapieha.¹²⁷ Even if the Polish government and its Vatican representatives tried to do much to inform the Pope about the murders of Jews in Poland, this cannot be said of the representatives of the Polish Church in the occupied country.

It is certain that information from Church sources was, from the point of view of the Holy See, more credible than figures from “Polish” London. Quite telling is the memorandum of early July 1942 drafted by the ambassador at the Holy See from a meeting with Domenico Tardini, during which he tried to highlight the situation in Poland.

Mons[ignor] Tardini listened without interrupting. At one point he said that although the information about the situation in Poland was a valuable supplement and confirmation of the Holy See’s own information, it had to rely on its own sources and that precisely now the Secretariat of State expected new information from Poland. What cannot be written down can often be said. This way has also recently been used by more and more bishops, orders and the faithful in Poland.¹²⁸

It cannot be ruled out that the information about the fate of the Jews could have been transmitted orally to those who were in touch with Polish bishops. In the archives there are no traces of such information that reached the Vatican through informal channels.¹²⁹ It is also possible that the Vatican and Polish Church archives contain materials unknown to historians.

It seems a good idea to quote the account of Father Quirino Paganuzzi made in 1967 of his conversation with Sapieha that had taken place in 1941, which dealt with German terror, including that against the Jews.¹³⁰ Paganuzzi was the chaplain of an Italian hospital train, who submitted Pius XII’s letter of 28 August 1942 to Sapieha, and in the summer of the following year he carried the Cracow Metropolitan’s correspondence to Rome.¹³¹ As far as we know, other intermediaries, mentioned in this text, Father Scavizzi and Count Malvezzi, did not refer to Sapieha or any other Polish bishop. Undoubtedly, one of the most important informers of the Holy See, particularly in the early years of the war, was Luciana Frassati-Gawrońska, who

¹²⁷ The state of knowledge is reflected in the Vatican protest note to Ribbentrop of 2 March 1943, unaccepted by the German Foreign Ministry.

¹²⁸ PISM, A. 44.122/28, *Notatka z rozmowy z D. Tardinim, 2 VII 1942 r.* [Memorandum from a conversation with D. Tardini of 2 July 1942], no pagination.

¹²⁹ W. Laqueur, *The Terrible Secret. Suppression of the Truth about Hitler’s “Final Solution”* (Boston, 1981), 57.

¹³⁰ C. Falconi, *The Silence of Pius XII* (Boston-Toronto, 1970), 149–150.

¹³¹ Ks. [Father] J. Wolny, “Arcybiskup Adam Sapieha w obronie Narodu i Kościoła polskiego,” 269.

during her seven stays in Poland contacted Warsaw and Cracow clergymen. Her first missions had primarily a political character. Her last stay in Poland was in late 1942. After each of her missions to Poland, she reported to the General of the Jesuit Order Włodzimierz Ledóchowski, who died on 13 December 1942. Unfortunately, in her memoirs she did not say what kind of information she had given him.¹³² At least once she was received by Pope Pius XII. On 21 November 1942, Ambassador Kazimierz Papée sent to London “A Letter of Polish Women to General Sikorski,” which, as he writes, reached Rome via Budapest “through contacts of the Church circles with the country.”¹³³ There is no evidence that Zofia Kossak’s famous “Protest” ever reached the Vatican. Moreover, we do not know whether the document was ever submitted to the Vatican Secretariat of State, even though it was referred to by President Władysław Raczkiewicz in his memorandum to Pius XII.

A few interesting threads can be found in the archives of the Polish Embassy at the Vatican. For example, the report “The Situation of the Catholic Church in Poland,” dated 16 April 1943, sent to London via the Polish Embassy at the Holy See, which in turn had received it via the Polish Ministry in Hungary, contains information about the fate of the Jews. Under the heading “Persecution of the Church” we read: “It is hard to ignore the mass murder of Christians of Jewish origin on a par with the rest of the Jews.” At the same time, the clerical estate suffers persecution on a par with the rest of the Jews and other strata of Polish society. Further on (in “Terror in Poland”), it was reported: “The G[eneral] G[overnment] became the scene of murders of ca. 1,000,000 in the death chambers of Treblinka, Auschwitz and Sobibór and other neighborhoods; the action to liquidate the surviving ones continues. Altogether, in Poland around 3,000,000 Jews have been murdered, starved to death, etc.”¹³⁴

That the Vatican received replies to enquiries sent via private channels from occupied Poland is confirmed by the memorandum drafted on 7 July 1943 by Undersecretary of State Giovanni Battista Montini: “In May Mr. X was handed a list of Jews, former inhabitants of Warsaw and Łódź, so that he would accept the information through [courtesy of] His Excellency Bishop Adamski. This morning, Ms X from Warsaw said as instructed by Bishop Adamski that the information was not available. Since May, the Warsaw ghetto is no more. 800 houses were burned. The Jews either died or were deported out of the city. Or, if they are free, they live under different names: it is impossible to find them.” And further on: “The same person informs that last May 1,000 Poles were killed in the Warsaw ghetto. The Poles, despite

¹³² L. Frassati-Gawrońska, *Przeznaczenie nie omija Warszawy*, transl. J. Tygielski (Warsaw, 2003), 196. For an extensive discussion of the Italian’s contacts with Cracow clergy, particularly during 1939–1941 see *Księga Sapieżyńska*, vol. 2, 343–365.

¹³³ PISM, A.44.49/6, no pagination.

¹³⁴ *Ibidem*, A.11/49sow/15, *Interwencje Stolicy Apostolskiej w dziedzinie ucisku religijnego pod rządem sowieckim* [Interventions of the Holy See regarding religious persecution under the Soviet regime], p. 2 and 7.

some rumors, refused to be drawn into wrong actions against the Jews.”¹³⁵ The information regarding mass repressions against the Poles was inaccurate. Suggestions regarding the shipment of materials to the Vatican also appear in post-war accounts. In mid-1943, a priest from the All Saints’ parish in Warsaw, Antoni Czarnecki, was to send to the Vatican, via his superiors, information about the death center in Treblinka and the Warsaw ghetto uprising.¹³⁶ The published Vatican documents contain no trace of such a document, although Bishop Adamski’s correspondence shows that it was possible to send all kinds of materials to the Vatican.

Let us reiterate: even though many questions still await answers, the sources available to historians demonstrate that the Polish Church hierarchy, taking into consideration the possibility of taking such steps, did very little to inform the world about the Holocaust. In the letters of Sapieha and other bishops, except Adamski, not only is there no information but also there are no allusions to the fate of the Polish Jews. To be sure, indifference to the Jewish fate was in part a result of their perception in terms of strangeness and threat. On the other hand, it is only natural that the Polish Church hierarchy was primarily interested in clergymen persecuted by the Germans, and whose fate – as one could see with ever greater clarity – raised no protest of the Pope. It is possible that, as was the case in the Polish milieu in London,¹³⁷ there were fears that the tragic fate of the Jewish population could obscure the martyrdom of the Church and of the Polish population, and thus diminish the chances for a diplomatic response of the Holy See, which was awaited in vain.

Bishops Residing Outside the Country on the Holocaust

Apart from August Hlond, the Bishop of Włocławek Karol Radoński and Army Bishop Józef Gawlina also remained outside the country. The dissimilarity of their situation in contrast with the bishops residing in the country allowed them to openly speak about domestic issues.

The primate left Poland in mid-September 1939 and soon arrived in Rome. After Italy joined the war he found shelter in Lourdes in the unoccupied part of France,

¹³⁵ ADSS, vol. 9, Notes de la Secrétaire d’État, Renseignements sur la persecution des Juifs en Pologne (Vatican, 7 July 1943), 376 (document no. 255). The document includes an attached comment, according to which the matter was discussed on 3 May 1943 following an audience with the Pope [in original abbreviation “Ex Aud. SSmi”]. Mons[ignor] A. Samoré, responsible for Polish affairs in the Secretariat of State, informed about the handover of the list (“The list was handed to Mr. X with the request to submit it to Mons[ignor] Adamski [the Katowice Bishop, then in Warsaw] for possible future research”).

¹³⁶ M. Phayer, *The Catholic Church and the Holocaust, 1930–1965* (Bloomington, 2000), 50. The information comes from a book by the American journalist Dan Kurzman, who in the 1970s had an interview with Father Antoni Czarnecki (see D. Kurzman, *The Race for Rome* [New York, 1975], 82).

¹³⁷ D. Stola, *Nadzieja i zagłada. Ignacy Schwarzbart – żydowski przedstawiciel w Radzie Narodowej RP (1940–1945)* (Warsaw, 1995), 186–187.

where he stayed until April 1943. Then he moved to the Benedictine Abbey in Hautecombe, where he stayed until his arrest in February 1944. He returned to Poland in July 1945. In the announcement to foreign journalists published after the Kielce pogrom in July 1946, there was a statement saying that during his stay in France he participated in saving Polish, French and German Jews from deportation to the death camps, helping in facilitating their emigration to the United States, putting them in safe places and providing them with documents.¹³⁸ On the basis of available sources it is hard to verify this confession, and what is more, Polish historiography has not mentioned this problem yet.¹³⁹ Hlond's involvement on behalf of the Jews could have taken place during his stay in Lourdes (it is known that he also received Jews in his residence). In his public appearances he never returned to this matter later on.

As it seems, in his correspondence with the Holy See, the primate did not touch upon Jewish issues. References to the extermination of the Jews were found in his report about the situation of the Catholic Church in occupied Poland during 1939–1942, published in Lyon in February 1943 in the underground periodical *Cahiers du Témoignage Chrétien* under the title "Défi" [Challenge].¹⁴⁰ A paragraph is devoted to this matter in the part regarding the relations in the General Government: "the General Government is a ghetto to which all the Jews and Poles were brought from Poland and Germany and to which the Jews from all occupied countries are now being brought. They are interned in the ghettos organized in large cities. Leaving the ghetto is punished by death. Work exhaustion, hunger, cold and diseases take a horrible death toll there. At times, the Gestapo enters and carries out massacres. Mass shootings and gas poisoning are the order of the day. Thousands of them were killed in Przemyśl, Stanisławów, Rzeszów and Dębica. 55,000 were killed in Lvov alone. In total, 700,000 Jews were brutally murdered on Polish territory, and there is no doubt that the Nazis intended to entirely uproot them from the European continent. Earlier, an attempt to create a Jewish reserve in the Lublin region was being discussed. The report also contained information about persecution of Jews in the Vilna region ("they were expropriated, maltreated, forced to do the heaviest work, exterminated on a mass scale. In Vilna alone 65,000 were

¹³⁸ The text of the statement was published in *Antyżydowskie wydarzenia kieleckie 4 lipca 1946 roku. Dokumenty i materiały*, ed. Z. Meducki (Kielce, 1994), 118. He mentioned this before during the conversation with the representative of Jewish Religious Associations Michał Zylberg. "I myself looked for Aryan papers for Polish Jews during my stay in France, and especially for the yellow documents on the basis of which the Jews could go to the United States." About the Holocaust *Dziennik Powszechny* 2, 22 January 1946 (after: August Prymas Hlond, *Dziela. Nauczanie*, 815–816).

¹³⁹ Bishop Henryk Muszyński mentions this matter in "Kardynał August Hlond (1926–1948) wobec Żydów," in *Collectanea Theologica* 3 (1991): 81–87.

¹⁴⁰ For circumstances of the creation of this document, see ks. [Father] S. Kosiński, "Raporty kardynała Hlonda o Kościele w Polsce," *Chrześcijanin w Świecie* 10 (1978): 15–24.

murdered”).¹⁴¹ These figures came from materials received by the primate via the Polish government in London. They were generally available at the time of preparing this report, but above all, in most part they were outdated. Both the information and the assessments regarding anti-Jewish goals of German policy came from a Bund letter dated 11 May 1942 and which was delivered to London by courier at the turn of May and June. Almost instantly, Polish and British media announced its content.¹⁴² For this reason, it is hard to agree with Father Zygmunt Zieliński’s opinion that fragments of Cardinal Hlond’s report devoted to Polish Jews played a significant role in spreading this information to the West.¹⁴³ What is striking in this reading is the primate’s unawareness of the situation in Warsaw and failure to mention it in his study about German policy towards the converts.

The notes that he was writing cast a little more light on the primate’s views on “the Jewish question.” References to the Jews rarely appear there and if so only in a negative context. Therefore, it is possible to learn about “diversion of national minorities” and “Jewish depravation” from the reflections on prewar relations, and there is a statement saying that Polish industry cannot be “anonymous,” “foreign” or “Jewish oligarchy” in the reflections on the prewar economic order. In a different part it reads that if Poland had renounced its “historical hopes, it would have become another Jewish nation without a leader, government or mission.”¹⁴⁴ In these notes, however, there are no direct references to “the final solution of the Jewish question” that was being carried on Polish territory. Furthermore, there is no comment on either anti-Jewish laws issued by the Vichy government or the deportation of the Jews from France. There is no doubt that research in the Church archives would make it possible to significantly supplement the picture.¹⁴⁵

After the first comprehensive data about crimes against the Jews had arrived in London, the Polish government undertook various political and informative actions.¹⁴⁶ It is hard not to notice that the representatives of the Polish Church hierarchy residing in London joined these actions rather late. On 15 June 1942 a special issue of the *Polish Fortnightly Review* devoted to German terror in Poland came out. A good deal of space was devoted to the persecution of the Jews. In this publication,

¹⁴¹ Cardinal August Hlond, “O położeniu Kościoła katolickiego w Polsce po trzech latach okupacji hitlerowskiej,” *Chrześcijańin w Świecie* 70, vol. 10 (1978): 33, 38.

¹⁴² For more on the subject, see D. Stola, *Nadzieja i zagłada*, 160–161.

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), 382.

¹⁴⁴ From Cardinal August Hlond’s notebook (Poznań, 1955), 148, 159, 155.

¹⁴⁵ Cardinal Hlond’s legacy (so-called *Acta Hlondiana*) was elaborated by Father Stanisław Kosiński. At present, this archive is hard to access because of the protracted beatification process (J. Żaryn, “Archiwa Kościelne – specyfika miejsca i czasu (1939–1989),” *Biuletyn IPN* 4 (2002): 34.

¹⁴⁶ For more on the subject, see D. Stola, *Nadzieja i zagłada*, 161–162.

there is also a transcript of the broadcast by Cardinal Arthur Hinsley, Archbishop of Westminster, transmitted on 9 July 1942. It contains the following words:

I am going to set down things which cannot be gainsaid concerning the barbarities of those tyrannous invaders in their treatment of Jews and Christians in Poland. . . . In Poland alone the Nazis have massacred 700,000 Jews since the outbreak of war. Must we not appeal to reason? A Jew is a man among rational civilized people. No man may be condemned unless he is tried and found guilty. But the Nazis have done to death without the semblance of justice numberless innocent peoples of non-Aryan race. Innocent blood cries to heaven for vengeance; the Lord will reply in his own good time.¹⁴⁷

The publication was lacking the voice of Polish bishops.

The situation changed in the fall of 1942 after the emissary Jan Karski arrived in London. This time, Karol Radoński joined in the endeavors of the Polish Government to inform the world about the crimes committed in Poland. The Bishop of Włocławek arrived in London in late June in connection with his appointment to the National Council in London (24 February 1942). Earlier, from September 1940, he resided in Jerusalem, where he exercised pastoral care over Polish refugees and then over the soldiers of the Polish Army. In his radio address of 14 December 1942 broadcast by the BBC he made a longer comment on the extermination of Polish Jews:

Meanwhile, more horrible news comes from our land. It is harder and harder for everybody. The German atrocities that affect hundreds of thousands of Poles are also applied to the Jewish population. Its martyrdom exceeded everything, whatever hatred and fierceness the oppressor could conceive. Massacres of the Jews in Poland must openly terrify and disgust the whole civilized world, even in the light of bragging and sneering of the executioners and their henchmen. It reminds us of the times when the ancestors of the Nazi bandits exterminated with fire and sword the Slavic peoples on the River Elbe and the Spree, while at festive tables they poisoned their leaders or killed whole tribes whose patrimony aroused greed and envy. Today, their descendants have fallen to an even lower level of barbarity. The current rulers of our country have been possessed by some kind of demonic madness to murder the unfortunate victims locked up in the ghettos. . . . As a Polish bishop I condemn outright the crime committed against the Jewish population in Poland. The reply of the Front for the Rebirth of Poland, that came to us from the country and was of the Christian spirit of neighborly love and human compassion, is the expression of what every Christian Pole feels.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁷ "German Crimes Arraigned," *Polish Fortnightly Review* 48, 15 July 1942.

¹⁴⁸ Quoted in: Ks. [Father] J. Dębiński, *Biskup włocławski Karol Mieczysław Radoński (1883-1951): życie i działalność* (Toruń, 2001), 194-195. This statement was published by Polish press in London (Bishop Radoński's speech: *Dziennik Polski*, 17 December 1942). It seems that this message was not reprinted in the national underground press.

It was the most expressive comment about the fate of the Polish Jews made by a Polish Catholic hierarch during World War II. Although contrary to what Radoński's biographer suggests, this address was not only unique but also, and what is more important, isolated.¹⁴⁹ Because already in Radoński's appeal to the bishops of the world broadcast by the BBC on 17 January 1943 the extermination of the Jews had been treated instrumentally. There was only one fragment concerning this matter: "After murdering the intelligentsia, the nation's spiritual leaders, they began liquidating the Jews. And now it is time to exterminate our people." The content of this dramatic appeal was entirely dominated by German atrocities against the Church and the Polish nation. The sufferings of the Polish nation were called "martyrdom which the world has not yet seen" – the Jews were forgotten, and not for the first time.¹⁵⁰

The crimes against the Jews in Poland were not mentioned at all in the correspondence between Radoński and the Holy See. At that time he belonged, as it is known, to the most stringent critics of the stance of Pope Pius XII and the Secretariat of State. The correspondence with the Vatican, frequently quoted by various authors, confirms his determination. It began with Radoński's dramatic appeal dispatched on 14 September 1942, in which, portraying the persecution of the clergy in the Włocławek Diocese, he pressed for the Pope's public comment on Polish matters. He argued that from the point of view of the Holy See's interests his silence was unfavorable to the mood of the Poles in the country and in emigration. Radoński's opinions were extremely firm.¹⁵¹ Irritated, the Secretary of State Luigi Maglione reminded the bishop about Pope Pius XII's endeavors on behalf of Poland and the Poles, and in sharp words he referred to the critics of the Vatican's policy, pointing out full agreement of the Holy See's actions with the expectations of the hierarchs in the country.

Radoński, however, did not change his opinion. In a letter to Luigi Maglione (15 February 1943) he wrote:

facts demonstrate that in spite of His Holiness's silence the persecutions are intensifying every day. Even children are now being taken from their parents and transported to Germany on a mass scale, whereas mothers who try to defend their children are killed on the spot. If such crimes that cry to heaven for vengeance are taking place, the unconceivable silence of the Supreme Church Teacher is, for those who do not know its reason – and there are thousands of such people – the beginning of spiritual decline.

¹⁴⁹ Radoński's biographer writes that "he defended the Jews during the uprising in the Warsaw Ghetto, and he demanded from the Holy See a firm condemnation of the crimes committed against the Polish and Jewish nation" (Ks. [Father] J. Dębiński, *Biskup włocławski Karol Mieczysław Radoński*, 8-9). These facts, however, are not confirmed in his book.

¹⁵⁰ After *ibidem*, 198.

¹⁵¹ For the entire letter, see *ibidem* 177-179.

The instrumental treatment of the Holocaust in this letter, in the light of the bishop's BBC statement of 14 December 1942, is puzzling to say the least. For Radoński lamented that the Poles "heard that the present Pope condemned through his nuncio the persecution of the Jews in France," and he asked, "Are we really worth less than the Jews?" But waiving the extermination of the Jews aside surprises not only for this reason. Warning about the possible results of Pope Pius XII's silence, he referred to Jan Karski's testimony: "An emissary who has recently come from Poland, a reliable man, partaking of sacraments, a member of the Catholic Action, told me about the state of minds."¹⁵² It is possible to ask here why he did not write that this particular man had delivered full documentation of the course of the extermination of the Jews to the Polish government. Even if Jan Karski had raised this matter during his meeting with Radoński, he must nonetheless have been aware of the role he played – Karski explained the course of his mission during the meeting of the National Council, a member of which was the Bishop of Włocławek. As we know, during the talks with representatives of the Jewish underground in the Warsaw ghetto Karski undertook to deliver the request to the president of the Polish Republic for intervention in the Vatican.¹⁵³ Even though we cannot be certain, perhaps that was the reason for the matters being discussed in the telegram sent by Władysław Racziewicz to the Pope on 3 January 1943.¹⁵⁴ The question whether Radoński's possible involvement could change the Holy See's policy on Polish issues should be answered negatively.

The third hierarch residing abroad, Army Bishop of the Polish Armed Forces Father Józef Gawlina, made a comment on the extermination of the Jews much later. In a sermon devoted to the fate of Polish children, delivered on 3 October 1943 in the presence of the President of Poland and members of the government, he pointed out the limited capabilities of the Polish Church and he accentuated the need for solidarity with the persecuted Jews:

when talking about rescuing our persecuted youth we do not exclude any religion, any nationality. All are God's children and sons of the Motherland. . . . Praying for Polish children, let's not forget about the Jewish children to whom a ruthless fate was served by the cruelty of a modern Assyria. A shudder of terror seizes us when we read about the barbaric system of murder of the Jewish nation. May, at least, Catholic churches be safe refuges and shelters for those persecuted and fleeing, as they used to be in the Middle Ages. All Catholic churches in Poland would be happy to open their gates not only to Christians but with the same brotherly love it would embrace the Jews to the safety of our altars. The churches, however, are closed, priests are lost, and the pagan fist of the new Nebuchadnezzars hits even the temples of the Living God.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵² For the whole document see *ibidem* 184–188.

¹⁵³ See W. Laqueur, *The Terrible Secret*, 232–234.

¹⁵⁴ I have written more on the subject in "Against a Brick Wall. Interventions of Kazimierz Papée."

¹⁵⁵ *Józef Feliks Gawlina Biskup Polowy Polskich Sił Zbrojnych*, ed. A.K. Kunert (Warsaw, 2002), 123.

Bishop Gawlina assessed domestic reality too pessimistically – quite often it was the churches and convents in particular that were sanctuaries for Jewish children. This is the only comment by Gawlina referring to Jewish issues that I know of.

The Catholic Church Hierarchy and the “Jewish Question”

Equally important is the treatment of the “Jewish question” by the clergy, including higher clergy, and its attitude towards organized and individual help to the Jews. Due to the scarcity of sources it is difficult to exhaustively describe the issue. In the reports of the Polish underground, little space was devoted to the views of the Church on the Jews, and the Church documents available to historians are meager. Nevertheless, the existing accounts make up a fairly consistent picture.

From the point of view of the myths promulgated in Polish literature, it is ironic that the only public statement of a Polish bishop who was in Poland regarding the Jews had anti-Semitic overtones – namely, the pastoral letter of the Bishop of Kielce, Czesław Kaczmarek, *Wychowanie religijne a dom rodzinny* [Religious education and the family home], published in early 1941 in the press organ of the Kielce Curia by permission of the occupation authorities, which contained a statement that Jewish children exerted a “very pernicious influence” on Christian children. The document was also read out in all the churches of the Kielce Diocese.¹⁵⁶ We hear echoes of the many years of the Polish Episcopate’s efforts to set up religious education in Poland, as well as of the views of Kaczmarek himself.¹⁵⁷ It is not difficult to imagine what kind of statements one could hear before the establishment of the Kielce ghetto (31 March 1941), and how they could have affected those who later considered whether to help the Jews. After the war Kaczmarek did not think he could have done anything wrong. And no wonder; his theses could have been signed by any other Roman Catholic hierarch (although for some of them, as I have said, the real danger came from Jewish teachers). Some light is cast on his insensitive perception of the Holocaust by the memorandum addressed to the US ambassador in Poland, written after the Kielce pogrom. The issue was treated perfunctorily and in a highly instrumental manner: “In the wake of the immense massacres of the Jews in 1943 by the German authorities in Poland, and thus in Kielce as well, there was no hostile attitude towards the Jews and there was no anti-Semitism. Everyone felt compassion for the Jews, even their greatest enemies. Many Jews were saved by Poles, because, after all, without Polish help none would have survived. They were

¹⁵⁶ Bp [Bishop] C. Kaczmarek, “Wychowanie religijne a dom rodzinny,” *Kielecki Przegląd Diecezjalny* 3 (1941): 115. The Curia’s organ was published until January 1943, which for the occupation authorities was a sensation.

¹⁵⁷ In texts published in the press organ of the Catholic Action, the future bishop called for a separation from “Judeo-Polish culture,” for “avoiding coexistence with Jews and half-Jews, not filled with Catholic thought and Polish ideas” (ks. [Father] C. Kaczmarek, “Problem inteligencji katolickiej w Polsce,” *Ruch Katolicki* 4 [1936]: 55; *idem*, “Inteligencja katolicka w Polsce i jej organizacja,” *Ruch Katolicki* 12 [1936]: 12).

saved, although such action was severely punished, including the death penalty.”¹⁵⁸ The point is not even the heroization of Polish attitudes, but failure to remember the date of the murder of Kielce Jews – the Kielce ghetto was liquidated in August 1942. On the other hand, one should point out that Kaczmarek, unlike Hlond, did not stress his own merits or those of the diocesan clergy subordinated to him.¹⁵⁹ Let us return to the fateful pastoral letter. The characterizations of clergymen drafted by the Polish underground did not mention the anti-Semitic fragment of Kaczmarek’s sermon. What he was accused of was an excessively conciliatory attitude to the occupation authorities.¹⁶⁰

Internal church documents (correspondence, instructions, etc.), which could be used to reconstruct the responses of the higher clergy to the series of manifestations of anti-Jewish Nazi policy, and subsequently to the physical extermination of the Jews, are unavailable. Also of little use are the relatively scarce materials of the Polish underground dealing with the Catholic Church. Thus, for example, the report of the Government Delegate Office of the turn of summer and autumn 1941 contains information about the critical attitude of priests with links to the National Party (*Stronnictwo Narodowe*, SN) due to, as it was described, its “left-wing and philo-Semitic” leanings. They were supposed to be exemplified in the Prime Minister’s wishes for the Jewish New Year and the appointment of a distinguished Polish Socialist Party (*Polska Partia Socjalistyczna*, PPS) activist of Jewish origin, Herman Lieberman, as Minister of Justice, and his subsequent posthumous decoration. It was believed, however, that a majority of the clergy had links with moderate centrist parties, and the younger ones even with the people’s movement. This had no bearing on the final conclusion that “anti-Semitic sentiments among the clergy are fairly widespread.”¹⁶¹ It was nothing exceptional as all declarations about the Jews coming from “the Polish” London, according to reports from the country, had a fatal resonance.¹⁶² But no examples of views of the higher Catholic clergy were given.

That anti-Semitism was widespread in Church circles is demonstrated by a Church report, drafted some time earlier, sent to London via the Delegate Office. It reads: “it should be interpreted as a special gift of Divine Providence that the Germans, apart from a multitude of harms they inflicted and still inflict on our country, made a good start in that respect, that they have shown the opportunity of liberating

¹⁵⁸ “Raport biskupa Czesława Kaczmarka przekazany ambasadorowi USA Arthurowi Bliss Lane’owi,” in *Wokół pogromu kieleckiego*, vol. 1, 186.

¹⁵⁹ In the Kielce Diocese several cases of hiding neophytes known to the author were noted, see ks. [Father] M. Paulewicz, “Diecezja kielecka,” in *Życie religijne*, vol. 1, 250.

¹⁶⁰ On 9 October 1939 Kaczmarek issued a pastoral letter containing an appeal to follow the rules and regulations of the occupation authorities “in everything that is not against Catholic conscience and our Polish dignity.”

¹⁶¹ AAN, DR, 202/II-6, Raport sytuacyjny za okres od 15 VIII do 15 XI 1941 r. [Situation report for 15 August to 15 November 1941], p. 108.

¹⁶² For more: D. Stola, *Nadzieja i zagłada*, 116.

Polish society from the Jewish plague, and they showed us the way we should, of course less cruelly and less brutally, but consistently tread.”

This is followed by a list of grievances literally copied from the Catholic press of the interwar period: The Jews “suck out the nation economically,” hinder the development of domestic trade, and primarily are the root of the demoralization of society. They promote corruption and bribery, through

their mysterious influence on government and state organs pervert our public life, . . . run houses of ill repute and [are engaged] in human trafficking and [sell] pornographic literature, they drive the people to drink, they corrupt the young, they infiltrate publications, art and public opinion with immoral and un-Catholic views, and finally they always ally themselves with everything that could damage the Church and Poland, which could weaken and humiliate it.

It also stated that the Jews hated the Poles more than the Germans did. In that situation the directions of Polish policy were to remain unchanged, and solutions to the “Jewish question” were to be of utmost importance in postwar Poland. However, proposals of such solutions were not a faithful copy of prewar ideas, but drew on Nazi models. The means to the ultimate end, i.e. the future emigration of Jews from Poland, were to be concentration and isolation of Jews in “closed settlement zones,” religious education, the *numerus clausus*, the exclusion of Jews from the armed forces and the public sphere, the Aryanization of the professions, etc. The implementation of the plan is to be the necessary condition for the “health of the reborn Fatherland.”¹⁶³

These opinions correspond to the prewar approach of the Polish Catholic clergy to the “Jewish question.” After all, it is difficult to assume that a sudden change of views had taken place within the group as it had not been the case in other segments of Polish society. It is difficult, however – as many scholars do¹⁶⁴ – to treat this unsigned document that contains extreme opinions as an official position of the Polish Church hierarchy. We do not know either whether the quoted memorandum led to any discussion in “Polish London.” There seem no traces of it. On the other hand, we do know that in the Church milieu the postulate of Jewish emigration from Poland was endorsed.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶³ Published for the first time in Poland in their original version: K. Jasiewicz, *Pierwsi po diable. Elity sowieckie w okupowanej Polsce 1939–1941 (Białostoczczyzna, Nowogródzczyzna, Polesie, Wileńszczyzna)* (Warsaw, 2001), 1195–1203, discussed at length in Y. Gutman, S. Krakowski, *Unequal Victims: Poles and Jews during World War Two* (New York, 1986), 52–53.

¹⁶⁴ Recently S. Friedländer, who writes of the “quasiofficial nature” of the document (S. Friedländer, *The Years of Extermination. Nazi Germany and the Jews 1939–1945* (New York, 2007), 184.

¹⁶⁵ Father Zygmunt Kaczyński, the prewar director of the Catholic Press Agency, member of the National Council for the Labor Party (*Stronnictwo Pracy*, SP), drew up a project to solve the “Jewish question” through settling Jews in Bessarabia, which he finally presented at a National Council session on 2 February 1942. See Y. Gutman, S. Krakowski, *Unequal Victims*, 85.

Some light on the origins of the document can be shed by another report, covering July and August 1941. Free of any anti-Semitic references, it contains information on the converts' problems: "One form of religious persecution is also the fact that the converts who desire to embrace the Catholic religion face so many difficulties on the part of the administrative authorities that practically it is not feasible, at least officially. Ignorance of the existing regulations is punished very severely." From information of some time later about the completely unjustified arrest of a "very keen priest, a convert from the Mosaic religion, Father Puder, who had done a lot of good in Warsaw," it transpires that the document, and consequently the previous one, was produced in Warsaw.¹⁶⁶ We still do not know who wrote the document and whether its drafting had anything to do with the local Curia.¹⁶⁷

Controversies over the Hierarchy's Stance on the Action to Help the Jews

Another important issue is the attitude of the Church hierarchy towards an institution to offer organized help to the Jews, set up on the initiative of an underground organization, the Front for the Rebirth of Poland (*Front Odrodzenia Polski*, FOP), which was close to the Church. The first step in that direction was the establishment, on 27 September 1942, of the Konrad Żegota Temporary Committee to Help the Jews. On 4 December 1942, it was replaced by the Council for Aid to Jews (*Rada Pomocy Żydom*, RPŻ), code name "Żegota." Bishop Karol Radoński, then in London, in a statement aired by the BBC, referred to "Protest" published by the FOP, and said that some of its contents "are filled with a truly Christian spirit of love of one's brother and human compassion, being an expression of what each Pole feels."¹⁶⁸

We know that many Warsaw priests, particularly Jan Zieja, were involved and honorably merited in Żegota's actions.¹⁶⁹ In his only, extremely laconic, postwar ac-

¹⁶⁶ PUMST, MSW, vol. 46/9, Sprawozdanie kościelne z Polski za lipiec-sierpień 1941 r. [Church report from Poland for July–August 1941], p. 3. Father Puder was arrested after being denounced by Father Trzeciak. Puder, who had a "Semitic appearance," was on Archbishop Gall's order placed in the children's home in Białołęka. After arrest, helped by nuns in November 1942, he was able to escape from the prison hospital and survive the occupation in hiding in convent homes in Białołęka and Płudy. He was killed by a Soviet truck on the left bank of the Vistula River in Warsaw, several days after 17 January 1945.

¹⁶⁷ The same file also contains "Sprawozdania o sytuacji Kościoła w Polsce" [Reports on the situation of the Church in Poland] for January–December 1943, prepared for the Warsaw [branch] of the Delegate Office (code name "Twierdza"), signed by Father Loga. One of them contains laconic information about the extermination of the Jews: "All kinds of atrocities are the order of the day everywhere. It was most glaring with respect to the Jews during the liquidation of the ghetto, with recorded cases of throwing Jews into the fire, cesspools or sewers. But there were and still are also many such cases with respect to the Poles (report of 20 July 1943).

¹⁶⁸ Bishop Radoński's statement.

¹⁶⁹ The issue of the relations of the clergy with Żegota has not been studied yet. A monograph of the organization contains little information (T. Prekerowa, *Konspiracyjna Rada Pomocy Żydom w Warszawie 1942–1945* [Warsaw, 1982]).

count, there is no mention of any contacts with the Archbishop's Curia on the matter.¹⁷⁰ In a conversation with a Polish Government courier, which took place several days before the Warsaw Uprising, Father Zieja sketched an extremely critical picture of the functioning of the Warsaw Curia. Stressing the advanced age of Bishop Antoni Szlagowski, on whose behalf prelates Zygmunt Choromański and Antoni Fajęcki were to have run the Curia, he said: "the atmosphere in Warsaw - very unpleasant. Stagnation. Stuffy; the Curia is operating very badly: No trace of intellectual life, very poor and unfavorable attitude towards priests resettled from the East and the West [from territories incorporated into the Reich and the Eastern dioceses - D.L.], lack of hospitality."¹⁷¹ After all, even during the formation of "Żegota", the Polish underground had an extremely critical view of the attitude of both priests, accusing them of "cowardice and a lack of patriotic backbone."¹⁷² In such circumstances, it is difficult to expect that the Curia would be interested in Jews who were seeking shelter.

The case of the Bishop of Pińsk, Karol Niemira, then in Warsaw, remains unclear. Several years ago I wrote that he was the only member of the Episcopate engaged in organized action for the Jews.¹⁷³ Niemira arrived in Warsaw in September 1939, after the Soviets had occupied his diocese and ordered him to leave Pińsk. He stayed at the St. Augustine parish, where he had previously been the rector. In his account he said that he "had contact" with the underground organization "Security Corps" (*Korpus Bezpieczeństwa*, KB). But, according to recent findings, the activity of the formation for the Jews appears highly problematic.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷⁰ *Ten jest z ojczyzny mojej. Polacy z pomocą Żydom 1939-1945*, ed. W. Bartoszewski, Z. Lewinówna (Cracow, 1969), 2nd edition, 819-820.

¹⁷¹ PISM, 25/9, *Sprawozdanie 'Celta'. Sytuacja duchowieństwa w okupowanej Polsce, Sprawozdanie z rozmowy z ks. Janem Zieją* [Celt's report. The situation of the clergy in occupied Poland, memorandum of conversation with Father Jan Zieja]. "Celt" also spoke with the Chief Chaplain of the Armed Forces in the Country, Father Col. Tadeusz Jachimowski. He confirmed that Szlagowski's health was poor and that he was incapable of running the diocese, but underlined his principled position vis-à-vis Governor Fischer, who tried to persuade him to support an anti-communist course. Both agreed that a substantial segment of the clergy was leaning toward the national democrats and the ONR.

¹⁷² AAN, 202/1-32, *Nastroje i stanowisko polityczne duchowieństwa katolickiego w Polsce, 6 I 1943 r.* [Mood and political position of the Polish Catholic clergy in Poland, 6 January 1943], p. 38. They were to have hidden the Pope's private letter to the dying Gall.

¹⁷³ D. Libionka, "Antisemitism, Anti-Judaism, and the Polish Catholic Clergy," 252.

¹⁷⁴ Information about his involvement in help to the Jews comes solely from his own statement made in March 1955 for a confidence man, Henryk Iwański, pseudonym "Bystry": "I looked after and fed Polish citizens of Jewish nationality, then handed them over to Major 'Bystry'" (AŻIH, 301/5792, *Relacja Karola Niemiry* [Karol Niemira's account], published in: *Ten jest z ojczyzny mojej* (2nd edition), 240-241). It seems that Iwański was a fraud and the history of his activities for the Jews was virtually all made up. See D. Libionka, "Apocrypha from the History of the Jewish Military Union and its Authors," *Holocaust Studies and Materials* 1 (2008): 147-176.

There are no testimonies to confirm support for Żegota, not only by high hierarchs of the Warsaw Archdiocese but also by those in Lvov and Cracow, where the regional branches of the Council functioned (incidentally, dominated by activists of the Polish Socialist Party – Freedom, Equality, Independence (*Polska Partia Socjalistyczna - Wolność, Równość, Niepodległość*, PPS-WRN) and of the Democratic Party (*Stronnictwo Demokratyczne*, SD). Historiography is fraught with repeated theses unconfirmed by archival materials. It is not true that Archbishop Sapieha “in his homilies and pastoral texts returned to the issue of help [to the Jews – D.L.]”¹⁷⁵ Another undocumented claim is that the hiding of the Jews in Cracow monasteries was carried out on his order.¹⁷⁶ Although there is an account of Sapieha issuing 11 birth certificates to the Jewish Kleinman family, who were hiding in Prądnik, and who were to be baptized anyhow,¹⁷⁷ it is difficult to pass general judgments on this basis. We do not even know whether those people survived the war. There are no traces of his interest in the activity of the Cracow “Żegota”. Szymon Datner’s thesis, formulated in 1977 in a forgotten text published in the press organ of the PAX Association, that the lack of documents does not contradict Sapieha’s great merits in saving Jews, and his “undisputed and proven involvement” contributed to the saving of “thousands condemned to physical extermination, including many Jews,” derived from “logical deduction from the undisputed reality of that time,” is controversial, to say the least.¹⁷⁸ It is true that the Archbishop’s actual possibilities of action were highly limited, that he could save only those who were in danger, and the lack of documents about his involvement could, in part, be due to the requirements of operating in the underground. Had he, however, issued any written directives or dispositions, there would certainly be some witnesses, and those rescued, the employees of the RGO collaborating closely with the Church, not to mention the Church participants in such actions (e.g. Archbishop Sheptytsky). It also seems unjustified to combine the merits of Catholic clergymen actually engaged in some way or providing another kind of help to members of Judaism and converts with the attitude of the hierarchy. The claim that there must have been the hierarchy’s “silent consent” to helping the Jews is not obvious at all. Datner assumes that help given to the Jews by the priests was common, which means that it had to be known to the

¹⁷⁵ A. Chwalba, *Kraków w latach 1939–1945* (Kraków, 2002), 157

¹⁷⁶ Recently: K. Zimmerer, *Zamordowany świat. Losy Żydów w Krakowie 1939–1945* (Cracow, 2004), 215. Władysław Bartoszewski’s text discusses only the activity of Father Ferdynand Machay for the Jews, “by will of the Metropolitan Sapieha” (see *Ten jest z ojczyzny mojej* (2nd edition), 70).

¹⁷⁷ Account of Father Władysław Bajer, published in: *Ten jest z ojczyzny mojej* (2nd edition), 824.

¹⁷⁸ S. Datner, “Człowiek człowiekowi bratem. Jeszcze o metropolie krakowskim,” *Wrocławski Tygodnik Katolików* 47 (1977). Equally difficult to defend is the supposition that the attitude of the Catholic clergy to the Holocaust was “generally and unequivocally positive... determined... by the all-encompassing love of one’s brother and a categorical inner imperative to offer help to people in mortal danger.”

bishops. It seems, however, that only a minority of clergymen became involved in such actions, just as in the operations of the pro-independence underground. Until this issue is studied in detail, on the basis of extensive archive research, it is safer to assume that, even if the priests and the nuns did not contradict the hierarchy's instructions, they acted on their own responsibility. Nechama Tec quotes an account of an unnamed "Żegota" collaborator, according to which one of the bishops categorically demanded the removal of Jewish children hiding in a convent he visited.¹⁷⁹ We do not know, however, who he was and what his motives were. On such a basis it is difficult to formulate general conclusions.

We do not know whether other bishops issued instructions regarding the hiding of Jews, particularly children in convents and other Church institutions. Publications on this topic do not at all suggest any incentives of the hierarchy,¹⁸⁰ although there are individual accounts stating that in 1941 the Archbishop of Vilna Romuald Jałbrzykowski (arrested in March 1942 and interned in a monastery in Mariampol) issued a recommendation for orders to hide refugees from the liquidated ghettos.¹⁸¹ We also know that a Jewish family was hiding in the palace of the Archbishop of Lvov, Twardowski. The source of the information was Wilhelm Koppe, SS and Police Leader in the GG, who disclosed it during Sapieha's meeting with Josef Bühler on 17 December 1943.¹⁸² He did not, however, accuse the Catholic clergy of helping to hide Jews, and no repressions ensued. Possibly, it was to be a gesture of good will towards the Church, whose cooperation was sought. It is hard, however, to link the fact with the activity of the Lvov "Żegota."¹⁸³

Individual accounts regarding the attitude of other bishops are equally hard to verify. According to a Sandomierz clergyman, a group of Jews was hiding in the Sandomierz cathedral tower and in the basement of the local seminary. But no details are available. The local diocesan archive contains letters of gratitude addressed to

¹⁷⁹ N. Tec, *When Light Pierced the Darkness. Christian Rescue of Jews in Nazi-Occupied Poland* (New York, 1986), 139.

¹⁸⁰ See M.L. Mistecka CR, "Zakonnice w obronie Żydów," *Chrześcijanin w Świecie* 9 (1979): 51–59. Such statements can also be found in literature on the hiding of Jewish children in nunneries and institutions of Catholic orders, see for example E. Kurek, *Dzieci żydowskie w klasztorach. Udział żeńskich zgromadzeń zakonnych w akcji ratowania dzieci żydowskich w Polsce w latach 1939–1945* (Lublin, 2001).

¹⁸¹ Ks. [Father] F. Stopniak, "Katolickie duchowieństwo w Polsce i Żydzi...", 23–24. Bartoszewski writes that help offered to refugees from Vilna by nuns from the convent in Kolonia Wileńska, as well as by other convents, was "approved and supported" by Archbishop Jałbrzykowski (see *Ten jest z ojczyzny mojej* (2nd edition), 311). D. Fajnhaus (in his text "Ludność żydowska na ziemiach dawnego Wielkiego Księstwa Litewskiego," in *Pamiętnik wileński* [London, 1972], 369) writes about the Archbishop's "patronage" over the action to save the Jews in monasteries and churches.

¹⁸² Z. Fijałkowski, *Kościół katolicki*, 113. Sapieha's account of the meeting: *Księga Sapieżyńska*, vol. 2, 463.

¹⁸³ I have not found any details regarding the issue in church studies (ks. [Father] W. Urban, "Metropolia lwowska," in *Życie religijne*, vol. 2, 89–171).

Bishop Jan Kanty Lorek, as well as the bishop's letter of 1940 condemning plunder of the property of Tarnobrzeg Jews.¹⁸⁴ Meanwhile, the content of those documents remains unknown. On the order of Bishop Teodor Kubina, Częstochowa priests were to help the Jews as well. The bishop was to have ordered them to "issue birth certificates to Jewish children who were taken out of the ghetto through a secret passage." Among others, the great granddaughter of Rabbi Nahum Asz landed in a monastic kindergarten, and subsequently was in the care of a Polish family with whom the bishop had been friends before the war.¹⁸⁵

The bishops' reserve towards the activity of "Żegota" stemmed, at least in part, from fears of easily conceivable repressions by the occupier that could follow as a result of such activity. The emissary Jan Karski understood the situation of the clergy. In his report written in London in the spring of 1943, he pointed at the popular opinion of the clergy's opportunism and said: "The Polish clergy is in a particularly difficult situation. The priest, the rector, cannot get himself delegalized, cannot leave his church, his parish, cannot flee - if he leaves the church, it is only when arrested by the Gestapo. His sermons are available to all, he is under constant observation, he is the natural object of suspicions of the German authorities that he radiates patriotism, he is conspicuous to all." For example, the Gestapo responded swiftly to a patriotic accent in a sermon of the Holy Cross Church in Warsaw: the following day Archbishop Gall heard threats of priests' arrests. This forced him to issue a circular for the priests to avoid endangering the entire diocese in their public statements.¹⁸⁶ In the first place, the bishops had to feel responsible for their clergy and faithful. No wonder then that they did not become involved (and if they did, it was only temporarily) in enterprises that carried a burden of unnecessary risk. Zofia Kossak's memoirs, written in 1954, about Bishop Adamski, referred to several times in this text, seem quite credible:

He did not try to defend himself from the underground. To the contrary. He fanned the dying flames by speaking categorically against priests' involvement in underground work. 'If I could,' he said openly to the "aces" of the underground, 'I would have every priest that runs around with illegal publications (*bibuła*) or a radio transmitter house-arrested. This is not the priests' job. The priests' job is to ensure that no one is forced to live or die without holy sacraments. There are not enough priests. They should not be unrec-

¹⁸⁴ Ks. [Father] A. Zpart, "Diecezja sandomierska," in *Życie religijne*, vol. 1, 444. In the Jewish testimonies appears motive of help offered by Lorek to rabbi from Ostrowiec Świętokrzyski who lived on that time in Sandomierz. However finally he decided not to escape from the ghetto.

¹⁸⁵ A. Klich, "Teodor Kubina: czerwonny biskup od Żydów," *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 1-2 March 2008. The existing studies of the occupation fate of the Częstochowa Diocese contain no information on the topic (see ks. [Father] J. Związek, "Diecezja częstochowska," in *Życie religijne*, vol. 1, 187-215; ks. [Father] C. Tomczyk, "Diecezja częstochowska w latach okupacji hitlerowskiej 1939-1945," in *Studia z historii Kościoła w Polsce*, vol. 4 (Warsaw, 1978), 207-515).

¹⁸⁶ PUMST, 3.1.2.1.3.2, Raport Karskiego [Karski's report], pp. 252-253.

essarily endangered. It would be a great misfortune for the country if there were no priests.

At the same time, every month he secretly donated 10,000 zlotys “for help to families of prisoners and of those shot.”¹⁸⁷ Evidently, there are no allusions to his knowledge of “Żegota”.

Controversy over Repressions for Helping the Jews

It is time to look into the circumstances of the death of Father Zygmunt Surdacki, the pre-war chairman of the Institute of Catholic Action, whose name appears among the victims of repressions for helping the Jews; in some studies he appears among the bishops who “helped the Jews.”¹⁸⁸ In fact, after the arrest of the Lublin bishops Władysław Goral and Leon Fulman, Father Surdacki ran the Lublin Diocese for several months, but at the moment of his arrest he was no longer Vicar General. From 21 September 1940 Father Prof. Józef Kruszyński was the administrator of the Lublin Diocese. What is more important, there are a lot of ambiguities and inconsistencies in the records of Surdacki’s activities. A testimony of the above-mentioned Bishop Karol Niemira given in 1955 seems to show that Surdacki worked in Warsaw. Moreover, it does not contain any facts pertaining to him.¹⁸⁹ It is the first record known to me that links Surdacki with actions on behalf of the Jews. In the interpretation dating back to the 1960s, he is credited with delivering birth certificates, weapons and water to the ghetto!¹⁹⁰ Szymon Datner followed by Waclaw Bielawski claims that he was murdered in 1943 or 1944 “for participating in hiding and rescuing Jews.”¹⁹¹ In later studies of the Main Commission to Investigate Nazi Crimes in Poland (*Główna Komisja Badania Zbrodni Hitlerowskich w Polsce*, GKBZHWp) the correct date of his death appears but is still accompanied by the information about him helping the Jews (“as the administrator of the Lublin Diocese he often used to render help to Jews”¹⁹²). In a Church publication about the martyrdom of Catholic clergy in the time of German occupation, a different version of the grounds for his arrest¹⁹³ appears with reference to text written down by a priest of the Lublin Diocese after the war:

¹⁸⁷ K. Heska-Kwaśniewicz, “Zofia Kossak o katowickich biskupach: Arkadiuszu Lisieckim i Stanisławie Adamskim,” *Śląskie Studia Historyczno-Teologiczne* 2000, vol. 36, book 1, 255.

¹⁸⁸ Ks. [Father] F. Stopniak, *Duchowieństwo katolickie i Żydzi*, 202. He was to “be in contact with Jewish organizations through nuns.”

¹⁸⁹ *Ten jest z ojczyzny mojej* (2nd edition), 241.

¹⁹⁰ *Dzieło miłosterdzia chrześcijańskiego*, 31.

¹⁹¹ S. Datner, *Las sprawiedliwych. Karta z dziejów ratownictwa Żydów w okupowanej Polsce* (Warsaw, 1968), 104; W. Bielawski, *Zbrodnie na Polakach dokonane przez hitlerowców za pomoc udzielaną Żydom* (Warsaw, 1987), 73.

¹⁹² *Those Who Helped. Polish Rescuers of Jews During the Holocaust* (Warsaw, 1997), 119.

¹⁹³ *Martyrologium polskiego duchowieństwa rzymskokatolickiego pod okupacją hitlerowską w latach 1939-1945*, vol. 3, ed. ks. [Father] W. Jacewicz, ks. [Father] J. Woś (Warsaw, 1978) (Lublin Diocese), 276.

In April 1941, former Vicar General of the Lublin Diocese, Father Zygmunt Surdacki, was taken for contacts with the underground movement. As one of the few clergymen from our diocese he gets to Auschwitz . . . and dies fast from internal otitis. Father Surdacki had been repeatedly warned about the danger; some people from his group had already been taken, but [his] love for the homeland and desire to work for it in a larger center, in Lublin, prevailed.¹⁹⁴

Obviously, it does not rule out the fact that Father Surdacki could, for example, deliver baptism certificates to those who needed them – the date of his arrest coincides with the establishment of the ghetto in Lublin. Nevertheless, I have not yet managed to get hold of documents confirming this information. This case demonstrates both the difficulties in researching the issues of German repressions towards the clergy for helping the Jews and the relatively limited knowledge of this subject.¹⁹⁵

The Case of Father Józef Kruszyński and the Persistence of Stereotypes

From the point of view of this text it is important to mention Father Józef Kruszyński, rector of the Catholic University of Lublin (1925–1933) and a biblical scholar, who was an administrator of the Lublin Diocese during 1940–1945. He was also one of the prominent “experts” regarding the “Jewish question,” the author of several anti-Semitic brochures issued in the 1920s, and an admirer of *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. In a paper delivered during Kurs duszpasterski w sprawie sekciarstwa i innowierstwa [course for priests regarding cults and other religions] (1931) organized on the initiative of Cardinal Hlond, he presented the theory of Jewish conspiracy against Poland and the Christian world, precisely in reference to *The Protocols*. It is also thanks to him that the view about the great cognitive value of the text was placed in the Church Encyclopedia.¹⁹⁶ Kruszyński’s attitude towards German anti-Semitism was fraught with ambivalence. In 1938 he wrote: “Hitler called the Jews the microbe of the world. This accusation is extremely harsh but we must admit that it is true.” Nevertheless, he did not spare words of condemnation for the treatment of the Jews in Nazi Germany, pointing out the perversions of Nazism.¹⁹⁷

Soon before his death (1953) Kruszyński, residing at that time in Włocławek, wrote a memoir of his life. This unique text makes it possible to observe his reac-

¹⁹⁴ Ks. [Father] Z. Goliński, *Biskupi i kapłani Lubelszczyzny w szponach gestapo 1939–1945* (Lublin, 1946), 13.

¹⁹⁵ Several other cases of repressions of the Catholic clergy, qualified by the Main Commission to Investigate Nazi Crimes in Poland as related to helping the Jews, raise doubts.

¹⁹⁶ J. Kruszyński, “Zgubny wpływ judaizmu na duszę polską,” in *Pamiętnik kursu duszpasterskiego w sprawie sekciarstwa i innowierstwa*, collected by B. Cizak (Poznań, 1931), 101–120; idem, “Żydzi,” in *Encyklopedia kościelna*, vol. 33, ed. ks. [Father] M. Nowodworski (Włocławek, 1933), 476.

¹⁹⁷ Idem, “W sprawie żydowskiej,” *Przegląd Powszechny* 220 (1938), 211.

tion to the Holocaust.¹⁹⁸ His condemnation seems to be total: “the Germans cannot be justified by any means.” He describes with horror anti-Jewish legislation and repressions against the Jews. He was particularly moved by the murder of Jewish children from a Jewish orphanage in Lublin in March 1942. What is surprising, however, is the lack of any reference to the concentration camp in Bełżec. He only writes that: “before the concentration camps started to function there was a mass transport of Jews to forests and then the murders. The forest near Bełżec was chosen first. Several dozen thousand Jews were transported and murdered there.”¹⁹⁹ In fact, from March 1942 to December 1942 more than 435,000 Jews were killed in the gas chambers, mainly from Lublin, the Cracow District and Galicia. It appears from Kruszyński’s description that the extermination of the Jews was happening mainly in Majdanek. It is hard to ascribe it to memory lapses if he talks in a matter-of-fact manner about so many events, even those that are distant in time. Probably, the details of the extermination of the Jews were not of interest to him. Kruszyński does not write that the “reptile press” wrote about him alongside Father Stanisław Trzeciak as of idealists demanding a solution to the Jewish problem before the war.²⁰⁰ On the other hand, he does not hide that there were “degenerates” in Polish society who betrayed hiding Jews for the prize of 500 marks and a liter of spirit.²⁰¹ In the fall of 1942 a Jewish girl sent by the chancellor of the Lublin Diocese was staying in the buildings belonging to the diocese.²⁰² Kruszyński, however, does not mention this fact. His attitude, in spite of declaring sympathy for the Jews, remained unchanged. Comments full of sarcasm give evidence to this. “Many a time I thought: the Jews have it coming from the Germans. I did not know that I would live to see it. During World War II the Germans put the Jews through a living hell. The Jews completely lost their political orientation. Wonderful salesmen, exploiters, depravers experienced an extremely great disappointment themselves.”²⁰³ And in another passage: “I of course realized that this matter would not be solved fast. I did not suppose and did not predict that Hitler would solve the Jewish question so fast and so radically. He indeed used barbaric and inhuman methods for this purpose but he did solve it.”²⁰⁴

Naturally, confessions of a pre-war classical author of “Jewish studies” cannot be reliable with reference to the Polish Church hierarchy. It is, however, a fact that after the war there were few signs of bishops being interested in the tragic fate of the Polish Jews. This is confirmed by well-known and frequently mentioned statements

¹⁹⁸ Idem, *Moje wspomnienia*, in the Library of the Włocławek Seminary.

¹⁹⁹ Idem, 230-232.

²⁰⁰ “Komu zawdzięczamy rozwiązanie kwestii żydowskiej,” *Nowy Głos Lubelski* 411, 20-21 June 1943, 1.

²⁰¹ J. Kruszyński, *Moje wspomnienia*, 234.

²⁰² S. Kraus-Kolkowicz, *Dziewczynka z ulicy Miłej albo świadectwo czasu Holocaustu* (Lublin, 1995), 46.

²⁰³ J. Kruszyński, *Moje wspomnienia*, 144.

²⁰⁴ *Ibidem*, 158.

(those for public consumption and those from internal correspondence in particular) of representatives of the Church hierarchy – Primate Hlond, bishops Kaczmarek and Łukomski, and Stefan Wyszyński – as well as their politically motivated ambivalence towards anti-Jewish violence after the war.

The same concerns Adam Sapieha, who, it is worth underlining, did not make any public statements regarding the Jews. The memorandum of the Central Committee of Polish Jews (*Centralny Komitet Żydów w Polsce*) passed on to the Cracow Curia in May 1945 with a request for a statement regarding anti-Jewish violence remained unanswered.²⁰⁵ In any case, it would be hard to expect a different course of events, considering not only the pre-war political context²⁰⁶, but also Sapieha's ambivalence towards the Jews during the interwar period and his distance and restraint regarding the Holocaust. As a matter of fact, according to Michał Borwicz, the head of the Provincial Jewish Historical Committee in Cracow, Sapieha agreed to assume honorary patronage of the celebration of the third anniversary of the Warsaw ghetto's establishment scheduled for April 1946, but this fact was not confirmed.²⁰⁷ What is more, the accounts from this period present the Cracow Metropolitan in a different light. In bitter words the confused Tadeusz Breza informed Zofia Nałkowska about an audience with Sapieha of 10 June 1946, along with a delegation of French Catholics:

It went terribly. The Cardinal made an impression of being a bad and a ruthless person (Father Glasberg to Sapieha, 'There are 60,000 Jews left in Poland.' Sapieha, 'Yeah, and add one more zero'). He also seemed to be an anti-Semite, was brusque and ill-disposed. The local progressive Catholics Zagórski, Natanson, Turowicz, Starowieyska-Morstinowa, and others, behaved extraordinarily decently and friendly. They covered up the harshness of the sacristy Catholics.²⁰⁸

Another participant, the French social activist and philosopher Emmanuel Mounier, had a similar impression about this visit. After returning from Poland he wrote about "striking anti-Semitism also among the highest hierarchs of the Catholic Church as if extermination of the Jews had never happened."²⁰⁹ Even if these opinions are too radical and Sapieha's reaction may be explained differently, the

²⁰⁵ Document cited in A. Cichopek, *Pogrom Żydów w Krakowie 11 sierpnia 1945 r.* (Warszawa, 2000), 28–29.

²⁰⁶ I wrote about the pre-war underpinnings of the comment on the Church hierarchy's representatives inter alia in "Między słowami," *Tygodnik Powszechny* 8 (2008).

²⁰⁷ M. Borwicz, "Polish-Jewish Relations 1944–1947," in *The Jews in Poland*, ed. Ch. Abramsky, M. Jachimczyk, A. Polonsky (Oxford, 1986), 196.

²⁰⁸ Z. Nałkowska, *Dzienniki*, vol. 6: 1945–1954 (Warszawa, 2000), 257. In the memoirs published in *Księga Sapieżyńska* there are no references to this matter. There is no mention about Jewish matters either in ks. [Father] J. Wolny, "Ostatnie lata działalności kościelnej Adama Sapiehy," *Księga Sapieżyńska*, vol. 2, 499–567.

²⁰⁹ The article was published in *Esprit* in June 1946. Quoted in J.T. Gross, *Fear: Anti-Semitism in Poland After Auschwitz* (New York, 2006), 197.

fact remains that Polish bishops did not have much to say about the Holocaust of 3,000,000 Polish Jews, whom they had never treated as fellow citizens. On the other hand, however, *Tygodnik Powszechny* – the press organ of the Cracow Diocese – by then had already commented on this matter in a completely different spirit.

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Abstract

The text deals with the attitudes of the Polish Catholic hierarchy towards the Holocaust. It describes the activities undertaken for the benefit of converts during 1940–1941, how the higher clergy perceived anti-Jewish incidents in Warsaw (spring 1940) and the murders of Jews in the Łomża region (summer 1941), and finally the immediate reactions of the bishops to the Holocaust on Polish territory. Particularly important is the explanation of the reasons why the extermination of the Jews was not mentioned in correspondence with the Vatican (Pope Pius XII and the Secretariat of State) during 1942–1943. Due to Adam Sapieha's position in the Church structure during the occupation, the figure of the Archbishop of Cracow is the focus. The text also analyzes statements concerning the Jews and the Holocaust made by the hierarchs outside Poland (Primate August Hlond and Bishop Karol Radoński). Additionally, the text discusses the attitude of the Church hierarchy's representatives towards organized and individual actions to help the Jews. The author's aim is to summarize existing knowledge based on Church sources (Polish and Vatican) available to researchers and documents of the Polish underground, and to identify controversies present in previous interpretations, as well as the directions and limitations of further investigations into the matter.

Key words

the Holocaust, the Polish Catholic Church during World War II, help to the Jews, Adam Sapieha