

# THE WARSAW GHETTO UPRISING AND THE POLES

## (THE UNTOLD STORY)

*“Without the help of the Poles we couldn’t have started the uprising.”*

Marek Edelman, the last surviving leader of the ghetto revolt<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See Sheldon Kirshner, interview with Marek Edelman, “Warsaw Ghetto commander forgives tormentors,” *The Canadian Jewish News* (Toronto), November 9, 1989. Edelman stated: “We didn’t get adequate help from the Poles, but without their help we couldn’t have started the uprising. ... You have to remember that the Poles themselves were short of arms.”

*This collection of materials consists mainly of citations from various authors whose names are set out in bold at the outset of the respective passages. The portions that are italicized are the editor's comments and notes. Sources are provided in the footnotes. The Polish Educational Foundation in North America, Toronto.*

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*“This was a widespread phenomenon a month ago. Hundreds of beggars, including women and children, smuggled themselves out of the Ghetto to beg on the Other Side, where they were well received, well fed, and often given food to take back to the Ghetto. Although universally recognized as Jews from the Ghetto, perhaps they were given alms for that very reason.”*  
*Emanuel Ringelblum, Chronicle of the Warsaw Ghetto (July 11, 1941)*

*“Through the openings very carefully made in the walls of the ghetto teams of starving Jewish children made their way to other districts of the city [of Warsaw] to look for bread. With fear in their eyes, these poor, dark-haired youths banged delicately on the doors of Polish homes and always met with understanding: they were given bowls of soup and pieces of bread. Then sneaking along the walls in order not to be caught, they ran to the opening in the wall and blended in with the mass of Jews.”*  
*Alceo Valcini, Warsaw correspondent of the Milan daily Corriere della Sera*

*“Our students must know ... of the Polish youngsters in Warsaw who waited at manhole covers for starved and emaciated Jews to emerge from the sewers, and then promptly turned them over to the Nazis and death.”*  
*Howard Roiter, Holocaust educator from Montreal (Voices from the Holocaust, 1975)*

## **Germans Create a Ghetto in Warsaw Jews and Poles Are Forcibly Relocated**

*Polish-Jewish relations did not take a dramatic turn for the worse after the German invasion. The suffering of the Jews aroused compassion and solidarity among many Poles, who themselves experienced German brutality on a daily basis.*

**Wehrmacht General Johannes von Blaskowitz, in a report to General Walther von Brauchitsch, Commander-in-Chief of the German Army:**

[February 6, 1940]: The acts of violence carried out in public against Jews are arousing in religious Poles [literally, “in the Polish population, which is fundamentally pious (or God-fearing)”] not only the deepest disgust but also a great sense of pity for the Jewish population.<sup>2</sup>

**Chaim Kaplan, a Jewish educator from Warsaw, made the following entries in his wartime diary:**

[November 1, 1939]: The conqueror wanted to open the law courts. The dean of lawyers, Jan Nowodworski, in peaceful days a well-known anti-Semite, was called up and two requests were made of him: to insert an Aryan clause in the judicial code, and second, to take a loyalty oath to the Führer. Nowodworski did not agree to either, on the grounds that they were both against the Polish Constitution.

[December 5, 1939]: At last the Poles have begun to understand that the hatred of the Jew which the conqueror spreads among them is an opiate, an intoxicating drink to blind them and turn their attention away from the real enemy. We thought that the “Jewish badge” would provide the local population with a source of mockery and ridicule—but we were wrong. There is no attitude of disrespect nor of making much of another’s dishonor. Just the opposite. They show that they commiserate with us in our humiliation. They sit silent in the street cars, and in private conversation they even express words of condolence and encouragement. “Better times will come!”

[February 1, 1940]: But the oppressed and degraded Polish public, immersed in deepest depression under the influence of the national catastrophe, has not been particularly sensitive to this [pervasive anti-Semitic] propaganda [which is being spread by the Germans]. It senses that the conquerors are its eternal enemy, and that they are not fighting the Jews for Poland’s sake. Common suffering has drawn all hearts closer, and the barbaric persecutions of the Jews have even aroused feelings of sympathy toward them. Tacitly, wordlessly, the two former rivals sense that they are brothers in misfortune; that they have a common enemy who wishes to bring destruction upon both at the same time.

[May 9, 1940]: Yet not a single Pole will register voluntarily [to work in Germany]. The conquerors are enraged and infuriated. ... in order to avoid forcible capture in broad daylight and transportation to the Reich, many Poles adorn themselves with the “Ribbon of Disgrace” (*Schandeband*) and masquerade as Jews to make sure of not being seized for forced labor.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Ernst Klee, Willi Dressen, and Volker Reiss, *‘Those Were the Days’: The Holocaust through the Eyes of the Perpetrators and Bystanders* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1991), 4; Jeremy Noakes and Geoffrey Pridham, eds., *Nazism 1919–1945: A History in Documents and Eyewitness Accounts*, vol. II: *Foreign Policy, War and Racial Extermination* (New York: Schocken, 1988), 939.

<sup>3</sup> Abraham I. Katsh, ed., *Scroll of Agony: The Warsaw Diary of Chaim A. Kaplan* (New York: Macmillan; London: Collier-Macmillan, 1965), 62, 82, 114, 150. In March 1941, Kaplan again notes that in order to avoid round-ups and arrests, “many Poles escaped secretly and illegally from the Aryan quarter and came to live for a while in the Jewish ghetto. They even wrapped the ‘badge of shame’ on their right arms to disguise their origins.” *Ibid.*, 254. (There is more later on Kaplan’s evolution from the pronounced anti-Polish sentiments expressed in the entries made in the early months of the war.) Historian Philip Friedman notes that, while Christians in some Western European countries wore Stars of David to show solidarity with persecuted Jews, Poles in the Resistance trying to escape the Nazis discovered an ally in the Jewish badge, and that a “brisk trade” developed where Poles bought or borrowed badges from Jews. He also cites an entry from Emanuel Ringelblum’s diary for May 8, 1940: “Everywhere the Germans are rounding up Poles. Jews are screened to make certain they are not camouflaged Poles. ... I’ve heard that during the raid Jews of Aryan

*The German invasion brought about conflicts within the Jewish community itself. Jewish shopkeepers hoarded their merchandise in the expectation of profiting as prices skyrocketed due to shortages. As Irena Bakowska recalls,*

Grunia Achlomov Dobrejcer, who had a philanthropic nature, and made a habit of lending money without interest to several neighbourhood merchants. ... My grandmother's modest, short-term loans had helped them to survive. But on 2 September [1939], when my grandmother went to buy her daily bread rolls, the storekeeper—a poor woman who had borrowed money from her for years—now seemed to barely recognize her, and refused to sell her anything. Perhaps the storekeeper was ashamed to charge her the new, inflationary price, for she sent my grandmother away with no bread. ... Then [my mother] went to the store herself, put a large sum of money on the counter, and returned home with the fresh rolls for my grandmother.<sup>4</sup>

*The Germans also fomented discord between Jews and Poles by waging a propaganda war and by instigating and directing a series of attacks on Jews (culminating in the so-called Passover pogrom) by paid hoodlums, who spontaneously appeared on the streets in February and March 1940. The Germans photographed these incidents while German soldiers stood by or, on occasion, joined in on the assaults. They then doctored the prints to show German soldiers defending Jews against the Polish mob.<sup>5</sup>*

*U.S.-style racial segregation was unknown in Poland, hence when the Germans decided to create a ghetto in Warsaw in October 1940, the Jews and Poles had to be physically separated. Throughout occupied Poland, several hundred thousand Poles were displaced from their homes as a direct consequence of the German-ordered resettlement of Jews into ghettos.*

#### **Martin Gilbert, British historian:**

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appearance were ordered to speak Yiddish to identify themselves.” See Philip Friedman, *Their Brothers' Keepers* (New York: Holocaust Library, 1978), 37. It is worth noting that Jews did not rush to assist endangered Poles or to manifest their solidarity with them when such opportunities arose: “The price of armbands soared, as the demand increased”—they were not given out for free. See Gary A. Keins, *A Journey Through the Valley of Perdition* ([United States]: n.p., 1985), 62.

<sup>4</sup> Irena Bakowska, *Not All Was Lost: A Young Woman's Memoir, 1939–1946* (Kingston, Ontario: Karijan, 1998), 12–13.

<sup>5</sup> Yisrael Gutman, *The Jews of Warsaw, 1939–1943: Ghetto, Underground, Revolt* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1982), 27–29. As historian Tomasz Szarota explains, the Passover pogrom was orchestrated by the Germans for propaganda purposes and there were no fatalities, but it triggered successful entreaties from the Germans to the Jewish authorities to endorse the creation of a ghetto for the safety of the Jews. Jewish workers started work on constructing walls around the ghetto on April 1, 1940. See Tomasz Szarota, *U progu Zagłady: Zajścia antyżydowskie i pogromy w okupowanej Europie (Warszawa, Paryż, Amsterdam, Antwerpia, Kowno)* (Warsaw: Sic!, 2000), 16, 30, 32–37; translated as Tomasz Szarota, *On the Threshold of the Holocaust: Anti-Jewish Riots and Pogroms in Occupied Europe: Warsaw – Paris – The Hague – Amsterdam – Antwerp – Kaunas* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2015). Szarota also describes anti-Jewish pogroms that took place in Western European cities such as Paris, Amsterdam, and Antwerp. On April 14, 1941, Antwerp experienced a major pogrom, when a mob of 200 people, spurred by anti-Semitic and pro-Nazi elements, invaded the Jewish quarter, vandalizing Jewish-owned stores and two synagogues, destroying the Torah scrolls and religious artifacts, and ending with the torching of the synagogues. Similar incidents were repeated two days later, until the German authorities finally intervened to put an end to this violence. See Mordecai Paldiel, *Churches and the Holocaust: Unholy Teaching, Good Samaritans, and Reconciliation* (Jersey City, New Jersey: Ktav Publishing House, 2006), 134. In early October 1941, the German authorities secretly organized bomb attacks on seven Paris synagogues, but they were actually carried out by a French anti-Semitic group, Eugène Deloncle's *Mouvement Social Révolutionnaire*. See Pim Griffioen and Ron Zeller, “Anti-Jewish Policy and Organization of the Deportations in France and the Netherlands, 1940–1944: A Comparative Study,” *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, vol. 20, no. 3 (Winter 2006): 437–73. The Germans also employed German soldiers posing as Polish civilians to stage attacks on Jews in Warsaw. One such pogrom occurred near Leszno and Nowolipie Streets towards the end of 1939. Jewish homes and shops were looted and Jews were beaten and several killed. These events are described by a Jewish eyewitness: Joshua Albert, *Yidishe Varshe durkh payn, blut un toyt* (Buenos Aires: n.p., 1958), 23–24, cited in Andrzej Żbikowski, ed., *Polacy i Żydzi pod okupacją niemiecką 1939–1945: Studia i materiały* (Warsaw: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej–Komisja Ścigania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu, 2006), 554.

Of the 400,000 Jews of Warsaw, more than 250,000 lived in the predominantly Jewish district. The remaining 150,000 lived throughout the city, some Jews in almost every street and suburb. On 3 October 1940, at the start of the Jewish New Year, the German Governor of Warsaw, Ludwig Fischer, announced that all Jews living outside the predominantly Jewish district would have to leave their homes and to move to the Jewish area. Whatever belongings could be moved by hand, or on carts, could go with them. The rest—the heavy furniture, the furnishings, the stock and equipment from shops and businesses—had to be abandoned.

Warsaw was to be divided into three ‘quarters’: one for Germans, one for Poles, and one for Jews. ... More than a hundred thousand Poles, living in the area designated for the Jews, were likewise ordered to move, to the ‘Polish quarter’. They too would lose their houses and their livelihoods. On October 12, the second Day of Atonement of the war, a day of fasting and of prayer, German loudspeakers announced that the move of Poles and Jews into their special quarters must be completed by the end of the month. ‘Black melancholy reigned in our courtyard,’ Ringelblum noted. ‘The mistress of the house’—a Pole—‘had been living there some thirty-seven years, and now she has to leave her furniture behind. Thousands of Christian businesses are going to be ruined.’ ... Both Poles and Jews obeyed the fierce decree.<sup>6</sup>

**Chaim Kaplan, chronicler of the Warsaw ghetto, on the creation of the ghetto:**

... all the Aryans (read Poles) living in the streets within the walls must move to the Aryan quarter. To a certain extent the edict has hurt the Poles more than the Jews, for the Poles are ordered to move not only from the ghetto, but from the German quarter as well. Nazism wants to separate everyone ...

The Gentiles too are in mourning. Not one tradesman or storekeeper wants to move to a strange section, even if it be to an Aryan section. It is hard for any man, whether Jewish or Aryan, to start making his life over. And so the panic in captured Warsaw, occupied by harsh masters, is great. ... for the time being we are in an open ghetto; but will end by being in a real ghetto, within closed walls.

By law a Jew is not permitted to remove the furniture when he vacates his apartment; in practice, however, the streets of Warsaw are full of carts loaded with furniture. ...

Several days ago the *Judenrat* furnished a questionnaire to all the courtyard committees in which they were asked to give detailed replies to questions about the number of apartments, the number of rooms in each apartment, the number of tenants, and the prices of apartments. On the basis of this information they will confiscate vacant rooms and settle homeless people in them ... And so the people are hurriedly renting out rooms to tenants of their own choice. Incidentally, they are raising the rents sky-high. They are afraid that the *Judenrat* will match them up with the wrong people and make them stick to the prescribed rents, so they are hurrying to beat the *Judenrat* to the draw.

Statisticians calculate that a hundred and forty thousand Aryans will vacate their apartments in the Jewish section, and that about a hundred and fifty thousand Jews will have to leave their apartments in the Aryan quarter. ... But the Aryans who live in the Jewish quarter are mostly of the poorer classes, and their rents are low. On the other hand, most of the Jews who live in the Aryan quarter have high rents. The Aryans going from one section to the other cannot afford to pay high prices. The Jews driven out of their homes do not wish to live in dark narrow quarters even though the rent is low. The only thing common to both is that they both are dissatisfied with their lot ...<sup>7</sup>

*Buying into German propaganda, some Jews initially welcomed the creation of the ghetto: “When they put up the wall, people said that was good because it would protect us from the Poles, but food prices went up*

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<sup>6</sup> Martin Gilbert, *The Holocaust: The Jewish Tragedy* (Glasgow: William Collins, 1986), 127–30.

<sup>7</sup> Abraham I. Katsh, ed., *Scroll of Agony: The Warsaw Diary of Chaim A. Kaplan* (New York: Macmillan; London: Collier-Macmillan, 1965), 208, 212.

*immediately ...*<sup>8</sup> Reality soon set in as conditions worsened, especially after the ghetto was surrounded by walls the following year. But initially conditions were tolerable.

**Rabbi Zilberhteyn, the Rabbi of the suburb of Praga:**

In general, the Poles were indifferent toward the Jews. In many cases they also expressed their sympathy. There was not a single instance when they exhibited a hostile attitude. They were primarily concerned that the creation of the ghetto would have a negative impact on their economic interests. ... There were also cases when Poles assisted the Jewish resettlers.<sup>9</sup>

**Israel (Srul) Cymlich, a resident of the suburban town of Falenica:**

Immediately, the *Volksdeutsche* [ethnic Germans] placed themselves at the top. ... They paraded with swastika armbands and terrorized the population, especially the Jews. They were in the lead whenever Jews had to be rounded up for forced labor, or just to beat them up at any opportunity.

... many people in our town made a living by smuggling goods to Warsaw. Although our bakery had to produce quotas, we also baked for the free market. ... The quotas amounted to no more than a means of legalizing the bakery's operation. In general, baking bread for the free market was a widespread phenomenon. Because no stringent controls were yet in existence, bread was fairly cheap (50 *groszy* per kg; in November 1939—30 *groszy*; whereas in the summer of 1940—1 *zloty* 10 *groszy* per kg). At first we didn't transport the bread to Warsaw by ourselves, but at the end of July [1940]—because we had a cart and a horse—we reached an agreement with a Jewish trader in Warsaw and took the baked goods to him.<sup>10</sup>

**Chaim Kaplan, chronicler of the Warsaw ghetto:**

[December 2, 1940]: While the rich were hoarding food the poor were going around mourning and desolate, their eyes expressing anger at those complacent people upon whom the famine had not yet made an impression. This jealousy, which was like a fire contained within their bones, prompted such talk: "Let them hoard to their hearts' content. When we're starving we will take it by force. Justice does not require allowing the bourgeoisie to enjoy all good things at a time when the people are dying of starvation. ...

[December 16, 1940]: At first we were afraid—simple, physical fear of the famine knocking at our door. Hoarding of food for evil times to come became a psychosis, and caused terrible turmoil in our minds and emotions. But by now we have come to realize that it was an exaggerated fear. We are not short of any foodstuffs, and if you have the money you can enjoy all good things. In the show windows of the ghetto stores you can find all manners of delicacies, from honey cakes to the choicest wines.

Smuggling across the border increases from day to day. This has become an occupation for thousands of people, both Jews and Aryans, since they have set up partnerships for smuggling food from the Aryan quarter to the Jewish ghetto. Even the Nazis participate in this.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Henryk Grynberg, *Drohobycz, Drohobycz and Other Stories: True Tales from the Holocaust and Life After* (New York: Penguin Books, 2002), 168.

<sup>9</sup> Shimon Huberband, *Kiddush Hashem: Jewish Religious and Cultural Life in Poland During the Holocaust* (Hoboken, New Jersey: Ktav Publishing House, and Yeshiva University Press, 1987), 452.

<sup>10</sup> Israel Cymlich and Oscar Strawczynski, *Escaping Hell in Treblinka* (New York and Jerusalem: Yad Vashem and The Holocaust Survivors' Memoirs Project, 2007), 9–10, 13.

<sup>11</sup> Abraham I. Katsh, ed., *Scroll of Agony: The Warsaw Diary of Chaim A. Kaplan* (New York: Macmillan; London: Collier-Macmillan, 1965), 230, 233.

## **Creation of the Ghetto Condemned by the Polish Underground**

### **Kazimierz Iranek-Osmecki, Polish historian:**

The attitude adopted by the Polish community in reaction to the terrible blow that befell the Jews was shaped, to a great extent, by the underground press, which was denouncing the establishment of the ghettos as a shameful atrocity.

The Polish Home Army publication *Biuletyn Informacyjny* repeatedly spoke out on this matter. One of its strongest statements was found in the November 28, 1940 issue: “The Warsaw ghetto takes on the dimensions of a gigantic crime: over four hundred thousand people are being condemned to all the consequences of unavoidable epidemics and a slow death from hunger.”

Polish public opinion denounced the establishment of forced labor camps with equal force. Although the Catholic Church [*subject as it was to repressive measures unheard of in any other occupied country*] could not reach the wide public through the written word, individual priests were able to from their pulpits. ... The clergy made every effort to counteract the anti-Semitic propaganda. Emanuel Ringelblum, the chronicler of the Warsaw ghetto, notes in an entry in his diaries dated December 31, 1940, that priests in all of the Warsaw churches exhorted their parishioners to bury any prejudice against Jews and beware of the poison of Jew-hatred spread by the common enemy, the Germans.<sup>12</sup>

### **John S. Conway, British historian of the Christian Churches under Nazism:**

The initial territorial separation and later annihilation of the Jews, on the one hand, and the decimation of the Catholic clergy and suppression of Catholic organizations, on the other, precluded any public protest.<sup>13</sup>

### **Jerzy Kloczowski, church historian at the Institute of East-Central Europe in Lublin:**

Considering the great number of Jews, and their crushing persecution by the Germans, any help on a mass scale was out of the question; one could only consider individual people and families, or children—hiding them outside the ghettos.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Kazimierz Iranek-Osmecki, *He Who Saves One Life* (New York: Crown Publishers, 1971), 122–24.

<sup>13</sup> John S. Conway, “Christian Churches: General Survey,” in *Encyclopedia of the Holocaust* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1990), volume 1, 293.

<sup>14</sup> Jerzy Kloczowski, *A History of Polish Christianity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 306.

## **Conditions in the Ghetto Polish Attitudes and Assistance**

**Apolinary M. Hartglass, President of the Zionist Organization, former member of the Polish Parliament and a member of the Warsaw Jewish Council, who managed to leave Warsaw in April 1940, on the attitude of the Poles toward the Jews:**

The relations are good in the areas annexed to the Reich. The same kind of treatment is meted out on both peoples. In the Warsaw district the relations have improved. With few exceptions, the Polish intellectuals are friendly toward the Jews and help them when they can. The same is true of the organized workingmen and of the thinking people. But the attitude of the Polish masses remains unchanged. ... Occasionally, they attack Jewish passers-by, but such attacks are not common. There is also another side to the picture. Poles often rise and offer their seats when women wearing the Jewish badge enter street cars. Once a German soldier came into a tram shouting 'Judens raus!' Thereupon a dignified elderly Pole rose and said: 'If the Jews go, we go too.' He left the car and was followed by all the other Poles present. It is true, however, that there have been instances of elderly Jews being forced off cars by Polish youths. But all in all, the Polish attitude toward the Jews is far more favorable than previously.

The Polish anti-Semites have not joined forces with Germans. Only one of the anti-Semitic groups, the Falange [Falanga], made overtures to the Germans, suggesting that it be co-opted in governing the Jews, since its program was akin to that of the Nazis. The Germans brushed this proposal aside.<sup>15</sup>

**Rabbi Shimon Huberband on the attitude of Poles to Jewish labour contingents:**

The fifteen men who were seized along with me from the same courtyard gained their freedom by paying the Jewish policemen fifteen zlotys [złoty] per person. The payment was carried out at the labor department of the Warsaw *Kehilah* [council]. Only the poor, the ill, and the weary were left behind. Unfortunately, the view subsequently expressed by the anti-Semitic head of the [labor] camp proved to be true—the *Kehilah* intentionally sent the refugees to the camp, in order to get rid of them and ensure that they wouldn't be a burden on the community. ...

The group was counted there were 180 persons. ...

We began to march through the Polish quarter, walking along *Zelazna* [Żelazna] and *Chlodna* [Chłodna] Streets. It was close to 6:00 A.M.; the trolleys were running, and the glances of the passing Polish passengers at us were not mocking and ridiculing but earnest and even full of sympathy. ...

Many of the detainees collapsed due to physical weakness, and we were beaten by the Germans in uniform. ...

Among the Poles we passed, we saw obvious expressions of pity on their faces, especially among the workers.<sup>16</sup>

**Emanuel Ringelblum, chronicler of the Warsaw ghetto:**

[Second half of 1940]: I have heard of many facts of Polish customers sending parcels of food to Jewish merchants in the Łódź ghetto ... I heard many moving stories about that ... Such facts were also noted in the Warsaw ghetto ... On the first day (after the closing of the ghetto), very many Poles brought food to their Jewish friends and acquaintances: this is a general and widespread initiative. ... Anybody who has the possibility comes to the ghetto and brings food articles at the same price as that outside the ghetto. ... For the moment food is introduced (into the ghetto) with the help of Polish friends.

[November 19, 1940]: A Christian was killed today ... for throwing a sack of bread over the (ghetto) wall.

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<sup>15</sup> Cited in Jacob Apenszlak, ed., *The Black Book of Polish Jewry: An Account of the Martyrdom of Polish Jewry Under the Nazi Occupation* (New York: Roy Publishers, 1943), Chapter 2.

<sup>16</sup> Shimon Huberband, *Kiddush Hashem: Jewish Religious and Cultural Life in Poland During the Holocaust* (Hoboken, New Jersey: Ktav Publishing House, and Yeshiva University Press, 1987), 72–73.

[July 11, 1941]: This was a widespread phenomenon a month ago. Hundreds of beggars, including women and children, smuggled themselves out of the Ghetto to beg on the Other Side, where they were well received, well fed, and often given food to take back to the Ghetto. Although universally recognized as Jews from the Ghetto, perhaps they were given alms for that very reason.

*Ringelblum also noted the attitude of Poles who encountered Jews outside the ghetto:*

On Nalewki Street the Christians warn the Jews of a press gang approaching by shouting the air-raid warning signals ... Everybody who appears in the street is warned that They [the Germans] are seizing Jews in such and such a place. Christians pass the word along to Jews that They are beating Jews. ...

These are very frequent occurrences, where Christians take the side of Jews against attacks by hoodlums. ...

Sermons have been preached in all the churches urging Christians to forget their misunderstandings with the Jews. On the contrary, the Jews are to be pitied because they are immured behind the walls. Christians were not to allow themselves to be agitated by the enemy, who was trying to sow hatred among peoples.<sup>17</sup>

*Ringelblum noted that the Germans were doing all they could to drive a wedge between Poles and Jews and that German anti-Semitic propaganda was intensifying. Nevertheless, every Sunday afternoon a Jewish symphony orchestra would play on the border of the ghetto. Crowds of Poles would come to listen and collect money for the Jewish musicians. Every half-hour Poles would leave and allow other listeners to take their place. The crowds would remain right up to curfew.<sup>18</sup>*

#### **Yisrael Gutman, historian at Yad Vashem:**

The Polish heads of the Main Welfare Council took the terrible situation of the Jews into account in their distribution of aid.<sup>19</sup>

#### **Władysław Szpilman, an accomplished pianist who lived in the Warsaw ghetto:**

However, the feeding of the ghetto did not depend solely on such smuggling [by Jewish children and professional smugglers]. The sacks and parcels smuggled over the walls mostly contained gifts from the Polish community to the poorest Jews.<sup>20</sup>

#### **Ludwik Hirszfild on the help Jews received on the Aryan side:**

I also visited the jail on Gęsia Street. As the chairman of the Health Council, I was entitled to enter every facility. ... I asked for what offenses they were arrested. It was always the same: the intelligentsia, because they had stayed outside the wall; the proletariat, because they had crossed the wall in search of work and bread. "How was it on the other side?" I asked. The reply was passionate calls uttered by adults and children expressing a yearning and gratitude: "Oh, the Poles are good: they gave me bread, soup, and even socks. I even spent the night there."<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Kazimierz Iranek-Osmecki, *He Who Saves One Life* (New York: Crown Publishers, 1971), 125, 126; Richard C. Lukas, *The Forgotten Holocaust: The Poles under German Occupation, 1939–1944* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1986), 141–42; Jacob Sloan, ed., *The Journal of Emmanuel Ringelblum* (New York: Schocken, 1974), 66, 68, 117.

<sup>18</sup> Samuel D. Kassow, *Who Will Write Our History? Emanuel Ringelblum, the Warsaw Ghetto, and the Oyneg Shabes Archive* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2007), 375–76.

<sup>19</sup> Israel Gutman, "Warsaw" in Walter Laqueur, ed., *The Holocaust Encyclopedia* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2001), 686.

<sup>20</sup> Władysław Szpilman, *Śmierć miasta* (Warszawa: Spółdzielnia Wydawnicza Wiedza, 1946), as cited in Kazimierz Iranek-Osmecki, *He Who Saves One Life* (New York: Crown Publishers, 1971), 127.

<sup>21</sup> Ludwik Hirszfild, *Ludwik Hirszfild: The Story of One Life* (Rochester, New York: University of Rochester Press, 2010), 236.

**Shlomo Atzmon, a Jewish boy from ghetto, who begged in the streets of Warsaw:**

One time I went into the tram workers' restaurant. It was late afternoon. The place was warm and well-lit. The diners were smoking and drinking, and their conversation sounded a happy note. My entrance riveted their attention. Silence descended and they all fixed their gaze on me. They did not probe me or ask questions. One of the workers who was eating there took me by the hand and led me behind the counter on which the cash register stood. I waited. I was afraid he had gone to summon a policeman or a German gendarme. To my surprise, he returned with a package wrapped in a cloth and tied in a knot. He handed me the package and took me out by a side door, saying: Go, boy, and tell no one you were here.<sup>22</sup>

**A Jewish lawyer who had escaped from the Warsaw ghetto and made his way to Sweden during the war:**

The Poles assisted the Jews however they could. They smuggled into the ghetto food, clothing, and the underground press. Contact was maintained on a political level with Jewish organizations. Along with others, I was able to escape from the ghetto with the help of Poles. Our common struggle and common suffering united Poles and Jews and eliminated racial and religious antagonisms.<sup>23</sup>

**Abraham Lewin, another Jewish resident of the ghetto:**

Many Jews consider that the influence of the war and the terrible blows that the country and all its inhabitants—Jews and Poles—have absorbed from the hand of the Germans has greatly changed relations between Poles and Jews, and the majority of Poles have been gripped by philo-Semitic feelings. Those who hold this opinion base their point of view on a considerable number of incidents that illustrate how from the very first months of the war the Poles showed, and continue to show, pity and kindness to Jews who were destitute, especially towards beggar-children.

I have heard many stories of Jews who fled Warsaw on that momentous day, 6 September 1939, and were given shelter, hospitality and food by Polish peasants who did not ask for any payment for their help. It is also known that our children who go begging and appear in their tens and hundreds in the Christian streets are given generous amounts of bread and potatoes and from this they manage to feed themselves and their families in the ghetto. This is what those who take a bright view think. ... I personally incline to the first view. I see Polish-Jewish relations in a bright light.

[June 7, 1942]: Today at one o'clock midday an 18-year-old Polish youth was shot at the entrance to the ghetto next to 9 Przejazd Street. He was about to climb over to the Jewish side on some smuggling errand. A [German] gendarme approached, saw him, and as quick as lightning fired once. The boy fell to the ground dead on the Jewish side. At three he was still lying there.

[July 29, 1942]: A Christian woman on Leszno Street, seeing the wagons with those who have been rounded up [during the great deportation of the summer of 1942], curses the Germans. She presents her chest and is shot. On Nowy Świat a Christian woman stands defiantly, kneels on the pavement and prays to God to turn his sword against the executioners—she had seen how a [German] gendarme killed a Jewish boy.<sup>24</sup>

**Wacław Śledziński, a Polish resident of Warsaw, witnessed the following scenes:**

The Poles too are hungry, suffer and perish. But the attitude of the Polish population to the Jews is full of sympathy. ... I have in mind two pictures.

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<sup>22</sup> Cited in Nahum Bogner, *At the Mercy of Strangers: The Rescue of Jewish Children with Assumed Identities in Poland* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2009), 101.

<sup>23</sup> Reported in the Swedish daily *Social Demokraten*. Cited in Paweł Szapiro, ed., *Wojna żydowsko-niemiecka: Polska prasa konspiracyjna 1943–1944 o powstaniu w getcie Warszawy* (London: Aneks, 1992), 304–305.

<sup>24</sup> Abraham Lewin, *A Cup of Tears: A Diary of the Warsaw Ghetto* (Oxford and New York: Basil Black in association with the Institute for Polish-Jewish Studies, Oxford, 1988), 44, 124–25, 141.

The first: I was crossing Złota [Złota] Street, by the wall separating the two quarters. A man in dirty working-clothes stopped, looked around, and threw a small packet over the wall. Then he went on his way.

‘Are you sure it will fall into the right hands? I asked him.’

‘Of course I am. I threw over a loaf of bread for the Jews. Whoever gets it will eat it.’

Second picture: Along the streets of the Aryan quarter, in the roadway of course, moved a melancholy procession. Several hundred Jews in rags, mostly barefoot. All of them with Jewish arm-bands, carrying small bundles in their hands. Sweat dripping from their brows, their eyes unnaturally bright with fatigue. The bigger children dragging along step by step behind the elders; the small ones and the infants peeping out from their rag nests on their mothers’ backs. They had come like that for fifty or sixty miles, driven from their homes to the Ghetto in Warsaw. They had reached the last stage of their journey. They moved along like folk condemned, not speaking to one another, not taking any interest even in those Aryan streets which they might never see again, nor in those folk without arm-bands whom likewise they might never see more. Every face seemed to express resignation ... In front of the procession, at the sides and behind went Germans in steel helmets with rifles on their shoulders.

The procession stopped for a moment at the corner of Krakowskie Przedmieście [Przedmieście] and Miodowa Street, where my book-stall stood for a certain length of time. There the Jews were handed over to a fresh guard. They stood still for at most two minutes. But in that time passers-by went up to them and thrust bread, cigarettes and bottles of water into their hands. The guards, who were busy taking over, did not notice it at once. When they did, they tore the bottles, and the Jews’ own bundles, from their hands, threw them all on the ground, and beat up everyone, Jew or Pole, whom they could reach. After that the procession continued on its way.

These two scenes, which I witnessed myself, may serve to illustrate the attitude of the Poles to the Jews.<sup>25</sup>

### **Ruth Altbeker Cyprys, an attorney who lived in the ghetto:**

The Germans had good reason to single out Jewish shops with the Jewish star. The scum understood how to avail themselves of such an opportunity. A German or a ‘Volksdeutsch’ [ethnic Germans, i.e., descendants of Germans] would enter a Jewish shop pretending to be a customer and would ask for some merchandise. After getting it, he would either not pay at all, or pay his own price. The Jew could not complain, could ask no one for help and very often thanked God that he had received no beating on such an occasion. That was the reason why from the beginning of the German invasion, the shops were seemingly without merchandise. Goods were sold only to people who inspired confidence. Because of my appearance, I was sometimes refused service and had to prove my Jewish origin. ...

At the same time many Aryan shop entrances started displaying small white rectangular signs with the typed inscription ‘Für Juden Eintritt verboten’ (Entry for Jews forbidden). ... The cakes at Gajewski’s and Ziemianska [Ziemiańska] looked so good, but both entrances were ‘decorated’ with those signs. Yet the majority of those cards had the inscription turned inside the shops, leaving the blank white facing the street. Once in the summer of 1940 when I shopped at Gajewski’s shop window, I was approached by a shop assistant and cordially invited to enter. ‘You know that this is a German order, not ours. Please do always come, and repeat this invitation to all your acquaintances.’ The same happened at Gogolewski’s and Ziemianska and it became a rule to shop in spite of those placards. We treated this rather like a game of making fun of the Germans. But only a small number of Jews derived profit from this ‘blessing’. The majority did not leave the Jewish quarter at all.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Waclaw Sledzinski, *Governor Frank’s Dark Harvest* (Newtown, Montgomeryshire, mid-Wales: Montgomerys, 1946), 123–24.

<sup>26</sup> Ruth Altbeker Cyprys, *A Jump For Life: A Survivor’s Journal from Nazi-Occupied Poland* (New York: Continuum, 1997), 24–25.

There was also another ‘window on the world’ in the ghetto, the building of the Lower Court at Leszno ...

The building had one gate from Leszno Street, the second from Ogrodowa Street,. The entrance from Leszno Street, which belonged to the ghetto, was guarded by a gendarme and Polish and Jewish policemen who took care that only Jews could pass through this gate. To get into the building, of course, an explanation was required, but even an old summons to the Court, or Income Tax department (which was also in the same building) proved sufficient. Inside the Court building Jews met non-Jews, busying themselves with all kinds of affairs and bargaining. There was, at that time, a considerable difference between the prices charged in the ghetto and those in the Gentile quarter. Food was cheaper on the Aryan side, whereas workmanship and various goods were much less expensive in the ghetto. Therefore parcels and bundles changed hands inside the building ...

Hundreds of kilograms of foodstuffs and other goods passed through the Law Court building daily. ...

There were several kinds of smuggling: the first was large-scale business. It was organized by wealthy wholesalers who had their associates on the Gentile side and a squad of ‘Szmalcowniki’, who bribed the gendarmes and Polish and Jewish militiamen, who in turn monitored the goods carried in wagons through the main gates of the ghetto—mostly at night. Smuggling on a minor scale was carried out by grocers and outsiders who lugged their contraband through the cellars of some houses connected with these in the ghetto, through all sorts of secret passages and dug subways. Children played a big role in smuggling. The walls encircling the ghetto were built of brick. Where the wall crossed a roadway there remained an opening some two bricks in diameter above the gutters through which water from the Jewish gutter flowed into the Aryan one. A small Jewish child could wriggle onto the other side through such a hole, carry back small quantities of victuals even several times in one night. Such a child was often the only supporter of a large family, an expert in goods and a reliable expert in working out bills and accounts.

I knew a Jewish family who before the war had a big shop with pottery and glassware. Unfortunately it stood in Zimna Street and was cut off from the ghetto. ... Two boys from this family breached the gutter several times a night; they co-operated with some boys from the Gentile side—the suppliers. I wondered whether such a small goy would not take the money and beat or give away his Jewish associate, and was really surprised at the downright denial from Josek or Srulek. It never happened. There was a great decency in dealings among those little merchants, one did not cheat the other ... The children carried on their hard work without grumbling, although they well knew that when caught, they would, at best, get away with a severe beating.<sup>27</sup>

*A flourishing underground economy came into existence that encompassed virtually every branch of commerce that operated outside the ghetto walls:*

Christian entrepreneurs smuggled raw materials—leather, textiles, dyes, tobacco leaves, sheet metal, cocoa—into the ghetto, and smuggled out finished products—chocolate, shirts, shoes, cigarettes and cigarette lighters, canned goods, watches, even jewelry—for resale on the black market. The scale of these illicit enterprises soon became mind-boggling, involving not only mom-and-pop shops but entire tanneries and canneries and factories with delivery trucks and hundreds of employees. Insurance companies offered policies on the safe delivery of goods, with premiums based on distance covered and delivery location and depending on the degree of bribability of the relevant officials. These indispensable payoffs lubricated every stage of the operation, and bribes were earning corrupt German overseers the equivalent of hundreds of thousands of dollars annually.<sup>28</sup>

**Halina Gorcewicz, a young resident of the ghetto, describes how it became more difficult for Poles to help Jews in the ghetto:**

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 36–38.

<sup>28</sup> Matthew Brzezinski, *Isaac's Army: A Story of Courage and Survival in Nazi-Occupied Poland* (New York: Random House, 2012), 110–11. Based on Percec Opoczyński, *Reportaże z warszawskiego getta* (Warsa: Żydowski Instytut Historyczny, 2009), 21.

The 14<sup>th</sup> of November [1940] has finally arrived. On that day the ghetto was closed off completely and a strengthened cordon of “blueys” and “green” police surrounded the wall. The supply of food has been halted altogether. German police, the SS (“Greens”) confiscates items of food carried frequently to the ghetto by Poles. They also carried food on trams passing through the ghetto but which no longer stop within its boundaries. And so many of those Poles who were helping the Jews have been arrested by the Nazi authorities. Many will certainly pay with their lives.<sup>29</sup>

**David Landau, a member of the Jewish Military Union (ŻZW):**

But even before 15 November [1940], permits had been introduced, issued by the Jewish ghetto authorities, and guards had been posted at the ghetto entrances.

The permits were not difficult to obtain and most of them were group permits, allowing a designated number of people to work outside the ghetto. I joined one of these working groups. ...

... The food rations were set so low that signs of starvation showed from the first day. If we were to survive, it would have to be by illegal means, by bribing guards and developing smuggling to a high art.

It was not difficult to establish contact with the ‘Aryan’ Poles. We had no German supervisors and our Jewish overseers were in the same boat as we were. Within a few days, exchanges between the ghetto and the outside began to function in a meaningful way. The ghetto offered dollars, gold, clothing, art works, underwear and other goods, in exchange for food and, once trust was built up on both sides, small arms.

The custom was for Poles to approach us, as we Jews were too visible to risk leaving our work sites. ... An exchange would be agreed to but no goods would change hands. Instead, the routine was to bribe the guards at the gate before leaving the next day, to allow us to take the requisite goods out of the ghetto and, in the evening, return without a body search. If a search was carried out it initially involved only the loss of the smuggled goods, so long as they were not arms. But soon, being found with smuggled goods led to beatings and, soon after that, instant death.<sup>30</sup>

To have goods to smuggle, the ghetto needed to produce items that were wanted on the Aryan side. Tailors, shoemakers, metal workers and even jewelers received raw materials (which were themselves smuggled in) and transformed them into finished goods. ...

The prices paid for these goods were a joke. They would have constituted slave wages if the artisans had received the whole amount. But after the [Jewish] middle-men and smugglers had taken their substantial shares, they received barely a slice from an already meager loaf.<sup>31</sup>

**Ruth Altbeker Cyprys, a resident of the Warsaw ghetto, on looting:**

The local mob usually guided the Germans to the rich Jewish houses and stores. With the deepest shame I must admit that there were some Jews among the scum. The fact that a Mojsze Zylberszejn had hidden some cloth, gold or jewels was usually known to another Jew, either his friend or relation. Prompted by greed or vindictiveness they would betray the person to a German who then robbed the victim of everything. Such things were done not only by a professional ‘Muser’ (blackmailer) but, unfortunately, also by an embittered wife or mistress, a quarrelling business partner, dissatisfied employee or competitor in trade.

A ‘poem’ was even composed to this effect:

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<sup>29</sup> Halina Gorcewicz, “Ghetto, late November, 1940,” *Why, Oh God, Why?*, posted online at <<http://www.books-reborn.org/klinger/why/Why.html>>.

<sup>30</sup> David J. Landau, alias Dudek, Janek and Jan, *Caged: A Story of Jewish Resistance* (Sydney: Macmillan, 2000), 68–69.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 95.

Mummy, Daddy, listen do  
With a German the Gestapo came two by two  
What shame, what a disgrace  
The first was a Pole, the second a Jew!  
Mummy, Daddy, listen do  
Here come the Gestapo, do you know who?  
What a shame, the worst disgrace  
The first is a Jew, and the second is too!<sup>32</sup>

*Feiga Rotstein recalled a series of raids by the Gestapo, at the instigation of fellow Jews, looking for hidden valuables on the premises of several family members in the Warsaw ghetto.*<sup>33</sup>

#### **Mordechai Lensky, a doctor in the Warsaw ghetto:**

The issue of closure inside the ghetto evolved into other problems ... Enormous movement was noted amongst the Jews. They were buying huge amounts of foodstuffs, and stocking up especially on flour, sugar and oil. The wealthy bought whole sacks of products. ... However, storing large amounts of food at home was not a simple matter. The Nazis conducted frequent searches in Jews' homes. The plight of a Jew maintaining a large store of food at home was no light matter. The Nazis not only confiscated the lot, but turned the owner over to the Gestapo, where his fate was sealed.

How did the Germans detect the goods? Rumor had it that among the Jews were corrupt types who worked for the Gestapo and informed on their brothers who had hidden goods, foodstuffs and furniture. The Nazis would suddenly show up with trucks, enter the apartment and remove the hidden stock. A man could become a pauper in a matter of seconds. It was heartwrenching to witness robbery facilitated by Jewish informants.<sup>34</sup>

#### **Chaim Kaplan, chronicler of the Warsaw ghetto:**

[August 25, 1940]: Along with the [German] looters came porters from among our Jewish brethren; these are regular porters who serve the Nazis regularly for pay. ... [the Germans] take regularly hired porters who ride from place to place together with the robbers.<sup>35</sup>

#### **Alexander Donat, a survivor from the Warsaw ghetto, on looting in the ghetto:**

Many high-placed occupation authorities ... were officially and unofficially involved in looting. So were some Jewish criminals who tipped Germans off about the best places to plunder, or threatened Jews that they would do so in order to blackmail them.<sup>36</sup>

#### **Rabbi Shimon Huberband on widespread crime in the Warsaw ghetto:**

The Jewish ghetto is flooded with a huge number of informers, collaborators, blackmailers, and thieves. Admittedly, the major causes of all these crimes are the famine, poverty, and epidemics which are prevalent

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<sup>32</sup> Ruth Altbeker Cyprys, *A Jump For Life: A Survivor's Journal from Nazi-Occupied Poland* (New York: Continuum, 1997), 26.

<sup>33</sup> Testimony of Feiga Rotstein, Archive of the Jewish Historical Institute (Warsaw), record group 301, number 2980. When Feiga's father left Warsaw, a Jewish policeman wouldn't allow him to enter the Otwock ghetto unless he paid a bribe. Edmund Komorowski regularly provided food to a group of 11 Jews in a forest hideout near Konstancin. Since his resources were scarce, he had his own children beg for extra bread and milk. He had to divide what he brought equally among his charges because of their bickering. Komorowski turned for help to a Jew who worked as an inspector on a nearby estate, but since he would not cooperate, Komorowski had to seize produce from the estate.

<sup>34</sup> Mordechai Lensky, *A Physician Inside the Warsaw Ghetto* (New York and Jerusalem: Yad Vashem and The Holocaust Survivors' Memoirs Project, 2009), 32.

<sup>35</sup> Abraham I. Katsh, ed., *Scroll of Agony: The Warsaw Diary of Chaim A. Kaplan* (New York: Macmillan; London: Collier-Macmillan, 1965), 187.

<sup>36</sup> Alexander Donat, *The Holocaust Kingdom: A Memoir* (New York: Holocaust Library, 1963, 1978), 9.

in such horrible forms in the concentration camp which is called the sealed Jewish ghetto. But that is no excuse.

The problem of denunciations is extremely widespread in the ghetto. Jews have always suffered from informers. ... But nothing is comparable to the current goings-on in the ghetto.

The porters were the first Jewish informers in Warsaw. They were the ones who showed the Germans where the wealthy Jews lived and where Jews hid their merchandise. Later on the porters went a step further. Whenever they noticed a Jew carrying even the smallest package, they approached him and ordered him to pay them money. If a Jew refused, they called over a German, a Polish policeman, a street agent, or a simple *goy*. [It is difficult to appreciate how an ordinary *goy* could be of any assistance to a burly Jewish porter.—*M.P.*] This is their practice until this very day.

The porters received regular payments from the clandestine milk producers, the illegal slaughterhouses, and other businesses. Otherwise, the businesses would immediately be denounced to the authorities. In many cases, the porters informed on them because they could not reach an agreement with the owners concerning the size of the weekly payment.

In addition to the sums which the porters received from the Germans and Poles [the identity of these Poles is rather baffling—*M.P.*] to reward them for their denunciations, the porters also stole a large amount of textiles, leather, and other items while carrying them down from homes and loading them into trucks. ...

Besides porters, there were also artisans who served as informers. In many cases, Jews called upon their close, good friends who were craftsmen, carpenters, bricklayers, and oven masons, and seeking to secure their jewelry, asked them to conceal their valuables inside a wall, floor, or ceiling. In many cases, Jews asked that their jewelry be built into their ovens or stoves. The artisans were well paid for such work. But in many cases they informed on the wealthy Jews. The Germans would then enter the Jews' homes and head straight for the "hiding place." It was thus patently clear that the craftsmen had informed. In many cases, the artisan even came along with them.<sup>37</sup>

*It was not only Poles who sometimes refused to return Jewish belongings temporarily lent them for safekeeping. In fact, the Jews had their own courts that dealt with such comparable Jew-on-Jew behaviour:*

During the war, there have arisen specific kinds of wartime litigation. Immediately after the bombing, there was a massive number of lawsuits brought before rabbinic courts by people who had entrusted others with their belongings, clothing, merchandise, valuables, and money. Those who were given the belongings claimed that the items had been stolen or burnt and so forth. The owners refused to believe their claims.<sup>38</sup>

*Solidarity was lacking in other respects too. Although Jews set up soup kitchens in the ghetto to feed the hungry, these were open only to the members of the relevant political formation: "The Zionists had theirs. We [Bundists] had ours. All the groups looked after their own."<sup>39</sup> Jews brought to the ghetto from the surrounding towns found themselves without a place to stay, as every available accommodation was already occupied. Arriving in the winter of 1941 with the temperatures well before freezing, thousands crammed into unheated synagogues or deserted factories. "They remain all day on their filthy straw mattresses, with no strength to rise," Marek Edelman noted. "A whole family often receives sleeping space for one. This is the kingdom of hunger and misery."<sup>40</sup> The vast majority of the newcomers had nothing to live on and no local support network among Christian residents of Warsaw. "Very rapidly they started to*

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<sup>37</sup> Shimon Huberband, *Kiddush Hashem: Jewish Religious and Cultural Life in Poland During the Holocaust* (Hoboken, New Jersey: Ktav Publishing House, and Yeshiva University Press, 1987), 136–37.

<sup>38</sup> Shimon Huberband, *Kiddush Hashem: Jewish Religious and Cultural Life in Poland During the Holocaust* (Hoboken, New Jersey: Ktav Publishing House, and Yeshiva University Press, 1987), 204.

<sup>39</sup> Matthew Brzezinski, *Isaac's Army: A Story of Courage and Survival in Nazi-Occupied Poland* (New York: Random House, 2012), 111.

<sup>40</sup> Marek Edelman, "The Ghetto Fights", in *The Warsaw Ghetto: The 45th Anniversary of the Uprising* (Warsaw: Interpress, 1988), posted online at <<http://www.english.upenn.edu/~afilreis/warsaw-uprising.html>>.

die, Boruch Spiegel recalled. "At first, it was a few a day. Then a few hundred a week. Then by the thousands."<sup>41</sup>

Looting was a common occurrence in the Warsaw ghetto, especially when the size of the ghetto was reduced due to population attrition. Being blackmailed for not complying with German orders was also a pervasive worry. Later on, after the great deportation in the Warsaw ghetto in the summer of 1942, the Jews who remained in the ghetto looted property left behind by the Jews who had been expelled from the ghetto.<sup>42</sup>

**Ludwik Hirszfeld, a survivor of the Warsaw ghetto, on looting and blackmail in the ghetto:**

... every once in a while, the district was made smaller, and 15,000 to 20,000 persons were shifted to the overcrowded remaining area. ... The fact that the Jewish mob stole mercilessly from their fellow men during such shifts only magnified the feeling of contempt for those who were perishing. There were many of those shifts ...

At one time they needed fur coats for German soldiers ... many turned their furs over because they had been seen wearing them and they feared blackmail from their fellow Jews.<sup>43</sup>

**Jerry (Jerzy) Rawicki, a survivor of the Warsaw ghetto, on looting in the ghetto and smuggling:**

... the minute I got out of this group, outside the ghetto with that working battalion, we called it, I would slip it off and then mingle with the crowd that was surrounding us. ... The crowd was surrounding us to barter for the things that we were smuggling out of the ghetto, because in the ghetto after people were deported, everything that they worked for all their lives, assembled, all their things—valuables—were left, the German organized an outfit called *Werterfassung*, which something in English would say like "acquisition of valuables," or something, "registration of valuables." And they would come in and they load everything up. They would take everything to the bare walls and would ship it to Germany. But we sometimes were faster than they were, and we would get there first and we would steal anything we could. We acquired another name, *szabrowniki*. *Szaber* is like a drywall, you know. Why were we called *szabrowniki*? Because we would take everything, up to the bare wall. Okay?

And this is how the ghetto [was] really sustaining itself, because what we took out—for example, Warsaw was very famous for millinery stores, factories and corsets, women's girdles and brassieres and so on. And that material that used to work for girdles was like rubberized things, was—again, has its weight in gold. So whenever there was an action—you know, deportation—we would see were the shops, you know, that were making those girdles, because we knew the material was there. So we would cut up whatever we could around ourselves, and outside of the—once we were out of the ghetto, that bartering that—I call it the walking flea market—was starting. We would unravel our things and we would give them that goods, and they would give us either money or mostly foodstuff, you know; this was the thing. At the end of the day, we would smuggle the foodstuff back to the [ghetto].

Now, this was all contingent on the sentries that were guarding the gates, because when I say that we had these things on us and all that—sure, many times we could smuggle these things out, but many times we were inspected. If you think that there is now inspection when you go to the airport, you should see the inspection we had. And sometimes these guards were not playing ball with us. As a matter of fact, we did not use the expression "playing ball" back then, just "playing." We knew that the certain sentries, certain guards, we knew them by—not myself personally, but the leaders of our battalion, work battalion, they knew who they were. And they knew if they could be bribed or if they could be looking away, so that our enterprise would be successful. But sometimes, right away they told us, "Those are killers over there." You

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<sup>41</sup> Matthew Brzezinski, *Isaac's Army: A Story of Courage and Survival in Nazi-Occupied Poland* (New York: Random House, 2012), 125–26.

<sup>42</sup> Barbara Engelking and Jacek Leociak, *Getto warszawskie: Przewodnik po nieistniejącym mieście* (Warsaw: IFiS PAN, 2001), 472, 706; Joanna Wiszniewicz, *And Yet I Still Have Dreams: A Story of a Certain Loneliness* (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 2004), 53.

<sup>43</sup> Ludwik Hirszfeld, *Ludwik Hirszfeld: The Story of One Life* (Rochester, New York: University of Rochester Press, 2010), 234, 235.

know, such and such, “Don’t even attempt. You better take this thing and throw it on the street, because not only they’ll take it away from you, but they’ll kill you at the same time.” So we knew when the—we called it when the gate was playing, or when it was not playing.

[Interviewer: Were the sentries getting something out of this? They were getting part of the loot, or—?]

Well, they were not supposed to. They were bribed sometimes, you know, because—but as far as when they were confiscating things from us—it’s a very good thing that you ask, because I forget about the very—often, some of the gates had a little—they built little—not huts, little enclosures that they could—that the guards in wintertime, they could go in and warm themselves up. So if they confiscated those things, they would put it in those things, and then the German *Werterfassung* could come in and collect it because it was a restric—we were stripped of it.

There was another thing. The guards were the German guards, usually two or three of them. There were two—one Jewish policeman. Jewish policeman sounds very impressive, but they were nothing; they were just helpers. Otherwise, if the German killer didn’t want to get his hands dirty, he would tell the Jewish policeman, “Hey, inspect him, take everything off him.” So this was their thing.

There were another people over there, Jewish people. They called them *śmieciarz*. *Śmieci* is garbage; they were called the garbage man. They were the ones who were collect—who were taking the things that were confiscated off us and put on wagons to be put away. They were very, very rich people. The garbage men—economically speaking, they were Brahmins; this was the upper caste of the Jewish people, because they stole some of the things. And to be a *śmieciarz* at the gate—oh, it was just like being an aide to the president of the United States. It was just fabulous. ...

The other people who were also very rich were the owners of the funeral homes, because they were for a time—for a long time, people who died had to be collected and go to the cemetery. Cemetery was outside of the ghetto. And this owner of this—one owner of the house, Pinkert Funeral Home, they had the permission to go out of the ghetto to bury people in the Jewish cemetery. Now, you can imagine if one had a permission to go with the hearse, or sometimes with just with anything with corpses, things could be smuggled under that, too. So he was thought to be millionaire. Of course the money didn’t mean didn’t mean anything, but he was very rich. So they knew that Pinkert was—his name was Pinkert; he was the most rich—the richest person in ghetto, plus the *śmieciarz*, the garbage men.<sup>44</sup>

#### **Dr. Edward Reicher on smuggling:**

The smugglers were the best off. Everything possible was smuggled in from the Polish side. Every day, truckloads of food arrived. Cows, geese, chickens, flour sugar, chocolate, wine, vodka—even flowers, since there were several florists in our midst. Even though smuggling was punishable by death, business thrived. It was the small-scale, retail smugglers who got caught. The big fish, the capitalists, could buy their way out. It was from them that the German, Polish, and Jewish police all took a cut. Everything functioned smoothly ...<sup>45</sup>

#### **Bernard Goldstein, a Bund leader, on forced labour, inequities, vast wealth, bribery, and smuggling in the ghetto:**

Under the chairmanship of Cherniakov [Adam Czerniakow], the Judenrat [Jewish Council] undertook such new duties as the registration of Jewish citizens, issuance of birth certificates, issuance of business licenses and permits, collection of government taxes from Jews, issuance of and collection of payment for ration

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<sup>44</sup> Rawicki, Jerry (Interviewee) and Ellis, Carolyn (Interviewer), “Jerry Rawicki oral history interview by Carolyn Ellis, July 1, 2009,” *Digital Collection – Holocaust & Genocide Studies Center Oral Histories*, University of South Florida, Paper 155, 25–28. Internet: <[http://scholarcommons.usf.edu/hgstud\\_oh/155](http://scholarcommons.usf.edu/hgstud_oh/155)>.

<sup>45</sup> Edward Reicher, *Country of Ash: A Jewish Doctor in Poland, 1939–1945* (New York: Bellevue Literary Press, 2013), 67.

cards, registration of workers, and so forth. From the registrants, Jews were drafted for forced, unpaid labor for various periods.

The organization of forced labor was the first major action of the Judenrat and undertaken on its own initiative. In an attempt to mitigate the terror aroused by the press-gangs which seized people at random in the streets, the Judenrat offered to provide labor battalions at specified times and in specified numbers for the use of the German authorities. The Germans agreed to this plan. Although the Judenrat set it up in what appeared to be a fair way, serving subpoenas on the list of registered Jewish citizens in rotation, the operation very quickly became corrupt.

All of the functions were sources of revenue for the Judenrat. The most important was the labor registration, for rich Jews paid fees running into thousands of zlotys [złoty] to be freed from forced labor. The Judenrat collected such fees in great quantity, and sent poor men to the working battalions in place of the wealthy.

From the outset the Nazi racial policy was a hardship for all Jews, but the wealthy found they could soften its effects. They were able not only to buy themselves out of forced labor but to get black-market food and to buy other favors, while the poor in some cases could not even afford to pay the few zlotys required to register for a ration card. Some families even found it necessary to sell the ration cards of some members in advance so that they might have money to buy cards and food for the others.<sup>46</sup>

For great sums of money, particularly for gold and foreign exchange, it was possible to “buy” from the Nazis entire buildings, or blocks of buildings, which had been singled out for “Aryanizing.” At this time there appeared on the scene “fixers” who had connections with various levels of the Nazi apparatus. The Judenrat—not officially, of course—used them to rescue some Jewish districts. ...

Through fixers, parts of Złota [Złota], Chmelnia [Chmielna], Shenna [Sienna], and Sosnova [Sosnowa] Streets were ransomed. The inhabitants of the threatened houses gave up everything to pay the Nazis. The bribes ran into millions. Blackmail flourished, feeding on the desperation of the unnerved Jews. The field was wide open for the high officials of the Gestapo and for the civilian branch of the military authority headed by Herr Fischer. ... they filled their pockets with Jewish “war booty.”<sup>47</sup>

During the early months, Polish workers used to enter the ghetto to work in shops and factories in the ghetto area. They helped to smuggle in a small amount of food. Later all Christian workers were removed from the ghetto, and this food channel was shut off.

In the beginning the penalty for smuggling food into the ghetto was a fine of as high as a thousand zlotys, or from three to six months in jail. Later it was increased to ten thousand zlotys and one year. Then an order was issued making death the penalty for leaving the ghetto without authorization. Since most forms of smuggling required periodic visits to the Aryan side, this was a severe blow. Many were shot for smuggling food.

But hunger broke through all barriers. Smuggling was organized spontaneously on a large scale. It was carried on through various channels and by the most artful means. Along with the daring and cunning and the extraordinary improvisations operated one simple and powerful mechanism—bribery—which reached to the police of all varieties and the gendarmes of all ranks. So important were the operations of the smugglers that prices in the illegal ghetto market rose or fell depending on the results of the day’s smuggling.

The streetcars played an important part. During the early days, Aryan as well as Jewish trolleys went through the ghetto. ... The conductors and motormen would bring sacks of food with them and at previously arranged points hand them over to confederates in the ghetto. From the Jewish cars, this was done at the stopping points. From the others, which made no stops in the ghetto, the conductors or

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<sup>46</sup> Bernard Goldstein, *The Stars Bear Witness* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1950), 35–36.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 62.

motormen would simply throw the sacks out of the cars to waiting smugglers. The guards and police were well paid and saw nothing.

A great volume of illicit commerce went through the janitors of Gentile buildings on streets bordering the ghetto. ...

Near the huge DOK building, the former Polish military headquarters at Pzheyazd [Przejazd] and Novolipya [Nowolipie] Streets, food was passed through holes gouged in the ghetto walls. The openings would be repaired, broken through again, and so on. The Jewish smugglers continued to throw ropes with hooks over the ghetto walls and haul in bundles of food. ...

The casualties in the battle for food were heavy, particularly heavy among the young. To scramble up a ghetto wall for a small package from the other side was much easier for children. As the youngsters worked, small groups of adults—expectant beneficiaries of a child’s agility—would stand about, watching and waiting. ...

Children used to steal over to the Aryan side by digging holes under the walls or by hiding near the ghetto gates and sneaking through when the guard momentarily turned his back. Then they would make their way to an apartment, cautiously and timidly knock on the door, and with eloquent eyes would beg for food. Occasionally [actually, quite often—or else they wouldn’t have engaged in this practice so often and in such large numbers—*M.P.*] they would get a crust of bread or a few potatoes. With their hard-earned treasure they would crawl back through breaks or chinks in the ghetto barrier. ...

The large-scale, well-organized, gang-operated smuggling went on with the help of bribery. At the Transferstelle, for example, where the food allotment was delivered to the ghetto, the officials were heavily bribed to allow more than the allotted number of truckloads to enter. Here both German and Jewish officials lined their pockets. Secret warehouses received the smuggled goods. Because it was not obtainable on ration cards, meat had to be smuggled differently. Specially constructed mobile ramps were set against the walls on both sides to smuggle over live cows and oxen. Milk was ingeniously smuggled in on Kozla [Koźla] Street. From the window of a building on Franciskanska [Franciszkańska] Street which overlooked the ghetto (half the street was outside the ghetto) a sheet metal pipe was lowered, and milk was poured across the racial boundary.

Even death was made to serve life. Four undertaking establishments operating little hand carts tried constantly to keep with the death rate. The cars plied back and forth all day to and from the Jewish cemetery on Okopova [Okopowa] Street outside the ghetto. Often the coffins would come back packed with food, transferred to the smuggler-undertakers through a Christian cemetery which bordered the Jewish.

Each branch of the smuggling operation developed its own technicians and specialists who constantly devised new methods and opened new channels as the old were shut off. They were a queer conglomeration. The big operators were for the most part former merchants or factory owners in the food industry—flour dealers, bakers, slaughterhouse operators. Around the great, the little fish would swarm—draymen and porters who had lost their professions, strong-arm men and thieves, the familiar petty crooks and underworld characters.

Smuggled grain was usually ground on primitive little hand mills, but there were also illegal flour mills operated by electric power. ... The illicit operators feared not only the Germans but also Jewish extortionists who were constantly on the lookout for such a rich source of blackmail.

The entire population of the ghetto had a very real interest in the smuggling, especially of food, textiles, leather, and other necessities. In addition, there was a lively illegal trade in foreign exchange and jewelry.

The most important bourse for trade in foreign currencies was the new Court building, situated athwart the boundary of the ghetto. The Gentiles would enter through Biala [Biała] or Ogrodova Streets on their side, the Jews from Leshno [Leszno] on the ghetto side. Here, on “neutral” soil, they carried on a brisk trade in

various currencies, stocks and bonds, diamonds and other precious stones. The court clerks, Polish lawyers, and others who had obvious reason for passing in and out of the building, acted regularly as intermediaries for important Gentile principals.

In the ghetto, Jewish artisans were active in fabricating various gold ornaments for the Germans. They were a handy source of cheap but highly skilled labor. In most cases, Germans or other wealthy Gentiles would contract for this work through trustworthy Poles, many of whom would take great risks to carry on this business. Some would become Jews for a day or two, sneaking into the ghetto with Stars of David on their arms—the business was worth while.<sup>48</sup>

Suddenly there was a movement in the crowd. Someone shouted, “Catch him!” A barefoot, ragged boy, his legs blackened with dirt, splashed through the mud, tripped over a corpse, fell. In his hand was a small loaf of bread, gripped tightly with all his strength. The owner of the bread pounced on him and tried to tear the treasure out of his hands. ...

These young food-snatchers were a special category of criminal. Their hunger gave them the desperation and strength to break the holy law of ownership over a piece of bread. They were savagely beaten by the people they robbed and by the police, but extirpating the snatchers was no more possible than extirpating the hunger.<sup>49</sup>

The children—the orphaned or abandoned half-starved waifs who roamed barefoot through the ghetto streets, their tattered clothing revealing ugly running sores—the children were our most heartbreaking problem.

Although the death rate among the homeless vagabonds was fantastically high, their number seemed to grow constantly. There were child-beggars at every step.<sup>50</sup>

*The German-sponsored “Gazeta Żydowska” reported on crime in the ghetto. For example, in the winter of 1941 the police chronicle carried stories of street robbers robbing children of their warm overcoats.<sup>51</sup>*

#### **Eugene Bergman, a resident of the Warsaw ghetto, on street crime:**

One time when I happened to be on a sidewalk fronting Tłomackie [Tłomackie] Square I saw a young man crossing the square. Suddenly, a pack of boys in their low teens surrounded him. They began to pummel him until he kneeled and fell in slow motion. They then stomped on his body. This happened in broad daylight on a crowded t, yet the passersby averted their eyes and gave it a wide berth, with no one trying to help the victim. The strange thing was that, although this young man’s height was some six feet and these boys were at most only half as tall, he did not defend himself and meekly lay down without moving on the pavement. ... The urchins went through his pockets and seized his wallet, watch, and some other things and then scattered. The young man remained lying for a while as if it were the most common thing in the world, except that his legs wobbled a little and he looked a bit disoriented. ...

Of the passersby who witnessed this incident not one came forward to protect the victim. What made it particularly surreal was that no one had bothered to stop either. They just kept walking as if the whole thing were totally ordinary. ...

Then there was the episode with the snatcher. ... As I was moving along with the crowd and passing a deli store, open only to the fortunate few who could afford its prices, a woman carrying a small package stepped out of it. What happened next took place in a flash. A thing young man, about seventeen, who lurked outside the store, lunged at her and grabbed that package. In seconds, while falling on the pavement, he tore the wrapping off and greedily stuffed the contents, some smoked fish, into his mouth.

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 75–79.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 80–81.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 82.

<sup>51</sup> Elżbieta Szczepańska-Lange, “Sobotnie poranki w Feminie,” *Gazeta Wyborcza*, September 7–8, 2002.

As he lay prone, the shocked passersby kept kicking his prostate body. When those preteens on Tlomackie Square attacked and robbed the tall young man, the passersby made no move to help him. This time it was different, because theft of food was such an outrageous crime in the ghetto. One man even tried to grab what was left of that food in the snatcher's fist but the boy was faster and crammed its remaining contents into his mouth, chomping greedily. The robbed woman kept lamenting and cursing.<sup>52</sup>

**Chaim Kaplan, chronicler of the Warsaw ghetto, on corruption and extortion by the Jewish Council and Jewish police:**

The *Judenrat* has conducted a program of taxation which has no parallel anywhere in the world. Out of every zloty [złoty] you spend on household expenses, you "contribute" about forty per cent, through fraud, for the benefit of the *Judenrat*. ...

There is no end to the tales of its mischief and abominations. ...

Once an entire delegation from the *Judenrat* entered my apartment (of three rooms and a kitchen) to requisition one of the rooms for a family of refugees. ... while we were still arguing, the refugee signaled that he wanted a word with me, and in private he bared his soul. ... This whole matter cost him money. If I will reimburse him for his expenses, he will backtrack and inform the delegation that he will forgo this apartment.

When I heard his proposal my eyes lit up, But I bargained with him. The refugee demanded 100 zloty; I offered 20. In the end he agreed to accept 20. Right away the delegation found an excuse to make light of the whole affair. They drafted a protocol that the apartment was full and their requisition nullified. Later on I found out that I need not have been so afraid. This is the way the delegation acts with all of its creatures. They hadn't come to confiscate, but rather to receive 20 zloty. The "refugee" was hired for the occasion.<sup>53</sup>

Sometimes the greedy Nazis conspire with some worthless Jew. They share one pocket; both lie in wait for the loot of innocents and for their blood; both fill their houses with the wealth they have stolen and robbed. But robbing doesn't last forever, and when the partnership breaks up it is not convenient for the thieving Nazi to have a Jew know his secrets. The remedy for this is to get rid of him. ...

Thus Perlmutter, the president of the *Judenrat* of Mława [Mława], was killed by his German overseer, whose hand had never left his while both of them looted and robbed and grew rich.<sup>54</sup>

**Aron Einhorn, journalist and member of the Jewish Social Self-Help:**

... we have reached the moral bottom.

There has never been so much stealing and robbery among Jews as now. You can't trust a Jewish craftsman with any task or repair, because there is no certainty that you will receive the item that you have entrusted to him back again. Cruelty is visible at every step on the streets. One passes with indifference pictures and scenes that in other places would shock you. One steps on human corpses with the coldest indifference. ...

The Jewish autonomy in the ghetto is a chapter unto itself. It was called into being in order to deepen our moral fall even more. The community organization is nothing but a tool to oppress the Jewish population. And that is how it understands its role. No one in his dreams could have imagined the kind of corruption that we are now seeing among the Jews.

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<sup>52</sup> Eugene Bergman, *Survival Artist: A Memoir of the Holocaust* (Jefferson, North Carolina and London: McFarland, 2009), 64–65.

<sup>53</sup> Abraham I. Katsh, ed., *Scroll of Agony: The Warsaw Diary of Chaim A. Kaplan* (New York: Macmillan; London: Collier-Macmillan, 1965), 277–78.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 279.

Take for example the Jewish police. Our youth signed up for the police in order to live off corruption, and only a small portion went there to get out of forced labour. ...

For over a year and a half all prayer houses and synagogues were closed, and the Jews did not feel it all that much. Religious life has collapsed, which is a great misfortune. ... Unfortunately, we lack religious authorities who could awaken in the masses spiritual values and faith.<sup>55</sup>

**David Landau, a member of the Jewish Military Union (ŻZW), on robbery and extortion:**

One of the plagues in the ghetto were the street youths who snatched parcels from passers-by. These 'snatchers' had a sixth sense for parcels of food, soap and money. ... Most of these snatchers knew us as the 'voluntary givers'. If they saw us coming they would offer us their protection for part of the way, warning others of their kind that we belonged to those who should not be disturbed, the voluntary givers. When I bought provisions for us I often gave something to these street youths ...<sup>56</sup>

Children were also prominent among the beggars on the streets. Many were genuine orphans, who stood or sat outside buildings, apathetic with the hunger that precedes death, their thin arms stretched out for alms, as indifferent to their fate as the passers-by who ignored them. Others were the 'bread winners' for their parents, who hid in the nearest house and waited while their child begged. Sometimes their waiting was simply to protect the child from gangs of other children, who would terrorise the beggar and take away whatever donation they had received. These donations were small and infrequent, given only by those who were not yet stone-hearted and could still afford to give.<sup>57</sup>

There were some 'lucky' children, those who had belonged to a youth movement before the war or joined the illegal youth organizations that were active in the ghetto. They were able to enjoy at least the taste of a happy childhood, some singing together, the guidance of older people who fought for them to remain young, some additional soup or even just an extra carrot. There were also rich parents who could afford to give their children a better life. But most of them belonged to the new elite, the dubious aristocracy of the ghetto police, the higher echelons of the Eldest of the Jews and, above all, to our shame, the Jewish informers who co-operated with the Gestapo.<sup>58</sup>

The Gestapo was busy transporting Jews from around Poland to Warsaw, for a fee. From the tightly sealed ghetto of Łódź, some two thousand Jews arrived at the Warsaw ghetto, having each paid the Gestapo and their Jewish middle-men between three and five hundred marks. It was a lucrative business for the Germans. For the price of an open army truck used for one and a half hours they collected between ten and fifteen thousand marks.<sup>59</sup>

*The involvement of the Polish "Blue" police who guarded the periphery of the ghetto in smuggling activities became blatant even to casual observers. A Pole reported the following occurrence on Ceglana Street in June 1941, which took place in full view of the "Blue" police: "Entire groups of people bring to the Jews all sorts of packages and containers with bottles of milk and loaves of bread, and even larger quantities of smuggled goods in sacks. A bicycle-drawn carriage with six sacks of buckwheat or flour, accompanied by four men, approached the fence [surrounding the ghetto] .... The men placed a table against the fence and handed the sacks to the Jews and then slowly drove away ... A few minutes later another carriage arrived carrying five sacks of goods, which followed the same path to the Jews over the fence ... And these Poles who supply food to the Jews can be found in a café on Żelazna Street no. 55 drinking vodka in the company of Polish policemen."*<sup>60</sup> An American Methodist missionary who lived in occupied Warsaw wrote that, in September 1941, "driven by hunger, small Jewish children went begging

<sup>55</sup> Testimony of Aron Einhorn in Marta Markowska, ed., *Archiwum Ringelbluma: Dzień po dniu Zagłady* (Warsaw: Ośrodek Karta, Dom Spotkań z Historią, and Żydowski Instytut Historyczny, 2008), 107–8.

<sup>56</sup> David J. Landau, alias Dudek, Janek and Jan, *Caged: A Story of Jewish Resistance* (Sydney: Macmillan, 2000), 86.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 96.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 97.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 87.

<sup>60</sup> Cited in Alina Skibińska and Robert Szuchta, eds., *Wybór źródeł do nauczania o zagładzie Żydów na okupowanych ziemiach polskich* (Warsaw: Stowarzyszenie Centrum Badań nad Zagładą Żydów, 2010), 142.

daily outside the ghetto for anything they could get. One day I was passing the ruins of Graniczna Street, when ahead of me appeared a group of Jewish children, each carrying a small sack of garnered booty. I watched them sneak towards a gap in the incomplete ghetto wall. Before it stood a Polish policeman; behind it, on the inside, a Jewish one. Simultaneously, the two walked away, and in a flash most of the children had disappeared through the gap into the ghetto. The policemen returned. The few little ones who were still outside receded waiting for the next opportunity. A man who had stopped beside me said, 'This goes on night and day. The policemen do what they can.'"<sup>61</sup> Given that leading Holocaust historians have argued that the most effective form of resistance for Jews in ghettos was food smuggling,<sup>62</sup> the widespread participation of Poles in illegal trade with Jews, when that activity was punishable by death, is no less commendable than the Danish boatmen's transporting of Jews to Sweden for substantial payment. The Germans were not pleased with the attitude of the Polish police. On August 25, 1941, the Schupo commander for the Warsaw District, Colonel Alfred Jarke, rebuked the Polish police for remaining "passive and inactive" when the German police resorted to shooting at Jews to maintain order. Jarke threatened the Polish police with punishment "with all the means" at his disposal if they did not initiate action before the German police did.<sup>63</sup>

### **Charles G. Roland on smuggling:**

Smuggled food preserved life in the ghetto for many months longer than the Jews could have existed on the official ration alone. The leaders of the *Judenrat* understood perfectly well how dependent the ghetto was on this illegal and clandestine source. Adam Czerniakow estimated that 80 percent of the food entering the ghetto was smuggled in, and Dr. Milejkowski stated unequivocally that "smuggling food from the Aryan part of Warsaw curtailed the prevalence of hunger, its spread, its tempo, and its irreversibility."

Nor was the existence of smuggling any secret to the Germans. The guards at the gates observed it daily, sometimes only confiscating the food but, all too often, jailing or killing the smuggler. ...

Smuggling was carried out at two levels. There were the amateur smugglers, working alone or in small groups, and there were the professionals, bringing in bulk quantities of supplies and protecting themselves by bribing German, Polish, and Jewish gate guards, as well as higher German officials.

Among the amateurs, children were perhaps the most effective. Memoirs of the ghetto abound with stories of these children, often the sole support of their parents, who went into Aryan Warsaw day after day, **begging** for food and **bringing home** to their families a few potatoes, some kasha, or a loaf of bread. Some risked traveling through the gates, counting on their small size and the supposed German weakness for children to protect them. This might work for days or weeks, but often enough they would creep home bruised and battered, their treasures taken away from them. And many died at the gates, shot by a German...guard whose antisemitism made Jewish children unlovable.

Another route for individual smugglers was the wall. Though it was 10 feet high and topped by broken glass, it was not impregnable. In places it was lower, or the glass had been crushed and flattened, or enough bricks had been removed in some out-of-the-way corner so that a small gap existed—the smallness being another reason for the preeminence of children in this dangerous trade. ...

Christian Poles also participated actively in this work. For much of the life of the ghetto, streetcars ran through it connecting the adjacent non-Jewish sections. These streetcars could be used only by the Poles and did not stop in the ghetto, but some enterprising Poles bribed the conductors so that the cars slowed down at some point and the Poles leaped off, bearing sacks of food for sale at black market prices [most often through Jewish middlemen, who added an even larger mark-up for themselves].

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<sup>61</sup> Hania and Gaither Warfield, *Call Us to Witness: A Polish Chronicle* (New York and Chicago: Ziff-Davis Publishing Company, 1945), 321.

<sup>62</sup> Peter Hayes, *Why?: Explaining the Holocaust* (New York and London: Norton, 2017), 193.

<sup>63</sup> Barbara Engelking and Jacek Leociak, *Getto warszawskie: Przewodnik po nieistniejącym mieście* (Warsaw: IFiS PAN, 2001), 208–209; Gunnar S. Paulsson, *Secret City: The Hidden Jews of Warsaw, 1940–1945* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2002), 146.

Many Poles did try to help, at least to the extent of giving food to the Jewish beggar children who approached them. Kindly street sweepers were known to “sweep” objects such as parcels of food or clothing into the rain culverts, where the Jewish children could crawl in and retrieve them.

Other techniques for smuggling existed. One required a confederate inside the wall at an agreed-upon place and time; objects would be thrown over the wall, to be retrieved and quickly hidden. ....

The Jewish cemetery on Okopowa Street was a particularly favored site for smuggling. Hearses entered the cemetery bearing their accustomed burdens but might return later with bread and butter. When the deportations began, the smuggling reversed its direction, and many Jews were able to slip into Warsaw and, in some cases, to safety over the cemetery walls.

These efforts, valuable as they were to a few, could not have made a major difference to the lives of the Jews as a whole. For this, the professionals deserve the chief credit. And their efforts were prodigious, though at least as self-serving [likely much more so!] as they were altruistic [rarely the case]. The potential for profit was immense, though [occasionally] paralleled by the risk. Ringelblum noted in his diary in September 1941 that the month before, the price of bread in gentile Warsaw was higher than it was in the ghetto, reflecting the fact that so much bread had been smuggled into the ghetto in August that supplies outside were grossly deficient.<sup>64</sup>

*Smuggling food into the ghetto was largely in the hands and control of the Jews themselves. At least several thousands Jews ventured outside the ghetto to engage in smuggling. Polish suppliers did not as a rule gouge Jews, even though food shortages were also felt outside the ghetto, especially in cities, and food prices rose dramatically. Jewish sources acknowledge that the majority of Poles who engaged in dealings with the ghetto were honest and reliable.<sup>65</sup> Smuggling took on such massive proportions (it is estimated that around 90 percent of the food supply was brought in illegally<sup>66</sup>) that until mid-1942, at the time of the great deportation, the prices of staples such as bread, butter, flour, sugar and butter were on average only five to ten percent higher in the ghetto than on the “Aryan” side despite all the attendant risks and problems associated with that activity.<sup>67</sup> Meat cost the most because animals had to be brought in alive, to conform to kosher butchering laws. (This was accomplished by placing mobile ramps on either side of the wall, and cattle were walked over the wall. Blue police, Jewish police and German gendarmes were paid to look the other way. Carriages bringing in lawful supplies would enter the ghetto pulled by two horses, and leave with one.) Besides, mark-ups were not attributable only to Christian smugglers, whose profit margin was generally rather modest. The bulk of the smuggling—and profiteering—was done by thousands of Jews involved in smuggling and trading outside the ghetto.<sup>68</sup> Jewish blackmarketeers usually sold smuggled food*

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<sup>64</sup> Charles G. Roland, *Courage Under Siege: Starvation, Disease, and Death in the Warsaw Ghetto* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 110–12.

<sup>65</sup> Andrzej Żbikowski, ed., *Polacy i Żydzi pod okupacją niemiecką 1939–1945: Studia i materiały* (Warsaw: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej–Komisja Ścigania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu, 2006), 560.

<sup>66</sup> According to Adam Czerniaków, the ratio of legal to illegal food supplies was 1:40; according to Emanuel Ringelblum, 80 to 97.5 percent of the food supplies were smuggled into the ghetto. See Barbara Engelking and Jacek Leociak, *Getto warszawskie: Przewodnik po nieistniejącym mieście* (Warsaw: IFiS PAN, 2001), 450–51; Barbara Engelking and Jacek Leociak, *The Warsaw Ghetto: A Guide to the Perished City* (New Haven, Connecticut, and London: Yale University Press, 2009), 458. As a result, according to Jewish Council calculations, the average ghetto resident consumed 1,125 daily calories in early 1941 instead of the allotted 184. Middle-class Jews had an average intake of 1,400 calories a day, while the poorest subsisted on only 785. See Gunnar S. Paulsson, *Secret City: The Hidden Jews of Warsaw, 1940–1945* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2002), 68.

<sup>67</sup> Adam Rutkowski, “O agenturze gestapowskiej w getcie warszawskim,” *Biuletyn Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego*, no. 19–20 (1956): 46; Tatiana Berenstein, “Ceny produktów żywnościowych w Warszawie i w getcie warszawskim w latach okupacji hitlerowskiej,” *Biuletyn Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego*, no. 70 (1969): 18.

<sup>68</sup> For some examples of Jewish smugglers see: Michel Borwicz, *Vies interdites* (Tournai, Belgium: Casterman, 1969), 30, 75; Henryk Makower, *Pamiętnik z getta warszawskiego: Październik 1940–styczeń 1943* (Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1987), 40; Eugenia Szajn Lewin, *W getcie warszawskim: Lipiec 1942–kwiecień 1943* (Poznań: a5, 1989), 50; Rhoda G. Lewin, ed., *Witnesses to the Holocaust: An Oral History* (Boston: Twayne, 1990), 153; Barbara Stanisławczyk, *Czterdzieści twardych* (Warsaw: ABC, 1997), 17; David J. Landau, alias Dudek, Janek and Jan, *Caged: A Story of Jewish Resistance* (Sydney: Macmillan, 2000), 58–59; Stefan Ernest, *O wojnie wielkich*

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*Niemiec z Żydami w Warszawie, 1939–1943* (Warsaw: Czytelnik, 2003), 83–85; Israel Gutman and Sara Bender, eds., *The Encyclopedia of the Righteous Among the Nations*, volumes 4 & 5: *Poland*, Part 1 & 2 (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2004), 401, 406; Severin Gabriel, *In the Ruins of Warsaw Streets* (Jerusalem and New York: Gefen, 2005), 41; Marta Markowska, ed., *Archiwum Ringelbluma: Dzień po dniu Zagłady* (Warsaw: Ośrodek Karta, Dom Spotkań z Historią, and Żydowski Instytut Historyczny, 2008), 112–13 (a report on the smuggling of vast quantities of milk and buckwheat into the ghetto and the enormous profits that were made by Jews); Eugene Bergman, *Survival Artist: A Memoir of the Holocaust* (Jefferson, North Carolina and London: McFarland, 2009), 57–58 (Pesakh Bergman, who established a residence outside the ghetto, smuggled food into the ghetto every weekend for almost three years); Frank Blaichman, *Rather Die Fighting: A Memoir of World War II* (New York: Arcade, 2009), 13–14 (the author brought in food by bicycle from a small town near Lublin); Barbara Engelking and Jan Grabowski, “Żydów łamiących prawo należy karać śmiercią!”: “Przetępczość” Żydów w Warszawie 1939–1942 (Warsaw: Stowarzyszenie Centrum Badań nad Zagładą Żydów, 2010), 172, 180 (enormous mark-ups in transborder and long-distance smuggling); Anna Kołacińska-Gałazka, ed., *Dzieci Holocaustu mówią...*, vol. 5 (Warsaw: Stowarzyszenie “Dzieci Holocaustu” w Polsce, 2013), 28–31, 152; Arthur Ney, *W Hour* (Toronto: Azrieli Foundation, 2014), 49–55; Olga Orzeł, ed., *Dzieci żydowskie w czasach Zagłady: Wczesne świadectwa 1944–1948: Relacje dziecięce ze zbiorów Centralnej Żydowskiej Komisji Historycznej* (Warsaw: Żydowski Instytut Historyczny im. Emanuela Ringelbluma, 2014), 84 (a Jew teenager who formed a group with Polish boys), 128 (trade involving Jews who worked at workplaces outside the ghetto), 186 (Jewish teenager leaving the ghetto to bring back food for trade); Testimony of Marek Zajdenfeld, dated September 22, 1946, Archive of the Jewish Historical Institute (Warsaw), record group 301, number 1886; Testimony of Szlama Jakubowicz, Archive of the Jewish Historical Institute (Warsaw), record group 301, number 2427; Testimony of Samuel Kenigszajn, dated July 1947, Archive of the Jewish Historical Institute (Warsaw), record group 301, number 5008 (who smuggled with both Jews and Poles); Testimony of Hanka Borensztein, Archive of the Jewish Historical Institute (Warsaw), record group 301, number 5107 (extensive smuggling by a Jewish woman based outside the ghetto); Testimony of Halina Złotnik, Archive of the Jewish Historical Institute (Warsaw), record group 302, number 93; Testimony of Morris Tugman, December 10, 2002, Holocaust Memorial Center, Farmington Hills, Michigan, Internet: <<http://www.holocaustcenter.org/page.aspx?pid=751>>; Oral history interview with Henry Billys, Sophie Billys, and Millie Korman, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Collection, Accession number 1993.A.0087.57, RG number RG-50.091.00 (a Jewish woman living outside the ghetto sold food inside the ghetto for double what she paid outside the ghetto; the food included chocolate, a luxury item). Bernard Goldstein recalls: “In the ghetto [Jacob] had owned a large fleet of wagons in partnership with Matus [Kulash] under a contract for garbage removal. This had enabled him to carry on profitable smuggling on a broad scale.” See Bernard Goldstein, *The Stars Bear Witness* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1950), 269. David Efrati, a Jewish teenager, recalls his experiences: “I thought to myself then, that since I had the right looks, I’d be stealing to the Polish side and smuggling things. First my parents didn’t agree to this, but in the end they sewed for me a coat with a special lining, under which I could carry the goods. Thus I was going to the Hala Mirowska, a covered market near the church in Chłodna [Street]. There, I was buying potatoes, flour and other products, stuffing them under the lining and going back to the ghetto, as round as a barrel. ... I earned fantastic money at first: three or four hundred per cent on the purchase. And the Germans weren’t killing as yet; when they happened to catch me, they beat me up and spilled the food in the street. So for the time being I gorged on chocolate, went to the ghetto theatre and neither I nor the family lacked anything.” Later on, David teamed up with a Pole who continued to help him throughout the war: “Stasiek and I carried on smuggling on an ever larger scale. On the old trams, on both sides of the car, there were platforms with doors. The trams also passed through the ghetto, but very fast, under police surveillance, and there were no stops. So we paid off the Polish policemen (oiling his palm, as they say), and when the tram speeded through the ghetto, we threw out the sacks and I jumped off. Thus life was rolling on, and I had pots of money.” See Elżbieta Isakiewicz, *Harmonica: Jews Relate How Poles Saved Them from the Holocaust* (Warsaw: Polska Agencja Informacyjna, 2001), 218–20. Jack Klajman, a young boy born in 1931, recalled on the success of his operation: “After providing our parents with enough food for our families, we then offered the rest to ghetto Jews in exchange for valuables such as watches or jewellery. We took those items back over to the Aryan side and sold them for a good sum of money, which we used to get more food. This cycle went on ... We ended the day with a good profit.” Typically, this young boy developed a friendship with a Polish couple who helped and supported him, for example, by letting him stay with them when he couldn’t get back to the ghetto. See Jack Klajman with Ed Klajman, *Out of the Ghetto* (London and Portland, Oregon: Vallentine Mitchell, 2000), 18, 19. Another 16-year old smuggler “did so well that his family was able to live in an almost opulent style.” See Lenore J. Weitzman, “Masks for Survival: The Experiences of Jews Who Passed in Poland and Germany During the Holocaust,” in John K. Roth and Elisabeth Maxwell, eds., *Remembering for the Future: The Holocaust in an Age of Genocide* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire and New York: Palgrave, 2001), vol. 1, 598. Even Władysław Szpilman, who later worked outside the ghetto and smuggled food in for sale, recalled purchasing bread for 20 zlotys and selling it for 50 zlotys in the ghetto, and potatoes for 3 zlotys which he sold for 18 zlotys. See Władysław Szpilman, *Śmierć miasta* (Warsaw: Spółdzielnia Wydawnicza Wiedza, 1946), 119, as cited in Barbara Engelking and Jacek Leociak, *Getto warszawskie: Przewodnik po nieistniejącym mieście* (Warsaw: IFiS PAN, 2001), 472; *The Warsaw Ghetto: A Guide to the Perished City* (New Haven, Connecticut, and London: Yale University Press, 2009), 478. Women smugglers were also plentiful. Jewish women ventured outside the ghetto for food, and were often quite successful. As one Jew notes, “I tried my

and goods for several times what was paid for them outside the ghetto. Although much is written about the risk Jews faced from Poles when they ventured out of the ghetto, Simha Rotem (Ratajzer) recalled how his Slavic appearance put him at risk from fellow Jews when he tried to blend into a Jewish work group: “The other Jews would think I was a Polish smuggler, and threaten to denounce me to the police. I would have to recite a prayer in Hebrew to prove I was one of them.”<sup>69</sup> Emanuel Ringelblum noted in his journal that the Jewish owner of an apartment building on Kozia Street with a door in a wall bordering on the Aryan side, was making a fortune by charging 5 zloty to pass through.<sup>70</sup> Jews were also engaged in the black market outside the ghetto, some of them in the lucrative diamond and currency black markets in which fortunes could be made.<sup>71</sup> There were also German-Jewish smuggling rings operating in Warsaw.<sup>72</sup> Jews also purchased goods for profit from both fellow Jews and impoverished Poles, who had to sell their possessions in order to make ends meet. As Jewish witnesses recall:

... more and more people were selling their valuables, their possessions, even their clothes. The *Wolavka* [Wałówka], the used goods market [located outside the ghetto], was full of people and getting bigger every day. People from all classes, people who had never set foot there, one and all were selling their possessions—valuable sets of dishes, sets of silver, clothing, bed clothes, and even more modest objects—everything was being offered for sale. The Poles bought; Jewish merchants also bought cheaply from people who wanted to sell as quickly as possible, and then they sold the merchandise to the Poles at a profit. When a Pole came to the market expecting to sell something expensive at its worth, people would laugh at him. After standing in the market for an hour, which seemed like a year, the seller would set his price lower and lower; if he had come to sell something, that meant that he needed money, and quickly.<sup>73</sup>

I remember going to the nearby market to sell our silverware. I told a vendor that I wanted \$100 for it. The shrewd vendor offered me \$45. I then went from vendor to vendor, trying to sell it for more. When I could not and went back to the first vendor for the \$45 he had offered me, he now said that he would give me only \$25, and not a cent more. I was stuck—I had no choice.<sup>74</sup>

*While many of the Jews smugglers operated individually or in small groups, there were also well-organized gangs who dealt with high volumes and realized enormous profits. Their ringleaders became the ghetto’s new rich and powerful known for their opulent lifestyle.*<sup>75</sup> *There were also many Jewish middlemen,*

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hand at smuggling a few times. ... Apparently, I was rather successful. Friends and relatives used to come to us for a bowl of soup ... My mother, who looked like a Gentile, contributed the most to the household larder. She would go out to her acquaintances on the Aryan side and bring back various items of food.” See Simha Rotem (“Kazik”), *Memoirs of a Warsaw Ghetto Fighter: The Past Within Me* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1994), 12–13 Jewish women from towns outside Warsaw also travelled to Warsaw to engage in black market activity: “Many Jewish women ... smuggled food to Warsaw to sell, bringing back to Parczew all kinds of manufactured goods, especially linen, shoes, cloth and so on. That trading (smuggling, because officially it was forbidden by the Germans) was the only way left of making a living for these Jewish women who were now their families’ sole breadwinners.” See Benjamin Mandelkern, with Mark Czarnecki, *Escape from the Nazis* (Toronto: James Lorimer, 1988), 13. For additional examples of Jewish-Polish smuggling rings operating in Warsaw see Cesha Glazer, *Cesha’s Story* (Sydney: Sydney Jewish Museum, 2011), 140, and the testimony of Jadwiga Jagielska, Archive of the Jewish Historical Institute (Warsaw), record group 301, number 4445 (a Jewish-led network dealing in cigarettes that involved Polish and Jewish smugglers and the cooperation of Blue policemen). For additional examples of women who engaged in trading and smuggling, often travelling to the countryside for food, see Dalia Ofer and Lenore J. Weitzman, eds., *Women in the Holocaust* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1998), 155–56; Stella Zylbersztajn, *A gdyby to było Wasze dziecko?* (Łosice: Łosickie Stowarzyszenie Rozwoju Equus, 2005), 24–27.

<sup>69</sup> Jacob Sloan, ed., *The Journal of Emmanuel Ringelblum* (New York: Schocken, 1974), 127.

<sup>70</sup> Matthew Brzezinski, *Isaac’s Army: A Story of Courage and Survival in Nazi-Occupied Poland* (New York: Random House, 2012), 109. See also Simha Rotem (“Kazik”), *Memoirs of a Warsaw Ghetto Fighter: The Past Within Me* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1994), 17.

<sup>71</sup> Edward Reicher, *Country of Ash: A Jewish Doctor in Poland, 1939–1945* (New York: Bellevue Literary Press, 2013), 140.

<sup>72</sup> Testimony of Fanny Gothajner, Archive of the Jewish Historical Institute (Warsaw), record group 301, number 2011.

<sup>73</sup> Dov Freiberg, *To Survive Sobibor* (Jerusalem and New York: Gefen, 2007), 102–103.

<sup>74</sup> Abraham Alpert, *A Spark of Life* ([United States]: n.p., 1981), 22.

<sup>75</sup> Professional blackmarketeers, and Jews involved in other activities, made fantastic fortunes at the expense of their co-religionists: “there was an abundance of luxuries that were barely obtainable even on the ‘Aryan’ side. The restaurants and cafés were crowded with a newly-rich class, grown fat on smuggling deals, bribes and blood-money

denouncers, and policemen who had to be bribed handsomely in order for the business of smuggling to operate smoothly. Jewish porters, who kept a careful watch on the entrances to the ghetto, exacted a “toll” from Poles who entered the ghetto.<sup>76</sup> The sewers were also penetrated by smugglers, especially professional ones. Smuggling continued after the Great Deportation in the summer of 1942, when it “became the main source of income for many people, and it was carefully organized.”<sup>77</sup> Similarly, the trade in documents also flourished in the ghetto. According to one witness, “Prices of those very documents were considerably higher in the ghetto because of the large number of Jewish go-betweens who profited on this business.”<sup>78</sup> The risk to smugglers, both Jewish and Polish, should not be taken for granted. Chaim Kaplan wrote the following entries in his diary:

[July 1, 1942]: Tonight (dawn 7/1) was also a night of slaughter for us. At first such nights were something out of the ordinary; but when they went on and on, we stopped counting them. But there was something new in tonight’s tragedy. Among the corpses there were only ten Jews; four of them were Aryans, Poles born and bred, who were in partnership with Jews in matters of smuggling. ... when they were caught in the crime of smuggling, they were equated with their lower-race partners and were buried with the rest of the dead of Israel in the Jewish cemetery.

The war against smuggling is at its peak. ... Although most of the victims of the nights are smugglers, the smuggling never ceases. Number 30 Nowolipki Street was turned into a slaughter house last night, when five or six people were killed, among them the wife of the janitor. The whole courtyard is tracked with blood. This took place in the middle of the night. Twelve hours later, a car brought smuggled goods into that same courtyard, a load worth tens of thousands of zloty [złoty]. The roof is in flames and the clock strikes on! ...

The importance that the Nazis attach to the war against smuggling can be proved by the fact that for capital punishment they have made the races equal. An Aryan who is caught smuggling is no killed at the scene of the crime; they bring him into the ghetto and kill him there.<sup>79</sup>

[July 18, 1942]: There are daily instances of Polish youths being taken into the ghetto in broad daylight in a military car, and shot to death in a public place before the eyes of thousands of passerbys. One of these occurred in Orla Street the day before yesterday. Who was the victim? He was an Aryan, of that there is no doubt. The reason for his death cannot be ascertained, but we can be sure that he was one of the smugglers. The business of smuggling brings the Aryans and the Jews together.<sup>80</sup>

*Many Jewish smugglers who were caught smuggling and buying food outside the ghetto were imprisoned in the ghetto’s Gęsia Street jail. An Oyneg Shabes [i.e., the secret ghetto archive] report described the*

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and collaboration with the Germans—an ugly excretion that had risen to the surface and batted while others bled. This class was made up of Judenrat officials, policemen and other functionaries, vicious and corrupt, openly in league with the German authorities and profiting from the vicarious deals carried out in partnership with them. Theatres and other places of entertainment sprang up in the ghetto; in fact the word passed round in the ‘Ayan’ side that anyone who wants to enjoy himself should cross over to the ghetto—an exaggeration, of course, but nevertheless containing some grain of truth.” See Chaim Lazar Litai, *Muranowska 7: The Warsaw Ghetto Rising* (Tel Aviv: Massada-P.E.C. Press, 1966), 34. David Landau describes how Jewish policemen took hefty sums for helping to smuggle Jews out of the ghetto and the Gestapo took astronomical bribes to smuggle “important” Jews out of Poland, such as the Hassidic Rabbi of Gur (Góra Kalwaria). See David J. Landau, alias Dudek, Janek and Jan, *Caged: A Story of Jewish Resistance* (Sydney: Macmillan, 2000), 106–107, 130–31. For pay-offs to Jewish denouncers see Barbara Engelking and Jacek Leociak, *Getto warszawskie: Przewodnik po nieistniejącym mieście*, (Warsaw: IFiS PAN, 2001), 449; *The Warsaw Ghetto: A Guide to the Perished City* (New Haven, Connecticut, and London: Yale University Press, 2009), 456.

<sup>76</sup> Władysław Bartoszewski and Zofia Lewinówna, eds., *Ten jest z ojczyzny mojej: Polacy z pomocą Żydom 1939–1945*, Second expanded edition (Kraków: Znak, 1969), 501.

<sup>77</sup> Joanna Wiszniewicz, *And Yet I Still Have Dreams: A Story of a Certain Loneliness* (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 2004), 53.

<sup>78</sup> Ruth Altbeker Cyprys, *A Jump For Life: A Survivor’s Journal from Nazi-Occupied Poland* (New York: Continuum, 1997), 114.

<sup>79</sup> Abraham I. Katsh, ed., *Scroll of Agony: The Warsaw Diary of Chaim A. Kaplan* (New York: Macmillan; London: Collier-Macmillan, 1965), 304.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 316.

*prisoners' reactions when asked about their experiences with the Poles they encountered outside the ghetto:*

Asked about the attitude of Poles, they utter spontaneous exclamations of gratitude and friendliness. This—from everyone in the crowd, such as, “They gave me to eat!”—“I could even spend a night!”—“Yes, the Poles are a kind people”—etc. One feels that the Jewish proletariat will not soon forget kindness encountered.<sup>81</sup>

*There are other disturbing phenomena in the ghetto that lie beyond the scope of this study, such as the fate of assimilated Jews and Jewish converts to Christianity.<sup>82</sup> One that should be noted, however, is the*

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<sup>81</sup> Samuel D. Kassow, *Who Will Write Our History? Emanuel Ringelblum, the Warsaw Ghetto, and the Oyneg Shabes Archive* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2007), 374

<sup>82</sup> Assimilationists and converts were universally loathed. In his chronicle of the Warsaw ghetto, Emanuel Ringelblum notes that Jewish nationalists were delighted that the Jews were finally separated from the Poles, albeit in ghettos, seeing in this the beginnings of a separate Jewish state on Polish territory. Hatred towards Polish Christians grew in the ghetto because it was widely believed that they were responsible for the economic restrictions that befell the Jews. Moreover, many Jews embarked on a battle against the use of the Polish language in the ghetto, especially in Jewish agencies and education, and were opposed to Jewish converts occupying positions of authority. See Emanuel Ringelblum, *Kronika getta warszawskiego: Wrzesień 1939–styczeń 1943* (Warsaw: Czytelnik, 1983), 118, 214–15, 531ff. Jewish memoirists confirm that some Jewish nationalists did not permit the use of the Polish language in their homes. See Antoni Marianowicz, *Życie surowo wzbrownione* (Warsaw: Czytelnik, 1995), 46. That author also attests to the fact that converts were generally detested in the Warsaw ghetto (p. 47), and to the pro-German attitudes of some Jews in the ghetto (pp. 66–67, 190). Another Jew, a child at the time, recalls being ostracized by Yiddish-speaking children because she did not know that language. Such children were disparaged as “Poles” and “converts” and were even pelted with rocks. See Małgorzata-Maria Acher, *Niewłaściwa twarz: Wspomnienia ocalalej z warszawskiego getta* (Częstochowa: Święty Paweł, 2001), 48. A Jewish woman who turned to a bearded Jew in Polish, since she did not speak Yiddish, which was a German-based language (!), recalled his hostile reaction: “I think he understood me, but he got very angry that I did not speak Yiddish, so he spat at me, “*Du solst starben zwischem goyim!*” I did not understand exactly what he said, so I went back to my apartment and repeated it to my mother. “What does ‘*Du solst starben zwischem goyim*’ mean?” She said, “Who cursed you like this?” She explained to me that he had said, “May you die amongst the *goyim!*” He said this because if you do not speak Yiddish, you were an outcast.” See Zosia Goldberg, as told to Hilton Obenzinger, *Running Through Fire: How I Survived the Holocaust* (San Francisco: Mercury House 2004), 39. Rabbi Huberband lamented that he a group of Hassids in the ghetto who were “as drunk as goys.” See Shimon Huberband, *Kiddush Hashem: Jewish Religious and Cultural Life in Poland During the Holocaust* (Hoboken, New Jersey: Ktav Publishing House, and Yeshiva University Press, 1987), 131.

According to one source, there were fewer than 1,600 Christian converts in the Warsaw ghetto. According to other sources there may have been as many as 2,000 or even 5,000 converts. See Yisrael Gutman, *The Jews of Warsaw, 1939–1943: Ghetto, Underground, Revolt* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1982), 59; Barbara Engelking and Jacek Leociak, *Getto warszawskie: Przewodnik po nieistniejącym mieście* (Warsaw: IFiS PAN, 2001), 620; *The Warsaw Ghetto: A Guide to the Perished City* (New Haven, Connecticut, and London: Yale University Press, 2009), 652; Peter F. Dembowski, *Christians in the Warsaw Ghetto: An Epitaph for the Unremembered* (Notre Dame Indiana: Notre Dame University, 2005), 66–68. As many accounts confirm, the general sentiment toward Jewish converts to Christianity living inside the ghetto was one of hostility and derision. Malicious jokes about converts circulated within the ghetto. See Lusja Przybyszewicz, *All That Was* ([Brookvale, New South Wales]: n.p., 2001), Chapter 13. Rabbi Chaim Aron Kaplan expressed tremendous rancor toward converts, attributing to them the vilest of motives and rejoicing in their misfortune: “I shall, however, have revenge on our ‘converts’. I will laugh aloud at the sight of their tragedy. ... Conversion brought them but small deliverance. ... This is the first time in my life that a feeling of vengeance has given me pleasure.” See Abraham I. Katsh, ed., *Scroll of Agony: The Warsaw Diary of Chaim A. Kaplan* (New York: Macmillan; London: Collier-Macmillan, 1965), 78–79, 250. Even Jewish atheists openly declared their disdain of converts. See Grace Caporino and Diane Isaacs, “Testimonies from the ‘Aryan’ Side: ‘Jewish Catholics’ in the Warsaw Ghetto,” in John K. Roth and Elisabeth Maxwell, *Remembering for the Future: The Holocaust in an Age of Genocide* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire and New York: Palgrave, 2001), vol. 1, 194. When Ludwik Hirszfeld, a renowned specialist and convert, started to give lectures for medical practitioners in the Warsaw ghetto, he was boycotted by Jewish nationalists. See Dembowski, *Christians in the Warsaw Ghetto*, 122. The Orthodox members of the Jewish council attempted to deny Christian Jews the rights and help given to Jews in the ghetto. See Dembowski, *Christians in the Warsaw Ghetto*, 70. The converted Jews were detested for everything: their betrayal of Judaism, their use of the Polish language, their education and social and economic status, their alleged air of superiority and anti-Semitism, and even the assistance they received from Caritas, a Catholic relief organization. Soon malicious, but false, stories spread that they had taken over the senior positions in the ghetto administration and controlled the Jewish police force. See Havi Ben-Sasson, “Christians in the Ghetto: All Saints’ Church, Birth of the

*enormous and shocking disparity in wealth that was plainly visible the ghetto and resulted in large numbers of deaths through starvation and malnutrition.*<sup>83</sup> *Some Jews, particularly smugglers and those*

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Holy Virgin Mary Church, and the Jews of the Warsaw Ghetto,” in *Yad Vashem Studies*, vol. 31 (2003): 153–73. This was so even though, according to one prominent researcher, many if not most of the converts were opportunistic and continued to consider themselves Jews, few of them sustained any connection with their new religion, and “virtually all continued to donate to Jewish religious charities.” See Joseph Marcus, *Social and Political History of the Jews in Poland, 1919–1939* (Berlin, New York, Amsterdam: Mouton, 1983), 78. See also Dembowski, *Christians in the Warsaw Ghetto*, 93; Marian Małowist, “Assimilationists and Neophytes at the Time of War-Operations and in the Closed Jewish Ghetto,” in Joseph Kermish, ed., *To Live With Honor and Die With Honor!...: Selected Documents from the Warsaw Ghetto Underground Archives “O.S.” [“Oneg Shabbath”]* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1986), 619–34. (The memoir of Halina Gorcewicz, whose father ostensibly converted to Catholicism when he married her mother, illustrates that even Jews who had fully assimilated linguistically and culturally maintained a strong, tribal-like attachment to fellow Jews—perhaps embodying the lingering notion of the oneness of “the chosen people” they had inherited from Judaism. Gorcewicz’s memoir, See *Why, Oh God, Why?*, is posted online at <<http://www.books-reborn.org/klinger/why/Why.html>>.) The blatant hostility and humiliations faced by Christian converts in the Warsaw ghetto are documented by Alceo Valcini, the Warsaw correspondent of the Milan *Corriere della Sera*, whose diary was translated into Polish as *Golgota Warszawy, 1939–1945* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1973), 235–36: Converts were repeatedly harassed when they left church after mass and, on occasion, even the German police had to intervene to protect them from enraged Orthodox Jews. Converts who did not figure in community lists were denied food rations and material assistance. Valcini’s portrayal is fully supported by a report filed by a Jewish Gestapo informer: Crowds of Jews would gather in front of the Christian churches on Sundays and Christian holy days to take in the spectacle of converts attending mass. At Easter in 1942, the crowd of onlookers was so large at the church of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary on Leszno Street that the *Ordnungsdienst* (Jewish police) stationed a special squad there to maintain order and protect the converts. Cited in Christopher R. Browning and Israel Gutman, “The Reports of a Jewish ‘Informer’ in the Warsaw Ghetto—Selected Documents,” *Yad Vashem Studies*, vol. 17 (1986): 263. Hostilities also occurred during the Sunday mass at the church of All Saints, where a large mob of Hasids gathered with sticks to beat up the converted Jews as they left church. The Jewish order police was called in to disperse the Hasidic pogromists. This incident is described in the memoirs of Stanisław Gajewski, which are found in the Yad Vashem archives. See Barbara Engelking and Jacek Leociak, *Getto warszawskie: Przewodnik po nieistniejącym mieście* (Warsaw: IFiS PAN, 2001), 622; *The Warsaw Ghetto: A Guide to the Perished City* (New Haven, Connecticut, and London: Yale University Press, 2009), 654; Dembowski, *Christians in the Warsaw Ghetto*, 85. A Jewish woman, who was not a convert, describes in her memoirs how Jewish scum in the Warsaw ghetto harassed Jewish Christians who attended church services. See Ruth Altbeker Cyprys, *A Jump For Life: A Survivor’s Journal from Nazi-Occupied Poland* (New York: Continuum, 1997), 32. A Pole who entered the ghetto recalled the caustic remarks made by onlookers about Jews who attended religious services at All Saints’ Church. See Waclaw Sledzinski, *Governor Frank’s Dark Harvest* (Newtown, Montgomeryshire, Mid-Wales: Montgomerys, 1946), 120. This is confirmed by another Jew who observed Jewish youths loitering in the street as converts walked to church services and calling out mockingly “Good Yontiff!” (Good holiday!). See Gary A. Keins, *A Journey Through the Valley of Perdition* ([United States]: n.p., 1985), 86.

The fate of the Gypsies, who were rounded up and sent to Jewish ghettos, was even harsher than that of the Jews since they had no communal welfare organizations to assist them. The Gypsies were beggars and were forced to wear distinctive armbands. They were universally regarded as intruders and loathsome thieves. Chaim Kaplan, for example, complained in his diary that “they occupy themselves by stealing from the Jews.” See Abraham I. Katsh, ed., *Scroll of Agony: The Warsaw Diary of Chaim A. Kaplan* (New York: Macmillan; London: Collier-Macmillan, 1965), 294–95. Gypsies apprehended in “Aryan” Warsaw were taken to the prison on Gęsia Street where they were guarded by functionaries of the Jewish police. See Institute of National Memory, Warsaw Regional Commission for the Investigation of Crimes against the Polish Nation, file no. S 5/20/Zn. There is no record of Jews displaying solidarity or offering assistance to the Gypsies. The Gypsies in the Warsaw ghetto were rounded up and deported to the death camps scarcely noticed. Characteristically, sociologist Nechama Tec blames the downtrodden and powerless Gypsies for any conflict they had with the Jews. See Nechama Tec, “Resistance in Eastern Europe,” in Walter Laqueur, ed., *The Holocaust Encyclopedia* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2001), 544. It is also worth noting that Jews did not rush to assist endangered Poles either when such opportunities arose. When Poles were being seized in the streets of Warsaw in the early part of the war, and avoided arrest by disguising themselves as Jews, a “brisk trade” developed for Stars of David: “The price of armbands soared, as the demand increased”—they were not given out or lent for free. See Philip Friedman, *Their Brothers’ Keepers* (New York: Holocaust Library, 1978), 37; Tadeusz Piotrowski, *Poland’s Holocaust: Ethnic Strife, Collaboration with Occupying Forces, and Genocide in the Second Republic, 1918–1947* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland, 1998), 116; Gary A. Keins, *A Journey Through the Valley of Perdition* ([United States]: n.p., 1985), 62.

<sup>83</sup> The Judenrat estimated at the end of 1941 that the average ghetto resident consumed 1,125 calories daily, enough to sustain life; but there were great inequalities. Officials of the Judenrat received 1,665 calories a day, shopkeepers 1,429, unemployed members of the middle class 1,395, workers in German workshops 1,229, refugees (that is, Jews who had

connected to the ghetto authorities, especially if they received concessions for various undertakings, but also many doctors, drivers, porters, butchers and bakers, became temporarily rich.<sup>84</sup> Many Jews who had been rich before the war and managed to hold on to some of their assets remained better off than most. The first group seems to have done little or nothing to provide assistance to those in need. The second group did less than they could have done to alleviate the hunger and poverty that afflicted all too many ghetto residents. According to ghetto chroniclers such as Henryk Bryskier, greed and corruption were the main obstacles to sharing the wealth equitably among the ghetto poor, and the indifference of many to the suffering of their neighbours played an important role in the unfolding tragedy.<sup>85</sup> In fact, the vast majority of the approximately 60,000 Jews who died in the Warsaw ghetto in 1940 and 1941, were not Warsaw Jews but outsiders—Jews who had been resettled from outlying towns or had sought refuge in Warsaw.<sup>86</sup> In his memoirs *Scroll of Agony*, Chaim Kaplan noted that widespread tax evasion by the well-off residents of the ghetto seriously exacerbated starvation among the ghetto poor.<sup>87</sup> The manufacture and sale of bread was a thoroughly corrupt enterprise, with rampant ingredient substitutions.<sup>88</sup> Given the abundance of wealth in the ghetto and the massive amount of smuggling that took place, which far surpassed the levels in other ghettos, there was no objective reason for the extent of the starvation that did occur in the Warsaw ghetto, when one bears in mind that starvation was virtually unheard of in most ghettos in occupied Poland.

### **Mordechai Lensky, a physician in the Warsaw ghetto:**

Life seemed to have stabilized in the ghetto at this time, and new patterns set in.

The middle class seemed confident that Warsaw Jews were in no danger of physical annihilation. They believed that the Nazi regime would make do with starving the Jews in the ghetto, through material and moral pressure.

The middle class did not know hunger then, and for this reason was certain that it could withstand the horrors of war and the suffering inside the ghetto. True 100,000 Jews starved slowly to death, but the slow death of the masses concerned neither their minds nor hearts, and they simply sighed and nodded in acknowledgement.<sup>89</sup>

### **Timothy Snyder, American historian:**

For the most part, however, the Jews dying in Warsaw were not Warsaw Jews. In the Warsaw district, as elsewhere in the General Government, the Germans drove Jews from smaller settlements into the larger ghettos [sic]. Jews from beyond Warsaw were usually poorer to begin with, and lost what they had as they were deported. They were sent to Warsaw with little time to prepare, and often unable to carry what they had. These Jews from the Warsaw district became the vulnerable ghetto underclass, prone to hunger and disease. Of the perhaps sixty thousand Jews who died in the Warsaw ghetto in 1940 and 1941, the vast majority were resettlers and refugees. It was they who suffered most from harsh German policies, such as

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been forcibly moved into the Warsaw ghetto, and who lived in shelters provided by the Judenrat) only 805, and street beggars 785. The last two groups, together with orphans, made up the bulk of the ghetto's mortality. See Gunnar S. Paulsson, *Secret City: The Hidden Jews of Warsaw, 1940–1945* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2002), 68.

<sup>84</sup> Henryk Bryskier, *Żydzi pod swastyką czyli getto w Warszawie w XX wieku* (Warsaw: Aspra-Jr, 2006), 85.

<sup>85</sup> Henryk Bryskier, *Żydzi pod swastyką czyli getto w Warszawie w XX wieku* (Warsaw: Aspra-Jr, 2006), 86–87.

<sup>86</sup> Andrzej Żbikowski, “Żydowscy przesiedleńcy z dystryktu warszawskiego w getcie warszawskim, 1939–1942,” in Barbara Engelking, Jacek Leociak, and Dariusz Libionka, eds., *Prowincja noc: Życie i zagłada Żydów w dystrykcie warszawskim* (Warsaw: IFiS PAN, 2007), 224–28.

<sup>87</sup> Abraham I. Katsh, ed., *Scroll of Agony: The Warsaw Diary of Chaim A. Kaplan* (New York: Macmillan; London: Collier-Macmillan, 1965), 262.

<sup>88</sup> Barbara Engelking and Jacek Leociak, *Getto warszawskie: Przewodnik po nieistniejącym mieście*, Second revised and expanded edition (Warsaw: Stowarzyszenie Centrum Badań nad Zagładą Żydów, 2013), 459–61.

<sup>89</sup> Mordechai Lensky, *A Physician Inside the Warsaw Ghetto* (New York and Jerusalem: Yad Vashem and The Holocaust Survivors' Memoirs Project, 2009), 46–47.

the decision to deny any food to the ghetto for the entire month of December 1940. Their death was often a hungry one, after long suffering and moral degradation.<sup>90</sup>

### **Kazimierz Iranek-Osmecki, Polish historian, on conditions in the ghetto:**

The Germans divided the ghettos into three categories...

The little ghetto, bounded by Wielka, Sienna, Żelazna, Leszno and Chłodna streets, contained the intelligentsia and the wealthy families. In spite of enclosure within walls, there were still ways in which economic and recreational desires could be fulfilled. Considerable fortunes were made by working in conjunction with the Germans while dances, shows, concerts, cafés, and restaurants were well supplied with foreign delicacies and drinks were available for businessmen.

Life in the big ghetto, lying north of the little one as far as Stawki, had a different pattern. Here lived the poor, fighting an unremitting struggle for a bite of bread, an onion, and a place to sleep. ... This part of the ghetto was a jungle of oppressed humanity. Hunger and illness were everywhere. The average death rate in the ghetto was six thousand per month. ...

Still another pattern of life existed in the industrial part of the ghetto where the workers, together with their families, were put into barracks. The Germans, utilizing the Jews as cheap labor in the existing industrial installations, ran large-scale workshops making brushes, furs, and other products. Compared with the inhabitants of the big ghetto, the workers in the so-called shops were an elite. Their wages were from three to five zlotys per day, in addition to which they were given a plate of soup at midday, coffee twice a day, and a slice of bread. And most important, they did not have to fear roundups. Their "employment cards" protected them temporarily. The unofficial payment, or bribe, to get into the "shops," was usually one thousand zlotys.

There were marked differences in the three areas in the way they were built up. The little ghetto was located in a typically residential quarter, consisting of apartment houses from three to six stories high, with apartments of three to six rooms. These houses were modern and well equipped. The streets on which they were situated were wide and shops were not numerous. These were mostly food stores, bakeries, drugstores, and the like. On the other hand, there were many cafés and restaurants, and also cinemas. ...

The food supply for the little and the big ghettos was, to a large extent, smuggled in. Each of the ghettos, however, organized its smuggling differently. The system in the little ghetto is described by Władysław Szpilman [in his memoirs *The Death of a City*, published in Polish in 1946<sup>91</sup>]:

"Smuggling on a regular scale was in the hands of big businessmen, the likes of Kohn and Heller.<sup>92</sup> It was easier and completely safe. The bribed sentries simply went blind at certain hours and then, under their very noses and with their silent connivance, long columns of lorries would enter the gate of the ghetto, laden with food, expensive drinks, exquisite delicacies, tobacco brought direct from Greece, or French cosmetics and fancy goods.

"Every day I admired the display of these smuggled goods in Nowoczesna. This was the meeting place of the rich; dripping with gold and glittering with diamonds; this was where painted harlots, at tables

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<sup>90</sup> Timothy Snyder, *Bloodlands: Europe Between Hitler and Stalin* (New York: Basic Books, 2010), 146.

<sup>91</sup> A significantly revised version of Szpilman's memoirs was published in English translation as *The Pianist* (1999) and in Polish as *Pianista* (2000). Historians Barbara Engelking and Jacek Leociak have noted so many significant and unexplained changes from the 1946 edition that they chose to rely exclusively on the former. See Barbara Engelking and Jacek Leociak, *Getto warszawskie: Przewodnik po nieistniejącym mieście* (Warsaw: IFiS PAN, 2001), 19; *The Warsaw Ghetto: A Guide to the Perished City* (New Haven, Connecticut, and London: Yale University Press, 2009), xxii. See also Bohdan Urbankowski, "Holokaust, mity i jeszcze parę groszy," *Nasza Polska*, September 25, 2002.

<sup>92</sup> Two such large-scale Jewish gangs, one of them with underworld connections, are described in Jack Eisner, *The Survivor* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1980), 55, 69. There were also mixed Polish-Jewish criminal gangs that would party late in luxurious clubs like the Café Sztuka on Leszno Street, in the ghetto. See Martin Gray (with Max Gallo), *For Those I Loved* (Boston and Toronto: Little, Brown and Company, 1972), 72.

bedecked with delicacies, seduced the wartime nouveaux riches, to the accompaniment of popping champagne corks.” ...

On July 18, 1942, on the eve of the great “cleaning out” [deportation] of the ghetto (signs of which were already discernible), a concert was held in the café Pod Fontanną in Leszno. ...

“The garden of the café was filled to the brim. About four hundred persons from the social elite and pseudo-elite had come. Hardly anybody remembered the last mass roundup deportation, and if there was excitement among those present it was due to quite a different reason; the elegant ladies of the plutocracy and the dashing nouveaux riches were exceedingly curious whether Mrs. L. will today acknowledge the greetings of Mrs. K.”<sup>93</sup>

*Władysław Szpilman described the contrast between the existence of those well-to-do and the poor in the ghetto. Large crowds of beggars would converge on restaurants and cafés only to be chased away by porters with sticks, as at the Nowoczesna. Wealthy passengers riding in rickshaws also drove away beggars with their canes.<sup>94</sup> Gestapo agents and informants became the plague of the ghetto, and confusion reigned when the Germans started to liquidate them when they were no longer useful.<sup>95</sup>*

### **Raul Hilberg, U.S. Holocaust historian, on conditions in the ghetto:**

The Warsaw Ghetto ... had a formidable upper class composed of bureaucrats, traders, and speculators. These privileged groups were large enough to be conspicuous. They frequented nightclubs, ate in expensive restaurants, and rode in man-drawn rikshas. ...

Gradually, however, the army emerged as the most important purchaser of ghetto products, crowding out other buyers. The ghettos thus became an integral part of the war economy, and this development was to cause considerable difficulty during the deportations. The Germans came to depend on the output of the Jewish labor force.<sup>96</sup>

More common, however, was the effort to seek salvation through labor. ... The zeal with which the Jews applied themselves to the German war effort accentuated the differences of interests industry and armament inspectors against the SS and Police, but the Germans were resolving their conflicts to the detriment of the Jews. ...

In short, the Jewish councils were assisting the Germans with their good qualities as well as their bad, and the very best accomplishments of a Jewish bureaucracy were ultimately appropriated by the Germans for the all-consuming destruction process. ...

The Jews did not always have to be deceived, they were capable of deceiving themselves. ...

The Jewish repressive mechanism was largely self-administered, and it could operate automatically, without any misleading statements or promises by German functionaries or their non-German auxiliaries.<sup>97</sup>

### **Bernard Goldstein, a Bund leader, on conditions in the ghetto:**

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<sup>93</sup> Kazimierz Iranek-Osmecki, *He Who Saves One Life* (New York: Crown Publishers, 1971), 39–41.

<sup>94</sup> Władysław Szpilman, *Śmierć miasta* (Warszawa: Spółdzielnia Wydawnicza Wiedza, 1946), 71–72, as cited in Barbara Engelking and Jacek Leociak, *Getto warszawskie: Przewodnik po nieistniejącym mieście* (Warsaw: IFiS PAN, 2001), 564; *The Warsaw Ghetto: A Guide to the Perished City* (New Haven, Connecticut, and London: Yale University Press, 2009), 583.

<sup>95</sup> Henryk Bryskier, *Żydzi pod swastyką czyli getto w Warszawie w XX wieku* (Warsaw: Aspra-Jr, 2006), 151–52.

<sup>96</sup> Raul Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews*, Third edition (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2003), volume 1, 262–63.

<sup>97</sup> Raul Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews*, Third edition (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2003), volume 3, 1109, 1112–15.

But a social differentiation arose in the ghetto, setting apart substantial groups who had the means even under those infernal conditions to lead a comparatively full, well-fed life and enjoy some kinds of pleasures. On the same streets where daily you could see scenes of horror, amid the swarms of tubercular children dying like flies, alongside the corpses waiting for the scavenger wagons, you would come upon stores full of fine foods, restaurants and cafés which served the most expensive dishes and drinks. At 2 Leshno [Leszno] Street, where the Gertner's restaurant had been, there was a café called Sztuka, complete with floor show. There was another at 13 Tlomatzka [Tłomackie] Street, once the Metropole Restaurant. These establishments were run in partnership with members of the Gestapo by outcast Jews, the most important of whom was the dancer Madame Machno. There were also the well-known Schultz Restaurant at Karmelitzka [Karmelicka] and Nowolipya [Nowolipie] Streets, A La Fourchette at 18 Leshno Street, Britannia at 20 Nowolipya Street.

The clientele of these places consisted principally of Jewish Gestapo agents, Jewish police officials, rich merchants who did business with the Germans, smugglers, dealers in foreign exchange, and similar kinds of people. The worst nest of drunkenness and vice was the Britannia. The curfew did not apply to the habitués of this establishment. They made merry all night. Feasting, drinking, and carousing went on to the rhythm of a jazz band. At dawn, when the revelers left, the streets were already strewn with naked paper-covered corpses. The drunkards paid little attention, tripping unsteadily over the obstacles in their path. Around the restaurants and cafés hovered human shadows, swollen from hunger, who trailed after the well-fed drunks, begging for scraps; they were usually angrily pushed aside for disturbing the mirage of luxury and well-being.

The Nazi made moving pictures of such festive orgies to show the "world" how well the Jews lived in the ghetto.<sup>98</sup>

**Dr. Edward Reicher recalled a sumptuous Sabbath feast he attended at the home of a Jewish barber who worked for a well-placed German official in the ghetto:**

Leon [Kac] had a very large apartment. ... The meal was exquisite—a feast such as we had not had for years: herring, sardines, hard-boiled eggs with mayonnaise, gefilte fish, consommé, chicken, vegetables, and a bottle of genuine Carmel, the wine from Palestine. The Sabbath candles shone in a silver candelabrum, a masterpiece of Venetian art. ... After dinner came coffee and a cake washed down with a good cognac. ...

The next day I returned to Leon and listened to his tale.

"Doctor, you're wondering how a poor barber came by such riches. ... I was appointed [Hermann] Höfle's 'court' barber. I was then given soldiers and a truck and told to find a proper salon. I amassed everything I needed from the most exclusive salons on Leszno Street: furniture, mirrors, instruments, and everything else. Then I set up my salon in number 103 Zelazna [Żelazna].

"You know yourself, as a physician, what happens when one works with people or takes care of them. At times one speaks of many things. I always chatted with my customers ... The officers wanted me to give them the addresses of rich Jews. I gave them those addresses, and will continue to do so. The Jews are doomed in any case; they will all be deported. The fact that I betray their financial status means only that their apartments are searched more thoroughly. Since they're going to be deported, I'm doing nothing wrong.

"Where they're going, no wealth or jewelry can help them. The officers only search the apartments once the owners are deported. They take the best things, and leave the rest for the Office of Estimates. But I can do exactly what the officers do. They do it for their own personal gain. And the officers have so much work that I do it not only for myself but also for them.

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<sup>98</sup> Bernard Goldstein, *The Stars Bear Witness* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1950), 91.

“Every day, I go out with the two Ukrainians assigned to me and load valuable things onto a rickshaw. The officers get wristwatches, gold cigarette cases, cuff links, and the pins studded with precious stones. Those are things they can easily hide and sell. They trust Leon the Jew. The rest I keep. ...” [Leon amassed an art collection, but was eventually deported to Treblinka with his family.]<sup>99</sup>

**Jacob Celemenski, a representative of the Bund labour movement living on the Aryan side, recalled conditions in the ghetto:**

The closed-off Warsaw ghetto became a world unto itself with a new stratum of rulers, Jewish police with their sergeants and captains, originating mainly from the wealthier classes or from the professional intelligentsia and bureaucrats. The chance to make money turned police departments into dreams for anyone who upheld to the principle of survival at any price, including, stepping over the bodies of dear ones. The Jewish police ran their own jail, further strengthening their new position.

A stratum of smugglers, grown rich at the expense of thousands of sick and impoverished Jews, was another successful new class. Not only did the police rule the ghetto, but also hunger. At every step, half-naked skeletons lay on the footpaths, begging for bread. Going down the street with a packet of food was not safe. In most corners lurked hungry children who pounced on the food, then disappeared into holes.

Systematic smuggling developed between the ghetto and the Aryan world outside. It was done in various ways. German and Polish police were bribed. Poles dropped products off trams, which were still running through the ghetto at that time. Food parcels were hurled over walls at selected sites.

Smuggling generated new magnates. The gap between rich and poor was a slap in the face of the poor, a distinct difference was maintained even in death. Rich Jews had proper funerals, while the poor were laid out on the footpaths and covered with old newspapers to wait for the morning’s black wagon, to pick them up.

In the same ghetto, some people led an extravagant life in cabarets. A friend, Leyke Sztolcman, secretary of ZYTOS, told me, ‘If you want to know Jewish life in the Warsaw ghetto, you must see everything.’ She persuaded me to visit the site where the famous Gartner Restaurant used to be at 2 Leszno Street, where a cabaret had been installed. Electric lights were permitted only until a fixed hour in the ghetto. After that, it was only candlelight and kerosene lamps, so when we approached the nightclub, the street was dark.

Suddenly, my companion was warning me not to step on a corpse. I jumped. Underfoot lay a human form covered with newspapers.

Upstairs, in the same cabaret building that once housed the Jewish Actors’ Union, a refugee centre had been established. Upstairs, exile, downstairs, night-life. When I opened the cabaret door, a blinding light hit me. Big carbide lamps burned in every corner of the packed hall. Well-fed people, who sat at tables covered with white tablecloths, were eating chicken, duck, goose, carp and lobsters, which they washed down with wines and liquors. These people were being entertained by an orchestra on a stage in the centre of the hall. Next to the stage, actors and singers performed. ...

Michal Znicz, the well-known Jewish actor was on stage performing a comic routine that aroused much laughter. Later, Vera Gran came out to sing old Polish ditties and romantic songs. The crowd, densely packed at and around the tables, was composed of the new ghetto aristocracy: big-time smugglers and police officers mingled with business colleagues and Germans in civilian clothing who ran businesses with Jewish entrepreneurs. The dense ceiling contained the sounds of the tragedy being played out a few feet overhead. Here, it was eating, drinking and raucous laughter in a small, shameful corner of a city of pain, hunger and frustration.<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> Edward Reicher, *Country of Ash: A Jewish Doctor in Poland, 1939–1945* (New York: Bellevue Literary Press, 2013), 100, 105–6.

<sup>100</sup> Jacob Celemenski, *Elegy For My People: Memoirs of an Underground Courier of the Jewish Labor Bund in Nazi-Occupied Poland 1939–45* (Melbourne: The Jacob Celemenski Memorial Trust, 2000), 49–51.

I spent the year following the June 1941 disaster in the Warsaw ghetto like a caged animal, my only movement a change of hiding places. ... Once, during my stay [at 34 Nalewki Street], a young Jewish customer, a man, entered. The man wanted to know if I was [my sister] Chaye's husband ... Later we found out that the young man had previously been to the building superintendent asking for a Jacob Celemenski, he had been sent by Jewish Gestapo agents. Comrade Laib Szpichler ... added that a clandestine cell of five comrades had been assigned to liquidate him. The traitor soon met his fate through his own bosses, who shot him themselves, an end not unlike that of other Jewish informers.<sup>101</sup>

#### **Stanisław Różycki, a ghetto resident and diarist, on the ghetto high life:**

The ghetto cafés play a very significant role in the life [of the ghetto] ... illegal trade takes place, smugglers meet to discuss their business, intermediaries abound, one offers and looks for goods, there are rooms for lovers, also trade in human merchandise found refuge here, and prostitution is rampant ...

“L'Ours” [at 58 Leszno Street] is the largest, best furnished and most popular café. Although the place is huge, with several rooms, from 10 a.m. there is constant traffic and crowds ...

When one first enters inside indeed one has the impression that it is still “before the war.” Besides the armbands there are no signs of war, bondage or the ghetto. The faces are not all gaunt, it is quite the opposite: they are normal and well nourished. The clothing is entirely proper, if not elegant. The ladies are well-dressed, made up as before ... The gentlemen also have distinguished attire. ...

The clientele is mixed, mostly the well off, but from different groups. One can see owners of food stores, policemen, some doctors, and a lot of youth. ... It is difficult to know who speculates, takes bribes, steals, does business with the Germans, betrays his countrymen, but it is a certainty however that most of them engage in [such activities]. There are no sad, forlorn faces, and laughter often brightens the faces of the women and men, they accompany or hum popular prewar melodies played by the orchestra.

The “society” waitresses are very elegant, their necks and fingers bejewelled, dressed in silk ... they add charm and elegance that bewilders someone who walks in from the street who is not accustomed to such sights. This is a true oasis of luxury, comfort, sybaritism and care-free attitude among a morass of hunger, disease, bondage and black adversity. ...

There are a lot of restaurants where there are gastronomic orgies. Mayonnaises, fish, sardines, herring, chicken, turkeys, compotes, wine, fruit—such meals are their biggest attraction and that is why these locales earn the most [money]. Bakers, butchers, those with monopoly concessions, smugglers, policemen, community dignitaries, the prewar rich and nouveaux-riches, informers, Gestapo agents, speculators, black marketers and intermediaries—every day such people spend hundreds of zlotys ... for their meals in restaurants.<sup>102</sup>

#### **Ruth Altbeker Cyprys, a resident of the ghetto describes conditions in the ghetto before the great deportation in the summer of 1942:**

In this small area the social contrasts were increasingly striking. There were fashionable streets like, for instance, Sienna, Elektoralna, Orla and Leszno, inhabited by wealthy people, with cafés, pastry shops, revue theatres and cabarets. It may seem strange, but in this horrible, overcrowded ghetto there were restaurants in which the most sought-after delicacies could be obtained, cafés with bands and artistic reviews and dance floors. Certain people were well off, making a lot of money by trading in foreign currency and gold, while others made money from trading with the Germans and the Gentile quarter. Money was being spent by everyone, even by those who for years had scraped pennies to put them away for rainy days. We were people with no future, so why save up, why hide it and count? Who knew whether

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<sup>101</sup> Ibid., 106.

<sup>102</sup> Testimony of Stanisław Różycki in Marta Markowska, ed., *Archiwum Ringelbluma: Dzień po dniu Zagłady* (Warsaw: Ośrodek Karta, Dom Spotkań z Historią, and Żydowski Instytut Historyczny, 2008), 113–15.

the end would come soon? So rather spend and enjoy it and get the best. Extremes of luxury and poverty were to be seen. A smartly dressed woman walked alongside a man in rags. A restaurant in Leszno displayed a roasted goose and at its door a boy was starving. People leaving a theatre in Leszno passed a poor, emaciated child shivering from cold and begging in the doorway. ...

When someone died of exhaustion on the streets [of the ghetto], passers-by would cover the corpse with newspapers, lay some stones on it and life rolled on. Some laughed, others cried. Ghastly scenes lost the power to move us, to impress themselves upon us. Then the so-called ‘chapers’ (snatchers) appeared on the streets of the ghetto. A chaper was usually a strong and ragged beggar who assaulted people carrying a loaf of bread or a parcel containing food. The chaper took his victim unawares, snatching whatever he was carrying. The unfortunate victim would have no hope of chasing the beggar and recovering the loss, for the booty was usually consumed during his flight.<sup>103</sup>

**Halina Gorcewicz, a young resident of the ghetto, describes the high life and poverty in the ghetto, the festivities that continued during the great deportation of the summer of 1942, and the activities of the Jewish police and collaborators:**

An entertainment centre featuring famous artists opened at Nalewki [Street] and became the meeting place of wealthier people ... Always having money in their pockets, they want distractions from sad reality. The premises called “Sztuka” are the largest in the ghetto. They are managed by a number of families in partnership. Real, good quality black market coffee and caviar are to be had there, so that is where the richest “elite” gathers.

There are other black market places in the Ghetto. Among the largest is the building at No. 12, Rymarska St.—the so-called “Palac [Pałac] Melodia”. The night club “Casanova” [on Nowolipie Street] is another. There are many, many others. ...

It came to this in the ghetto that there were many houses occupied by the so-called “exceptionally poor”. The poorest of the poor lived in them. Death scythed through entire families there. There were such houses at 46, Miła [Miła] St., 51, Miła St., 21, Krochmalna St., 56, Zamenhofa St., 14, Ostrowska St. and 63 Pawia St. The last of these was occupied by 800 people, of whom more than half died. Poverty, hunger and cold, as well as the appalling hygienic conditions in those houses created monstrous conditions. Yet more and more people were crammed into the houses on Pawia St. although it was already hopelessly overcrowded by the influx of evicted people. ...

Because he was about to leave us—possibly for a long time—Tadeusz Frenkiel-Niwiński invited his family, the Frenkiels, myself, Kama, Jurek and our two boys to the most interesting and largest entertainment venue—“Sztuka” at Leszno—for a splendid evening which would remain in our memories for many years, perhaps a lifetime.

“Sztuka” was well known in the ghetto as the venue for the richest Jewish elite. High-class artists, singers, literary figures and many other personalities performed here. The venue itself was organised by a group of writers from the so-called “Living Daily”. One of its contributors was Władysław Szlengel, co-author of the pre-war “Needles”, well-known poet, writer and satirist—who was also the compere.

Distinguished Warsaw pianist, Władysław Szpilman, performed here in a duet with Adolf Goldfeder. The singer Andrzej Włast (born Waclaw Tajtelbaum) also appeared as a very popular humorist-writer opposite Pola Baunowna in a living performance of “The Living Daily”.

Among those appearing here was also the famous, talented Marja Ajzensztadt—popularly known as “the ghetto Nightingale”, as well as Wiera Gran, Fama, Ida, Asia, Złuta, Sonia and many others whose names I did not know.

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<sup>103</sup> Ruth Altbeker Cyprys, *A Jump For Life: A Survivor's Journal from Nazi-Occupied Poland* (New York: Continuum, 1997), 34–35.

This artistry was presented to refresh the spirit and relieve the atmosphere of threat to life and of death. And so Mr. Tadeusz invited us to this fine spectacle in the first days of August. My impressions were wonderful. ...

On the 5<sup>th</sup> of August all children from the orphanage called “Our Home” were led out to the Umschlagplatz. ...<sup>104</sup>

Two rabbis—Blumenfeld and Glicensztajn—are also collaborating with the Germans as censors at the post office in the P.O. Building at No. 5, Leszno Street.<sup>105</sup>

**Henryk Makower describes what went on at a well-known cabaret in the ghetto:**

In the cabaret “Pałac Melodia” [Melody Palace], the rich of the ghetto, speculators, bribers, scammers, those doing a roaring trade with Germans and for Germans, smugglers, enriched men from the Order Service [Jewish police] with their girlfriends played until the final days of their lives.<sup>106</sup>

**Emanuel Ringelblum also noted this phenomenon with shame:**

[February 19, 1941] There was a carnival at Melody Palace, with a beauty contest for the prettiest legs. The Ghetto is dancing. The Law and Order Service tried to break up the good time, but it turned out that one of the owners of the Melody Palace was one of Them, and she couldn't be touched.<sup>107</sup>

The “lifeless Hassids” on Nowolipie have put up a huge banner: “Jews, do not lose hope!” The Jews over there are dancing the way they did before the war.

There are more and more entertainment clubs opening up. ... On the other side [of the ghetto walls] Poles are saying: “He/she is enjoying her/himself like Polish Jews do in the ghetto.” The Ghetto is dancing. The number of nightclubs is multiplying endlessly. ... Jewish policemen fill the most elegant clubs [in the company of] beautiful women. They dictate the tone of all the parties. Women are impressed by their elegant, shimmering, tall officer's boots, as is quite evident.<sup>108</sup>

**Hanna Krall describes the experiences of Marek Edelman, a Jewish underground leader, both inside and outside the ghetto:**

Actually, I used to go to the Aryan side, legally, every day [Edelman said] ... I would walk like that every day [wearing his armband on the Aryan side] around 8 a.m. for a couple of years, and in the end nothing bad ever happened to me. Nobody ever stopped me, nobody called a policeman, no one even laughed. People only looked at me. Only looked at me ...<sup>109</sup>

... some people [including Edelman] were simply gathered up ... and transported down to Stawki Street towards the Umschlagplatz. The cart was being pulled by two horses; a Jewish policeman was sitting next to the driver and there was a German at the back ... ‘Mietek [Dab, a Jewish policeman, who had been assigned to work in the Ghetto police], I got caught,’ Marek yelled, and Mietek came running up close, told the policeman that he was his brother, and they let him off the cart. Then they went to Mietek's house. Mietek's father was there – short, thin, hungry. He looked at them with distaste: ‘Mietek managed to save

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<sup>104</sup> Halina Gorcewicz, “The Warsaw Ghetto—End of April, 1940,” “Ghetto, end of April, 1942,” and “Ghetto, end of August, 1942,” *Why, Oh God, Why?*, posted online at <<http://www.books-reborn.org/klinger/why/Why.html>>.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, “Ghetto, August, September, October, 1941.”

<sup>106</sup> Henryk Makower, *Pamiętnik z getta warszawskiego: Październik 1940–styczeń 1943* (Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1987), 196.

<sup>107</sup> Jacob Sloan, ed., *Notes from the Warsaw Ghetto: The Journal of Emmanuel Ringelblum* (New York, Toronto, and London: McGraw-Hill, 1958), 125.

<sup>108</sup> Emanuel Ringelblum, *Kronika getta warszawskiego: Wrzesień 1939–styczeń 1943* (Warsaw: Czytelnik, 1983), 233, 240, 254.

<sup>109</sup> Hanna Krall, *Shielding the Flame: An Intimate Conversation with Dr. Marek Edelman, the Last Surviving Leader of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1986), 41.

somebody from the cart again, right? And as usual, he didn't take a penny for it? He could have made thousands already. He might at least have been able to buy some rationed bread with the money.<sup>110</sup>

**Prominent Jews who were confined in the Warsaw ghetto speak out about the Jewish police, who were for the most part members of the Jewish elite and included many professionals, especially lawyers:**

The Jewish Auxiliary Police constituted the executive arm of the Judenrat [German-appointed Jewish Council]. Its members were all volunteers. ... Władysław Szpilman describes the police in this way:

“It was composed in the main of young people from the well-to-do classes. We had many acquaintances among them, hence our disgust was the greater when we saw people, until recently quite decent, who we treated as friends and whose hands we shook, becoming scoundrels. They became infected with the spirit of the Gestapo. I think that is how one ought to describe it. No sooner had they donned their uniforms, put on their police caps, and gripped their truncheons, that they degenerated. Their greatest ambition was to get on good terms with the Gestapo men—to serve them officiously, to disport themselves with them in the streets, to display their knowledge of German, and to outdo one another in the severity of the methods used towards the Jewish population, which did not prevent them from organizing a police jazz band, which was, by the way, excellent.”

Professor [Ludwik] Hirszfeld has a similar opinion of the Jewish Auxiliary Police:

“The auxiliaries were recruited mainly from the intelligentsia. They were monstrous. Bribery and blackmail were an everyday occurrence. In their justification it could be said that they drew no pay and that they had to live somehow. But at the crucial moment, when the entire nation was being murdered, there ought to have been someone to unite those young men and lead them to the defense, and not to the collaboration in the crime.”<sup>111</sup>

**Hersh Wasser, an active member of Left Po'alei Zion, a prominent member of the Warsaw leadership who was involved in public affairs of the ghetto and in social work, a participant in the Oneg Shabbat Archives, on the Jewish police:**

In his view, the Jewish police is primarily a-communal, riddled through with egoistic aims. Eighty per cent of them are rich men's sons trying to avoid labor camps; and only incidentally do they sport their uniforms and indulge their power instincts. Nobody, at least not the administration, pays the least thought to a civic approach towards the ravaged Jewish population. They while away the time in cafes and cabarets. Rotten to the core. Every platoon (50 people) keeps a kitty into which all pay their earnings, later shared out equally. Police “earnings” consist of various pretext-monies from petty Jewish smugglers (women who carry in bread from the other side, and like heroes), bribes levied for letting people in and out of home locked up because of infestation (tenants carted off to the steam-baths), and simple extortion. The German-Prussian mentality has also penetrated the Jewish Police: relentless beatings and floggings, endless insults against entirely innocent people. With no cause whatsoever, people are dragged off to the district commissariat and on the whole, conduct is arrogant and impudent. “Should this hell ever come to an end, I shall regard this period of my life as the most sorrowful and ignominious.”<sup>112</sup>

**Emanuel Ringelblum, chronicler of the Warsaw ghetto:**

In those days, during 1939, 1940, and part of 1941, people would be seized for forced labor almost every day—so the men hid out in the shops, under bench beds, in mezzanines, cubbies, cellars, garrets, etc. ... The Germans knew the location of such hideouts, thanks to their Jewish informers, who accompanied them and pointed out the hiding places. ... During the time when there were blockades, the resettlement period,

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<sup>110</sup> Ibid., 109.

<sup>111</sup> Kazimierz Iranek-Osmecki, *He Who Saves One Life* (New York: Crown Publishers, 1971), 36–38.

<sup>112</sup> “Daily Entries of Hersh Wasser (with introduction by Joseph Kermish),” *Yad Vashem Studies*, vol. XV (Jerusalem, 1983): 247–48.

hideouts assumed a new importance. People took special pains to build good hiding places, because they had become a matter of life and death. Old folks, children, and women hid out there. ... In 90 percent of the cases it was the Jewish police who uncovered the hideouts. First they found out where the hideouts were; then they passed the information along to the Ukrainians and Germans. Hundreds and thousands of people are on those scoundrels' conscience.<sup>113</sup>

#### **Dov Freiberg, a refugee from Łódź:**

One Sunday, I was surprised to see a German SS officer come into the courtyard, whistle and shout, "Max!" A window opened from that same apartment on the third floor. And a young man looked out—he was one of the children who used to play in the yard. He answered in German, "I'll be right down!" A few minutes later, the young man appeared in the yard and left with the German, the two of them laughing. Afterward, I found out that he was one of the most dangerous informers in the neighborhood and that everyone was afraid of him. In Lodz, I had heard stories of Jewish informers who worked for the Germans, but now, when I actually saw a young Jewish man collaborating with a German—it was said that he helped the Germans plan their robberies—I was in a state of shock. I couldn't understand how his family could let him cooperate with the Germans. Every time I saw him after that, I used to pray that he would be killed.<sup>114</sup>

Many things had changed in our courtyard, but one thing did not change—the children continued to play, and their voices could be heard all day; only the games changed and were suited to the times. Instead of playing "cops and robbers," the game changed to "the Gestapo and the Jews." In this game, the children would curse in German and shoot the Jews.<sup>115</sup>

*When American children used to play "cowboys and Indians," a game that was considered quite normal and acceptable until very recently—even though the "bad guys" were the Indians, and not the White settlers who took their land, and the point of the game was to kill off as many Indians as possible—no one, except perhaps the Indians, viewed it as an inherently racist game. On the other hand, Jewish authors like Jan T. Gross have branded Polish children as "anti-Semites" for playing "Germans and Jews," a game in which the object was to catch the Jew, even though Jewish children played similar games in the ghettos.<sup>116</sup>*

*In September 1940, Gazeta Żydowska [Jewish Gazette] reported that Jewish teenagers—emulating their German overlords—were parading around haughtily in the streets of Jewish districts in Warsaw, Kraków, Lublin and Rzeszów dressed in Tyrolean hats and smoking cigarettes.<sup>117</sup>*

#### **David Landau, a member of the Jewish Military Union (ŻZW), on the ghetto police and Jewish authorities:**

The newly created police gave the best apartments to their own families and relatives. The richer Jews quickly learned that only through bribing these men could they hope to obtain reasonable accommodation

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<sup>113</sup> Jacob Sloan, ed., *The Journal of Emmanuel Ringelblum* (New York: Schocken, 1974), 339–41.

<sup>114</sup> Dov Freiberg, *To Survive Sobibor* (Jerusalem and New York: Gefen, 2007), 93–94.

<sup>115</sup> Freiberg, *To Survive Sobibor*, 121.

<sup>116</sup> Aharon Zalkind (Eynat), born in 1934, recalled the following games he played in the Wilno ghetto: "We would play war and ghetto. There was a group of kids dressed in rags—these were the Jews. Another group held sticks in their hands: rifles. These were the Germans. At other times we played market. We, the boys, sold and bought cigarettes and candies. The girls traded in bread and rolls. The older boys played [Jewish] policemen and chased us around. There was also a 'Iapanke,' a roundup game. My little brother and I would hide, and two other boys would catch us and yell 'verfluchter Jude.'" See Shimon Redlich, *Life in Transit: Jews in Postwar Lodz, 1945–1950* (Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2010), 140. Abram Sztobel, born in 1928, recalled the following game Jewish children played in the village of Komarów near Zamość: "Back when I was still in *kheyder*, we used to play a game pretending to be Germans. We took the rabbi's shovels, sticks, and pokers and ran through the courtyards screaming in German and [pretending to be] chasing Jews: *Heraus! Verfluchter Hund! Jude!* [in German: "Get out! You damn dog! Jew!"] The neighbours would yell at us that we sounded crazy, we answered them in German." See Rachel Shtibel and Adam Shtibel, *The Violin / A Child's Testimony* (Toronto: Azrieli Foundation and Centre for Jewish Studies at York University, 2007), 175 n11.

<sup>117</sup> Janina Hera, "Ustalenie 'prawdy historycznej,'" *wSieci Historii*, no. 12 (2018), 66–68.

for their families. As a result, those who had joined the police force had discovered a gold mine. The salary quickly became a minor consideration, the position everything. ...

The police were basically trained by outside authorities who stood behind them. It was therefore important to be on the best terms with members of the force.

When the small rations were allocated to the ghetto, the people in the food department behaved in exactly the same way as the police. They looked after themselves first. Only a tiny portion of the small allocation reached the non-affiliated inhabitants of the ghetto. It was the same with those in charge of coal and winter fuel. The bread people gave extra rations to the coal people who supplied them with extra coal in turn. Those organisations that still believed in basic morality fought a losing battle.

During the first winter, death by starvation was rife. Night after night the streets filled with bodies to be collected in the morning. These bodies were naked, as their clothing had been sold for money to buy food. A department of the Jewish administration, the 'death collectors', were set up to collect the bodies and bury them in mass graves. Ghetto inhabitants learned to ignore this morbid phenomenon. Sometimes bodies were placed outside nightclubs in protest, but the underworld characters merely stepped over them as they left the clubs in the early hours of the morning. ...

Another request, for soap, had unfortunate consequences. The Warsaw Health Department, Jewish Section, came back with a strict order from the German command to establish 'hygiene units' to delouse 'the dirty Jewish population' ... The Jews were to be deloused in communal disinfecting baths. ...

During the spring and summer of 1941, these units became the new scourge of the ghetto. The 'disinfectors' would appear at a given street, seal off a building with police help, then go from apartment to apartment, forcing the people out and marching them under guard to the disinfecting bath. While the inhabitants were away, the disinfectors or the police, or both, would rob the dwellings while disinfecting them. The deloused inhabitants would come back from the 'bath' stinking of one kind of disinfectant, to apartments stinking of another and robbed of most of their belongings. The people feared the police and the disinfectors more than the plagues of typhus or typhoid themselves. And there was no authority to which they could turn. The targets of the disinfectors were mostly larger buildings, where there were many tenants and more to steal.<sup>118</sup>

### **Chaim Kaplan, chronicler of the Warsaw ghetto, on corruption in the ghetto:**

The entire ghetto is a huge dunghill. The Jewish janitors do as they please, and there is no one to reprimand them. There is no limit to their impudence. ...

However, if anyone thinks that only the janitors are corrupt, he is greatly mistaken. ... Everyone who holds a responsible position in the *Judenrat* is openly or secretly prepared to do your bidding—for a price. A perfect example of this is the health department established under the auspices of the *Judenrat* to maintain standards of sanitation, cleanliness, and health. In this instance you are not dealing with vulgar, dull-witted janitors, but with apparently highly intelligent, cultured doctors. Yet even here money purifies all filth and covers all iniquities. ...

Outwardly no one is more zealous than the officials of the health department in enforcing sanitation. ... After a few days the courtyard committee receives notification from the health department that due to below-standard conditions of sanitation in the following apartments, disinfection is necessary. What does disinfection entail? ... It entails the complete ruin of all your possessions with the sharp disinfectant they use. ...

In my courtyard the following incident once took place: A disinfection was announced and the disinfectors came with their paraphernalia, not to disinfect but to haggle over the size of the bribe. For a full hour they

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<sup>118</sup> David J. Landau, alias Dudek, Janek and Jan, *Caged: A Story of Jewish Resistance* (Sydney: Macmillan, 2000), 77–78.

stood on their price. During that time the bargaining would stop and start periodically, not secretly but publicly. In the presence of all the residents of the courtyard, the disinfectors negotiated their deal. Finally they agreed on 400 zloty [złoty]. Every apartment that was supposed to have been disinfected paid its share. Once the money was handed over the courtyard was out of danger, as far as sanitation was concerned, since the health department would receive a duly signed report that everything had been carried out according to plan.<sup>119</sup>

**Bernard Goldstein, a Bund leader and political activist in the ghetto, on Gestapo agents in the ghetto and the collaboration of the Jewish police:**

Soon after the organization of the Jewish police, a new figure appeared in the ghetto, a man named Ganzweich, a journalist and one-time Zionist, originally from Lodz [Łódź]. ...

After the Germans announced the formation of the ghetto, Ganzweich set up a bureau for distributing favors and concessions like jobs as house janitors or rent collectors. He seemed to have great influence with the authorities. People stood in line at his office, bribe in hand, hoping to enlist Ganzweich's aid to free an arrested member of the family, to get a better apartment, to procure a vital legal document. His carefully constructed network of connections and acquaintances kept his finger on every pulse of ghetto life, supplying him with information invaluable to the occupation authorities. ...

Everyone knew that this creature was working for the Germans; that it was for them he was organizing this supposed campaign against exorbitant prices and smuggling. Nevertheless people joined his group for the same reason that others had joined the Jewish police. His "anti-profiteering" police numbered several hundred. Because their headquarters were at 13 Leshno [Leszno] Street, they soon became known as the "Thirteeners." They wore the same uniform as the other Jewish police.

The Thirteeners spread fear throughout the ghetto. They conducted raids, descending on entire blocks of houses, supposedly hunting for smuggled goods, speculators, and black marketeers. Actually they were on the scent of political material, illegal literature, and active workers in the underground. They fulfilled the function of the Gestapo in the ghetto. In time, Ganzweich and his Thirteeners became the authority on Jewish matters for the Gestapo and had its complete confidence. Before the rupture of the Stalin-Hitler pact, Ganzweich even enlisted Jews from the Warsaw ghetto to filter into the Russian zone to bring back information for the German authorities.

At first the Judenrat carried on a quiet fight against Ganzweich. ... But all efforts to eliminate Ganzweich as competition for police control in the ghetto failed. His connections with the Gestapo were too strong. His Thirteeners continued to function as a police unit, parallel to the Judenrat police but more closely identified with the specific features of Gestapo policy toward the Jews.

Aside from Ganzweich's Thirteeners, the Gestapo included some Jews in its own apparatus. One of them, Kokosoffsky, had been before the war a leader of the Maccabee, a Jewish sport organization, in Pabianitz [Pabianice]. Another agent, Andes by name, had previously been a boxer in the Zionist Maccabee. He now specialized in searching out illegal flour mills. Later he was sent by the Germans to the Oswiecim [Oświęcim—Auschwitz] camp. Rumor had it that the millers paid substantial bribes to engineer this coup. At least one Jewish woman was on the Gestapo payroll—Madame Machno, a former Warsaw actress and dancer.

Through the hands of these creatures flowed tremendous sums as bribes for the Gestapo. They used to "arrange" passes for the ghetto gates, business licenses, exemptions from forced labor, and other privileges. A travel permit between Warsaw and Lodz cost thousands of zlotys; exemption from forced labor, tens of thousands. The scale of prices varied with the importance of the service.

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<sup>119</sup> Abraham I. Katsh, ed., *Scroll of Agony: The Warsaw Diary of Chaim A. Kaplan* (New York: Macmillan; London: Collier-Macmillan, 1965), 282–83.

These leeches attached themselves firmly and sucked, for themselves and the Gestapo, the last drop of blood from the Jewish population, spreading what they bred upon—complete demoralization and licentiousness without limit.

The Jewish police found their strongest and most capable opponent in Morizi Orzech.

Orzech's hatred of the Jewish police once led him into serious difficulty. Encountering a police captain attempting to arrest an old Jewish woman for illegally selling vegetables in the street, he intervened. In the course of the argument, he struck the officer. Orzech was arrested to be handed over to the Germans. It took a lot of work and money to save him ...<sup>120</sup>

One morning the janitor of 12 Nowolipya [Nowolipie] burst in to tell me that he had just been visited by two Gestapo agents, apparently Jews, who had gone through his registry book. They had paid particular attention to the G's. He was sure that they were after me. ...

Ten minutes later a Gestapo car pulled up in front of 12 Nowolipya, and agents swarmed into the building. They ransacked my apartment, questioned my family and neighbors. They left a written order that I must report the following morning at the headquarters of the Gestapo at Allee Shucha [Szucha].

The following day they returned to find out why I had not appeared. My brother was not at home, so they took young Jacob as a hostage. ...

Jacob was a Bundist and, living in my apartment, had seen comrades come and go on underground business. The Gestapo tortured him in an attempt to get information, but they were finally defeated when death brought an end to his agonies.<sup>121</sup>

Dark as usual was the spring night of April 17, 1942. ... During that night, the Gestapo had visited scores of houses in various parts of the ghetto, had dragged people out and shot them on the spot. The bodies were left where they fell. Jewish police had accompanied the SS and Gestapo men, carrying a list of names and addresses, and leading the murderers directly to their victims.

In the morning, under order from the police, the bodies were cleaned off the streets by wagons of the Chesed Shel Emmeth Burial Society and by other undertakers. The police drove the neighbors of the murdered men into the streets and forced them to wash away the blood.

That night we lost, among others, the following comrades: ...

Especially tragic was the death of our comrade, Moishe Sklar, a typesetter. He had been a member of the executive committee of the Printers' Union, and continued his Bund activity in the ghetto. He was arrested that night but not shot immediately as were the others. For two weeks he was held in Paviak [Pawiak] prison and horribly tortured. He was asked for the names of those active in printing illegal literature. He knew them all, but he endured the terrible pain and said nothing. At five o'clock in the morning, two weeks after his arrest, he was taken to the corner of Djelna [Dzielna] and Motcha [Smocza], where he was shot.

Neighbors heard the shots and ran out. They saw a man lying in a pool of blood and a Jewish policeman leaning over the corpse, removing its shoes. ... Later we identified the Jewish policeman who had done the ghoulis h looting. He was dealt with appropriately.<sup>122</sup>

Now the terror in the ghetto entered a new and bloodier phase. Almost every night the Nazis would break into a tenement, drag scores of people into the street, and shoot them. People were brought into the ghetto from the Aryan side at night and shot. We did not know who they were or why they were murdered.<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> Bernard Goldstein, *The Stars Bear Witness* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1950), 68–71.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, 94–95.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, 100–102.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, 104.

The feeling of expectancy, of nervous waiting for an unknown but certain catastrophe, grew when the Germans began a new campaign of terror. From time to time in the past they had seized people on the streets and shipped them away into forced labor. After April 17, [1942], such abductions took place much more often and with much greater ferocity. The Jewish police, led by SS men and [German] gendarmes, would descend on a ghetto area like a band of wild animals, grabbing every adult man and throwing him into a circle of armed guards in the center of the street. Ringed by the police, numbed by fear and bewilderment, the condemned would huddle there, waiting to be escorted to the nearest police commissariat and then to the freight cars for forced labor. ...

From the window of my hiding place at 13 Gensha [Geşia] I once witnessed a horrifying scene. A Jewish policeman held a thin young man, with matted black hair, who fought with insane fury to break loose from his captor's grasp. There was a mad look in the victim's eyes as he punched and kicked and pulled. With a rubber truncheon the policeman beat his hands, his legs, his entire body and then half pushed, half dragged him toward the square where the armed ring was waiting.<sup>124</sup>

### **Matthew Brzezinski on the April 17, 1942 raids on the ghetto:**

On the night of Friday, April 17 [1942], trucks crammed with German soldiers and SS officers stormed the Warsaw Ghetto. They poured through several gates simultaneously, fanning out through the locked-down district, which was dark and silent, no lights or movement being permitted after curfew. Within minutes the deserted cobblestone streets echoes with the clatter of jackboots, while portable searchlights scanned buildings and doors were hammered down with rifle butts. Shots rang out, along the occasional staccato of machine gun fire.

One of the tenements targeted during the raids was Isaac [Yitzhak] Zuckerman's Valiant [Dzielna] Street headquarters. His startled janitor-lookout barely had time to pull the makeshift alarm before Gestapo agents were pounding up the stairs. On the third floor, in the Young Pioneer clubhouse, panic erupted and there was a mad dash for the attic, where an emergency exit had been cut through the wall into an adjacent building. In the ensuing scramble one of Isaac's most trusted deputies, Tuvia Borzykowski, was shot in the leg, but he still managed to escape. Two other Pioneers were not so fortunate. They were dragged to the ground-floor courtyard, and, with all the residents looking on in horror, each was shot in the head.

Before executing them, the Gestapo posed only one question to the victims: Where were Isaac Zuckerman and Lonka Kozibrodska? That the SS knew about Isaac was not surprising. His involvement with the Socialist Zionist youth movement was not a secret. But Lonka was a different story. Very few outsiders were aware of the clandestine role the beautiful blonde played in linking the Young Pioneers to the outside world.

This could only mean that the Nazis had Jewish informants, a suspicion that was borne out when the homes of almost all the Bund's central committee members were also raided that evening. Sonya Nowogrodka, the only woman in the Bund underground leadership, narrowly cheated death, as did Bernard Goldstein by switching hiding places at the last minute. ... the Bund lost nearly a dozen operatives that night. All were shot on the spot, their bodies left to bleed out where they fell. In total, fifty-two people were killed on April 17, which became known variously as Bloody Friday, Night of Blood, or the Sabbath Massacre.

Blood Friday revealed a shift in Nazi tactics. Until then, the Gestapo had focused its brutal counterinsurgency measures almost exclusively on Gentiles. (Indeed, earlier that very day, the Nazis had conducted a series of separate raids in the Christian quarters of Warsaw, deporting 461 suspected Resistance members to Auschwitz.) Prior to Bloody Friday, no evidence existed to suggest that the occupation authorities either knew or cared that Jews were forming conspiratorial cells. [Perhaps this was because these cells did not engage in any armed activities either then or for some time afterwards. *M.P.*] Occasionally, the Gestapo inquired about the likes of Bernard Goldstein, since he was a well-known agitator from before the war. But there had never been mass arrests or Gestapo dragnets in the Jewish

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<sup>124</sup> Ibid., 106.

Quarter on the scale that routinely decimated the Polish Resistance. The question was: Why now? What prompted the raids? Had the Germans, through their network of spies, gotten wind of the unification talks between Zionists and Bundists? Had they heard of the intensified efforts to acquire weapons? Did they know about the newly formed youth militias and their growing chorus of calls for self-defense?

*The sad fact remained that the Bund, to date, had not managed to procure a single gun.* The vaunted militias, in Boruch Spiegel's opinion, "were not very serious." Spiegel, after he recuperated, had demanded to join the defense unit, and he quickly became disillusioned by its lack of structure, discipline, adequate training, and, most of all, arms.<sup>125</sup>

### **Zosia Goldberg, a resident of the ghetto, on traitors in the ghetto:**

Unfortunately, there were many traitors amongst the Jews who formed a secret police working with the Gestapo. None of them was from Warsaw, I'm happy to say. They were all from Lodz [Łódź], which the Germans called Litzmannstadt. They were all intelligentsia—doctors, engineers, police—none of them uneducated or from the lower classes. They were all professionals—and disgustingly mean. We were afraid of them like fire. Their headquarters were on the same street as Café Sztuka, but on the other side. The building was Number Thirteen Leszno Street. Because of that, they were called Number Thirteens.

This was the Jewish Gestapo against the Jews. They had green bands on their caps. The regular Jewish police had blue bands. The Jewish Gestapo would come into the café, but we did not like to serve them. They did a lot of dirty work. Let's say some Jews had hidden in their apartments dollars or money or gold that they could sell to buy food. The Jewish Gestapo would give away all these secrets to the Germans. And the Germans would come shooting and killing. There was not mass killing yet. It was just bad treatment, very awful treatment, but not mass exterminations. ...

Some German Jews were given jobs outside the walls of the Warsaw Ghetto. ... One day these German Jews were marching off to work past the SS men on guard. These German Jews were all raising their hands, hollering, "Heil Hitler!" and the SS men did not even answer them, did not look at them, did not even spit at them. In Warsaw, we just laughed when these German Jews screamed, "Heil Hitler!"—as if Hitler would help them—this was the funniest part. ...

Jews were starving, even though food was being smuggled in. We did not have food, but we could get smuggled-in strawberries on the street. I remember one day I bought myself all kinds of goodies. I was walking on the street and a man came and he grabbed all the food and ran away. ...

The conditions in the ghetto were so terrible ... People hated each other. You understand, they were starving. They could kill each other for food. We had a family from Lodz in our apartment. My mother cooked. The wife of this man came and ate up my mother's soup, so my mother complained to me. The man did not like my mother complaining, so he pushed her around and beat her up. When I came home from work that day I hit him on the head with an iron pot. I got even for my mother. He got no pity from me. He never touched her anymore.

I did not see any resistance leaflets or newspapers in the ghetto. If I ever saw any resistance, any writing on the walls, it was in the Aryan section. There they would write on the walls things like "Only pigs go to the movies," because going to the movies helped the Germans by making people forget about the war, forget about resisting. But in the ghetto we were only worried about food, the cold, the sickness and the lice. We were completely demoralized.

We were so demoralized that people became disrespectful of each other.<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>125</sup> Matthew Brzezinski, *Isaac's Army: A Story of Courage and Survival in Nazi-Occupied Poland* (New York: Random House, 2012), 154–56. Based on Gutman, *The Jews of Warsaw, 1939–1943*, 176; Władysław Bartoszewski, *1859 dni Warszawy* (Kraków: Znak, 2009), 330.

<sup>126</sup> Zosia Goldberg, as told to Hilton Obenzinger, *Running Through Fire: How I Survived the Holocaust* (San Francisco: Mercury House 2004), 23–25.

I did not ask anybody what to do. I was all on my own. Whenever I did something, I never asked anybody. ... Besides you couldn't talk to anybody. You did not know who was a traitor. I was too afraid.<sup>127</sup>

**Charles G. Roland about night life, crime and Gestapo agents in the ghetto:**

There were brothels, which were active at least until the massive deportations began in July 1942. ...

Where there are brothels, nearby will be bars, taverns, restaurants and nightclubs. Even in the Warsaw ghetto, such places existed in bizarre and frenetic abundance. Attendees were no longer the affluent and near-affluent of Warsaw society, but the new leaders, the *nouveaux riches* of Warsaw's underworld—in this case, mainly the smugglers ...

One of these establishments was the Hotel Britannia ... The Thirteen not only frequented the place, they owned and operated it... The Britannia didn't close its doors until 7 a.m., and one could buy a kilo of wine for 25 zloty (45). And a gambling house existed at Chłodna 16 ... operated by a *Judenrat* official, Henryk Czerwinski.

Among the restaurants that functioned well into the ghetto period, Adler especially mentions two as having notoriously impressive menus despite the circumstances: A La Fourchette, at Leszno and Solna, and the Adas, at Leszno 14. Both were patronized largely by black marketeers. Another anachronism in the starving ghetto was Gogolewski's cake shop, mentioned in a frank and unashamedly existential account by a former blackmarketeer: "I sold my goods at exorbitant prices, ate cakes from Gogolewski's cake shop..."<sup>128</sup>

One Avraham Gancwajch [Abraham Ganzweich] established the Control Office for Combatting the Black Market and Profiteering. The group's title designated a noble purpose, but it lacked the sanction of the *Judenrat*. It came to be known as "The Thirteen" (*Trzynastka*) because it was located at Leszno 13. The true power behind Gancwajch's throne was the Gestapo. Certainly their approach to controlling the black market and profiteering seemed to consist of trying to corner these rackets for themselves. For example, they taxed clandestine bakers, but the tax became income for The Thirteen. They did nothing to eliminate the bakers, who passed the tax along to their unfortunate but starving customers. So the hard-pressed residents of the ghetto were further oppressed by their fellow Jews. According to one survivor, The Thirteen was an open and suppurating abscess. Another technique: A man from The Thirteen entered a shop and bought some coffee, a luxury almost beyond price in the ghetto. Shortly afterward he returned, confiscated 10 kilos of coffee, and arrested the owner. But for 1000 zloty he released him.

The Thirteen established an ambulance service, possibly as a public relations gesture to offset some of the negative aspects of their image. ...

The supposed task of this ambulance was to care for people taken ill in the street, giving assistance, distributing bread and bitter tea, and, if necessary, taking the sick to the hospital. Eventually, the only visible activity of the ambulance service was transporting sick people. However, it seems that the ambulance rarely dealt with an emergency case, being tied up in the important business of smuggling, until it was vanished along with The Thirteen in July or August 1942.<sup>129</sup>

**Adam Starkopf, a survivor of the Warsaw ghetto, on Jewish collaborators:**

Two SS men entered the building and broke into the apartment of our neighbors, the Orensteins ... It seemed that a Jewish collaborator had reported to the Gestapo that her husband still had in his apartment

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<sup>127</sup> Ibid., 39.

<sup>128</sup> Charles G. Roland, *Courage Under Siege: Starvation, Disease, and Death in the Warsaw Ghetto* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 50.

<sup>129</sup> Charles G. Roland, *Courage Under Siege: Starvation, Disease, and Death in the Warsaw Ghetto* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 68.

some leather from his store. ...one of the SS men shot Mr. Orenstein and [his 8-year-old] child from the balcony. ...

That night, for the first time, the German 'death car' had made the rounds of the ghetto streets. The 'death car' was a shiny black limousine with a skull and crossbones painted on the door. ... The Gestapo had compiled a list of names and addresses of Jews in the Warsaw ghetto [*obviously with the help of Jewish informers*] who had been wealthy or socially prominent before the war. Between four and five o'clock each morning, the 'death car' would pull up at addresses chosen at random from this Gestapo list. The heads of the wanted families would be pulled from their beds and, still in their night clothes, would be dragged out into the street. There in front of their apartment buildings, they would be shot in the back of the head at such close range that they were mutilated beyond recognition.

...a Jewish informer who was known in the ghetto as Yossele Kapote. ... Yossele was a big shot, proudly sporting an official-looking cap adorned with four stars. ... everyone knew that Yossele Kapote had become very popular with the Gestapo. ... Yossele lived on our street with a Jewish prostitute whom he had taken as his mistress. He had made a good living as a Gestapo stool pigeon, but at the same time, rumor had it, he could be persuaded to use his privileged status to help get Jews out of trouble—provided it brought him enough cash. ... Yossele was not in, but his girl friend was there, lurching on such delicacies as scrambled eggs, sardines, chocolate milk and cake. While decent, innocent people round about her were starving to death, this scum, this traitor to her own people, was living off the fat of the land.<sup>130</sup>

#### **David Landau, a member of the Jewish Military Union (ŻZW), on extortion and Gestapo agents:**

From the conversation between the Germans and the Jewish policeman, I realised that the bribe I had given him, a substantial one, was for the three of them.

This policeman knew that they had been waiting in the entrance to the first house outside the ghetto, and had been prepared to send me to my death for a small part of the bribe.<sup>131</sup>

Across the street from us lived a man who was completely paralysed from the neck down. Every morning as soon as the curfew hour was over the caretaker was seen pushing this man out in his wheelchair into the street near the entrance of the building. The paralysed man was always well dressed, with a quilt covering the lower part of his body. There, in front of the building, he sat the whole day long ...

Once, returning from a forced outing close to the curfew hour I noticed a passing Gestapo officer turning the wheelchair around and wheeling it back into the building. ...

From that day on I was sure that my suspicion was correct, and that as well as being a Jew he was also a spy.<sup>132</sup>

#### **Reuben Ainsztein on Gestapo agents and the Jewish underworld:**

To provide him with funds, the Gestapo made him [Abraham Gancwajch or Ganzweich] administrator of 100 houses in the Warsaw ghetto, where until then all houses had been administered by the Judenrat. It also issued him every month with thirty passes allowing their bearers to travel on trains. As no Jew was allowed to use public transport, the possession of the passes conferred on Ganzweich and his men a unique privilege and also a unique source of income, for Ganzweich sold the passes and shared the profits with his Gestapo masters. Soon Ganzweich became known in the ghetto as the man who for payment could not only arrange the transfer of relatives from one ghetto to another, but also secure the release of people arrested by the Germans. ... Ganzweich became by the end of 1940 a second force in the ghetto, which increasingly usurped much of the authority of the Judenrat.

On January 5, 1941, Ganzweich opened his Office for Combating Usury and Blackmarketeering at number 13, Leszno Street, which the ghetto subsequently dubbed The Thirteen. ...

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<sup>130</sup> Adam Starkopf, *There Is Always Time To Die* (New York: Holocaust Library, 1981), 88–89, 92, 93–94.

<sup>131</sup> David J. Landau, alias Dudek, Janek and Jan, *Caged: A Story of Jewish Resistance* (Sydney: Macmillan, 2000), 115.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*, 285–86.

Of the 318 people working for Ganzweich, 300 formed the “police force,” [not to be confused with the much larger Jewish order police which reported to the Jewish council], eight were employed as drivers, motor-car mechanics and in similar honest occupations, and the rest were lawyers, who formed a court that went through the legal motions of trying people guilty of profiteering and blackmarketeering. In fact, only a few small bakers, butchers and smugglers were heavily fined or kept in The Thirteen’s prison until they paid up. The 300 policemen performed the functions of an American gangster’s hoodlums and with their help Ganzweich forced all the important businessmen in the ghetto, irrespective of whether they were honest or dishonest, to pay him protection money, which he shared with his Gestapo patrons.

As practically everything needed in the ghetto had to be smuggled in, Ganzweich’s protection racket also extended to this vital activity. Before any article could be brought into the ghetto, bribes had to be paid to the Polish police, the ghetto police and to officials of the German Criminal Police, and even then there was no guarantee that it would reach the ghetto, for a German gendarme patrolling around its walls might seize it. However, if one paid protection money to The Thirteen, the article was certain to reach the ghetto without any other bribes being paid.

The Judenrat authorities attempted to oppose the growing power of The Thirteen, but without success. In April 1941 the Judenrat put out to public auction the concession for removing the ghetto garbage and received three offers, one from The Thirteen. When the Judenrat failed to choose The Thirteen, three Gestapo officers paid a visit to the Judenrat offices, kicked the Chairman, Czerniakow, down the staircase and arrested him and two of his colleagues, Lichtenbaum and Herman. The three men were released only after the Judenrat has paid a bribe of 20,000 zlotys, which Szternfeld, the commander of Ganzweich’s policemen, and his fellow-gangsters spent drinking in Casanova, the ghetto nightclub frequented exclusively by people of their ilk. Not satisfied with this victory, Szternfeld wrote to Szeryński [the commander of the Jewish ghetto police] demanding that the ghetto policemen should salute his own men. When Szeryński ignored the demand, Szternfeld’s men arrested two ghetto policemen and one of them, who resisted arrest, was sent to Auschwitz by the Gestapo. Szeryński then agreed that the lower ranks of the ghetto police should salute the officers of Ganzweich’s force.

Sharing in the proceeds of Ganzweich’s rackets was, no doubt, an important element in the Gestapo game. But the most important factor was the usefulness of Ganzweich and his Mafia as an agency of espionage and subversion—in brief, a classical fifth column. The espionage activities were not confined to the Warsaw ghetto or even to what was happening in the Polish underground outside. Until the German attack on the Soviet Union Ganzweich’s agents travelled to Bialystok [Białystok], Vilno [Wilno] and Lvov [Lwów] and no doubt carried out espionage assignments for their German masters. As for Ganzweich’s subversive activities, which formed an integral part of the psychological warfare methods used by the Nazis against the Jews, they were of a complex nature. Two rabbis belonging to the Agudath Israel Party, Blumenfeld and Glicensztajn, made propaganda on his behalf among the Hassidic elements and saw to it that no resistance ideas should take root in the religious schools and colleges. ...

On May 15, 1941, Ganzweich created another agency of subversion, the Ambulance Service, which was to play a particularly sinister role during the Great liquidation. The members of the Ambulance Service claimed that the purpose of their organization was to provide medical assistance in an emergency and additional food rations for the poorest. In fact, Ringelblum recorded in his notes as an exceptional occurrence that on May 18, 1941 the Ambulance Service had distributed 110 loaves of bread, which The Thirteen had requisitioned from bakers. The Ambulance Service revealed its true face during the Great Liquidation when its members helped the ghetto police to round up the victims and drive them to the trains that took them to Treblinka. At the same time a few persons, who could afford the price demanded by the gangsters, were escorted to temporary safety in the ambulances.

Ganzweich visited the Gestapo every Tuesday with a report prepared by him and edited by a German Jew, a former member of the editorial board of the famous *Berliner Tageblatt*. The report contained a survey of the activities of the Judenrat, the Jewish Self-Help Organization and other Jewish institutions, a chronicle of events in the ghetto, and regular assessments of “What is said in the ghetto about the situation on the war fronts” and “What is reported in the ghetto on the course of the war.” The last two sections of his weekly reports amounted to nothing better than denunciations. As Adam Czerniakow had to make his report to the

Nazi ghetto commissar every Wednesday, Ganzweich's document served the Germans as a means of verifying whether the Judenrat was faithfully carrying out their orders. Ganzweich boasted that the Gestapo awaited his report with impatience, because they regarded it as the only reliable assessment of what was happening in the ghetto.

For reasons that remain unknown but can easily be guessed, the Nazi Security Service decided that it would be useful to have another agency of treachery and corruption and picked for the role of Ganzweich's competitors two of his lieutenants, Zelik Heller and Maurycy Kon, who had fled to the Warsaw ghetto from Lodz [Łódź]. Kon...and Heller separated from Ganzweich in April 1941 and soon proved themselves superior to their master in building up a financial empire. Ganzweich owned a covered market and made vast profits from the licenses for the importation of food into the ghetto given him by the Germans, but Heller and Kon soon outdid him by the size of their transactions. Apart from earning large sums of money by arranging the transfer of Jews from Lodz and, after September 1941, from Bialystok and other ghettos [sic] in the former Soviet territories to the Warsaw ghetto, they obtained from the Germans a monopoly on the import of fish into the ghetto. As a result of their monopoly, fish which they purchased for one zloty a kilogram was sold inside the ghetto for six zlotys. On one occasion they obtained from the Nazi masters a license to import 40 railway truckloads of potatoes for which they paid 40 groszes a kilogram; they sold them at two zlotys a kilogram. Within a year they created a trust controlling thirty enterprises, including the only horse-drawn tram line in the ghetto.

While Ganzweich tried to act as the benefactor and sponsor of Jewish culture in the ghetto by helping financially the ghetto theater and paying a number of writers and artists regular monthly stipends, Kon and Heller devoted large sums of money to the maintenance of religious schools and institutions and extended their protection to many Hassidic rabbis. ... In the Warsaw ghetto the same people helped Kon's and Heller's work by telling their numerous followers that the ghetto was not only Lord's punishment for Jewish desertion of orthodoxy and atheism, but a blessing in disguise designed to bring the Jews back to the state of piety and isolation in which they had lived before the French Revolution. As, unlike Bialystok, Vilno or other Jewish ghettos in Lithuania and Byelorussia, the Hassidic element was relatively numerous in Warsaw, the effect of the views propagated by Kon's and Heller's protégés was most useful to the Nazis, for it helped to create an atmosphere of fatalism.

In the spring of 1942 Ganzweich created a fictitious resistance organization, whose purpose was to counteract the growing resistance movement [i.e., the Jewish Military Organization, which had ties with pro-Piłsudski Polish army circles] inside the ghetto by producing confusion and also to discover, by various provocative moves, whether there were any links between the Judenrat and the resistance groups. The fictitious organization called itself *Żagiew* (*Firebrand*) and claimed to consist of Poles of the Jewish faith, who were faithful followers of Piłsudski [after Marshal Józef Piłsudski, the interwar Polish leader] and had served in the Polish Army. The ferociously anti-Soviet leaflets distributed in the name of *Żagiew* aimed at preventing the creation of a common front between the left-wing and non-socialist resistance in the ghetto.

No doubt convinced that The Thirteen had outlived their usefulness, the Nazis closed the Office for Combating Usury and Blackmarketeering on July 17, 1942. However, they forced the Judenrat to accept 200 of its members in the ghetto police. ... After the disappearance of The Thirteen Ganzweich's chief agency of subversion remained the Ambulance Service.

In April 1942 the Gestapo decided that Ganzweich's presence inside the ghetto was temporarily undesirable and ordered the Judenrat to hang out posters throughout the ghetto announcing that Ganzweich and his right-hand man, Szternfeld, were wanted by the Germans and that anybody who was sheltering them inside the ghetto or knew of their whereabouts but did not report them would be shot. In fact, Ganzweich and his closest collaborators were living safely in the "Aryan" part of Warsaw and continuing to work for the Gestapo. Such was not the case of Kon and Heller, whose usefulness ended during the Great Liquidation. They were both killed on August 4, 1942 in the building of the ghetto police. Ganzweich, however, reappeared in the ghetto after the Great Liquidation, when the Judenrat was ordered by the Gestapo to issue an announcement that there had been a mistake when its posters had described him as a wanted man.

By the end of 1942, aware of the new mood in the ghetto, the Gestapo entrusted Ganzweich with the task of winning over the surviving intellectuals to a policy of preaching fatalistic inactivity. ...

Having failed with the intellectuals, Ganzweich tried to sabotage the approaching uprising by reviving the *Żagiew* provocation and by creating an Anti-Soviet League, which the Nazis hoped would divide the Jewish underground ... The effect of his actions was nil, but Ganzweich remained useful to the Germans for several more months after the destruction of the Warsaw ghetto. According to some reports, he was liquidated by them on November 24, 1943, while according to others he went into hiding and was still being sought by the Gestapo in 1944.

Ganzweich, Kon and Heller and their collaborators together numbered some 500 people and of them only a few dozen were actually Gestapo agents. ... Among the Gestapo agents in the Warsaw ghetto there was, however, a man who, had he not been a Jew, might have played the role of a Pétain or a Laval. ...

He returned to Poland after the victory of Nazism in Germany and found himself in the Warsaw ghetto at the age of seventy-six. Whether he volunteered to act as a Gestapo agent or whether the Nazis knew of his links with the German intelligence services ... we do not know. But there is no doubt that he worked for the Germans until February 22, 1943, the day he was killed by three members of the Jewish Fighting Organization, who were informed of his Gestapo connections by the Polish underground. ...

To deal with the Jewish resistance organizations, SS Obersturmführer Brandt sent Ganzweich back into the ghetto, where he revived the *Żagiew* (*Firebrand*) organization. The aims of the organization became quite clear when it issued an appeal calling on all the inhabitants of the ghetto to gather outside the Judenrat in Zamenhof Street and there begin an uprising. Had the Jews followed the appeal, it would have been very easy for the Germans to surround them and drive them to the railway yards. Of the sixty members of *Żagiew*, the *ŻZW* and the *ŻOB* liquidated fifty-nine, including the editor of their paper, Adam Szajn, but failed to capture Ganzweich.<sup>133</sup>

*Also worthy of mention are the activities of the Jewish grave robbers, mentioned in the diary of Adam Czerniaków, the head of the Judenrat, already on January 4, 1940: "Yesterday for a second time [our] workers were beaten up at the Praga cemetery [by a gang] which was searching for diamonds." Ringelblum also noted the same phenomenon several times in September 1941. The first time his record was dry: "Undertakers open graves, take out the jewels and gold teeth." The second time his reaction was highly emotional: "Unspeakably baseless acts are happening at the cemetery. Mass graves [and] defilement of the dead by the lower orders, who throw them into the graves like dogs. That is not all. It turns out that they open graves at night, pull out gold teeth and steel the shrouds. Recently, there was a serious investigation of Jewish policemen participating in these acts. In one word: the lowest of the low." In April 1942, author and social worker Rachel Auerbach wrote in her diary: "It turns out that a large percentage of items available today for trade come from looting dead bodies. Specialized companies, who make a living from this, strip the clothes from dead bodies lying in the street. By morning, the people are completely naked, covered at most by a sheet of paper, or a poster pulled off the wall."<sup>134</sup>*

### **Matthew Brzezinski on the failure of the Jewish underground organizations to create a defence force:**

Isaac Zuckerman and Zofia Lubetkin's plan to form a joint defense force within the Ghetto encountered surprisingly stiff opposition. An initial pitch to Jewish Council leaders and relief agency heads prompted "a vehement reaction," in Zivia's words. "We were accused of being dangerously irresponsible" and of playing with people's lives. "If the Germans get wind of even the barest hint of what you propose," the Elders admonished the young Zionist hotheads, "the reprisals will be catastrophic. Are you ready to take responsibility for the massacre of tens of thousands?"

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<sup>133</sup> Reuben Ainsztein, *The Warsaw Ghetto Revolt* (New York: Holocaust Library, 1979), 9–16, 88; Reuben Ainsztein, *Jewish Resistance in Nazi-Occupied Eastern Europe* (London: Paul Elek, 1974), 557–63.

<sup>134</sup> Itamar Levin, *Walls Around: The Plunder of Warsaw Jewry during World War II and Its Aftermath* (Westport, Connecticut and London: Praeger, 2004), 98.

Undaunted, Zuckerman next approached the Bund. The Bund's elder statesmen, however, were not entertaining notions of immediate combat, as Isaac discovered to his dismay. When Isaac made his case for the establishment of a Jewish fighting force. An argument he buttressed with fresh reports of renewed atrocities in the east, Bund boss Maurice Orzech was not impressed. "You are quite young," Isaac remembered him responding. "And your assessment of the situation appears somewhat rushed and unseasoned." Orzech was fifty, twice Isaac's age, and a trained economist from a very wealthy industrialist family, who carried himself with the authority of one born into money. "It's impossible for the Germans to kill us all. Three and a half million Polish Jews!" he proclaimed. "You're spreading panic unnecessarily, young man."

Jews were not the only ones dying, Orzech argued. In Auschwitz, almost all the victims were still Gentiles [i.e., Christian Poles] at this stage, and the camp's capacity was vastly expanding with the construction of a satellite site in neighboring Birkenau. "Thousands of Poles are also being murdered," he insisted. When the Gentiles rose up, the Bund would join in the national rebellion, Orzech declared, but not before. "Our struggle is linked with the Polish working class," he ended the discussions. "We will not participate in any pan-Jewish organization."

Isaac was dumbfounded. "I was ready to kill my Bundist colleagues for their blindness," he vented to Zivia Lubetkin and several other dejected Zionists. They had counted on the Bund's connections with the Polish Resistance, but not on its baffling solidarity with Polish workers. Unbeknownst to Isaac, many younger Bundists like Boruch [Spiegel] and Mark Edelman shared his view. Orzech's rejection of a joint fighting force stirred considerable rumblings within the Bund's lower (and less ideological) ranks. ...

Though rebuffed, Zuckerman would not give up. Like the Spiegel brothers, he had lost family members, and that hardened his resolve to fight. So when a charismatic Communist operative contacted another big Zionist group, the Marxist-leaning Po'alei Zion Left, and its youth arm, the Young Guard, with a proposal to forge an antifascist alliance, Isaac set aside his ideological misgivings and listened. The man's name was Pinkus Kartin, and he was a veteran of the Spanish Civil War, a flamboyant Jewish adventurer who had spent years in Polish jails and Parisian exile because of his Leninist beliefs. Kartin did not promise access to the Polish Resistance, because the Polish Underground actively barred Communists. He offered something better: the backing of the Red Army. Kartin was a Soviet agent. Trained in guerrilla tactics by the NKVD, he had been parachuted into Poland in late 1941 to launch a network of Communist partisan cells that would disrupt German lines from the rear.

While his affiliation didn't bother the Po'alei Zion Left—its leader, Dr. Adolf Berman, had a younger brother in Moscow also being schooled by the Soviet secret police—Isaac Zuckerman and Zivia Lubetkin were neither Marxists nor particularly enamored of the USSR. "We had serious reservations," Lubetkin recalled. "There was a lot of dissension at the meeting," Isaac added. But there were very few other options. "This was after our great failure with the Bund, and we were grabbing at anything that could shape a force."

The offer Pinkus dangled before them was too tempting to ignore: unlimited supplies of Red Army-issue weapons, access to trained military instructors, intelligence reports—in short, everything Isaac and Zivia lacked, and desperately needed. "We feared that by the time all the other Jewish groups united in a common front, it would be too late," Lubetkin explained. "So we joined."<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>135</sup> Matthew Brzezinski, *Isaac's Army: A Story of Courage and Survival in Nazi-Occupied Poland* (New York: Random House, 2012), 157–58. Based on Yitzhak Zuckerman ("Antek"), *A Surplus of Memory: Chronicle of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 175, 182; Zivia Lubetkin, *Zagłada i powstanie* (Warsaw: Książka i Wiedza and Żydowski Instytut Historyczny, 1999), 60–62.

## The Great Deportation in Summer 1942 and Its Aftermath Jewish Attitudes Begin to Change

Between the end of July and mid-September 1942, the Germans deported at least 265,000 Jews from the Warsaw ghetto to the Treblinka death camp. This operation was preceded by a period of escalated terror, when almost every night Gestapo agents would enter the ghetto and murder victims either at random or from a prepared list supplied by their agents inside the ghetto.<sup>136</sup> Historian Yehuda Bauer has acknowledged that the Jewish order police played a “major role” in the Great Deportation, with similar roles being played by the Jewish police forces in other cities such as Lublin, Kraków, and Łódź.<sup>137</sup> (The Jewish police—some 2,500 in number—were three times as numerous as the Jewish ghetto fighters. The Polish police did not take part in rounding up the Jews.<sup>138</sup>) The Jewish police received assistance from employees of the Judenrat (Jewish Council), the ambulance service and other social services, as well as doctors from hospitals, in rounding up Jews.<sup>139</sup> The operation met with no violent resistance on the part of the Jewish population, though many without protection tried to hide—usually in vain. Jewish policemen demanded enormous bribes to facilitate the release of Jews who were discovered or apprehended.<sup>140</sup> The number of Jews was reduced to about 60,000—mostly young Jews in good health who were needed to keep German workshops operating.

What did the Jews of Warsaw know of the Germans’ plans? Starting in late 1941, abundant information about the mass murder of Jews was reaching the Warsaw ghetto. Reports by Jewish Gestapo informers indicate that the extent of knowledge and discussion of various Nazi atrocities by ghetto residents was far more widespread than Jewish sources acknowledge.<sup>141</sup> The first report from the extermination facility in Chełmno (Kulmhof), where Jews were gassed in December 1941, probably reached the Warsaw ghetto at the end of January 1942 and was reported widely in the ghetto’s underground press.<sup>142</sup> Marek Edelman, a leader of the Jewish Fighting Organization (ŻOB), says he realized the Germans’ true intentions toward the close of 1941, when the first death camp in Kulmhof (Chełmno) started operation: “We had heard stories about mass killings, but we didn’t believe them. After speaking to people who had escaped from Chełmno, I believed anything was possible.”<sup>143</sup> Unfortunately, very few others in the Warsaw ghetto shared

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<sup>136</sup> Samuel D. Kassow, *Who Will Write Our History? Emanuel Ringelblum, the Warsaw Ghetto, and the Oyneg Shabes Archive* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2007), 299.

<sup>137</sup> Yehuda Bauer, *Rethinking the Holocaust* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2001), 143–44.

<sup>138</sup> Raul Hilberg, one of the foremost Holocaust historians, states: “Of all the native police forces in occupied Eastern Europe, those of Poland were least involved in anti-Jewish actions. ... The Germans could not view them as collaborators, for in German eyes they were not even worthy of that role. They in turn could not join the Germans in major operations against Jews or Polish resistors, lest they be considered traitors by virtually every Polish onlooker. Their task in the destruction of the Jews was therefore limited.” See Raul Hilberg, *Perpetrators, Victims, Bystanders: The Jewish Catastrophe, 1933–1945* (New York: Aaron Asher Books/HarperCollins, 1992), 92–93. Mary Berg records in her diary entry of June 3, 1942, that the Polish police were ordered to shoot 110 Jews in the prison on Gęsia Street in Warsaw, but refused. They were then forced to watch the execution. “One of the eyewitnesses told me that several Polish policemen wept,” she noted, “and that some of them averted their eyes during the execution.” See Mary Berg, *Warsaw Ghetto: A Diary* (New York: L.B. Fischer, 1945), 154.

<sup>139</sup> Barbara Engelking and Jacek Leociak, *Getto warszawskie: Przewodnik po nieistniejącym mieście* (Warsaw: IFiS PAN, 2001), 672; *The Warsaw Ghetto: A Guide to the Perished City* (New Haven, Connecticut, and London: Yale University Press, 2009), 5.1 (“The Great Deportation Aktion, 21 July–24 September 1942”).

<sup>140</sup> Testimony of Marek Zajdenfeld, Archive of the Jewish Historical Institute (Warsaw), record group 301, number 1886 (after their hideout was located by Jewish policemen, the author’s wife had to pay 60,000 złoty to save herself and her children from being dragged away for deportation to Treblinka); Testimony of Artur Ney, Archive of the Jewish Historical Institute (Warsaw), record group 301, number 2227 (a policeman demanded 15,000 złoty just to deliver a letter).

<sup>141</sup> Christopher R. Browning and Israel Gutman, “The Reports of a Jewish ‘Informer’ in the Warsaw Ghetto—Selected Documents,” *Yad Vashem Studies*, vol. 17 (1986): 247–73.

<sup>142</sup> Stefan Ernest, *O wojnie wielkich Niemiec z Żydami w Warszawie, 1939–1943* (Warsaw: Czytelnik, 2003), 133 n.70; Daniel Blatman, *En direct du ghetto: La presse clandestine juive dans le ghetto de Varsovie (1940–1943)* (Paris: Cerf; Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2005), 441–44.

<sup>143</sup> Sheldon Kirshner, interview with Marek Edelman, “Warsaw Ghetto commander forgives tormentors,” *The Canadian Jewish News* (Toronto), November 9, 1989. See also See Marek Edelman, “The Ghetto Fights”, in *The*

this belief. Vladka Meed writes: “Several months before, three Jewish gravediggers who by some miracle had escaped from Chelmno had startled the ghetto with tales of Jews being gassed to death. Some refused to believe the story; even those who did refused to entertain the thought that we might meet the same end some day. That Warsaw, our capital, should suffer such a disaster was simply past belief.”<sup>144</sup> Nor did the Jews want to believe reports that had been pouring in from Eastern Poland: “In November 1941, the mass shooting of Jews in Wilno, Slonim, Białystok and Baranowicze occurred. In Ponary (near Wilno) tens of thousands of Jews perished in rapid killings. The news reached Warsaw, but the uninformed public again took a near-sighted view of the situation.”<sup>145</sup> This information was even known by Jews in the backwoods.<sup>146</sup> Information about the brutal deportation of Jews from Lublin, a major city in the Generalgouvernement, in March and April 1942, rapidly reached the Warsaw ghetto and caused a major panic. The warnings issued by the minuscule Jewish underground organization in the Warsaw ghetto, however, were generally viewed with scepticism and not heeded. David Wdowiński, a leader of the Jewish Military Union (ŻZW), reported:

In the winter of 1941–42 four young men came from Vilna [Wilno] to Warsaw. Two of them belonged to our youth movement, Betar. They made their way disguised as Aryans. Through them we received the first authentic reports from the Polish Eastern districts. They told us of mass deportations, executions, annihilation. In the course of a few weeks of the 70,000 Jews in Vilna only 13,000 remained alive. Still worse were the reports from other cities. Complete liquidation. ... 80% or more of the Jewry in the Eastern districts was already exterminated. ...

At the end of April 1942, two Betarim, members of our youth organization, the brothers Zvi and Moshe Zilberberg, came from Lublin to see me. Their story added up to the fact that the Ghetto in Lublin had been liquidated. In the course of several days more than 40,000 Jews of Lublin had been shot or burned to death. The same had already happened to the Jews in the smaller districts around Lublin. The situation was clear. The extermination of the Jews had nothing to do with this or that area or with this or that administration. ... I went with this news to the president of the Jewish Council, Engineer Czerniakow. The two refugees from Lublin repeated to him what they had told me. He considered the news as exaggerated. Then he said that he had the assurance of the General Governor Frank, that three large Ghettos would remain—Warsaw, Radom and Cracow. ...

I then went to the Zionist leaders, among others to Dr. Schipper, former member of the Polish Parliament; to the chief director of the Jewish National Fund, Mr. Bloch, and to the director of the Joint Distribution Committee, David Guzik. I told them what had happened in Lublin. In the meantime other refugee had arrived from Lublin, ... and they corroborated the story of the Silberberg brothers. I suggested that we organize a self-defense. Sr. Schipper, a very intelligent and highly educated man, looked at me as if I were suffering from a high fever and talked in delirium. “You Revisionists were always hotheads,” he told me with a friendly smile. “It is impossible to liquidate a population of half a million souls,” he argued. “The Germans will not dare to exterminate the largest Jewish community in Europe. They will still have to

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*Warsaw Ghetto: The 45th Anniversary of the Uprising* (Warsaw: Interpress, 1988), posted online at <<http://www.english.upenn.edu/~afilreis/warsaw-uprising.html>>. Edelman notes that a “few dozen copies of a report on the Chelmno murders were circulated throughout the ghetto.”

<sup>144</sup> Vladka Meed, *On Both Sides of the Wall: Memoirs from the Warsaw Ghetto* (New York: Holocaust Library, 1979), 14.

<sup>145</sup> Marek Edelman, “The Ghetto Fights”, in *The Warsaw Ghetto: The 45th Anniversary of the Uprising* (Warsaw: Interpress, 1988), posted online at <<http://www.english.upenn.edu/~afilreis/warsaw-uprising.html>>.

<sup>146</sup> The following is from a wartime diary from Sokoly, a small town near Białystok: “During those days, fearful rumors spread again about the mass murder of Jews. This time, the rumors arrived from the area surrounding Warsaw. Every single day during the entire summer of 1942, the Germans rounded up thousands of Jews from Warsaw and its surroundings and sent them in boxcars to Treblinka, a place where the Germans had built a giant slaughterhouse for killing Jews by both electrocution and strangulation with gas. Exact details as to how they killed the Jews were not yet known, but it was known that every day dozens of boxcars loaded with Jews arrived at Treblinka.” See Michael Maik, *Deliverance: The Diary of Michael Maik. A True Story* (Kedumim, Israel: Keterpress Enterprises, 2004), 84–85. There is no basis to the claim that the average Pole somehow knew more than the Jews about the existence of the death camps. The opposite is probably true.

reckon with world public opinion. And finally, there is the assurance of the Governor-General Frank, that Warsaw, Radom and Cracow will remain.”

I went away empty handed, without accomplishing anything.<sup>147</sup>

*The situation did not change even when escapees from Treblinka made their way back to Warsaw before the Great Deportation, and provided detailed descriptions of what they had witnessed. Bernard Goldstein, a Bundist activist, recalls:*

For the difficult task of getting more exact information, we appointed Zalman Friedrich [Friedrich], one of the most daring and tireless individuals in the underground. ...

A Polish Socialist, a railroad worker, who often traveled the line and knew the direction taken by the deportation trains, advised Friedrich which route to investigate. With great difficulty Friedrich finally reached Sokolov [Sokolów]. There he learned that the Germans had constructed a small branch railroad to the village of Treblinka. Each day trains packed with Jews were switched onto the new spur. At Treblinka there was a large camp divided into two sections, one for Jews, one for Poles. The residents of Sokolov had heard that terrible things were happening in Treblinka, but they had no precise information.

In Sokolov Friedrich stumbled upon our comrade, Azriel Wallach, [Soviet foreign minister] Maxim Litvinov's nephew, who had just escaped from Treblinka. He was in terrible shape, badly bruised, bleeding, his clothes in shreds. From Wallach, Friedrich learned that all the Jews brought to Treblinka were immediately put to death. They were unloaded from the trains and told that they were to be bathed and cleaned before being taken to their quarters and assigned to work. Then they were led into large hermetically sealed chambers and gassed. Wallach had been picked up in Warsaw. He had been shipped to Treblinka but had been spared from immediate death to work at cleaning up the freight cars, and had managed to escape.

With this information, Friedrich returned to Warsaw. We immediately published the gruesome report in a special edition of *Storm*. We were thus able to give the ghetto an eyewitness account of what actually happened to the daily trainloads of deportees.

Once again *Storm* warned: “Do not be deceived. Throw off your illusions! You are being taken to death and extermination. Do not let them destroy you! Do not give yourselves voluntarily into the hands of your executioners.”<sup>148</sup>

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<sup>147</sup> David Wdowinski, *And We Are Not Saved* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1985), 53, 54–55.

<sup>148</sup> Bernard Goldstein, *The Stars Bear Witness* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1950), 118. See also Vladka Meed, *On Both Sides of the Wall: Memoirs from the Warsaw Ghetto* (New York: Holocaust Library, 1979), 103–104; Jacob Celemenski, *Elegy For My People: Memoirs of an Underground Courier of the Jewish Labor Bund in Nazi-Occupied Poland 1939–45* (Melbourne: The Jacob Celemenski Memorial Trust, 2000), 124; Daniel Blatman, *En direct du ghetto: La presse clandestine juive dans le ghetto de Varsovie (1940–1943)* (Paris: Cerf; Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2005), 476–81. Examples of assistance received from farmers and railway workers by escapees from Treblinka or, more frequently, from trains headed there, are plentiful, despite the frequent manhunts carried out by the Germans looking for Jews. In his account dated May 1994 (reproduced in this compilation), Joseph S. Kutzzeba writes: “During the first days of September 1942, at the age of 14, I jumped out of a moving train destined for Treblinka, through an opening (window) of a cattle car loaded to capacity with Jews from the Warsaw Ghetto. Wandering over fields, forests and villages, at first in the vicinity of Wołomin, and later of Zambrów, I found myself, in late November, in the area of Hodyszewo (near Łomża). Throughout my wandering, the peasants for the most part were amenable to put me up for the night and to feed me—some either suspecting my origins or pressing me to admit it.” Ruth Altbeker Cyprus, who jumped from a train headed for Treblinka, recalls various instances of assistance from railway guards, villagers, passers-by, passengers, and even a gang of robbers. See Ruth Altbeker Cyprus, *A Jump for Life: A Jump For Life: A Survivor's Journal from Nazi-Occupied Poland* (New York: Continuum, 1997), 97, 102–110. A Jew who escaped from the Treblinka death camp recalled the help he received from peasants: “I was free. I walked to a village. ... I knocked to ask for bread. The peasants looked at me in silence. ‘Bread, bread.’ They saw my red hands, torn jacket, worn-out slippers, and handed me some hard, gray crusts. A peasant woman, huddled in shawls, gave me a bowl of hot milk and a bag. We didn't talk: my body had turned red and blue from the blows and the cold, and my clothes, everything proclaimed *Jew!* But they gave me bread. Thank you Polish peasants. I slept in a stable near the animals, taking a little

## From a wartime report by Yitzhak Zuckerman, a member of the Jewish underground:

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warm milk from the cow in the morning. My bag filled with bread.” See Martin Gray, with Max Gallo, *For Those I Loved* (Boston and Toronto: Little, Brown, 1972), 178. A.L. Bombe, an escapee from Treblinka, was helped by several peasants in the area: “Lying in the field, we saw a peasant in a wagon go by. We called him over and told him that we had escaped from Treblinka and, perhaps, it would be possible if he could take us into his barn. ... In the end, we convinced him and he showed us his barn in the distance and we went inside. But he doesn’t know of anything. And if they would ask, we should say that we sneaked in. That is what we did. We were there the entire day. At night, the head of the village came and told us that he would lead us out of the village and show us the way to go. He indeed took us to the main road, and we traveled all night until the morning. In the morning, we came to a village. We saw, in front of a house, that a woman opens the door. We went over to the house and the woman told us to come in. We were there for a week. The second week, we were at the friend of the peasant in the same village. I remember this peasant’s name: Piotr Supel. ... This was in the village Zagradniki [Ogrodniki] near Ostrovek Vengravski [Ostrówek Węgrowski]. The peasant traveled with us to Warsaw.” See A.L. Bombe, “My Escape from Treblinka,” *Czestochov: A New Supplement to the Book “Czenstochover Yidn”*, Internet: <<http://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/Czestochowa/Czestochowa.html>>, translation of S.D. Singer, ed., *Tshenstokhover: Naye tsugob-material tsum bukh “Tshenstokhover Yidn”* (New York: United Relief Committee in New York, 1958), 57ff. Abraham Kolski escaped from Treblinka with nine other friends during the uprising on August 2, 1943; they were hidden in a cellar of a home near the camp for the remainder of the war. See the oral history interview with Abraham Kolski, by Linda Gordon Kuzmack, March 29, 1990, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Washington, D.C. In spite of the death penalty for the slightest Polish assistance to Jews, local Polish peasants helped Samuel Willenberg on no less than nine separate occasions in the first days after his escape from Treblinka. See Samuel Willenberg, *Surviving Treblinka* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell in association with the Institute for Polish-Jewish Studies, 1989), 143–48. The brothers Sandor and Shalom Spector jumped out of two separate trains headed for Treblinka and both of them survived with the help of friendly Poles. See Sandor Spector, “I Jumped From the Death Trains,” in Yerachmiel Moorstein, ed., *Zelva Memorial Book* (Malwah, New Jersey: Jacob Solomon Berger, 1992), 81–82. According to three separate testimonies by Jewish escapees from the death camps of Treblinka and Sobibór, they “walked about the villages” where they were “known to everybody,” including the farmhands and school children, without being denounced. See Teresa Prekerowa, “Stosunek ludności polskiej do żydowskich uciekinierów z obozów zagłady w Treblince, Sobiborze i Bełżcu w świetle relacji żydowskich i polskich,” *Biuletyn Głównej Komisji Badania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu—Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej*, vol. 35 (1993), 108. For additional accounts of Jews who escaped from Treblinka, or trains headed there, and who returned safely to their homes with the aid of random Poles along the way, see the account of David Wolf in *Entertainment and Ball Given by the United Wisoko-Litowsker and Woltchiner Relief*, Internet: <<http://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/Vysokoye/Vysokoye.html>>, translation of Samuel Levine and Morris Gervitz, eds., *Yisker zhurnal gevidmet diumgekumene fun Visoka un Voltshin* (New York: United Wisoko-Litowsker and Woltchiner Relief, 1948); Alexander Donat, ed., *The Death Camp at Treblinka: A Documentary* (New York: Holocaust Library, 1979), 135, 142, 248–89 (one of the Poles who helped was a member of a rightist-nationalist organization); Michał Grynberg, *Księga sprawiedliwych* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 1993), 438–39, 481; Richard Glazer, *Trap With a Green Fence: Survival in Treblinka* (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1995), 149–53 (the author passed through a long series of localities and when he was finally caught it was not be a Pole but by a Volksdeutsche); Alina Bacall-Zwirn and Jared Stark, *No Common Place: The Holocaust Testimony of Alina Bacall-Zwirn* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1999), 32–35; Eddi Weinstein, *Quenched Steel: The Story of an Escape from Treblinka* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2002); Irene Shapiro, *Revisiting the Shadows: Memoirs from War-torn Poland to the Statue of Liberty* (Elk River, Minnesota: DeForest Press, 2004), 189–90; Israel Gutman and Sara Bender, eds., *The Encyclopedia of the Righteous Among the Nations: Rescuers of Jews during the Holocaust* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2004), vol. 4: *Poland*, Part 1, 246, 348, 362–63, 364, 366–65, 384, and vol. 5: *Poland*, Part 2, p.703; Michael Maik, *Deliverance: The Diary of Michael Maik. A True Story* (Kedumim, Israel: Keterpress Enterprises, 2004), 87; Halina Grubowska, *Haneczko, musisz przeżyć* (Montreal: Polish-Jewish Heritage Foundation of Canada, 2007), 73–74; Israel Cymlich and Oscar Strawczynski, *Escaping Hell in Treblinka* (New York and Jerusalem: Yad Vashem and The Holocaust Survivors’ Memoirs Project, 2007), 188; Samuel D. Kassow, *Who Will Write Our History? Emanuel Ringblum, the Warsaw Ghetto, and the Oyneg Shabes Archive* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2007), 310. Treblinka escapee Samuel Willenberg stresses the risks involved in assisting Jews. When a group of Jews broke out of Treblinka, the Germans mobilized their forces (including the Ukrainian camp guards) and conducted a thorough search of the entire area, setting up checkpoints on the roads and combing nearby villages and searching villagers’ homes. See Willenberg, *Surviving Treblinka*, 25, 144. Richard Glazer notes that bandit gangs roamed around robbing and posing as partisans, “with nothing in common with partisans than the name.” See Glazer, *Trap With A Green Fence*, 105. Escapees from Treblinka also had to contend with being stripped of their money by unscrupulous fellow Jews. See Alexander Donat, ed., *The Death Camp Treblinka: A Documentary History* (New York: Holocaust Library, 1979), 141–42.

The liquidation of the Jews in the Government-General began at Passover 1942. The first victims were the Jews of the city of Lublin, and shortly after that the Jews of the whole District of Lublin. There were evacuated to Belzec [Bełżec], and there they were killed in the new gas-chambers that had been built specially for this purpose. The Jewish Underground newspapers gave detailed descriptions of this mass slaughter. But [the Jews of] Warsaw did not believe it! Common human sense could not understand that it was possible to exterminate tens and hundreds of thousands of Jews. They decided that the Jews were being transported for agricultural work in the parts of Russia occupied by the Germans. ... The Jewish press was denounced and charged with causing panic, although the *descriptions* of the “rooting out” of the population corresponded accurately to the reality. Not only abroad were the crimes of the Germans received with disbelief, but even here, close by Ponary, Chełmno [Chełmno], Belzec and Treblinka, did this information get no hearing!<sup>149</sup>

### **Samuel Kassow, American historian:**

As other refugees from Vilna [Wilno] arrived in Warsaw, they, too, were interviewed by the Oyneg Shabes [i.e., the secret ghetto archive] staff ... Rabbi [Shimon] Huberband ... took down a young woman’s reports of [the mass] shootings in Ponar [Ponary outside Wilno] ...

When a group that represented different Vilna youth movements arrived in Warsaw in December 1941, “not a single person believed their stories about the outright extermination of Jews, and no one wants a war or a revolt against the Germans.”

It was the arrival of “Szlamek.” A religious Jew from Izbica [Izbica Kujawska near Koło], in late January 1942 that finally dispelled whatever doubts the Oyneg Shabes or Ringelblum might have had about German plans. Szlamek was an escapee from Chełmno, the killing installation in the Warthegau that had begun murdering Jews in gas vans in December 1941. Szlamek had worked in the Chełmno Sonderkommando and gave the Oyneg Shabes the first eyewitness testimony from a German death camp. ...

The first few days, Szlamek remembered, the victims were gypsies; then transports of Jews began arriving from nearby towns and from the Lodz [Łódź] Ghetto. ... Szlamek gave a detailed account of how Chełmno operated, and how the Germans fooled the victims until the very last moment. ... Szlamek’s account gained credibility through its wealth of personal detail. ...

[After his escape] Szlamek knocked on the door of a Polish peasant hut and received food and directions to the nearest settlement, Grabów. In Grabów, Szlamek immediately asked to see the rabbi, Jacob Shulman. ... On his way to Warsaw in late January 1942, Szlamek, using the name Jacob Grojanowski, spread the news in the various ghettos that he passed through.

Rabbi Shulman dispatched letters of warning to other towns, including Warsaw and Lodz. In his letter to relatives in Warsaw ... Rabbi Shulman stressed that there was not a minute to lose. Warsaw Jewry, he reminded his relatives, was still a force to be reckoned with, the largest Jewish community in Europe. The Jews now “had to alarm the world and devise methods and stratagems to save those threatened by the terrible decree.” ...

The Oyneg Shabes relayed Szlamek’s account of Chełmno to other leaders in the ghetto. ... Given that the Oyneg Shabes executive committee was directly linked to the Bund, the Zionists, the Joint, and the youth movements, Szlamek’s story soon became common knowledge among the political and cultural leadership of the ghetto.

The leaders of the Oyneg Shabes knew that the Germans would spare no effort to track down Szlamek as well as two other escapees from Chełmno and decided to send him out of the Warsaw Ghetto to Zamość,

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<sup>149</sup> From a report dated March 1944, and sent to London on Mat 24, 1944, through the Polish Underground, reproduced in Yitzhak Arad, Yisrael Gutman, and Abraham Margalio, ed., *Documents on the Holocaust: Selected Sources on the Destruction of the Jews of Germany and Austria, Poland, and the Soviet Union* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1981), 277–78.

where he had a sister-in-law. ... No sooner did Szlamek arrive in Zamość in 1942 than he sent a letter imploring Wasser to get him back to Warsaw. ... In that same letter, written between April 5 and 12, Szlamek added chilling news. The Germans, he wrote, had built another death camp very close to Zamość, near the town of Bełżec. ... Wasser wrote back, but it was too late: Szlamek was gassed in Bełżec along with the other Jews of Zamość. ...

The Oyneg Shabbes also received news of new German death camps in Sobibór and Treblinka. One letter from Włodawa, written in Yiddish, was smuggled into the Warsaw Ghetto sometime in June 1942. It reported the gassing of the Jews of Włodawa in Sobibór in May 1942. ... Shortly thereafter Eliyahu Gutkowski debriefed two women couriers (Frumka Plotnicka and Chava Folman) who corroborated the accounts of Sobibór.

For the political parties and the youth movements in the ghetto, the news from Vilna, from Chełmno, from Lublin, and from other towns began a period of painful stocktaking. Disbelief and skepticism slowly yielded to the realization that Warsaw's turn would come. ... Major youth movements now began to reach out to the wider ghetto population, circulating publications that reported the mass killings. Dror, for example, started to publish a new underground newspaper, *Yedies* (The news), based on information provided by Gutkowski and the Oyneg Shabbes. In a hard-hitting June 1942 article, *Yedies* criticized the Jews of the Warsaw Ghetto for their determination to shrug off bad news and try to live a normal life, and chided communal and political leaders for continuing to worry about schools and soup kitchens. All that mattered now, the article warned, was to accept the truth and prepare for resistance. (The entire arsenal of the Dror and Hashomer combined consisted of a few pistols at that time.)

The growing realization that the Germans had changed their plans for the Jews injected a new sense of urgency into attempts to unite the political parties and the youth movements in order to prepare for resistance. The Zionist youth movements took the lead by inviting representatives of major political parties and youth groups to a joint meeting in March 1942. The meeting included representatives from Dror, Hashomer Hatzair, the Right and Left Poalei Tsiyon, and the Bund. According to [Yitzhak] Zuckerman, the agenda included the establishment of a Jewish fighting organization, the formation of a Jewish body that could negotiate with the Polish underground, and the preparation of a unit on the Aryan side that would procure and manufacture arms. ...

Since the Bund was the best-organized political party and had the best contacts with the Polish underground, its cooperation was essential to the establishment of any viable Jewish fighting organization and to any supply of arms. At the March meeting, however, citing its traditional doctrinal unwillingness to collaborate with other Jewish parties, the Bund refused to be part of a joint organization.

Although the Bund's attitude was a bitter disappointment, high hopes came from another direction—the Communists and their newly organized Polish Workers Party (PPR). For the leaders of both the Right and Left Poalei Tsiyon and of the youth movements, the Communists represented a vital bridge to the Soviet Union and its Red Army, a guarantee that the Jews in the ghetto were not alone. ... it was mainly in the Warsaw Ghetto that the PPR, organized in January 1942, could find even a modicum of support. The leaders of the PPR opened talks with the LPZ and the two groups in turn made overtures to the Hashomer, Dror, and the Right Poalei Tsiyon [Zion]. Together these organizations set up an Anti-Fascist Bloc. The non-Communists at this time had an exaggerated idea of the actual strength of the PPR and its access to weapons and Soviet support. ... Militarily the Anti-Fascist Bloc accomplished nothing. Its pro-Soviet orientation and the Bund boycott precluded any hope of support from the Polish underground ... The PPR had virtually no weapons and no support among the Polish population. Making matters worse, the Germans penetrated the PPR and arrested [its leader] Andrzej Schmidt. This crippled the Bloc's ability to recruit and train fighters. Contrary to communist postwar propaganda, therefore, the bloc was not the organizational precursor to the Jewish fighting organization that was founded by the Zionist youth groups in August 1942.<sup>150</sup>

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<sup>150</sup> Samuel D. Kassow, *Who Will Write Our History? Emanuel Ringelblum, the Warsaw Ghetto, and the Oyneg Shabbes Archive* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2007), 286–95.

### **Adek Stein (Bulkowstein) brings back news of killing at Treblinka:**

Adek Stein's fighting spirit fuelled his determination to survive. Neither the Jews in the Warsaw ghetto nor the Germans after the war could believe what he did. "With no help from the rest of the world, I did the impossible," he declared. In August 1942 he escaped from Treblinka death camp.

He had smelled the horror of the gas chambers, saw thousands marched to their death and was forced to sort their left-over clothing. He had seen a hundred of his fellow workers shot every night and he knew his time was running out. While loading a train with the clothes of those who had been killed, he hid himself in a wagon amongst the clothes. Days later, he managed to jump off the train during the night and make it back to the Warsaw ghetto. He told the Jewish Council there of the horrors that he had witnessed. No one would believe him. Ever incredulous, he said, "I was accused of spreading gruesome propaganda."<sup>151</sup>

### **Martin Gilbert, British historian:**

In Warsaw, an SS Major, Hermann Höfle, had been appointed Plenipotentiary in charge of deportations. On July 22 [1942] he went to see the Chairman of the Jewish Council, Adam Czerniakow, who noted in his diary Höfle's order 'that all Jews, irrespective of sex and age, with certain exceptions, will be deported to the East. By 4 p.m. today a contingent of six thousand people must be provided. And this (at the minimum) will be the daily quota.' ...

That same day, July 22, the ghetto walls were surrounded by Ukrainian and Latvian guards, in SS uniforms, armed, and at twenty-five-yard intervals. The round-up and deportation of Jews from Warsaw now began. ... The deportations from Warsaw continued, almost without pause, until September 12. In those seven weeks, a total of 265,000 Jews were sent by train for 'resettlement in the East'. Their actual destination was Treblinka, and its three gas-chambers. Death, not slave labour, was their fate. It was the largest slaughter of a single community, Jewish or non-Jewish, in the Second World War. ...

Every day, several thousand Jews were taken from their homes or seized in the streets [by the Jewish police], and then marched on foot, or forced into trucks or horse-drawn carts and driven, to the Umschlagplatz. Those whom the Germans wished to keep in the ghetto, at productive work, were issued with a special employment card, or *Ausweis*. ... Anyone without such a card was deported. ...

Such scenes were repeated every day, in every street. Many Jews, resisting or fleeing, were killed on the spot, often by Ukrainian, Latvian and Lithuanian volunteers, or their German SS officers. ...

In Warsaw, on September 3, disaster struck the fledgling Jewish Fighting Organization. One of their leaders, Yisrael Zeltzer, had already been arrested with a group of youngsters. Then, on September 3, Joseph Kaplan, another of its leaders, was arrested. His colleague Shmuel Braslaw, while trying to find out where Kaplan was being held, was stopped on the street by uniformed Germans. He tried to pull a jackknife out of his pocket but was shot on the spot. Alarmed, Yitzhak Zuckerman and the remaining leaders decided to transfer their 'treasure', the small cache of grenades and revolvers which they had been able to assemble, to a new hiding place. The 'treasure', hidden in a sack of vegetables, was being carried to its new hiding place by Reginka Justman when she was stopped by a sentry, the arms were seized, and Reginka shot. ...

Some suggested going out on the streets, to attack the Germans with their bare hands, and die. But Yitzhak Zuckerman and Zivia Lubetkin persuaded them to try to rebuild the broken force. ...

The following night, September 12, was the eve of the Day of Atonement. During the day, a further 2,196 Warsaw Jews, most of them women and children, were rounded up, sent to Treblinka, and gassed, bringing the total number of deportees in the previous seven weeks to 253,741. There were now, in the Warsaw

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<sup>151</sup> Australian Memories of the Holocaust, Internet: <[http://www.holocaust.com.au/mm/j\\_adek.htm](http://www.holocaust.com.au/mm/j_adek.htm)>.

ghetto, no more than fifty-five thousand Jews, most of them 'exempt workers', some, 'wildcats' in hiding. A further eight thousand Jews had managed to cross illegally from the ghetto to 'Aryan' Warsaw.<sup>152</sup>

### **Chaim Lazar, chronicler of the Jewish Military Organization:**

The Jews due for deportation were to be assembled at the "Umschlagplatz", a square outside the Jewish hospital on Stawki St., and thence marched to the "Transferstelle" to board the waiting railway trains. The walls of the ghetto were soon covered with posters proclaiming the transfer of the Jewish population for resettlement in the east, and the Jewish Police began rounding up the deportees.

The first day's quota was easily filled. All the Jewish Police had to do was to empty the relief centres of their destitute inmates, empty the Gęsia St. Gaol of the prisoners serving terms for various offences, round up the beggars in the streets and remove the chronically-ill patients from the hospital. They formed a wretched procession through the streets of the ghetto ... [Presumably the detested Gypsies in the ghetto were seized during the early stage of the deportation.]

At first, the Germans merely looked on as the Jewish Police carried out the deportations under the command of Adv. Jakob Leikin. ...

After Czerniakow's death [Czerniakow, the chairman of the Judenrat, committed suicide on July 23], the Jewish Police assumed complete control; they forced the Judenrat officials to cooperate by threatening to send them, too, to the Umschlagplatz unless they helped fill the daily quota of victims.

To anticipate and prevent any possible resistance that might arise, the deportation office ... saw to the circulation of rumour through Jewish Gestapo beachmen, to the effect that the deportation would only last for three days and applied solely to destitute persons who were unfit for work, and that after these unproductive elements had been sent off, all those remaining in the ghetto would be employed on essential jobs for the German war effort. ...

A frenzied search, bordering on psychosis, now began for jobs in the German workshops ... Unscrupulous profiteers, quick to take advantage of the panic, organized "new" workshops and sold hundreds of work-cards at exorbitant prices.<sup>153</sup> ...

But the masses no longer flocked there 'of their own accord', obliging the Jewish Police to carry out the *Aktions* by force. The policemen would cordon off a building and drag all the tenants down to the courtyard, where their paper were checked; all those who had work-cards testifying that they were employed in a German factory were set free, and the others taken off to the Umschlagplatz. Sometimes the number of persons detained for deportation exceeded the quota, in which case they were kept waiting for one day or more in the open, or in the former Czysta Hospital building, until there was room for them in the death wagons that would convey them to Treblinka. ...

To encourage Jewish policemen to do their jobs properly, their most distant relatives were furnished with documents exempting them from being deported. Thus encouraged, the policemen would beat their victims mercilessly, hunt them down and drag them out of their places of hiding and frequently turn in a larger number of deportees than was called for.<sup>154</sup>

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<sup>152</sup> Martin Gilbert, *The Holocaust: The Jewish Tragedy* (Glasgow: William Collins, 1986), 388–89, 390–91, 451–52, 462.

<sup>153</sup> Previously, the well-to-do had hired the poor to substitute for them when the Judenrat was required to supply forced labour. Though the poor needed the tiny sums they earned, they resented the fact that the rich didn't work. Also, the need to find substitutes led to graft, as foremen saw an opportunity for bribes to supplement their income. See Yisrael Gutman, *The Jews of Warsaw, 1939–1945: Ghetto, Underground, Revolt* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982), 22–23.

<sup>154</sup> Chaim Lazar Litai, *Muranowska 7: The Warsaw Ghetto Rising* (Tel Aviv: Massada–P.E.C. Press, 1966), 103–107.

It was members of the Jewish Police and functionaries of the Jewish ghetto institutions particularly who carried out these degrading tasks of hunting down their fellow-men in every nook, cranny, attic and cellar, beating and robbing those they discovered and actually trading in human lives.<sup>155</sup>

**Jews try to avoid deportation by obtaining work cards, as described by Bernard Goldstein, a Bundist activist, who also describes the role of the Jewish police:**

In panic everyone hunted for a working card to prove that he was employed somewhere, was productive, and did not come within the deplorable classification. Without some such document even a skilled worker was lost. Great sums of money, diamonds, gold jewelry, whatever one could lay hands on, were used to buy a working card, a permit to enter a factory. People paid Germans and Volksdeutsche tremendous sums for their influence in obtaining licenses to become partners in shops and factories. Some bought machinery from the Germans and opened up various kinds of small manufacturing establishments.

False-working-card mills sprang up. We ourselves established a counterfeiting plant to forge working cards. Since the employee of Zhitos [CENTOS], the Judenrat, and similar institutions were exempt from deportation, we duplicated and distributed them among comrades who had no papers. A working card became a talisman against death.<sup>156</sup>

In front of the jail on Gensha [Gęsia] Street stood rows of Jewish police; behind them were armed Germans, Ukrainians, and Letts. The street soon filled with a ragged mob whose starved yellow faces bobbed up and down as they strained to get a better view.

The jail was being emptied—liquidated. All the prisoners, among them many already sentenced to death for smuggling or other offence, were being deported. The mob crowded closer. Everyone wanted to see who would be led from the jail, what condition they would be in, where they would be taken.

... The column continued on its way to the waiting freight cars at the Umschlagplatz.

At the same time, the police were busy at the places where the homeless congregated—those who had not been able to find lodgings, the refugees from the provinces who were too late to find a corner in the overcrowded ghetto. Like madmen, the Jewish police, the SS men, the gendarmes, dragged them into the line of the march. Sick and aged, women and children, were pursued like dogs and thrown into the wagons, receiving a thorough beating in the process.<sup>157</sup>

The German and Czech Jews were evacuated in a body. They were ordered to report with all their property at the Umschlagplatz. ... Long rows of rickshas, piled high with fine leather suitcases, beautiful bedding, and expensive household effects rolled down the street. Sitting in them or walking alongside were the self-assured, respectable, well-dressed German and Czech Jews. All of them, without exception, allowed themselves to be evacuated. They had consistently remained aloof, refusing to mingle with the other Jews, although they lived within the confines of the ghetto. They had considered themselves a superior society, not to be compared to the “Eastern Jews,” and they knew little or nothing of the rumors, discussions, wrangling, and doubts aroused by the deportations.

The Nazis practiced a similar deception on the *Ausländer*, the Jews who held passports of neutral countries.  
...

While calling for volunteers and deceiving the *Ausländer*, the Nazis directed a terrifying hunt in the ghetto. The Jewish police would block off entire sections and break into the houses, searching, rummaging, seeking out hiding places, and dragging thousands of victims to the Umschlagplatz. The hunt would start at seven in the morning and end at six in the evening.

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<sup>155</sup> Ibid., 181.

<sup>156</sup> Bernard Goldstein, *The Stars Bear Witness* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1950), 110.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid., 113–14.

It was horrible to watch. Children hung onto their fathers, wives to their husbands. They grabbed at pieces of furniture, doorjambs, anything to keep from being dragged away by the police. They clawed at their captors, fighting against death with hopeless desperation. All day, somewhere, one could hear the sounds of the gruesome chase. The cries and weeping of the unfortunates were mixed with the violent abuse and wild shouts of the police.

Some, who had money, were able to bribe the police, buy some time, while the hunt went on, perhaps to reach them again tomorrow.<sup>158</sup>

The same scenes occurred day after day. From seven in the morning until six in the evening there were raids, blockades, shootings in the street, death marches to the Umschlagplatz. ...

At eight o'clock one morning we heard the wild rush of heavy boots, accompanied by shooting, shouts, and screaming: pandemonium again. Our house was blockaded. Through all the entrances, over all the stairways, poured the Jewish police. The building resounded with the sounds of smashing doors and shattering windows. ...

For four or five days we lay hidden in Erkin's apartment. Every morning from our window which looked out on Ogradova [Ogradowa] we watched the Jewish police assemble in front of their headquarters. Armed with clubs, they were divided into two groups. One marched out of the police yard through a gate into Leshno [Leszno] in the greater ghetto. The second went through Ogradova in the direction of the Zhelazna [Żelazna] bridge to the small ghetto. So began each day's bloody chase.

It was painful to watch them. My heart sank and my eyes filled with tears when I saw among these Jewish hunting dogs, employees of the Judenrat wearing armbands with the legend "*Aussiedelungs Hilfe*."

The Germans had demanded that all employees of the social institutions who were exempt from deportations assist the Jewish police in carrying out their grim assignments. Whoever failed to do so would face deportation himself. Delegates from all social institutions, such as Zhitos, Centos, and Tos had met to determine their course. After long and painful debate, they had voted against any participation in the selection. The employees of the Judenrat, however, had accepted the shameful job. Now I watched them run with the pack-hounds pursuing their own brothers, even their own parents. ...

We would lie for hours at our little observation points, unable to tear our eyes from the streets below. Groups of Germans, Ukrainians, and Jewish police, armed with axes and crowbars, roamed about, smashing doors and windows, hunting for human loot. Wherever they went, they stole whatever was valuable enough to carry away. The near-by streets were deserted. Only the dull blows of the axes and crowbars broke the fearful silence. Now and then we would see dead or badly wounded bodies lying unattended in the street.<sup>159</sup>

#### **Chaim Kaplan describes the round-ups in the ghetto in his wartime diary:**

At the beginning ... a directive was issued to the *Judenrat* to deport 6,000 a day; in point of fact they are now deporting close to 10,000. The Jewish police, whose cruelty is no less than that of the Nazis, deliver to the "transfer point" on Stawki Street more than the quota to which the *Judenrat* obligated itself. Sometimes there are several thousand people waiting a day or two to be transported because of a shortage of railroad cars. Word has gotten around that the Nazis are satisfied that the extermination of the Jews is being carried out with all requisite efficiency. This deed is being done by the Jewish slaughterers.<sup>160</sup>

[July 28, 1942]: Anyone who could see the expulsion from Warsaw with his own eyes would have his heart broken. The ghetto has turned into an inferno. Men have become beasts. Everyone is but a step away from

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<sup>158</sup> Ibid., 116–17.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid., 119–22.

<sup>160</sup> Abraham I. Katsh, ed., *Scroll of Agony: The Warsaw Diary of Chaim A. Kaplan* (New York: Macmillan; London: Collier-Macmillan, 1965), 324.

deportation; people are being hunted down in the streets like animals in the forest. It is the Jewish police who are cruelest toward the condemned. Sometimes a blockade is made of a particular house, sometimes of a whole block of houses. In every building earmarked for destruction they begin to make the rounds of the apartments and to demand documents. Whoever has neither documents that entitle him to remain in the ghetto nor money for bribes is told to make a bundle weighing 15 kilos—and on to the transport which stands near the gate. Whenever a house is blockaded a panic arises that is beyond the imagination. Residents who have neither documents nor money hide in nooks and crannies, in the cellars and in the attics. When there is a means of passage between one courtyard and another the fugitives begin jumping over the roofs and fences at the risk of their lives ... But all these methods only delay the inevitable, and in the end the police take men, women, and children. The destitute and impoverished are the first to be deported. In an instant the truck becomes crowded. ... Their cries and wails tear the heart out.

The children, in particular, rend the heavens with their cries. The old people and the middle-aged deportees accept the judgment in silent submission and stand with their small parcels under their arms. But there is no limit to the sorrow and tears of the young women; sometimes one of them makes an attempt to slip out of grasp of her captors, and then a terrible battle begins. At such times the horrible scene reaches its peak. The two sides fight, wrestle. On one side a woman with wild hair and a torn blouse rages with the last of her strength at the Jewish thieves, trying to escape from their hands. Anger flows from her mouth and she is like a lioness ready for the kill. And on the other side the two policemen, her “brothers in misfortune,” who pull her back to her death. It is obvious that the police win. ...

But isolated incidents don't hold up the operation. The police do what is incumbent upon them. After the completion of the arrests in one house, they move on to another. The *Judenrat* prepares a daily list of houses in which blockades will be made that day. And here a new source of income is opened for the graft-chasing police. The wealthy and the middle class have yet to be brought to the transports. For those who have no documents, banknotes turn into documents. There is almost a fixed price for ransom, but for some it is cheaper, all according to the class of the ransomed one and the number of people in his household.<sup>161</sup>

[July 29, 1942]: The expulsion is reaching its peak. It increases from day to day. The Nazis are satisfied with the work of the Jewish police, the plague of the Jewish organism, and the police too are satisfied: the Nazis, because through industry and cruelty the police have succeeded in supplying exiles above and beyond the daily quota originally specified, and close to 70,000 people have already gone into exile; the police, because they are lining their pockets. This income is fortuitous and apparently not dangerous. The Nazis don't bother about details. ... In any event, the respite that the bribe creates is only temporary. A house which is blockaded today can be blockaded tomorrow too, and the next day, and so on ad infinitum. A man who was released once can be caught again—even by the same policeman who set let him go the first time—especially since the police have nearly 2,400 dogs. The wives of the policemen know no bounds. Besides taking bribes, they also steal and rob. How? They order the inhabitants of the house to go down, while they themselves remain in the unguarded apartment. Thus they profit from all that is abandoned.

This criminal police force is the child of the *Judenrat*. Like mother, like daughter. With their misdeeds they besmirch the name of Polish Jewry which was stained even without this. At the transfer point where the exiles are collected, the policemen traffic in bread. Those loaves of bread, which the police force gets in abundance free of charge, are sold to the hungry and oppressed captives at 80 zloty [zloty] a loaf. For delivering a letter, ten zloty. They are growing rich on these profits, and for the time being they are experiencing the eternal reward in this life—until the Nazis take pity on them as well. Their day will come, and they too will be destroyed, but they will be the last. ...

Immediately a great movement arose to set up factories to work for the good of the German army, and the German commandant invited German firms to establish branches in the General Government. The Jewish shop-factories received raw materials from these firms and began to manufacture for each one what was required to meet their obligations to the commandant. In this way factories for various trades were opened which employed tens of thousands of people. ... Henceforward, only one who is enrolled as a worker in

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<sup>161</sup> Abraham I. Katsh, ed., *Scroll of Agony: The Warsaw Diary of Chaim A. Kaplan* (New York: Macmillan; London: Collier-Macmillan, 1965), 325–27.

one of the factories under the protection of some German firm has the right to remain in the ghetto. A certificate (*Ausweis*) granted by a firm of the Reich has the power to save its bearer from expulsion ... Within a week, tens of thousands of tradesmen, peddlers, unemployed men, idlers, spreaders of false rumors, and bums have been turned into creative workers, into a productive element; they sit hunched over a needle, sewing buttons on a pair of army pants.

The entire ghetto is a mammoth factory producing for the good of the German army. We have become a laughingstock!<sup>162</sup>

[July 30, 1942]: There is one category among those “insured” against expulsion whose eyes reflect fear, who despite the documents in their pockets, never go out of the doors of their houses ... These are “officials” of the Jewish Self-Aid Society, who numbered over two thousand at the outbreak of the catastrophe. ... Before the expulsion, the Self-Aid employed about four hundred people who were registered with the labor office ... Thousands of people were left without legal protection and doomed to exile. Accordingly, the directors of the society, with the consent of the *Judenrat*, decided to provide their friends with a legal haven in the form of “legitimizations,” documents stating that So-and-so was an official of the society. ... A veritable factory for legitimizations was set up. Anyone who had had any connection whatever with the activities of the society ... received certification as one of its officials.

Within three days, over two thousand certificates were prepared and distributed ... In point of fact it did save many people. They were seized and later released.<sup>163</sup>

[July 31, 1942]: The hunting goes on full force. ... The Jewish police are fulfilling their humane duty in the best possible manner, and the Nazis are so pleased with their work that some of them are being sent to Radom and Kielce, where expulsions have now been ordered as well. ...

More factories are established every day. This is the only source of salvation now ... Many people scurry to register for the factories. ... Everyone is pushing his way into a “shop” and is prepared to sell all his possessions and give away his last cent, if only to be considered productive. ...

None of the newly erected factories has any validity or future unless they are incorporated into the network of factories of some German firm; and this privilege too must be bought with cash from the Germans, who demand immense sums in return for the right to work for the German army.<sup>164</sup>

### **Vladka Meed describes the round-ups in the ghetto:**

The Jewish police were now very important people in the Warsaw ghetto. The Nazis relied on them to carry out their roundups, to control employment cards, and to load unemployed Jews into the wagons and transport them to the waiting railway cars. Obviously, no one was very fond of the police; even in better days they had been known to badger and harass people in their daily lives by insisting on rigid adherence to the Nazi regulations. Now they had become even more hostile and aggressive. They were feared, but at the same time they were the objects of envy. For one thing, the Jewish police were secure; even the Germans thus far had left their relatives alone. They were never threatened with “resettlement.”

One afternoon, during the first week of the deportation, I happened to be at home with my mother when a column of police suddenly sealed off our building. All residents were ordered to go down and assemble in the courtyard. In their alarm, people tried to snatch up a few belongings, but the raiders, some wearing white armbands reading “*Judenrat*,” told them, “You’ll have time to pick up your things when the wagons get here.” So, it was no longer only police, but also functionaries of the *Judenrat*, who had been delegated to assist in the task of “resettlement.”

The luckless residents of the building submitted to the orders of these men. Without protest, they were herded roughly down the stairs. With the callous arrogance of the privileged, the Jewish police dragged

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<sup>162</sup> *Ibid.*, 329–31.

<sup>163</sup> *Ibid.*, 332–33.

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid.*, 333–34.

children, the elderly and the ailing down to the courtyard. Although a number of the residents had employment cards, the faces of all were pale with fear. Families clung together for whatever comfort they might be in closeness.

The elderly were pushed to the rear, while the young were lined up in front. Children snuggled up close to the adults. Hearts pounding, the distraught residents prepared for the inspection. Several women brushed past rudely and walked up to the police, flaunting their employment cards.

“These women are going to be released immediately,” one of the bystanders muttered. “Their husbands are in the police force.” And, indeed, as the troopers saw these cards, their arrogance softened; they smiled and motioned to the women to return to their homes. Envious glances followed them as they hastened off.

Three men approached the police. Someone behind me whispered that they were the richest Jews of our building. It was easy to guess their intention was bribery. The police never objected to having their palms greased. ...

But the Jews who were about to be deported did not move. Ashen white with fear, they begged the police for mercy. ...

It was no use. The men in the uniform ignored their anguish. A few of the less hardened, visible distressed by the scene, walked out of the courtyard.

We stood as though turned to stone. Near me someone muttered, “Dear God! Put an end to this misery!” Yet not one of the hundred and fifty-odd Jews who had been spared many any effort to help. They did not want to jeopardize their own good fortunes. One group gave thanks to the Lord for His Mercy; the other, defeated and resigned to their fate, handed over their sacks and baskets, and climbed slowly into the waiting wagons. From there, they stared out at the remaining crowd. Some of them broke into cries of despair. What grief was reflected in their eyes! What mute reproach! We stood there, stunned, silent and conscience-stricken. ...

But why had no one helped the others? Why hadn't somebody—why hadn't I—pleaded for them? Flinching, I tried to silence these questions, to justify my cowardice, saying to myself, “Our own chances of being allowed to stay in the ghetto were slim enough. We could not afford to stick our necks out for others.”

Shortly thereafter, the police threw up a roadblock at the corner of Zamenhof and Nowolipki Streets, where the cards of all passersby were subjected to inspection. Any Jew without the proper documents was immediately forced into a waiting wagon. I showed my card and was waved on.<sup>165</sup>

#### **David Landau describes the round-ups in the ghetto:**

From the first day of the deportations, a routine was established ... A block of streets would be closed off in the morning; the Jewish police would call out that the street had been surrounded and no one was to leave their dwelling; the caretakers of the buildings would immediately close the building gates and anybody found in the street would be either shot on the spot or handed over to the police. The Germans and their assistants would then go from building to building and the Jewish police would call to the trapped inhabitants: ‘*Alles herunter!*’ (All to come down.) Pressure was applied to hurry: ‘*Schnell, schnell!*’ It was the duty of the Jewish police to go in first to check the apartments in case anybody had disobeyed the order. Walls would be tapped, wardrobes opened; they would look under the beds. The cellars and attics were searched for anyone who failed to obey the German order. The police would drag out those found hiding to be dealt with by the Germans or their helpers. ...

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<sup>165</sup> Vladka Meed, *On Both Sides of the Wall: Memoirs from the Warsaw Ghetto* (New York: Holocaust Library, 1979), 26–28.

When all tenants were assembled in the yard the selection started. ... Those selected for deportation were handed over to the Jewish police. Together with their Aryan colleagues the police led the victims to the *Umschlagplatz* on foot or in carts.<sup>166</sup>

Before dawn a messenger from the ŻZW came to our home to tell me to go into hiding at a place prepared for active members. ... I turned to the ŻZW leaders who were urgently trying to get their members into hiding.<sup>167</sup>

### **Ruth Altbeker Cyprys describes the round-ups in the ghetto:**

Immediately after the publication of the 'Resettlement Order' the manhunts started. Ordinary large carts, accompanied by a few Jewish policemen, appeared in the streets. All those with inadequate documents, or with none, were forcibly pushed on to the carriages. ...

I witnessed the expulsion of the Korczak Orphanage. ... On the day that they left the ghetto they made a strange procession as they walked along *Sliska* [Śliska] Street led by an elderly, dignified man, and accompanied only by a few policemen. ... Mr. Korczak would not leave his children. And I learned, later, that he gave the same answer to his Aryan friends when they tried several times to take him to the Aryan side.

In the first weeks after the expulsion order the Germans did not show up in the ghetto. Jews themselves, as for example the Jewish militia, were entrusted with the job. They carried out the checking of identity papers in the streets and even on the *Umschlagplatz* where the Germans were present; the loading and forcing of Jews into the railway carriages was left to the militiamen. After all 'points' and other places of collective Jewish misery had been cleared out, street catching was carried out ceaselessly. ...

The institution of the blockades carried out by the Jewish militia became a daily routine. During a blockade, which as a rule took place in the early hours of the morning, a strong detachment of militia men would cordon off a whole street or a part of big road, and begin sweeping the blocks. There would be a shrill whistle and shouts of 'All down, all to the courtyard' which would announce the beginning of the blockade. After a while the militia men would enter the flats, chasing the inhabitants out. They were very efficient in their searches, even too meticulous, for they looked into the night tables and drawers, they climbed into the attics and descended to the cellars. The courtyards were swarming with militia men and when all the tenants were gathered, an officer would begin the checking. The lucky owners of good *Ausweis* passes were placed on one side of the yard, all the others on the other side. They were then chased out into the street and loaded into the waiting carts. ...

On 6 August [1942] I was resting at home after my night shift when I suddenly heard a terrible noise in the street, loud cries, shots and shouts of 'Alles runter' (all downstairs). I knew what this meant. The street was already full of Germans, Ukrainians and Jewish militia. A normal blockade had started. We all had to go out into the street guarded by Germans, Ukrainians and *Shaulis* (Lithuanians), while the militia searched the rooms and hideouts, forever dragging somebody out. ...

Alas, they checked no papers. Only the families of the militia men were released on the spot. The rest, formed in fives, were hurried to the *Umschlagplatz*. The way was strewn with horrific sights. ...

... During all this time the Jewish militia loaded the freight wagons with struggling people, sealed them in, while new trains pulled in to the station ...<sup>168</sup>

### **Zosia Goldberg describes the round-ups in the ghetto:**

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<sup>166</sup> David J. Landau, alias Dudek, Janek and Jan, *Caged: A Story of Jewish Resistance* (Sydney: Macmillan, 2000), 133–34.

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.*, 137–38.

<sup>168</sup> Ruth Altbeker Cyprys, *A Jump For Life: A Survivor's Journal from Nazi-Occupied Poland* (New York: Continuum, 1997), 49–50, 54–57.

One day the Germans encircled the house at Leszno 42, and they called everybody down. I was with my mother and we were sleeping on the floor with my aunts and we were supposed to go down with them. Instead, I ran upstairs to Bolek, a young fellow who was a friend of mine. He knew many of the Jewish police and he spoke Russian, so I said to him, "Go down and see what you can do." Along with the German Nazis, there were Ukrainians, Lithuanians, Latvians, and Jewish police.

"Try to get all the family out," I told Bolek. They were already forming lines to march to the trains at the *Umschlagplatz*. So he came back and said, "I saw Marian. He's in the police. I'll see what he can do." But Marian, my ex-husband, the one I had married and divorced before the war, simply washed his hands of us and turned away. ... He did not lift a finger to help. ...

Then Bolek tried to talk to a Ukrainian who understood his Russian. He made up a story that my mother was his mother and I was his sister. He said our family was dead. Maybe because Bolek spoke Russian to him, which is close to Ukrainian, he felt sympathetic. I don't know why, maybe it was just luck, but the Ukrainian said you can take out your mother and sister from the line, but nobody else. Everybody else had to stay.<sup>169</sup>

#### **Adolf and Barbara Berman describe the round-ups in the ghetto:**

The morning [of July 24] there was a blockade at 29 Ogrodowa Street. At around six in the morning we were woken by an incredible din: a big ŻSP [Jewish Order Police] division appeared outside and stood guard at the gates. A moment later the order rang out: 'All inhabitants outside! Evacuees to take 15 kg of baggage. Those exempt from evacuation to present their papers.' There was great confusion. Half-dressed, people ran down into the yard, showing their papers and identity cards. The police spread out and searched the staircases, attics and cellars and began to pull out those hiding. A moment later trucks pulled up outside and they began to throw in the people they had dragged out. ... Four truckloads of people were taken away—around 120 people.<sup>170</sup>

[On July 28–29 July]: alongside the blockades carried out by the ŻSP [Jewish Order Police], the Germans began their own systematic blockades with the help of Ukrainian units and Lithuanian infantry. They were carried out with exceptional brutality and generally encompassed not particular houses, but whole blocks and streets. The blockades began with intensive gunfire, killing people looking out of windows and from balconies and those attempting to hide. Then the cry went up, 'Alle herunter.' The Ukrainians stormed through staircases and apartments and, beating the inhabitants with their rifle-butts, drove them outside where they were ordered to line up. The Germans checked documents. ... Great numbers of people were marshalled into a huge column of rows of five, surrounded by a cordon of Ukrainians who drove them to the *Umschlagplatz*. Those who tried to escape, who tried to communicate with anyone or who did not fall in line along the way were shot.<sup>171</sup>

#### **Abraham Lewin, teacher and historian, recorded in his diary:**

The savagery of the [Jewish] police during the round-up, the murderous brutality. They drag girls from the rickshaws, empty out flats, and leave the property strewn everywhere. A pogrom and a killing the like of which has never been seen.<sup>172</sup>

#### **Charles G. Roland on the ghetto police:**

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<sup>169</sup> Zosia Goldberg, as told to Hilton Obenzinger, *Running Through Fire: How I Survived the Holocaust* (San Francisco: Mercury House 2004), 34–35.

<sup>170</sup> Władysław Bartoszewski, "The Martyrdom and Struggle of the Jews in Warsaw under German Occupation 1939–43," in Władysław Bartoszewski and Antony Polonsky, eds., *The Jews in Warsaw: A History* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell in association with the Institute for Polish-Jewish Studies, 1991), 319–20.

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid.*, 322.

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid.*, 321.

Rubinlicht claims that members of the Jewish *Ordnungsdienst* either raped young Jewish girls or extorted sexual favors from them at the *Umschlagplatz*. Young women caught up in an *Aktion* and desperate to escape would allow anything “in order to be promised release from that hell. Of course, they were never released. But the guards had their way with them.”<sup>173</sup>

**Reuben Ainsztein, Jewish historian, about the role played by Jewish Gestapo agents in deluding the ghetto population:**

Later, in August [1942], when the truth [about the destination of the deportees, namely Treblinka] became widely known, there was the psychological difficulty of accepting it. ... Moreover, the Nazis saw to it that their victims should still be able to reject the truth by providing them with false hope. Hoefle [SS Major Hermann Höfle] had brought with him from Lublin a gang of Jewish Gestapo agents who were ready to do anything to stay alive a little longer. They were installed in number 101, Żelazna Street, next to number 103 where Hoefle had his own headquarters, and there, assisted by Jewish Gestapo agents from the Warsaw ghetto, they fabricated letters, which were supposedly written by the ‘resettled’ from labour camps in Russia and elsewhere.<sup>174</sup>

...the majority [of the Jewish ghetto police], according to [Emanuel] Ringelblum ‘carried out with the greatest eagerness the orders of the Germans. It is a fact that on most days the Jewish police supplied more victims than the quota demanded by the Germans. That was done to have a reserve for the following day. ... Many a hideout was discovered by the Jewish police, who always wanted to prove themselves *plus catholique que le pape* and thus curry favour with the Germans. The victims who escaped the eye of the German were seized by Jewish policemen. For two hours I watched the march of victims to the trains in the Umschlagplatz and I saw groups exempted from deportation being forcibly driven back to the trains by the Jewish policemen. Dozens, perhaps hundreds, of Jews were sent to their deaths during those two hours by the Jewish policemen.’ Szmeling, a former boxer, a giant with a little beard and the face of a killer who was in command of the Jewish police in the Umschlagplatz, did not hesitate to use his whip and took advantage of his position to extort money and jewels from wealthy victims for allowing them to escape from the point of departure for Treblinka. His subordinates, acting in partnership with the Sonderdienst composed of Polish Volksdeutsche [i.e., ethnic Germans] and the Ukrainian and Latvian cutthroats, demanded from 1,000 to 10,000 zloties from their victims to allow them to escape. ‘There were cases when the police demanded from their victims, apart from money, also payment in kind: women had to submit to their lust.’

The police plumbed the depths of their baseness in the final weeks of the Great Liquidation, when thousands of survivors refused to obey orders to surrender for deportation, even if it meant dying in hideouts. Each policeman was then ordered to supply seven victims daily or share with his family the fate of the other Jews. Having already sold their souls to the Nazi devil, the policemen did their best to carry out the order.

This did not stop the Nazis from killing over 1,700 policemen and their families at the end of the Great Liquidation.<sup>175</sup>

When the Great Liquidation was over, the Germans learnt that several hundred children, whose parents had been murdered at Treblinka, still survived in the ghetto, and so one day an SS officer called on the Judenrat and told its officials that the children ought to be cared for in orphanages, which the German authorities would supply with food. As usual, the Judenrat officials complied and when the orphans were assembled in the orphanages, the Nazi descended on them, packed the children into lorries and carried them off to Treblinka.<sup>176</sup>

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<sup>173</sup> Charles G. Roland, *Courage Under Siege: Starvation, Disease, and Death in the Warsaw Ghetto* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 51.

<sup>174</sup> Reuben Ainsztein, *Jewish Resistance in Nazi-Occupied Eastern Europe* (London: Paul Elek, 1974), 581.

<sup>175</sup> Reuben Ainsztein, *Jewish Resistance in Nazi-Occupied Eastern Europe* (London: Paul Elek, 1974), 583.

<sup>176</sup> Reuben Ainsztein, *Jewish Resistance in Nazi-Occupied Eastern Europe* (London: Paul Elek, 1974), 592.

**Emanuel Ringelblum, chronicler of the Warsaw ghetto:**

Why didn't we resist when they began to resettle 300,000 Jews from Warsaw? Why did we allow ourselves to be led like sheep to the slaughter? Why did everything come so easy to the enemy? Why didn't the hangmen suffer a single casualty? Why could 50 S.S. men (some people say even fewer), with the help of a division of some 200 Ukrainian guards and an equal number of Letts [Latvians], carry the operation out so smoothly?<sup>177</sup>

**Yisrael Gutman, Israeli historian and former ghetto fighter (ŻOB):**

Even so, the extravagant German response to demonstrations of physical resistance still does not explain why people who knew what awaited the deportees at Treblinka did not revolt or even put up a struggle. After the *Aktion* Ringelblum commented that the Jews left in the ghetto were overcome by feelings of remorse and reproach, not only because they had failed to rise up against the armed Germans, but because they had not even put up a struggle against the Jewish policemen, who were not armed with guns.

Historians have tried to explain this enigmatic phenomenon, which not only relates to Warsaw but was characteristic of the Jews throughout Nazi-occupied Europe.<sup>178</sup>

**Marek Edelman, the last surviving leader of the Jewish Fighting Organization, describes the mood of the ghetto prior to the great deportation to Treblinka in the summer of 1942:**

But public opinion was against us. The majority thought such action provocative and maintained that if the required contingent of Jews could be delivered, the remainder of the ghetto would be left in peace. The instinct for self-preservation finally drove the people into a state of mind permitting them to disregard the safety of others in order to save their own necks. True, nobody as yet believed that the deportation meant death. But the Germans had already succeeded in dividing the Jewish population into two distinct groups—those already condemned to die and those who still hoped to remain alive. Afterwards, step by step, the Germans will succeed in pitting these two groups against one another and cause some Jews to lead others to certain death in order to save their own skin. ...

So that we might learn conclusively and in detail about the fate of the human transports leaving the ghetto, Zalmen Frydrych (Zygmunt) was ordered to follow one of the transports to the "Aryan side". His journey "to the East", however, was a short one, for it took only three days. Immediately after leaving the ghetto walls he established contact with an employee of the Warsaw Danzig [Gdański] Terminal working on the Warsaw–Malkinia line. They travelled together in the transport's wake to Sokołów where, Zygmunt was told by local railroad men, the tracks forked out, one branch leading to Treblinka. It proved that every day a freight train carrying people from Warsaw travelled in that direction and invariably returned empty. No transports of food were ever seen on this line. Civilians were forbidden to approach the Treblinka railroad station.

This in itself was conclusive proof that the people brought to Treblinka were being exterminated somewhere in the vicinity. In addition, Zygmunt met two fugitives from the death camp the following morning. They were two Jews, completely stripped of their clothes, and Zygmunt met them on the Sokołów market place and obtained the full details of the horrible procedure. Thus it was not any longer a question of rumours, but of facts established by eyewitness accounts (one of the fugitives was our comrade Wallach).

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<sup>177</sup> Ringelblum's diary entry of October 15, 1942. See Jacob Sloan, ed., *The Journal of Emmanuel Ringelblum* (New York: Schocken, 1974), 310. In the prior entry Ringelblum mentions that Gestapo agents Kohn and Heller, who had contacts with rabbis, took in Hasidic Jews to avoid deportation, and that Jews who managed workshops ran a lucrative business selling work registration cards to unemployed Jews in the ghetto. See Emanuel Ringelblum, *Kronika getta warszawskiego: Wrzesień 1939–styczeń 1943* (Warsaw: Czytelnik, 1983), 408–409.

<sup>178</sup> Yisrael Gutman, *The Jews of Warsaw, 1939–1945: Ghetto, Underground, Revolt* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1982), 224–25.

After Zygmunt's return we published the second issue of *On Guard* with a detailed description of Treblinka. But even now the population stubbornly refused to believe the truth. They simply closed their eyes to the unpleasant facts and fought against them with all the means at their disposal.

In the meantime the Germans, not too discriminating in their choice of methods, introduced a new propaganda twist. They promised—and actually gave—three kilograms of bread and one kilogram of marmalade to everyone who voluntarily registered for “deportation”. The offer was more than sufficient. Once the bait was thrown, propaganda and hunger did the rest. The propaganda value of the measure lay in the fact that it was truly an excellent argument against the “stories” about gas chambers (“why would they be giving bread away if they intended to murder them? ...”). The hunger, an even stronger persuader, magnified the picture of three brown, crusty loaves of bread until nothing was visible beyond it. Their taste which one could almost feel in one's mouth—it was only a short walk from one's home to the “Umschlagplatz” from which the cars left—blinded people to all the other things at the end of the same road. Their smell, familiar, delicious, befogged one's mind, made it unable to grasp the things which would normally have been so very obvious. There were times when hundreds of people had to wait on line for several days to be “deported”. The number of people anxious to obtain the three kilograms of bread was such that the transports, now leaving twice daily with 12,000 people, could not accommodate them all. ...

The [German] gendarmes, Ukrainians and Jewish police cooperate nicely. The roles are meticulously and precisely divided. The gendarmes surround the streets; the Ukrainians, in front of the gendarmes, encircle the houses closely; the Jewish police walk into the courtyards and summon all the inhabitants. “All Jews must come down. 30 kilograms of baggage allowed. Those remaining inside shall be shot ...” And once again the same summons. People run from all staircases. Nervously, on the run, they clothe themselves in whatever is handy. Some descend as they are, sometimes straight from bed, others are carrying everything they can possibly take along, knapsacks, packages, pots and pans. People cast frightened glances at one another, the worst has happened. Trembling, they form groups in front of the house. They are not allowed to talk but they still try to gain the policemen's pity. From nearby houses similar groups of trembling, completely exhausted people arrive and form into one long column. A gendarme beckons with his rifle to a casual passer-by who, having been warned too late, was unable to escape the doomed street. A Jewish policeman pulls him by his sleeve or by his neck into the column in front of the house. If the policeman is half-way decent, he hides a small piece of paper with the scribbled address of the victim's family—to let them know ... Now the deserted houses, the apartment entrances ajar according to regulations, are given a quick once-over by the Ukrainians. They open closed apartments with a single kick of their heavy boots, with a single blow of a rifle butt. Two, three shots signify the death of those few who did not heed the call and remained in their homes. The “blockade” is finished. On somebody's table an unfinished cup of tea gets cold, flies finish somebody's piece of bread.

People outside of the “blockaded” area hopelessly look for relatives and friends among the rectangular groups surrounded by Ukrainians and Jewish policemen. The columns slowly march through the streets. Behind them, in a single row, requisitioned “rikshas” carry the old and the children. ...

Possibilities of leaving the “Umschlag” did exist, but they were a drop in the sea of the thousands awaiting help. ... In addition, the Jewish police also “helped”, by charging incredible amounts of money, gold or valuables per “head” for a chance to escape. Those who were rescued, however, a comparatively insignificant number, usually showed up at the “Umschlag” for a second and third time, and finally disappeared into the fatal interior of a railroad car with the rest of the victims. ...

After this temporary let-up, the deportations from Warsaw started again with intensified force. Now the blockades were even more dangerous for us, because there were fewer people and the area had become smaller. They were also more difficult for the Germans, however, because people had already learned how to hide. Therefore, a new method was used: every Jewish policeman was made responsible for bringing 7 “heads” daily to the “Umschlag”. And this is how the Germans were playing their best game. Never before had anyone been so inflexible in carrying out an action as a Jewish policeman, never before had anyone been so unyielding in holding on to a captured victim as one Jew in relation to another Jew. So that they might furnish the 7 “heads”, Jewish policemen would stop a doctor in a white coat (the coat could be sold

for a fantastically high price later, in the “Umschlag” ...), a mother with her child in her arms, or a lonely, lost child in search of its home.

Yes, the Jewish police certainly wrote their own history by their deeds.<sup>179</sup>

*According to Henryk Makower, in addition to beating uncooperative Jews, the Jewish police looted vacated apartments on a massive scale, often amassing considerable fortunes for themselves. There was much boasting going on about this in the ghetto.<sup>180</sup> Later on, after the great deportation in the Warsaw ghetto in the summer of 1942, the remaining Jews looted property left behind by deported Jews.<sup>181</sup>*

**Israel Shahak, professor and human rights activist, Jerusalem, who lived in the Warsaw ghetto:**

In the Warsaw ghetto, even during the period of the first massive extermination (June to October 1942), one saw almost no German soldiers. Nearly all the work of administration, and later the work of transporting hundreds of thousands of Jews to their deaths, was carried out by Jewish collaborators. Before the outbreak of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising (the planning of which only started after the extermination of the majority of Jews in Warsaw), the Jewish underground killed, with perfect justification, every Jewish collaborator they could find. If they had not done so the Uprising could never have started. The majority of the population of the Ghetto hated the collaborators far more than the German Nazis. Every Jewish child was taught, and this saved the lives of some of them “if you enter a square from which there are three exits, one guarded by a German SS man, one by a Ukrainian and one by a Jewish policeman, then you should first try to pass the German, and then maybe the Ukrainian, but never the Jew.”

One of my own strongest memories is that, when the Jewish underground killed a despicable collaborator close to my home at the end of February 1943, I danced and sang around the still bleeding corpse together with the other children. I still do not regret this, quite the contrary.

It is clear that such events were not exclusive to the Jews, the entire Nazi success in easy and continued rule over millions of people stemmed from the subtle and diabolical use of collaborators, who did most of the dirty work for them. But does anybody now know about this? This, and not what is “instilled” was the reality. Of the Yad Vashem (official state Holocaust museum in Jerusalem - Ed.) theatre, I do not wish to speak at all. ...<sup>182</sup>

**Calel Perechodnik, a policeman in the Otwock ghetto, outside Warsaw:**

There is no justification for the Jewish policeman in Warsaw. They cannot defend themselves by explaining that they had a mental blackout. This might be done in the course of one day, but not for three long months. Their hearts turned to stone; all human feelings became foreign to them. They grabbed people, they carried down in their arms infants from the apartments, they robbed if there was opportunity. So it was not surprising that Jews hated their own police more than they did the Germans, more than the Ukrainians. There is nothing like setting a brother against a brother.<sup>183</sup>

**Yitzhak Zuckerman, one of the organizers and leaders of the Jewish Fighting Organization, on the role of the Jewish police:**

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<sup>179</sup> Ibid. (Gutman, *The Jews of Warsaw, 1939–1945*). See also Władysław Bartoszewski, *The Blood Shed Unites Us: Pages from the History of Help to the Jews in Occupied Poland* (Warsaw: Interpress Publishers, 1970), 46–47.

<sup>180</sup> Henryk Makower, *Pamiętnik z getta warszawskiego: Październik 1940–styczeń 1943* (Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1987), 62.

<sup>181</sup> Barbara Engelking and Jacek Leociak, *Getto warszawskie: Przewodnik po nieistniejącym mieście* (Warsaw: IFiS PAN, 2001), 472, 706; *The Warsaw Ghetto: A Guide to the Perished City* (New Haven, Connecticut, and London: Yale University Press, 2009), 479, 749; Joanna Wiszniewicz, *And Yet I Still Have Dreams: A Story of a Certain Loneliness* (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 2004), 53.

<sup>182</sup> Letter to the editor by Prof. Israel Shahak, published in *Kol Ha'ir* (Jerusalem), May, 19, 1989.

<sup>183</sup> Calel Perechodnik, *Am I a Murderer?: Testament of a Jewish Ghetto Policeman* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press/HarperCollins, 1996), 104.

I was captured by police once more. And what I went through is nothing compared to what other Jews experienced. I mention this in connection with the Jewish police. In two cases, the Jewish police did their job. ... Of course they had no choice—from the moment they decided to be policemen. There were different kinds of policemen, more brutal ones and less brutal ones. There were those who took bribes and those who thought they had to excel. ... There were a lot of them—thousands. ... They served the German occupier, willy-nilly, and thought they could save their lives and their families like that. ...

When there were hundreds of thousands of Jews in Warsaw, the Germans couldn't have taken the transports to Treblinka without the help of the Jews themselves. It was the Jewish policemen who caught and took out the masses of Jews. They were armed with sticks; we could have used sticks and knives against them; we could have strangled and hanged them. ... Of course, the Germans also came—it was enough for one German to show up, ten Germans. But the majority were Jewish police and they did their work faithfully. By that time, we realized that the Jews were being taken to their death. ...

And I must repeat once more that, even if we had started the war with the Judenrat police on July 22 [1942] and done everything possible, we wouldn't have saved the people. That's not what I blame us for. Our blame is that we could have delayed the sentence, we could have made it hard for the Germans, we could have forced them to bring 10,000 Germans to do the work done by 2000 to 3000 Jewish police. In this matter, every German would have been less efficient than a Jewish policeman. He would have been more brutal, because he had a machine-gun and not a stick, and no doubt he would have slaughtered people on the spot.

But our goal was, in fact, to bring Treblinka to Warsaw. If that had happened, the Jews would have done their best to run away and hide, since they wouldn't have believed the Germans; but when a simple Jew saw a Jewish policeman calling him, it was hard for him to imagine that his brother would lead him to death.<sup>184</sup>

But the Jews, the Jewish police did the despicable work of the Germans. Some people try to defend them, others accuse them. What do I think is our great guilt, my guilt (since most of my comrades are no longer alive)? Our guilt was that immediately, from the first day, we didn't begin our harsh war against the Jewish police! Would we have saved the people? No! Absolutely not! But clearly the Germans wouldn't have done the job so easily or so fast, without the Jewish police. Because the Jews would certainly have run away from the Germans, but, when they saw a Jewish policeman, it didn't occur to them that he would lead them to their death. And the Jewish police knew, as I knew, and no later than I did, what Treblinka was, since it was the Jewish police themselves who brought the information about the slaughter taking place there.

You might say they took part in building Treblinka, and there is documented evidence of that. One night in the ghetto, the Germans assigned the Judenrat and the Jewish police to collect Jewish skilled laborers: carpenters, tinsmiths, locksmiths, builders; they ordered the Judenrat to obtain barbed wire, various instruments they needed to set up the camp; it all went to Treblinka. That was Passover 1942, the first time I heard of Treblinka. ...

A year had passed since then and we hadn't done anything at all: the Jewish police were armed with rubber truncheons and knives. That is, they didn't have guns. All we had to do was kill them. If a few of them had been killed, others would have been afraid to join the police. ... We could even have sent our boys to ambush and scare them; but we didn't do that either. And there's a supposedly "legal" argument that anyone who didn't follow orders was threatened with death. But what danger faced the police force? At most, what happened to all Jews.

I never forgave myself for not doing what we should have. That was the situation up to a certain point. Later, when we did start going that way, it was too late. ... This way, we would have forced the Germans to come into the ghetto and do the job with their own hands.

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<sup>184</sup> Yitzhak Zuckerman ("Antek"), *A Surplus of Memory: Chronicle of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 207–208, 209.

That was what I demanded in the first meeting of the public committee held in Kirshenbaum's apartment at Leszno 56, on July 22, 1942 ... I proposed that those present and their comrades, the community leaders (we could assemble a few hundred Jews) demonstrate in the streets of the ghetto with the slogan "Treblinka Is Death!" Let the Germans come and kill us. I wanted the Jews to see blood in the streets of Warsaw, not in Treblinka. Because the day after the *Aktsia* [operation] started, July 23, maybe even on that day, we knew what Treblinka was and where it was. The police in the *Umschlagplatz* saw the railroad cars returning from there after a few hours. That showed us how far it was from Warsaw. Moreover, when the doors of the cars were opened to put in more people, they found bloodspots and even corpses. The cars weren't even cleaned properly. ...

That was the direction of my thought, I explained it like this: we have no choice. The world doesn't hear, doesn't know ... if we can't save anyone—at least let the Jews know! So they could hide. I also said that we had to attack the Jewish police. If we had worked in this spirit, we might have prolonged the process, made it hard for the Germans to carry it out; because the annihilation would have been a little harder to "manage" with 450,000 Jews then than with 50,000 later on. They would have to bring military forces and use them day and night to capture all the Jews. ...

After two or three days, when we saw they [i.e., the community leaders] weren't coming to meetings, we tried to assemble the left, proletarian, segments. I don't think the Communists were around anymore. ... The groups included Po'alei Zion Left, Po'alei Zion-Z.S., Ha-Shomer, Ha-Tza'ir, and Dror; Gordonia had vanished. But it fell apart. They simply didn't come to the meetings. ... In light of this situation, it's almost shameful to admit what happened—we issued the proclamation with the call: "Jews, don't go; Treblinka is death!" And the Jews tore our proclamation off the walls, by force, with blows. The Jews saw it as a German provocation. I heard that from the comrades who were putting up the posters, who told it with tears in their eyes. Yosef Kaplan and Shmuel Braslaw got beaten up. We had a lot of people who were ready and willing. Someplace, Braslaw, as I recall, found switchblades and, lacking any other weapons, they intended to use them and even tried to assassinate a few policemen with them. ...

During the *Aktsia*, everyone wanted to save his own life. There was no leadership in the ghetto. ... The Judenrat gave the following document to all the notables: This man is vital to the war effort."<sup>185</sup>

**Rachel Auerbach, an activist in the ghetto, was also bitterly critical of the behaviour of her fellow Jews:**

Auerbach stressed the Germans' brilliant use of psychological factors to effect the destruction of Warsaw Jewry and to use the Jews' strengths against them. The Germans played with the Jews and with their natural human instincts for self-preservation and hope. In her brilliant observations of the mass hysteria that gripped the Warsaw ghetto in the summer of 1942, Auerbach described how the very qualities that had served Jews so well in the past—practicality, pragmatism, hard-headedness, *seykhel* and natural optimism—now accelerated their journey into the abyss.

And still other Jews. Broad-shouldered, deep-voiced, with powerful hands and hearts. Artisans, workers. Wagon drivers, porters, Jews who, with a blow of their fists, could floor any hooligan who dared enter their neighborhoods.

Where were you when your wives and children, when your old fathers and mothers were taken away? What happened to make you run off like cattle stampeded by fire? Was there no one to give you some purpose in the confusion? You were swept away by the flood, together with those who were weak.

And you sly cunning merchants, philanthropists in your short fur coats and caps. How was it that you didn't catch on to the murderous swindle?<sup>186</sup>

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<sup>185</sup> Yitzhak Zuckerman ("Antek"), *A Surplus of Memory: Chronicle of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 192–94, 196–97.

<sup>186</sup> Samuel Kassow, "The Warsaw Ghetto in the Writings of Rachel Auerbach," in Glenn Dynner and François Guesnet, eds., *Warsaw: The Jewish Metropolis* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2015), 507–8.

*The Jewish Military Organization (ŻZW) had already come into being and was equipped with arms thanks in part to its contacts with the Polish underground. The Jewish Fighting Organization (ŻOB) had not yet formed: "In January 1942 [likely March], an inter-party conference was called. By now all parties agreed that armed resistance was the only appropriate answer to the persecutions. The Hashomer and Hechalutz organizations for the first time suggested a plan for a joint battle organization. ... However, the common organization was not established at that time."<sup>187</sup> Despite much talk, serious plans to acquire arms and ammunition did not materialize until after the Great Deportation of the summer of 1942. The attempts to create a representative body to take over the leadership of the Jewish underground movement in July 1942 were thwarted, as were previous efforts to organize resistance, by those factions—a majority on the Jewish Social Council—who opted for a wait-and-see course. The fledgling Jewish underground was infiltrated by Jewish Gestapo agents and informants and was virtually wiped out.*

*In view of these developments it is readily apparent that any armed intervention on the part of the Polish underground, for which they were not in any event equipped, was not only doomed to failure but also would have pitted them against Jews—certainly against the Jewish police and many others who did not want to antagonize the Germans. First of all, there was no significant Jewish underground in the ghetto prepared or willing to take or join in military operations against the Germans: the Jewish Fighting Organization (ŻOB), for example, had just been created and was largely a fiction. Moreover, the ranks of the underground had been seriously depleted through denunciations (e.g., on April 17–18, 1942 the Gestapo executed 52 prominent Jewish social activists in the ghetto<sup>188</sup>; leftist underground leaders were rounded up on May 9, 1942, thereby paralyzing the so-called Anti-Fascist Block<sup>189</sup>). Secondly, just like Jewish calls to resist the Germans, Polish interventions would have been viewed as a German provocation, or at least a harmful strategy, by the vast majority of the Jewish population.<sup>190</sup> Massive German forces would have been brought in immediately and a blood bath would have ensued both inside and outside the ghetto, for which the blame would fall on the "anti-Semitic" and "irresponsible" Poles.<sup>191</sup> Moreover, psychologically neither the Jewish underground nor the Jews were prepared for a revolt against the Germans,<sup>192</sup> and without this no outside force could have moved them to act. With virtually no exceptions, the Jews in the ghetto—especially those with connections and the well-to-do, and including members of the underground—were preoccupied with their own survival and showed no interest in putting up any resistance. As noted by underground member Jacob Celemenski: "News of the deportations to labour camps was publicly announced on wall posters, and on the 22 July 1942, it started. At first it was thought that those with working permits would be spared deportation. A panic-driven chase to obtain work permits followed. I secured a permit for myself by stating that I worked in the public kitchen managed by comrade*

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<sup>187</sup> Marek Edelman, "The Ghetto Fights", in *The Warsaw Ghetto: The 45th Anniversary of the Uprising* (Warsaw: Interpress, 1988), posted online at <<http://www.english.upenn.edu/~afilreis/warsaw-uprising.html>>.

<sup>188</sup> Edelman describes the reaction in the ghetto: "The following day the whole ghetto, terrified, numbed, and distressed ... The majority believe that since editors of illegal newspapers have been shot, the action was directed against political activists and that conspiratorial activities should stop in order to avoid an unnecessary increase in the number of victims." See Władysław Bartoszewski, "The Martyrdom and Struggle of the Jews in Warsaw under German Occupation 1939–43," in Władysław Bartoszewski and Antony Polonsky, eds., *The Jews in Warsaw: A History* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell in association with the Institute for Polish-Jewish Studies, 1991), 315.

<sup>189</sup> Barbara Engelking and Jacek Leociak, *Getto warszawskie: Przewodnik po nieistniejącym mieście*, (Warsaw: IFiS PAN, 2001), 648; *The Warsaw Ghetto: A Guide to the Perished City* (New Haven, Connecticut, and London: Yale University Press, 2009), 683–84.

<sup>190</sup> Indeed, flyers issued by Jewish groups warning that the "deportation" was a sham and calling on Jews to resist were widely regarded as German provocations. See Barbara Engelking and Jacek Leociak, *Getto warszawskie: Przewodnik po nieistniejącym mieście* (Warsaw: IFiS PAN, 2001), 671–72; *The Warsaw Ghetto: A Guide to the Perished City* (New Haven, Connecticut, and London: Yale University Press, 2009), 709.

<sup>191</sup> Historian Marcin Urynowicz also shares this view. See Marcin Urynowicz, "Stosunki polsko-żydowskie w Warszawie w okresie okupacji hitlerowskiej," in Andrzej Zbikowski, ed., *Polacy i Żydzi pod okupacją niemiecką 1939–1945: Studia i materiały* (Warsaw: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej–Komisja Ścigania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu, 2006), 607–8.

<sup>192</sup> Barbara Engelking and Jacek Leociak, *Getto warszawskie: Przewodnik po nieistniejącym mieście*, (Warsaw: IFiS PAN, 2001), 646; *The Warsaw Ghetto: A Guide to the Perished City* (New Haven, Connecticut, and London: Yale University Press, 2009), 682.

*Basie Buks (later of Australia), at 68 Nowolipie Street.*<sup>193</sup> Finally, mounting a revolt against the Germans was simply not feasible until the Jews got their own house in order. The Jewish council had to be neutralized and the Jewish police and nests of Gestapo agents, traitors and bandits eliminated.<sup>194</sup> Nonetheless, even without an organized armed struggle, the deportation could still have been thrown into serious disarray if several thousand Jews (of the 350,000 in the ghetto) took up sticks, clubs, stones and other instruments against those who came to round them up. However, nothing of the sort happened.<sup>195</sup>

Thus, the only force that was needed, and that was capable of paralyzing the massive deportation of Jews from Warsaw in the summer of 1942, was the Jews themselves. And they were the only ones who could have resolved to act. If Jewish activists of all stripes had no success in mobilizing their own people, what possibly could the Polish underground have done? With the benefit of hindsight, charges are often levelled that the Poles did nothing to prevent or halt the great deportation. But, at the same time, countless Jewish sources say repeatedly that the Jews themselves eschewed revolting against the Germans because they feared collective and brutal reprisals. But that is exactly the risk that they expect Poles to have taken by staging relief operations for the benefit of the Jews at the height of German military power. To thrust this responsibility onto the Poles, and demand of them a level of initiative and heroism that Jews were not

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<sup>193</sup> Jacob Celemenski, *Elegy For My People: Memoirs of an Underground Courier of the Jewish Labor Bund in Nazi-Occupied Poland 1939–45* (Melbourne: The Jacob Celemenski Memorial Trust, 2000), 108.

<sup>194</sup> See, for example, the testimony of Samuel Kenigszajn, dated July 1947, Archive of the Jewish Historical Institute (Warsaw), record group 301, number 5008, who describes several such actions, including the blinding of a certain Kac, who betrayed an underground hideout.

<sup>195</sup> When the Germans staged the so-called Passover pogrom in March 1940, for which they enlisted and brought in paid young ruffians, Jews took no time organizing themselves to rebuff the attacks. The Jews formed several armed contingents, which they located strategically, and engaged in protracted fighting with the hoodlums for hours, using iron pipes and brass knuckles. (The Bund's prewar militias often employed gruff porters and coal carters.) "Every fighting contingent was mobilized—slaughtergouse workers, transport workers, [Bund] party members. We organized them into three groups." Just before curfew, the detachments were discreetly deployed to different spots to make the units seem more numerous and omnipresent. "When the pogromists appeared in these sections the following morning, they were surprised to find our comrades waiting for them. A bloody battle broke out. Ambulances rushed to carry off wounded pogromists. ... The battle kept shifting to various parts of the city. Our organized groups were joined spontaneously by other workers." In the Wola district, Bernard Goldstein notes, "our comrades received help from non-Jewish Socialist workers to whom we had appealed for aid. Many Christians tried to persuade the pogromists to stop." Fighting that day lasted until just before curfew and resumed the next morning, though the Polish fascists appeared less numerous and seemed to have lost some of their enthusiasm now that someone was striking back. Four or five zlotys apparently were not worth the risk of having one's head split open by a burly slaughterhouse worker, and by 1 p.m. the Blue Police ... dispersed the combatants. The pogrom ended on March 29, as abruptly as it had begun." There were no German retaliations for this act of physical resistance. See Bernard Goldstein, *The Stars Bear Witness* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1950), 51–53; Bernard Goldstein, *Five Years in the Warsaw Ghetto* (Edinburgh, East Virginia: AK Press, 2005), 44–45. Marek Edelman states that "the Bund militia carried out revenge actions. Four major street battles resulted." See Marek Edelman, "The Ghetto Fights", in *The Warsaw Ghetto: The 45th Anniversary of the Uprising* (Warsaw: Interpress Publishers, 1988), posted online at <<http://www.english.upenn.edu/~afilreis/warsaw-uprising.html>>. Another source states: "Because the *goyim* had the upper hand, or perhaps as a planned stratagem, the Jews fled via Nalewki to Franciszkańska [Franciszkańska] Street. The *goyim* chased after them. Apparently the Jews had anticipated this, because upon reaching Franciszkańska Street, the Jews were joined by a large contingent of additional Jewish forces. They attacked the *goyim* from all sides. Bricks, stones, and pieces of concrete were thrown at them from the bombed-out buildings. Many Poles were wounded. All that remained on the "battlefield" were some sacks which the *goyim* and *shiksas* had taken along to fill with stolen Jewish goods, some clubs which they had brought to beat Jews, and one dead Pole. ... The street was empty; a vehicle of military police drove up and arrested a large number of men who lived in houses on Franciszkańska Street near where the battle had taken place. They also arrested a small number of Poles, and took everyone to the courthouse on Krasinski [Krasieński] Street. The Jews were kept in detention for three days. ... The Jews from the house near which the Pole was killed were led off to the Pawiak Prison, where they were held for three months, and only then released." See Shimon Huberband, *Kiddush Hashem: Jewish Religious and Cultural Life in Poland During the Holocaust* (Hoboken, New Jersey: Ktav Publishing House, and Yeshiva University Press, 1987), 57–58. The Bund decided to form and begin training a 500-member militia in the event that the Germans tried to incite another, more lethal pogrom in Warsaw. However, even by the time of the April 17, 1943 raids on the Warsaw Ghetto, virtually nothing had been accomplished. See Matthew Brzezinski, *Isaac's Army: A Story of Courage and Survival in Nazi-Occupied Poland* (New York: Random House, 2012), 118–19, 154–56. Why it did not train its members and acquire arms in the more than two years before the Great Deportation of the summer of 1942 is simply baffling.

prepared to show, is an untenable argument. Moreover, this line of argument suggests (falsely) that the Poles had the military strength to effectively halt the great deportation. If that is the case, they could have also presumably chased the Germans out of Warsaw and Poland and spared the Allied forces three years of fighting and millions of casualties. Typically, Shmuel Krakowski, a Jewish apologist historian, claims, against all evidence, that “The lack of weapons was the main reason an armed resistance was not offered during the deportation from the Warsaw ghetto in the summer of 1942.”<sup>196</sup>

In this light, charging Poles with various shortcomings that they allegedly were guilty of demonstrates a complete lack of realism, though it serves as a convenient smokescreen for problems internal to the Jewish community. Yisrael Gutman, for example, claims that the Poles could have armed the Jewish underground in the ghetto (even though the ŻZW had by then already acquired significant quantities of arms with Polish assistance but planned no revolt at that time), or they could have disrupted the deportation by sabotaging the railroad track to Treblinka or by even attacking the extermination camp itself (sic).<sup>197</sup> Until the formation of a full-fledged and united military underground with broad-based community support near the end of 1942, the Jewish groups that discussed staging anti-German operations were not representative of the community, nor were they recognized or mandated to act by any umbrella organization within the Jewish community. They were not a military underground in any real sense, and it would have been unreasonable to expect the Polish underground to have provided arms at that time.

Moreover, faulting the Polish underground for not blowing up the tracks leading to the death camps ignores reality. Sabotaged tracks can be repaired in a few hours, and the Germans would have savagely retaliated against nearby Polish villages. As historian Gunnar S. Paulsson points out, “We should not be under the illusion that railway sabotage could have saved many Jewish lives. The same arguments that apply to the proposal to bomb the railway tracks leading to Auschwitz [in which, until mid-1942, most of the prisoners were Christian Poles] also apply here. Actions of this type can only serve at best to delay and harass, since a railway line can be repaired in a matter of hours. Railway sabotage was useful only for specific military purposes where timing was critical (most successfully, to interfere with German troop movements in France after D-Day). In view of the cost to the civilian population and the limited benefits to be had, railway sabotage was not used to stop Jewish transports anywhere in Europe, except I think for a single case in Belgium. Jewish partisans also didn’t attempt such actions.” Paulsson notes that “a large-scale railway sabotage action was carried out in the Warsaw area in October 1942, when the marshalling yards and most of the railway lines leading out of the city were sabotaged. The purpose was to try to disrupt the buildup of German troops at Stalingrad. It might however have had the side effect of delaying the deportations of Jews, except that it unfortunately came in the interval between the first and second deportation ‘Aktions’. It also resulted in massive reprisals against the Polish population.”<sup>198</sup> Paradoxically, the explanations offered by, Chaim Lazar, a chronicler of the Jewish Military Organization (ŻZW), for Jewish inaction during the great deportation fully exonerate the Poles.

After the great deportation of the summer of 1942, the remaining “productive” Jews in the ghetto toiled in workshops. Hunger was virtually eliminated and in fact food became plentiful. Parties, artistic events, and social gatherings resumed, and even well-stocked cafés opened. There was an abundance of abandoned goods for the taking inside the ghetto and smuggling and trade with the “Aryan” side flourished, as Polish workers smuggled in food to barter for clothing and other items.<sup>199</sup> Tuvia Borzykowski, a ŻOB member notes, notes that the great deportation ushered in a period of despondency and moral decline that had to be overcome before the Jews could gather the fortitude to confront their German masters.

It is almost impossible to describe the mood of the ghetto Jews in those days, shortly after the first extermination action. They were broken people, deprived of all human feelings. They accepted everything,

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<sup>196</sup> Shmuel Krakowski, *The War of the Doomed: Jewish Armed Resistance in Poland, 1942–1944* (New York and London: Holmes & Meier, 1984), 215.

<sup>197</sup> Yisrael Gutman, *The Jews of Warsaw, 1939–1945: Ghetto, Underground, Revolt* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1982), 250.

<sup>198</sup> Posted on H-Holocaust Net Discussion List, November 21, 2001.

<sup>199</sup> Leon Najberg, *Ostatni powstańcy getta* (Warsaw: Żydowski Instytut Historyczny, 1993), 41; Stefan Ernest, *O wojnie wielkich Niemiec z Żydami w Warszawie, 1939–1943* (Warsaw: Czytelnik, 2003), 292, 296, 299; Henryk Bryskier, *Żydzi pod swastyką czyli getto w Warszawie w XX wieku* (Warsaw: Aspra-Jr, 2006), 222–23.

did not even hesitate to step over dead bodies, and all eyes expressed the same self-evident truth: “We’ll all end up as soap.” Cynical jokes circulated in the ghetto. One could hear people jokingly calculating how much fat in somebody’s body would produce for the German war machine.<sup>200</sup>

### **Bernard Goldstein, a Bund activist:**

After removing every human being from the closed sections, the Germans, with typical Teutonic efficiency, began the salvage of every usable article. For this purpose they organized a *Wertverfassungstelle*, the task of which was to gather everything from the abandoned houses. They kept a thousand Jews busy collecting the material, sorting and packing it at the depots in the Tlomatzky [Tłomackie] Synagogue building and in Catholic Cathedral [actually, just a church—*M.P.*] on Nowolipky [Nowoliki], whence it was trucked out of the ghetto.

The *Wertverfassungstelle* had some competition. As the remaining Jews recovered from the ordeal of the deportations, the need for food revived the smuggling trade. The Gentiles no longer considered money acceptable [as it was virtually useless—*M.P.*], but they gladly took the goods which smugglers collected from the deserted homes, in exchange for bread. Daring smugglers crept into the forbidden districts to compete with the organized ghoulies of the *Wertverfassungstelle*.<sup>201</sup>

*The next phase of the ghetto saw the gradual consolidation of the underground, culminating in an armed assault on the German forces that entered the ghetto on January 18, 1943, accompanied by the Jewish police, to carry out a much smaller round-up of Jews for deportation. The Jewish police took an active part in seizing Jews for deportation.<sup>202</sup> Jews who sought to flee after that Aktion had to pay the Jewish police large sums of money to be smuggled out of the ghetto.<sup>203</sup> According to Stefan Ernest, an employee of the Arbeitsamt, “This operation was carried out with the aid of several companies of gendarmes and SS infantry. The Jewish Order Police played an auxiliary role by breaking down doors and searching through hideouts. ... The residents hid as best they could, and in some places, mainly on Muranowski Square [where the ŻZW had its headquarters] and Miła Street (no. 34), there was active resistance. Arms were used and the enemy incurred losses. Apparently there was also resistance on the third day of the operation, that is, on January 20, on the premises of Schultz [workshop]. As a result of this operation around 6,000 victims were deported or shot on the spot, of this around 4,000 on the first day of the operation. The undertakers counted up to 1,000 corpses they had to clear. The losses among the foe were supposed to have amounted to 21 victims killed or seriously wounded.”<sup>204</sup> When the Germans entered the ghetto again on April 19, 1943, according to Stefan Ernest, the “main points of resistance” were Muranowski Square, Muranowska Street, the hospital on Gęsia Street and the brushmakers’ workshop.<sup>205</sup> (Stefan Ernest wrote his report in May 1943.) The participation of the ŻZW in the fighting in January 1943 is described by Chaim Lazar-Litai.<sup>206</sup> However, other members of the ŻZW such as David Landau deny that the ŻZW took part in the fighting. Landau poses the following question about the continued collaboration of the Jewish police: “The Germans had to enter the houses to remove the people they wanted for deportation yet they*

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<sup>200</sup> Tuvia Borzykowski, *Between Tumbling Walls* (Tel Aviv: Beit Lohamei Hagettaot/Ghetto Fighters’ House and Hakibbutz Hameuchad Publishing House, 1972), 18.

<sup>201</sup> Bernard Goldstein, *The Stars Bear Witness* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1950), 154–55.

<sup>202</sup> Testimony of Rachela Hönigman, Archive of the Jewish Historical Institute (Warsaw), record group 301, number 4239.

<sup>203</sup> Testimony of Helena Jakubowicz, Archive of the Jewish Historical Institute (Warsaw), record group 301, number 3418. This testimony mentions an organized group of Jewish policemen who worked hand in hand with Polish policemen.

<sup>204</sup> Stefan Ernest, *O wojnie wielkich Niemiec z Żydami w Warszawie, 1939–1943* (Warsaw: Czytelnik, 2003), 324.

<sup>205</sup> Stefan Ernest, *O wojnie wielkich Niemiec z Żydami w Warszawie, 1939–1943* (Warsaw: Czytelnik, 2003), 350.

<sup>206</sup> Chaim Lazar-Litai, *Muranowska 7: The Warsaw Ghetto Rising* (Tel Aviv: Massada–P.E.C. Press, 1966), 189–90. Józef Grynblatt, who claims to have been a member of the Jewish Military Union (ŻZW), also states that the ŻZW put up armed resistance in January 1943. See Anka Grupińska, “Rozmowa z Józefem Grynblatem, członkiem Betaru i Żydowskiego Związku Walki w czasie powstania w getcie warszawskim,” *Zagłada Żydów: Studia i materiały*, vol. 3 (2007): 317–35, here at p. 322.

*were still assisted by the Jewish police. I often ask myself what evil force made the Jewish police cooperate in January 1943, when they themselves had been decimated after the great deportation?* <sup>207</sup>

### **Chaim Lazar, chronicler of the Jewish Military Organization:**

But where, the reader may well ask, was the Jewish national resistance movement at the time? Were they too, deluded into giving themselves up to passive fatalism?

What, then, had happened to the Z.Z.W., the Jewish military organization described in the preceding chapters? This was the only organization of its kind in the ghetto which possessed arms and had clear-cut objectives. Why did it not take to offering resistance at the commencement of the first mass deportations? ...

Where were they at the time of the *Aktion*? The answer is furnished in the deposition given by Wladislaw Zarski-Zaidler [Władysław Zajdler-Żarski] at the Jewish Historical Institute of Warsaw in June 1960, as recorded by Professor [Bernard] Mark. Zarski-Zaidler states:

“On the one hand, Jews who had been able to leave the ghetto were hiding out in bunkers (cellars) prepared for them by members of the organization and using escape routes to the East, while at the same time the Z.Z.W. fighting organization was becoming consolidated and strengthening its position inside the ghetto itself. Thanks to its contacts with the A.K. and its connections with the K.B. (Security Corps), the Z.Z.W. was able, by the Spring of 1942, to acquire a quantity of arms and rally a group dedicated to its cause. The organization was headed by David Appelbaum, who went by the name of ‘Koval’. In the spring of 1942, David Appelbaum received word through W.Z.W.Z. [Polish underground] channels that the Germans were planning the mass extermination of the Warsaw ghetto. The chairman of the Judenrat, Czerniakow, on hearing of the horrible crime that was being planned, officially denied in June 1942 that the Jews were going to be deported. Disatisfied with this attitude, Appelbaum at the end of June called a meeting of the Z.Z.W. Command, which was also attended by representatives of the W.Z.W.Z., including Bystry (Major Henryk Iwanski [Iwański]) and his brother, Waclaw Iwanski [Wacław Iwański]. The latter depicted in unequivocal terms the fate awaiting the Jews of the Warsaw ghetto: “They want to numb your senses, the more easily to get you out of the ghetto and destroy you,” he said.

“It was a stormy meeting. Some of those present wanted to launch armed resistance at all costs. Others advocated moderation and tried to cool down the ‘hotheads’ with cold reasoning. Appelbaum was in principle all for starting the revolt, but did not wish to take such a fateful decision on his own.

“The meeting decided to consult with influential members of the Judenrat, obtain the opinions of rabbis, and have a decision adopted on the broadest possible basis and with the least possible delay.

“The second meeting took place in the first week of July. From the Aryan side (that part of the city outside the ghetto) there came Henryk and Waclaw Iwanski and Wladislaw Zarski-Zaidler. The meeting was held at the home of Leon Urbach on Dzielna St., the second house from the corner of Karmelicka St. Those present included Czerniakow, Lichtenbaum, Advocate David Szulman, Leon Rodal, Heniek Federbusz, Henryk Lifszyc, two rabbis (one from Twarda St. and the other from the Greater Ghetto), Dłuzyk January, Haim Moritz Leib, Dremalski (or Dermatulski), Dr. Alojzy Lunarski, Appelbaum, Dr. Goldfarb Maurycy, Leonard Fisz, Haim Lopata, Kalman Mendelson, Pika Janek, Dr. Temerson (a gynaecologist), Wainszok, Winecki Romualdi, Bialoskornik (Bialoskora) and others whose names I no longer recall.

“Appelbaum outlined the situation; he was followed by Iwanski, who spoke of the German scheme to liquidate the ghetto. Unfortunately, none of those present was prepared to believe that the Germans would actually execute such a plan. They raised innumerable objections, to the effect that the economic benefit which the Germans derived from Jewish forced labour in the ghetto and its contribution to the German war

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<sup>207</sup> David J. Landau, alias Dudek, Janek and Jan, *Caged: A Story of Jewish Resistance* (Sydney: Macmillan, 2000), 204–205. According to Landau, the *Aktion* of January 18, 1943 “never came close to our part of the ghetto.”

effort rendered such a plan unfeasible. Moreover, they claimed, the Germans would hardly risk antagonizing world opinion by perpetrating such a horrible and senseless crime.

“The rabbis, too, were opposed to any armed resistance, on the grounds that this would incur heavy reprisals and unnecessary bloodshed. One rabbi quoted from the Book of Job (Chapter 5, 17-20): ‘Behold, happy is the man whom God correcteth; therefore despise not thou the chastening of the Almighty. For he maketh sore, and bindeth up; he woundeth and his hands make whole. He shall deliver thee in six troubles; yea, in seven there shall no evil touch thee. In famine he shall redeem thee from death; and in war from the power of the sword.’

“He recited these verses in prophetic tones and in Hebrew, which I did not understand. Only later did I find out that he had been quoting from the Book of Job. I must admit, that even though I could not follow the meaning at the time, I was deeply impressed. All present fell silent and sat with bowed heads.

“This was the beginning of the end.” – Zarski-Zaidler concludes his testimony.

The impossibility of offering resistance is described by Dr. David Wdowinski [a ŻZW leader] as follows:

“Our fighting organization did not possess enough arms at the time to start a rising, but even had we had sufficient arms and fighting men, *the Revisionist Movement alone could not have assumed responsibility for the consequences. Under the existing circumstances, any resistance and revolt would have needed the backing of the entire Jewish community. This we did not have. It was painfully clear to all of us that any such resistance would inevitably incur bloody German reprisals in the ghetto. Naturally, we would then be blamed for the ensuing Aktion and have to bear this everlasting mark of infamy. Could we have assumed a responsibility such as this?*”

The social and political make-up of the Jewish community at this time hardly lent itself to the formation of a united force which could arise and make a concerted stand against the Germans. The Jews were splintered up into a variety of parties, factions, and movements, namely: Orthodox, Revisionists, Benei Akiva, General Zionists, right-wing Poalei Zion, Dror, Gordonia, Hashomer Hatzair—Left-wing Poalei Zion, Bundists, Communists, and a large number of splinter-groups and movements of varying political shades. To these may be added the fellow-travellers, the officials and assimilationists who kept aloof, the property-owners who were interested solely in safeguarding their wealth, most of the factory workers who considered themselves a cut above the others since they believed they had the best chances of survival, the so-called “productive” elements, and the broad masses who were concerned exclusively with the grim realities of life in the ghetto and their attempts to overcome insoluble day-to-day problems. This, then, was a cross-section of the community which would have had to be called upon to rise up against the highly-disciplined and organized armed German forces, which blindly obeyed each and every one of the Führer’s orders.

Would a mere handful of Z.Z.W. fighters, as dedicated as they were, have been able to join all these splinters together and unify them into a consolidated force, ready and able to engage the Germans in actual combat?

The policy of collective responsibility—and collective punitive measures—adopted by the enemy constituted a further, and perhaps crucial, consideration. As far as the Germans were concerned, all Jews were responsible for one another’s actions. There was no doubt whatsoever that any rising would invoke large-scale reprisals and possibly lead to the total extermination of the Jewish population. And even those who were all for offering resistance were faced with the tragic dilemma of whether they had the moral right to expose the Jewish masses to the risk of certain death, against the slender chances of saving no more than a few.

When the various [Jewish] resistance movements in Poland were discussing the crucial question of what would be the most opportune time for launching the revolt, the consensus weighed heavily against launching resistance operations before it was quite clear, beyond any doubt, that the Germans were about to carry out their final *Aktion*, i.e., that the entire Jewish community was facing total annihilation and there

was no longer the least shred of hope that any would be allowed to survive. But so long as the deportations were partial and some Jews could still hope to be spared, the rising must be kept in abeyance. This is what happened in Vilno [Wilno], in Bialystok [Białystok], and in Warsaw too, for all realized that once the revolt was launched, none would be spared.

I well remember how we were faced with this tragic dilemma in the Vilno ghetto, and there the position was incomparably better since all the underground movements, from Betar to the Communists, were firmly united. ...

We now see, in historical retrospect, how right was the minority in insisting that the rising was to be launched without delay. For it was clear that the deportees were invariably put to death and that this was the fate that awaited each and every one in the ghetto; it was merely a matter of time, and a very short time at that. The opportune moment for starting the revolt should on no account have been wasted for the sake of a week's, or at most a month's respite. But the minority that held this view was unable to make the others see it in this light, and as a result: the Jewish masses were led like sheep to the slaughter; the fighting organization lost its finest combatants; all the Jewish movements lost their reserve forces of potential fighters, who could have inflicted heavy losses on the enemy, had they been called upon to do so at the right time; and the Jewish masses were denied the opportunity to rise up and be swept into the storm of revolt, as the survivors did in April 1943. How very different matters might have been if half a million Jews had joined in a mass rising, forcing the enemy to call up whole divisions of troops to quell it!<sup>208</sup>

**David Wdowiński, a leader of the Jewish Military Union (ŻZW), on sentences passed on collaborators and “expropriation” of money in the ghetto:**

We had to pay for everything very dearly. It entailed the expenditure of millions of zloty [złoty]. Where did we obtain these vast sums of money? Because the popularity of our organization grew, we received voluntary contributions. We had carried out sentences of execution against a number of higher Jewish police officers who had distinguished themselves infamously during the transfer [i.e., deportation of Jews to Treblinka]. In the pockets of one of these officers we found a plan of the Gestapo for a “peaceful” transfer and liquidation of the Warsaw Jewry. Our organization also executed several Jewish traitors who were in the confidence of the Gestapo as well as several Jews who had made bargains with the Germans to fleece the population. ...

But a good deal of the money was obtained at the point of a revolver from still rich Jews. There were rich Jews in the Ghetto, those who had gotten richer at the expense of the poor. These were the liaison between the Germans and the Jewish population in the Ghetto, Jewish managers of German firms, unscrupulous food speculators and other social hyenas. We approached these quite differently. If they did not hand over the sum of money demanded, we arrested them. We had jails both in the Ghetto and in the shops. We kept such individuals on bread and water until our demands were met, such as half a million or a million zloty, jewelry, or better still foreign valuta [*waluta* or currency]. For foreign valuta one could get weapons much more easily.<sup>209</sup>

**Yitzhak Zuckerman, a leader of the Jewish Fighting Organization (ŻOB), on informers and “expropriations” in the ghetto:**

After the mass deportation, ... the status of the Jewish Police and the *Judenrat* declined, and it was the informers—Jews who maintained contact with the various branches of the German police—who posed the greatest threat to the Ż.O.B. and the broader resistance movement.<sup>210</sup>

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<sup>208</sup> Chaim Lazar Litai, *Muranowska 7: The Warsaw Ghetto Rising* (Tel Aviv: Massada–P.E.C. Press, 1966), 122–28. Confirmation of the extensive assistance provided by Henryk Iwański (“Bystry”) can also be found in the memoir of David J. Landau, alias Dudek, Janek and Jan, *Caged: A Story of Jewish Resistance* (Sydney: Macmillan, 2000), 40–41, 80–81.

<sup>209</sup> David Wdowinski, *And We Are Not Saved* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1985), 82.

<sup>210</sup> Yitzhak Zuckerman (“Antek”), *A Surplus of Memory: Chronicle of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 341. Gutman speaks of “the many agents and traitors...within the ghetto.” See Israel Gutman, *Resistance: The Warsaw Ghetto Uprising* (Boston and New York: Houghton and Mifflin, 1994), 219.

After the January (1943) Uprising ... separate “wildcat groups” of unorganized people who wanted to fight the Germans began surfacing. Some of those wildcat groups wanted to exploit the conditions...with weapons and violence, in order to get rich at the expense of the Jews. They would attack and rob Jewish houses, representing themselves as the Jewish Fighting Organization and, under this aegis, would perform their robberies. We started a war against the wildcat groups and destroyed them, both by negotiations and force.<sup>211</sup>

There was once a Communist group carrying out “Exes” [expropriations, i.e., robberies] in the ghetto, and the commander maintained that he was acting on orders from above. We then investigated the matter and the Polish Communists responded sharply that they had never asked their members to collect money in the ghetto.<sup>212</sup>

The Ż.O.B. succeeded in dominating the *Judenrat* and forced the council to follow its orders. It also extracted a quarter of a million zlotys from the *Judenrat* for the purchase of arms. When then the chairman of the *Judenrat*, Lichtenbaum, was threatened that his son would be killed if the money was not paid, the cash was turned over to the Ż.O.B. in three days and the members of the council merely asked that among the reasons given for the payment, the clause reading “a penalty imposed as punishment for services to the Germans” be deleted.<sup>213</sup>

We had a friend on the *Judenrat*, named Mayofis. ... There was also a steel safe in *Judenrat* building. And thanks to Mayofis, we knew who had the keys. ... Israel Kanal put on his Jewish policeman’s uniform and, at dawn, went to the treasurer of the *Judenrat* and used threats to get the keys from him. We went to the bank and took out the money. We did this twice. The second time was just before the *Aktsia*; but by then I was no longer in the Central Ghetto. Another time, we attacked the treasury of the *Judenrat* in the middle of the day. ... The men approached the bank, went inside and took out the money; it was a very successful operation.<sup>214</sup>

#### **Matthew Brzezinski on “expropriations” in the ghetto:**

[Hanoch] Gutman was one of the heroes of the January [1943] Rising, and his team did some of the ZOB [ŻOB]’s dirtiest work: so-called “Exes,” which included both execution of traitors and expropriation of funds to finance weapons purchases. The unit was part hit squad, part extortion ring—but its targets hardly qualified as innocent victims. The notorious Gestapo agent Alfred Nossig ... was the first to be shot. He was followed by Mieczysław Brzezinski, the head of the Jewish Police’s hated Umschlagplatz unit. ...

Marek Edelman was more forthcoming about the sort of victim the ZOB shook down and the mafia-style tactics employed. “A Jewish policeman, a real son of a bitch, wouldn’t give us money,” he recalled. “We said, ‘You don’t want to pay? Fine,’ and shot him.”

The activities of the ZOB during this brief but controversial period of its evolution were in fact very similar to those of the American mob. Every underground baker in the Ghetto was forced to pay tribute to the ZOB by delivering free daily bread. Those who balked had their shops wrecked. Since the Organization needed to raise the equivalent of millions of dollars to buy arms for its members, it targeted the rich with a special “tax.” A disproportionate percentage of surviving residents were wealthy, because money, gold, and diamonds was what kept people alive in the diabolically corrupt Nazi system. There was also no shortage of smugglers or collaborators to squeeze. “We would kidnap their children and ransom them,” Simha explained of one tactic to secure contributions for the ZOB’s weapons fund. ...

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<sup>211</sup> Yitzhak Zuckerman (“Antek”), *A Surplus of Memory: Chronicle of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 227.

<sup>212</sup> *Ibid.*, 399.

<sup>213</sup> *Ibid.*, 342.

<sup>214</sup> *Ibid.*, 316–17.

So much money was being raised through extortion that a violent turf war nearly erupted. The rival Jewish Military Union had its own Exes program, and competition between the two groups over territory and marks eventually led to a confrontation. Zuckerman, Edelman, and Anielewicz went to meet with unnamed leads of the JMU to try to resolve the dispute. “They drew their guns, we also brought our guns,” was all Edelman would say. “I won’t discuss it any further than that.”<sup>215</sup>

**Simha Rotem (Ratajzer) “Kazik”, a close colleague of Zuckerman’s who made use of racial stereotypes in assaults carried out in the ghetto, at the same time dispels the claim found in some Jewish sources that Polish gangs infiltrated the ghetto to carry out “expropriations”:**

At Hanoch [Gutman]’s order, we went on “exes” (short for expropriations) to “raise” money from rich Jews. We kept watch at the home of one man, collected information, and set a date for the operation. The apartment was on the second floor. One of us knocked on the door and when it opened we burst in, identified the man of the house, stood facing him in a “persuasive” movement, and announced, “We’ve come to get your contribution for the ZOB.” The Jew refused. I put the barrel of my revolver near him; he froze and didn’t utter a sound. Then Hanoch ordered, “Kazik, kill him!” When he called me “Kazik,” I was to understand that I had to appear as Kazik, that is, as a Pole. I assumed a strange expression, rolled my eyes, puffed up my chest, grabbed the Jew by the collar, and dragged him into a corner of the room. “Listen, with me you don’t play games!” I told him. When he heard the name “Kazik,” he understood he was dealing with a Gentile, and you didn’t get smart with a Gentile, especially not in those days. He broke down, asked for a brief delay, went to a hiding place, pulled out some money, and reluctantly gave us his “contribution.” ...

The “sniffers”—our intelligence people—identified a very rich Jew in the Brushmakers’ Area. We considered how to get money out of him after he refused to contribute willingly. At headquarters it was decided to take his beautiful daughter hostage. ... We took the girl to a locked room in an attic in the Brushmakers’ Area. ... This girl was to write a letter to her father, which we dictated to her and delivered to her house by messenger. ... Once again I played a Christian, a representative of the Polish Underground, supposedly cooperating with the ZOB in the Ghetto.

Soon after, the father was brought to the jailhouse. ... after the man was brought into the locked room, the three of us had to try to squeeze out of him a sum of money which, according to our information, he was capable of paying. He was a real character. Despite our threats of execution, he claimed he couldn’t give us such a large sum. In fact, at first he demanded that we release him and his daughter for nothing. This went on for two or three days. ...

As a last resort, my commanders decided to include me in an attempt to “convince” him, so he would know he wasn’t dealing with “compassionate Jews” but with real Gentiles, for whom killing a man, not to mention a Jew, was not a problem to hesitate about. ... we had agreed from the start that, at a certain stage, we’d begin to play the role of “murderer,” that is, we’d put him up against the wall, cock our weapons, count to three, according to all the rules of executions, hoping the man would finally break. Hence, when I didn’t succeed in convincing him with the carrot, I was forced to use the stick of execution. I cocked the weapon in my hand. My finger was on the trigger. I said, “I’ll shoot you if you don’t respond.” The man broke down and for the first time started negotiating the amount. ... The man believed a Gentile was standing in front of him, a pure Aryan.<sup>216</sup>

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<sup>215</sup> Matthew Brzezinski, *Isaac’s Army: A Story of Courage and Survival in Nazi-Occupied Poland* (New York: Random House, 2012), 234–35. On expropriations carried out in the Warsaw ghetto by various Jewish underground groups and the execution of collaborators, see also Barbara Engelking and Jacek Leociak, *Getto warszawskie: Przewodnik po nieistniejącym mieście*, Second revised and expanded edition (Warsaw: Stowarzyszenie Centrum Badań nad Zagładą Żydów, 2013), 790–94.

<sup>216</sup> Simha Rotem (“Kazik”), *Memoirs of a Warsaw Ghetto Fighter: The Past Within Me* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1994), 28–31. Adam Halperin, for example, claims: “Night after night, bands of Poles began to infiltrate into the Ghetto via the sewers; they set upon defenseless Jews, stole their few remaining possessions, raped the women, and then returned safely to the Aryan side.” See Adam Halperin, “Betar’s Role in the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising,” in Yisrael Gutman and Livia Rothkirchen, eds., *The Catastrophe of European Jews: Antecedents, History, Reflections. Selected Papers* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1976), 552–53.

### **Pnina Greenspan, a ŻOB member, on “expropriations” in the ghetto:**

Raising funds was an urgent priority. Pnina Greenspan was the specialist in this sphere. “We had undercover intelligence,” she recalls. “We would locate the affluent Jews in the ghetto, those who had jewels and gold and diamonds in their homes. We came to them and asked them nicely. Once, twice, three times. If they wanted, they gave. If they didn’t want, they gave anyway. ... It’s simple – you aim the pistol at the woman or the man. We searched them for the jewels. Sometimes I had to undress them. Sometimes we even had to do a body search on the women, you know where. It was very unpleasant.”<sup>217</sup>

*According to Yisrael Gutman, there were groups of robbers who operated under the guise of being underground organizations preparing for armed struggle, which they camouflaged as the actions of a “fighting organization.” Reportedly, the ŻOB ambushed and captured a group of this kind in the act of committing a robbery.<sup>218</sup> Rachela Hönigman, who lived in the Warsaw ghetto during that time, recalled how Jews posing as Germans and young armed Jews invaded homes to rob affluent Jews. Looting by Jews also continued to be a problem.<sup>219</sup> Other reports confirm that the ghetto had to contend with common criminal gangs composed of Jews that undermined the efforts of the Jewish resistance to raise money for the acquisition of arms: “deception and embezzlement also flourish. Armed gangsters still operate in the Ghetto. They, too, visit apartments ostensibly to collect money for the resistance, but the money they steal goes into their own pockets. They burgle at night and take all the clothes first—knowing that the Ghetto Jews usually sew money and valuables into their clothes to conceal them from the Nazis.”<sup>220</sup> There are many other accounts describing how “contributions” for arms acquisitions were procured from wealthy Jews by members of the underground and Jews posing as such, as well as the widespread practices of corruption, extortion and common thievery, often by Jews who exercised positions of influence.<sup>221</sup> The ŻZW also carried out its own very profitable “expropriations”—a combination of forcible seizures, voluntary contributions, and “levies”—for arms acquisition<sup>222</sup> as well as measures designed to rid the ghetto of collaborators. It claims to have passed death sentences on and executed numerous Jewish Gestapo agents and informers especially after the Great Deportation of the summer of 1942.<sup>223</sup>*

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<sup>217</sup> Vered Levy-Barzilai, “The Rebels Among Us,” *Haaretz*, October 11, 2006. This article also records the words of Masha Putermilch (Gleitman), who copied and edited her husband Jacob Putermilch’s memoir: “There are some things it is better not to talk about. When he wrote the book, I asked him to remove these things. He wrote by hand and I typed – there were things I removed.”

<sup>218</sup> Yisrael Gutman, *The Jews of Warsaw, 1939–1945: Ghetto, Underground, Revolt* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1982), 350.

<sup>219</sup> Testimony of Rachela Hönigman, Archive of the Jewish Historical Institute (Warsaw), record group 301, number 4239.

<sup>220</sup> Hillel Seidman, *The Warsaw Ghetto Diaries* (Southfield, Michigan and Nanuet, New York: Targum/Feldheim, 1997), 231. Seidman was chief archivist of the Warsaw Kehillah.

<sup>221</sup> See, for example, Piotr Weiser, ed., *Patrzyłam na usta...: Dziennik a warszawskiego getta* (Kraków: Homini; and Lublin: Państwowe Muzeum na Majdanku, 2008), 33–35, 49–51, 83–91; account of Pnina Grynspan-Frymer (née Papier) in Anka Grupańska, *Po kole: Rozmowy z żydowskimi żołnierzami* (Warsaw: Alfa, 1991), 92; Irena Birnbaum, *Non omnis moriar: Pamiętnik z getta warszawskiego* (Warsaw: Czytelnik, 1982), 86–87, 90, 112, 114, 116, 124, 148–49; and Alicja Zawadzka-Katz, *Refleksje pewnego życia* (Paris: Institut Littéraire, 1967), chapter 2.

<sup>222</sup> Chaim Lazar Litai, *Muranowska 7: The Warsaw Ghetto Rising* (Tel Aviv: Massada-P.E.C. Press, 1966), 162–64: “At first it was necessary to make [well-to-do] people pay up the point of a gun and even keep them locked up in one of the organization’s secret detention cells in the ghetto or in the factory area. ... There were even times when the Ż.Z.W. had more money than it could immediately use to buy arms. ... Once the underground organizations’ fund-raising activities became common knowledge in the ghetto, various gangs of tricksters began resorting to similar methods of obtaining money under false pretences ...”

<sup>223</sup> Marek Edelman, “The Ghetto Fights”, in *The Warsaw Ghetto: The 45th Anniversary of the Uprising* (Warsaw: Interpress Publishers, 1988), posted online at <<http://www.english.upenn.edu/~afilreis/warsaw-uprising.html>>; Chaim Lazar Litai, *Muranowska 7: The Warsaw Ghetto Rising* (Tel Aviv: Massada-P.E.C. Press, 1966), 178–84, 194–96, 320–21. Among those reportedly executed by the ŻZW were: two Gestapo agents shot dead near the entrance to Schultz’s restaurant on Karmelicka St. (spring 1942); Adolf Borensztein (known as the “13<sup>th</sup> man”), shot dead in Elektoralna St. (March 1942); a police lieutenant of the Leszno St. police station, shot near one of the ŻZW tunnel entrances (summer 1942); a nest of eleven Gestapo spies (eight men and three women), executed in the cellar of Kosieradzki’s house on Karmelicka St. after a “trial” (June 1942); two female Gestapo agents, one of them Haya Blumberg; Jacob Leikin, the deputy commander of the Jewish police, shot in Gęsia St. (October 29, 1942); Israel Firszt

Organizations such as the Bund were amply endowed during the occupation and never short of funds.<sup>224</sup> However, “most of the money” for the acquisition of arms was “extracted under duress,”<sup>225</sup> and not gathered through voluntary contributions. According to Yitzhak Zuckerman, the ŻOB had amassed more than ample funds to acquire all the weapons it needed: “We had a lot of jewelry in the ghetto, and there were millions of Zlotys..., as well as dollars and British pounds.”<sup>226</sup> According to Marek Edelman, they had acquired the enormous sum of 10 million zlotys in three months, much of which was never spent on arms acquisition or ever accounted for. Zuckerman, the Jewish Fighting Organization’s master of arms, chose to acquire only pistols even though the events of January 1943 demonstrated that pistols were not an effective weapon in street fighting.<sup>227</sup> Although rifles were more useful and also plentiful on the black market, their transfer into the ghetto was more difficult (though certainly not impossible, even in large quantities<sup>228</sup>), so no significant effort was expended to acquire these.<sup>229</sup> As Zuckerman explains, “of all the weapons we bought, the rifle was easier to get than other weapons, but we needed it less than the pistol. You didn’t know what to do with a rifle, because it was hard to carry... We needed rifles, too, but it was hard to bring them into the ghetto and hard to hide them.”<sup>230</sup> The Jewish Military Union (ŻZW), on the other hand, managed quite readily to bring in larger weapons into the ghetto with the help of the Poles. As we shall see, Zuckerman’s strategy proved to be a mistake that would cost the ŻOB fighters dearly in the months to come.

**Wladyslaw Bartoszewski, Polish historian, founding member of Żegota (Polish wartime Council for Aid to the Jews), decorated by Yad Vashem:**

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or First, the head of the Judenrat’s Economic Department (November 29, 1942); Leon (Lolek) Skosowski (who escaped seriously wounded to the Aryan side where he was later executed by the Polish Home Army), Pawel Bludarski, Arik Waintraub (had in his possession a detailed list of bunkers for the Gestapo), H. Mangiel, Lydia (Anya) Radziszewska, all shot in the brush-factory compound at 38 Świętojerska St. (February 21, 1943); Jerzy Firstenberg, a high-ranking officer in the Jewish ghetto police (February 1943); Moniek Prozanski and his son Anders, shot as they were about to escape to the Aryan side; Zinger, shot in a restaurant on Nowolipki St.; two porters called Pinya and Elia (“Małpa”) on Nowolipki St.; Nosek, shot dead in the brush-factory area (he too was in possession of a detailed list of bunkers). Reuben Ainsztein writes that Revisionist historians wrongly ascribe the execution of First to the ŻZW. See Reuben Ainsztein, *Jewish Resistance in Nazi-Occupied Eastern Europe* (London: Paul Elek, 1974), 615–17, 904 n.14.

<sup>224</sup> Bernard Goldstein, *The Stars Bear Witness* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1950), 50–51: “One important resource was the ‘money transfer.’ Our comrades in America raised money by various means. We received money from individuals in Poland and wrote to our comrades in New York to pay out an equivalent amount to a person designated by the one from whom we got the money. ... We were able to borrow amazingly large sums of money.”

<sup>225</sup> Yisrael Gutman, *The Jews of Warsaw, 1939–1945: Ghetto, Underground, Revolt* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1982), 344: “Compulsory levies—called ‘Exxes’ (‘Expropriations’)—were sometimes collected in combat-like operations, whereby a group of fighters would take over a building and demand that the tax be paid on the spot. The Ż.O.B. even maintained improvised prisons where the relatives of those who refused to pay could be held until the account had been settled.”

<sup>226</sup> Yitzhak Zuckerman (“Antek”), *A Surplus of Memory: Chronicle of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 378.

<sup>227</sup> According to Marek Edelman, “After that battle we realized that street fighting would be too costly for us, since we were not sufficiently prepared for it and lacked the proper weapons.” See Marek Edelman, “The Ghetto Fights”, in *The Warsaw Ghetto: The 45th Anniversary of the Uprising* (Warsaw: Interpress Publishers, 1988), posted online at <<http://www.english.upenn.edu/~afilreis/warsaw-uprising.html>>.

<sup>228</sup> Marek Edelman describes the process thus: “Arms were smuggled into the ghetto in precisely the same manner as other contraband. Bribed Polish policemen closed their eyes to heavy parcels thrown over the ghetto walls at designated spots. ŻOB liaison men immediately disposed of the packages. The Jewish policemen guarding the ghetto walls had no voice in the matter. Our most active liaison men with the “Aryan side” were Zygmunt Frydrych (who arranged the first transport of weapons), Michał Klepfisz, Celemeński, Fajgele Peltel (Władka [Vladka Meed]), and many others. Michał Klepfisz in cooperation with the PS and WRN [Polish underground] groups made the necessary arrangements for a large-scale purchase of explosives and incendiaries (e.g. 2,000 litres of gasoline) and later, after transporting the shipment to the ghetto, set up a factory for the production of Molotov cocktails and hand grenades.” See Marek Edelman, “The Ghetto Fights”, in *The Warsaw Ghetto: The 45th Anniversary of the Uprising* (Warsaw: Interpress Publishers, 1988), posted online at <<http://www.english.upenn.edu/~afilreis/warsaw-uprising.html>>.

<sup>229</sup> Yisrael Gutman, *The Jews of Warsaw, 1939–1945: Ghetto, Underground, Revolt* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1982), 344.

<sup>230</sup> Yitzhak Zuckerman (“Antek”), *A Surplus of Memory: Chronicle of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 253.

Early in August 1942, immediately after the beginning of the annihilation of the Warsaw Ghetto, the clandestine Catholic civic-educational organization Front for Reborn Poland (*Front Odrodzenia Polski*—FOP) issued 5,000 copies of a special leaflet called “Protest”. Its author, the famous Catholic writer, Zofia Kossak, appealed to the hearts and consciences of all Poles who believed in God, including those who had previously felt a dislike for Jews, for active opposition to the crime. “... Whoever remains silent in the face of murder becomes an accomplice of the murderer. Whoever does not condemn, condones ...” The FOP Protest caused quite a widespread response among the people.<sup>231</sup>

The official organ of the AK [Home Army], *Wiadomości Polskie*, adopted a similarly direct and unambiguous stance in its issue of 14 August 1942:

“The persecution of millions of people for nothing other than racist reasons exposes in a terrible light the ideology which has produced these murders, its essence and ultimate consequences. Thus, after two thousand years of the triumphant march of the teaching of Christ of love of one’s neighbour, and after an even longer period during which all the world’s religions have pronounced the commandment ‘Thou shalt not kill’, a nation is found in the centre of Europe calling itself Christian and, in the name of Christianity [Nazi German propaganda only on rare occasion—and cynically—invoked the alleged defence of Christianity to justify their deeds—*Ed.*], allegedly fighting against the godlessness of Bolshevism, which sinks to committing such atrocities. ... One would have to go back somewhere to the hazy depths of the early Middle Ages, or even further—to the prehistoric cave-dwellers—in order to find similar, brutal tendencies. Human language cannot find words adequate to describe them.”<sup>232</sup>

On September 17th, 1942 the Civil Struggle Directorate (*Kierownictwo Walki Cywilnej*—KWC) issued an announcement concerning the extermination campaign conducted by the Nazis on Polish soil. Carried by many underground publications and transmitted to London by radio, so as to give the widest possible publicity to the genocide committed on the Jews, the announcement said:

“Alongside the tragedy experienced by the Polish people, decimated by the enemy, for close on one year Poland has been the scene of an atrocious, planned massacre of Jews. *These genocidal killings are unparalleled in the history of the world. All the atrocities history has known pale before it.* For no other reason than belonging to the Jewish nation, infants, children, young people, grown-ups, the aged, disabled, ill, healthy, men, women, Jews of Catholic faith, Jews of Jewish faith, are mercilessly murdered gassed, buried alive, pushed from windows onto the streets, being subjected to the additional suffering of prolonged agony, the hell of homeless wandering and cynical torturing by the executioners. The number of victims killed this way exceeds one million and is rising with each passing day.

“Unable to resist this actively, the Civil Struggle Directorate protests in the name of the entire Polish people against the crimes being committed against the Jews. All Polish political and social groups join in the protest.

“As in the case of the Polish victims, the actual responsibility for the crimes will fall on the executioners and their accomplices.”

The Nazi authorities, on their part, put up posters in different parts of the Government General in which local SS and police chiefs threatened with death all those who “knowingly render aid to the Jews”.<sup>233</sup>

On 27 September [1942] a secret Temporary Committee for Aid to the Jews was established in Warsaw on the initiative of Zofia Kossak-Szczucka and Wanda Kraheńska-Filipowicz, supported by the Government

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<sup>231</sup> Władysław Bartoszewski, *The Blood Shed Unites Us: Pages from the History of Help to the Jews in Occupied Poland* (Warsaw: Interpress Publishers, 1970), 48–49.

<sup>232</sup> Władysław Bartoszewski, “The Martyrdom and Struggle of the Jews in Warsaw under German Occupation 1939–43,” in Władysław Bartoszewski and Antony Polonsky, eds., *The Jews in Warsaw: A History* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell in association with the Institute for Polish-Jewish Studies, 1991), 327.

<sup>233</sup> Władysław Bartoszewski, *The Blood Shed Unites Us: Pages from the History of Help to the Jews in Occupied Poland* (Warsaw: Interpress Publishers, 1970), 50–51.

Delegacy. This new body was to unite all efforts by different groups of the Polish underground to rescue the victims of persecution.

The Government Delegacy gave this action its official support on behalf of the Polish government in exile and announced it in its underground press organ *Rzeczpospolita Polska* on 14 October 1942. The activity of the Committee led to the establishment in Warsaw at the beginning of December of the clandestine Council for Aid to the Jews (regional organisations appeared in the following months in Lwów and in Kraków). The Council's leadership included representatives of the main Polish democratic parties and activists of the Jewish underground operating outside the ghetto.<sup>234</sup>

#### **Appeal issued by the Jewish Fighting Organization to the Warsaw Ghetto, December 4, 1942:**

... Have we learned nothing from the terrible past? Will some Nazi killer again be able to beguile us by his talk, or by some rumour circulated by the Jewish Gestapo men, renegades, or traitors or by some gullible people? ...

Let us face the truth with courage and boldness! ...

The Germans have once again found lackeys and hirelings among the Jewish community. Do not trust the Jewish traitors, the 'shop' bosses, the foremen. They are your enemies. Do not let them deceive you.

Do not fool yourself, nor let anyone else fool you into believing that the more skilled and more experienced workers, those with numbers, are secure, and hence the weaker and defenceless ones should be delivered.

Everybody is in danger!

No one should dare to assist actively or passively in delivering up his comrade, neighbour, or associate to the executioner. ...<sup>235</sup>

#### **Ludwik Hirszfeld, renowned bacteriologist, on the change in attitude in the Warsaw ghetto in the early part of 1943:**

The first phase of the liquidation of the ghetto came. Thousands went to the slaughter, passively, without resistance. One German pup led hundreds of people, and not one of them dared to go for his throat!

Before, when one Jew looked in the ghetto for ten others to form a unit, he did not find them ... Everyone asked had a wife, children, commitments, everyone had some sort of security. No one wanted to die for others. Ten just men were not to be found in that city doomed to destruction.

That was a year ago. But under the stress of terrible, inhuman suffering, the Jews understood that death was not the most dreadful thing, that more important was how one died and what for. That was why, when the hour of the second and final liquidation of the ghetto came [in April 1943], Jewish fighters decided in the name of the entire Jewish community that they would die with arms in their hands.

They had no illusions about the outcome of their desperate fight. The Jews had to die, though not a miserable death, that no one needed, but a death in defence of human dignity, and of their own honour.<sup>236</sup>

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<sup>234</sup> Władysław Bartoszewski, "The Martyrdom and Struggle of the Jews in Warsaw under German Occupation 1939–43," in Władysław Bartoszewski and Antony Polonsky, eds., *The Jews in Warsaw: A History* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell in association with the Institute for Polish-Jewish Studies, 1991), 328.

<sup>235</sup> Władysław Bartoszewski, *The Blood Shed Unites Us: Pages from the History of Help to the Jews in Occupied Poland* (Warsaw: Interpress Publishers, 1970), 117.

<sup>236</sup> Ludwik Hirszfeld, *Historia jednego życia* (Warszawa: Czytelnik, 1946), as cited in Kazimierz Iranek-Osmecki, *He Who Saves One Life* (New York: Crown Publishers, 1971), 89. Translated as *The Story of One Life* (Rochester: Rochester University Press, 2010).

**Ruth Altbeker Cyprys describes the dramatic improvement in living conditions in the ghetto after the great deportation:**

After the selection in Miła [Miła] Street, which took place on 6 September 1942, a period of peace began. The Vernichtungskommando left Warsaw, the Umschlagplatz stood idle. Optimists considered the liquidation of the ghetto had ended. The Germans in our factory told us that we had the same rights as German workers and would certainly remain alive. Their attitude indeed changed for the better and the food situation improved considerably. We were given special ration cards, honey, sugar, even sweets, and bread was plentiful. Vegetables were brought into our area in large quantities and sold at very cheap prices. The German care for our well-being went so far, that all cellars were requisitioned for the storage of potatoes and cabbage. It was obvious that we were to survive the winter in peace.

Slowly life reshaped itself in our little street. A small factory for making chocolate and sweets was founded, two barbers made permanent waves and dyed hair, a dressmaker was found who accepted orders, but busiest of all were the shoemakers who, by some lucky chance, found material to use. At the same time all of us were working at the Schultz factory. Our little state was named jokingly 'Schulcowizna'—the Schultz Estate. We had everything ...

The end of 1942 was celebrated boisterously and joyfully. It may appear strange to normal people, but on 31 December 1942 in the Jewish Council area, in all factories and among the 'outlaws', people had a wonderful time, drinking vodka in abundance. We have outlived five months of Jewish extermination', people were saying with glasses in their hands, 'we will outlive the war.' ...

The beginning of 1943 seemed really peaceful. We grew accustomed to our toil, the Germans supplied us with food, smuggling went on efficiently and hope slowly entered our hearts. 'The Germans need us, our hard, free labour; perhaps we shall survive.' Therefore, despite the fact that Mrs. P. had consented to take her, I did not send my [young daughter] Eva away. As long as there was the slightest possibility of keeping her with me, I would not part with her. ...

The apparent calm in the ghetto lasted until 17 January 1943. Then the Vernichtungskommando came to Warsaw again, and the Umschlagplatz was revived. ...

Meanwhile the Jews in the ghetto began to resist. Raiding Germans were met with hand grenades and rifle- and machine-gun fire. The very first day there were victims both among Jews and Germans. After a few hours fighting the Germans withdrew. They were not prepared for such open resistance. The next day, 18 January, the Germans, reinforced by Ukrainians and Shaulis [Lithuanians] and helped by the remnants of the Jewish militia, returned to their job of clearing the Jewish quarter. The Jews bravely resisted. They fired from windows, cellars and roofs. ... In these circumstances the liquidation of the ghetto progressed. Still, a person with a good hiding-place and some hand grenades could easily survive because the Germans never went down to explore the dark cellars.<sup>237</sup>

**David Landau, a member of the Jewish Military Orgaization (ŻZW), provides the following description:**

Yet, ironically, it was now easier to find food and accommodation for the illegal thirty thousand who came out of hiding than it had been for the Jews who had lived legally in the ghetto before the deportations began. ...

Materially, this became easy to achieve: the groups who worked outside the ghetto began a blossoming exchange of goods which were needed for the Aryan side but had become useless in the ghetto. In return, we obtained food, alcohol, and cigarettes.<sup>238</sup>

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<sup>237</sup> Ruth Altbeker Cyprys, *A Jump For Life: A Survivor's Journal from Nazi-Occupied Poland* (New York: Continuum, 1997), 73, 87, 89.

<sup>238</sup> David J. Landau, alias Dudek, Janek and Jan, *Caged: A Story of Jewish Resistance* (Sydney: Macmillan, 2000), 143–43.

Paradoxically, there was a lust for consuming as much of the short time left as possible. Smuggling grew to great proportions. Restaurants opened in which food and alcohol were plentiful and of good quality. Those who had money, not even great amounts of it, could afford to visit the restaurants and enjoy a good meal. One restaurant was known to the organisers of the ŻOB [Jewish Fighting Organization]. Their Commander, Mordecai Anielewicz, was taken there by his friends from time to time to enjoy a fish meal, which he loved.<sup>239</sup>

**Vladka Meed points out that help from fellow Jews who were in “good” positions came with a high price:**

My way out [of the ghetto] would be by posing as a member of a labor brigade. No other means of escape was possible. The foreman of the labor gangs employed outside the ghetto were occasionally able to make substitutions for absences. Such opportunities were rare and expensive. I paid. ...

December 5, 1942. At 7:00 a.m. the street was astir with people streaming to work. Brisk bartering went on as Jews traded their last pitiful belongings—a coat, a skirt, an old pair of shoes—to those working on the “Aryan side” for chunks of bread. Later, the commodities would be smuggled out of the ghetto and sold to Gentile vendors. [This description is clearly an exaggeration in light of many other accounts that state that clothes and other commodities were plentiful after the deportation of the summer of 1942.]

After some searching, I found a Jewish leader of a forty-man labor battalion who for 500 zlotys [złoty] allowed me to joining his group. I was the only female in the unit. We marched in the column formation to the ghetto gate, where we were joined thousands of other laborers, men and women.

The morning guard, heavily reinforced, was busy inspecting the throng. People pushed and jostled wherever they could, hoping to elude the Gestapo scrutiny—to escape to the “Aryan side.” To smuggle a few belongings out of the ghetto. The inspection had just started. ...

A Jewish policeman appeared. The place was swarming with troopers and police; there was no chance of escape.

“Please let me slip out while the German is away,” I whispered to the policeman.

“Do you expect me to risk my life for you?” the policeman snapped. “The German will be right back!” At the entrance to the wooden shack lay a man, bruised and bleeding. Off to one side was the young girl. I stood a moment, stunned. The policeman shoved me inside. [She was miraculously spared a beating and escaped when a commotion broke out later on.—*M.P.*]<sup>240</sup>

**Zosia Goldberg left the main ghetto and found refuge in the brushmakers’ factory, a workshop for Jews, from whence she escaped to the “Aryan” side:**

In one day I lost my father’s family. ... There were men and women and a lot of children, and nobody was doing anything, just waiting for me to help them. What they did was to come to me: “Zosia, what will we do? Get us papers, the Life Cards.”

Since they spoke Polish so beautifully, without any Jewish accent, and because they looked like Gentiles, they could have saved themselves by going to the Aryan section. They could have found a way. They were not doing well at all, but they were not completely without money. They could have managed. If somebody is desperate, he can do anything. He has to save himself, even if he goes without a penny. But they did not

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<sup>239</sup> Ibid., 203–204.

<sup>240</sup> Vladka Meed, *On Both Sides of the Wall: Memoirs from the Warsaw Ghetto* (New York: Holocaust Library, 1979), 76–78.

have any courage. They could have gone amongst the Gentiles even without money. Anybody would have opened their doors for the; they would have taken them for Gentiles for sure. But they did not even try.<sup>241</sup>

I did not know how, not yet, but I did know that we had to get out of the ghetto. ... I said to my mother, "We are going. We are leaving the house, never to come back." ...

My mother said, "You're crazy!" She was about forty-five years old, not an old woman. But all the older people had the same way of thinking. The old ones wanted to stay in the houses. They did not realize that the next morning, or three days later, they would be taken and killed. They wanted to stay in their homes. Only the youth ran. When I told my mother that I would go out into the streets, she was very upset. ...

So early in the morning, we ran to the hole. ... When we climbed out on the other side we were on Nowolipki Street. We were still in the ghetto, but now we were homeless and on the run. ...

We were on the street. I was breaking my head, thinking. My mother was breaking my head, too. "Where do we go now? Do you want to sleep on the street?"

"Well," I said, "we will knock on somebody's door. They will let us in." we knocked and I said, "We ran away from Nowolipie Street. Will you please let us in?" They shut the door in our faces.<sup>242</sup>

I was walking on Franciszkańska [Franciszkańska] Street one day with my mother when I saw my aunt Mindla. ... And there she was with all her children—the Jewish police taking Mindla and all the children in a pushcart to the station [for deportation to Treblinka]. ...

I went to the policeman and said, "Look, she's my aunt. Leave her alone." "Who are you to tell me?" he said. "What do you mean? *You* get on the pushcart." And he picked me up and put me on the pushcart. ... Then came another Jewish policeman who knew me very well. He said, "Are you crazy? That's Zosia. Leave her alone." "All right," the first policeman said. "Let her get out." And they took away Mindla and her children. She was crying, begging, "Zosia, help!" What could I do? I could do nothing. I tried. I will never forget her face, how they took her with her three children.<sup>243</sup>

Then they moved the brush factory to Swietojska [Świętojska] Street, to a big courtyard. ... When the factory moved, we went to live in a building with maybe eight or ten apartments. We took over one apartment. I just opened the door and went in. Our apartment had beautiful paintings, silver, the most expensive linen. It was the apartment of some very wealthy family who had run away, or maybe were dead. I had one room with my mother, and in the same room was another bed for a friend of mine from the Café Sztuka, Helena Goldberg. ...

Helena was the daughter of one of these filmmakers or producers from Café Sztuka. She went with a lot of men. She had a husband, but he meant nothing to her, even though he was a Jewish policeman in the ghetto. She did whatever she wanted. ... She was so sure, since her husband was a policeman and she knew all these brushmakers, that she would be safe. Then one day they put her on the line for death and they took her to the *Umschlagplatz*. Nobody helped her. She went right to the station. She disappeared ...

In another room of the apartment there were families from Number Thirteen Leszno Street, the Jewish Gestapo headquarters. They would eat the most fancy stuff you could imagine, all smuggled. Their brothers, sisters, and husbands were all working for the Germans. They had a good time. They were not scared or anything. They were sure they would be saved.

I continued working at the brushmakers' factory. I was always looking for a possible chance to run away from the ghetto ...

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<sup>241</sup> Zosia Goldberg, as told to Hilton Obenzinger, *Running Through Fire: How I Survived the Holocaust* (San Francisco: Mercury House 2004), 32.

<sup>242</sup> *Ibid.*, 40–42.

<sup>243</sup> *Ibid.*, 40–42.

The head of our brushmakers was a Jew from Lodz [Łódź]. He was an engineer, and he was working with one Gentile fellow, Kudasiewicz, a wonderful person. He really helped me a lot.<sup>244</sup>

There was another group collaborating with the Germans besides these Number Thirteens, a group they called *Pogotowie*, which means paramedics in English. They picked up the dead bodies and cleaned the streets, but they also collaborated with the Germans.<sup>245</sup>

After every selection the Germans gave what they called a Life Card, a document that meant you could live and work. Now I had a Life Card, but my mother did not because she had not gone to the selection. At the next selection, you had to show the Life Card you received from the last selection ... So I went over to the [Jewish] manager of our brush factory and I said to him, “Look, do me a favour. Falsify one card. Make me one card.” ...

So he said to me, “Ten thousand dollars—if you have ten thousand dollars you get a Life Card.” ...

I had good nails, so I took him and started to scratch his face. ... While this was happening, a little German soldier came over, an ordinary soldier, and he asked me, “Why are you beating him up?”

... I told him the truth. I had asked the manager for a life Card, and he would not give it to me unless I gave him ten thousand dollars. So the soldier said, “*Verflucht!* Come with me!” He went into the office, and with his big boots he kicked the doors open, took a card and said, “Here it is.”

And so my mother was safe, at least until the next selection.

From now on I had a friend. Every time I went out, the German soldier would call to me. ... He gave me bread every morning. He was an old German, an old man. ...

The roundup continued. My mother and I made it through several selections. ...

I was with my friend Eli, from Lodz, and Szymek Katz. We went into the streets, heading for the *Umschlagplatz*. ... All three of us had our mothers with us; we were caring for our mothers, trying to save them. Hardly anyone else was. Children were not trying to save their parents. Parents were ballast for the, just like little children were ballast to the women. If a pregnant woman could cut their belly, she would do so in order not to be pregnant.<sup>246</sup>

... we could see that all the people of Number Thirteen were very happy, making themselves sandwiches with sardines, the most expensive food. They were eating, laughing, having a good time. ... It was on account of the Number Thirteens that many people disappeared. ...

They marched our factory out. I had a piece of paper. ... As soon as we marched out of the *Umschlagplatz*, those happy ones, the Number Thirteens, were not so happy. All of a sudden an SS man shouted, “Halt!” and he pushed us to the front, and pushed the others to the back—the Number Thirteens—to load them onto the trains. Then we marched through the empty streets back to the brushmakers’.<sup>247</sup>

When Helena Goldberg, my friend from Café Sztuka, was taken to the train she left behind winter clothing. She had a warm coat. I took her coat, her clothing, her hat, everything. I prepared myself for out [of the ghetto] the next morning. ...

I instructed my mother that she should not move anywhere until I had arranged things. “One thing,” I said to her, “Don’t trust anybody. Don’t tell anybody. Don’t tell where I went or how.” ...

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<sup>244</sup> Ibid., 43–46.

<sup>245</sup> Ibid., 48.

<sup>246</sup> Ibid., 49–51.

<sup>247</sup> Ibid., 53.

Suddenly, in the evening, somebody knocked. My mother opened the door and in came the Jewish police. ... Someone must have told them I was planning to escape. They came and they brought vodka also. ...

“If you have some money, we can help you get out to the Aryan section.”

“That’s marvellous,” I said. “I don’t have money now, but I can get it tomorrow. How will you take me out?”

“Through the cemetery.”

... Finally, they left me, figuring I would be there. I wanted to get rid of them.<sup>248</sup>

*Zosia Goldberg was able to escape from the ghetto through the sewers, a hazardous and arduous venture, with the assistance of Polish smugglers who proved to be trustworthy. Once safely out, she arranged with the same smugglers to get her mother out of the ghetto.*

I arranged to get my mother. I paid again, and the same smugglers went back and took her out. I don’t know what happened to the Jewish policemen who had visited that night. Maybe they waited for me in the cemetery. Maybe they had some action and they forgot about me. Whatever it was, we were lucky. If they had returned, my mother would never have survived. They would have paid her for what I did because I cheated them. I lied. Anyhow, they did not intend to help me get out. They just intended to get money and give me away.<sup>249</sup>

**Eugene Bergman, a resident of the ghetto, describes some of the thousands of escapes from the ghetto:**

The work detail with Bronek [Bergman] in it trudged to the ghetto exit in a loose military formation, with Bronek and Mr. Hutoran marching in the last row. At the ghetto exit the foreman deliberately miscounted the number of men in his detail. ... to the gendarme on duty, with whom he was in cahoots in return for a fat bribe.

By prearrangement, once they were out of the ghetto and on the Aryan side, as the column was approaching a corner Mr. Hutoran and Bronek started to lag behind the others. Finally they stopped and bent down, pretending to tie their shoelaces very slowly so as to give the marching column enough time to vanish behind a corner. Then they quickly took off their white celluloid armbands with the blue Star of David emblazoned on them, stuffed them in their pockets, and ran in opposite directions. They were seen by the Polish passersby, who observed the whole happening passively.

Bronek proceeded to 58 Towarowa Street, where Tatus [tatuś, i.e., daddy] was renting half a kitchen, and joined him there.<sup>250</sup>

As for Mamusia [mommy], Dadek, and me, we proceeded to the nearest ghetto gate. It was manned by a German gendarme along with a Polish policeman and a Jewish policeman. ... It was he [the Jewish policeman] also whom Mamusia first approached and, after a whispered conversation, handed a thick wad of banknotes along with some papers that appeared to be forged Polish I.D. cards. ... That was with the bogus I.D. cards was then passed on to the Polish “Blue” policeman, who took a cursory look at the cards presented to him by his Jewish assistant. He deftly pocketed the money, passed on the cards to the German guard and motioned for us to approach him. The German also did not bother to scrutinize our I.D. cards closely. He handed them back to Mamusia and just let us pass. ...

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<sup>248</sup> Ibid., 56–58.

<sup>249</sup> Ibid., 61.

<sup>250</sup> Eugene Bergman, *Survival Artist: A Memoir of the Holocaust* (Jefferson, North Carolina and London: McFarland, 2009), 74.

We were on the other side. ... Mamusia, Dadek and I made our way through a little crowd of curious Polish onlookers. ... The onlookers parted before us. After we walked for about a dozen blocks with no one following us, Mamusia stopped an old lady and asked her directions to the address where Tatus [tatuś, i.e., daddy] would be.<sup>251</sup>

*The escapees would soon find out that life on the “Aryan” side was not as tranquil as they had imagined inside the ghetto. As Eugene Bergman recalls,*

Of course, I was not aware at the time that the Poles were not living in a paradise either. A subjugated people, they were living at the occupier’s mercy and eking out a subsistence living, for the Germans had a special animus against Poles.

The Germans considered Poles subhuman, just a notch higher than the Jews. They were treated like dirt, and their food rations were only half as high as those received by the Germans, just enough not to starve ... These outwardly normal, bustling streets and people of Aryan Warsaw were in reality gripped by an atmosphere of terror, with the Germans conducting daily roundups of young Poles for forced labor in Germany or as hostages to be executed in hundreds for one German, whenever a German was attacked by the Underground.

**Bernard Goldstein, a Bund activist:**

During the early part of 1943 the terror throughout all of Poland entered a more severe and terrible phase. Armed German bands descended upon small towns and villages, indiscriminately dragging out inhabitants, men, women, and children, and shipping them away. The Germans did not even go through the formalities of preliminary warnings. All Poland became the scene of a wild human hunt. Day in and day out, hundreds of Poles were dragged away. People went outdoors only under the pressure of extreme necessity. A thick fog of fear hung over the entire country.

By contrast, the ghetto was somewhat more peaceful. It seemed almost as if the beasts had forgotten the tens of thousands of Jews who, like ghosts, haunted that empty wilderness.

Suddenly, on January 18, 1943, at six o’clock in the morning, the several ghetto streets which housed the slave labourers of the shops and factories were filled with shouts, volleys of shooting, the sharp blasts of truck and motorcycle horns. German murderers raced into the courtyards and tenements and began to drive people out. ...

Only four battle groups, Zamenhof, Miła [Miła], Muranowska [Muranowska], and Franciskanska [Franciszkańska], managed to get into action. They opened fire and threw several hand grenades ...

The debut of the ghetto fighters made a tremendous impression inside and outside the ghetto. The mere fact of an organized armed blow strengthened the will to further resistance and increased the tempo of preparation for future battles. The entire Polish underground press, regardless of political ideology, greeted the battle of January 18 with enthusiasm.<sup>252</sup>

**Marek Edelman, one of the ŻOB leaders, describes the skirmishes with the Germans in January 1943:**

At the end of December 1942 we received our first transport of weapons from the Home Army. It was not much—there were only ten pistols in the whole transport—but it enabled us to prepare for our first major action. We planned it for January 22nd and it was to be a retaliatory measure against the Jewish police.

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<sup>251</sup> *Ibid.*, 79–81.

<sup>252</sup> Bernard Goldstein, *The Stars Bear Witness* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1950), 176–77.

However, on January 18th, 1943, the ghetto was surrounded once again and the “second liquidation” began. This time, however, the Germans were not able to carry out their plans unchallenged. Four barricaded battle groups offered the first armed resistance in the ghetto.

The ŻOB was baptized in battle in the first large-scale street fighting at the corner of Miła and Zamenhofa Streets. The best part of the Organization was lost there. Miraculously, because of his heroic attitude, the ŻOB Commander, Mordechai Anielewicz, survived. After that battle we realized that street fighting would be too costly for us, since we were not sufficiently prepared for it and lacked the proper weapons. We, therefore, switched to partisan fighting. Four major encounters were fought in the apartment houses at 40 Zamenhofa Street, 44 Muranowska Street, 34 Miła Street and 22 Franciszkańska Street. In the Schultz shop area the SS men taking part in the deportation were attacked by the partisans. Comrade A. Fajner took an active part in this action and was killed in its course. ...

Of all the prepared 50 battle groups only five took part in the January activities. The remainder, not having been assembled at the time of the Germans’ entry into the ghetto, was caught by surprise and was unable to reach the place where their weapons were stored. Once again, as was the case in the first stage of the ŻOB’s activities, four-fifths of the Battle Organization’s members perished.

The latest developments, however, reverberated strongly both within the ghetto and outside of it. Public opinion, Jewish as well as Polish, reacted immediately to the ghetto battles. For now, for the first time, German plans were frustrated. For the first time the halo of omnipotence and invincibility was torn from the Germans’ heads. For the first time the Jew in the street realized that it was possible to do something against the Germans’ will and power. The number of Germans killed by ŻOB bullets was not the only important thing. What was more important was the appearance of a psychological turning point. The mere fact that because of the unexpected resistance, weak as it was, the Germans were forced to interrupt their “deportation” schedule was of great value.

In the meantime legends about “hundreds” of dead Germans and the “tremendous” power of the ŻOB started circulating throughout Warsaw. The entire Polish Underground was full of praise for us. At the end of January we received 50 larger pistols and 50 hand grenades from the Home Army Command. A reorganization of the ŻOB was carried out.<sup>253</sup>

**Leon Najberg, a Jew who worked outside the ghetto, recalled the reaction of the Polish population to the January fighting:**

From the lips of other Poles we heard about the alleged Jewish tanks that were brought into the battle. Everyone was full of sympathy for the fighting Jews. Some Polish workers related that they had seen with their own eyes ambulances with wounded Germans being taken from the ghetto.<sup>254</sup>

**Holocaust historian Gunnar S. Paulsson writes on developments in the ghetto:**

By the time the ghetto uprising broke out, the network of shelters and underground passageways was so extensive that the entire population of the ghetto was able to disappear into it. Those historians who have stressed the ghetto’s preparations for resistance during this period have sometimes characterized the construction of bunkers as part of these preparations, or as a form of ‘passive resistance’. In fact, as we can see from Ringelblum’s contemporary testimony, the underlying intention was evasion rather than resistance: the chief alternative to the construction of bunkers in the ghetto was escape to the ‘Aryan side’. The whole of the contemporary record attests to the fact that most of the ghetto’s Jews at that time vacillated between these two alternatives, with only a small minority of mainly young people thinking about armed resistance. Indeed, those who had their sights set on hiding or escaping viewed the prospective uprising as a threat. As ghetto-fighter Simcha Rotem put it candidly:

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<sup>253</sup> Marek Edelman, “The Ghetto Fights”, in *The Warsaw Ghetto: The 45th Anniversary of the Uprising* (Warsaw: Interpress, 1988), posted online at <<http://www.english.upenn.edu/~afilreis/warsaw-uprising.html>>.

<sup>254</sup> Leon Najberg, *Ostani powstańcy getta* (Warsaw: Żydowski Instytut Historyczny, 1993), 37.

“Our environment wasn’t very encouraging. The relatively few Jews left in the ghetto were generally not enthusiastic about our operations. Thus the ŻOB was in a double underground, hiding from the Germans and from most of the Jews as well.”<sup>255</sup>

**“Kazik” (Simha Rotem)—a member of the Jewish Fighting Organization—presented a less favourable picture of the mood in the ghetto.**

By this time—February or March 1943—we members of ŻOB were convinced that we had to act, that sitting around idly was to risk our lives. Our environment wasn’t very encouraging. The relatively few Jews left in the ghetto [in fact there were 50–60,000 Jews!—*M.P.*] were generally not enthusiastic about our operations. Thus the ŻOB was in a double underground, hiding from the Germans and from most of the Jews as well. We got sympathy and good will only from a small group who were close to us.<sup>256</sup>

**Bernard Goldstein, a Bund activist, on the preparation of the ghetto for the anticipated fighting:**

In further preparation for the events ahead, the Jewish fighting organization took steps to clear the ghetto of all Jewish servants of the Gestapo. Special counterespionage groups tracked down every Jewish Gestapo agent and liquidated him. For example, there was Alfred Nossig, a Jewish intellectual from Galicia. He had been a contributor of articles in Jewish, Hebrew, and German to various journals. He had served as an informer on Jewish matters for the German government even before Hitler. His specialty was the Polish Jewry. After the First World War, when Poland became independent, he used to visit Warsaw from time to time. Now he appeared in the ghetto on special work for the Gestapo. One of our comrades discovered his apartment and searched it. An identity card showed that Nossig had served the Gestapo since 1933, the year Hitler came to power. The fighting organization passed sentence of death, and he was shot.

Fuerst, one-time director of the prewar Jewish Students’ Home in Praga [a suburb of Warsaw], and a Gestapo informer, was shot by order of the fighting organization. Lolek Kokosovsky, a Maccabre leader from Zgerzh [Zgierz], was a Gestapo agent whose specialty was political information about the ghetto and the members of the underground organizations. At first he escaped our agents only with a bad wound. His friends took him from the ghetto, and he recovered. Later, however, he was shot and killed on the Aryan side as he walked out of a restaurant.

Sherinsky [Szeryński], an apostate Jew, already has been mentioned as the commissioner of the Jewish police. Our attempted execution of him failed, though he was seriously wounded. Afterward he took his own life. Laikin, who had been a lawyer before the war, was Sherinsky’s assistant. After Sherinsky’s death he assumed the position of Jewish police commissioner. Greatly hated in the ghetto, he was sentenced to death and shot.

These executions further strengthened the morale of the fighting groups and increased the prestige of the Jewish fighting organization. It felt sufficiently powerful now to levy a tax on the entire ghetto to buy arms; it even taxed the Judenrat. Some of the wealthy who refused to pay the tax were arrested. The authority of the fighting organization began to be felt throughout the ghetto. Its influence and power grew with every passing day.<sup>257</sup>

**David Landau, a member of the Jewish Military Union (ŻZW):**

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<sup>255</sup> Gunnar S. Paulsson, “Evading the Holocaust: The Unexplored Continent of Holocaust Historiography,” in John K. Roth and Elisabeth Maxwell, eds., *Remembering for the Future: The Holocaust in an Age of Genocide* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire and New York: Palgrave, 2001), vol. 1, 309–310. In actual fact, the building of shelters had started long before. Following the first Soviet air attack against central Warsaw on August 21, 1942, bomb shelters were built, on German orders, everywhere in the city, including the ghetto, for the protection of the residents. The Germans furnished the Jews with the cement and other necessary materials for the construction of these shelters. Many of these shelters later became blockhouses and bunkers for Jews who hid during German police operations.

<sup>256</sup> Simha Rotem (“Kazik”), *Memoirs of a Warsaw Ghetto Fighter: The Past Within Me* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1994), 26.

<sup>257</sup> Bernard Goldstein, *The Stars Bear Witness* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1950), 178–79.

From a speech by ŻZW leader Paweł Frenkel: ‘... both the ŻOB and the ŻZW have been collecting large sums of money from the rich Jews in the ghetto and from the departments of the Eldest to pay for the arms some of you are buying. Up to a few weeks ago we had mutually agreed to report to each other where collections had been made, in order not to duplicate our work. Of course, here and there, we used force, but in general even those who were approached knew that once they had paid up and the collectors gave them their receipts they would be in the clear. However, in the last few days it appears that some clever individuals have been going around making collections for their own pockets in our name or in the name of the ŻOB. ... we have confiscated the collected money from the individuals who believed they were clever and have warned them that their game is very dangerous. ...

A man we sent to execute a Jew who was an informer to the Gestapo, did his duty; he killed the traitor ... The woman was Anna Milewicz, who previously belonged to the Hashomer Hatsair. She was removed from it. The Hashomer Hatsair was in full agreement with what we did, because it was proved that she worked for the Gestapo.<sup>258</sup>

Like the Kiercelak [*Kercelak*, i.e., a flea market on Kerceli Square] on the Aryan side, the Szczęśliwa Restaurant on the Jewish side was the hub for everything and everybody. The Jewish Underground leaders met there and so did the Jewish confidants of the Gestapo. The smugglers came to buy and sell goods. Everyone knew who the others were. The place was both the battlefield of all and the neutral territory, with one odd exception: the Jewish confidants of the German authorities, the informers to the Gestapo at the restaurant, knew not only who the leaders of the Underground were but also that the leaders of the Underground were to be taken seriously and feared. They were not a commodity to be sold to the Germans for a price. The long arm of the Underground had already removed those who had in the beginning laughed about a Jewish resistance. Now the reverse was happening and the ex-informers who came to the Szczęśliwa were the first source of information about the plans of the Germans. The Underground fed them bits of useless information to keep them trusted on the German side. Like the rest of the Jews in the ghetto, most informers had lately begun digging bunkers for themselves and their families. Half jokingly, the invited members of the leadership of the Jewish fighting Organisation as well as members of the leadership of the Jewish Military Union to come to their bunker if they should need a place.<sup>259</sup>

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<sup>258</sup> David J. Landau, alias Dudek, Janek and Jan, *Caged: A Story of Jewish Resistance* (Sydney: Macmillan, 2000), 189–91.

<sup>259</sup> *Ibid.*, 213–14.

## The Warsaw Ghetto Revolt: An Overview

SS Reichsführer Heinrich Himmler ordered the total liquidation of the Warsaw ghetto. Without warning, on April 19, 1943, 2,000 SS men and German army troops marched into the ghetto with tanks, rapid-fire artillery, and ammunition trailers. They were pitted against approximately 750 organized Jewish fighters—500 in the ranks of the ŻOB and 250 in the ŻZW—and an undetermined number of unaffiliated “wildcat” groups. (Some estimates run lower, stating there may have been only 300–400 ŻOB fighters.) All of the ŻOB fighters were armed with revolvers, hand grenades, and Molotov cocktails, and two-three rifles were assigned to each area.<sup>260</sup> When the Germans entered the ghetto, the streets were completely empty “except for a small Jewish police unit and a handful of Judenrat members.”<sup>261</sup> Among those who marched into the ghetto on April 19<sup>th</sup> there were Jewish ghetto police who headed the column of collaborators, a small contingent of Polish police, who were considered unreliable and were withdrawn once fighting erupted, followed by Latvian, Lithuanian, and Ukrainian troops.<sup>262</sup> While most of the Jews hid in bunkers, pockets of Jewish resistance fighters opened fire from sheltered locations. Since the Germans chose to enter the ghetto on the eve of the Passover, many Jews who had been hiding outside the ghetto but entered the ghetto to spend Passover with family members were also trapped.

In the first few days Jewish fighters engaged the Germans in street skirmishes, but organized military resistance was soon broken. According to David Landau, of the Jewish Military Union (ŻZW), “The open fights came to an end with the battle that took place at Muranowska on 25 or 26 April. ... By the time the battle was over on that spring evening we had lost a considerable number of our members. Many other were wounded. ... After that our commanders informed us that arrangements were being made on our side and on the Aryan side to evacuate our group through the sewers to join the Polish partisan units in the forests. We were told that each of us was now free to decide to go with the group that was leaving, or to remain. From that moment on, everyone was free to make their own arrangements for the future. ... we were told that we would not engage the Germans in any battle unless it became impossible to avoid it.”<sup>263</sup> Poles provided the ŻZW fighters with detailed plans of the sewers and guided their exacuation to safety.<sup>264</sup>

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<sup>260</sup> Yisrael Gutman, *The Jews of Warsaw, 1939–1945: Ghetto, Underground, Revolt* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1982), 365–66; Marek Edelman, “The Ghetto Fights”, in *The Warsaw Ghetto: The 45th Anniversary of the Uprising* (Warsaw: Interpress, 1988), posted online at <<http://www.english.upenn.edu/~afilreis/warsaw-uprising.html>>.

<sup>261</sup> Israel Gutman, “Warsaw” in Walter Laqueur, ed., *The Holocaust Encyclopedia* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2001), 692.

<sup>262</sup> Many sources confirm the participation of the remnants of the Jewish police, who then numbered under one hundred men. See Reuben Ainsztein, *Jewish Resistance in Nazi-Occupied Eastern Europe* (London: Paul Elek, 1974), 624; David J. Landau, alias Dudek, Janek and Jan, *Caged: A Story of Jewish Resistance* (Sydney: Macmillan, 2000), 221; Barbara Engelking and Jacek Leociak, *Getto warszawskie: Przewodnik po nieistniejącym mieście* (Warsaw: IFiS PAN, 2001), 218; *The Warsaw Ghetto: A Guide to the Perished City* (New Haven, Connecticut, and London: Yale University Press, 2009), 216; Władysław Bartoszewski, “The Martyrdom and Struggle of the Jews in Warsaw under German Occupation 1939–43,” in Władysław Bartoszewski and Antony Polonsky, eds., *The Jews in Warsaw: A History* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell in association with the Institute for Polish-Jewish Studies, 1991), 338–39; Leon Najberg, *Ostatni powstańcy getta* (Warsaw: Żydowski Instytut Historyczny, 1993), 45; Moshe Arens, “The Warsaw Ghetto Uprising: A Reappraisal,” *Yad Vashem Studies*, vol. 33 (2005): 101–42, especially 114; Moshe Arens, *Flags over the Warsaw Ghetto: The Untold Story of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising* (Jerusalem and New York: Gefen, 2011), 194. According to one source their number was reduced to 70 after police commander Józef Szeryński (Szynekman) committed suicide. See Stefan Ernest, *O wojnie wielkich Niemiec z Żydami w Warszawie, 1939–1943* (Warsaw: Czytelnik, 2003), 287. In an attempt to re-wrire histoty journalists like Michael T. Kaufman of the *New York Times* suppresses information about the role of the Jewish police in the deportations from the ghetto in the summer of 1942 and the ghetto revolt in April 1943, while claiming, falsely, that the Polish police took part in subduing the latter: “starting on July 22, 1942, the ghetto population began to shrink ominously. Each day, armed Germans and the Ukrainians serving with them prodded and wedged 5,000 to 6,000 Jews into long trains, which departed from the Umschlagplatz ... At 4 o’clock on the morning of April 19, 1943, as German soldiers and their Ukrainian, Latvian and Polish henchmen marched through the ghetto to round up people.” See Michael T. Kaufman, “Marek Edelman, Commander in Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, Dies at 90,” *New York Times*, October 3, 2009.

<sup>263</sup> David J. Landau, alias Dudek, Janek and Jan, *Caged: A Story of Jewish Resistance* (Sydney: Macmillan, 2000), 236.

<sup>264</sup> Landau states: “One of the men [i.e., Poles] had brought a detailed plan that showed which sewers were still open, or rather which were still possible to cross in reasonable safety. ... Some fifty members of the ŻZW were making their

According to another source, “The systematic burning of the ghetto, building by building, forced the fighters to abandon their positions, take refuge in the bunkers, and used a different method.”<sup>265</sup> The reason the Germans decided to burn the ghetto, building by building, was to force the Jews out of hiding. Jews had constructed hideouts, called “bunkers,” in anticipation of the final liquidation of the ghetto. Some Jews experienced difficulties in hiding in bunkers because they were denied access by their inhabitants.

One morning when we came to the entrance of the bunker we had been working on, there was a tough man standing guard there who would not let us in. The place was now filled with people who had come from all over and were using our shelter. When I tried to get in around him, he smashed me over the head with his rifle butt. I had to have my head bandaged up.

The next morning, there I was standing on line at the “Umschlag Place” [Umschlagplatz] (the train depot), the place from which all Jews were deported to camps and to the gas chambers.<sup>266</sup>

One morning we heard some knocking. The voice of a woman called my name and begged to be allowed in with her children. It was Mrs. Windman, with two children, her mother, and the brothers Kopchuk. It was clear to me we had no choice but to let them in, yet the others were staunchly opposed. The arguments continued all day; we almost came to blows. Those most adamantly opposed to accepting outsiders were those who still had some provisions. Softly, we, who were in agreement to let them in, instructed them when to come back and to use the entrance on Zamenhof Street.

We waited in vain. They never came. If, as we feared, the Germans had caught them, we were also lost. We learned later, that, indeed they had been picked up by the Germans and taken to the Umschlagplatz but they had not given us away. ...

Yet to our astonishment, a group of Jews appeared in the opening, ... who had made their way through ruins and dug passages to the Aryan side to enable them to escape. ... They were in the same position as we, without means of livelihood, without room for the hundreds of survivors of other burnt-out bunkers, seeking a place of refuge.

Among them I saw many who had worked in the vegetable storeroom. Rabbi Meir whispered to one who knew my brother-in-law, Ackereisen, that I still had some alcohol on me. He did this to detract the attention from himself and the provisions he still had, which he wanted to share with no one, not even with the young children. He had taken over a section of the cellar and there closed himself off with his provisions. I bartered with one of the newcomers, agreeing to exchange some of my alcohol for dry biscuits for my son. I gave him the alcohol but never received the biscuits.

The new arrivals asked us to take in another thirty survivors. The arguments broke out again. ...

We were all very worried. Only Reb Meir believed he would survive and refused to share any of his supplies.<sup>267</sup>

*Bunkers were frequently located with the help of Jewish informers, who had been apprehended earlier or offered their services in exchange for promises of personal safety, and were liquidated by the Germans with help of the Jewish police.*<sup>268</sup> As survivors from Warsaw record, “Clearly, the most effective method for the

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last preparations before leaving. Some Poles were present, waiting to give final instructions before moving out with our men. ... Before midnight the group left.” David J. Landau, alias Dudek, Janek and Jan, *Caged: A Story of Jewish Resistance* (Sydney: Macmillan, 2000), 241, 242.

<sup>265</sup> Reuben Ainsztein, *Jewish Resistance in Nazi-Occupied Eastern Europe* (London: Paul Elek, 1974), 624.

<sup>266</sup> Abraham Alpert, *A Spark of Life* ([United States]: n.p., 1981), 34.

<sup>267</sup> David Mittelberg, *Between Two Worlds: The Testimony & the Testament* (Jerusalem and New York: Devora, 2004), 31–32.

<sup>268</sup> Gunnar S. Paulsson, *Secret City: The Hidden Jews of Warsaw, 1940–1945* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2002), 91; Barbara Engelking and Jacek Leociak, *Getto warszawskie: Przewodnik po nieistniejącym mieście*, Second revised and expanded edition (Warsaw: Stowarzyszenie Centrum Badań nad Zagładą Żydów, 2013), 828. Jewish “musers” were housed on Zamenhof Street and worked with a special 137-member German police unit tasked with locating hidden Jews. Rikvah Trapkovits-Farber reported that Jewish policemen were employed to lure Jews out of underground hideouts, holding out the promise of safety in work camps. See Dan Porat, *the Boy: A Holocaust Story* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2010), 95. According to Stefan Ernest, who wrote his diary describing life in the Warsaw ghetto in May 1943, during the liquidation of the ghetto the Jewish police force, which was then reduced to about 70 members, used grenades to open up the entrance to bunker hideouts. See Stefan Ernest, *O wojnie wielkich Niemiec z Żydami w Warszawie, 1939–1943* (Warsaw: Czytelnik, 2003), 74, 287. One survivor recalls:

*Germans was the use of Jewish informers—and that is how my hideout was uncovered on 21 April.*<sup>269</sup>  
*After its premises on 29 Mila Street was betrayed, the Jewish Fighting Organization (ŻOB) command was*

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Along with us, neighbors from our stairwell and employees of the hospital were hiding in the attic. We heard shooting all the time—machine guns from the German side and solitary shots from the Jewish. ...

Once—perhaps on the third or fourth day—I fell asleep in the attic. I was tired. Suddenly, something woke me up. I opened my eyes, moved a bit. ... No one said a word. ...

At one point I heard a loud *ein, zwei, drei* (one, two, three) behind the wall, then a pistol shot. Somebody was removing the loose bricks from the outside. It was a Jewish policeman. We had been discovered. ...

We crawled out one by one. It was funny: a few Jewish policemen, one German, and a whole bunch of us. We could have just killed that German!

See Joanna Wiszniewicz, *And Yet I Still Have Dreams: A Story of a Certain Loneliness* (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 2004), 70. The Germans also employed Jewish agents who were in their service and Jews who had been caught and turned informers. A Jewish eyewitness states: “The Germans now proceeded to demolish these [bunkers], on the strength of the lists furnished by Brandt [i.e., a Jewish agent]. ... As soon as a bunker was discovered, some of the occupants would be shot in full sight of the rest. A German officer would then offer a reprieve to anyone who would disclose the location of other bunkers. This would sometimes produce the psychological effect of breaking down the resistance of one or other of the survivors, who would then lead the Germans to any hideouts they knew of. A new plague of informers now infested the ghetto. The Germans, as a rule, would keep these informers alive only until they had squeezed them out of every bit of information, and then shoot them out of hand. The average life-expectancy of such an informer, therefore, was no more than a few days, and the Jews continued living in the ghetto.” See Chaim Lazar Litai, *Muranowska 7: The Warsaw Ghetto Rising* (Tel Aviv: Massada-P.E.C. Press, 1966), 269. David Landau writes: “While some German units were engaged directly in fighting, others were engaged in sniffing out bunkers. Expert units were employed in this work. They were helped by sniffer dogs and here and there by the last Jews they managed to capture. They would leave one of them alive and make this unfortunate person follow them as they approached a bunker. The living sacrifice would be made to call in Yiddish: ‘Jews, you can come out, the Germans have gone!’ Sometimes the ruse worked.” See David J. Landau, alias Dudek, Janek and Jan, *Caged: A Story of Jewish Resistance* (Sydney: Macmillan, 2000), 235. Benjamin P. describes how his bunker was betrayed by a Jew who had come around asking about his relatives, and then returned the next day with German gendarmerie. See Donald L. Niewyk, ed., *Fresh Wounds: Early Narratives of Holocaust Survival* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 129. The bunker where Marek Zajdenfeld’s wife and children were hiding, which held 169 Jews, was betrayed by a Jew who disclosed its location to the Germans in exchange for safe passage out of the ghetto for himself and his family. See the testimony of Marek Zajdenfeld, dated September 22, 1946, Archive of the Jewish Historical Institute (Warsaw), record group 301, number 1886. Another Jewish survivor records that informers were already searching out the locations of bunkers before the uprising in the ghetto. See Estelle Glaser Laughlin, *Transcending Darkness: A Girl’s Journey Out of the Holocaust* (Lubbock, Texas: Texas Tech University Press, 2012), 42. For several additional examples of the activities of Jewish informers see the eyewitness testimony of Władysław Świątochowski, Archive of the Jewish Historical Institute (Warsaw), record group 301, number 4423. Obsessed with alleged Polish collaboration, Holocaust historiography generally overlooks unsavoury episodes such as these.

<sup>269</sup> Jack Klajman with Ed Klajman, *Out of the Ghetto* (London and Portland, Oregon: Vallentine Mitchell, 2000), 71. Israel Mittelberg’s hideout was also betrayed by Jews: “The Germans had come from the same opening as our guests of two days earlier; quite clearly they had denounced us. ... Outside, we caught sight of the two young men who had denounced us—one was eighteen, the other in his early twenties. They tried to deceive us, further assisting the Germans in their treacherous work. ... The informers were often put to death before their victims. A selection took place. About one hundred and sixty of us stood for an hour in the yard. Those prepared to talk were told to move to the right. Out of our ranks, no one volunteered except for a couple by the name of Shuster—he had served as a Jewish policeman. We turned away from them in contempt.” See David Mittelberg, *Between Two Worlds: The Testimony & the Testament* (Jerusalem and New York: Devora, 2004), 33. Another Jew captured during the mop-up of the ghetto recalls: “There were a few underworld personalities in our bunker, who had arms. They played the role of our ‘protectors’. A sharp debate broke out among them over some shady matter, and the defeated one, Yisraelikl, was threatened with revenge. Outside, we heard the shooting and bomb explosions from quite near. Houses were burning around us. The smelly smoke came in from around us. The air in the bunker was difficult to breathe. The eyes were tearing, the throats were strangling, and we were all choking. At night we opened the secret trap door to get some air. This also let us see what was going on outside. Suddenly, Yisraelikl was snatched out of the bunker. He disappeared. We had a suspicion that he would betray us. During the day we heard a strong explosion, and the lights went out. We were overcome by great terror. We heard Yisraelikl’s voice near the trap door: ‘Here you have the group to be annihilated!’ At that moment, the trap door opened and the order was issued: ‘Out!’ A hand grenade fell into the bunker with a bang. There was a terrible stampede. We crawled out of the bunker with the fear of death. The wounded were dragged out by the Germans with terrible beatings from their guns and whips. Encircled by the armed Germans, we were taken to Umslagplatz.” See Miriam Flajszman, “From the Last Days of the Warsaw Ghetto,” in A. Sh. Stein and

invited into a large and well-equipped bunker on 18 Miła Street, which belonged to Shmuel Isser, a prominent figure in the Jewish criminal underworld. It was one of the best equipped and largest in the ghetto, housing about 200 persons, among them many thieves, prostitutes and their families. After its betrayal, this bunker was taken by the Germans on May 8<sup>th</sup> and the Jewish command was eliminated.<sup>270</sup> The remaining members of the ŻOB escaped to the Aryan side by way of the sewers whose exits were guarded by German gendarmes. (The ŻOB did not build bunkers or tunnels of its own, holding out the slogan that its members would die fighting. The reality proved to be quite different: as soon as street fighting became impossible, they sought cover in bunkers and frantically looked for escape routes out of the ghetto.) Stranded Jewish resistance fighters continued to shoot at the Germans sporadically from their bunkers as they systematically reduced the ghetto to rubble. The ghetto was finally emptied of its inhabitants on May 16<sup>th</sup>.<sup>271</sup>

It was not the intention of the German assault to destroy the ghetto and its residents outright—something they could have accomplished readily within a very short period through the extensive use of aircraft and firebombs. Rather they eliminated pockets of resistance and executed suspected combatants and their supporters; the remaining Jewish population that they captured was deported to the Treblinka and Majdanek death camps and to forced-labour camps. Although Yitzhak Zuckerman, one of the three co-commanders of the Jewish Fighting Organization (ŻOB), remained outside the ghetto for the first twenty days as a liaison with the Polish underground, he did not muster any reinforcements or relief for the ghetto from the approximately 30,000 Jews who were living on the “Aryan” side. Shortly before the final liquidation of the ghetto Zuckerman returned and, with the assistance of guides, led some 75 ŻOB fighters out of the ghetto through the sewers. They were then taken by the People’s Guard to the Łominaki forest outside Warsaw. Many more Jewish resistance fighters managed to escape with the help of the Home Army, especially its Security Corps.

The revolt in the ghetto was universally viewed by the Jews themselves as a symbolic and even a suicidal struggle against the Germans, who were then at the peak of their power. It could not even properly be termed an uprising. Yitzhak Zuckerman defined the “war aims” of the Jewish fighters as follows: “For us it was a question of organizing a defence, not an uprising. In an uprising, the initiative is with the one rising up. We, we sought only to defend ourselves; the initiative was entirely on the side of the Germans.”<sup>272</sup> Most reasonable Jews also recognized that it was simply unrealistic for the Poles, or for the 30,000 Jews living in “Aryan” Warsaw and who were concerned primarily with their own survival, to have joined in the

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G. Weissman, eds., *Pinkas Sochaczew* (Jerusalem, Former Residents of Sochaczew in Israel, 1962), 510 ff., translated as *Memorial Book of Sochaczew*, Internet: <<http://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/sochaczew/sochaczew.html#toc389>>. Halina Birenbaum states that her bunker was betrayed when one of its residents went out to scavenge and was apprehended by the Germans; he betrayed the location of his hideout and all of its residents were seized. See Halina Birenbaum, *Nadzieja uniera ostatnia* (Warsaw: Czytelnik, 1988), 72. A mother and her deranged young son, who had screaming fits, were evicted from a large bunker, but the woman’s daughter was kept as a hostage so that the mother would not betray the location of the bunker. See Zofia Rozenstrauch, “Historia czterech miesięcy,” *Przełom*, no. 1 (1947), cited in Barbara Engelking and Jacek Leociak, *Getto warszawskie: Przewodnik po nieistniejącym mieście*, Second revised and expanded edition (Warsaw: Stowarzyszenie Centrum Badań nad Zagładą Żydów, 2013), 804. Babies were suffocated or poisoned by residents who were fearful that their crying would betray the existence of the bunkers. See Leon Najberg, *Ostatni powstańcy getta* (Warsaw: Żydowski Instytut Historyczny, 1993), 61; Barbara Engelking and Jacek Leociak, *Getto warszawskie: Przewodnik po nieistniejącym mieście*, Second revised and expanded edition (Warsaw: Stowarzyszenie Centrum Badań nad Zagładą Żydów, 2013), 804, based on the testimony of Stella Fidelseid, Archive of the Jewish Historical Institute (Warsaw), record group 301, number 4873.

<sup>270</sup> The bunker on 18 Miła Street, one of the best equipped and largest in the ghetto, belonged to Shmuel Isser, a criminal from the Jewish underworld. Large amounts of food were stored there and likely some weapons for self-defence. Unlike the ŻZW, the ŻOB did not build its own bunkers. When the Germans started to use flamethrowers, the ŻOB members found they could no longer move about and hide aboveground, so they sought out bunkers in which to take cover. The largest and best equipped bunkers belonged to the criminal underworld. See Barbara Engelking and Jacek Leociak, *Getto warszawskie: Przewodnik po nieistniejącym mieście*, Second revised and expanded edition (Warsaw: Stowarzyszenie Centrum Badań nad Zagładą Żydów, 2013), 806–7. See also Kobi Ben-Simhon, “World of our (god)fathers,” *Ha’aretz*, October 21, 2004; Cezary Gmyz, “Zdrada przy Miłej,” *Wprost*, May 1, 2005.

<sup>271</sup> Jürgen Stroop, *The Stroop Report: The Jewish Quarter of Warsaw Is No More!* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1979); “Warsaw ghetto uprising,” posted online at <<http://www.usmmm.org/wlc/article.jsp>>.

<sup>272</sup> Nicolas Weill, “L’Insurrection du ghetto de Varsovie,” *Le Monde* (Paris), April 18–19, 1993.

hopeless struggle at that time. Nonetheless, on the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the revolt, the New York Times saw fit to draw attention to the fact that “there was no general uprising or major effort” on the part of the Poles to aid the Jews.<sup>273</sup> The truth of the matter is that whoever could, tried to escape to the “Aryan” side. Honest leaders of the Jewish struggle, as well as respected historians, also recognize that without Polish help, there would have been no revolt.

It is often claimed—falsely and crudely—that the ghetto revolt lasted longer than the German campaign against Poland in September 1939. A rather typical example is Canadian historian Irving Abella, who, as then president of the Canadian Jewish Congress, used the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Warsaw ghetto revolt to engage in historical myth-building at the expense of the Poles. Writing in the May 3, 1993 issue (“Bearing Witness”) of Maclean’s, Canada’s national news magazine, Abella took obvious delight in claiming, with a disregard for basic facts unbecoming a professional historian, that “For almost a month—longer than many European countries, including Poland itself, had been able to withstand the Nazis—the tiny handful of Jews fought the massive German army and its tanks, artillery and machine-guns to a standstill.” The same revisionist propaganda was parroted recently in the advance publicity for the NBC docudrama “Uprising” (billed as a “true story” and aired on November 4 and 5, 2001): “Against impossible odds, they [i.e., the Jewish resistance fighters] hold off the German army longer than the entire country of Poland.”

The ghetto uprising lasted some 20 days until the fall of resistance headquarters and the elimination of its command (from April 19<sup>th</sup> to May 8<sup>th</sup>), when the remaining ŻOB leaders escaped to the Aryan side and the major German units left the ghetto. Sporadic shooting by stranded pockets of fighters continued for another 8 days, until May 16<sup>th</sup>, when the ghetto was liquidated.<sup>274</sup> It is trite knowledge that the German assault on Poland, which was cut short by the treacherous Soviet invasion on September 17<sup>th</sup>, lasted from September 1<sup>st</sup> until the defeat of the Polish Army in a major battle near Kock on October 5<sup>th</sup> (17,000 Polish troops surrender the following day). In a speech to the Reichstag on October 6<sup>th</sup>, that is, 36 days after Germany invaded Poland, Hitler announced the victorious conclusion of the Polish campaign. Not only did Polish resistance continue after the surrender of Warsaw on September 27<sup>th</sup> (and the fortress of Modlin on the 28<sup>th</sup>), but also uninterrupted partisan warfare continued well into the following year: Forces under the command of Major Henryk Dobrzański (nom de guerre “Hubal”), turned partisan, were still fighting the Germans in April of 1940, whereas those of Lieutenant-Colonel Jerzy Dąmbrowski (nom de guerre “Lupaszko”) fought against the Soviets. There was no formal cease-fire, and no formal capitulation.

More importantly, the two events are not at all comparable. In the September 1939 campaign, 1.6 million German troops invaded Poland without declaration of war (as opposed to the 2,000 troops that entered the Warsaw ghetto), leaving no substantial reserve on the French frontier. (Some 110 French and British divisions, which faced 25 German divisions, remained completely inactive.) Polish military losses numbered 66,300 troops killed and 133,700 wounded, while the Poles inflicted 45,000 casualties on the Germans. Moreover, the campaign was a serious setback for the German war effort—the Polish Army destroyed more than one-fifth of the German tanks (674) and one-fourth of the airplanes (564) used against it—and one that delayed the launching of the Western Front. As historian Norman Davies points out, the task of the Poles was not to defeat the Germans, but to hold the Wehrmacht for the two weeks required for their Western Allies to launch a major offensive. The Poles fulfilled their task; the French and the British did not. In fact, the Western Allies, who declared war against Germany on September 3, 1939, did not fire a shot in Poland’s defence.

Indeed, Poland’s performance was more creditable than that of the combined British and French armies when they, too, faced their baptism of fire the following year. The Germans used less than half as much ammunition, artillery shells, and bombs to defeat the British and French armies in May-June 1940. Though

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<sup>273</sup> “Warsaw, 25 Years After,” *New York Times*, April 19, 1968.

<sup>274</sup> According to some reports, occasional shooting continued longer as the remaining bunkers were flushed out by the Germans. See Yisrael Gutman, *The Jews of Warsaw, 1939–1945: Ghetto, Underground, Revolt* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1982), 398–99.

heroic, the ghetto uprising resulted in a score, at most perhaps a few score, of German deaths.<sup>275</sup> From a military perspective, it was totally insignificant. On the other hand, the Warsaw uprising of August 1944, lasted 63 days (August 1<sup>st</sup> to October 2<sup>nd</sup>) and engaged some 50,000 German troops of which at least 10,000 were killed. Polish losses, both military and civilian, exceeded 150,000. NBC's historical consultants are apparently unaware of such basic historical facts and seemingly oblivious to the fact that their pointed jab at the Polish Army, which fought for all of the country's citizens in September 1939, is also a slight directed against the many Jews who fought valiantly against the Germans in that campaign.<sup>276</sup>

It is also often falsely reported that the Warsaw ghetto revolt was the first instance of armed resistance in German-occupied Europe. Stefan Korboński, Chief of Civil Resistance in occupied Poland, has provided a terse and pointed response to historians such as Lucy Dawidowicz who have pushed such clearly unfounded claims: "Yet the Polish forests were swarming with partisans since 1939. They attacked German convoys, blew up railroad bridges, and took on small German garrisons. At the same time General Mihailovich's partisans were fighting in Yugoslavia, as were the Communists and the Maquis who operated in parts of France."<sup>277</sup> An important area of Polish underground activity was the Zamość region, where the German attempt to deport the entire Polish population met with intense military reprisals from December 1942 onward and mobilized over twenty thousand Polish partisans. Between October 1942 and March 1943, there were no fewer than 70 armed actions undertaken by the Polish underground in Warsaw alone.<sup>278</sup>

**Michael Berenbaum, historical consultant for the NBC docudrama "Uprising", former President and Chief Executive Officer of the Survivors of the Shoah Visual History Foundation—a historian with a political agenda who engages in myth-building at the expense of the Poles<sup>279</sup>:**

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<sup>275</sup> According to Yisrael Gutman, "The number cited by Stroop (16 dead, 85 wounded) cannot be rejected out of hand, but it is likely that his list was neither complete, free of errors, nor indicative of the German losses throughout the entire period of resistance, until the absolute liquidation of Jewish life in the ghetto. All the same, the German casualty figures cited by the various Jewish sources are probably highly exaggerated." See Yisrael Gutman, *The Jews of Warsaw, 1939–1945: Ghetto, Underground, Revolt* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1982), 393–94. On the other hand, historians such as Raul Hilberg and French L. MacLean endorse the accuracy of official German casualty figures. See Raul Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews*, Third edition (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2003), volume 2, 537; French L. MacLean, *The Ghetto Men: The SS Destruction of the Jewish Warsaw Ghetto, April–May 1943* (Atglen, Pennsylvania: Schiffer Military History, 2001), 167–70. MacLean provides a detailed description of the German forces used in suppressing the revolt. Based on research of German army personnel files, he names each of their casualties, the unit to which he belonged, and the date of injury or death. This permits identification of the German military units in some of the encounters, and estimates of German casualties in specific encounters. His casualty list is probably the best estimate of German casualties. It does not differ substantially from Stroop's casualty reports.

<sup>276</sup> For an overview of the Polish-German war of 1939 see Norman Davies, *God's Playground: A History of Poland* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), volume 2, 435–39; and *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 15th Edition (Chicago, 1992): *Macropaedia*, volume 29, 989 ("World War II: The War in Europe, 1939-41; The Campaign in Poland, 1939"). For a monograph on this topic, see Steven Zaloga and Victor Madej, *The Polish Campaign, 1939* (New York: Hippocrene, 1991).

<sup>277</sup> Stefan Korboński, *The Jews and the Poles in World War II* (New York: Hippocrene, 1989), 96.

<sup>278</sup> Tomasz Strzembosz, *Akcje zbrojne podziemnej Warszawy 1939–1944*, Second revised and expanded edition (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1983).

<sup>279</sup> Michael Berenbaum was formerly Director of the United States Holocaust Research Institute at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum. Under his watchful eye, that institution adopted a policy of ignoring, and even denying, Polish assistance to the Warsaw ghetto underground, as evidenced in the exhibits at the museum and its online resources. See Michael Berenbaum, *The World Must Know: The History of the Holocaust as Told in the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum* (Boston, Toronto and London: Little, Brown, 1993), 108–12. As pointed out by historian Jon Petrie in H-Holocaust Net Discussion List (on February 27, 2002), "as per a panel in the Museum: '... April 19, 1943... The 700 to 750 [Warsaw] ghetto fighters had a few dozen pistols and hand grenades... the Polish underground was unprepared to aid the ghetto combatants...' (Wording from a photograph of a section of the Museum, p. 114, Jeshajahu Weinberg and Rina Elieli, *The Holocaust Museum in Washington*, New York: Rizzoli International Publications, 1995.) In fact Polish military aid to the ghetto fighters was considerable, and the fighters had at least four times more arms than the Museum states. A series of emails to the Museum over the last six months have not been answered. From the *Holocaust Encyclopedia* (Yale 2001), p. 482: 'it is well known that the Home Army [the mainstream Polish underground] aided...by providing maps of the Warsaw sewer system and instructions for making Molotov

I am writing to call your attention to an important program that might otherwise fall through the cracks in these oh so difficult times.

On November 4th and 5th [2001] NBC network will air this story, entitled “UPRISING”, the true story of the characters and the historical events leading up to this amazing act of resistance and courage by a handful of youthful Jews. It will be a two evening special programming ...

It was written by Paul Brickman and Jon Avnet and was directed by Jon Avnet. Jon has worked on this program for seven years. It has been an act of love and of passion.

I have been his historical consultant—and his fan—since its inception when he came to visit me at the Museum and asked for guidance. UPRISING chronicles the events leading up to and during the battle for the Warsaw Ghetto. It explores the moral issues of those days, which are unfortunately only too relevant to the choices that confront us today. In the case of the Ghetto Fighters, they decided “to live with honor and if necessary to die with honor”, and they did both. They held off the German Army longer than the entire armies of Poland and France. The names of Mordechai Anielewicz, Yitzhak Zuckerman, Marek Edelman, Kazik [Rotem] and Zivia Lubetkin may not be current in our vocabulary, but with your help, they will be.

We are asking you to make your students aware of the airing of this project and to encourage them to watch it. We are further asking to take advantage of this unique opportunity to make these names and these courageous fighters part of the vernacular of everyone in our country.

### **The “big lie” is lovingly embraced by the New York Times:**

But the uprising—which lasted longer than the Polish Army’s resistance to the Germans ...

... the film touches on some controversial aspects of Holocaust history: the anti-Semitism of the Poles and their seeming indifference to the mass killings of Jews, the ineffectiveness of the Polish underground ...

The mini-series has consumed Jon Avnet, the director of “Fried Green Tomatoes” and other films, since 1994. The Walt Disney company asked him and Mr. Brickman, the screenwriter of “Risky Business” and “Men Don’t Leave,” to adapt Leon Uris’s novel “Mila 18,” a fictionalized telling of the uprising. ...

Mr. Avnet’s obsession with the uprising—and he acknowledged that he was a man obsessed—was a central reason for NBC’s decision to move ahead with the relatively costly (\$22 million) project after film studios rejected it as too downbeat. Scott Sassa, the president of NBC West Coast, said he had approved the project because of a strong script and Mr. Avnet’s determination.<sup>280</sup>

### **Jon Avnet, Jewish-American director of “Uprising”:**

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cocktails...created diversions...supplied 90 revolvers, 600 grenades... Other arms were supplied by Communist resistance groups.” In a brochure titled *Resistance During the Holocaust*, produced in conjunction with the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum’s Miles Lerman Center for the Study of Jewish Resistance and available online at <<http://www.ushmm.org/education/foreducators/resource/resistance.pdf>>, not only is there no mention of assistance provided by the Home Army, but the discussion of fighting organizations in the ghettos explicitly *denies* the existence of such assistance and claims, contrary to all evidence, that the Jewish underground had to purchase arms from the Polish underground for large sums of money. Page 17 of that brochure states: “Jews received no arms from Allied governments or forces. ... In Warsaw, most weapons were bought from members of the Polish underground, but the prices were high, the quantities limited, and the quality poor.” The latter claim is discussed, and dismissed authoritatively, later on in this compilation. It is difficult to dismiss “educational resources” of this nature as trivial, when their source is a government-funded organization that pretends, and is mandated to be, a centre of research that produces serious scholarship. Another disturbing development is the leak, reported by the Israeli daily *Ha’aretz* on January 25, 2002, that the Jewish military studied the tactics employed by the Nazis during the liquidation of the Warsaw ghetto with a view to developing methods to combat Palestinian insurgents.

<sup>280</sup> Bernard Weinraub, “A Seldom-Seen Holocaust Image: The Register,” *New York Times*, November 4, 2001.

The American Jewish Committee was invaluable in the making of the film Uprising. From the first days of my research seven years ago, it was the AJC that introduced me to the most knowledgeable experts in the world and provided me with access to them in Israel, Poland, Washington and New York.<sup>281</sup>

### **Joseph Goebbels on Propaganda, Nuremberg 1934:**

Political propaganda in principle is active and revolutionary. It is aimed at the broad masses. It speaks the language of the people because it wants to be understood by the people. Its task is the highest creative art of putting sometimes complicated events and facts in a way simple enough to be understood by the man on the street. Its foundation is that there is nothing the people cannot understand, rather things must be put in a way that they can understand. It is a question of making it clear to him by using the proper approach, evidence and language. ...

The effective propagandist must be a master of the art of speech, of writing, of journalism, of the poster and of the leaflet. He must have the gift to use the major methods of influencing public opinion such as the press, film and radio to serve his ideas and goals, above all in an age of advancing technology. Radio is already an invention of the past, since television will probably soon arrive.

### **Historian Gunnar S. Paulsson deliberates on whether the ghetto revolt was “ill-conceived”:**

Taking Erich Loewy up further on the question of whether the Ghetto Uprising was “ill-conceived” (jumping fearlessly and/or rashly into the breach): I think that my research casts some light on this question. “Ill-conceived” is not the expression I would use, but I do think the uprising needs to be reassessed.

The standard reading of the uprising is the ZOB version, i.e., the version according to Mordechai Anielewicz, Antek Zuckerman, Cywia Lubetkin, etc. These people were heroes, and challenging their accounts and explanations will be considered offensive by many people. Even Marek Edelman has got into trouble for doing it. There was, however, another group of heroes, making up about a third of the ghetto fighters, whose contribution has been practically written out of history and is (for example) not even mentioned on the USHMM website. That group is the Revisionist ZZW [Żydowski Związek Walki (Jewish Military Union)], whose fighters unfortunately did not survive and so could not tell their story or defend their views. They had an entirely different opinion as to how the uprising should be conducted, which surely must be taken into account.

The ZOB [Żydowska Organizacja Bojowa (Jewish Fighting Organization)] version, which is repeated at commemorations every April 19th and on websites etc., runs roughly as follows. The Jews had only two options: they could stand and fight, or go like sheep to the slaughter. Either way they would die, but if they fought they would sell their lives dearly and so strike a blow for Jewish honour and pride. The uprising was an uprising of the whole ghetto: the active fighters, and the majority who resisted passively, by building bunkers. A handful of people were able to escape from the ghetto (cowards! traitors!), but this was an option available only to the rich and well-connected, and in any case their chances of survival were slim. The ghetto was doomed anyway; the duty of the Jews was not to try to survive, but to resist, actively or passively, down to the last trench. And that is what they did.

The ZZW version was different. The Revisionist leadership had been preparing for years to fight for the Yishuv's independence: they had volunteered for the Polish army to gain military experience, and had formed strong bonds with certain elements in the army. They had also been stockpiling weapons before the war, and there is some evidence that they were able to draw on this stockpile in 1943. In any case, the ZZW was much better prepared and armed than the ZOB, and being military men, they formed a military plan: they would hold certain fixed positions for as long as possible, then conduct an orderly retreat through prepared routes to a prepared hiding place on the Aryan side – there to live to fight another day.

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<sup>281</sup> Posted online at <<http://www.ajc.org/>>.

It is not for us to adjudicate between these two views, but we should take both of them seriously and not just take the ZOB orthodoxy as the only permissible view. Now there is no basis for the ZOB's view that (1) the construction of the bunkers was intended as a form of passive resistance, (2) escape to the Aryan side was limited to a handful of people, (3) the only alternatives were to die either resisting or going like sheep to the slaughter, and (4) that only a fight to the death would rescue Jewish honour. (In the last proposition, there is in fact the odious blame-the-victim implication that those who died in Treblinka somehow compromised Jewish honour. Janusz Korczak, for example?) In fact, in the runup to the uprising, the decision being made by the vast majority of the Warsaw ghetto's population was not between different ways of dying. Rather, they were deciding between two different ways to survive: by escaping from the ghetto, or hiding inside it, hoping to ride out the final "Aktion". This is clear from a large number of memoirs and diaries, and also from the statistics I have been able to compile. I offer the following. On the eve of the Ghetto Uprising, there were: 42,000 Jews remaining in the ghetto, nearly all of whom had prepared hiding places hoping to ride out the final "Aktion", 24,000 Jews living on the Aryan side (the number would eventually grow to 28,000), 700 Jews prepared to fight (roughly 500 ZOB and 200 ZZW). Possibly a few more including "wild" groups, about whom little is known. Thus 36% of the remaining Jews of Warsaw were at that point living on the Aryan side – hardly a handful of privileged individuals. About 40% of them would survive.

From the ZZW's point of view, the ZOB's method of fighting, inspired by the street fighting in Stalingrad and dubbed "Ghettograd" by a Polish newspaper, was the product of a group of inexperienced, politically motivated youngsters. They fought bravely, but with inadequate preparation and not much idea of tactics. The Revisionists had wanted ZOB to subordinate itself to ZZW and thus fight under experienced military leadership; the ZOB instead wanted the ZZW to place itself under ZOB's political leadership. Thus the two organizations had incompatible conceptions, one military and the other political, and that was why they fought separate and unco-ordinated actions. I would say that the ZOB represented Kiddush Hashem, and the ZZW, and the majority of the Jews, Kiddush Hachaim. ZOB apologists have always dismissed ZZW as insignificant and criticized it for leaving the ghetto after a few days' fighting, but the ZZW conception can be defended as being in better agreement with the facts, namely, that most of the Jews wanted to live and that many had a realistic prospect of surviving.

The value of the uprising was in any case symbolic: there was no possibility of victory, and we would certainly honour the ghetto fighters no less if they had held their ground and then retreated. It didn't have to be Masada. After retreating, they might, for example, have tried to sabotage the deportation trains; they could, all along, have played an active role in helping Jews to escape and find hiding places; they could have tried to rescue what was left of the ghetto's wealth to help support Jews in hiding. The ZZW method of fighting might have allowed more Jews to survive in bunkers within the ghetto, eventually making their way to the Aryan side. It could, in short, have saved a few thousand lives. OK, this is counterfactual. Let's say that I'm pointing to tantalizing possibilities rather than rendering judgments. In fact, people act in accordance with their perceptions and beliefs at the time, without the benefit of hindsight, so there is no real point in suggesting that either the ZOB or the ZZW could have or should have behaved differently. However, we can talk about causes and effects, and that is always a counterfactual exercise: to say that A is a cause of B is to imply that if A had not happened then B might have turned out differently. If the ZZW conception had prevailed, then I think the uprising would still be celebrated in song and story, but more people might have been saved. Perhaps among them, who knows, another Golda Meir, or Einstein.

I'm suggesting here that we change our method of commemorating the Ghetto Uprising. In particular, that: (1) the ZZW be restored to its proper place in history and remembered and honored alongside the ZOB. Mordechai Anielewicz was not "the leader of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising", as the USHMM has it, he was the leader of the ZOB. The leader of the ZZW was Pawel Frenkiel. (2) we recognize that the ZOB's justifications were the product of a particular mind-set at a particular time, do not represent the hallowed truth, and are hard to reconcile with the facts. ZOB had to think that escape was impossible to steel itself for "Ghettograd"; we don't have to take their word for it today. (3) thus we should stop talking about "only a choice of ways to die", and instead speak of difficult choices and genuine sacrifice. After all, fighting only when there is no choice is surely not as heroic as fighting when it was possible to save oneself. (4) recognize that escape and hiding did occur on a very large scale and were real options for many people; that these actions required courage and boldness and were by no means a sign of cowardice. (5) recognize also

that those who escaped were not passive recipients of aid but were active agents in their own survival and often in the survival of family, friends, comrades and colleagues as well. In other words that the concept of “rescue” does not even begin to touch the reality of escape and hiding, which have thus far been almost ignored by historians. Nor is it right to subsume escape and hiding under “resistance”: in practice it hasn’t been dealt with that way, and to do so would obscure the real conflict (“fight or flight”) between the two.

By the way, my preliminary estimate of the number of Jews who escaped and/or fled and/or went into hiding across Europe is around 2 million. Hilberg called these phenomena “evasion” and thought that they were negligible. The term is good, the conclusion is not. There is much more work to be done in this area; I would recommend it to anyone looking for a thesis topic or an idea for a book. And there are many implications. The truth is that once we accept that there was a third way between compliance and resistance, namely evasion; that evasion was possible on a large scale; and that it was by far the most likely way to survive – then there is hardly an aspect of the Holocaust that we don’t have to look at in a different way.<sup>282</sup>

### **On the role of the Jewish underworld in the ghetto revolt and looting in the ghetto:**

The professional smugglers – a euphemism for underworld figures – lived a debauched life in the ghetto. They made a great deal of money very quickly and became the social elite. They brought in luxury items such as sweets or other goods that earned them large profits. In the book, [Yisrael] Gutman quotes one person’s testimony: “The smugglers had enormous revenues ... most of them accumulated millions. The smugglers were the richest class in the ghetto and were glaringly set apart from the gray, meager and hungry Jewish quarter. The easy profits and the uncertainty about tomorrow led the smugglers to spend all their spare time drinking, visiting night clubs and in the company of women.”

In the end, the admired fighters and the members of the underworld linked up. Based on their ideological approach, the members of the Jewish Fighting Organization did not build bunkers. Their basic assumption was that they would fight to the end, so no withdrawal or escape routes were planned (the other underground group in the ghetto, the Jewish Military Organization, led by the Revisionists, built a protected, well-equipped bunker with an underground passage out of the ghetto). When the members of the Jewish Fighting Organization found that they could no longer move about and hide aboveground, because of the Germans’ flamethrowers, they had no choice but to take cover in underground bunkers. The largest and best equipped of these fortified sites were those of the underworld.

According to Havi Ben Sasson, 32, a doctoral student who works at the International School for Holocaust Studies at Yad Vashem, the Jewish criminal organizations were part of the Warsaw landscape. In the course of a few hours of archival research and reading of testimonies, she was able to come up with a great deal of information: “At Mila 18, which became one of the symbols of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising, a concrete connection existed between the Jewish underworld and the Jewish Fighting Organization,” Ben Sasson says. “In fact, that bunker was built by and belonged to people from the Warsaw underworld. It was a huge shelter, with a number of rooms, a power hookup and even a well for water. Tremendous amounts of food were stored there, which the underworld was able to bring into the ghetto, thanks to its connections with the Polish underworld.”

The leader of the bunker was Shmuel Isser, Ben Sasson says. He dealt mainly in the production of illegal goods, which were smuggled out of the ghetto. “We have a number of testimonies about this from fighters who survived,” she notes. “Those who succeeded in getting out of the bunker definitely say that the bunker belonged to people of the underworld and that the fighters were received their like princes. Shmuel Isser’s bunker was intended to hold his family, which numbered between 80 and 100 people. It was one of the best equipped bunkers in the ghetto.

“Every self-respecting bunker made sure it had weapons for self-defense, and the members of the underworld were definitely self-respecting, so I have no doubt that weapons were stored there, too. That was why the Jewish Fighting Organization chose Mila 18. What happened was that the people of the

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<sup>282</sup> Posted online at <<http://h-net.msu.edu>>, H-Holocaust Discussion Logs, October 26, 2004.

underworld let the people of the underground into their bunker. According to testimonies, the underworld people also served as guides for the fighters. They were familiar with the ghetto even after it was burned and its form changed.”<sup>283</sup>

*During the quelling of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, Jewish “shabrovniks” (looters) went to the bunkers destroyed by the Germans looking for food and valuables.*

When the Germans had started to detect and destroy one by one the bunkers, the “shabrovniks” set up an intelligence network. They knew which bunkers were gassed, and each time this happened, “shabrovniks” from all over the ghetto converged on the place. They took food from the people still living, they trampled on dead and dying bodies, and fought each other over every scrap. There were among the “shabrovniks” those who did their work with a bitter feeling, knowing that tomorrow someone might trample on their still living bodies. ...

Not only food was the aim of the “shabrovniks”. In those days, when the most precious items had lost all value, the ghouls searched the pockets of the dead for jewels and currency. They removed rings and watches from the victims of the deadly gas, or even a good pair of shoes.<sup>284</sup>

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<sup>283</sup> Kobi Ben-Simhon, “World of our (god)fathers,” *Haaretz*, October 21, 2004.

<sup>284</sup> Tuvia Borzykowski, *Between Tumbling Walls* (Tel Aviv: Beit Lohamei Hagettaot/Ghetto Fighters’ House and Hakibbutz Hameuchad Publishing House, 1972), 79.

## The Jewish Resistance Movement and Polish Assistance

*The true extent of Polish assistance to the Jewish underground is a little known fact, and is often downplayed, if not ignored outright in Holocaust literature. However, as these accounts show, it was very real, as were the voices of Poland's leadership in condemning the crimes of the Nazis and rallying to the defence of the Jews.*

*The Jewish underground felt more secure on the Aryan side than in the ghetto. Fearing betrayal and capture by the Gestapo and Jewish police, many of their members escaped from the ghetto. The Jewish underground established contact with the Polish underground, who provided it with various forms of assistance, and Jews often met in the homes of Poles on the Aryan side.*

*Arms in the hands of private citizens were a rare phenomenon in occupied Poland and their possession was punishable by death. This made each gun enormously valuable. Even during the Warsaw Uprising of August 1944, only about ten percent of the Polish insurgents had a weapon. Efforts to secure and transport arms and ammunition to the ghetto were precarious undertakings. According to some reports, the Jewish Military Union (ZZW) was already amassing weapons in the winter of 1940–1941. Arms, as well as just about anything else, could be readily purchased for a price on the black market. Consequently, Emmanuel Ringelblum wrote that, before the revolt in the ghetto, "Arms were flowing into the ghetto in large quantities."<sup>285</sup>*

### **Bernard Goldstein, a Bund activist:**

When the Gestapo had begun to hunt for Orzech in the ghetto, we had a great deal of difficulty with him. ... During the deportation in July 1942, the Gestapo searched for him in earnest. In August we managed to get him over to the Aryan side ...

Immediately after we got to Orzech's apartment Leon Feiner arrived. ... This was considered a formal meeting of half the members of the central committee of the underground Bund. The other half ... were still in the ghetto. ...

We asked Mrs. Chumatovsky's father, Schcherbinsky [Szczerciński], with whom Friedrych lived, to take us in for a few days. That was not so simple. He already had Friedrych, Fishgrund, David Klin ..., Gala Leshtchinska, and a few others, all very much wanted by the [Jewish] police. Moreover, Shcherbinsky's apartment also served as a rendezvous for various leaders of the underground, such as Berman of the Left Poale Zion ..., Guzik of the Joint Distribution Committee, Kirshenbaum of the Zionists, Dr. Ringelblum of the Poale Zion, and others. ...

Our center for arms procurement on the Aryan side was at 3 Gournoshlonska [Górnośląska] Street in the home of a Polish worker, Stefan Macho.<sup>286</sup>

We received from the official underground army, Armia Kryowa [Armia Krajowa], a small transport of arms: fifty revolvers, fifty grenades, and some explosives. ...

Michel Klepfisz [Klepfisz], Zalman Friedrych [Friedrich], and I sat in one of our conspiratorial apartments on the Aryan side one evening, discussing the details of plans for smuggling more weapons and explosives into the ghetto. Michel's specialty was now explosive bottles. With the help of the PPS [Polish Socialist Party], he had already smuggled two thousand liters of benzene into the ghetto. He had also organized a factory for manufacturing the explosive bottles and had taught a group of comrades how to make and use them. ...

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<sup>285</sup> Emmanuel Ringelblum, *Polish-Jewish Relations During the Second World War* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1974), 170–71.

<sup>286</sup> Bernard Goldstein, *The Stars Bear Witness* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1950), 168–69, 170–71.

We on the Aryan side utilized every means of obtaining arms—private channels, professional smugglers, Armia Kryowa (the “official” army of the government-in-exile), and the military organizations of the Polish government and the Polish Socialists. Arms from the various sources were dispatched to the ghetto as soon as we received them. ... The comrades on the Aryan side would escort shipments of arms into the ghetto, remain a few days, and then return for new shipments.<sup>287</sup>

**Jacob Celemenski, a member of Jewish underground on the Aryan side:**

At the end of January [1943], the AK [Home Army] leadership, impressed by the Jewish anti-Nazi attack earlier that month, gave ZOB [ŻOB] fifty long pistols and an equal number of grenades. ... Through Polish socialists, we received 2000 litres of petrol and a shipment of explosives.

After transporting this material into the ghetto, [Michał] Klepfisz went over to set up small-arms workshops to teach ZOB personnel how to make grenades and Molotov cocktails (incendiary bottles). Klepfisz learnt to specialise in small-arms production under the supervision of a PPS [Polish Socialist Party] munitions-master, whom he met secretly in a church on the Aryan side. The ability to manufacture arms lifted the morale in the ghetto.<sup>288</sup>

**Vladka Meed, a courier for the Jewish Fighting Organization (ŻOB) on the Aryan side:**

Later I learned that the deliveryman was Aryeh Wilner, of the *Hashomer Hatzair*, who represented the Jewish Fighting Organization (*Zydowska [Żydowska] Organizacja Bojowa*) on the “Aryan side,” and that the crates contained not nails but the first ten revolvers to be secured from the Polish underground (*Armia [Armia] Krajowa*) ...<sup>289</sup>

Mikolai [Mikołaj, i.e., Leon Feiner] introduced Michal [i.e., Michał Klepfisz] to a Polish underground officer named Julian, who was an expert on explosives. Their first meeting took place at dusk in a church on Fabryczna Street. Michal soon learned the art of manufacturing grenades, bombs, and “Molotov cocktails.” Silent but pleased, he would return from the church, loaded with leaflets and formulae, to sit up all night studying the material.<sup>290</sup>

The arms traffic flourished in the ghetto; one could obtain revolvers from Gentile and even Jewish smugglers—at a price.<sup>291</sup>

... the Fighting Organization had been levying “taxes” on Jews in the ghetto who were known to be wealthy, particularly those who had prospered since the ghetto had been set up. They were informed by letter of the time and place at which specific amounts of money were to be deposited for the Fighting Organization. ... A tax was leveled, as well, upon the *Judenrat*. The collection of these taxes was a dangerous business. One never knew who might be waiting at the designated payment sight. Hence, the collectors were fully armed. Not all Jews yielded voluntarily; many had to be pressured into handing over the levy demanded by the Fighting Organization.<sup>292</sup>

**David Landau, a member of the Jewish Military Union (ŻZW):**

After Betar went underground in November 1939, affiliating with the ŻZW, it differed from other Zionist groups through its co-operation with the mainstream (Christian) Polish Resistance. We were disciplined according to rules dictated from the ‘other’ side. It would be as false to claim they trained us merely for their interests as to claim they did it merely for our own. Our benefit was mutual. Before, during and after

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<sup>287</sup> Ibid., 178, 180–81, 186.

<sup>288</sup> Jacob Celemenski, *Elegy For My People: Memoirs of an Underground Courier of the Jewish Labor Bund in Nazi-Occupied Poland 1939–45* (Melbourne: The Jacob Celemenski Memorial Trust, 2000), 157.

<sup>289</sup> Vladka Meed, *On Both Sides of the Wall: Memoirs from the Warsaw Ghetto* (New York: Holocaust Library, 1979), 86.

<sup>290</sup> Ibid., 125.

<sup>291</sup> Ibid., 107.

<sup>292</sup> Ibid., 108–109.

the Uprising [in the ghetto], our Polish friends stood by us. A few even entered the ghetto to fight, and some died fighting with us. But it was all on their terms, the terms of the Polish Underground. We were forbidden to accept individuals who had no connections with existing members and for security reasons we were forbidden to station a representative on the Aryan side. We felt handicapped by this. ...

It is hard to believe that, in the total separation between ghetto and the outside world, the Germans never cut off all the telephone lines. Organisations needed only to phone through the resolutions of their meetings to their representative on the Aryan side in a coded cipher and action could be taken immediately. We of Betar/ŻZW. However, had to get our messages across physically to the other side. Our leaders had their own reasons for not trusting the phone lines.<sup>293</sup>

Through my contacts, I was one of the first to be offered 'hot' goods, meaning small arms. Following instructions from my Betar friends I accepted the offer and bought two Polish hand grenades, known as 'potatoes'. Although I had bribed the guards, I remember the terror I felt that evening as I returned to the ghetto. ... My standing in the Betar was sealed with that first purchase. ... At a later stage many people would obtain arms for the organization, but in the winter of 1940–41 little had been organized in this respect.

I was very familiar with the types of small arms offered for sale and concentrated mostly on revolvers, although I did not shy away from buying hand grenades. ...

In the first months of buying arms, the prices were steep and the risk high, but the supply of all varieties was considerable, Once the trust between seller and buyer was established, business was business and our common enemy became the same—the cursed Hitlerite. I would be offered anything up to a light automatic machine-gun. Although such a treasure could cost a small fortune. The delivery was made in parts, each individually greased and packed. We smuggled the parts in with the help of many of the Jews who worked outside the ghetto.<sup>294</sup>

I was also busy, more than ever before, buying and smuggling arms and ammunition for the ŻZW. There was seldom a day I went to work outside the ghetto when I did not carry a roll of banknotes for the organisation's needs. Often I had specific orders with regard to the ammunition we needed for the arms we had in stock. The arrangements were that I bought whatever arms I could lay my hands on with a small number of bullets. Later, we would order the calibre of bullets we needed. After the great deportation, armament had become essential and I had established myself as one of the key buyers on the outside.<sup>295</sup>

A Polish Captain, Henryk Iwański, has left a record of what happened soon after [i.e., late 1939]. Four Jewish officers of the Polish Army visited him at the St. Stanisław Hospital at 37 Wolska Street. One of them, First Lieutenant David Mordechai Appelbaum, had fought in his regiment. These officers were members of the Irgun Zvei Leumi (IZL—'Organisation of National Army'), which had been led before the war by Menahem Begin, future Prime Minister of Israel.

They told Iwański of three Underground Jewish officers, Paweł Frenkel, Leon Wajnsztok and Dr David Wdowiński, who by German law should have been reported to the German *Offlag*, or prison camp for officers. But somehow they were still free. With Iwański's help they wanted to organise a Jewish youth movement and train its members to resist the Germans.

Iwański, in turn, did two things. He told the officers that he should be referred to by his code name 'Bystry', and he handed each of the a Wis 9 mm pistol with the compliments of the KB [Korpus Bezpieczeństwa] Security Corps of the recently formed Polish military Underground. To the best of our historical knowledge, these four pistols were the first arms Jews received for the future ghetto Uprising.

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<sup>293</sup> David J. Landau, alias Dudek, Janek and Jan, *Caged: A Story of Jewish Resistance* (Sydney: Macmillan, 2000), 97–98.

<sup>294</sup> *Ibid.*, 69–70.

<sup>295</sup> *Ibid.*, 69–70.

The four officers resolved then and there to create the ŻZW. All historical documents agree that the ŻZW was not lacking in armaments at the beginning of the Warsaw ghetto Uprising in 1943.

...In January 1940, the KB gave the officers an additional twenty-nine Wis pistols, which the Polish Underground organisation Świt had approved during its monthly meeting in December 1939.<sup>296</sup>

Betar could not afford the luxury of recruiting young people by going out into the ghetto streets. The secrecy we had to keep was strict and total. When I became officially accepted as a Betar member I was not told, and officially never knew, who the leaders of the organisation were. When I was eventually trusted with their names it was on the understanding that I must never acknowledge them to their face. ...

New recruits were accepted only on the personal recommendation of members, but this too was not easy. ...

These facts explain why the ŻZW could not easily afford to cooperate fully with ŻOB. We could not risk jeopardising our own position with the Polish Underground even if we, as Jews, believed otherwise. It was also a question of having the agreement of our Polish partners, the Underground Army, the KB Security Corps, who kept training our fighters and supplying us with arms. We could not risk even asking if they would agree to us establishing close relations with the ŻOB as it would have made them wonder what activities we were getting up to behind their back and whether they were dangerous to their own work. We therefore kept ourselves as a separate body, while co-ordinating our anti-German activities with ŻOB, supposedly without the knowledge of the Polish side.<sup>297</sup>

Outside the ghetto there was an open market called the Kiercelak [Kercelak], which had existed since before the war. One could buy anything there, including goods not available elsewhere in Warsaw. ...

The Gestapo and its treacherous collaborators tried to penetrate the Kiercelak and catch the Underground leaders, but neither bribes nor their frequent raids were of much use. Occasionally they succeeded in hauling away some minor player, but the leaders remained beyond their reach. Known collaborators or informants were always swiftly dealt with—executed—by the Underground. Some of the major dealers were even protected from persecution because the Polish police recognised them as being leading operators at the market. ...

At the Kiercelak one never asked unnecessary questions. A buyer seeking grenades (called ‘potatoes’) would approach a ‘stranger’ with whom he had dealt many times and say, ‘You don’t know me, but I am interested in potatoes. They must be of the highest quality, without blemishes.’ ...

A deal would be made, delivery arranged and the money would be paid in advance. Deals made at the Kiercelak were always honoured. This was not because of the honesty of the deal-makers but because anyone who tried to act otherwise, to ‘make a quick killing’, ended up being killed themselves.

Nobody used their real names at the Kiercelak. ...

The Kiercelak was neutral territory even for German soldiers, including SS officers. Some were on leave and wanted to have a good time, others wanted to deal. Nobody asked if the revolvers, grenades or even heavier arms offered in a dismantled state, were theirs or not. It was strictly cash and carry each time. Parties to such arms deals would leave the Kiercelak within seconds, but within an hour or two a new session would be going on, with ‘new’ people and new goods for sale.

I was known to most of the dealers. We sometimes met up in a *knajpa*, a pub, outside the Kiercelak, where we would drink illegally distilled vodka, called *bimber*. Whenever we met in the Kiercelak, however, it always as strangers, as if we were meeting for the first time. The rules of the Kiercelak were strictly adhered to. ...

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<sup>296</sup> Ibid., 80–81.

<sup>297</sup> Ibid., 83–84.

At the Kiercelak, I often met a young Christian man who was closely connected with the Jewish Underground, the ŻZW. His name is Jan Kostański and we have remained friends for life. Kostański and his mother, Władysław [Władysława] Wierzbicka, saved many Jewish people, including his future wife and her family. ...

Anything and everything went on under the noses of the Germans at the Kiercelak.

Smuggling goods in and out of the ghetto kept it alive, figuratively and literally. It was the secret channel by which we extended life beyond German patience.<sup>298</sup>

*Dealing in arms was a lucrative business and there were arms dealers of all nationalities active in Warsaw, including Jewish ones. Feliks Dawidowicz, a Jew from Pruszków, describes how he and Hersz Rubinsztajn from Grójec smuggled pistols and ammunition into the Warsaw ghetto, where they were received by Jerzy Walter and Jerzy Reutt. Dawidowicz stated: "They paid well for weapons."*<sup>299</sup>

From a speech by ŻZW leader Paweł Frenkel: 'We, the ŻZW, believe that the time has come when we can and should accept every Jew who has a gun and comes and says he wants to join us. We should take him or her in and train them as part of ourselves, but checking and re-checking that we have the right person. The ŻOB believes that such a policy may endanger everything in advance. This is the basic and most important reason why we are and will remain a separate fighting body. In the end it will make no difference—we do not believe that in either way we can win the final battle physically. The question that divides us is: which way can we inflict the greatest damage on the Germans and their helpers?' Only time will show who was right and who was wrong.' ...

The final decision to say if the next Action means the liquidation of the ghetto and therefore the right time to open up with fire has been left to the command of ŻOB. When the time comes we may not agree with their decision but for the moment ŻOB represents many political streams. ... It is therefore imperative that we leave the decision to them for the sake of co-ordination. Only if we conclude that they have failed to start fighting at the right moment will we be morally free to act on our own. Not before.'<sup>300</sup>

#### **Władysław Bartoszewski, Polish underground activist and member of Żegota:**

The Commander-in-Chief of the AK [Armia Krajowa or Home Army], General 'Grot' Rowecki, responded positively to this appeal [from the Jewish Fighting Organization (ŻOB) to help organise and coordinate actions by the Jewish underground and to supply arms, ammunition and military training] in a letter to the official representatives, approving the activities of ŻOB as a paramilitary organisation and recommending military training along the guidelines set by the AK. The Government Delegation approved the appeal verbally in November 1942. [Henryk] Woliński [head of the Jewish Section of the Home Army High Command] personally communicated the response of the AK Commander and the Government Delegation to [Arie] Wilner and [Dr. Leon] Feiner [of the *Bund*]. As a result, the AK supplied members of the ŻOB printed instructions on how to use arms and explosives, instructed them in the methods of urban warfare, and taught them how to attack armoured cars and to produce incendiary devices, mines and hand grenades. Plans were also drawn up for a joint action by AK detachments and ghetto fighters in the area of Bonifraterska Street in the event of a military offensive by the ŻOB.<sup>301</sup>

#### **Joshua Zimmerman, American historian, on the organization of the Jewish underground:**

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<sup>298</sup> *Ibid.*, 92–95.

<sup>299</sup> Marian Skwara, *Pruszkowscy Żydzi: Sześć dekad zamkniętych zagładą* (Pruszków: Powiatowa i Miejska Biblioteka Publiczna im. Henryka Sienkiewicza w Pruszkowie, 2007), 196.

<sup>300</sup> David J. Landau, alias Dudek, Janek and Jan, *Caged: A Story of Jewish Resistance* (Sydney: Macmillan, 2000), 191–92, 193.

<sup>301</sup> Władysław Bartoszewski, "The Martyrdom and Struggle of the Jews in Warsaw under German Occupation 1939–43," in Władysław Bartoszewski and Antony Polonsky, eds., *The Jews in Warsaw: A History* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell in association with the Institute for Polish-Jewish Studies, 1991), 335.

In the autumn of 1942, advances were made in the establishment of formal ties between the Home Army and the emerging Jewish underground resistance. In October 1942, the Zionist leader, [Arie] Wilner, now met with Wolinski [Henryk Woliński, head of the Jewish Section of the Home Army High Command]. Wilner had come as a representative of the Jewish National Committee, the confederation of Zionist groups in the ghetto, which had recently been created. Henceforth, strong ties developed between these two men. The result was significant for the development and strengthening of the newly emerging ŻOB [Jewish Fighting Organization].

The concrete outcome of this first meeting was the request of the ŻOB for weapons, ammunition, and training. The Jewish representative further requested that his group be recognized as the official Jewish military organization vis-à-vis the Polish underground. According to Wolinski, who relayed the request, the Home Army commander [General “Grot” Rowecki] responded that to warrant assistance from the Polish underground, the Jewish parties had to unify into a single representative body. We should recall that at the time, the Bund had refused to join the ŻOB or its political arm, the Jewish National Committee, an umbrella group of Zionist parties. The Bund representative, Leon Feiner, had personally voiced his opposition to Wolinski, arguing that any organization that spoke for the Jewish community as a whole had to include the Bund. That the London Polish government had both a Zionist and a Bundist in its National Council only reinforced Feiner’s argument.

Jewish underground leaders in the Warsaw Ghetto thus went about reorganizing in response to the Polish underground. The Bund agreed to join the ŻOB at the end of October 1942, but it refused to sit on the Jewish National Committee (ŻKN). Instead, a non-partisan Jewish Coordinating Committee was established, consisting of the ŻKN and the Bund. The result was an agreement that the Jewish underground would be represented on the Aryan side of Warsaw by both a Zionist and Bundist representative. There were Arie Wilner, a delegate of the ŻKN, and Leon Feiner of the Bund. These two men then drafted and signed a letter addressed to the AK High Command and the Polish government-in-exile requesting that formal contacts be established between the Jewish community, represented by Wilner and Feiner, and the Polish underground, with the goal of coordinating (*w celu podporządkowania i uzgodnienia działań*) their activities as well as procuring military supplies. According to Wolinski, Grot-Rowecki issued a written reply on November 11, 1942, praising the military preparedness of the Jewish resistance in the Warsaw ghetto while agreeing to consider the requests. Wolinski then presented the AK Commander’s reply orally to Wilner and Feiner in late November 1942.

At the beginning of December, the Jewish Coordinating Committee drafted a set of bylaws. These outlined the military structure of the ŻOB whose aim it described as the defense of the ghetto in the case of further deportation actions.<sup>302</sup>

### **Stefan Korboński, Chief of Civil Resistance in German-occupied Poland, decorated by Yad Vashem:**

On July 28, 1942, the Fighting Organization of the Warsaw ghetto was born. [*By this time the mass deportations to Treblinka were already underway.*] “On the Aryan side”, it was represented by Arie Wilner (pseudonym: Jurek). On December 2, 1942, the Fighting Organization, its composition enlarged by that time, took a new name: Jewish Fighting Organization (Żydowska Organizacja Bojowa—ŻOB). The Jewish Fighting Organization was commanded by Mordecai Anielewicz. At the time of the Ghetto Uprising, it had about twenty-two combat groups (between twenty and thirty men in each), over seven hundred combat soldiers in all. Liaison with the Home Army was maintained by Arie Wilner, who was in touch with the head of the Jewish section of the High Command of the Home Army, Henryk Woliński (pseudonym: Waclaw).

The Jewish representatives—Adolf Berman for the Jewish National Committee, Leon Feiner for BUND, and Arie Wilner for the Jewish Fighting Organization—declared their willingness to subordinate the activities of their organizations to the Government Delegate and the High Command of the Home Army. At the same

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<sup>302</sup> Joshua D. Zimmerman, “The Attitude of the Polish Home Army (AK) to the Jewish Question during the Holocaust: The Case of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising,” in Murray Baumgarten, Peter Kenez, and Bruce Thompson, eds., *Varieties of Antisemitism: History, Ideology, Discourse* (Newark, Delaware: University of Delaware Press, 2009), 113–14.

time they asked for arms and ammunition, financial assistance, and help with training. The Delegate accepted the declaration and promised to extend help, while the commander of the Home Army, in his order of November 11, 1942, acknowledged the Jewish Fighting Organization as a paramilitary organization and instructed them to employ the Home Army's organizational methods and fighting tactics. Simultaneously, the High Command assigned Major Stanisław Weber (pseudonym: Chirurg) and Captain Zbigniew Lewandowski (pseudonym: Szyna) to organize assistance for the Jewish Fighting Organization. Accordingly, the first ten guns and ammunition were passed on to the Jewish Fighting Organization in December 1942, and another ten guns and ammunition in January 1943. For his part, the Government Delegate established the Jewish section of his office, headed at first by Witold Bienkowski (pseudonym: Kalski) and later by Władysław Bartoszewski (pseudonym: Ludwik), who was decorated after the war with the Israeli medal of Yad Vashem. ...

Also active in the ghetto was another military organization, which did not merge with the Jewish Fighting Organization. The Jewish Military Union (Żydowski Związek Wojskowy—ŻZW) consisted of three combat groups, about four hundred men in all, mostly former officers and noncommissioned officers of the Polish army and members of a Zionist organization, BETAR. It was commanded by Paweł Frenkel. The Jewish Military Union established contact with the Government Delegate and the High Command of the Home Army through a Polish underground organization, the Security Corps.

Within the framework of cooperation between the Polish and Jewish underground, and at the request of Leon Feiner, the High Command of the Home Army sent a dispatch to Jewish organizations in London, which responded by forwarding through the Home Army channels the first \$5,000 for BUND. This initiated other, more frequent and larger shipments of money sent to the Jewish organizations via the underground channels of the Government Delegate and the High Command of the Home Army. Contact was also established, by means of the Home Army and the Delegate's transmitters, with Jewish organizations in the United States. ...

Beginning with January 1943, officers of the Home Army and representatives of the Jewish Fighting Organization held meetings to plan for a joint action on both sides of the ghetto walls at the outbreak of the uprising. Three Polish units led by Captain Józef Pszenny (pseudonym: Chwacki), were to break through the ghetto walls, attacking the Germans on the Aryan side and blowing up the walls with explosives. Since it was assumed from the start that the Ghetto Uprising must inevitably end in disaster, this action was planned only to open the way for the retreat of the Jewish fighters.

At this time the Home Army delivered to the Jewish Fighting Organization 1 light machine gun, 2 submachine guns, 50 handguns (all with magazines and ammunition), 10 rifles, 600 hand grenades with detonators, 30 kilograms of explosives (plastic, received from air drops), 120 kilograms of explosives of own production, 400 detonators for bombs and grenades, 30 kilograms of potassium to make the incendiary "Molotov cocktails," and, finally, great quantities of saltpeter needed to manufacture gun powder. The Jewish Fighting Organization also received instructions on how to manufacture bombs, hand grenades, and incendiary bottles; how to build strongholds; and where to get rails and cement for their construction.

On April 19, 1943—the first day of uprising in the Warsaw ghetto—three Home Army units, commanded by Captain Józef Pszenny, took up their posts near the ghetto walls on Bonifraterska Street and attempted to blow up the wall with mines. Detected prematurely, they attacked the Germans, while four sappers tried to get to the wall. Unfortunately, two of them were killed on the spot—Eugeniusz Morawski and Józef Wilk—while a third sustained wounds in both legs. Captain Pszenny ordered his men to retreat and withdrew, taking along four wounded men and detonating the mines on the street. The explosion tore to shreds the bodies of Morawski and Wilk. Several Germans were killed during the engagement, but the attempt to blow up the wall ended in failure.

The next day, a unit of the People's Guard of the Polish Workers Party, led by Franciszek Bartoszek, attacked the German machine-gun posts near the ghetto wall on Nowiniarska Street. Two SS men were killed.

On April 22, a detachment of the Home Army, commanded by Więckowski, routed a unit of the Lithuanian auxiliary police near the ghetto walls.

On Good Friday, April 23, a Home Army unit led by Lt. Jerzy Skupieński, attacked the gate in the ghetto wall at Pawia Street. They had orders to blow up the gate. Two German sentries were killed at the gate, but—under the heavy barrage of fire from Germans converging from all sides—the Home Army soldiers had to withdraw, killing on the way four SS and police officers whose car happened to cross their path of retreat.

In harassing actions, ordered by Colonel Antoni Chruściel (pseudonym: Monter), the Home Army commander of Warsaw, German sentries on Leszno and Orla streets were shot by Home Army soldiers led by Cadet Officer Zbigniew Stalkowski. Another unit of the Home Army, led by Tadeusz Kern-Jędrzychowski, killed SS sentries on Zakroczymska Street.

There was also fighting in the area of the Powązki Cemetery (under the command of Władysław Andrzejczak) and near the Jewish cemetery (under Leszek Raabe, commander of the Socialist Fighting Organization). Raabe's deputy, Włodzimierz Kaczanowski, organized the escape of the Jewish members of the Polish Socialist Party from the ghetto.

On Good Friday, April 23, the Jewish Fighting Organization issued an appeal to the Polish population, declaring that the struggle in the ghetto upheld the time-honored Polish motto: "For your freedom and ours," and stressing that the Jews and the Poles had become brothers in arms.

A particularly daring action was undertaken by a unit of the Corps for Security [of the Home Army], under the command of Captain Henryk Iwański. From the very first days of the Warsaw ghetto's existence, Captain Iwański's brother, Waclaw, and his two sons—Zbigniew and Roman—maintained regular contact with the Jewish Military Union, providing them with arms, ammunition, and instructional materials smuggled through the sewers or in carts that brought lime and cement into the ghetto. When the uprising began, a unit of the Jewish Military Union occupied positions on Muranowski Square, which was to become the scene of the bloodiest fighting. On the first day of the uprising, a Polish and Jewish [Zionist] flag were raised over this sector. They were clearly visible from the Aryan side and created a deep impression on the Polish population of Warsaw. The commander of the Jewish unit on Muranowski Square, Dawid Moryc Apfelbaum, sent a message to Captain Iwański informing him that he had been wounded and asking for arms and ammunition. The next day, Iwański and eighteen of his men (among them, his brother Waclaw and his two sons, Roman and Zbigniew) made their way into the ghetto by way of a tunnel dug from the cellar of a house at 6 Muranowska Street, on the opposite side and behind the ghetto wall which, at this point, ran in the middle of Muranowska Street. They brought with them arms, ammunition and food for Apfelbaum's men and, seeing the utter exhaustion of the Jewish fighters, relieved them at their posts amid the ruins on Muranowski Square and Nalewki Street, repelling repeated German attacks. The same tunnel was used without delay to evacuate the Jewish wounded to the Aryan side. Later on, Iwański's brother and both his sons were killed during the fighting, and Iwański himself was seriously wounded. After the collapse of the uprising, Iwański's men carried their wounded commander back through the tunnel, taking along also thirty-four Jewish fighters, fully armed. ...

This was not an isolated instance of the Jews and the Poles fighting together. According to the underground paper *Głos Warszawy* (April 23, 1943), when the uprising began "there were Poles in the ghetto, fighting shoulder to shoulder with the Jews in the streets of the ghetto against the Germans."

In his 100-page report, SS and police general Jürgen Stroop, commander of the German forces fighting in the ghetto, confirmed the fact of Polish diversionary operations and Polish participation in the fighting, both within and without the ghetto. He wrote that his soldiers were "constantly under fire from outside of the ghetto, i.e. from the Aryan side"; he described Iwański's action as follows: "The main Jewish group, with some Polish bandits mixed in, retreated to the so-called Muranowski Square already in the course of the first or the second day of fighting. It was reinforced there by several more Polish bandits." ...

Throughout the Ghetto Uprising, daily reports on the course of the fighting were transmitted by the chief of the Directorate of Civil Resistance [Stefan] Korboński to the radio station ŚWIT, which based its broadcasts on their contents. [One such message was the following:]

May 7, 1943. [The Polish underground paper] *Rzeczpospolita* of May 6 contains a statement of the [Polish] Government Delegate, denouncing German crimes in the ghetto. He pays homage to the Jewish fighters, voices our solidarity, and calls on all Poles to help those who escape from the ghetto.

In his letter to Cukierman [Yitzhak Zuckerman, one of the ghetto resistance leaders], dated April 23, 1943, Mordecai Anielewicz [the leader of the Jewish Fighting Organization] refers to the [dispatch of April 20], on which the ŚWIT broadcast was based:

“The fact that ... the radio station ŚWIT broadcasts a beautiful program about our struggle (which we heard on our sets here), was the source of great satisfaction. It gives us courage in our fight to know that we are not forgotten on the other side of the ghetto wall.”<sup>303</sup>

*In addition to his official duties, Stefan Korboński established, on behalf of the High Command of the Home Army, the nucleus of an organization that extended protection to Jews from the Warsaw ghetto. At the time of the Warsaw Uprising on August 1, 1944, 283 Jews were being sheltered by members of the High Command. In addition to financial help, Korboński's unit provided refugees from the ghetto with suitable documents.*

*A much more detailed account of Polish military assistance to the Warsaw ghetto fighters is found in Władysław Bartoszewski's The Blood Shed Unites Us: Pages from the History of Help to the Jews in Occupied Poland,<sup>304</sup> portions of which are reproduced in the appendices. See also Bartoszewski's essay, "The Martyrdom and Struggle of the Jews in Warsaw under German Occupation 1939–43," in Władysław T. Bartoszewski and Antony Polonsky, eds., The Jews in Warsaw: A History (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, in association with the Institute for Polish-Jewish Studies, 1991), 312–48.*

### **Reaction of the Polish leadership to German propaganda, their unequivocal condemnation of the crime and their appeal to Poles to help the Jews:**

Nazi propaganda in the occupied countries cynically justified the crimes committed against the Jews, arguing that they were necessary for the ‘defence of civilization ... and the struggle against Bolshevism’. During the battle in the Warsaw ghetto on 30 April 1943, the Government Plenipotentiary, Jan Stanisław Jankowski, issued a long statement opposing the Nazi propaganda. He stated unequivocally:

“The cruel pursuit and murder of Jews hiding in the ruins of the ghetto and beyond its walls continues at this very moment. The Polish nation, imbued with the spirit of Christianity and rejecting double standards of morality, reacts to these German anti-Jewish bestialities with disgust, and when the unequal battle broke out in the ghetto on 19 April they responded with respect and compassion to the Jews courageously defending themselves, and looked on their German murderers with disdain. The political leadership of the country has already expressed its deepest condemnation of the anti-Jewish German brutalities and firmly renews these words of condemnation today. Polish society is right to nurture feelings of pity for the persecuted Jews and to give them help. It should continue to do so.”

This declaration gave great moral support to the activities of the Council for Aid to the Jews, as it did to all other efforts to help those perishing. Even more forceful were the momentous words of the Prime Minister of the Polish government in exile, Władysław Sikorski, broadcast to Poland by the BBC on 5 May 1943 and published by the underground press there:

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<sup>303</sup> Stefan Korboński, *The Jews and the Poles in World War II* (New York: Hippocrene, 1989), 47–48, 56–59, 60–63.

<sup>304</sup> Władysław Bartoszewski, *The Blood Shed Unites Us: Pages From the History of Help to the Jews in Occupied Poland* (Warsaw: Interpress Publishers, 1970), 119–162.

“The greatest crime in human history is being committed. We know that you are helping the persecuted Jews as best you can. I thank you, my countrymen, in my own name and in that of the Government. I ask you to give all the assistance you can to shelter those being murdered, and I condemn all these atrocities on behalf of all humanity, which has been silent too long.”<sup>305</sup>

*Throughout the ghetto uprising, the official organ of the Home Army—Biuletyn Informacyjny—printed several ŻOB communiques and constant appeals to the Polish population to help all those who managed to escape from the ghetto.*

**Major General Jürgen Stroop, SS commander, in his report on the quelling of the revolt and the liquidation of the ghetto:**

*In the introduction to the 1979 Pantheon Books edition of Stroop’s report, Andrzej Wirth acknowledged that “Jewish armed resistance would be impossible without outside help.”<sup>306</sup> Stroop wrote that his soldiers “have been repeatedly shot at from outside the ghetto,” prompting historian István Deák of Columbia University of New York to ask: “I wonder whether anyone fired a shot elsewhere in Europe on behalf of persecuted Jews.”<sup>307</sup> “Polish bandits” is the name given by Stroop to members of the Polish underground who came to the assistance of the Jewish fighters.*

- “The Jews and Polish bandits succeeded in repelling the first penetration of the Ghetto by ambushing the participating unit, which included tanks and armored cars.”
- “The main Jewish fighting unit, which was intermingled with Polish bandits ... They were reinforced by a considerable number of Polish bandits ... The Jewish [Zionist] and Polish flags were hoisted on top of a concrete building in a call to battle against us...”

*[The foregoing reference is to the Jewish Military Union (ŻZW) which, according to German sources, put up the fiercest struggle. One of its members reported that a machine gun had reached the ŻZW that day through a tunnel to the Aryan side. The machine gun was stationed in a position that dominated the entire Muranowski Square, where the main contingent of the ŻZW was located, and successfully repelled the German advance.<sup>308</sup>]*

- “One bandit, who arrived with his truck, exploded 2 hand grenades as a prearranged signal for the waiting bandits to emerge from the sewers. ... These groups always included Polish bandits armed with carbines, small arms, and one light machine gun...”
- “The resistance offered by the Jews and the bandits could be broken only by the energetic and relentless day and night commitment of our assault units...”
- “35 Polish bandits, Communists, were liquidated at once. At their execution the bandits collapsed shouting ‘Long Live Poland!’” (April 22)
- “The Jews and bandits stood fast until the last moment and then concentrated their gunfire on our units ... A number of bandits firing from balconies were hit and came crashing down ...” (April 23)

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<sup>305</sup> Władysław Bartoszewski, “The Martyrdom and Struggle of the Jews in Warsaw under German Occupation 1939–43,” in Władysław Bartoszewski and Antony Polonsky, eds., *The Jews in Warsaw: A History* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell in association with the Institute for Polish-Jewish Studies, 1991), 342–43.

<sup>306</sup> Jürgen Stroop, *The Stroop Report: The Jewish Quarter of Warsaw Is No More!* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1979).

<sup>307</sup> István Deák, “The Incomprehensible Holocaust,” *The New York Review of Books*, September 28, 1989. This and other essays by István Deák were reprinted in István Deák, *Essays on Hitler’s Europe* (Lincoln, Nebraska and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2001).

<sup>308</sup> Yisrael Gutman, *The Jews of Warsaw, 1939–1945: Ghetto, Underground, Revolt* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1982), 375.

- “In addition to the activity of these 7 assault units with gigantic fires, a special operation against a convey of bandits located outside the former Ghetto walls, which was housing Poles only...” (April 25)
- “Various Jews who had maintained a close liaison and collaborated with the Polish terrorists were arrested...” (April 26)
- “Security posts of the surrounding barricade were moved farther into the Aryan section to more effectively intercept the Jews and bandits who are pushing toward the Ghetto...” (May 6)
- “The Jews and bandits—they always include Polish bandits—were armed with carbines, small arms, and 1 machine gun...” (May 10)
- “A total of 931 Jews and bandits were apprehended. 53 bandits were shot...” (May 11)
- “Shots were repeatedly fired from the Aryan section against the surrounding barricade. The line of sentries returned relentless fire. About 30 bandits were shot in the skirmishes, and 9 Jews and bandits belonging to an armed gang were captured... One assault detachment got into a skirmish with a 10–14-member gang on the roofs of a housing block at the edge of the Ghetto (Aryan part). The bandits were exterminated, with no losses on our side...” (May 14)
- “Altogether, 87 Jews were apprehended today and an additional 67 Jews and bandits shot in battle...” (May 15)

Franz van Lent, a Dutchman who served with the SS before being captured by the British, also reported: “Six Poles of the Polish Underground movement who had tried to help the Jews were arrested and shot ...,” thus confirming the claim, mentioned in Stroop’s report, that Polish guerrillas fought alongside the Jews. Lent’s figure does not include those Polish guerrillas who had died earlier in the combat, or had managed to escape.<sup>309</sup>

**Martin Gilbert, British historian:**

The Germans entered the Warsaw ghetto on the morning of April 19. Man for man and gun for gun, their forces were formidable: 2,100 German soldiers, including SS troops, against 1,200 Jewish fighters; 13 heavy machine guns, against which the Jews had no equivalent armament; 69 hand-held machine guns, against which the Jews had none; a total of 135 submachine guns, against which the Jews had 2; several howitzers and other artillery pieces, of which the Jews had none; a total of 1,358 rifles, as against only 17 rifles among the Jews. The Jews had acquired some pistols, about five hundred. But pistols were of little or no use in street fighting. The main Jewish weapons were several thousand grenades and incendiary bottles.<sup>310</sup>

*The above represents the arms in the possession of the Jewish Fighting Organization (ŻOB). The first day of the revolt (April 19, 1943), the People’s Guard more than doubled the quantity of rifles by presenting the ŻOB with twenty-eight rifles with ammunition, but those weapons were never transferred to the ghetto by the ŻOB,<sup>311</sup> even though the need for them was critical. Yitzhak Zuckerman acknowledges that whether*

<sup>309</sup> Philip P. Blood, *Hitler’s Bandit Hunters: The SS and the Nazi Occupation of Europe* (Dulles, Virginia: Potomac Books, 2006), 221, 358.

<sup>310</sup> Martin Gilbert, *The Holocaust: The Jewish Tragedy* (Glasgow: William Collins, 1986), 557–58. Mordechai Anielewicz wrote to Zuckerman on April 23, 1943: “You should know that pistols are of no use. We hardly use them. What we need is hand grenades, rifles, machine guns and explosives.” See Vladka Meed, *On Both Sides of the Wall: Memoirs from the Warsaw Ghetto* (New York: Holocaust Library, 1979), 155.

<sup>311</sup> Yitzhak Zuckerman (“Antek”), *A Surplus of Memory: Chronicle of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 353. Simha Rotem, a close colleague of Zuckerman’s, candidly admits: “He [Zuckerman] maintained contact simultaneously with the two Polish Undergrounds: The Armia Krajowa (AK) and the Armia Ludowa (AL). The AL knew about our contacts with the AK, whereas the AK was not supposed to know about our contacts with the AL.” Rotem also states that the remnants of the ŻOB continued to maintain close contacts with

“there were ten guns more or less is unimportant.”<sup>312</sup> The fighters lacked the right type of weapons, such as anti-tank guns and rifles and machine guns (which the Poles also had few of) to carry out effective assaults on the Germans. Zuckerman also admits in his memoirs that the reports prepared by the Jewish Fighting Organization were often inflated or even invented to embellish their image and military accomplishments:

Afterward, almost every day, we issued propaganda communiqués in which *Dichtung und Wahrheit* (truth and fiction) were intermingled. Historians tend to think that everything written in a document is the truth; but I can prove it isn't so. Sometimes, we “fabricated” things, and they weren't precise ... I wasn't thinking of historical precision. It was an appeal to the Poles designed to stir their feelings of sympathy for our struggle; and it didn't matter how that battle occurred, or how we were defending our lives.<sup>313</sup>

*Yitzhak Zuckerman blatantly ignores damning information about the attitude of leftist factions in the ghetto, which had an obvious impact on the ŻOB's relations with the non-Communist Polish underground. Communist and pro-Soviet factions were very strong and Polish intelligence had excellent information gathering about the activities of these various groups.*<sup>314</sup> Gideon Hausner, the chief prosecutor at the trial of Adolf Eichmann, wrote: “Until the German attack on Russia [in June 1941], Jewish pro-Communist elements in the ghettos followed the official Soviet line; they kept propagandizing for complete cooperation with the German occupation forces.”<sup>315</sup> After surveying the Jewish underground press published in the Warsaw ghetto, historian Teresa Prekerowa noted that there were strong pro-Soviet sentiments among certain Zionist factions in Poland's capital as well. Leftist Zionists saw their future linked with the Communists, whom most Poles considered to be an enemy on par with the Nazis. Their loyalty was to the Soviet Union rather than Poland, which they often referred to as “former Poland” in their publications. The Hashomer Hatza'ir faction regarded the Soviet-German Non-Aggression Pact of August 1939, which partitioned Poland between those two invaders, to be a “wise and justified move.” Mordechai Anielewicz, who became the commander of the ŻOB, was the editor of a periodical (*Neged Hazerem*) that openly embraced Communism over capitalism and the Soviet Union over Poland.<sup>316</sup> Needless to add, the Polish

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the command staff of the Communist People's Army (AL) after the failed revolt in the ghetto, and then wonders why the Home Army was reluctant to keep them informed of their plans for the Warsaw Uprising of August 1944. See Simha Rotem (“Kazik”), *Memoirs of a Warsaw Ghetto Fighter: The Past Within Me* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1994), 66, 119–20.

<sup>312</sup> Yitzhak Zuckerman (“Antek”), *A Surplus of Memory: Chronicle of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 372.

<sup>313</sup> *Ibid.*, 356, 371. This matter is raised again in Roman Gerlach's review and analysis of Zuckerman's memoir which is found in the appendices.

<sup>314</sup> Piotr Wróbel, “An NKVD Residency (Residency) in the Warsaw Ghetto, 1941–42,” in David Bankier, ed., *Secret Intelligence and the Holocaust: Collected Essays from the Colloquium at The City University of New York Graduate Center* (New York: Enigma Books; Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2006), 245–72; Piotr Wróbel, “Wokół problemu rezydentury NKWD w getcie warszawskim,” *Pamięć i Sprawiedliwość*, vol. 8 (2005): 197–216.

<sup>315</sup> Gideon Hausner, *Justice at Jerusalem* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), 184.

<sup>316</sup> Teresa Prekerowa, “The Jewish Underground and the Polish Underground,” in *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry*, volume 9, *Poles, Jews, Socialists: The Failure of an Ideal* (London: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 1996), 151–53, translated from the Polish “Podziemie polskie a żydowskie,” *Odra* (Wrocław), no. 4 (April 1991): 30–35; Teresa Prekerowa, “Prasa getta warszawskiego jako źródło do badań stosunków polsko-żydowskich,” *Kwartalnik Historii Żydów*, no. 3 (2009): 347–55. See also Yitzhak Zuckerman (“Antek”), *A Surplus of Memory: Chronicle of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 339, 360. Ringelblum describes similar activities on the part of Szachno Sagan. See Emanuel Ringelblum, *Kronika getta warszawskiego: Wrzesień 1939–styczeń 1943* (Warsaw: Czytelnik, 1983), 530. As historian Peter D. Stachura has noted, “The radical-proletarian and pro-Communist pronouncements issued by the tiny Jewish underground resistance groups from time to time hardly inspired confidence in a Polish population for whom extreme left-wing ideologies held little attraction before, during or after the war.” See Peter D. Stachura, *Poland in the Twentieth Century* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire and London: Macmillan Press, 1999; New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999), 103. Examples can be found in Manfred Kridl, Jerzy Wittlin and Władysław Malinowski, *The Democratic Heritage of Poland* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1944), 224. The duplicitous dealings of the leadership of the Jewish Fighting Organization with the Polish underground authorities is dealt with in Roman T. Gerlach's study, “Ani niedźwiedzi, ani lasu ani nic: Tragedia getta warszawskiego,” *Zeszyty Historyczne*, no. 150 (1996): 3–21, an English translation of which appears in the appendices. In Białystok, where most of the members of the underground were Communists, and in Wilno, the Jewish underground was not prepared to distance itself from the Soviet Union even when they turned to the Home Army for arms, preferring instead to leave the

underground was well aware of these leanings and their contacts with the Communist underground, despite attempts by Zuckerman to conceal them both at that time and in his memoirs, and was understandably less than enthusiastic when these same groups turned to them for arms and other forms of military assistance.<sup>317</sup> As historian Timothy Snyder has observed, “Some Home Army commanders feared that arming Polish Jews would ease the spread of Soviet power. ... the concern was not entirely unjustified. The Polish Communist party was part of the Jewish Combat Organization, which the Home Army had supplied with arms. The man who negotiated those arms transfers, Aryeh Wilner, was also negotiating with Communists. The Jewish representative within the Polish government department charged with rescuing Jews, Adolf Berman was also in touch with the Communists.”<sup>318</sup>

These duplicitous dealings came to the fore when the Home Army questioned whether the Jewish Fighting Organization, which appeared to be a youth movement, in fact represented the Jews in the Warsaw ghetto. Zuckerman’s response was: “So we told Ari Wilner to tell them he represented two institutions: the

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question of allegiance in the event of a Soviet return (which they anticipated and welcomed) to be “decided at some later time.” See Prekerowa, “The Jewish Underground and the Polish Underground,” in *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry*, vol. 9 (1996): 156; Yitzhak Arad, *Ghetto in Flames: The Struggle and Destruction of the Jews in Vilna in the Holocaust* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, Martyrs’ and Heroes’ Remembrance Authority; New York: Ktav Publishing House, 1981), 248; Sara Bender, *The Jews of Białystok During World War II and the Holocaust* (Waltham, Massachusetts: Brandeis University Press, 2008), 261. Curiously, even some rabbis in Warsaw were known to rejoice in the destruction of Poland. In his wartime diary, Chaim Kaplan, a rabbi, educator and author from Warsaw, wrote on September 1, 1939: “This war will indeed bring destruction upon human civilization. But this is a civilization which merits annihilation and destruction. ... well, now the Poles themselves will receive our revenge through the hands of our cruel enemy. ... My brain is full of the chatterings of the radio from both sides. The German broadcast in the Polish language prates propaganda. Each side accuses the other of every abominable act in the world. Each side considers itself to be righteous and the other murderous, destructive, and bent on plunder. This time, as an exception to the general rule, both speak the truth. Verily it is so—both sides are murderers, destroyers, and plunderers, ready to commit any abomination in the world.” See Abraham I. Katsh, ed., *Scroll of Agony: The Warsaw Diary of Chaim A. Kaplan* (New York: Macmillan; London: Collier-Macmillan, 1965), 19–21. A similar attitude was demonstrated by Rabbi Kalonymus Kalmish Shapira, a prominent Hasidic leader who was confined in the Warsaw ghetto, where he wrote: “The Jewish people have often had to endure calamities whose sole purpose was the destruction of wicked Gentiles. At such times, Jews are imperiled through no fault of their own.” See Rabbi Kalonymos Kalmish Shapira, *Sacred Fire: Torah from the Years of Fury 1939–1942* (Northvale, New Jersey and Jerusalem: Jason Aronson, 2000), 294. There are even reports of Jews greeting the Germans and building triumphal arches in a number of towns such as Łódź, Pabianice, Radom, Przemyśl Kraków Zaręby Kościelne, Janów Lubelski, and elsewhere. See Tadeusz Piotrowski, *Poland’s Holocaust: Ethnic Strife, Collaboration with Occupying Forces, and Genocide in the Second Republic, 1918–1947* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland, 1998), 315 n.167; Tadeusz Bednarczyk, *Życie codzienne warszawskiego getta: Warszawskie getto i ludzie (1939–1945 i dalej)* (Warsaw: Ojczyzna, 1995), 242; Eugeniusz Buczyński, *Smutny wrzesień: Wspomnienia* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1985), 132; Elinor J. Brecher, *Schindler’s Legacy: True Stories of the List Survivors* (New York: Penguin, 1994), 56; Tomasz Strzembosz, “Zstąpienie szatana czy przyjazd gestapo,” *Rzeczpospolita* (Warsaw), May 12, 2001; Józef Łyżwa, “Pomagałem, a potem siedziałem,” *Gazeta Polska* (Warsaw), February 10, 1994. Confirmation of these activities can also be found in the report of an Italian diplomat, a leftist: “in the first days of the conflict, numerous Jews greeted the entrance of the German armies into Polish cities with cries of joy.” See Eugenio Reale, *Raporty: Polska 1945–1946* (Paris: Institut Littéraire, 1968), 204. Even more incredible situations ensued in Soviet-occupied Eastern Poland. In Kobryń, in Polesia, the Germans armed local Jewish Communists, who then carried out diversionary assaults against the Polish army. In the Volhynian town of Luboml, where the Germans entered first, and then retreated a few days later in deference to their then Soviet ally, when afforded the opportunity Jews came forward to collaborate with the Germans, and later with the Soviets, in rounding up Polish soldiers, the only Allied army engaged in fighting at the time. See Marek Wierzbicki, *Polacy i Białorusini w zaborze sowieckim: Stosunki polsko-białoruskie na ziemiach północno-wschodnich II Rzeczypospolitej pod okupacją sowiecką 1939–1941* (Warsaw: Volumen, 2000), 181; Berl Kagan, ed., *Luboml: The Memorial Book of a Vanished Shtetl* (Hoboken, New Jersey: Ktav Publishing House, 1997), 240–41.

<sup>317</sup> As István Deák points out, “Why did the underground Polish Home Army offer so little help to the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising in 1943? The reason, Todorov believes, is less the certainly existing anti-Semitism in the Polish ranks than the two communities’ traditional isolation from each other and also the pro-Soviet position of many of the Jewish fighters. The Home Army was just as hostile to Stalin as it was to Hitler, Todorov writes; and the Hashomer organization, which was the nucleus of the Ghetto revolt in 1943, was unconditionally pro-Soviet.” See István Deák, “Memories of Hell,” *The New York Review of Books*, June 26, 1997, where Deák reviewed Tzvetan Todorov’s *Facing the Extreme: Moral Life in the Concentration Camps* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 1996).

<sup>318</sup> Timothy Snyder, “Jews, Poles & Nazis: The Terrible History,” *The New York Review of Books*, June 24, 2010.

*political institution, the Jewish National Committee, which united all forces in the Ghetto, and the Jewish Fighting Organization, the military arm.” As has been pointed out,*

There was no such thing as a Jewish National Committee, but it sounded good and lent the youthful ZOB [ZOB] the illusion of having gray-haired supervision. The bureaucratic Home Army bought the hierarchical charade, and Zuckerman had to scramble to create the heretofore fictitious body. Unfortunately, the Bund refused to join any national committee that included Communists. So Zuckerman invented a second putative civilian body, a Communist-free Coordinating Committee under the National Committee that oversaw the activities of the ZOB. The Bund accepted the convoluted compromise, and it was on this somewhat confusing basis that the Home Army was hoodwinked into finally recognizing the ZOB on November 11, 1942.<sup>319</sup>

*As Moshe Arens points out, duplicity was a hallmark of the Jewish underground in its dealings with the Home Army:*

Wilner was having no end of trouble trying to obtain the assistance of AK for ZOB. In his first meeting with them he was asked who were the members of the organization he represented. It was made clear to him that a condition for AK assisting the ghetto underground was that it be representative of all parties and movements in the ghetto. After the agreement with the Bund in November [1942] and the establishment of the committees to oversee the actions of ZOB, Wilner was able to report to them that all parties were represented in ZOB. He even included the Revisionists, aware that the relations the Revisionists had with the pre-war Polish government and Polish army were known in AK. He judiciously omitted mention of the Communist membership in ZOB, in deference to the hostility of AK to the Communists and their suspicion that the Socialist Zionist organizations were close to the Communists.

But now the AK handed ZOB a dilemma. They told Wilner that as a condition for their support, they required a declaration that in case of war between Poland and the Soviet Union, ZOB would be prepared to fight for Poland against the Red Army. This demand regarding a future hypothetical situation, difficult to envisage at the time, nevertheless created great turmoil among some of the ZOB member organizations, who clung to their ideologies fashioned in the pre-war days. Rather than dismissing the issue as irrelevant and telling the AK what they wanted to hear, a long drawn-out discussion ensued. Hashomer Hatzair and Left Po’alei Zion felt that such a declaration would mean betraying their “most sacred ideals.” The Bund representatives would not express an opinion on the matter. The ZOB meeting to discuss the Polish demand could reach no conclusion.

The following day they met again, and [Hersh] Berlinski came up with an idea for how to wiggle out of this dilemma. He suggested that, rather than ZOB, the Jewish National Committee, ZKN, transmit a declaration to the Poles which would state that: “As citizens of Poland we are bound by the declarations of the Polish government.” Then Berlinski, on behalf of Left Po’alei Zion, cleared his conscience by giving the following speech: “Dear Comrades! In case of a conflict between Poland and the Soviet Union we will do everything to weaken the fighting ability of Poland. Our place is in the ranks of the Red Army, and we will do all in our power to help it gain victory. November 1917 taught us that many of our friends today will become bloody enemies at a decisive moment of the battle for control of the workers. We have united to fight against the German occupier, against the liquidation of the Jewish masses in the Warsaw ghetto. It cannot be ruled out that the weapons we will acquire by a common effort will be turned one against the other at the time of the fateful determination of the future nature of the world, if the political interests of the working class and its avant-garde will require it of us.” The Hashomer Hatzair representative nodded his agreement, and the Bund representative held his peace. After receiving the ZKN declaration AK made no further demands of a political nature.<sup>320</sup>

*Nonetheless, help was not withheld from the Jewish insurgents, even though the Home Army’s own arms supplies were very limited and the Jewish struggle obviously doomed. The ŻOB, the largest recipient of Polish assistance, repaid the Poles by not flying the Polish flag during the ghetto revolt, unlike the right-*

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<sup>319</sup> Matthew Brzezinski, *Isaac’s Army: A Story of Courage and Survival in Nazi-Occupied Poland* (New York: Random House, 2012), 219–20.

<sup>320</sup> Moshe Arens, *Flags over the Warsaw Ghetto: The Untold Story of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising* (Jerusalem and New York: Gefen, 2011), 141–43.

wing Jewish Military Union,<sup>321</sup> thereby underscoring its lack of loyalty to the Polish state. As Yitzhak Zuckerman made it clear, “anyone who tries to attribute the flag to the ŻOB is distorting them and history.”<sup>322</sup> (Curiously, Dawid Wdowiński, of the political command of the ŻZW, did not mention the Polish flag in his memoir, which raises questions as to the motive for flying it in the first place.) Another Jewish historian reveals that there was as well at least one red (i.e., Communist) flag hoisted over the highest buildings in the ghetto.<sup>323</sup> Indeed, among the ŻOB fighters there were four or five Communist combat units, not to mention pro-Soviet fighters scattered throughout the fourteen Zionist and four Bundist units.<sup>324</sup>

Polish émigré historian and socialist Adam Ciołkosz detailed, in the Paris-based historical journal *Zeszyty Historyczne*,<sup>325</sup> that the Polish Home Army supplied a substantial quantity of arms, ammunition and explosives to the Jewish underground, as well as instructions on how to make explosives. (The entire stock of weapons held in the suburb of Wola was transferred to the Jewish Fighting Organization.) The Home Army also acted as intermediaries in the purchase of a considerable amount of weapons and ammunition from individual German soldiers and from black market sources. They did so without cost and at great personal peril, and depleted their own meagre supplies. The Home Army did not possess arsenals of usable weapons at its disposal, and most of these weapons were in the hands of individual members.<sup>326</sup> Although small in absolute terms, the arms and ammunition furnished by Polish sources were not insignificant in relation to the totality of Jewish supplies and the number of Jewish insurgents (around 750 combatants in total). Of course, these were no match for German tanks and machine-gun fire. Furthermore, without Polish aid Jewish resistance would have been impossible. Initially, informed Jewish sources took account of this invaluable, selfless, and perilous contribution (see, for example, Melech Neustadt<sup>327</sup>). Belatedly, during the Warsaw Uprising of 1944, Yitzhak Zuckerman came to realize that the poverty that Henryk Woliński pleaded when the ŻOB appealed to him for arms was very real, although Zuckerman had previously ascribed it to anti-Semitism. Subsequently, some Jewish authors started to denigrate Polish assistance by slashing the quantity of arms supplied and even accusing the Home Army of charging exorbitant sums and providing unusable arms.<sup>328</sup> However, had there been a concerted effort to organize

<sup>321</sup> The ŻZW may have flown as many as three Polish flags throughout the ghetto: at 7 Muranowska Street, 42 Nalewki Street, and the corner of Świętojerska and Francuska Streets. See Yehuda Helman, “The Fate of the Last of the Fighters of the Military League in Warsaw,” in Asher Cohen, Yehoyakim Cochavi, and Yoav Gelber, eds., *Dapim: Studies on the Shoah* (New York: Peter Lang, 1991), 213; Henryk Bryskier, *Żydzi pod swastyką czyli getto w Warszawie w XX wieku* (Warsaw: Aspra-Jr, 2006), 244; August Grabski and Maciej Wójcicki, *Żydowski Związek Wojskowy: Historia przywrócona* (Warsaw: Żydowski Instytut Historii, 2008), 65.

<sup>322</sup> Yitzhak Zuckerman (“Antek”), *A Surplus of Memory: Chronicle of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 412.

<sup>323</sup> Reuben Ainsztein, *Jewish Resistance in Nazi-Occupied Eastern Europe* (London: Paul Elek, 1974), 624.

<sup>324</sup> Reuben Ainsztein, *Jewish Resistance in Nazi-Occupied Eastern Europe* (London: Paul Elek, 1974), 602.

<sup>325</sup> Adam Ciołkosz, “Broń dla getta Warszawy,” *Zeszyty Historyczne* (Paris: Institut Littéraire), volume 15 (1969): 15–44. See also his letters in volume 32 (1975): 226–28; and in volume 35 (1976): 236–37. Ciołkosz authoritatively counters the charge that the Home Army had huge amounts of weapons at its disposal which it did not want to share with the Jews.

<sup>326</sup> Holocaust historians, on the other hand, are fond of citing a Polish military report stating that, in the spring of 1943, the Home Army had 25,000 rifles, 6,000 revolvers, 30,000 grenades, and other types of even heavier weapons, without acknowledging the important proviso that many of these weapons had been buried after the German invasion and were unusable, and that most of the usable weapons were in the hands of individual soldiers located throughout the country. See, for example, Yisrael Gutman, *The Jews of Warsaw, 1939–1945: Ghetto, Underground, Revolt* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1982), 257.

<sup>327</sup> Melech Neustadt, *Churban Vemered stel Yehudei Varsha* (Tel Aviv: Executive Committee of the General Federation of Jewish Labour in Palestine, 1946).

<sup>328</sup> A similar claim is made in an online publication of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, *Resistance During the Holocaust*: “most weapons were bought from members of the Polish underground, but the prices were high, the quantities limited, and the quality poor.” (Internet: <<http://www.ushmm.org/education/foreducators/resource/resistance.pdf>>.) The Polish underground (the Home Army) was not in the business of selling arms to Jews, nor did it charge for the weapons it provided to the Jewish underground. Weapons were generally purchased on the black market, in which Germans, Poles, and Jews operated. On occasion Home Army members acted as intermediaries in these transactions, as did members of the Jewish underground on the “Aryan” side. In his book *The Jews of Warsaw, 1939–1943: Ghetto, Underground, Revolt* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982), Yisrael Gutman refers to the acquisition of arms several times, but not once does he support the claim advanced by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum that the Polish

armed resistance in the ghetto when news of the mass killings became known to the Jews in Warsaw (these had occurred in the summer of 1941 in Eastern Poland; the first death camp, in Kulmhof, started to operate in December 1941; and by the spring of 1942 escapees from the camp reached Warsaw), the Jewish underground—following the lead of the Jewish Military Union (ŻZW)—could have stockpiled considerable quantities of arms, as virtually anything could have been, and indeed was smuggled into the ghetto before the summer of 1942, and even after the great deportation. Any one of the many Jewish smuggling rings or arms dealers could have been conscripted, by force if necessary, for this purpose had ŻOB shown sufficient initiative.<sup>329</sup>

In any event, the belated acquisition of arms in the early part of 1943 was so successful, that all of the estimated 500 ŻOB fighters were armed with revolvers, small amounts of ammunition, and hand grenades.<sup>330</sup> Since it was the Jewish underground's goal to put up token but symbolic resistance, rather than the impossible and unrealistic tasks of stopping the deportations, they effectively had at their disposal all the weapons that they required for this purpose. Moreover, as historian Richard Lukas points out, the Poles could not furnish the Jews with the type of weapons that were needed to prolong the struggle, namely anti-tank guns and anti-tank rifles. One of the many Poles who took part in acquiring arms for the Jewish Fighting organization was Henryk Grabowski, the famed liaison man of the Home Army. Grabowski rescued Arie Wilner ("Jurek"), the ŻOB liaison with the Home Army on the Aryan side, from a German prison where he was badly tortured. Grabowski's family nursed Wilner back to health before Wilner's return to the ghetto.<sup>331</sup>

Two Polish reminiscences of arms deliveries to the right-wing Jewish Military Union (ŻZW) are found in Władysław Bartoszewski and Zofia Lewin's book *Righteous Among Nations*.<sup>332</sup> The extent of Polish underground aid to the Jewish Military Union—both in terms of arms and military training—has been fully corroborated by Jewish sources.<sup>333</sup> The main arms depot for the ŻZW was located at the St. Stanisław

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underground was the principal commercial purveyor of arms for the ghetto. At 343–44, Gutman writes: "The opportunity to purchase arms grew with the rise in the number of German and allied soldiers passing through Warsaw on their return from the eastern front or visiting the city on short leaves. After the severe setback on the eastern front, they were desperate for cash and even went so far as to sell their weapons. Certain quantities of arms were also purchased from Poles who had owned them since the outbreak of the war or had "liberated" them from ammunition dumps (or arms factories) in the Warsaw area." At p. 361, Gutman states: "Eventually, the arms market moved from the 'Aryan' side into the ghetto itself. ... The purchase and smuggling of weapons was handled mainly by gangs made up of both Poles and Jews. Their motivation was purely commercial, as, in compensation for the high risks involved, arms smuggling guaranteed fat profits."

<sup>329</sup> Leon Najberg recalls his encounter with a Jewish arms smuggler (Mosze Trinker) at the brushmakers' shop in the early part of 1943, who told him that some young Jews were procuring weapons to defend their hideouts. Pistols cost from 15,000 to 18,000 złoty, and ammunition from 80 to 100 złoty per round. See Leon Najberg, *Ostatni powstańcy getta* (Warsaw: Żydowski Instytut Historyczny, 1993), 42.

<sup>330</sup> Yisrael Gutman, *The Jews of Warsaw, 1939–1945: Ghetto, Underground, Revolt* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1982), 344.

<sup>331</sup> Hanna Krall, *Shielding the Flame: An Intimate Conversation with Dr. Marek Edelman, the Last Surviving Leader of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1986), 101–103; Yisrael Gutman, *The Jews of Warsaw, 1939–1945: Ghetto, Underground, Revolt* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1982), 358–60.

<sup>332</sup> Władysław Bartoszewski and Zofia Lewin, eds., *Righteous Among Nations: How Poles Helped the Jews, 1939–1945* (London: Earls Court Publications, 1969), 548–55 and 573–74. In one of these recollections, by Wiesław Bieliński, three Bergmann submachine guns are mentioned. The Bergmann type of submachine gun (also called machine pistols), which was widely used in the German and Soviet armies, could be fired with 9 mm Parabellum pistol ammunition. The two deliveries discussed in these two accounts were made by truck through a gate (with bribes) and through sewers, respectively.

<sup>333</sup> See, for example, Chaim Lazar Litai, *Muranowska 7: The Warsaw Ghetto Rising* (Tel Aviv: Massada-P.E.C. Press, 1966), 149–61; Reuben Ainsztein, *The Warsaw Ghetto Revolt* (New York: Holocaust Library, 1979), 98–99. Kalmen Mendelson (Madanowski), the only officer of the ŻZW command to survive the uprising. Mendelson acknowledged in 1974 that the Polish underground provided 2 medium machine guns, 3 light machine guns, more than 10 submachine guns, more than 20 automatic pistols, more than 40 rifles, more than 300 handguns, ammunition, grenades, and incendiary materials, as well as instructors and organizational help. See Maciej Kledzik, "Biało-czerwona opaska z gwiazdą Dawida," *Rzeczpospolita* (Warsaw), March 12, 2005. There is, however, a great deal of controversy (and doubt) surrounding the assistance allegedly provided by some Poles who claimed to have helped the ŻZW such as

*Hospital for Infectious Diseases located at 37 Wolska Street, a place that the Germans were reluctant to enter. The Polish underground organized a cell at the hospital comprised of medical staff, nurses—both nuns and lay personnel, and the hospital chaplain Rev. Smyrski (nom de guerre “Jawor”).*<sup>334</sup>

*The historical record is to be contrasted with the shoddy manner in which many Western historians continue to treat this topic. For example, British historian Richard Evans writes: “In the course of 1942, Jewish underground organizations began to form, and Polish Communists [sic] supplied them with arms. ... the Polish nationalist resistance [sic, i.e., the Home Army] rejected their call for help ...”*<sup>335</sup>

**Richard C. Lukas, American historian:**

It was not until October 1942 that [Henryk] Woliński [who headed the Home Army’s Jewish Bureau] met with Aryeh Wilner (known as “Jurek”), who represented the Jewish National Council, and requested that contact between Jewish and Polish military and civilian representatives be established to coordinate their efforts and to secure Polish military help for the Jewish Fighting Organization (ZOB [ŻOB]). ... The reason [an earlier attempt to make contact with the Home Army] failed to materialize was, according to Woliński, not because AK [*Armia Krajowa* or Home Army] authorities rejected the request but because Woliński “approached a person who was a civilian and that person didn’t want to assume the task of putting him in contact with the A.K.” Wilner’s frustrated initial attempt to make personal contact with the AK was not regarded by Jewish leaders at the time as a major issue, and none of them—Wilner, Feiner, or Berman—made any allegations about Poles to Woliński on this matter.

On November 11, 1942, Rowecki [General Stefan Grot-Rowecki] took Jewish requests under advisement, praised the battle readiness of the ZOB, and authorized them to organize into units of five resistance fighters. Polish cooperation initiated with the Jews was tentative and reserved. In December, the Poles gave only ten pistols and a small amount of ammunition to the Jews. In order not to deepen [entirely legitimate] Polish suspicions about Communist influence in the Jewish resistance movement, Wilner submitted a code of regulations which included all Jewish organizations, except the Communists, that functioned under the Jewish political and military structure in the Warsaw ghetto. Prior to January 18, 1943, when the Warsaw Jews initiated their first, if spontaneous, armed resistance against the Germans, the AK gave the Jews an additional ten pistols, instruction in diversionary actions, and directions to make Molotov cocktails. From the beginning of December 1942, members of the Jewish resistance regularly visited secret quarters of the AK on Marszałkowska Street, where they received military training: ...

The reserve of the AK in supplying the Jewish resistance with arms is pointedly brought out in Rowecki’s message to [the Polish authorities in] London on January 1, 1943: “Jews from various groups, including Communists, turn to us for weapons as though we have full arsenals. I gave them a few pistols on trial but I have no idea whether they will use them. I will not give more arms because, as you know, we don’t have them ourselves and are waiting for you to send them. Inform me what kind of contact local Jews have with London.”<sup>336</sup>

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Tadeusz Bednarczyk, Władysław Zajdler (“Żarski”), and even Henryk Iwański (“Bystry”). See the publications by Dariusz Libionka, Laurence Weinbaum, Moshe Arens, August Grabski and Maciej Wójcicki discussed later on.

<sup>334</sup> Maciej Kledzik, “Biało-czerwona opaska z gwiazdą Dawida,” *Rzeczpospolita* (Warsaw), March 12, 2005.

<sup>335</sup> Richard J. Evans, *The Third Reich at War, 1939–1945* (London: Allen Lane/Penguin Books, 2008), 309–10. In keeping with this approach, Evans reduces the Poles and the Polish underground to nationalistic stereotypes, deprecates the role of Poles in aiding Jews, states nothing about the death penalty Poles faced for helping Jews, and ignores the contribution of the Poles in cracking and providing the Enigma Code to the Allies and the role of Polish airmen in the Battle of Britain. As Timothy Snyder points out, this is symptomatic of that historian: “Germany, in Evans’ presentation, was a complex society, defined by Christian morality, in which the majority was opposed to the persecution of Jews. Poles, on the other hand, had, in Evans’ account, no educated classes (these, he thinks, were eliminated by the Germans), and can be reduced to the stereotype of nationalism. Evans writes with tedious consistency of the ‘Polish nationalist resistance.’ The word ‘nationalist’ appears every time the anti-Nazi Polish opposition is mentioned,” with one lonely exception. See Timothy Snyder, “Nazis, Soviets, Poles, Jews,” *The New York Review of Books*, December 3, 2009; and the exchange between Richard J. Evans and Timothy Snyder in the February 11, 2010 issue.

<sup>336</sup> Rowecki’s message is repeatedly, and with obvious tendentiousness, mistranslated in Jewish sources to read: “*Jews of various Communist groups turn to us for weapons*” or “*Jews from all sorts of communist groups are asking us for*

After the armed resistance of the Jews during the period January 18–22, 1943, the attitude of the AK toward giving additional arms to the Jews changed. This change reflected the positive views of Poles who praised Jewish heroism and even inflated Jewish achievements against the Nazis. According to the official Polish history of the AK, Rowecki's organization gave the following arms and supplies to the ZOB prior to the Ghetto Uprising of April 1943: 90 pistols with magazines and ammunition, 500 defensive hand grenades, 100 offensive hand grenades, 15 kilograms of explosives with fuses and detonators [80 kilos according to Henryk Woliński], 1 light machine gun, 1 submachine gun, and material to make Molotov cocktails and sabotage material such as time bombs and safety fuses. The AK and its affiliates aided the ZOB in purchasing arms on the black market, a practice in which the AK also engaged. *Żegota* also allocated some of its funds for the purchase of arms for the Jewish resistance.

In addition, two organizations, part of the AK—the Polish People's Independence Action (PLAN [Polska Ludowa Akcja Niepodległościowa, the armed section of the Democratic Party in the Polish underground]) and the Security Corps (KB [Korpus Bezpieczeństwa, a kind of military police responsible for security within the Home Army])—gave the Jewish Military Union (ZZW [ŻZW–Żydowski Związek Walki]), an independent Jewish resistance group, aid in acquiring arms and ammunition. According to Henryk Iwański, who distinguished himself along with other members of his unit, the KB provided the ZZW with 2 heavy machine guns, 4 light machine guns, 21 submachine guns, 30 rifles, 50 pistols, and over 400 grenades. The PLAN also managed to supply the ZZW with an assortment of pistols, rifles, ammunition, and on one occasion a case of 60 grenades. The aid of the [communist] People's Guard was the most modest: 25 rifles and 2 boxes of ammunition. The Jews themselves produced a large number of Molotov cocktails, the primary weapon of the ZOB, and electronically detonated mines. ...

In comparison to the existing supply of arms in the AK, the amount of arms and ammunition given by the AK to the ZOB was small. In the city of Warsaw, the AK had immediately prior to the Ghetto Uprising 25 heavy machine guns, 62 light machine guns, 1182 rifles, 1099 pistols, and 51 submachine guns. But the AK had only a few anti-tank rifles and anti-tank guns in its arsenal in Warsaw, and these were the types of weapons the Jews needed in order to prolong the struggle. Even Schwarzbart [a Jewish representative in the Polish government exiled in London] saw clearly that it was not merely a matter of giving the Jewish resistance more weapons. The critical problem for the Jews and the AK was the lack of heavy arms: ...

It would have been unreasonable to have expected the AK to divest itself entirely of these few heavy weapons that it would obviously need for launching the long-planned general uprising when the Germans were at the point of military collapse. To be sure, the Poles could have given more pistols and rifles to the Jews, but smaller weapons of this type would not have altered the military situation in Jewish favor against the Germans. Moreover, it is not entirely clear how many of these guns were the personal weapons of members of the AK who, like soldiers anywhere, would have been reluctant to part with them.

Despite what appears to be impressive numbers of weapons in the AK in 1943–44, a large amount of these arms that had been buried after the September campaign were unusable. There were perennial shortages of ammunition in the AK, too. Air drops of arms and supplies had no appreciable impact on weapons shortages until 1943. ... Finally, the extensive shortage of weapons in the AK was dramatized when it launched the Warsaw Uprising on August 1, 1944, more than a year after the ghetto insurgency: only 10 percent of its soldiers were properly armed.

Although recent historians have been critical of the amount of AK aid to the Jews prior to the Ghetto Uprising, Wilner and Berman considered the help, in Woliński's words, "generous and honest," a view confirmed by General Bór[-Komorowski]'s contacts with Jewish emissaries from the ghetto. Michael

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guns." The mistranslation appears to have originated in the writings of Communist historian Ber (Bernard) Mark (see his *Powstanie w Getcie Warszawskim* (Warsaw: Idysz Buch, 1963), translated as *Uprising in the Warsaw Ghetto* (New York: Schocken Books, 1975)), but has been repeated, without any scholarly verification, by other Jewish historians and has found its way into popular literature. See, for example, Israel Gutman, *Resistance: The Warsaw Ghetto Uprising* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1994), 174, and Matthew Brzezinski, *Isaac's Army: A Story of Courage and Survival in Nazi-Occupied Poland* (New York: Random House, 2012), 221.

Borwicz, a Jew who fought in the AK, remarked later, “The cooperation of the AK was real and substantial even though it did not measure up to the enormity of the events.”<sup>337</sup>

Responsible Jewish leaders in Warsaw were fully aware that by resisting the Germans, the Jews had no chance to survive if they remained in the ghetto. ... there were no Jewish illusions about defeating the Germans. Shortly after the uprising was launched in April 1943, Jewish representatives radioed Zygielbojm and Schwarzbart in London: “The result of the battle was decided from the outset. ... We will fight to the last.”

At no time did responsible Jewish leaders of the Warsaw Ghetto, except perhaps [Mordechai] Anielewicz, expect the AK to squander its strength and join the Jews in a suicidal uprising. Nor did they have the right to do so. As Woliński aptly suggested, any uprising by the AK at the time would have been “pointless.” ... The only reasonable option open to the AK was to initiate diversionary attacks when the Jewish uprising began. Before the uprising began, the AK apprised the Jews of what it would do in this regard. To have attempted to do anything more would have unnecessarily eroded AK strength, depriving it of the men and resources they needed to take power in Poland at the time of German military collapse and before the Soviets took possession of the country. After all, the purpose of the Polish underground was not only to engage in anti-German conspiracy but also to help the Polish people survive the occupation into the postwar era.

Rowecki, apprehensive that a Jewish uprising in the ghetto might trigger a premature insurgency of the city of Warsaw, which would have invited a slaughter of the entire population, sought to get the agreement of the Jewish Fighting Organization (ZOB) to evacuate from the city with the help of the AK to eastern Poland where they had a better chance to survive than in the environs of the capital. ... In any event, the Jewish resistance fighters refused to leave the ghetto. ...

The fears of Rowecki and the High Command of the AK concerning a premature uprising in Warsaw in early 1943 were not without foundation. When the Poles finally decided to launch their on insurrection in Warsaw more than a year later in August 1944—a far larger enterprise that involved more people and resulted in greater casualties and destruction than the Jewish rising—they found that even in the more favorable circumstances of that time, the Germans could not be overcome without substantial Allied assistance, which never came.

Prior to and during the Ghetto Uprising, there was understandable fear in AK circles concerning the extent of Communist influence in the Jewish resistance movement. ... A well-known apologist [Yisrael Gutman] for the Jews pointed up the problem when he wrote: “The direct relationship between the Communist ranks and the Jews in the ghetto was one of sincere comradeship and was free of the reserve and suspicion that marked the ties with the .. AK.” ...

The Ghetto Uprising that began on April 19, 1943, pitted 1,500 to 2,000 [this number appears to be too high] poorly armed Jewish fighters against approximately 2,100 enemy troops who had heavy weapons, including tanks, armored vehicles, and aircraft at their disposal. This struggle, in Ringelblum’s words, was “between a fly and an elephant,” and the result was a foregone conclusion. Estimates of the strength of the Jewish Fighting Organization (ZOB) and the Jewish Military Union (ZZW) vary: [Yisrael] Gutman says there were 750 [500?] in the ranks of the ZOB and 250 in the ŻZW, while [Reuben] Ainsztein estimates 600–800 in ZOB and 400 in the ZZW. The remainder of the armed Jews who participated in the struggle were wildcat groups which were not part of the ZOB or ZZW. Estimates of their strength differ widely—from a few hundred to 2,000. In any case, if one accepts the estimate that there were 70,000 Jewish inhabitants in the ghetto prior to the uprising, no more than 3 percent of the Jewish inhabitants actually took

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<sup>337</sup> Borwicz is candid about the fact that the Jews themselves made little effort to open and maintain channels of communication with the Poles, and realizes that no European nationality under German occupation would have launched, or significantly participated in, a suicidal uprising at the height of the German occupation. See Michael Borwicz, “Factors Influencing the Relations Between the General Polish Underground and the Jewish Underground,” in Meir Grubsztajn, ed., *Jewish Resistance During the Holocaust: Proceedings of the Conference on the Manifestations of Jewish Resistance, Jerusalem, April 7–11, 1968* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1971), 335, 345.

part in the struggle against the Germans. If one accepts the estimate of Gutman that there were as few as 40,000 Jews in the ghetto before the insurrection, then not more than 5 percent of the Jews participated in combat against the enemy. Thus the overwhelming majority of Jews were not combatants during the uprising; most of them hid in bunkers and remained passive.

The heroic struggle of the Jews evoked sympathy and support among most Poles. The day the Jews launched their insurgency, [Stefan] Korboński immediately radioed London, informing Polish authorities there of what was going on and urging them to speak on the radio to the brave defenders. On April 30, 1943, the government delegate stated: “The Polish nation is right in showing compassion to the persecuted Jews and helping them. We should continue to help them.” [Polish leader General Władysław] Sikorski was preoccupied with the Katyn affair, which resulted in Stalin’s severing diplomatic relations with the London Poles shortly after the Jews rose up in revolt in Warsaw, but Sikorski declared in a radio broadcast on May 5, 1943: “The greatest crime in human history is being perpetrated. We know that you are helping the suffering Jews as best you can. I thank you on behalf of my government and myself. I beg you to give them all possible aid and to resist this terrifying barbarity.”

The Polish clandestine press gave thorough and compassionate coverage to the Ghetto Uprising. SWIT [ŚWIT] broadcast extensive and sympathetic accounts of the Jewish struggle. ...

During the uprising there were several combat actions undertaken by units of the AK and GL [People’s Guard] to help the beleaguered Jews. According to one account, there were twenty-six actions, including combat, supply, and evacuation actions, during the period extending from April 19 through May 10, 1943. ...

The AK and GL also participated in several successful efforts to evacuate the Jews from the ghetto. The AK gave the Jews the plans of the municipal sewer network<sup>338</sup> and put them in touch with Polish guides. According to one high-ranking officer of the AK, “Several dozen Z.O.B. fighters” were rescued by the AK through the sewers and later found refuge in nearby forests. Iwański’s unit helped evacuate thirty-four resistance fighters, about the same time that a GL unit rescued forty Jewish soldiers. Thanks to units affiliated with the AK, as many as 140 ZZW fighters made it out of the ghetto to the Michalin Woods; unfortunately, about one-third of them died in combat later in a nearby forest.<sup>339</sup> There were uncounted numbers of Jews who made it to the Aryan side of the ghetto during these tragic days. Ringelblum noted: “Other Ghetto inhabitants besides the Ghetto combatants also escaped to the Aryan side, though those who were unarmed rarely succeeded. I was told as an authentic fact about a group of sixty Jews who made their way over to the Aryan side across the ruins of a block on Grzybowska Street through barbed wire. People living in this block saw the tragic scene and fortunately no one betrayed these Jews escaping from the Ghetto.” *Żegota* also played a role in moving a unit of ZOB fighters from Warsaw to Cracow and tried to link them up with partisans in that area. Conspicuously absent was Soviet help to the Jews. Since there was an obvious Communist presence in the ghetto, one would have expected something more than an air attack by the Soviet Air Force on the night of May 12, 1943, that ended up killing more Poles and Jews than Germans.

Toward the end of May 1943, Stroop revealed that 56,065 Jews in the ghetto had been “apprehended”; of that number, 19,929 had died in the struggle. He claimed his own losses were only 16 killed and 85

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<sup>338</sup> This is confirmed by ŻZW sources such as Chaim Lazar Litai, *Muranowska 7: The Warsaw Ghetto Rising* (Tel Aviv: Massada-P.E.C. Press, 1966), 147. ŻOB sources, however, complain that the Home Army did not provide them with such plans, which begs the question: Why didn’t the ŻZW share the information with the ŻOB?

<sup>339</sup> This too is confirmed in Chaim Lazar Litai, *Muranowska 7: The Warsaw Ghetto Rising* (Tel Aviv: Massada-P.E.C. Press, 1966), 296, 321: A Pole called Kowalski, the owner of the Wenecja amusement park in Wolska St., allegedly the boss of the local underworld, led a group of some sixty Jews out of the ghetto in the last days of the revolt, but most of them were killed when their hideout in Michalin, on the outskirts of Warsaw, was discovered and surrounded by a heavy police cordon. According to Jewish sources the detection of the Jewish fighters was due to a lack of precautions on their part. See August Grabski and Maciej Wójcicki, *Żydowski Związek Wojskowy: Historia przywrócona* (Warsaw: Żydowski Instytut Historii, 2008), 67.

wounded, a likely downplaying for obvious reasons. But regardless, the Jews of the ghetto had embarrassed the Germans.<sup>340</sup>

**Tomasz Szarota, Polish historian. On Soviet assistance for the ghetto:**

... during the night of 12–13 May [1943] the Soviets did indeed raid Warsaw, as the ghetto uprising was in its dying stages, but instead of ammunition for the fighters, the planes dropped propaganda leaflets with quotations from Stalin’s speeches, and also bombs, which killed mainly Poles.<sup>341</sup>

**Gunnar S. Paulsson, Holocaust historian, on the contribution of the Jewish Military Organization (ŻZW):**

The ŻZW’s contribution to the ghetto uprising has been undervalued by the official historians of the revolt, whose affiliation has been Communist (Ber [Barnard] Mark) and ŻOB (Israel Gutman). ŻOB criticized ŻZW for its method of fighting—that is, defending a prepared position and then retreating through a prepared escape-route, rather than fighting to the death as ŻOB did. ŻZW in turn criticized ŻOB for being political and unprofessional. ŻZW felt that since they had professional military men, they should be in command of the revolt; ŻOB felt that it was a political, not a military revolt and should be led accordingly. That’s why the two groups fought separately.

ŻZW had three separate escape-routes prepared, one under Muranowska Street, one under Karmelicka leading into the courtyard of the Carmelite convent, and one from the church [of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary] on Leszno. The Leszno tunnel apparently collapsed; the Karmelicka Street tunnel was unusable because the Germans used the convent as a staging ground (however, one of the ŻZW fighting groups used it to enter the sewer system and escaped that way), and the Muranowska Street tunnel, leading to an apartment building on the Aryan side, was used by the main combat group.

The Iwański group was connected with the Security Corps (KB), the internal police force of the Polish underground; it consisted of more than just the Iwanski brothers. There is a testimony on file by one of its members, Cezary Ketling, who describes the construction of the Muranowska Street tunnel. Interestingly, he also claims to have seen a ŻZW “warehouse” in Praga (right-bank Warsaw), containing a stockpile of weapons that the Revisionists had been accumulating.

The Revisionists programme included “evacuating” the Jews of Eastern Europe to Eretz Israel, and they prepared themselves before the war to fight in Haganah. This included volunteering for the Polish army so they could get military training, and forming contacts with Polish military men (who had their own reasons for favouring Jewish “evacuation”). According to David Wdowiński [*And We Are Not Saved*], this was the source of their contacts with the Polish underground, Iwanski included. They may have started accumulating weapons before the war; Wdowiński says they collected as many guns as they could during the 1939 campaign, not with the idea of staging an uprising, but for eventual use in Eretz.

The weapons they received from KB were thus only a fraction of their total armament, which included several machine guns and a number of rifles.<sup>342</sup>

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<sup>340</sup> Richard C. Lukas, *The Forgotten Holocaust: The Poles under German Occupation, 1939–1944* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1986), 173–81; Second revised edition (New York: Hippocrene, 1997), 173–81. See also Barbara Engelking and Jacek Leociak, *Getto warszawskie: Przewodnik po nieistniejącym mieście* (Warsaw: IFiS PAN, 2001), 746–49; *The Warsaw Ghetto: A Guide to the Perished City* (New Haven, Connecticut, and London: Yale University Press, 2009), 790–93.

<sup>341</sup> Tomasz Szarota, “The Merry-Go-Round on Krasiński Square: Did the ‘happy throngs laugh’? The Debate Regarding the Attitude of Warsaw’s Inhabitants towards the ghetto Uprising,” in *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry*, vol. 26: *Jews and Ukrainians* (Oxford and Portland, Oregon: The Litman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2014), 493–515, here at 514.

<sup>342</sup> Posted on H-Holocaust Net Discussion List, August 7, 2001. In recent years there has been a belated acknowledgement in the West and in Israel of the accomplishments of the Żydowski Związek Walki (ŻZW), as having played a major role in the ghetto uprising. This heroic record was systematically denigrated and even negated by ŻOB survivors and pro-ŻOB historians. However, there are also many false claims by persons who allegedly belonged to or

**Yisrael Gutman, Israeli historian, on liquidating Jewish agents in the ghetto, on Polish assistance to the Jewish underground,<sup>343</sup> and on the warning received from the Polish underground about the impending German operation against the ghetto:**

After the mass deportation, however, as we have seen, the status of the Jewish police and the *Judenrat* declined, and it was the informers—Jews who maintained contact with the various branches of the German police—who posed the greatest threat to the Ż.O.B. and the broader resistance movement. Though their number was few—no more than a few dozen—they had the potential to cause tremendous damage. ... While living on the “Aryan” side, Ringelblum drew up a “list of people who been shot to death by order of the Jewish Fighting Organization.”<sup>344</sup>

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assisted the ŻZW, both Poles and Jews, about their alleged exploits. According to the most recent studies by Dariusz Libionka and Laurence Weinbaum, the ŻZW allegedly did not come into being until the fall of 1942, at which time it established contact with the Polish People’s Independence Action (PLAN), who helped them secure arms and provided them with military training. On this topic see Moshe Arens, “The Jewish Military Organization (ŻZW) in the Warsaw Ghetto,” *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, vol. 19, no. 2 (Fall 2005): 201–25; Moshe Arens, “The Warsaw Ghetto Uprising: A Reappraisal,” *Yad Vashem Studies*, vol. 33 (2005): 101–42; Moshe Arens, “The Development of the Narrative of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising,” *Israel Affairs*, vol. 14, no. 1 (January 2008): 6–28; Moshe Arens, *Flags Over the Warsaw Ghetto: The Untold Story of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising* (Jerusalem and New York: Gefen, 2011); Marian Apfelbaum, *Two Flags: Return to the Warsaw Ghetto* (Jerusalem and New York: Gefen, 2007). For a critique of these studies see Dariusz Libionka and Laurence Weinbaum, “Deconstructing Memory and History: The Jewish Military Union (ZZW) and the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising,” *Jewish Political Studies*, vol. 18, nos. 1–2 (Spring 2006): 87–104; Dariusz Libionka, “Apokryfy z dziejów Żydowskiego Związku Wojskowego i ich autorzy,” in *Zagłada Żydów: Studia i materiały* (Warsaw: Centrum Badań nad Zagładą Żydów IFiS PAN, 2005), vol. 1, 165–90; Dariusz Libionka, “Apocrypha from the History of the Jewish Military Union and Its Authors,” *Holocaust: Studies and Materials. Journal of the Polish Center for Holocaust Research*, vol. 1 (2008): 147–76; Dariusz Libionka and Laurence Weinbaum, *Bohaterowie, hochsztaplerzy, opisywacze: Wokół Żydowskiego Związku Wojskowego* (Warsaw: Stowarzyszenie Centrum Badań nad Zagładą Żydów, 2011); Israel Gutman, “How History Is Made: The Evolution of the Armed Resistance in the Warsaw Ghetto,” in *Moresnet: Journal For the Study of the Holocaust and Antisemitism*, vol. 5 (Summer 2008): 7–47. For a rebuttal to Libionka and Weinbaum, see Maciej Wójcicki, “Żydowski Związek Wojskowy w getcie warszawskim—synteza,” *Kwartalnik Historii Żydów*, no. 1 (Warsaw: Żydowski Instytut Historyczny, 2006): 35–47; August Grabski, “Czy Polacy walczyli w powstaniu w getcie? Rzecz o polskich sojusznikach Żydowskiego Związku Wojskowego,” *Kwartalnik Historii Żydów*, no. 4 (Warsaw: Żydowski Instytut Historyczny, 2007): 422–34; August Grabski and Maciej Wójcicki, *Żydowski Związek Wojskowy: Historia przywrócona* (Warsaw: Żydowski Instytut Historii, 2008). In particular, Grabski and Wójcicki affirm the assistance provided by Janusz Cezary Ketling-Szemley (“Arpad”) of the Polish People’s Independence Action (PLAN–Polska Ludowa Akcja Niepodległościowa) in obtaining arms and disavow the claim that the Home Army put him on trial before a military court because of the assistance he had rendered to the ŻZW. Libionka and Weinbaum also doubt the existence of Dawid Apfelbaum. However, Anna Ciałowicz, a Jewish historian based in Warsaw, has found confirmation of his existence.

<sup>343</sup> David Landau (code name “Dudek”), a member of the ŻZW, stated in an interview by E. Thomas Wood: “The Bund was always complaining about not getting guns and ammunition from the AK. But...I was speaking to Anielewicz a day, practically, before the uprising. I exchanged with him guns. I did give him my Belgian one, which had fourteen bullets in it, it was an old Belgian gun, getting one gun from him. Because I did have more bullets. The magazine was built in such a manner that you shipped in one against another one like a domino. ... He did give me one from him, and on the stairs of Muranowska 17, he told me, because it was quite a new gun practically, I said, ‘Where have you got it from?’ ‘Oh,’ he said, we got it from the AK, from the Polish side.’ So I can give a sworn statement that they did get the guns, but could be that in very small amounts. Before, they [the AK] did supply, too—not just when the uprising started. ... I remember quite well, quite well, that the AK did give us, did give to ŻZW, I don’t know how many, and I don’t know if that was enough or what was promised...but the rest of it I can assure you.” Posted on Holocaust Net Discussion List, August 8, 2001. (Of course, this begs the question: How many weapons would have been enough?) Thus, it is apparent that Yad Vashem historian Yisrael Gutman’s earlier claim that “The Jewish fighters were also aided by a number of individual Poles and certain factions within the underground, *who disobeyed the orders of the central underground organization*”—a claim he does not repeat in his later works—is untenable. See Yisrael Gutman, “The Battles of the Ghettos,” in Alex Grobman and Daniel Landes, eds., *Genocide, Critical Issues of the Holocaust: A Companion to the Film Genocide* (Los Angeles: Simon Wiesenthal Center; Chappaqua, New York: Rossel Books, 1983). Unfortunately, in the meantime, this false claim has made its way into popular writing on the Holocaust.

<sup>344</sup> Yisrael Gutman, *The Jews of Warsaw, 1939–1945: Ghetto, Underground, Revolt* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1982), 341.

The council [Council for Aid to the Jews–Żegota, operating under the aegis of and financed by the Polish underground] and its Jewish functionaries (Feiner of the Bund and Berman of the National Committee) reached an agreement on transmitting messages and cables abroad through the communications channels of the Polish underground. Thanks to this agreement [and the dauntless Polish couriers], at the beginning of 1943 regular reports and appeals for help from the Jews in Poland began to reach the Jewish representatives in the London-based Polish government-in-exile and Jewish leaders and parties in the United States and Palestine. The Council also contributed in no small measure to informing the Polish population of the state of affairs in the ghetto. It called upon the Poles to aid fugitive Jews and to denounce informers and extortionists.<sup>345</sup>

The members of the Ż.Z.W. met in a tunnel that had been dug from the organization's headquarters at 7 Muranowska Street to the 'Aryan' side of the city, which aided them in maintaining contact and transferring arms into the ghetto. (The tunnel was also to play an important role during the revolt itself, and similar tunnels were dug by different groups of the ghetto population.) The acquisition of arms was accomplished through Polish members affiliated with the A.K. and purchases made by *palatzołka* [placówka, i.e., outpost] workers. We know that the Ż.Z.W. acquired a considerable arsenal of weapons and even obtained a machine gun (which the Ż.O.B. did not have), as well as other automatic weapons. ... Among the important operations credited to the Ż.Z.W. was the attack against the 'Żagiew' group...suspected of being responsible for provocative acts designed to sow confusion and fear within the ghetto...some of its supporters were believed to be Gestapo agents.<sup>346</sup>

The local manufacture of weapons (following formulas obtained from the Poles) also contributed substantially to the arming of the Ż.O.B. Michael Klepfisz received special training in a course run by the military section of the P.P.S. [Polish Socialist Party], and a group of Jews was trained in the use of explosives by the A.K. Once a larger quantity of explosives had been smuggled into the ghetto with the aid of the Poles, the manufacture of incendiary bombs began in special arms workshops. These bombs, which served as a substitute for hand grenades, were put together in a very primitive fashion, but they were used very effectively in the April revolt.<sup>347</sup>

That same day, April 18, the Polish Police was out under alert... The declaration of a state of alert was evidently passed on to circles in the Polish underground, who in turn warned the ghetto underground that an *Aktion* might commence the next day.<sup>348</sup>

[On April 21] ...the group of Ż.Z.W. fighters (including some wounded) left the ghetto through the tunnel [under Muranowska Street]. Members of the K.B. [Security Corps] evidently aided them in organizing their retreat to the "Aryan" side, and they eventually reached a forest between Michalin and Józefów.<sup>349</sup>

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<sup>345</sup> Ibid., 356.

<sup>346</sup> Ibid., 348–49.

<sup>347</sup> Ibid., 345, 357. In the NBC film "Uprising" these events are portrayed without any mention of Polish assistance, and it claimed that a Jewish hospital worker taught the ŻOB how to manufacture explosive devices and implied that the young ŻOB members were well-versed in military tactics and trained themselves.

<sup>348</sup> Yisrael Gutman, *The Jews of Warsaw, 1939–1945: Ghetto, Underground, Revolt* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1982), 369. Thus, it is apparent that reliance on Polish intelligence gathering was crucial for the preparedness of the ghetto fighters, and that they would have been caught off guard again, as in January 1943, if not for the Polish warning. Curiously, no member of the Jewish police, which was still functioning at the time of the revolt (see pp. 372–73), conveyed this information to the Jewish underground. Other Jewish sources are a lot clearer about the crucial role played by Polish intelligence gathering in conveying information about the planned German operations to the Jewish Military Union (ŻZW), who in turn passed it on to the Jewish Fighting Organization (ŻOB). See, for example, Reuben Ainsztein, *The Warsaw Ghetto Revolt* (New York: Holocaust Library, 1979), 96. Some Jews heard the rumours from Polish friends who telephoned them, and were thus able to plan their escape from the ghetto. See Leon Najberg, *Ostatni powstańcy getta* (Warsaw: Żydowski Instytut Historyczny, 1993), 43. Jews who worked outside the ghetto also received warnings from friendly Poles not to return to the ghetto because of the arrival in Warsaw of a deportation company composed of Ukrainians, Lithuanians and Latvians. Ibid., 40.

<sup>349</sup> Yisrael Gutman, *The Jews of Warsaw, 1939–1945: Ghetto, Underground, Revolt* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1982), 377, 420.

The second day of the uprising also witnessed two abortive “support actions” by the Polish underground. A band of fighters from the A.K. attempted to break through the wall on Bonifraterska Street. This operation, under the command of Major Józef Pszenny (“Chwacki”), was conceived as a major action in the A.K. plan to aid the ghetto. ... In the end, the Poles did not complete their mission, since the Polish Police had them under surveillance and called in the Germans. The one mine activated during the assault tore a crater in the road, but the wall remained intact. In the meantime shooting broke out between the Polish fighters and the Germans called to the scene. According to Polish sources, some armed Germans were hit during this clash, while two A.K. fighters (Józef Wilk and Eugeniusz Morawski) fell in the battle and two others were wounded.<sup>350</sup>

On April 27 a group of Ż.Z.W. members and civilians left the building at 5 Karmelicka Street, in the sector of the “shops.” They were aided by a Pole who was evidently a member of the A.K. The more than thirty people in this group wandered around the sewer system until they exited on Grzybowska Street, on the “Aryan” side, and temporarily established themselves in the building at 13 Grzybowska Street, where the Ż.Z.W. contingent that had left the ghetto on the second day of the revolt was located.<sup>351</sup>

On April 30 the long-awaited truck arrived at Grzybowska Street with two men—an A.L. [G.L.] officer named Władysław Gajek (“Krzaczek”), who played a major role in the actions designed to rescue the remaining Jewish [ŻOB] fighters, and the Ż.O.B. liaison Tuvia (“Tadek”) Szajngut. The thirty or so people who mounted the truck were taken to a forest near Warsaw and constituted the core of a partisan unit that was built around the surviving members of the Ż.O.B.

On April 29 Simha Ratajzer (“Kazik” [Rotem]) and Zalman (“Zygmunt”) Friedrich left the ghetto to establish contact with Yitzhak Zuckerman and organize a campaign to rescue the fighters who remained among the ruins. With the aid of a number of A.L. [G.L.] comrades, and particularly the above-mentioned “Krzaczek,” the Ż.O.B. people on the “Aryan” side managed to put together a rescue team. At the dawn of May 8 it started to make its way toward the ghetto through the sewer system... Ratajzer roamed the streets of the ghetto trying to locate the remaining fighters. When he could not find anyone, he returned to the sewer in despair, and the team began to make its way back to the “Aryan” side. While still inside the sewer, however, they came across ten fighters who were trying to escape from the ghetto... [The next day they were picked up at a manhole by a truck supplied by the GL and taken to Łomianki, on the edge of the Kampinos Forest, a short distance north from Warsaw.]

Among the Ż.O.B. fighters who escaped through the sewers were some of the leaders of the Warsaw underground and commanders of the Ż.O.B., including Yisrael Kanał, Marek Edelman, Zivia Lubetkin, Tosia Altman, Yehuda Wengrower, Michael Rosenfield, Hirsch Berlinski, Eliezer Geller, and Tuvia Borzykowski. Altogether, about eight Ż.O.B. fighters were rescued.<sup>352</sup>

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<sup>350</sup> Ibid., 379–80.

<sup>351</sup> Ibid., 421. According to Józef Grynblatt, a member of the ŻZW, the hideout of the ŻZW fighters on Grzybowska Street was betrayed to the Gestapo by Dawid Guzik, a Jewish agent who was involved in the Hotel Polski affair, and not by the radical Polish underground group “Miecz i Pług,” as claimed by Bernard Mark and Marek Edelman. The ŻZW fighters were all killed in a firefight with the Gestapo. See Anka Grupińska, “Rozmowa z Józefem Grynblattem, członkiem Betaru i Żydowskiego Związku Wojskowego w czasie powstania w getcie warszawskim,” *Zagłada Żydów: Studia i materiały*, vol. 3 (2007): 329–30.

<sup>352</sup> Yisrael Gutman, *The Jews of Warsaw, 1939–1945: Ghetto, Underground, Revolt* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1982), 423–25. Yisrael Gutman goes on to allege, without providing any evidence, that afterwards “many” of the Jewish fighters “were murdered by Polish partisans.” Ibid., 425. The deaths of some Jewish survivors from the Warsaw ghetto, who were transferred to a forest near Wyszaków (about 60 kilometres northeast of Warsaw) by Władysław Gaik (“Krzaczek”) of the Communist People’s Guard (GL), has been attributed in Holocaust literature to the Home Army (AK) or alternatively to the National Armed Forces (NSZ). In fact, it was neither. Merdek Growas’ group was in all likelihood murdered by a band of partisans belonging to the radical organization “Miecz i Pług” who later turned bandit and was eliminated by the Home Army. See Dariusz Libionka, “Polska konspiracja wobec eksterminacji Żydów w dystrykcie warszawskim,” in Barbara Engelking, Jacek Leociak, and Dariusz Libionka, eds., *Prowincja noc: Życie i zagłada Żydów w dystrykcie warszawskim* (Warsaw: IFiS PAN, 2007), 475–81. Strangely, the claim it was the work of the NSZ arose despite the fact that Jewish testimonies clearly alleged problems with the AK, and not the NSZ, who had no bases in that area. Holocaust literature fails to acknowledge that, according to Communist sources, the Growas group (under the command of “Ignacy Gajowy”), which contained many former ghetto policemen,

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broke away from the main group and behaved like bandits. See the testimony of Jan Załęski in Jerzy Diatłowicki, comp. and ed., *Żydzi w walce 1939–1945* (Warsaw: Żydowski Instytut Historyczny and Stowarzyszenie Żydów Kombatanów i Poszkodowanych w II Wojnie Światowej, 2009), vol. 1, 214; Testimony of Jan Załęski, Jewish Historical Institute (Warsaw) archive, record group 301, number 1818. Pninah Papier (later Frymer-Grynszpan), one of the Jews transferred from Warsaw to Wyszaków forest, wrote: “It was said that there, the Russian partisans would take us on. ... Captured Russian soldiers who escaped from captivity wandered aimlessly around the forests ... They took weapons from us and ran away. Even Kshatshek [Krzaczek] did not know these woods. Under his guidance, we once raided a police station and got weapons. But it was a failure, because on the next day the Germans started shelling and there were casualties.” Papier continues: “Our entire group was banged around quite a bit over time and was broken up among various partisan groups. A group from Hashomer Hatzair was sent to one partisan outfit and murdered there. Chaim Greenspan (Frimer) went with a group to Czerwony Bor [Bór] and we lost all contact with him. On the paths, the Russians attacked us and took our weapons. We did not know the woods and by the time we familiarized ourselves with them, only 14 of our group of 60 remained alive.” Papier adds to her disjointed account: “But the situation became increasingly complex. The PPR wanted us, the ‘AK’ wanted us. However both accused us of crimes and tried to liquidate us. We fought independently as a group of fighters from the Warsaw Ghetto but being isolated, we saw only one solution, which was to return to Warsaw.” See Pninah Papier, “In the Warsaw Ghetto and in the Wyszaków Forests,” in Aryeh Shamri and Dov First, eds., *Pinkas Novi-Devor (Pinkas Novy-Dvor)* (Tel Aviv: The Organizations of Former Novy-Dvor Jews in Israel, the United States, Canada, Argentina, Uruguay and France, 1965). Other reports of a group of Russian partisans who robbed the villagers are found in Dariusz Libionka, “Polska konspiracja wobec eksterminacji Żydów w dystrykcie warszawskim,” in Engelking, Leociak, and Libionka, eds., *Prowincja noc, supra*, 477. The aforementioned “Krzaczek” or Władysław Gaik (sometimes mistakenly referred to as Gajek), who had arranged for a truck to collect Jewish escapees from the Warsaw ghetto at a Prosta Street manhole and to take them to a People’s Guard base in a forest outside the city, near Łomianki, helped Jews at various times for free and at other times for money. Suspected of being a double agent, “Krzaczek” is said to have lured Jews out of the ghetto to rob and kill them, to have incited the GL command against the Jews, and to have led them on suicidal missions. He was eventually executed, according to one source, by the Germans in the ruins of the ghetto—see *Słownik biograficzny działaczy polskiego ruchu robotniczego* (Warsaw: Książka i Wiedza, 1987), volume 2, 166.

Vladka Meed, a Jewish underground courier who visited the Jewish partisans in Wyszaków forest, attributes most of the killings of Jewish partisans to the frequent German manhunts. (For additional conformation of this fact, see the testimony of Henryk Mściwoj Radziszewski, Archive of the Jewish Historical Institute (Warsaw), record group 301, number 4146.) According to Meed, the deterioration of relations with the local villagers was caused by the activities of a “wild Polish-Ukrainian detachment [who] had appeared in the neighboring woods, plundering the houses and raping the women of the villages. As a result, the peasants lumped all the partisans together as common criminals. Thus their attitude towards the Jewish partisans also changed, and this made the lot of the Jewish fighters even worse than it had been before.” Some Jewish partisans are said to have died at the hands of the “Polish-Ukrainian partisan group.” In fact, as we shall see, this so-called Polish-Ukrainian group were actually Ukrainian guards who had fled from the Treblinka death camp and were taken in by the Communist People’s Guard. Meed does not mention that Jewish partisans also engaged in raids on villages and lays the blame for the downfall of the Jewish partisans in that area on the “treachery of the Polish underground.” See Vladka Meed, *On Both Sides of the Wall: Memoirs from the Warsaw Ghetto* (New York: Holocaust Library, 1979), 161, 179, 219–25, 252.

One group of escapees who, according to Yitzhak Zuckerman, “got instructions to go to the forests” and made their way to Wyszaków were the so-called Pinkert group, former gravediggers in the ghetto. They had amassed considerable wealth in the ghetto and, allegedly, some of them had collaborated with the Germans. The gravediggers, who worked hand in glove with the Jewish ghetto police, were widely considered to be hyenas. They would dig up recently buried bodies and extract gold crowns and fillings and steal jewels and shrouds. See Stanisław Adler, *In the Warsaw Ghetto, 1940–1943: An Account of a Witness, the Memoirs of Stanisław Adler* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1982), 258; Charles G. Roland, *Courage Under Siege: Starvation, Disease, and Death in the Warsaw Ghetto* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 47; Itamar Levin, *Walls Around: The Plunder of Warsaw Jewry during World War II and Its Aftermath* (Westport, Connecticut and London: Praeger, 2004), 98. Zuckerman states that they “also made money by roaming around the streets and abandoned buildings ... even during the first days of the Uprising,” and that “Krzaczek” had “collected ... hundreds of thousands of Złoty, some of it in dollars” from them in the forest. Soon the Pinkert group became notorious for robbing and terrorizing the local population in the vicinity of Wyszaków. See Yitzhak Zuckerman (“Antek”), *A Surplus of Memory: Chronicle of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 397–402. According to Communist documents, the gravediggers so aroused the enmity of their fellow Jews that the latter wanted “to get rid of them at any price and to liquidate them.” Likely, they were eliminated by a joint action of the GL and the ŻOB fighters in their ranks. See Tadeusz Piotrowski, *Poland’s Holocaust: Ethnic Strife, Collaboration with Occupying Forces and Genocide in the Second Republic, 1918–1947* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland, 1998), 102–103; Marek J. Chodakiewicz, Piotr Gontarczyk, and Leszek Żebrowski, eds., *Tajne oblicze GL-AL i PPR: Dokumenty* (Warsaw: Burchard Edition, 1997–1999), vol. 1, 110, n.3, vol. 2, 72–84.

Moreover, the ghetto fighters who had been incorporated into the newly formed People’s Guard (GL) unit in Wyszaków forest were also involved in robbing the local population, even though they had ample funds and didn’t need to resort to

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such measures to survive. They were well-armed to carry out their raids, having received the 28 rifles that the GL had given to the ŻOB when the revolt in the ghetto broke out, but which never made their way to the ghetto thanks to Zuckerman's procrastination. Zuckerman puts forward the following explanation to explain their problems with the local population: "there practically wasn't a single village that was sympathetic to Jews. ... But there was a sympathetic village (even if not the whole village) and there were people in the village who gave our people the necessary help; I supplied them with money; there was no question of money then. One of the things customary with our people was not to take money or property from sympathetic villages, not to steal or use weapons to acquire things, but to pay good money. But if they came on unsympathetic villages ... they behaved differently." In other words, if the Jewish partisans acted decently and paid for food with the money they had, the villagers were considered sympathetic—the rest they plundered mercilessly. See Yitzhak Zuckerman ("Antek"), *A Surplus of Memory: Chronicle of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 397–402, 477–78. Pnina Papier (Grynszpan-Frymer), a ŻOB member, recalled that her commander Hirsch Berlinski, who had abandoned his fighters in the Warsaw ghetto, stole food from the supply that the Jewish partisans had taken during a raid on a farming estate. The decision was made to eliminate Berlinski and the mission was assigned to Greenspan. However, she refused to carry it out. Israel Gutman comments on this: "I tend to think, I'm afraid, that maybe there was something more serious, which she herself is unwilling to talk about, even today." See Vered Levy-Barzilai, "The Rebels Among Us," *Haaretz*, October 11, 2006.

Curiously, as mentioned, the GL accepted into their ranks some Ukrainian guards who had deserted their posts at the Treblinka death camp, and they became a source of problems for the local villagers as well as for their fellow Jewish partisans. When the Soviet army arrived, the Jews denounced them to a Soviet-Jewish commander and they were promptly assembled and executed. The Communist partisans, which included a number of Jewish fighters, were responsible for luring and ambushing a friendly Home Army (AK) commander, whom they killed, and were afterwards justifiably hunted down by the AK, or more precisely by the KN-AK (*Konfederacja Narodu*, a group led by Bolesław Piasecki which had subordinated itself to the AK). This was part of a pattern of treachery that the Soviet partisans, reinforced by Polish Jews in their ranks, had embarked on in the summer of 1943 in the Wilno area, and together with the many violent attacks on the Polish civilian population for food and other provisions, it was the other source of conflict between Jews and Poles during the German occupation. See Tadeusz Piotrowski, *Poland's Holocaust: Ethnic Strife, Collaboration with Occupying Forces and Genocide in the Second Republic, 1918–1947* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland, 1998), 102–103; Marek J. Chodakiewicz, Piotr Gontarczyk, and Leszek Żebrowski, eds., *Tajne oblicze GL-AL i PPR: Dokumenty*, 3 volumes (Warsaw: Burchard Edition, 1997–1999), volume 1 (1997), 108–110, 128–30, volume 2 (1997), 72–84, and volume 3 (1999), 79–82; Leszek Żebrowski, *Paszkwil Wyborczej: Michnik i Cichy o Powstaniu Warszawskim* (Warsaw: Burchard Edition, 1995), 110–17; Piotr Gontarczyk, *Polska Partia Robotnicza: Droga do władzy 1941–1944* (Warsaw: Fronda, 2003), 251–52, 288. See also Władysław Bartoszewski and Zofia Lewinówna, eds., *Ten jest z ojczyzny mojej: Polacy z pomocą Żydom 1939–1945*, Second expanded edition (Kraków: Znak, 1969), 286; Reuben Ainsztein, *Jewish Resistance in Nazi-Occupied Eastern Europe* (London, Paul Elek, 1974), 413; Zivia Lubetkin, *In the Days of Destruction and Revolt* (Israel: Beit Lohamei Hagettaot-Ghetto Fighters' House and Hakibbutz Hameuchad Publishing House, 1981), 259, 305; Shmuel Krakowski, *The War of the Doomed: Jewish Armed Resistance in Poland, 1942–1944* (New York and London: Holmes & Meier, 1984), 133–36; Michał Grynberg, *Żydzi w rejeencji ciechanowskiej 1939–1942* (Warsaw: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1984), 121–22; Roman T. Gerlach, "Ani niedźwiedzi, ani lasu ani nic: Tragedia getta warszawskiego," *Zeszyty Historyczne*, no. 150 (1996): 3–21; Aleksandra Bańkowska, "Partyzantka polska lat 1942–1944 w relacjach żydowskich," *Zagłada Żydów: Studia i materiały*, vol. 1 (2005): 148–64, here at 156, 158, 161, 162; Andrzej Żbikowski, ed., *Polacy i Żydzi pod okupacją niemiecką 1939–1945: Studia i materiały* (Warsaw: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej-Komisja Ścigania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu, 2006), 97–98, 181, 619. On the Soviet assault on Polish partisans in Eastern Poland, see Mark Paul, "Anti-Semitic Pogrom in Ejszyszki? An Overview of Polish-Jewish Relations in Wartime Northeastern Poland," in *The Story of Two Shtetls, Brańsk and Ejszyszki: An Overview of Polish-Jewish Relations in Northeastern Poland during World War II*, Part Two (Toronto and Chicago: The Polish Educational Foundation in North America, 1998), 49–60, 80–125. Conflict was not inevitable. According to one report, two young Jewish men sheltered by villagers in Zdziebórz near Wyszaków were accepted into the Home Army. See the interview with Rev. Zdzisław Król by Krystian Brodacki, "Musimy ich uszanować!" *Tygodnik Solidarność*, December 17, 2004.

The recollections of Jacob Celemenski, a Bund activist and courier for the Jewish underground (ŻOB) who travelled to Wyszaków forest several times, bringing money for the Jewish partisans from the coordinating committee of Bundists and Zionists, contain rather curious information. Celemenski confirms that the Jewish partisans suffered severe casualties because of frequent German raids, and that a group of Russian partisans "sneaked into the villages every night to find what they could, thereby terrorising the local peasants. This gave all partisans, Jewish included, a bad name. Nevertheless, the Jews maintained contact with their Russian colleagues." According to Celemenski, "Conscience kept them [i.e., the Jewish partisans] from looting peasant villages for food; they chose instead large estates or the houses of the wealthy." They were also said to be in touch with Polish Home Army partisans who were billeted among local peasants. Celemenski does not mention the connection of these Jewish partisans to the Communist People's Guard. However, he does note the following: "A group of men, women and children affiliated with the Pinkert funeral parlor [in Warsaw], had paid Polish communists to settle them in the woods. They were faithfully transported,

**Hanna Krall, Polish-Jewish journalist, interviewed Marek Edelman and others for her book *Shielding the Flame*.**

Henryk Wolinski [Woliński] – who has been mentioned in every account of the Ghetto, was the head of the Jewish Department of the Chief Command of the Home Army. He was the liaison between the ZOB (the Jewish

Combat Organization) and the Command of the AK (the Home Army). Among other things, he transmitted to the chief commander the first declaration of the creation of the ZOB, and to Jurek Wilner, Home Army Commander Grot-Rowecki's order subordinating the ZOB to the Home Army. He put the Jews in touch with Colonel Monter and the other officers who later supplied them with arms and taught them how

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but then the organisers stripped them of their money, food and clothing and left them to wander aimlessly. They were helped out by being given some of our own meagre food supply, as well as by a peasant woman who was friendly with one of the Pinkert family.” Reportedly, the woman was his mistress. By the spring of 1944, of the original eighty partisans, only thirty remained. The others had either perished or returned to Warsaw. According to Celemenski, “At this point, both the Russian partisans and some Polish AK insurgents wanted the bedraggled ghetto heroes to join their ranks, and threatened to kill them if their proposal was rejected.” Celemenski and Simha Rathaiser (“Kazik”—later Rotem) were dispatched to Wyszaków forest early in May 1944, by the Jewish Fighting Organization (ŻOB), to come to the aid of the partisans. There they learned that the peasants despise the partisans because the partisans raid them for food. They were also told that the Soviet partisans wanted the Jewish fighters to join them. “Above all, they insisted on the services of two doctors, Zygmunt Skurnik [Zygmunt Skórnik] and Jurek, as well as those of the nurses. They threatened to enforce their will by using their military might if they were refused.” Celemenski goes on to state: “At the same time the Polish fighters from AK, with whom we had a friendlier relationship, also delivered a strong demand for the Jewish fighters to join their forces, with the same ultimatum: if not—bear the consequences. The Jewish partisans, who wanted to belong to neither the Russians nor the Poles, understood that the demands of both groups were coming from higher up the command ... Perceiving the Russians to be more amenable to compromise, I felt it would be best to first talk the Polish AK out of this plan.” Celemenski and “Kazik” then met with the Polish Home Army representative, a local commander and his party to convey the Jewish group's refusal to accede to these demands. The Poles would not budge: Proceedings were cordial, but as far as the Poles were concerned, there was nothing to bargain over, either we joined or we suffered the consequences. The commander expressed, in however comradely a fashion, strict military sentiments. We were going to have to approach the top brass in Warsaw, so we asked for three more days to consider our position. The commander consented. Kazik took pictures with a small camera, ‘for posterity’.” Celemenski and “Kazik” returned to Warsaw the following day. “In Warsaw we reported to our people, who immediately went to the AK headquarters and persuaded the command to rescind the ultimatum about joining their forces.” See Jacob Celemenski, *Elegy For My People: Memoirs of an Underground Courier of the Jewish Labor Bund in Nazi-Occupied Poland 1939–45* (Melbourne: The Jacob Celemenski Memorial Trust, 2000), 167–75. Władysław Koński, a forest ranger, sheltered a group of ŻOB members in the Fidef forest near Wyszaków. One of the ŻOB contacts was Zygmunt Skórnik. See Jan Żaryn and Tomasz Sudoł, eds., *Polacy ratujący Żydów: Historie niezwykle* (Warsaw: Neriton, 2014), 285–86.

On the other hand, Simha Rotem, a representative of the Jewish Fighting Organization (ŻOB), describes these events rather differently and doesn't even mention the Russian partisans. He states that he was assigned to meet representatives of the Home Army in the Wyszaków area “to try to settle relations between the AK and the ZOB in the forest. The ZOB group had called us in and complained bitterly that the AK were conspiring against them, and in fact wanted to destroy them. With Antek's [Yitzhak Zuckerman] intervention, we got in touch with someone from headquarters who was in charge of the area. He gave us data and details about holding a meeting with the AK underground commander, who would settle relations between the two sides. ... Accompanied by several armed companions, I went to the meeting place. ... After a few polite words, I brought up the problem. To reinforce what I said, I introduced myself as a member of the AK in Warsaw, working on their behalf, which was only partly correct, since I ... hadn't been appointed by them. ... I explained that the AK command wanted them to make peace with the ZOB, and I scolded them for what they had done in the past. ... my interlocutors promised to make every effort to ensure the safety of our people. In return, they asked the members of the ZOB not to pester the peasants in the area. In fact, things did calm down in the area for some time, which made our companions feel safer.” Rotem refers to correspondence from Zuckerman from that period which adds yet a different dimension. Reportedly, the AK representative that Rotem met with wanted to check into the affiliation of the ŻOB” group. If it belonged to the Polski Związek Powstańczy (a cryptonym for the Home Army), “they would leave them alone.” Zuckerman's letter goes on to say that the “[communist] PPR treats our group as ‘its own people,’ who have a certain autonomy. Recently, they carried out an armed attack in cooperation (with us). The PPR thinks the group is acting correctly (they don't know about their contacts with the AK) otherwise (it's the AK), they would have destroyed them.” Apparently, Zuckerman wanted to obtain from the AK headquarters a letter confirming the ŻOB group affiliation with the Home Army. See Simha Rotem (“Kazik”), *Memoirs of a Warsaw Ghetto Fighter: The Past Within Me* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1994), 87–95.

to use them. In most cases, the teacher was Zbigniew Lewandowski – ‘Szyna’ – the head of the Technical Research Office of the Home Army. Today Dr. Lewandowski says that only two people from the Ghetto attended those ‘classes’, a man and a woman; at the beginning he was concerned about this, but it quickly became evident that the man was a chemist and he was catching on to everything very fast and passing the information on to his friends in the Ghetto. In addition to instructions, they also received potassium chlorate, to which they could themselves add sulfuric acid, gasoline, paper, sugar, and glue to make ignition bottles. ‘Molotov cocktails?’ I [Krall] ask to make sure, but Dr. Lewandowski huffs: ‘You can’t even compare them. Our bottles were delicate, sophisticated, covered over with this chlorate and wrapped in paper, and the ignition points went around the whole surface. Really, a sophisticated, elegant item: the newest achievement of the Home Army’s Technical Research Office. In general, everything we were giving to the ŻOB – the bottles, the people, the arms – were the best available to us at the time.’<sup>353</sup>

In April 1943 ‘Wacław’ [“Wacław” was Woliński’s code name] delivers to the ŻOB Command Group’s Antek a dispatch from Colonel Monter ‘welcoming the armed section of the Warsaw Jews’ and subsequently informs him that the Home Army will try to break through the Ghetto wall on the side of Bonifraterska Street and the Powązki [Powązki] Cemetery ... meanwhile, on the other side of the wall, two guys lay on the street – they were supposed to have placed 50 kilograms of explosives at the Ghetto Wall. The AK partisan, Zbigniew Młynarski [Młynarski], who used the pseudonym ‘Kret [Kręt],’ says that precisely this was the most horrible – that these two were killed at the very outset and that therefore nobody was going to get the explosives to the wall. ... ‘The street was empty. The Germans were shooting at us from all over [Młynarski said]. The machine gun on the hospital roof that had been shooting into the Ghetto was now shooting at us. Behind us, in Krasinski Square [Plac Krasińskich], an SS company was stationed, so that when Pszeny exploded that mine that was supposed to collapse the wall – instead, it went off in the street and mangled the bodies of our two guys. So we began to withdraw...’<sup>354</sup>

**According to Marek Edelman, the ŻOB command had been making efforts to leave the ghetto at the end of April, but were forced to remain because of circumstances beyond their control:**

That very same night [May 8] two of our liaison men (S. Ratajzer—“Kazik” and Franek) arrived from the “Aryan side”. Ten days previously the ŻOB Command had dispatched Kazik and Zygmunt Frydrych to our representative on the “Aryan side”, Icchak Cukierman [Zuckerman] (“Antek”), to arrange the withdrawal of the fighting groups through the sewer mains. Now these liaison men arrived. Unfortunately, it was too late. For one thing, the ŻOB was already almost non-existent, but even the remnants that had remained could not all be taken out of the ghetto together.<sup>355</sup>

**Simha Rotem (“Kazik”), a member of the Jewish Fighting Organization, went to the Aryan side during the ghetto uprising with Zygmunt Frydrych to make contact with members of the Polish underground:**

Walking swiftly and strenuously—we were weak after several days without food—we reached Anna’s [Wachalska] house and rang the doorbell. Anna, the widow of a PPS (Polska Partia Socjalistyczna, or Polish Socialist Party) activist, knew Zygmunt well and greeted us warmly. Zygmunt introduced me and we were joined by Marysia Sawicka. The women suggested that we wash and change our clothes. This was my first shower since April 18, an opportunity not only to wash my body but also to restore my soul.<sup>356</sup>

*They were fed, and the same day, or perhaps the next, the sisters’ nephew, 19-year-old Stefan Siewierski, sent them to Feigl Peltel, better known in the literature of the Holocaust as Vladka Meed. Anna used her dead daughter’s papers to secure a Kennkarte for her. Yad Vashem recognized the sisters as Righteous Gentiles. Their flat was used by Bund and ŻOB people for meetings, they found and rented*

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<sup>353</sup> Hanna Krall, *Shielding the Flame: An Intimate Conversation with Dr. Marek Edelman, the Last Surviving Leader of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising* (New York: Henry Holt, 1986), 93–94.

<sup>354</sup> *Ibid.*, 96.

<sup>355</sup> Marek Edelman, “The Ghetto Fights”, in *The Warsaw Ghetto: The 45th Anniversary of the Uprising* (Warsaw: Interpress, 1988), posted online at <<http://www.english.upenn.edu/~afilreis/warsaw-uprising.html>>.

<sup>356</sup> Simha Rotem (“Kazik”), *Memoirs of a Warsaw Ghetto Fighter: The Past Within Me* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1994), 45.

*apartments in their own names for Jews in Warsaw. Maria Sawicka worked as a courier for the Jewish underground between Warsaw and Częstochowa. Stefan Siewierski brought out of Warsaw several Jews dressed as Germans to join the partisans. He was arrested on his way back, and shortly after that, executed. "Kazik" described the tasks of ŻOB couriers thus:*

1. maintaining contacts with people in the camps and ghettos, preserving this contact between them and free Jews—who were in touch with the Polish underground, and knew what was going on in the world and on the front—was important and encouraging.
2. delivering money and financial assistance to various branches of the organization.
3. delivering forged documents.
4. delivering underground publications.
5. supplying weapons to places where uprisings were planned and prepared.

ŻOB couriers carried these missions out throughout the occupation. ... I was often helped in this by our women couriers and by Gentiles who were willing to risk their lives on such errands.

Some of these whom I sent on these missions were Luba, Irena, Marysia Sawicka (a Pole), the Jewish Marysia (called "Blue-Eyed Marysia"), Inka, a Jewish fellow named Nowak, a Polish policeman (whom I have already mentioned) named Adamczyk, sometimes the young son of Felek Ruszczak, and others.<sup>357</sup>

We gave him (Antek) a report on the situation in the Ghetto and explained the issue of helping. ... Those who showed up to cooperate were Stefan (Sawicki), Kostek (Krzaczek), Anna (Wąchalska), Stefan P. (Pokropek). Their help was decisive for us and we are grateful for it.<sup>358</sup>

In August or September 1943 a survivor from the Ghetto came to us on the Aryan side. ... The man told about a group of some twenty Jews who were alive and hiding in the debris.

An acquaintance of mine, a Polish policeman, agreed to help rescue the group from the Ghetto on a fixed date. Since policemen were allowed to walk around after curfew, we could get one of our men into Ghetto in the evening. We decided that if anyone asked whom he was taking, he would answer that he arrested the man—or men—and was taking them to the nearest police station. Things went according to plan.

We managed to get the group out and the policeman brought them to a temporary hiding place at Mokotowska Street 1, where I met them.<sup>359</sup>

*"Kazik" also used Adamczyk to deliver weapons to the Jews in Częstochowa, a town some 275 kilometres southwest of Warsaw:*

One of the first missions I assigned to him was to transport weapons (pistols and bullets) to the group of Jews, thus largely reducing the danger. He performed his task loyally and efficiently. He didn't do it for money but solely for humanitarian motives. The only payment he got from us were travel expenses and money for the work day he gave up for our errand.

I maintained contact with Adamczyk until the Polish Uprising. Then he disappeared and we lost track of him.<sup>360</sup>

*"Kazik" had arranged for some surviving ghetto fighters to be picked up by the People's Guard at a Prosta Street manhole, and taken to Łomianki, a village on the edge of the Kampinos Forest, a short distance north from Warsaw.*

We knew it wasn't an ideal hiding place, but we didn't have anything better. [We were aided by one of the

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<sup>357</sup> Ibid., 67–68.

<sup>358</sup> Ibid., 164.

<sup>359</sup> Ibid., 63.

<sup>360</sup> Ibid., 71–72.

local peasants, Jan Sikorski, who sought no reward for his help, which meant so much to us then.] My efforts were now devoted mainly to seeking another hiding place for the fighters, and soon afterward they were moved, some to forests around Wyszaków, others to clandestine apartments in and around Warsaw. I also tended to those who came out of the Ghetto hungry, almost naked, and in bad health. We had to provide them with clothing and, especially and immediately, with food. ...

We got in touch with a peasant in the village of Lomianki whom we called “Chlop” (Polish for peasant) [his name was Sikorski], a good-hearted and warm soul who agreed to supply food to our comrades. We would give him money and he would buy food in various places so as not to make the shopkeepers suspicious. In the evening he would hitch his horse to his wagon and bring them the food. He always added something to drink, sometimes hot soup he made himself. With the help of his children, he would bring the food and soup to the forest, and would warn the group when he heard that the Germans were planning a search. The situation deteriorated and we were afraid the Gestapo would find us out. During their stay in Lomianki, one of our comrades died of weakness and perhaps from the effects of poisoned gas he had breathed in the sewers. He had to be buried on the spot, and the peasant lent them spades and other tools to dig the grave. ...

After making contact with the Polish underground, which gave orders to its members in the field, most of the fighters were taken to the forest in Wyszaków. You couldn't be on the Aryan side without identity documents. While the comrades were in Lomianki, the Polish underground had helped me get a *Kennkarte* (the identity card issued by the Germans in the Generalgouvernement which replaced the Polish identity documents). I was sent to the office of a church in one of the Warsaw suburbs. I went to the clerk and requested a birth certificate (which was required in order to receive the *Kennkarte*). They had coached me in what to say. This was a document whose real owner, someone my age, was no longer alive. The clerk looked at me sharply and spat out: “Funny world—one person dies and another walks around and impersonates him.” I didn't say anything. He asked my address, the names of my parents, and the other details of questionnaires everywhere in the world. I answered briefly and finally got the birth certificate.

From there I went to the registration office where Poles worked with Germans and Poles, and submitted a proper request for a *Kennkarte*. My fingerprints were taken like any other Polish citizen's. At the end of this process I had a *Kennkarte* in the name of Antoni Julian Ksiezopolski [Książopolski]—a common name among the Polish aristocracy. At the same time I got a forged *Kennkarte* from the Polish Underground in another name. I kept the document with the name Ksiezopolski with me, while the other one was kept at “home” in case of trouble. [They also gave me an *Arbeitskarte* (proof of employment). (This final sentence is found in the Polish translation of this book, but omitted in the English version.—Ed.)<sup>361</sup>

*After the failed Warsaw Uprising of August 1944, which ended at the beginning of October of that year, the remaining ŻOB fighters again needed the help of the Polish underground to escape falling into the hands of the Germans. This time it was the Home Army that came to their rescue. Dr. Stanisław Śwital, a member of the Home Army, assembled a team of hospital workers to spirit fourteen Jewish ghetto fighters out of their hide-out in a cellar of an abandoned home in then-evacuated Warsaw under the noses of the Germans. Among those rescued in November of that year were Marek Edelman, Yitzhak Zuckerman, Tuvia Borzykowski, and Zivia Lubetkin, who wrote the following testimony:*

The Germans began to remove the entire Polish population from the capital. The city became empty. There was neither food nor water. After wandering for hours on the banks of the Vistula, we found a camouflaged cellar where we hid for six straight weeks. One day our friends who had found refuge in the vicinity of Warsaw learned that we were still alive and that we were in constant danger from the enemy. They organized a delegation of the Polish Red Cross which entered Warsaw on the pretext that it had to remove from the destroyed city the wounded and those ill with typhus. The members of the Red Cross came with stretchers and those of us with distinctive Jewish features were bandaged and placed on them. The rest of

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<sup>361</sup> Ibid., 59–61. See also Simcha Rotem “Kazik”, *Wspomnienia bojowca ŻOB* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 1993), 73–75.

us wore Red Cross tags and helped like any member of the team to remove the “ill”. ... We finally succeeded in leaving. Fate, apparently, wanted us to survive.<sup>362</sup>

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<sup>362</sup> Lubetkin.net, posted online at <wysiwyg://49/http://homepages.msn.com/BondSt/lubetkin/promise.htm>. See also Tuvia Borzykowski, *Between Tumbling Walls* (Tel Aviv: Beit Lohamei Hagettaot/Ghetto Fighters' House and Hakibbutz Hameuchad Publishing House, 1972), 220–23; Yitzhak Zuckerman (“Antek”), *A Surplus of Memory: Chronicle of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 552–55. The story of Dr. Stanisław Śwital, who was in charge of the hospital where the rescue was organized, can be found in Richard C. Lukas, *Out of the Inferno: Poles Remember the Holocaust* (Lexington, Kentucky: The University Press of Kentucky, 1989), 159–61. After their rescue by the Home Army in December 1944, Yitzhak Zuckerman, Marek Edelman and other ghetto fighters, lived in Grodzisk, a small town outside of Warsaw, under the protection of the Home Army, who even delivered to them secret mail from overseas. The charlatan Roman Grunspan takes credit for, among other obvious fabrications, the task of locating Yitzhak Zuckerman in a Warsaw bunker after the Red Army “liberated” that city in January 1945. Grunspan’s memoirs parade around under the deceptive title, *The Uprising of the Death Box of Warsaw: A Documentary Book about Jewish and Christian Lives under Nazi Rule in the Warsaw Ghetto and in the Non-Jewish Region of Warsaw* (New York: Vantage Press, 1978), 201. Grunspan also claims to have been part of a three-member hit squad called “Parasol” (Umbrella), who assassinated the notorious henchman General Franz Kutschera, the head of the SS and police for the District of Warsaw, on “Aleja sucha” (sic) in Warsaw. The book even contains a photograph showing a crude superimposition of a hand holding a machine gun with the following caption: “To the right you can see the punishing hand of the author with the machine gun that gunned down the Nazi lunatic.” (Ibid., 172, 177.) However, that well-known operation carried out by the Home Army bears little resemblance to Grunspan’s tale: “On February 1, 1944, after weeks of planning, a platoon of Pegasus [*Pegaz*], commanded by twenty-year old Bronisław Pietraszkiewicz, attacked Kutschera’s car on Ujazdowskie Avenue. In an operation lasting scarcely a minute, Kutschera and several other Germans were killed, but four of the attackers, including, Pietraszkiewicz, were killed.” See Richard C. Lukas, *The Forgotten Holocaust: The Poles under German Occupation, 1939–1944* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1986), 92; Norman Davies, *Rising ‘44: The Battle for Warsaw* (London: Macmillan, 2003), 197–98. Avrom Feldberg is another survivor of the Warsaw ghetto who spins a tale of heroism along the same lines. Allegedly a member of the Jewish Fighting Organization who joined up with unnamed Polish partisans, Feldberg claims to have headed a team of five Polish partisans who executed the unnamed chief of police on the Aryan side in the Fall of 1942. See Alvin Abram, *The Light After Dark II: Six More Stories of Triumph After All Hope Had Gone...* (Toronto: AMA Graphics Incorporated, 2000), 132–33. (Interestingly, he also states that he later met a Jewish woman who told him that the police chief was sheltering her in the basement of his house.) However, the execution of the “Blue” police chief Aleksander Reszczyński, who cooperated with the Home Army’s counter-intelligence and was not looked on favourably by the Germans, was carried out by a four-member squad of the People’s Guard (Gwardia Ludowa) on March 5, 1943 in circumstances that bear little resemblance to those described by Feldberg. See Adam Hempel, *Pogrobowcy kłęski: Rzecz o policji “granatowej” w Generalnym Gubernatorstwie 1939–1945* (Warsaw: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1990), 321–23, 383–87. Another blatantly charlatan memoir is that of Maurice Shainberg, who allegedly descends from “a family of prominent rabbis.” Shainberg claims to have been the guard of ŻZW leader Paweł Frankel yet knows little about how that organization started and how it interacted with ŻOB; gets the date of the creation of the Warsaw ghetto wrong by a year; carries out all sorts of daring missions (e.g., the bombing of a Nazi conference in the spring of 1941 in which 38 German police are killed); participates in a meeting with the Polish underground in a non-existent church; thinks that Żagiew, a Jewish collaborationist organization, was “three pro-German Polish groups,” and makes the fantastic claim that ŻZW killed about 600 (sic) “members of these anti-Semitic organizations”; does not know that the Jewish police took part in the great deportation of the summer of 1942 and thinks that it occurred in the spring of 1943; claims that it was not the Jewish police and Jewish Gestapo agents, but rather “Poles...watched over our every step, keeping the Germans informed about our activities and hiding places.” After the Soviet “liberation” Shainberg claims that he joined the intelligence section of the Polish army, quickly rose to the rank of major, and became the personal aide of Colonel Zaitsev, the Soviet military intelligence head in Poland. In that latter role, he allegedly penetrated Zaitsev’s secret diary containing detailed information about the Katyn massacre and entrusted the pages he copied from the diary to a Resurrectionist priest in Poznań by the name of Kwiatkowski. See Maurice Shainberg, *Breaking from the KGB: Warsaw Ghetto Fighter...Intelligence Officer...Defector to the West* (New York, Jerusalem, and Tel Aviv: Shapolsky, 1996), 70–99, 165–74. Shainberg is not mentioned in Chaim Lazar Litai’s detailed monograph about the ŻZW, *Muranowska 7: The Warsaw Ghetto Rising* (Tel Aviv: Massada–P.E.C. Press, 1966). It has been established that there was no Rev. Kwiatkowski in Poznań at the time, and although Shainberg claims to have attained the rank of major before April 1944 (p. 155), the photograph of a Polish military certificate from May 1946 gives his rank as second lieutenant (“podporucznik”). Several of the photographs reproduced in the book appear to have superimposed images. Furthermore, Shainberg’s assumed named (Mieczysław Prużański) does not appear in the Ministry of Public Security’s personnel files for 1944–1947 under any rank. See Andrzej Krzysztof Kunert and Rafał E. Stolarski, “*Bijące serce partii*”: *Dzienniki personalne Ministerstwa Bezpieczeństwa Publicznego*, volume 1: 1945–1947 (Warsaw: Rada Ochrony Pamięci Walk i Męczeństwa, and Adiator, 2001), 235ff. Another patent forgery is Jacob Bierman’s blatantly racist tract, *The Penalty of Innocence: From the Diary of Yakoiv Zeiv Weiler* (New York, Washington and Hollywood: Vantage Press, 1973), which is “Dedicated to

Truth and Justice” and of course purports to be “a true story.” Yakoiv, who supposedly worked closely with the Communist Polish People’s Party, claims to have “thrown quantities of weapons, ammunition, hand grenades [sic]...over the high ghetto fence,” and after the fighting, Yakoiv’s boys “waited at every hole to help” thousands of Jews escape from the ghetto.” Near the ghetto wall he allegedly saw “mobs of Poles...fighting with each other over the dead Jewish victims. They had, with their sharp knives, cut the faces to make it easier to pull gold crowns from the victims’ mouths.” *Ibid.*, 87–89. No serious Holocaust historian has advanced such charges. Another somewhat less obvious, but undoubtedly fabricated memoir is Martin Gray (with Max Gallo), *For Those I Loved* (Boston and Toronto: Little, Brown and Company, 1972), which is translated from the French. The author claims to have joined the Jewish Fighting Organization in March 1943, and, with his excellent knowledge of the maze of sewers, was able to smuggle into the ghetto weapons and munitions acquired through contacts he made with the People’s Army and Home Army. He then became a fighter of herculean proportions who, in his spare time, led women, children and old men, and fighters too, through the sewers to safety. *Ibid.*, 198–211. Gray’s alleged exploits have come under close and devastating scrutiny by Polish historians, and were even sharply rebuked by Yisrael Gutman. For a summary of the debate which appeared in many Polish newspapers including *Gazeta Wyborcza*, see Jerzy Robert Nowak, *Spory o historię i współczesność* (Warszawa: von borowiecky, 2000), 359–61. A 145-minute French-language film based on Gray’s memoirs *Au nom de tous les miens*, directed by Robert Enrico and starring Michael York, was released in 1983 and an English-language U.S. version in 1990. Another memoir that is full of startling revelations that no serious historian has endorsed is that of Jack Eisner, who founded the Warsaw Ghetto Resistance Organization in 1962. In his memoir, *The Survivor* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1980), Eisner claims that he joined an unaffiliated underground group led by Artek Milner, and that through his arms supplier he managed to acquire for one thousand dollars a brand-new Schmeisser machine gun stolen from a SS depot. Eisner challenges the widely held contention that arms were difficult to obtain in the ghetto: “Until then, I’d been an armed smuggler with a bunker to my credit, like many others in the central ghetto who also had guns and bunkers.” Eisner’s gang of smugglers also controlled two tunnels into the ghetto, the “tolls” from which brought in enormous revenues. In the course of just one day they collected “more than one hundred thousand zlotys—enough to buy half a dozen Molotov bottles and several guns.” One of his daring missions was, allegedly, the execution of the Jewish police officer Kronenberg. This is probably a reference to Firstenberg, a high-ranking officer in the Jewish ghetto police who was executed by the ŻZW in February 1943. See Chaim Lazar Litai, *Muranowska 7: The Warsaw Ghetto Rising* (Tel Aviv: Massada–P.E.C. Press, 1966), 196. Eisner also claims that in January 1943, on the third day (sic) of fighting, he and his friend Artek Milner opened fire on the German soldiers who had entered the ghetto to round up Jews for deportation and carried out a routing that the fledgling ŻOB could only dream of: “Artek whispered, ‘It’s now or never,’ and aimed his Schmeisser, spraying a barrage of bullets. Within seconds, half a dozen Germans were lying in their own blood. The panicked horses began to gallop in all directions. Rudy and I opened fire with our pistols.” These events are not confirmed by any historians. It was after that exploit that Artek decided that his group of more than forty members should join forces with the ŻZW. Contrary to what Eisner writes, all reliable sources confirm that the Polish flag was hoisted alongside the Jewish (Zionist) flag by the ŻZW on April 19, 1943, the first day of the revolt. In his diary, SS Brigadeführer Jürgen Stroop, the German general who quelled the revolt, wrote: “The main Jewish battle group, mixed with Polish bandits, had already retired during the first and second day to the so-called Muranowski Square. There, it was reinforced by a considerable number of Polish bandits. Its plan was to hold the Ghetto by every means in order to prevent us from invading it. The Jewish and Polish standards were hoisted at the top of a concrete building as a challenge to us. These two standards, however, were captured on the second day of the action by a special raiding party.” A Polish eyewitness who lived outside the ghetto walls, across the street from ŻZW headquarters, describes the event in her memoir: “On the roof just across, we could see people walking around, all carrying arms. At a certain moment we witnessed a unique sight—they hoisted a blue-and-white flag and a red-and-white flag. We burst into cheers. ‘Look! Look! The Jewish flag! The Jews have captured Muranowski Square!’ ... We embraced and kissed one another.” See Alicja Kaczyńska, *Obok piekła: Wspomnienia z okupacji niemieckiej w Warszawie* (Gdańsk: Marpress, 1993). David Landau, a leading ŻZW member, organized the hoisting of the Polish flag, asking his Polish colleague Jan Kostański to bring it into the ghetto. See David J. Landau, alias Dudek, Janek and Jan, *Caged: A Story of Jewish Resistance* (Sydney: Macmillan, 2000), 216, 222–24. See also Władysław Bartoszewski, “The Martyrdom and Struggle of the Jews in Warsaw under German Occupation 1939–43,” in Władysław Bartoszewski and Antony Polonsky, eds., *The Jews in Warsaw: A History* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell in association with the Institute for Polish-Jewish Studies, 1991), 339; Barbara Engelking and Jacek Leociak, *Getto warszawskie: Przewodnik po nieistniejącym mieście* (Warsaw: IFiS PAN, 2001), 736–37; *The Warsaw Ghetto: A Guide to the Perished City* (New Haven, Connecticut, and London: Yale University Press, 2009), 779–80; Marian Apfelbaum, *Retour sur le ghetto de Varsovie* (Paris: Odile Jacob, 2002), 195. Eisner, however, maintains that a Polish flag was raised only after the Home Army had complained to the ŻZW, and that because of his knowledge of the sewers acquired as a smuggler, he was the one who was sent to escort the Home Army messenger who brought the flag to the ghetto on April 20, in somewhat different circumstances. See Jack Eisner, *The Survivor* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1980), 141–81. August Grabski, a historian at Warsaw’s Jewish Historical Institute, also questions the veracity of Eisner’s memoir, as well as Maurice Shainberg’s memoir *Breaking From the KGB*. See August Grabski, “Czy Polacy walczyli w powstaniu w getcie? Rzecz o polskich sojusznikach Żydowskiego Związku Walki,” *Kwartalnik Historii Żydów*, no. 4 (2007): 423. (Eisner’s book was turned into a play written by Susan Nanus and

### **Bernard Goldstein, Bund activist, on the escape of Jewish fighters from the beleaguered ghetto:**

The ranks of the fighting organization were already decimated. Burned by fire, suffocated by smoke and gas, torn by cannon shell, the small remnant was beginning to look for ways to escape from the inferno.

The only way into or out of the ghetto was through the underground sewer system which carried the filth of the great city. The sewers extended in a complicated network under all of Warsaw. To crawl through the sewers without a very good idea of their geography meant certain death—suffocation or drowning in the vile stream. Many had already tried this method of escape and had met a horrible death in the treacherous labyrinth.

The Polish underground helped us. It provided several men who had worked in the sewer system. They mapped the routes through which it would be easiest and safest to reach a particular rendezvous in the ghetto. In addition, we made contact with several smugglers who had used the sewers as an avenue of commerce. Kazik [Shmuel Ratheiser, later known as Simha Rotem] went back into the ghetto with them on the rescue expedition.

On May Day, the ghetto fighters undertook a one-day “offensive.” In the evening they held a roll call of their decimated ranks and sang the “Internationale.”<sup>363</sup>

### **Henryk (Mordecai Khaim) Zylberberg, a commander of a ŻOB unit, acknowledges that he and 29 other Jews were rescued by a Home Army detachment under extremely perilous conditions:**

On 30 May [1943] Zylberberg and a few survivors of his group went down the manhole at the corner of Smocza and Nowolipie Streets and sought a way out of the ghetto through the sewers. ‘I shall not try to describe what it was like, I could not do it,’ he recalled twenty-seven years later. ‘Thousands of corpses were rolling in the swirling current of the storm-water sewers. In every branch of the sewers there were Jews waiting for a miracle that could never happen. The people would join up in groups, then would separate again and attempt singly to reach the surface. Many times we ran from the gas-grenades which the Germans kept dropping through the manholes. Those who could no longer escape died. We had no food, not even a crumb of bread. Driven on by hunger we crept out at night and like rats we scratched under the rubble in search of a crust of bread or a potato peel. I was gradually losing my strength, my body was covered with ulcers, my legs, encrusted in excreta and other filth, looked as though they were leprous.

On their twelfth day in the sewers, when Zylberberg and his companions were lying in the sludge waiting for their end, there appeared a Jew with a torchlight who told them that he had come to guide them to safety. They followed him and altogether thirty Jews emerged through the manhole at the corner of Pańska and Wronia Streets to find themselves surrounded by fifteen SS men armed with submachine-guns. Convinced that they had been trapped, the Jews climbed into three lorries which drove them across the Vistula into [the suburb of] Praga, where they turned north. When the lorries were stopped by the gendarmes at a road-block on the outskirts of Praga, Zylberberg heard the SS men tell them in German that they were taking the Jews to their place of execution. The three lorries bypassed Legionowo and drove on

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performed on Broadway in March 1981; a film, *War and Love*, directed by Moshe Mizrahi, screenplay by Abby Mann, produced by Jack Eisner, and released by Cannon Group, 1985; and an opera, *Jacek*, written by David A. Yeagley (2000.) Another memoir that falsely attributes an accomplishment of the Zośka battalion of the Home Army to the communist People’s Guard/Army, namely, the liberation of several hundred foreign Jews from the so-called Geśiówka concentration camp in Warsaw (and not Pawiak as the author claims) on August 5, 1944, is Yehuda Nir, *The Lost Childhood: A Memoir* (San Diego, New York and London: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1989), 132, 159. Beyond any serious consideration of integrity is Leon Uris’s novel *Mila 18*, which is a thinly disguised anti-Polish diatribe replete with historical inaccuracies and of dubious literary merit. Interestingly, historian David Engel has exposed the role of Warsaw’s Jewish Historical Institute in manipulating and censoring Cael Perchodnik’s memoir, published under the title *Am I a Murderer?: Testament of a Jewish Ghetto Policeman* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press/HarperCollins, 1996); the manuscript of Perchodnik’s memoir, which was located in the Yad Vashem archives, has been published in its uncut version by the Karta Centre in Warsaw in 2004.

<sup>363</sup> Bernard Goldstein, *The Stars Bear Witness* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1950), 198.

to the Chotomowski forest, where they stopped and the Jews were told to get out. They did so expecting to be shot, but heard one of the SS men say in Polish: 'You are free. We have saved you.'

The SS men turned out to be members of the Home Army. Zyberberg and his companions were divided into groups of four, placed with peasant families and ultimately incorporated in Home Army partisan detachments. Zylberberg found himself in Jan Gutek's detachment, which operated near Kraśnik in the Lublin region. In July 1944 Zylberberg and several of his companions were ordered to make their way to Warsaw, where they were given the task of transporting arms to the various points where the Home Army were to pick them up on the outbreak of the planned rising. Zylberberg fought through the uprising and thanks to his 'Aryan' looks and false papers escaped summary execution when the Polish insurgents surrendered to the Germans.<sup>364</sup>

**Historian Jörg Böttger responds in H-Holocaust Net Discussion List (April 12, 2002) to charges that the remnants of the Jewish Fighting Organization did not join the Home Army during the Warsaw Uprising of August 1944 because of the attitude of the Home Army:**

Steve Paulsson writes (April 9): "The Jews therefore joined these groups [Communist AL and Soviet partisans, JB] when they could, out of necessity and not out of political sympathy. (Thus Antek Zuckerman writes that the Jewish platoon which he headed in the 1944 Warsaw Uprising first offered itself to the AK, and only after the AK leaders 'hemmed and hawed' did they join the AL)."

Huh? I beg to differ. Zuckerman is quite adamant that he had no intention to join the AK. His negotiations with the AK concerned the publication of a proclamation by the remnants of the ZOB to join the uprising per se. The negotiations were not about "Antek" and his men joining the ranks of the AK.

Zuckerman writes: "It [the proclamation, JB] was published by the Communists and later by the AK in all the underground press that appeared at the start of the Uprising. WHEN I WROTE IT, I KNEW I WOULD FIGHT IN THE RANKS OF THE COMMUNIST ARMIA LUDOWA. But my public responsibility told me that the declaration had to be general and had to call on the Jews to join the fighters for democratic, free Poland without mentioning which side ... Although I KNEW MY PLACE WAS IN RANKS OF THE AL, I also carried on negotiations with the AK ..." (Yitzhak Zuckermann ("Antek"), *A Surplus of Memory: Chronicle of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising*. Translated and edited by Barbara Harshav, Berkeley, Cal.: University of California Press, 1993, p. 523).

Zuckerman continues: "I didn't say who to join. Although WE HAD DECIDED TO JOIN THE AL, I wasn't authorized to act as a private person or as a representative of a small group" (Ibid., p. 527).

Zuckerman makes it quite clear where his political sympathies lie: "I'm talking now about the Communists of 1944 ..., I can't forget how lucky I was to have been put with that group of Communists in those days – idealists, loyal to the socialist idea, genuine Polish Communists" (Ibid., p. 523).

To the AK commanders in Warsaw "Antek" was no stranger since he had already dealt with them before and during the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising 1943. His political affiliation and sympathy were obviously well-known by August 1944. "Antek" was a member of the left-wing Zionist Hashomer Hatsa'ir youth organization which had a decidedly pro-Soviet orientation. This didn't exactly endear him to the AK.

It is plausible that perhaps political factors were more important for joining or being admitted to a Polish underground formation, at least during the Warsaw Uprising 1944. Some support for this argument comes from the background of Jews who participated in the fighting.

One source lists the names of 25 ZZW (Jewish Military Union) veterans of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising who fought and died in the ranks of the AK. There are no ZZW veterans listed as having served and died in the ranks of the Communist AL. At the same time, six ZOB (Jewish Fighting Organization) veterans are listed, who fought and died in the ranks of the AL, while another four ZOB veterans are named, who served

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<sup>364</sup> Reuben Ainsztein, *Jewish Resistance in Nazi-Occupied Eastern Europe* (London: Paul Elek, 1974), 664–65.

and died in the ranks of the AK (see Benjamin Meirtchak, *Jewish Military Casualties in the Polish Armies in World War II*, Vol. IV, Tel Aviv: Association of Jewish War Veterans of Polish Armies in Israel, 1997, pp. 62–80).

While far from conclusive, these figures suggest that Jews' political sympathies did in fact play a role which Polish underground formation they wanted to join or which one would accept them more readily into its ranks.

**Marysia Warman (née Bronisława or Bronka Feinmesser), a Jewish activist and liaison officer on the “Aryan” side of Warsaw, married to Zygmunt Warman, a ŻOB fighter who escaped from the ghetto together with Yitzhak Zuckerman and Marek Edelman:**

When the Polish uprising broke out, Antek [Zuckerman] and Marek [Edelman] went to the higher officers in the Polish [Home] army and asked them to take us as a group, as the Jewish Fighting Organization. They refused. “Individually, please come, but not as a group; we won’t give you any commander.” So they went to the *Armia Ludowa*, and they took us as a group. They gave us a commanding officer.<sup>365</sup>

*The allegation that the Home Army showed antipathy toward Jews during the Warsaw Uprising of 1944 has been debunked by ŻOB leader, Yitzhak Zuckerman, who wrote: “When I was in the Old City, I didn’t sense anti-Semitism even once, neither from the civilian population nor from the AK; the opposite was true.”<sup>366</sup> The Home Army could not afford the risks associated with creating ethnically-based units within its forces, especially in light of the mass desertion of Jews from General Władysław Anders’s Army in Palestine. Defections to the Communist side would have exposed the Polish underground to incalculable harm as it was becoming abundantly clear that the Soviet forces were re-entering Poland in the role of occupiers. Given Zuckerman’s contacts with the Communist PPR (Polish Workers’ Party) and AL (People’s Army), the decision not to inform the ŻOB remnants of the planned uprising, or to accept them into the ranks of the Home Army as group, was entirely justified. Moreover, the Jewish Fighting Organization (ŻOB) had also refused a merger with the Jewish Military Union (ŻZW) on the eve of the revolt in the ghetto, and insisted that ŻZW members join the ŻOB individually, and not as a group.*

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<sup>365</sup> See the testimony of Marysia Warman in Brana Gurewitsch, ed., *Mothers, Sisters, Resisters: Oral Histories of Women Who Survived the Holocaust* (Tuscaloosa and London: The University of Alabama Press, Tuscaloosa and London, 1998), 288. See also Gustaw Kerszman, *Jak ginąć, to razem* (Montreal: Polish-Jewish Heritage Foundation, 2003), 123. Reuben Ainsztein, on the other hand, contends that the Home Army Command flatly told Zuckerman that “there was no room for his men in the Home Army.” See Reuben Ainsztein, *Jewish Resistance in Nazi-Occupied Eastern Europe* (London: Paul Elek, 1974), 674. Zuckerman, however, states: “I negotiated with the AK and they put me off with hemming and hawing,” without specifying regarding what or giving any time frame. Zuckerman makes it clear that, when he carried on these negotiations, “I knew I would fight in the ranks of the Communist Armia Ludowa.” See Yitzhak Zuckerman (“Antek”), *A Surplus of Memory: Chronicle of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 523, 534. (This version is frequently repeated in secondary sources, for example, Matthew Brzezinski, *Isaac’s Army: A Story of Courage and Survival in Nazi-Occupied Poland* (New York: Random House, 2012), 331–32.) Simha Rotem “Kazik”, a close colleague of Zuckerman’s, is equally vague: “the AK disappeared, leaving us in doubt about whether to join them. Some of our members argued against cooperating with the AK because it was an extremely right-wing organization ... In the end Antek [Zuckerman] and I were assigned to negotiate with the command of the command staff of the AL [Armia Ludowa—People’s Army] in Starówka (the Old City.)” See Simha Rotem (“Kazik”), *Memoirs of a Warsaw Ghetto Fighter: The Past Within Me* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1994), 120. For yet another version see Basia Temkin-Bermanowa, *Dziennik z Podziemia* (Warsaw: Twój Styl and Żydowski Instytut Historyczny, 2000), 208. Jews from rightist organizations also experienced difficulties joining the leftist Jewish Fighting Organization. As Sol Rosenberg recalls, “Sol then told Anielewicz that he was a member of the Betar youth movement and was anxious to become involved in the underground. Anielewicz said that Sol would be welcome as an individual, but that disagreements about the organizational structure of the resistance movement made it impossible for the ŻOB to accept Betar into the organization.” See Richard Chardkoff, *Sol’s Story: A Triumph of the Human Spirit* (Nashville, Tennessee: Cold Tree Press, 2002), 87.

<sup>366</sup> Yitzhak Zuckerman (“Antek”), *A Surplus of Memory: Chronicle of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 561.

**Ruth Altbeker Cyprys recalls the fate of the Jews during the Warsaw Uprising of August 1944 and after the expulsion of the Warsaw populace to holding or transit camp in Pruszków:**

During this period ... I made the acquaintance of a young Jew. He told me that he had been imprisoned with a large group of Jews at Pawiak, and had been freed by the insurgents who had given them lodging and clothing. He had parted with that group of Jews after a few days and had come to stay with a good friend in Noskowski [Noakowski] Street where he was given food and shelter. 'Now I have everything, but what is going to happen when, God forbid, the uprising fails and the Germans come back? Look at my features, my terrible Semitic features. Have I regained my freedom only to lose it so soon for ever? I must confess that I pray daily for the success of the uprising not for my sake, but because of the insurgents who set me free. Even if my freedom is short-lived, I shall remain eternally grateful to the boys for the weeks of freedom that I have had. I give almost all my food to our soldiers. ... Practically every night I keep watch with them, happy to be allowed to share their jokes and keep company with them.'<sup>367</sup>

The Wehrmacht soldiers who had given themselves up, or other captured in battle, were taken prisoner, but SS men, police, and all kinds of informers and spies were shot. ... The German prisoners were directed to work. Once I went to a house in Krucza Street to have a look at the Germans in captivity. I saw them doing some light work. They were well treated and guarded by two boys who also protected them from possible attacks by the population. We were not even allowed to spit in their faces. At the same time the Germans would shoot any Polish soldiers without mercy, even civilians taken prisoner, denying them the right of combatants.<sup>368</sup>

Militia were being established from which all 'dark blue' policemen were banned. The courts started functioning properly. Offices of the insurrection were situated in Krucza Street and the Security Committee had its headquarters in our neighbourhood. ... Courts started dealing with offences, even those relating to pre-insurrection times. Germans, Volksdeutsche and Poles were tried for all kinds of transgression. ... Sentences were published in newspapers. ... The 'dark blues' were sentenced for their zeal in serving the occupying forces and some death sentences were passed for Jew-baiting, taking advantage of their weakened position in hiding, and betraying them to the Germans. It is obvious that only very few cases were brought to the attention of the Court, but all were dealt with under the full severity of the law.<sup>369</sup>

We were to be sent to a staging camp at Pruszkow [Pruszków], and from there—God only knew where. ... The Germans, as they stood on both sides of the long rows of tired people who were bent under the weight of heavy rucksacks, were taking care that no one slipped away to hide. We could now see the full extent of Warsaw's ghastly devastation. Women and children, the old and the crippled, had to march ahead, always quickly, while our German guards laughed to burst.<sup>370</sup>

We started to get ready for the journey first thing in the morning and I noticed a group of people standing nearby. One look at them convinced me that they were Jews. Only such a big gathering of people and the prevailing upheaval could explain the fact that they had remained undetected until now. All the informers, blackguards and other scoundrels had too many troubles of their own at present to remember the Jews.<sup>371</sup>

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<sup>367</sup> Ruth Altbeker Cyprys, *A Jump For Life: A Survivor's Journal from Nazi-Occupied Poland* (New York: Continuum, 1997), 208–209.

<sup>368</sup> *Ibid.*, 194–95.

<sup>369</sup> *Ibid.*, 195–96.

<sup>370</sup> *Ibid.*, 213.

<sup>371</sup> *Ibid.*, 215.

## An Assessment of Polish Help

### **Marek Edelman, the last surviving ŻOB leader of the Warsaw ghetto revolt:**

“We didn’t get adequate help from the Poles, but *without their help we couldn’t have started the uprising*. ... You have to remember that the Poles themselves were short of arms. The guilty party is Nazism, fascism—not the Poles.”<sup>372</sup>

### **David Wdowiński, a leader of the ŻZW:**

The command of Irgun Zvai Leumi [Jewish Military Union] was in contact with the Polish underground movement. For a short time they sent us military instructors to teach our people. Our fighters had to learn how to handle various weapons and hand grenades. Besides this they learned how to build barricades, how to behave in street battles, how to defend the bunkers. The contact with the Polish military organization made it possible for us in the beginning to buy weapons, hand grenades, Molotov cocktails, munitions. Later we had our own sources of supply. Besides, one could always obtain these things in limited quantity from German soldiers who for money and gold would do anything.<sup>373</sup>

### **Marian Fuks, Jewish historian, writing in the Bulletin of the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw:**

It is an absolutely certain fact that without help and even active participation of the Polish resistance movement it would not have been possible at all to bring about the uprising in the Warsaw Ghetto.”<sup>374</sup>

### **Stefan Korboński, Chief of Civil Resistance in German-occupied Poland:**

A question arises, Should the Home Army have helped the Jews with more than arms, diversionary actions, and efforts to open up escape routes for the Jewish fighters? The answer must be negative. Not even the entire strength of the Home Army in Warsaw could have saved the ghetto or brought victory. There was considerable concentration of German army, SS, and gendarmerie forces in Warsaw and vicinity, which would have been sent into action immediately, with but one possible outcome—a crushing defeat of both the Jewish Fighting Organization and the Home Army. An uprising in the ghetto could have been more than a heroic and tragic gesture of protest and self-defense only if the Soviet army could have come to the rescue in time to win victory. The only other alternative would have been a total disarray of the German armies. But in April 1943, the Soviets were hundreds of miles away from Warsaw and the German armies showed no signs of decay, fighting doggedly on all war fronts.

Towards the end of the Ghetto Uprising, there began an organized evacuation of the Jewish fighters. ... Jewish fighters escaped through tunnels dug from cellar to cellar and through the city sewers. Members of friendly Polish organizations, such as the Socialist Fighting Organization, awaited them on the Aryan side with trucks, which transported the rescued Jews to the woods near Warsaw.<sup>375</sup>

### **Henryk Woliński, in charge of the Jewish office in the Bureau of Information and Propaganda of the High Command of the Polish Home Army:**

It is untrue that the Home Army, especially officers designated to cooperate with the Jewish Fighting Organization, had no interest in extending assistance to the Jews and were in fact anti-Semitic. The help of the Home Army to the Jews was truly self-sacrificing.

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<sup>372</sup> Sheldon Kirshner, interview with Marek Edelman, “Warsaw Ghetto commander forgives tormentors,” *The Canadian Jewish News* (Toronto), November 9, 1989.

<sup>373</sup> David Wdowinski, *And We Are Not Saved* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1985), 81–82.

<sup>374</sup> Marian Fuks, “Pomoc Polaków bojownikom getta warszawskiego,” *Biuletyn Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego w Polsce* (Warsaw), (January–March) 1989, volume 149, number 1, 44.

<sup>375</sup> Stefan Korboński, *The Jews and the Poles in World War II* (New York: Hippocrene, 1989), 60, 62.

That was also the opinion of Jurek (Arie Wilner) and Borowski (Adolf Berman). I deny that anti-Semitism was the reason for the limits on military aid given to the Jewish Fighting Organization by the Home Army. The help given by the Home Army was small in relation to the needs of the Jewish Fighting Organization, but it is necessary to measure the possibilities available to the Home Army at the time. They were not great. Arms were in short supply even for the soldiers who fought in the Warsaw Uprising of 1944.<sup>376</sup>

**Dr Andrzej Sławiński, Warsaw Ghetto Uprising and The Polish Home Army – Questions and Answers:<sup>377</sup>**

In 1940 nearly 500,000 Polish Jews were herded into a sealed off part of Warsaw by the real rulers of occupied Poland – the German Police and SS. The inhabitants of the Ghetto existed under conditions of indescribable squalor, with hunger and disease taking their daily toll.

In 1942 the SS commenced their programme of “Resettlement of the Warsaw Jews to the work camps in the East”. By the end of 1942 there were only about 70,000 left in the Ghetto.

On obtaining convincing evidence from the Polish Underground that deportations were in fact to the death camps, the Jewish Combat Organisation (ŻOB – Żydowska Organizacja Bojowa) decided to put up a fight against the SS and Police attempting to liquidate the Ghetto.

**Q.:** Did Warsaw Ghetto Fights have any chance of success?

**A.:** Not in a military sense. It was a heroic act of defiance but in essence a suicidal one. This was a situation frequently encountered in Nazi occupied Poland: when facing certain death many members of the resistance opted for dying in combat. In the words of one of the leaders of the uprising, Marek Edelman: “The uprising was doomed to fail. It was more a symbolic gesture to make the world recognise us.” (1)

**Q.:** The Polish Nation did not rise to help the Ghetto Fighters. Why?

**A.:** A national uprising is only possible when a liberating army is approaching the site of the intended armed action (and even then not always so, as exemplified by the fiasco of the Warsaw Uprising of 1944!). Under any other circumstances it would amount to a futile and costly gesture. It must also be remembered that the Poles themselves were under occupation, with major restrictions put up on them by the enemy occupiers.

**Q.:** Was the Warsaw Garrison of the Home Army, consisting at the time of several thousand members, capable of offering help to the Ghetto Fighters?

**A.:** A military intervention was not possible for reasons stated in the answer to the previous question, but also because at the end 1942 and at the beginning of 1943 the Warsaw Home Army Garrison was virtually unarmed.

**Q.:** How can a resistance organization be of any use if it is not armed?

**A.:** The Partisan Units of the Home Army operating in the forests of Eastern Poland were reasonably well armed, albeit with light weapons only. The units in large cities, such as Warsaw, were preparing for possible future national uprising. For their weapon training frequently the same single pistol, one rifle or one submachine gun was used to train dozens or even hundreds of soldiers. There were only few weapons available. One small unit used for special armed actions was well equipped with weapons, but many thousands remained unarmed. It was envisaged that when the time for an uprising came, weapons would be obtained from parachute drops by the allies.

**Q.:** Could the Warsaw Home Army help the Ghetto Fighters in any other way?

**A.:** Yes, by supplying them with weapons. However there were severe limitations to this course of action. To quote Marek Edelman again: “The resistance movement of the Poles was just beginning at the time (1942). There was nothing unusual in the fact that our efforts to obtain arms and ammunition ...encountered major difficulties.” (2)

**Q.:** Did the Home Army supply the Ghetto Fighters with weapons?

**A.:** There was a reluctance by GHQ Home Army to provide arms to the Warsaw Ghetto due to the fact that there were so few arms, and that providing the Ghetto from the meagre supplies would diminish further the armed potential of the Home Army without enabling the Jewish insurgents to be successful. An accurate picture can be obtained from someone who was there and was one of the leaders. Marek Edelman states:” At the end of December (1942) we received our first transport of weapons from the Home

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<sup>376</sup> Richard C. Lukas, ed., *Out of the Inferno: Poles Remember the Holocaust* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1989), 178.

<sup>377</sup> Internet: <<http://www.polishresistance-ak.org/5%20Article.htm>>.

Army. It wasn't much – there were only ten pistols in the whole transport – but it enabled us to prepare for our first major action". (3)

"At the end of January (1943) we received 50 larger pistols and 55 hand grenades from the Home Army Command". (4)

"By now (March 1943) every partisan was equipped, on average, with one pistol (and ten to fifteen rounds for it) four or five hand grenades, four or five Molotov cocktails. Two or three rifles were assigned to each 'area'. There was just one machine gun in the entire Ghetto". (5)

Apart from help given to the Jewish Combat Organisation (ZOB) by the Home Army, another Warsaw Ghetto resistance group, The Jewish Military Union (ZZW), obtained supplies of arms, ammunition and explosives from two Polish organisations linked to the Home Army: the Security Corps (KB) and the Polish People's Independence Action (PLAN). Some supplies were also sent by the communist People's Guard (GL).

**Q.:** Was this help effective?

**A.:** The Ghetto Fighters certainly needed more weapons and ammunition. However taking into account scarcity of weapons in the Home Army and the great difficulties and danger involved in transporting them through Warsaw and into the Ghetto (by then completely sealed off by German Police and their Lithuanian auxiliaries) the efforts of the Home Army to help the Jewish insurgents should be regarded as creditable. The effectiveness of this help was summarized by M. Edelman: "... be German casualties: more than one thousand were killed or wounded and tremendous material losses were suffered by the German war production enterprises that were set on fire and destroyed by the Jewish Resistance Organization". (6)

Although theirs was in the main a lone fight, the Ghetto insurgents were given help, perhaps of a more symbolic nature, through several combat actions at the Ghetto during the Uprising initiated by the Home Army and Peoples' Guard. Both of these organisations eventually undertook several successful rescue missions of the surviving Ghetto fighters.

In the past there have been conflicting reports of the extent of help given to the Jewish insurgents by the Home Army. Marek Edelman's account stands out as factual and objective and should be regarded as reliable.

Footnotes:

(1) Marek Edelman, *The Ghetto Fights* (Bookmark, London 1990), p. 28.

(2) *Ibid.*

(3) *Ibid.*, p. 69.

(4) *Ibid.*, p. 71.

(5) *Ibid.*, pp. 73-74.

(6) *Ibid.*, p. 94.

### **Profiles of members of the Polish underground who came to the aid of the Jewish insurgents:**

"There were always some Polish bandits among them," Gen. Jurgen Stroop, commander of the German forces during the Warsaw ghetto uprising, wrote to his superiors in Berlin. ...

As for the Christian Poles Stroop found fighting with the Jews, he refers to them as "bandits, criminals, terrorists and sub-humans." His troops found them in the sewers, in dugouts, shooting from balconies, and from outside the ghetto. For months they had smuggled arms and counterfeit identification in preparation for the outbreak.

Several of these "bandits" now live in Canada. Their "criminal" activities included hiding Jews, supplying them with false I.D.s, smuggling arms and joining in this most uneven and tragic battle. Their stories were unknown for decades. Some Christian fighters were identified by Dr. Zdzislaw Przygoda, a Toronto resident who was saved by such bandits and who worked with them saving others.

Two other "bandits" were recognized by the Yad Vashem Holocaust Authority and awarded medals as Righteous Among Gentiles. All were members of the Polish Underground and most also belonged to Zegota, the Catholic-based Council for Aid to Jews. ...

In the months preceding the uprising, Poles helped the Jews obtain and smuggle in arms. This was no simple matter in a country completely cut off from the Allies. The Polish Home Army was ill-equipped. Parachute drops were rare. That left stealing and buying guns from German soldiers.

“Buying guns was possible,” said Jerzy Rozwadowski who was a reserve air force officer when war broke out and now lives in Toronto [Rozwadowski has since died]. “Particularly after the German defeat at Stalingrad, when morale and discipline declined.”

Rozwadowski, who had been captured by the Germans, escaped and joined the underground. His brother-in-law, in charge of a unit fabricating counterfeit documents, provided him with a pass to go in and out of the Warsaw ghetto. There he maintained contact with a fellow reserve officer, Mieczyslaw Tomkiewicz, who asked him to purchase arms and ammunition for the Jewish Underground. Rozwadowski bought them and made about a dozen drops in designated homes outside the ghetto.

“I never asked questions,” said Ludwik Buczynski, another Polish fighter. “My wife was executed by the Gestapo and I just wanted to do my job.” His jobs included blasting a hole in the ghetto wall when the uprising started. Covered by two others, he attached the plastic explosive, set the detonator, and ran.

Rozwadowski, too, was assigned for actions at the ghetto wall. His unit was ordered to destroy a German machine gun post. There were people milling about, allowing them to approach unnoticed. Then it was fast. They killed the Germans and got away before reinforcements came.

Jerzy Burski picked up pistols and grenades in appointed places in the Old Town, entered the ghetto through a hole, and turned them over to a man who identified himself with a code. He didn’t know the real names of the men in his unit, or the men in the ghetto. To ask would have been very suspicious.

The youngest of the “bandits” was Lech Halko, who was 17 when he joined the underground and Zegota in January, 1943. Recruited by his uncle because he had a “Semitic” appearance, he was to take counterfeit documents to the ghetto by linking up with Jewish work details returning from a factory. Once inside, he changed clothes and walked out using a pass of a municipal waterworks employee.

“In the ghetto, I met Itzhak Cukierman [Yitzhak Zuckerman], who was a member of the Jewish Fighting Organization,” said Halko. “He asked me to buy him a pistol and some ammunition. My uncle thought that was too risky for me, so he bought them himself and I took them in.” ...

Guns were hard to get, but so was money. Stanislaw Milczynski, who now lives in Metro, and his AK (Home Army) sabotage unit hijacked a shipment of furs destined for the German troops on the Russian front, sold the furs, and with the profits, bought weapons for the ghetto.

There were a lot of people involved, from the furrier who tipped them off down the line to those who stored, handed out and acquired the weapons and smuggled them in. They smuggled three Jews out when they got the weapons in and all three joined the sabotage unit. With pride Milczynski said, “They fought with us in the Warsaw uprising (by the Poles against the Germans in 1944.)”

Stanislaw Karlinski escaped from a Soviet prison in the eastern zone and joined the AK in his home town of Piotrkow [Piotrków]. This ghetto was one of the first set up, and his family was already active in helping the Jews there. They owned a large farm and were smuggling in food to their friends. Karlinski’s unit produced false documents and they helped many Jews live as “Aryans.” He also persuaded some to risk escape and join the partisans in the forest. He is still in touch with those who survived this way.

In 1943, he was assigned to Warsaw. There he smuggled grenades and other weapons entering the ghetto dressed as a streetcar conductor. Danger was normal. “Every day, there were random killings and street roundups.” Three of his friends got caught. One was shot, the other two died in concentration camps.

Edward Kemnitz, a member of the Underground [the National Armed Forces, a right-wing partisan organization] and Zegota, was the son of a Warsaw industrialist whose family maintained contact with

former business associates in the ghetto. For some time, they were able to conduct business for them. “We processed their raw materials in our factory and then transferred the proceeds and food to them in the ghetto” he explained.

The Kemnitz family supplied papers for false identities for their friends. They took some into their home in Warsaw, others to a country estate, and some were placed with friends. After he joined Żegota, his help extended to others whom he didn’t know. The entire family risked execution. “Of course we were afraid, but we could not bear what we saw. My father was a devout Catholic and this was an offence against man and God.”

When Kemnitz was asked to get arms for the ghetto, he already had a source—a heavy-drinking German soldier. From him, he bought boxes of guns and ammunition. Concealed in his father’s delivery wagons, they were delivered with consignments of metal products legally entering the ghetto. ... Both he and his late father were honored by Yad Vashem in 1983.<sup>378</sup>

**Lech Halko, a member of Żegota who smuggled weapons into the Warsaw ghetto, interviewed by the *Canadian Jewish News*:**

Halko, a retired architect [from Toronto], risked life and limb to assist the besieged Jews of the Warsaw ghetto. Over a two-month period in 1943, on the eve of the heroic uprising, he smuggled false identity papers, arms and ammunition into the ghetto.

But Halko is not the only Pole living in Canada who was actively involved in providing assistance to the Jewish underground in preparation for the ultimately doomed April 19 revolt. Others in the network were Ludwik Buczyński [Buczyński], Jerzy (George) Burski, Stanisław Karlinski [Stanisław Karliński, *nom de guerre* “Burza”], Stanisław Milczyński [Stanisław Milczyński] and Jerzy Rozwadowski, according to the Canadian Polish Congress.

Halko, 68, was drawn into this humanitarian enterprise when his uncle, Lubomir Konarski, a member of the Home Army (Armia Krajowa or AK), the largest Polish underground movement, asked him to volunteer. The Konrad Żegota [Żegota] committee, formed by the Polish government-in-exile in Britain to aid and rescue Jews, was looking for young volunteers of Semitic appearance, like Halko, who could slip in and out of the ghetto unobtrusively. He agreed to become a courier because he hated the German occupation of his homeland and felt that it was his Christian duty “to do the right thing.”

Perhaps Halko was also motivated by his widowed mother’s example of selflessness. In 1940, after the ghetto was sealed, she invited her old Jewish friend, known as Aunt Regina, to live with the family in their crowded Warsaw apartment. Aunt Regina stayed with the Halkos and their sundry relatives for about three years. Shortly after the outbreak of the general Warsaw uprising in August 1944, Aunt Regina, whom Halko describes as “a precious person,” was struck by a German shell and killed instantly.

In March 1943, eight months after his uncle had contacted him, Halko received instructions to carry out his first assignment. He was told to wear weathered clothing and a white armband with a blue Star of David, so that he could blend in with a column of Jewish workers returning home after a day’s work at a German workshop outside the ghetto. He was to smuggle a wad of false identity documents into the ghetto and bring back fresh photographs of Jews who would be smuggled out at a later date. He would leave the ghetto

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<sup>378</sup> Irene Tomaszewski, “Poles helped Jews in uprising,” *The Toronto Star*, April 16, 1993. Six personal accounts describing the participation of Poles in the ghetto revolt appeared in the May 1, 1993 issue of the Toronto weekly *Głos Polski*, under the title “Polacy, którzy pomagali Żydom przed i w czasie Powstania w Getcie.” Edward Kemnitz’s story is found in Richard C. Lukas, *Out of the Inferno: Poles Remember the Holocaust* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1989), 87–89; and in Irene Tomaszewski and Tecia Werbowksi, *Żegota: The Council for Aid to Jews in Occupied Poland, 1942–1945* (Montreal: Price-Patterson, 1999), 116–18. At a ceremony commemorating the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Warsaw ghetto uprising, held in Toronto on May 9, 1993 and sponsored by The Polish-Jewish Heritage Foundation, the following persons were awarded by the government of the Province of Ontario for their “heroism and altruism” in bringing help to the ghetto fighters: Ludwik Buczyński, Jerzy Burski, Lech A. Halko, Stanisław Burza-Karliński, Stanisław Milczyński, Jerzy Rozwadowski, and Zdzisław Przygoda.

using his own ID, which identified him as an employee of the municipal waterworks, and with a counterfeit German pass authorizing entry into the ghetto.

He had no problem getting past German sentries, who were afraid of contracting lice and diseases rampant in the ghetto. But he ran afoul of Jewish policemen inside the ghetto. They beat him mercilessly because he did not have a bribe in the form of smuggled food. “They preyed on people coming into the ghetto,” he recalls. “They were brutal. There was a terrible hunger in the ghetto, and people behaved like animals.”

He would have been pummelled to death had he not been rescued by a man who, he believes, was Yitzhak Zukerman [Zuckerman], a leader of the Jewish Fighting Organization (ZOB). ... He spent three days in the ghetto, recovering from his wounds. He could not very well leave with bruises on his face. Halko was cared for and fed and given new clothes. Before his departure, Zukerman asked Halko to deliver arms the next time. He gave Halko a sum of money for that purpose, and informed him that a revolt was imminent.

Halko returned to the Aryan side of Warsaw without incident, only to discover that he was infected with lice. On his second foray into the ghetto, Halko smuggled in more false identity papers as well as a Walther P-38 pistol, two clips and bullets that had been purchased from a drunken German soldier. This time, he was not bothered by the Jewish policemen, having paid them off with bagels. However, he was stopped by SS men, who assumed he was Jewish. He was ordered to pull down his trousers. After a cursory examination, he was let go.

On his third and final trip to the ghetto, just weeks before the uprising, he smuggled in a few pistols and grenades donated by the AK. “It wasn’t very much, but we didn’t have much,” he says. Halko used a safe route through the sewers. If he had been caught, he would have been shot like a mangy dog.

To this day, he is impressed with the desperate courage and dignity of the Jewish fighters he met, albeit fleetingly, in the ghetto. “They knew that this was the end, that the Germans would liquidate them.” In his recently-published memoirs, *A Surplus of Memory*, Zukerman claims that, except for 49 pistols and some grenades, the AK refused to help arm ZOB. Halko takes issue with this accusation. “We didn’t have sufficient arms for our own soldiers, and yet we shared it with Jews.” He adds, “If anti-Semitism had really been a factor in AK thinking, no arms would have been smuggled in. It wasn’t a token supply. It was all we could afford.” ...

In Halko’s view, the average Pole sympathized with the Jewish fighters. “There was a deep sadness. It was a tragedy. No decent human being could be happy.”<sup>379</sup>

### **Tadeusz Borowski, a member of the Home Army who smuggled weapons into the ghetto and trained Jewish underground members for combat:**

“Irek” was his code name. But most people knew him as Tadeusz Borowski. Only other Polish resistance fighters knew him by his pseudonym, “Irek”. As 2nd Lieutenant in the Polish Home Army (Armia Krajowa), “Irek” was responsible for men with names like: “Szczur”, “Ludwik”, “Jurek”, and “Chawcki”. He took his orders from “Waligóra”, a.k.a. Major Jan Tarnowski, commander of “Wola” Region in Warsaw.

Wearing either stolen German uniforms or just plain street clothes, these homemade soldiers were the Polish Underground—the resistance fighters of Nazi-occupied Poland. Fathers, grandfathers and young boys fought side by side with only red and white armbands for identification. They came together to defend, as best as they could, their beloved homeland. They fought with Polish pistols and German

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<sup>379</sup> Sheldon Kirshner, “Polish Catholics helped Warsaw Jews,” *The Canadian Jewish News* (Toronto), August 26, 1993. A similar fate met Jan Nowakowski, who smuggled underground publications, food, and even weapons into the ghetto at the behest of his father, a member of the Polish Workers’ Party. Nowakowski was apprehended by the Jewish police at the beginning of April 1943 and handed over to the Germans. Fortunately, the German gendarme into whose hands 14-year-old Jan Nowakowski was delivered had more compassion than his Jewish counterparts: after receiving a stern lecture and a kick, he was thrown out through a gate to the ghetto. See Tadeusz Bednarczyk, *Życie codzienne warszawskiego getta: Warszawskie getto i ludzie (1939–1945 i dalej)* (Warsaw: Ojczyzna, 1995), 230.

“shmyzers”, automatic sub-machine guns, which they either stole or bought from the Nazis. They concealed their precious cache in cemeteries and hospital grounds.

The city sewers became their staging area, their Headquarters and their passage ways. The younger ones—teenagers worked as liaisons, running through the sewers smuggling supplies and passing cryptic messages and orders.

“One night,” says Borowski, “we got the order that our armbands must be switched before dawn from our left arms to our right arms.” The Germans had infiltrated their ranks. “In the morning we were instructed to shoot anyone wearing an armband on their left arm.”

Through the wet stinking sewers they moved like rats in sewage that was sometimes chest high. “We would have to dismantle our weapons,” says Borowski, “and carry them along with our ammunition over our heads so they would not get wet.”

In one almost comic military operation, Borowski, who speaks perfect German, dressed himself in a stolen Tirolean mountaineer’s outfit—complete with a feathered hat. With the help of three of his men, who followed discreetly in a “borrowed” German automobile, Borowski befriended three Nazi police officers. The charlatan then coyly maneuvered the German officers into a quiet cull-de-sac where his three partners were waiting.

By day Borowski worked within the walls of the Warsaw Ghetto as an engineer at the Tyton Fabryka [tobacco factory] at Dzielna 62. Taking advantage of his freedom to pass through the well-guarded gates without suspicion, Borowski smuggled weapons, ammunition and forged documents inside for the Jewish Underground. He also worked with the Jewish Underground secretly preparing selected Jewish men and boys for combat.

“Żegota” was the cryptic code that became the word for the Polish Council of Assistance to the Jews (Rada Pomocy Żydom) established with the approval of several Polish organizations on December 4, 1942. Headquartered in Warsaw, Żegota had branches in several cities ... throughout Poland. Żegota aided the Jews both inside and outside the ghettos by providing forged documents, food, lodging, medicine and financial support.

Tadeusz Ireneusz Borowski, Sr. was only one of several thousand Polish resistance fighters. With his ability to speak four languages fluently and his cunning talent for the art of war, he became a hero many times over. For his active participation in the Warsaw Ghetto uprising, and for his part in smuggling arms into the Ghetto, Borowski was awarded the Cross of Valour and the Cross of Merit with Sword. In 1948, he received the highest medal of honor to be bestowed on a Polish soldier, the Virtuti Militari Class V. Even 40 years later, Borowski flew to Warsaw where he was, again decorated with medals, including one inscribed, “To the Heroes of the Warsaw Ghetto 1940–1943.”

Not all of Borowski’s heroism was of a military type. There is a Jewish woman alive today in a coastal town in California because she was rescued by “Irek” when she was five years old. He placed the young Jewish girl with a Polish Catholic family who also had a young daughter. Each month he sent money to the family for her support. The two girls lived and played together as sisters until the Catholic girl, Basha [Basia], was killed during a Soviet air attack in June 1942. Basha’s parents gave the Jewish girl their daughter’s identity. This new name and paperwork enabled the new “Basha” to elude the Nazis.

Pursued by the Soviet Political Police (NKVD), even after the war, Borowski left Poland in 1950. He emigrated to the United States with his wife, Helena, who had worked as a double agent in a German submarine base for the Polish Intelligence. They raised three children while Mr. Borowski worked as a design engineer for Lockheed. Today, Borowski, now a widower, lives in Southern California with his dog, “Lady”. A true Polish patriot even in his 80’s, Borowski is still active in Scouting and the Polish community. His home is a museum of books, photos, medals, and Polish folk art. He is unabashedly proud of his wartime accomplishments but his feelings of pride are clouded by the neo-criticism of occupied Poland and the Polish people during the Holocaust. “I risked my life to save lives,” says Borowski, in a

proper Eastern European accent. "I'm not looking for glory. I just want people to know the truth [about] what happened."<sup>380</sup>

*The Poles also helped to rescue Emanuel Ringelblum, who had returned to the Warsaw ghetto for various reasons after he had found a shelter with Poles. Ringelblum was trapped in the flaming ghetto on April 19, caught and sent to the Trawniki labour camp near Lublin. Two intrepid couriers, Teodor Pajewski, a Pole, and Emilka Kossower, a Jewess, travelled to Trawniki to smuggle him out. They bribed one of the Ukrainian guards to look the other way as Ringelblum managed to slip away from his work detail. Ringelblum later recalled, while in hiding: "I am indebted to the Poles for having saved my life twice during this war: once in the winter of 1940 when the blessed arm of the Polish underground saved me from certain death, and the second time when it got me out of an SS labor camp, where I would have met my death either in an epidemic or from a Ukrainian or SS bullet." Ringelblum recognized that the Polish people could neither have averted the Holocaust nor saved most of their Jewish neighbors.*<sup>381</sup>

### **Yitzhak Zuckerman, one of the organizers and leaders of the Jewish Fighting Organization:**

Anyone who fosters hatred for the Polish people is committing a sin! We must do the opposite. Against the background of anti-Semitism and general apathy, these people are glorious. There was great danger in helping us, mortal danger, not only for them but also for their families, sometimes for the entire courtyard they lived in. ... I repeat it today: to cause the death of one hundred Jews, all you needed was one Polish denouncer; to save one Jew, it sometimes took the help of ten decent Poles, the help of an entire Polish family; even if they did it for money. Some gave their apartment, and others made identity cards. Even passive help deserves appreciation. The baker who didn't denounce, for instance. It was a problem for a Polish family of four who suddenly had to start buying double quantities of rolls or meat. And what a bother it was to go far away to buy in order to support the family hiding with them. ... And I argue that it doesn't matter if they took money; life wasn't easy for Poles either; and there wasn't any way to make a living. There were widows and officials who earned their few Złotys by helping. And there were all kinds of people who helped.

If I gauge the phenomenon by one of the finest figures I knew, Irena Adamowicz, who helped Jews deliberately and consciously, as a devout Christian, who assisted as much as she could, I nevertheless cannot ignore the fact that she also saw another mission for herself: to convert Jews, since there is no greater commandment than to convert Jews to Christianity, accompanied by the faith that will save the world. I'm not saying she would have abandoned someone even if she hadn't kept her sights fixed on the Christian purpose; but let's look at this from the other side: for example, if a rabbi chanced to save a gentile. He wouldn't see anything bad if, at this opportunity, he began telling him about the religion of Moses and the various practices of Judaism. Is there anything wrong in that? Irena also filled such "missions." I know of at least four or five such cases.<sup>382</sup>

*Paid rescue should not be dismissed as immoral in the conditions of occupied Poland, where the vast majority of the population lived in dire poverty and could not afford to provide anyone with long-term assistance. Everyone tried to survive as best they could under the circumstances. Assistance rendered by Jews to fellow Jews was also often tied to hefty compensation, as Sholem Kamienny testifies to:*

We used to hide there during each *Aktion*. Once a Jewish policeman noticed us there, and when during an *Aktion* he came into our hiding place, we locked him in together with us, (he agreed to this for a considerable sum of money). After the raid, we let him out. ...

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<sup>380</sup> Terese Pencak Schwartz, "Irek from the Underground," posted online at: <<http://www.remember.org/forgotten/irek-e.html>>.

<sup>381</sup> Samuel D. Kassow, *Who Will Write Our History? Emanuel Ringelblum, the Warsaw Ghetto, and the Oyeg Shabes Archive* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2007), 359–60, 379–81 .

<sup>382</sup> Yitzhak Zuckerman ("Antek"), *A Surplus of Memory: Chronicle of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising* (Berkeley, London and Oxford: University of California Press, 1993), 461, 463.

I was saved by a Christian, Szczepański—a Polish army officer. When he returned to Warsaw after the German invasion, I did him a favour and provided him with civilian clothing from my shop. His wife found me when she came once to my workplace to buy up Jews' clothing and bed linen. Szczepański's dwelling was at 10 Marianski Street, in an apartment previously occupied by Jews. It was there that I was hiding with my wife and child.

This was in December 1942, when 85 thousand Jews were still living in Warsaw. I used to go in and out of the ghetto to transfer things from our home in Nalewki Street. On 13<sup>th</sup> of December I went in to take some things for my wife and child to the *Aryan side*, and when two days later I wanted to get out, a Jew ran by warning me that the entire ghetto was surrounded. This particular *Aktion* then lasted three days. I again hid in the synagogue attic and got out the third night. The ghetto was still under siege and a Jew offered, for a sum of money to take me to the *Aryan side*.

I paid the asked price and as was arranged I waited about midnight in a court at the corner of Nalewki and Miła Streets. The man arrived on time together with a young companion. They took me out into the street, opened the cover of the sewer and we went down, with him behind us with a revolver in his hand. We walked through the stinking sewer, now and then catching our breath at intersections. At a certain point we stopped at a signal from the street above. We again opened the cover and went up. There a Gentile was waiting for us—on Bonifratów Square. He led us all to his dwelling, gave us food and drink (me, after three days of hunger and thirst). The Jew took some food parcels and went back to bring out others (from the ghetto).<sup>383</sup>

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### **Poles Can Be Proud of Sendlerowa**

Israel Gutman interviewed by Piotr Zychowicz  
*Rzeczpospolita* (Warsaw), 13 May 2008

Irena Sendlerowa was quite possibly the most courageous of Polish women, the brave women of the intelligentsia who put their hearts entirely into helping Jews. In an interview with Piotr Zychowicz, Israel Gutman, a historian at the Yad Vashem Institute in Jerusalem, said, “This was humanism in its purest form.”

PZ: Was the death of Irena Sendlerowa noted in Israel?

IG: There is not, of course, the same level of interest as in Poland, but Mrs. Sendlerowa was not an unknown personality. When Poland and Israel jointly put forward her nomination for the Nobel Prize, a great many articles about her appeared in our press, many Israeli journalists called me, asking me about her. But let's not pretend otherwise. Mrs. Sendlerowa and her wartime activities are known primarily among Polish Jewish survivors, people who are interested in the history of the Holocaust. The population in general, however, are only vaguely aware of her.

PZ: Is that, perhaps, because her story doesn't fit the stereotype of the Pole as a szmalcownik (blackmailer, denouncer)...

IG: To be sure, there are people in Israel who still hold on to that stereotype. But this negative image, which at one time really was quite common, is gradually changing. This was influenced to a large extent by the excellent relations between our two countries. These days, if someone says “Polish anti-Semitism is acquired at birth,” voices of protest will immediately be heard. Israelis are changing their way of thinking about Poles. One hears more and more not just about the Holocaust, but also about the thousand years of co-existence in Poland.

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<sup>383</sup> Sholem Kamienny, “With Kałuszyn *Landslayt* in the Warsaw Ghetto,” in A. Shamri and Sh. Soroka, eds., *Sefer Kaluszyn: Geheylt der khorev gevorener kehile* (Tel Aviv: Former Residents of Kaluszyn in Israel, 1961), 411ff., translated as *The Memorial Book of Kaluszyn*, Internet: <<http://jewishgen.org/Yizkor/kaluszyn/Kaluszyn.html>>.

PZ: And about Poles who rescued Jews? Why is it that every Israeli child knows about the “good German” Schindler, but about Sendlerowa, only a few who were saved?

IG: At one time I thought of Poles as collaborators, blackmailers, neighbours who refused to help. But seeing the evidence about the Righteous Among the Nations, I changed my mind.

To a large extent, that is due to Steven Spielberg’s film. But do you think that in Poland there was always so much said about Sendlerowa? The leaders of the communist regime did not go out of their way to praise these people. Not many Poles knew about her. But let’s return to the subject of Poles who are the Righteous Among the Nations. It so happens that just yesterday I attended the launch of the second edition of the memoirs of Barbara Berman, who during the occupation lived on the “Aryan” side of Warsaw and rescued escapees from the ghetto. The event attracted great crowds, the interest in the book was great.

PZ: What will Israelis learn from this memoir?

IG: In her memoir, Berman describes a certain type of Pole, actually Polish women. Courageous women, from the intelligentsia, who dedicated their whole hearts to helping Jews. It was humanism in its purest form. Nobody, after all, ordered them to do this. But they felt that what they witnessed, what was happening, went against their ethos, with the world view they were raised with in their homes. They felt that they *had* to help, no matter what the consequences. These women refused to accept the fact that people were turned into animals. They weren’t just saving Jews, they were saving humanity. Irena Sendlerowa was perhaps the braves of these Polish women.

PZ: Two and a half thousand children saved. That really is impressive.

IG: Please try to imagine what is concealed behind this dry statistic. What an enormous effort and dedication. Rescuing each child was a very complicated business. First you had to enter the ghetto and somehow get the children out of there. Then you had to find a home or an institution – usually a Catholic convent – that could accept a child. To persuade people to take in this child, and to teach the child to conceal his real identity. They had to procure false documents, escape routes, food and clothing. And all this right under the Gestapo’s nose! Such work even in peacetime is exceptionally difficult, so can you imagine doing this in secrecy? The Germans could have caught Sendlerowa at any time.

PZ: What was she risking?

IG: Death. Only in Poland did the Germans impose such draconian punishments for helping Jews. Yet despite that, Poles constitute the largest number of “Righteous.” To a great extent, it is the “Righteous” who have changed the Israelis’ perception of Poland. That is what influenced me. I too, at first, accepted these negative stereotypes as truth. Collaborators, blackmailers, neighbours who wouldn’t help. That’s what was said in all articles, in books. But when Yad Vashem published its Encyclopedia of the Righteous – I was the editor – I was forced to examine this again through the stories told by Jews who were saved. I don’t change my opinions readily, but these testimonies brought about a diametrical change in opinion.

PZ: Do you remember any specific case?

IG: Every case is specific. But I’ll tell you about one instance that took place someplace in eastern Poland. One day a Jew knocked on the door of a poor farmer’s cottage and asked for food. They let him in and discovered that he had been wandering about in the woods for several days with his wife and two children. The poor peasants took them all in. In time, the two families bonded so well that they became as one. One day, the farmer returned from a trip to a neighbouring village and told them that the Germans found a Jewish family sheltered there and murdered them all, both the Jews and the Polish family hiding them. They all lapsed into silence. The Jews realized that they couldn’t keep endangering their Polish protectors so during the night, they packed up their belongings. In the morning, the Poles came to their room. “We’ve been talking about this. Stay. Whatever happens to you, will happen to us.” And these people survived. There are thousands of cases like this.

PZ: Does the average Israeli know about such people?

IG: Gradually, they are learning about this. It enables them to see Poles as real people, made of flesh and blood. The same as Jews. In the archives of Yad Vashem I found testimonies of such deeds, deeds that I myself would not be able to do. And that disturbs my peace. It was a trial, a test of one's humanity. Would we pass this test if placed in that situation? All of us – both Jews and Poles – we are only human. We are not saints. Yes, there were blackmailers in Poland. There were also heroes. People like Sendlerowa, of whom you may be very proud.

*Israel Gutman is a historian at the Yad Vashem institute. During the German occupation of Poland, he was a member of the Jewish Fighting Organization, took part in the Warsaw ghetto uprising, and subsequently was a prisoner in the Nazi camps of Majdanek, Auschwitz-Birkenau, and Mauthausen-Gusen. In 1961, he served as a witness in the trial of Adolf Eichmann.*

## The Polish Underground Transmits News about the Holocaust to the West

### Samuel Kassow, American historian:

The Oyneg Shabes [i.e., the secret archive in the Warsaw ghetto] now adopted new priorities and responsibilities: to document the extermination process, to provide material for the Jewish and Polish underground press, and to get that information out of Poland. ... the Oyneg Shabbes began to issue a new Yiddish-language bulletin, *Miteylungen*, that reported the news of the killings. ... the Oyneg Shabes at this time also set up a press bureau to feed material to both the Jewish and Polish underground press. ...

... the Oyneg Shabbes had two potential channels for getting this information out of Poland. Both ran through the Polish underground. One channel involved Aleksander Kamiński, who headed the Bureau of Information and Propaganda of the Polish Home Army (Armia Krajowa [AK]), and was also the editor of the AK's major underground newspaper, the *Biuletyn Informacyjny*. As we have seen, Kamiński was a friend of Irena Adamowicz, who had close ties to Hashomer and to Dror. The Oyneg Shabes provided much of the material that the Bureau of Information and Propaganda was publishing about the killing of the Jews. ...

A second channel involved the Bund. Ringelblum certainly viewed the Bund with suspicion and disappointment, but political rivalries paled beside the need to alert the outside world and also many personal ties linked the Oyneg Shabes and the Bund. ... in the early months of 1942 the Oyneg Shabes worked closely with the Bund to smuggle out of Poland the first reports on the Final Solution. Thanks to its long-standing relationship with the Polish Socialist Party, the Bund was the only Jewish organization in the Warsaw Ghetto with good links to the higher levels of the Polish underground. The Polish underground, in turn, was using sympathetic Swedish businessmen living in Warsaw to get reports out of Poland in late 1941 and early 1942. These businessmen—Carl Wilhelm Herslow, Sven Normann, and Carl Gustafsson—had lived in Warsaw for many years. Trusted by the Polish underground, they traveled regularly between Sweden and Poland, conveying information on rolls of 35-mm film. According to [historian Walter] Laqueur, this is how the Chełmno report and the Bund letter on German atrocities reached London. Normann's last visit to Poland took place in May 1942. The Gestapo arrested the two other Swedes in July, just as the great deportation was beginning.

By late May 1942, therefore, the first two Oyneg Shabes reports had arrived in Britain, as had a detailed report compiled by the Bund. On June 2, 1942, the BBC broadcast the news that the Germans had murdered seven hundred thousand Polish Jews ... Other broadcasts followed, to Ringelblum's satisfaction.<sup>384</sup>

### Walter Laqueur, professor of history, Tel Aviv University and expert in international affairs:

The Polish underground played a pivotal role in the transmission of the news [of the Holocaust] to the West. ... Most of the information about the Nazi policy of extermination reached Jewish circles abroad through the Polish underground. ...

The Polish case is very briefly that they did what they could, usually at great risk and in difficult conditions. If the news about the mass murders was not believed abroad this was not the fault of the Poles. It was, at least in part, the fault of the Polish Jews who, in the beginning, refused to believe it; it was also the responsibility of the Jewish leaders abroad who were initially quite sceptical. ...

The Polish Government was the first to alarm the Allied governments and world public opinion but it was accused of exaggeration. Even after it had been accepted in London and Washington that the information about the mass slaughter was correct, the British and US governments showed much concern that it should not be given too much publicity.

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<sup>384</sup> Samuel D. Kassow, *Who Will Write Our History? Emanuel Ringelblum, the Warsaw Ghetto, and the Oyneg Shabes Archive* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2007), 295–98.

The record of the Polish underground and the Polish Government-in-exile was not perfect, as far as the publication of news about the ‘final solution’ is concerned. But the long report submitted by Edward Raczyński, the Polish representative to the Allied governments, of 9 December 1942 contained the fullest survey of the ‘final solution’. No other Allied government was remotely as outspoken at the time and for a long time after. If one finds fault with them what is one to say about the Russians who deliberately played it down from the beginning to this day? What about the British Foreign Office which decided in late 1943 to delete any reference to the use of gas chambers because the evidence was untrustworthy? What about the American officials who tried to suppress the ‘unauthorized news’ from Eastern Europe? What about the Jewish leaders who continued to doubt the authenticity of the news well after it should have been obvious that there was no more room for doubt? In a search for scapegoats few are likely to emerge unscathed.

It would have been far better if the Jews had not depended entirely on the transmitters of the AK [Polish Home Army] or the *Delegat* [the delegate’s office in Poland of the Polish government exiled in London] for their contact with the outside world. This dependence is one of the many riddles of that period. It was difficult to produce weapons in the ghettos, but the construction of wireless transmitters was a less formidable task. There were dozens, if not hundreds, who had the expertise. Thousands of Jews were employed in workshops or little factories. The necessary materials could have been stolen or bought, a code could have been agreed upon with Jewish organizations abroad. By 1942 no second Edison or Marconi was needed to build a transmitter of twenty or thirty watts which would have been received abroad. The Polish resistance had eventually about a hundred such transmitters. They were relatively small and the Germans, hard as they tried, succeeded in locating only a few of these.<sup>385</sup>

**British historian Michael Fleming reaffirms the important role played by the Poles in transmitting information to the West.**

On September 3, 1943, the information included in *Sprawozdanie 4/43* about the mass murder of Jews at Oświęcim (Auschwitz) was published in *The Polish Jewish Observer*, a limited-circulation, subscription-only supplement of *The City and East London Observer*. The front-page article, titled “Oswiecism [sic] is Grave of 629,000 Jews, Poles and Russians,” reported that: “At least 520,000 Jews, 83,000 Poles and 26,000 Russian prisoners of war died or were murdered in Oswiecim concentration camp in Poland up to the end of 1942.” The number of Jews killed was also published in a brief, page-eight article in *The Jewish Chronicle’s* September 10, 1943 edition. None of this information reached the pages of the national press or was broadcast on the BBC’s Home Service, however. I argue that this silence was due to the British policy of “voluntary” censorship—a policy that encouraged editors to act “responsibly” and heed the frequent informal advice the government gave them through the Ministry of Information and the Foreign Office. ...

British officials discouraged the publication of information about the plight of Europe’s Jews. A July 25, 1941 Ministry of Information planning document titled “Combating the apathetic outlook or ‘What have I got to lose even if Germany wins?’” succinctly illustrates British policy on disseminating news about atrocities. Such information, it states, should be “used very sparingly and must deal always with treatment of indisputably innocent people. Not with violent political opponents. And not with Jews.” The rationale behind this policy was that highlighting what was happening to Jews in Europe might accentuate the antisemitic sentiment pervasive in Britain. This view was not unfounded, judging by British Home

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<sup>385</sup> Walter Laqueur, *The Terrible Secret: The Suppression of the Truth About Hitler’s ‘Final Solution’* (Boston: Little/Brown, 1981), 200, 106, 201, 121–22, 107. For a study of the official publication of the Polish government-in-exile see Piotr Wróbel, “*Dziennik Polski*, The Official Organ of the Polish Government-In-Exile, and the Holocaust, 1940–1945,” *Gal-Ed of the History of the Jews in Poland*, vol. XVII (Tel Aviv: Center for Research on the History of Polish Jewry, Diaspora Research Institute, Tel Aviv University, 2000): 57–83. The position of the Polish government-in-exile regarding the use of its diplomatic channels to assist Jews was diametrically opposed to that of the United States. American diplomat Hiram Bingham IV, vice-counsel in Marseilles, France, when World War II began, incurred the displeasure of the state department for assisting Jews. When he continued his activities after the secretary of state ordered him to desist, he was relieved of his post and transferred to Buenos Aires in 1941. When he called attention to Nazi war criminals who had escaped from Germany and were living in South America, he again annoyed his superiors, and the state department showed its displeasure by passing him over for promotion several times. In 1946 Bingham realized his career was over and left the diplomatic service. See Rafael Medoff, *They Spoke Out: Varien Fry and Hiram Bingham IV* (Melrose Park, Pennsylvania: David S. Wyman Institute for Holocaust Studies, 2004).

Intelligence reports that monitored British public opinion during the war. The report of December 31, 1942 assessed opinion following the United Nations Declaration of December 17, 1942—a declaration that condemned German atrocities against Jews—and recorded “no evidence that the popularity of Jews in this country has increased.” The report summarized British public opinion in the following terms: “Abroad—greatest sympathy [for Jews]; in England—general feeling that they badly want controlling.”

The liberal assimilationism dominant in Britain also encouraged the marginalization of “Jewish” stories in the press, as nationals of various countries (i.e., French, Polish, Dutch, and so on) were the preferred subjects. For example, throughout the war the Political Warfare Executive (PWE, the British office responsible for propaganda) sought to portray what was happening to Jews “as part of a common pattern.” The Ministry of Information, which was responsible for the dissemination of information in Britain itself, also adhered to this strategy. This framework inhibited the distribution of news about specifically anti-Jewish Nazi actions. ...

Two main factors inhibited wider distribution of the information from Auschwitz during late 1943. First, all reports from Poland took some time to process and assess; second, the Polish government was sensitive to the British government’s policy of marginalizing news about German atrocities against Jews. Indicatively, Jankowski’s and Rowecki’s March 1943 report, which stated that more than half a million Jews had been killed at Auschwitz, was published in early September 1943 in *The Polish Jewish Observer* and *The Jewish Chronicle*, but was not picked up by *any* national media. Given the challenges posed by the British context in disseminating news about Jews and atrocities, it is possible that Polish officials sought to distribute the information when the opportunity for it to be received (rather than summarily dismissed) by key audiences presented itself. ...

Through 1943, the Polish government-in-exile had found key audiences—namely, the British and American governments—unreceptive to news of Auschwitz. Reports about the camp rarely featured in the Allied-controlled media and what news did appear was censored. The situation changed, at least in the United States, in January 1944, when President Roosevelt created the War Refugee Board. Under the directorship of John Pehle, this body changed the dynamics of American reporting on the Holocaust and energized American Jewry to respond more actively to events in continental Europe. Through the first few months of 1944, the War Refugee Board pressured Roosevelt to make a declaration about the Jews’ plight.<sup>45</sup> However, the political environment in the US was not particularly conducive to this effort. As Laurel Leff notes in her important study of the *New York Times*, news of the Holocaust was reported, but was buried in the inside pages. ...

To date, Holocaust scholarship has tended to imply that the Polish Underground and/or the Polish government withheld or delayed the transmission of news about the Holocaust to the Western Allies. In his recent work on the Polish Underground, Adam Puławski has maintained that delays and marginalization of news about Jews did occur, and these practices can, in part, be explained by the varying social distance between Poles and Jews. It is also the case, however, that the Western Allies neither requested the Poles’ information about Jews nor, it seems, wanted it when it was presented; this held true especially in 1943, when the British Foreign Office sought to deflect demands for a generous refugee policy. In relation to Auschwitz specifically, every piece of information that David Engel suggests was not passed on was, in fact, distributed. The problem was not the lack of information being passed to the West, but of response. ...

The assumption that the Polish government tended to conceal information—an interpretation that has informed much of the scholarship to date—should be rejected. The attempt to track documents has a greater chance of success if we adopt a *working* presumption that information was passed on to Western Allies, as scholars will pursue the task with greater vigor. Such an approach could lead to a greater focus on the specific histories of particular reports at various dates during the war, and result in more detailed histories seeking to explain why some reports seem to have been fast-tracked while others languished unpublished for months.<sup>80</sup> Such scholarship would provide a more complete understanding of the actions of key gatekeepers: the Polish Underground; Polish intelligence operatives in London; the Polish minister of the interior; National Council member Ignacy Schwarzbart; newspaper proprietors, editors, and journalists; British Minister of Information Brendan Bracken; the Foreign Office; the Political Warfare Executive; British and American intelligence; and so on.

The history of the summer 1943 report also suggests that the British political leadership knew more about the camp than has hitherto been thought. No document has been located that clearly indicates that Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden or Prime Minister Winston Churchill knew that Jews were being systematically gassed at Auschwitz. But since the summer 1943 report (among others) was widely distributed, the argument that Eden and Churchill did not know about this prior to the arrival of the Vrba/Wetzler report in June 1944 is difficult to sustain.<sup>386</sup>

**“Kazik”—Shmuel or Shimek Ratheiser, later known as Simha Rotem—confirms that the Jewish Fighting Organization did not want to run the risk of owning a radio receiver.**

Now and then, Antek [Zuckerman] would send me to certain places in the city to hear the news on the BBC or from Moscow, and I would come back and report to him. We didn't have a single radio in the ZOB, not even in our apartment-bases. We didn't want to take the risk, since listening to foreign stations was strictly prohibited. Possessing a receiving and transmitting instrument was not even to be mentioned.<sup>387</sup>

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<sup>386</sup> Michael Fleming, “Allied Knowledge of Auschwitz: A (Further) Challenge to the ‘Elusiveness’ Narrative,” *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, vol. 28, no. 1 (Spring 2014): 31–57.

<sup>387</sup> Simha Rotem (“Kazik”), *Memoirs of a Warsaw Ghetto Fighter: The Past Within Me* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1994), 86.

## Assistance Provided by the Catholic Clergy

A number of religious orders and priests extended help to the Jewish insurgents of the Warsaw ghetto. The Carmelite Sisters provided shelter to especially endangered leaders of the Jewish underground organizations at their convent on 27 Wolska Street, situated near the ghetto walls. They helped the Jews in various ways: this was one of the places where false documents were delivered to the Jews; there, too, liaison men of the Jewish underground (ŻOB) on the Aryan side—Arie Wilner, Tuvia Szejngut, and others—had their secret premises. In 1942 and 1943, the seventeen sisters lived under permanent danger of death but never declined their cooperation even in the most hazardous undertakings.<sup>388</sup> A moving conversation with the Mother Superior of the Carmelites, recorded by Polish-Jewish journalist Hanna Krall in the book *Shielding the Flame*, is reproduced in part below. Chaim Lazar Litai, a chronicler of the Warsaw ghetto revolt, described the assistance provided by the Polish Catholic clergy to the Jewish Military Union (ŻZW) in his book *Muranowska 7*, also reproduced below. That organization built two of its three tunnels to the Aryan side through Catholic institutions: one under Karmelicka Street leading into the courtyard of the Carmelite convent; another from the church of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary on Leszno Street. Two other Catholic churches in the ghetto—All Saints' on Grzybowski Square and St. Augustine's on Nowolipki Street—also served as temporary depots for the transmission of arms to the ghetto.<sup>389</sup> Extensive assistance, described below, was provided to Jews by the priests of All Saints' church. The priests at St. Augustine's church (which was formally closed though some priests remained), including Bishop Karol Niemira, Rev. Władysław Głowacki (who was honoured by *Yad Vashem*), and Rev. Leon Więckiewicz, were active in smuggling Jews, especially converts, out of the ghetto.<sup>390</sup> Rev. Franciszek Garncarek was shot by the Germans in front of the church rectory on December 20, 1943, for helping Jews. Rev. Więckiewicz was arrested on December 3, 1943 for his activities on behalf of both Jews and Poles and deported to Gross Rosen concentration camp where he perished on August 4, 1944.<sup>391</sup>

Despite this undeniable track record, the 2001 NBC docudrama “Uprising” chose to suppress information about these accomplishments and instead concocted a malicious scenario described by the Jewish Telegraphic Agency as follows: “In one particularly damning incident, an Easter mass is celebrated in a Warsaw cathedral, while the smoke of the ghetto’s burning buildings and bodies drift into the church. The priest’s response is to close the windows and continue the service.” That masses would continue to be celebrated in churches, especially on the Holiest Day of the Christian calendar, is neither surprising nor a source of shame. Jews too organized elaborate Passover celebrations in the ghetto,<sup>392</sup> and hundreds of

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<sup>388</sup> Władysław Bartoszewski, *The Blood Shed Unites Us: Pages from the History of Help to the Jews in Occupied Poland* (Warsaw: Interpress Publishers, 1970), 189–90.

<sup>389</sup> Tadeusz Bednarczyk, *Obowiązek silniejszy od śmierci: Wspomnienia z lat 1939–1944 o polskiej pomocy dla Żydów w Warszawie* (Warszawa: Krajowa Agencja Wydawnicza, 1982), 56 (1986 edition).

<sup>390</sup> Halina Gorcewicz, *Why, Oh God, Why?*, posted online at <<http://www.books-reborn.org/klinger/why/Why.html>>. See the chapters titled “Ghetto, end of September 1940,” “Ghetto, the last days of April & May, 1943,” and “Warsaw, end of May, 1943.”

<sup>391</sup> Waclaw Zajaczkowski, *Martyrs of Charity*, Part One (Washington, D.C.: St. Maximilian Kolbe Foundation, 1987), 253 (entries 574 and 590); Barbara Engelking and Jacek Leociak, *Getto warszawskie: Przewodnik po nieistniejącym mieście* (Warsaw: IFiS PAN, 2001), 621; *The Warsaw Ghetto: A Guide to the Perished City* (New Haven, Connecticut, and London: Yale University Press, 2009), 652.

<sup>392</sup> A Jewish source describes the preparation for these festivities as follows: “Passover was approaching and Jews needed matzoth, wine, and other foods with which to observe the holiday properly. Rabbi [Menahem] Zemba appointed a special Passover committee consisting of three outstanding communal leaders: Jacob Trockenheim, who before the war had been a wealthy industrialist and a member of the Polish Senate; Joseph Koenigsberg, who had been a prosperous manufacturer and president of the Yeshiva of Lublin, and Eliezer Gershon Friedenson, formerly editor of the *Beth Jacob Journal* and member of Warsaw’s Jewish Community Council. Under the most adverse conditions imaginable, these men labored selflessly to procure Passover foods and make them available to as many Jews as possible. The apartment of Rabbi Joshua Perlow, the Novominsker Rav, directly across the street from Rabbi Zemba’s house on Kupiecka 7, was converted into a depot for Passover foods. All day long, crowds streamed into the building with scrips to pay for the wine and matzoth, and emerged with their bags filled. Despite the constant undercurrent of uncertainty and apprehension, the ghetto seemed to be taking on a holiday mood.” See Simon Zuker, comp., *The Unconquerable Spirit: Vignettes of the Jewish Religious Spirit the Nazis Could Not Destroy*, Second revised edition (New York: Zachor Institute, 1980/1981), 83.

Jews living on the “Aryan” side—among them Emanuel Ringelblum—returned to the ghetto for that reason unsuspectingly on the eve of the revolt.<sup>393</sup> According to Yisrael Gutman, “the surviving remnant of the Warsaw ghetto prepared to celebrate the Passover, taking care to acquire the ritual Passover foods (matzos and wine) and cleansing their eating and clothing utensils as prescribed by religious law.”<sup>394</sup> As pointed out by Israel Shahak (cited later), “No doubt, had a survivor from one of the many small towns of conquered USSR, where most of the Jews had been already exterminated, arrived at a typical Passover celebration of spring 1942 in the Warsaw Ghetto, or at one of the numerous public balls, concerts, etc., he would have said, if he was as stupid as the survivor of the Warsaw Ghetto whom [Claude] Lanzmann picked [for the documentary film Shoah], that while Jews were killed in his area, in the Warsaw Ghetto ‘life went on as naturally and normally as before.’”<sup>395</sup> But it’s hardly stupidity that motivates historical consultants with a political agenda. The concocted scenario like the one in the NBD docudrama also belies there contempt for Polish goys. More importantly, in the process, the truth about the help extended to Jews by priests from the cathedral church of St. John the Baptist in Warsaw’s Old Town is suppressed: not only did they supply false baptismal records and stocked soup kitchens in the ghetto with food, but they also sheltered Jews in the vaults of the cathedral.<sup>396</sup>

The following examples of assistance to Jews are taken from a compilation of sources detailing the rescue efforts of the Polish Catholic clergy, posted online at < <http://www.savingjews.org/> >.

<sup>393</sup> Yitzhak Zuckerman writes: “...Passover was at hand, and since I didn’t expect developments or a big turning point in the near future, I intended to return to the ghetto for the Passover Seder with a group of workers.” He then says he got letters from Mordechai Anielewicz and Zivia Lubetkin, both of them telling him not to come back because of his duties were on the Aryan side. Nevertheless Antek decided to do it, though he never succeeded, because “I was terribly lonely. I hated being in a strange place on Passover, for the Seder. ... If I had known on April 19, would I have gone back to the ghetto for Passover? ... I wouldn’t have gone back.” See Yitzhak Zuckerman (“Antek”), *A Surplus of Memory: Chronicle of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 350–51. Hundreds of Jews, however, did arrive in the ghetto for Passover. Marian Berland describes hiding in a bunker at the start of the uprising in which there were several people who had returned for Pesach. Some of them then escaped from the ghetto again. On the other hand, Joseph Szmekura did not manage to return to the Aryan side: “In the Ghetto on Nalewki St. there lived a Rabbi. A rumour spread on the ‘Aryan side’ that this Rabbi was organising a large ‘Seder’ to celebrate Passover and that all were invited. On the eve of Passover 1943, late in the afternoon, the girl from the chemist shop, my friend and I sneaked back into the Ghetto. Many young who lived outside the Ghetto had done the same to attend the ‘Seder’.” His account, “Saved from the Gas Chamber,” is found in Gedaliah Shaiak, comp. & ed., *Lowicz: A Town in Mazovia (Memorial Book)* (Melbourne and Sydney: Lowitcher Landsmanschaften, 1966), xix. Avrom Feldberg, allegedly a member of the Jewish Fighting Organization on the Aryan side, also says he returned for his mother shortly before the revolt broke out and then fought in the revolt. See Alvin Abram, *The Light After Dark II: Six More Stories of Triumph After All Hope Had Gone...* (Toronto: AMA Graphics Incorporated, 2000), 134–35. Additional examples of Jews who returned to the ghetto just before the revolt are mentioned in the following sources: Leon Najberg, *Ostatni powstańcy getta* (Warsaw: Żydowski Instytut Historyczny, 1993), 41–42; Peretz Hochman, *Daring to Live* (Tel Aviv: Ministry of Defense Publishing House, 1994), 129; Simha Rotem (“Kazik”), *Memoirs of a Warsaw Ghetto Fighter: The Past Within Me* (New Haven and Yale: Yale University Press, 1994), 19; Denise Nevo and Mira Berger, eds., *We Remember: Testimonies of Twenty-four Members of Kibbutz Megiddo who Survived the Holocaust* (New York: Shengold, 1994), 136; Władysław Dov Kornblum, *Ostatnia latorośl: Wspomnienia malego chłopca z getta warszawskiego* (Warsaw: Ypsilon, 2002), 105; “Listy Emanuela Ringelbluma,” in *Zagłada Żydów: Studia i materiały*, vol. 1 (2005): 194.

<sup>394</sup> Yisrael Gutman, *The Jews of Warsaw, 1939–1945: Ghetto, Underground, Revolt* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1982), 367. At the trial of Adolf Eichmann, Zivia Lubetkin testified: “I also remember that on the second day—it was the Passover Seder—in one of the bunkers by chance I came across Rabbi Meisel. ... The Halutz underground, in its operations, had not always had an easy time on the part of the Jewish population—they did not always accept us. There were those who thought we were bringing harm to their lives... But this time, when I entered the bunker, this Jew, Rabbi Meisel, interrupted the Seder, placed his hand on my head and said: ‘May you be blessed. Now it is good for me to die. Would that we had done this earlier.’”

<sup>395</sup> A Jew who lived through the destruction of the ghetto in his hometown of Złoczów, in Eastern Galicia, recalled: “Paradoxically, at the same time, letters were received from the Warsaw ghetto that life there was quite normal. True, Jews were forbidden to leave the ghetto and gentiles were forbidden to enter, but it was all for the good. The Jews in the ghetto were left alone. Schools were established and there were theatres and nightclubs. I myself saw the letter received by my wife’s cousin, Clara Kogut.” See Samuel Lipa Tennenbaum, *Złoczow Memoir* (New York: Shengold, 1986), 199.

<sup>396</sup> Władysław Bartoszewski and Zofia Lewin, eds., *Righteous Among Nations: How Poles Helped the Jews, 1939–1945* (London: Earls Court Publications, 1969), 233, 330.

**Philip Friedman, Holocaust historian:**

In 1942, during the massive German raids on the Jews in the Warsaw ghetto, the three remaining rabbis received an offer of asylum from members of the Catholic clergy. The rabbis graciously declined the proffered chance of escape and perished with their congregations.<sup>397</sup>

**Monsignor Marcelli Godlewski, the pastor of the Church of All Saints, now enclosed within the ghetto, and his curates Rev. Antoni Czarnecki and Rev. Tadeusz Nowotko, as well as priests from other Catholic institutions, extended their help to everyone in the ghetto—both converts and Jews.**

When the walls were erected around the Warsaw ghetto, All Saints' church was enclosed within them. Its parish priest [pastor] was Marcelli Godlewski, known quite well before the war for his anti-Jewish views. [In actual fact, he was disliked by the Jews mostly for promoting Polish business and credit unions.] However, once he witnessed the terrifying persecution of the Jews, Godlewski turned his energies to the task of helping as much as he could. He did so by remaining in the ghetto and ministering to the Jews who had been converted to Christianity. He also offered the shelter of his church to any others who turned to him.

Father Godlewski gave the Jews who came to him birth certificates of deceased parishioners, thus providing those ready to escape with an "authentic" document. He smuggled children out of the ghetto under his robes, and helped find shelter and provide food on the other side for those who did make it out.

Godlewski frequently had meetings with Adam Czerniaków, the chairman of the Judenrat, listening sympathetically and trying to give hope. Caritas, a Catholic welfare organization, opened a soup kitchen in the ghetto operated by a Father Michał Kliszko [vicar at the cathedral parish of St. John the Baptist]. It was open to anyone who came. Several hundred Jews were kept hidden with Godlewski's former parishioners on the Polish side and in a chapel at 49 Złota Street.

Father Godlewski and his young curates remained in the ghetto until they were expelled, but continued their work outside the walls.<sup>398</sup>

*A cot was kept behind the screen in the locutory of the cloister for Arie Wilner ("Jurek"), a liaison officer of the Jewish Fighting Organization (Żydowska Organizacja Bojowa—ŻOB) to sleep overnight if necessary. The spirit of those times was captured with unusual poignancy by Polish-Jewish journalist Hanna Krall.*

**The Carmelite convent on Wolska Street in Warsaw, near the ghetto, was one of the meeting places of the Jewish underground. It also served as a storage place for arms destined for the ghetto fighters.**

As the ŻOB's representative on the Aryan side... Jurek Wilner used to get in touch all the time with "Waclaw" and the [other Polish officers], and when he was unable to take all the packets to the Ghetto, he would leave them at [Henryk] Grabowski's or with the Barefoot Carmelite nuns on Wolska Street: sometimes guns, sometimes knives, or even explosives. ...

I am sitting now in the same locutory on one side of a black iron bar, with the Mother Superior in a nook on the other side, at dusk, and we are talking about those arms transports for the Ghetto that went through the convent for almost a year. Didn't they have any misgivings? The Mother Superior does not understand ...

"After all, arms in such a place?"

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<sup>397</sup> Philip Friedman, *Their Brothers' Keepers* (New York: Holocaust Library, 1978), 125–26.

<sup>398</sup> Irene Tomaszewski and Tecia Werbowski, *Żegota: The Council for Aid to Jews in Occupied Poland, 1942–1945* (Montreal: Price-Patterson, 1999), 36.

“You mean, perhaps, that arms serve to kill people?” asks the Mother Superior. No, for some reason she had never thought about it that way. Her only thought was for the fact that Jurek would eventually be making use of these arms and that when his last hour came, it would be good if he managed to make an act of contrition and make his peace with God. She even asked him to promise this to her, and now she asks me what I think; did he remember the promise when he shot himself in the bunker, at Miła Street?

While Jurek and his friends were making use of those arms, the sky in this part of the town became red and this glow even reached into the convent’s vestibule. That’s why precisely there, and not in the chapel, the barefoot Carmelite nuns would gather each night and read psalms (“Yea, for Thy sake are we killed all the day long, we are counted as sheep for the slaughter. Awake! Why sleepest thou, oh Lord?”), and she prayed to God that Jurek Wilner might meet his death without fear.<sup>399</sup>

**Jews from the underground would also gather at other Catholic institutions on the “Aryan” side, such as one run by the Sisters of the Resurrection, which were considered the safest meeting places as they were out of sight of Jewish Gestapo agents lurking in the ghetto.**

Vladka Meed, the young Jewish courier who was liaison between [Leon] Feiner’s and [Adolf] Berman’s groups [two Jewish underground groups] ... had been brought out of the ghetto in December 1942 by Michał Klepfisz, who later perished in the Ghetto Uprising. He took her to meet Berman and Feiner in a soup kitchen operated by nuns in a convent on Sewerynów Street. This quiet, secluded spot was a regular meeting place not only for Żegota, but for ŻOB, the Jewish Fighting Organization.<sup>400</sup>

Jews in hiding often met by chance in the streets, restaurants and churches. In Sewerynów Street you would find the Catholic Community Centre of St. Joseph, which had a well-patronised restaurant. The fact that it was in a quiet street and that the service by nuns was so pleasant attracted many Jews to that place. They came there for lunch and to meet friends, both Jews and Gentiles. It was known to nearly all Jews hidden in Warsaw, and offered an hour’s respite from the cruel outside. The atmosphere was peaceful; everyone knew everyone else and fear was temporarily at bay. I went to the restaurant every day for more than a year. On principle I avoided those whom I suspected of being Jewish; I always tried to sit with Poles. It turned out that these so very Catholic Poles were, in fact, Jews. Among the diners I often saw previous friends and pupils of mine. We glanced at each other but conversation was out of the question.

There was one diner who always attracted particular attention; a heavily-veiled woman in black who always wore widow’s weeds. No one ever saw her face. The heavy mourning garb, which she wore in summer and winter, and the thick veil were symbols of some great tragedy—and I was certain that she was Jewish too. One day I asked a fellow diner who she was. He told me she was Mrs. Basia Berman, the wife of the active Jewish underground worker Adolf Berman. She acted well, and sometimes overacted, the part of a veiled Catholic.<sup>401</sup>

**Apart from the Church of All Saints on Grzybowski Square, whose pastor Monsignor Marceli Godlewski and curates were particularly active in rendering assistance to Jews, assistance to the Jewish underground came from the Church of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary on Leszno Street, which served as a highly effective hideout for the ŻZW (Żydowski Związek Walki—Jewish Military Union), another Jewish underground group in the Warsaw ghetto that maintained close contact with the Polish underground.**

There were in the ghetto at that time a considerable number of former Jews who had converted to Christianity; one of their centres was the Church of the Holy Virgin in Leszno St. ... One of these converts

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<sup>399</sup> Hanna Krall, *Shielding the Flame: An Intimate Conversation with Dr. Marek Edelman, the Last Surviving Leader of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1986), 100–101.

<sup>400</sup> Irene Tomaszewski and Tecia Werbowksi, *Żegota: The Council for Aid to Jews in Occupied Poland, 1942–1945* (Montreal: Price-Patterson, 1999), 71. See also the description in Vladka Meed, *On Both Sides of the Wall: Memoirs from the Warsaw Ghetto* (New York: Holocaust Library, 1979), 84–85.

<sup>401</sup> Michael Zylberberg, *A Warsaw Diary, 1939–1945* (London: Vallentine, Mitchell, 1969), 120–21.

was a man called Fodor [Rev. Tadeusz Puder]<sup>402</sup>, a priest at the Church of the Holy Virgin and a close friend of Dr. Marcelli Godlewski, a leading Catholic Church dignitary. Fodor was later saved by Godlewski from deportation and hidden in the Aryan section of the city.

In the course of their joint efforts, Father Godlewski became friendly with a number of Jews, among them Łopata, one of the Betar leaders and a member of Betar. Very soon, Łopata was able to exert considerable influence on the priest. This gave rise to the idea of digging a tunnel leading from the ghetto to the church, through which Jewish children could be evacuated. The tunnel would also be used by the Jewish Military Organization for transferring men, supplies and arms, and as a means of communication with the Aryan side.

The tunnel was dug from a building near the church on Leszno St. under the crypt of the church, where a large bunker was excavated. A well-concealed aperture was made in the floor of the crypt to the bunker below (the floor of the crypt was actually the roof of the bunker). This aperture gave access from the bunker to the crypt, whence, by means of a ladder, one emerged through removable floorboards into the vestibule of the church, a few paces from the entrance. A short stairway led down to Leszno St. a busy thoroughfare open to Poles and Aryans, transversed by tramway from the west of the city to the eastern suburbs.

The bunker had another exit through a hole in the wall of the crypt. This led to an adjacent building which was occupied by nuns. In an emergency, an additional means of escape was afforded by the ‘chimney’, a narrow shaft in the hollow wall behind the church altar, which led down to the bunker. Built by engineers, members of the Z.Z.W., the bunker was fitted with electricity, an alarm system and other essential installations.

Gabriela “Bronka” Łajewska, a non-Jewish girl, maintained liaison between the A.K. [Armia Krajowa—Polish Home Army] and the Z.Z.W. headquarters. ... Her main task lay in helping the evacuation of Jewish children from the ghetto. As a rule she would take charge of the children at the mouth of the tunnel in the cemetery or near the All Saints Church and hand them into the care of Father Godlewski, the priest. The last time she was in the ghetto, shortly before the major Aktion [July 1942], she was caught trying to get a group of children out through the passage near the Pawiak, and sent to prison. In July 1944 she was transferred from the prison to a camp at Ravensburg [Ravensbrück concentration camp?]. ... In all, Gabriela rescued more than seventy children, many of whom she transferred to the Home for Blind Children [run by the Franciscan Sisters Servants of the Cross] in the town of Laski [outside Warsaw].<sup>403</sup>

**Maria Rajbenbach, a Jewish woman who escaped from the Warsaw ghetto just before the outbreak of the uprising, obtained false documents with the help of a priest from St. John’s Cathedral:**

How did we obtain our documents? A brother of the painter Malicki was employed, together with his wife, at the Record Office of the Municipal Administration. Together with a parson [from the cathedral parish of St. John the Baptist] they had forged both the death and birth registers to secure Christian birth certificates of two deceased women. Thus several people had to collaborate to prepare such certificates. The Malickis had supplied numerous Jews with such certificates. Unfortunately, one of these Jews was identified by the Gestapo and in this way the names of the three people became known to them. The parson was shot dead,

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<sup>402</sup> The story of Rev. Puder being in the ghetto is a legend. In order to protect Rev. Tadeusz Puder, a Jewish convert with a distinctive Semitic appearance, Warsaw Archbishop Stanisław Gall installed him as the chaplain at a children’s home operated by the Sisters of the Family of Mary in Białołęka near Warsaw in November 1939, where in turn he assisted in the rescue of Jewish children. Rev. Puder was arrested by the Gestapo in April 1941, but through the intervention of nuns and friends he was placed in St. Sophia’s hospital in Warsaw, near a convent of the Sisters of the Family of Mary but under the control of the Gestapo. In November 1942, an escape was arranged and Rev. Puder returned to Białołęka, and then was transferred to another institution run by the sisters in Płudy where he survived the war. Barbara Engelking and Jacek Leociak, *Getto warszawskie: Przewodnik po nieistniejącym mieście* (Warsaw: IFiS PAN, 2001), pp. 621–22; *The Warsaw Ghetto: A Guide to the Perished City* (New Haven, Connecticut, and London: Yale University Press, 2009), 653.

<sup>403</sup> Chaim Lazar Litai, *Muranowska 7: The Warsaw Ghetto Rising* (Tel Aviv: Massada–P.E.C. Press, 1966), 134–36, 169–70.

the Malickis were sent to Treblinka [actually it was Majdanek] concentration camp and Malicki had his arms and legs broken in an attempt to extort the names of other rescued Jews. But he would not give them away. Both perished in Treblinka camp.<sup>404</sup> [Actually, Mrs. Malicka survived.]

See also Mark Paul, *Wartime Rescue of Jews by the Polish Catholic Clergy: The Testimony of Survivors and Rescuers*

Internet:

<http://www.kpk-toronto.org/obrona-dobrego-imienia/>

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<sup>404</sup> Władysław Bartoszewski and Zofia Lewin, eds., *Righteous Among Nations: How Poles Helped the Jews, 1939–1945* (London: Earls Court Publications, 1969), 233.

## Reaction of the Polish Population

### **Adolf Berman and Leon Feiner, Jewish executive members of Żegota, in a radio message transmitted on the second day of fighting:**

“Great excitement throughout the city. The people of Warsaw are watching the struggle with admiration and open sympathy for the fighting ghetto.”<sup>405</sup>

### **Flyer issued by the Jewish Fighting Organization on April 23, 1943:**

Citizens—Poles, soldiers of freedom!

We know that you are watching the war that we have been waging with our cruel occupier for many days with a sincere sense of grief and tears of solidarity, and with admiration and apprehension about the outcome of this struggle.<sup>406</sup>

### **A poem written by an anonymous Polish worker:**

“Burning Ghetto”

I gaze on thee, Jewish quarter—  
with wide-open eyes...  
with eyes that have frequently faced fear.  
I cannot stop wondering  
and I ask myself: Is there no God?  
God who treats every man the same.  
I gaze on thee, northern quarter of the city  
surrounded by a sea of flames:  
shooting upward columns of fire and smoke.  
I gaze by night on the blaze in the red sky  
and the clouds hidden by smoke.  
I listen to the firing of guns,  
I hear the rattle of machine guns,  
the burst of grenades;  
Oh wonder! The Sons of Israel do defend themselves!  
I gaze and admire you, Jews: I admire your heroic deeds,  
I admire that you have turned fighters,  
fighters at the very last hour.<sup>407</sup>

*Comments like the following refute the claim that the Poles generally felt “friendly neutrality” towards the Germans’ extermination of the Jews. We also see that seemingly callous Polish remarks weren’t necessarily that and, in any case, Poles used comparable remarks to refer to themselves.*

### **Ludwik Landau, a renowned Jewish economist, wrote in his wartime chronicle:**

April 20, 1943: There was an enormous commotion in the entire city ... the dominant mood is one of compassion and approbation.

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<sup>405</sup> Władysław Bartoszewski, *The Blood Shed Unites Us: Pages from the History of Help to the Jews in Occupied Poland* (Warsaw: Interpress Publishers, 1970), 153.

<sup>406</sup> Paweł Szapiro, ed., *Wojna żydowsko-niemiecka: Polska prasa konspiracyjna 1943–1944 o powstaniu w getcie Warszawy* (London: Aneks, 1992), 224.

<sup>407</sup> From a leaflet published by the Polish underground. See Kazimierz Iranek-Osmecki, *He Who Saves One Life* (New York: Crown Publishers, 1971), 145.

April 21, 1943: ... even among those who are indifferent or hostile there is a definite mood of approbation, and everywhere there is an animated and even attentive interest.

April 22, 1943: The attitude toward the Jews of various groups in society seems to have changed favourably during the course of the fighting: in the direction of showing approbation for putting up resistance, and perhaps even a wider extent of compassion that has made itself felt.

April 26, 1943: New announcements were posted today ... the chief of police of the Warsaw District not only reminded about the threat of death for providing any kind of help to Jews outside the ghetto, but also warned that those who did not inform police about Jews outside the ghetto would be sent to penal camps.

April 27, 1943: The fighting continues and meets with the approbation of even the most anti-Semitic groups. There is a great deal of exaggeration in the rumours.

April 30, 1943: This battle was greeted everywhere with approbation, it awoke compassion even among those who hitherto were rather unlikely to show it toward Jews, especially in light of the unequivocal attitude of the entire secret press.<sup>408</sup>

**Zdzisław Przygoda, former president of the Association of Polish Engineers in Canada, a Pole of Jewish origin who was passing as a Christian in German-occupied Warsaw:**

The Warsaw suburb of Żoliborz was inhabited by the middle class, largely members of the Polish intelligentsia. Many Jews were hidden among them.

The day the revolt in the ghetto began [i.e. April 19, 1943] I was riding in a streetcar in the vicinity of the ghetto. An animated discussion ensued in which it seemed most of the crowded passengers were taking part. One of the passengers yelled out gloatingly: "Look at the Jews burning. We'll be rid of them at last." At that remark most of the crowd reacted with outrage. "Have you no shame, sir," one of them yelled back. The first passenger narrowly missed a thrashing by jumping out of the streetcar and escaping.<sup>409</sup>

**Jacob Celemenski, a member of the Jewish underground on the Aryan side:**

I jumped on the first tram for Żoliborz [Żoliborz] so I could reach my contact before the curfew at 9 o'clock. Afraid to enter the ghetto, the Nazis were shelling it with artillery from afar.

The tram was buzzing with many favourable comments about the Jews ...<sup>410</sup>

**Ruth Altbeker Cyprys, a Jewish woman who passed as a Christian on the Aryan side:**

I would pass in tram alongside the ghetto wall several times a day ...

My fellow passengers reacted variously to the sounds of battle in the ghetto. 'Why should the Jews defend themselves?', asked a woman in a hat with a pink feather. 'You are wrong, the Jews are right,' I heard an elderly man speaking gravely and saw him making the sign of the cross. 'Serves them right, those vile German cowards. I heard yesterday the Jews killed ten German scoundrels', interjected a workman.

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<sup>408</sup> Ludwik Landau, *Kronika lat wojny i okupacji*, Volume 2: *Grudzień 1942–czerwiec 1943* (Warsaw: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1962), 355, 358, 362, 369, 370, 380.

<sup>409</sup> Zdzisław Przygoda, "Rocznica powstania w getcie warszawskim," *W służbie polonii kanadyjskiej, 1969–1983* (Toronto: Century Publishing Company Limited, 1983), 150–54. In his published memoirs Przygoda described the events as follows: "On my way home from work in the street car, I listened to the loud discussions amongst the passengers. 'The ghetto is burning! The Jews are burning, and we will finally be rid of them!' said one. The majority of passengers reacted quickly by beating him as he made a quick exit from the moving carriage. It was clear that the majority of passengers were upset by the German action, and pleased that the ghetto inhabitants were beginning to fight." See Zdzisław Przygoda, *The Way to Freedom* (Toronto: Lugus Publications, 1995), 54.

<sup>410</sup> Jacob Celemenski, *Elegy For My People: Memoirs of an Underground Courier of the Jewish Labor Bund in Nazi-Occupied Poland 1939–45* (Melbourne: The Jacob Celemenski Memorial Trust, 2000), 158–59.

The tram was leaving the ghetto walls behind, turning into Miodowa Street. As the sounds of the battle grew fainter the topics of conversation changed.<sup>411</sup>

*The oft-quoted Polish remarks about Jews in the Warsaw Ghetto Revolt “getting burned like bugs,” although invariably presented as such, was not necessarily derogatory. After all, as Ruth Altbeker Cyprys notes, Poles used the same phrase to refer to themselves in the face of their defencelessness against German incendiary bombing during the Warsaw Uprising of 1944.*<sup>412</sup>

*Ruth Altbeker Cyprys’s memoir also belies another inflammatory Polonophobic Holocaust myth, that of Jews, while being transported to the death camps and with full knowledge of their impending deaths, being forced to endure the sight of indifferent or gleeful Polish onlookers. Against such nonsense, we learn that the death trains had small, barred windows well above eye level, and with nothing to stand on in order to look out of them.<sup>413</sup> Viewing (in either direction) was nearly impossible. The author and her daughter were loaded on a Treblinka-bound train. It was only with the greatest difficulty that Cyprys was boosted up and enabled to cut through the bars to jump out and to have her daughter get pushed out. For confirmation that there were no windows in Sobibór-bound trains see Gitany Sereni, *Into That Darkness: An Examination of Conscience* (New York: Vintage Books, 1974, 1983), 122, thus refuting the myth of doomed Jews looking out and beholding throngs of indifferent or hostile Poles.*

*Rather than denigrating remarks, Poles often circulated exaggerated accounts of Jewish accomplishments.*

#### **Alexander Donat, a survivor from the Warsaw ghetto:**

After the January [1943] resistance ... we occasionally heard Poles say things like, “Bravo, little Yids! That’s the way. Stand right up to them!” Or, “They’re eating you for lunch and saving us for dinner!” Or, “As soon as those sons-of-bitches have finished you off, it’ll be our turn.”<sup>414</sup>

#### **Israel (Srul) Cymlich, who overheard conversations of Poles when he was hidden in suburban Falenica:**

The Poles who came into the shop during the day told different versions of events [in the ghetto] such as that the Jews had allegedly freed prisoners from the Pawiak prison; that three aircraft had been shot down over the ghetto; and that “pitched defensive battles are being fought.” But I didn’t put much faith in those stories. ...

The heroic surge of the Warsaw ghetto became the most talked about topic.<sup>415</sup>

#### **Helena Elbaum Dorembus, a Jew sheltered by Polish Christians in Warsaw:**

Two neighbours, Boczek and Mrs. Zaleski, return from town with incredible reports. They tell of hundreds of dead Germans, wrecked tanks and wounded, frightened soldiers being taken to hospitals. Mrs. Zaleski seems to gloat as she praises the Jews for their heroism.

*Dorembus also describes a street scene on the ‘Aryan’ side after the Germans had set the ghetto on fire. A Jewish mother is seen leaping to her death from the third-storey window of a burning building holding her*

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<sup>411</sup> Ruth Altbeker Cyprys, *A Jump For Life: A Survivor’s Journal from Nazi-Occupied Poland* (New York: Continuum, 1997), 132.

<sup>412</sup> *Ibid.*, 200. For a reference to Jews in the Warsaw ghetto being burned like bugs see Martin Gilbert, *The Holocaust: The Jewish Tragedy* (Glasgow: William Collins, 1986), 661.

<sup>413</sup> Ruth Altbeker Cyprys, *A Jump For Life: A Survivor’s Journal from Nazi-Occupied Poland* (New York: Continuum, 1997), 96.

<sup>414</sup> Alexander Donat, *The Holocaust Kingdom: A Memoir* (New York: Holocaust Library, 1963, 1978), 123–24.

<sup>415</sup> Israel Cymlich and Oscar Strawczynski, *Escaping Hell in Treblinka* (New York and Jerusalem: Yad Vashem and The Holocaust Survivors’ Memoirs Project, 2007), 58.

*little son. A Polish woman among the crowd cries out: "Jesus, Jesus, have mercy. After all, they are human beings." The woman covers her eyes with her hands.*<sup>416</sup>

**Hania Azjner, a resident of a Catholic boarding school run by the Sisters of the Resurrection:**

One night, Sister Wawrzyna came into the dormitory after the girls had already settled down. "Get up, girls, come up to the windows," and she drew aside the clack-out curtains. They could all see a red glow over the fields to the South. "That is the Ghetto, burning," she said. "There was an uprising in the Ghetto. You must all pray, girls, for there are heroes fighting and dying there."

Ania [Ajzner] stood there in silence. ... It was a long time before they went back to their beds. It was the 19<sup>th</sup> April, 1943.<sup>417</sup>

**Yitzhak Zuckerman, one of the leaders of the Jewish underground who was on the "Aryan" side when the revolt broke out:**

We can say that the Polish street in those days was pro-Jewish. I'm not talking about fringe groups, who were thrilled that the *Zhids* were burned in the ghetto. ...what was happening in the ghetto roused extraordinary respect for the Jewish fighters. The Polish [underground] press was full of excitement and wonder, not just some leftist and liberal leaders, but the simple sympathy of the masses. You had to be a real bastard to enjoy what was happening to the Jews at that time. ...the general sympathetic atmosphere in the streets did help us a little; I felt it especially because I didn't have documents and, all that time, I walked around, usually near the ghetto walls or at the manhole covers, along with a few people I had with me. ...

As the ghetto was burning, I would mix with the crowd assembled to watch the ghetto walls. At that time, there was a lot of sympathy and admiration for the Jews, because everyone understood that the struggle was against the Germans. They admired the Jews' courage and strength. But there were also some, mostly underworld characters, who looked upon us as bugs jumping out of burning houses. But you shouldn't generalize from that. With my own eyes, I saw Poles crying, just standing and crying. Some days I would go to Zolibórz [Żoliborz, a suburb of Warsaw]. One day the ghetto was shrouded in smoke and I saw masses of Poles, without a trace of spiteful malice. And if I consider the treason carried out against me by individuals, there were just as many Jews among them as Poles. For example, when I was condemned to be executed on April 18, 1942, it was because of a Jewish denunciation.<sup>418</sup>

*Contrary to what Zuckerman and other informed eyewitness confirm, author Larissa Cain claims that, with few exceptions, Poles came to the ghetto walls to watch a fire show ("spectacle des incendies") and to rejoice in Hitler's ridding Poland of its Jews.*<sup>419</sup>

There were many Gentiles who were loyal to us. Most of them weren't paid for their work. Some people could be counted on just as much as the most loyal Jew. None of them hinted even delicately at his very difficult situation, or asked for help. The construction [of hideouts in Warsaw] required the assistance of skilled electricians, builders, carpenters, and other experts; and there weren't many Jewish builders. And if I mention Jews like Benjamin (Meed) or other Jews who built, they were "auxiliaries." The experts were always Poles... Construction wasn't a Jewish profession in the city, and most of the builders were loyal Poles. Our landlady, Marysia [Sawicka], was a member of PPS; I think she was close to the right wing, WRN (the PPS faction that cooperated with the rightist [i.e. main] Polish underground); but she ceased all

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<sup>416</sup> Helena Elbaum Dorembus, "Through Helpless Eyes," *Moment*, volume 18, number 2 (April 1993). (This is a translation from her memoirs *On The Aryan Side*, which appeared in Israel in 1954, in Yiddish.)

<sup>417</sup> Hania Azjner, *Hania's War* (Caufield South, Victoria, Australia: Makor Jewish Community Library, 2000), 43.

<sup>418</sup> Yitzhak Zuckerman ("Antek"), *A Surplus of Memory: Chronicle of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising* (Berkeley, London and Oxford: University of California Press, 1993), 374, 493.

<sup>419</sup> Larissa Cain, *Irena Adamowicz: Une juste des nations en Pologne* (Paris : Cerf, 2009), 100.

Polish conspiratorial activity so as not to endanger her Jewish friends [by risking possible German retaliations for her underground activities]. Her older sister, Anna Wąchalska, did the same.<sup>420</sup>

**Bernard Goldstein, a Bund leader, expressed unrealistic expectations of the Poles, given the measures they themselves faced at the hands of the Germans:**

On all the streets placards were posted, reading: “Death to every Pole who hides a Jew!” There were incessant searches for escaped Jews. The Germans had tasted resistance in the ghetto and were afraid that the Poles might also be stimulated to violence. “Security measures” on the Polish side were strengthened to forestall incidents.

The German press reported briefly that the ghetto Jews were resisting the transfer to work. The illegal Polish press of all shades wrote of the uprising sympathetically. Some even compared it to the historic Barkokba uprising against the Romans. Almost every day they carried communiqués from the battlefield, reporting the number and character of the German units that had entered and left the ghetto, how many ambulances with wounded Germans had driven out of the ghetto gates, the progress of the artillery bombardment, and so forth. ...

The average Poles was not quite so friendly. Among the knots of people who gathered at Shwentoyrnska [Świętojerska] Street and Krashinsky [Kraśiński] Square to watch the progress of the Jews’ fight, all sorts of opinions were heard. Many were sympathetic, but one would often hear a cynical “Thank heaven the Germans are doing this for us.” The broad mass of the Polish people was completely disoriented. Most of them had no understanding of what the uprising meant for the Jews, or even for the Poles. ...

Even among the members of the organized underground, who expressed friendliness to the ghetto fighters, there was no stomach for a brush with the occupying power in order to help the Jews. “An open fight at this time,” they said, “would mean complete extermination for all of us.” They refused to organize street demonstrations and turned down our request for a protest strike as a gesture of sympathy.<sup>421</sup>

**In his assessment of Poles, Bernard Goldstein overlooked how the Jews themselves had reacted during the deportations in the summer of 1942 and the inaction of the 20,000 Jews living on the Aryan side in the face of the liquidation of the ghetto:**

We could see no obvious line of action. ... we knew that armed resistance would doom the whole ghetto instead of only sixty thousand. And who, no matter how convinced that the whole ghetto was doomed in any case, could take upon himself the responsibility for precipitating such a catastrophe?

On July 23, [1942], the day after the beginning of the deportations, representatives of the Bund and of organizations close to it met to consider the problem. A general conference of all Jewish groups was scheduled to meet that afternoon to consider a course of action for the ghetto. ... Then all of us felt that active resistance and obstruction of the deportations was the only possible course. ...

But how would the hundreds of thousands who were not immediately threatened with deportation react to such a proposal? Would they consent to mass suicide? Had we not ourselves conspired to obtain, and even forged, work cards for many people? ...

When, finally, they came back they [i.e., the Bund delegates] reported that they had presented and defended our viewpoint at the conference but only the delegates of Hechalutz and Hashomer Hatzair had supported us. The overwhelming majority had given way to the general feeling of panic. ... They had persisted in clinging to the illusion that nothing more was intended than the deportation of sixty thousand to labor

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<sup>420</sup> Yitzhak Zuckerman (“Antek”), *A Surplus of Memory: Chronicle of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising* (Berkeley, London and Oxford: University of California Press, 1993), 475.

<sup>421</sup> Bernard Goldstein, *The Stars Bear Witness* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1950), 194.

battalions. In view of the temper of the great majority, it was impossible for us, on our own responsibility, to call for general active resistance.<sup>422</sup>

### **Stefan Chaskielewicz, an economist who was sheltered by Poles in Warsaw:**

I was convinced that among those [Poles] I knew in Warsaw I shouldn't have any particular enemies—people who would wish me death. I often met people I knew on the street who would look at me but not greet me, or who would greet me with open sympathy. ...

The fighting in the ghetto was the talk about town in Warsaw. I attempted to listen attentively to what was being said about this matter. ... I did not hear even one person praising the brutal murder of the Jews or disparaging the actions of the ghetto fighters. I was told that a passenger in a streetcar expressed out loud his satisfaction that there will no longer be Jews in Warsaw. That was said to have incensed all the other passengers. ... In the evening the neighbours went onto the roof of the house in which I lived to look at the smoke rising from the houses burning in the ghetto. ... They looked at the site with horror and were convinced that when the Germans finish off the Jews they will go after the Poles. ...

Many Poles actively helped Jews in a variety of ways, sheltering them or supporting them financially, risking a great deal in doing so and exposing themselves to various dangers. The majority of Poles undoubtedly felt great sympathy for the Jews and categorically condemned the humiliation of their Jewish fellow-citizens. But there were others who emphasized with pride that they were not Jews and that German treatment of the Jews was a matter of indifference to them. Some felt deep compassion for the Jews, but were subconsciously glad of the benefits their destruction brought. There were also Poles—but surely few in number—who actively collaborated with the Germans and it is difficult to ascertain whether they did this out of conviction, because of the direct material benefits, or whether they were forced to do so by German blackmail.

Can the Polish population of Warsaw therefore be categorically described as anti-semitic or philosemitic? Can the population as a whole be characterized through the actions of individuals? No, the people behaved in the same way as anyone else would probably have behaved in similar circumstances, including the Jewish population. There were good people, there were evil people, there were indifferent people. Just as there always are all over the world.

I must make one observation here. In hiding, I realised how deeply humanitarian the role of religion was, how much the teachings of the Catholic Church influenced the development of what was most beautiful and noble among believers. Just as in critical moments the majority of people turn to God for help—even if their faith is not particularly strong—so the very thought of God dictates to them the need to help their neighbour who is in danger.<sup>423</sup>

*Chaskielewicz also recorded an incident that occurred on a streetcar in Warsaw. A young Jewish woman passenger was recognized by a former Polish classmate who yelled out, "She's a Jew, catch her." The young woman, who had difficulty walking, quickly got out of the streetcar and merged into a crowd of people. The young man followed her yelling "Catch the Jew" but his appeal fell on deaf ears.*<sup>424</sup>

### **Israel Shahak, professor and human rights activist, Jerusalem, who lived in the Warsaw ghetto:**

Let us take the Warsaw Ghetto. Before the beginning of the actual extermination in the summer of 1942, when of course the extermination of Jews in the other cities was known to many including the children

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<sup>422</sup> Bernard Goldstein, *The Stars Bear Witness* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1950), 110–12.

<sup>423</sup> Stefan Chaskielewicz, *Ukrywałem się w Warszawie: Styczeń 1943–styczeń 1945* (Kraków: Znak, 1988), 35, 42, 170–71. A portion of this book was translated in Władysław Bartoszewski, "Four Jewish Memoirs from Occupied Poland," in *Polin: A Journal of Polish-Jewish Studies* (Oxford: Institute of Polish-Jewish Studies), volume 5 (1990): 391.

<sup>424</sup> Stefan Chaskielewicz, *Ukrywałem się w Warszawie: Styczeń 1943–styczeń 1945* (Kraków: Znak, 1988), 138.

(especially after the news came of the extermination of the Ghetto of Lublin) the life went on exactly as usual, exactly as in Polish Warsaw during the extermination of the Warsaw Jews.

More than this: when after the great majority of Warsaw Jews were exterminated in summer 1942, and in the following late autumn and winter there was a comparative lull in “the actions,” that is in the rounding up of Jews to be exterminated, life in the pitifully small residue of the Ghetto that remained also returned to some level of “normality” with some entertainment and card-playing or other kinds of parties. The explanation is simply that the great majority of human beings cannot do otherwise ... I am not implying that most people who witnessed such horrors, whether Poles or Jews, do not continue to suffer and to feel some sympathy for the victims, only that they *must* after a rather short time return to some sort of normal experience in which the sufferings of the victims do not obsess and occupy their whole lives. ...

No doubt, had a survivor from one of the many small towns of conquered USSR, where most of the Jews had been already exterminated, arrived at a typical Passover celebration of spring 1942 in the Warsaw Ghetto, or at one of the numerous public balls, concerts, etc., he would have said, if he was as stupid as the survivor of the Warsaw Ghetto whom [Claude] Lanzmann picked [for the documentary film *Shoah*], that while Jews were killed in his area, in the Warsaw Ghetto “life went on as naturally and normally as before.”

... Of course there were Polish policemen who rounded up Jews and Poles, who blackmailed Jews whom they recognized as such. ... But who of the Jewish survivors does not know ... that there were also Jewish blackmailers, some of them even quite famous by name, outside the Ghetto, who were neither better nor worse than the Polish ones, and also Jewish policemen in the Ghetto whose duty in the first weeks of the extermination of summer 1942 was to deliver, each of them a specified number, Jewish victims to “be sent” to extermination. ...

The attempt by ... Lanzmann ... to find the “essence” or the “essentials” of the Polish situation is unfair and wrong in both senses of the word. It is not honest and it is not true. It is also presumptuous and racist...<sup>425</sup>

It is of course true that there was another small group which either helped the Nazis, or expressed, quite loudly too, their satisfaction that the Jews “are gone.” ... But in justice it should be pointed out that on many, perhaps most, of those occasions, there was also a verbal opposition to such a statement ... I had, by the way, many occasions to think about this and similar occasions, when I heard completely similar statements made by Israeli Jews in the summer of 1982, when a minority (but a greater one I am sure than in conquered Poland of 1943) expressed delight in every report of the death of Palestinians and Lebanese.

A more typical reaction of the majority of the Poles could be illustrated by a completely casual conversation which I overheard quite by chance: A group of workers were eating and conversing about the lack of food and of money, and one of them observed that those who blackmail Jews “make a lot of money. Will you do it?” he added, turning idly to another. “No” came the answer. “Why?” “Because I will not be able to look on my own face in the mirror.” ... I will quote one really typical story which I myself vividly remember:

It was on a railway, a short time after a control of personal papers ... carried out by some German soldiers. The people in the crowded railway truck ... began to converse about the sufferings caused by the

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<sup>425</sup> Raul Hilberg writes: “The Intellectuals of Paris could be found in their customary coffee houses. In that city Pablo Picasso went on painting, and Jean-Paul Sartre wrote his plays. Those with less lofty aspirations looked for escape in movies, sports, or alcohol. Everywhere, everyday routines were maintained, and if need be reconstituted. The quest was a necessity, pursued day after day. Immersed in their own existence, the neighbors of the Jews only had to glance at the Jewish community in its distress to reassure themselves that they did not share the Jewish fate. That was the situation of the time in most of Europe. ... Clearly, all the prewar divisions between Jews and non-Jews were deepened as the non-Jewish neighbors turned their concerns inward for the sake of material and mental stability. It was at this point that the witnesses distanced themselves from the victims, so that physical proximity no longer signified personal closeness.” See Raul Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews*, Third edition (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2003), volume 3, 1122–23.

occupation ... when one person suddenly exclaimed: "... after we have our independence I also want to donate money in order to put a golden statue of Hitler in Warsaw for freeing us of Jews." There was a short silence and another person exclaimed—and I am translating him literally as his words are branded in my memory: "Fear God, Sir! They are human beings too!" There was then a total, rather long silence ...<sup>426</sup>

*Calel Perechodnik, who became a policeman in Otwock ghetto near Warsaw, observed Poles in trains passing the ghetto lowering their heads, making the sign of the cross, and praying: "May they rest in peace." On another occasion, Poles stood silently as they saw the blood marks of murdered Jews on the pavement.*<sup>427</sup>

**After escaping from the ghetto in May 1943 with the help of priests, Halina Gorcewicz took a tram to her new residence in the suburb of Praga:**

My eyes turned unwittingly in the direction of the burning ghetto. An older woman sitting opposite noticed this and turned to me sneering:

"You're watching the ghetto burn, Miss? Won't do them any harm to fry a bit. They won't be saying again that the buildings are theirs and the streets are ours to sweep."

I thought I would launch myself at her. I was just about to yell out ... when from the row of seats on the other side some man shouted at her:

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<sup>426</sup> Israel Shahak, "The 'Life of Death': An Exchange." *The New York Review of Books*, January 29, 1987. A similar scene was observed by Szmul Zygielbojm, a respected Jewish member of the Polish National Council in London, who recalled that when he was on his way to Kraków, he heard a Pole sermonizing on the Jews in the presence of other Poles. Finally, one of the Polish peasants who had heard enough of the anti-Semitic diatribe asked the man, "And where did you learn to preach so well in German?" The anti-Semite tried to respond but was drowned out by the laughter of the pro-Jewish Poles. See Richard C. Lukas, *The Forgotten Holocaust: The Poles Under German Occupation, 1939–1944* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1986), 142–43. A Jew passing as a Pole, who was being transported by train along with other Poles to work in Germany, recalled how one of the young Poles wanted to instigate a search for Jews hiding among them. This met with the pointed rebuke of another Pole: "'You are a stupid peasant, Stephan. We are all in the same boat. The Germans will finish the Jews first, then they will finish us. ... The Jews are Polish citizens and have contributed to the prosperity of Poland ... Together, Jews and Poles, we must fight the Germans or we will perish together. ... We should have compassion for our fellow Polish Jewish citizens and the terrible lot that has befallen them.' ... His impressive presence silenced Stephan's zeal for a while. Soon the talk of the crowd turned to more mundane topics on happenings and problems in their respective villages." See David Makow, *Dangerous Luck: Memories of a Hunted Life* (New York: Shengold Publishers, 2000), 39–41. For another example of a similar incident on a train see Andrzej Żbikowski, *Archiwum Ringelbluma: Konspiracyjne Archiwum Getta Warszawy*, vol. 3: *Relacje z Kresów* (Warsaw: Żydowski Instytut Historyczny IN-B, 2000), 733. A Jew who survived in southeastern Poland working as an agronomist wrote in his memoir: "During the occupation, passing as a would-be Aryan in various circles, I came across some decidedly anti-Semitic Poles, though not a large number, who expressed their satisfaction with what Hitler was doing with the Jews. But in those cases there were always other Poles who sharply condemned those statements." See Marek Urban, *Polska... Polska...* (Warsaw: Żydowski Instytut Historyczny IN-B, 1998), 171.

The reaction of the local population to the fate of the Jews in Holocaust memoirs and popular literature is often taken out of its wartime context, and the reader is led to believe that this implied Polish hostility, or at least callousness, to the Jews and their suffering. In actuality, it was an attempt at normalcy in the face of the unending tragedies. In fact, the inmates of Auschwitz also tried to escape the horrors by enjoying themselves, as Kitty Hart relates: "We would dance and sing and even formed a little band. We began to laugh and joke again ... This was surely the craziest set-up in the whole world. All around us were screams, death, smoking chimneys making the air black and heavy with soot and the smell of burning bodies. I think our main fight was for sanity so we laughed and sang with the burning hell all around us. It was incredible, we lay sunbathing and not two yards away, divided only by a thin fence, columns of people of all nationalities were passing by on their way to the sauna and to the gas chambers." See Kitty Hart, *I Am Alive* (London, New York and Toronto: Abelard-Schuman, 1961), 92. Certainly, Hart, who was Jewish herself, was not disrespecting the dying Jews by her conduct. The "Jews are getting burned like bugs" remarks by some Poles during the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, rather than a mockery of the Jews and their plight, may actually have been a form of nihilistic gallows humor in the face of the overwhelming, monstrous events. Hart, for example, observed such gallows humor in reaction to the horrors of Auschwitz: "Someone inside our block made up a dance and named it 'UNDER THE SMOKING CHIMNEYS'." (P. 104.) Obviously, no one was making fun of those who had been murdered and were now being cremated.

<sup>427</sup> Calel Perechodnik, *Am I a Murderer?: Testament of a Jewish Ghetto Policeman* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press/HarperCollins, 1996), 41, 55.

“And what have the Jews done to you, Missus? You German, or Volksdeutsche? You’re in the wrong carriage then. Get out, you so-and-so, or I’ll call a gendarme from the first carriage!” As he later admitted, he wanted to scare her. And she, still muttering something, got off at the next stop.

“So we’ve still got such rabble among us?” The fellow carried on. “The Nazis don’t take ones with a foul mouth like that to extermination camps! You know how it is—I didn’t mean to make a fuss. But for an old bag like that to make ironic comments about those who are fighting, whose hearts are breaking and bleeding ... I have to cry ...”

The conductor came up and pleaded:

“It’s dangerous these days to get into arguments. Calm down. You know how it hurts Poles. That’s just a stupid old woman who doesn’t understand anything, or may be serving those up front in their separate carriage. Well—enough! Waste of time talking about it!”<sup>428</sup>

**Survival on the Aryan side often depended on chance encounters with Poles who were prepared to maintain the pretence that the Jews they encountered were Christian Poles. Marjorie Wall Bingham notes the following examples of many:**

Some of the most striking rescue acts for non-Jewish Poles were spontaneous ones. Jewish memoirs often contain instances of those single moments of character illumination that Zuckerman described. A few examples among many may illustrate how quickly women decided to help Jews. A Jewish woman, passing as non-Jewish at a governmental office got flustered and signed her real name to a false identity card. The female clerk quietly told her that card was “smeared” and found her another blank one. A young Jewish smuggler was chased by the Germans, but a Polish woman upset her apple cart in front of the pursuers to allow his escape. When Marysia Szpiro was pointed out as a Jew in a market, most of the crowd yelled to the police, no, she was Polish. One of the women customers offered to walk her home. As they rounded several corners, she said, “I know you’re Jewish, go wherever you need to go.” As Morris Wyszogrod tried to escape from a labor camp, he slipped into a Polish labor detail where a woman vouched for his presence. Once they are further along, she told him, “Now that you are out, run like hell; I know that you are a Jew.” Another Jewish man chased by police, rushed into a building and then turned as if coming out of the dentist office. The pursuing policeman asked a woman exiting if the man had been inside. The woman said, “yes.” Jan Nowak, one of the underground couriers, commented on this anonymous woman, “She understood in an instance that someone’s life was at stake.” Sometimes the Poles did more than react to an immediate situation. Janina Bauman and her mother found refuge several times in their hiding by simply knocking on doors and finding someone to take them in. In all these situations, the Polish women were at risk if their stories had been checked.<sup>429</sup>

**Roman Solecki, former member of Armia Krajowa, participant in the Warsaw Uprising (August–October 1944), retired Professor of Mechanical Engineering, University of Connecticut, responding to the charge that “after all, only a few Warsaw gentiles expressed their solidarity with the Ghetto fighters in any meaningful way...”:**

I wonder how do you know how many Warsaw gentiles expressed their solidarity with the Ghetto fighters? I was there. Not in the Ghetto but on the other side: a Polish Jew hiding his identity. I wouldn’t be able to answer such question. I’m sure however that vast majority of people I had contact with sympathized with the Ghetto fighters. In a “meaningful way”? What does it mean? Taking to the streets and starting a pro-Ghetto rebellion? Going to the burning Ghetto to help the Jewish fighters? You don’t really mean this? I was happy that I was spared a certain death and I’ll bet so were the others.

Yes, one day during the Ghetto Uprising I was going from Central Warsaw where I attended a mandatory trade school (as you probably know schooling beyond elementary school was strictly forbidden in Nazi-occupied Poland) to Żoliborz where I lived. I passed near the burning Ghetto. Many people were standing and watching. Me too. Near me was a young couple. The guy uttered those monstrous words: “Niemy

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<sup>428</sup> Halina Gorcewicz, “Ghetto, the last days of April & May, 1943,” *Why, Oh God, Why?*, posted online at <<http://www.books-reborn.org/klinger/why/Why.html>>.

<sup>429</sup> Marjorie Wall Bingham, “Women and the Warsaw Ghetto: A Moment to Decide,” *World History Connected*, vol. 6, no. 2 (June 2009), Internet: <<http://worldhistoryconnected.press.illinois.edu/6.2/bingham.html>>.

robią kotleciki z Żydów” (the Germans make cutlets from the Jews). Nobody who could hear it said a word. Neither did I. What would you do? Hit the guy? Argue with him risking your life?

And yes, as far as I remember, life went on the “Aryan” side. Self-preservation instinct. Believe me I was not in constant mourning during this time either. I was attending the underground senior high school. Playing volleyball with my friends. Visiting my fiancée. Telling jokes. I was telling jokes also when deported to Germany or in Polish-communist jail. Maybe that’s why I’m alive and more or less normal.<sup>430</sup>

**George Sten, a native of Tomaszów Mazowiecki, passed as a Christian on the Aryan side with the assistance of Poles:**

I had conscience problems, and I was thinking at one stage of going through the wall and joining the resistance fighters. My protector stopped me. ‘Don’t be silly’, he said. ‘If you go there you will be killed sooner or later. One Jewish fighter will not help them. They are doomed to lose. I sympathise with them, and all decent Poles sympathise with them, but apart from supplying them with medicines and weapons and ammunition we cannot help very much.’

The reaction in the streets was mixed. On the trams I heard comments like, ‘Jewish cutlets are burning. The Germans are doing the dirty work for us. After the War Poland will have no Jews.’ But I also heard comments like, ‘What the Germans are doing to them is inhuman.’ In the end I decided not to go there ...<sup>431</sup>

**Marek Edelman, the last surviving leader of the Warsaw ghetto revolt, attempted to put the charges levelled against Poles in their proper perspective:**

Near the ghetto one always found a crowd of Poles looking at the Jews who were going to work. After leaving the ghetto gate one of the Jews might leave the work column, remove his armband, and steal away. Among the crowd of several hundred Poles there would always be one, two, perhaps three betrayers who would apprehend the Jew... The entire crowd, however, did not act that way. I didn’t know who among the crowd was a betrayer... One has to remember that there were not a thousand or five hundred betrayers; there were maybe five of them. It was the same way with neighbours; one didn’t know if the neighbour was upright. We lived on Leszno Street and across from us there was a suspicious dwelling. Ours was also suspect. After the uprising [of August 1944] broke out, it turned out that that dwelling was an AK [Home Army] station. The mistress of the house had been afraid of us and we of her.<sup>432</sup>

**Stasia Alapin Rubilowicz, who escaped from the Warsaw ghetto, and was assisted by many Poles on the Aryan side, recalled an unexpected encounter with a young betrayer:**

I was standing at the tramway stop when I heard the boy shouting, “Jewess! Jewess! Hold the Jewess!” The boy, maybe nine or ten years old, was pointing at me. There was no use in trying to run; it would have been an admission of guilt. Anyway, I was Irena Ponikowska. The other people at the stop looked at me without interest, indifferently, and said nothing. No reaction—neither “Leave her alone” nor “Yes, fetch the police.” It was just “Don’t get involved.” They themselves were frightened of the Germans and scared of being deported. The boy brought a policeman, who took me, protesting that I was not a Jew, to the police station. My manner was one of annoyance. “What am I here for?” I demanded of the chief. “What have I done?” “Ah, nothing,” he said. “You just look like a woman who killed someone a few minutes ago.” “But I didn’t kill anyone,” I said indignantly. He took my *Kennkarte* away to check that it was genuine, which of course it was, and soon returned it, telling me that I was free to go.<sup>433</sup>

**Zosia Goldberg, who escaped from the Warsaw ghetto with the assistance of Polish smugglers, found both help from Poles and danger from unexpected sources:**

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<sup>430</sup> Posted on APAP (Association of Polish-American Professionals) Discussion Archives, November 6, 2001.

<sup>431</sup> George Sten, *Memoirs of a Survivor* (Bondi Junction, New South Wales: n.p., 1996), 27.

<sup>432</sup> Witold Bereś, Krzysztof Brunetko, Anna Guzik and Tomasz Fiałkowski in conversation with Marek Edelman, “To się dzieje dzisiaj: O powstaniu w getcie, Polakach, Żydach i współczesnym świecie,” *Tygodnik Powszechny* (Kraków), April 18, 1993.

<sup>433</sup> Heather Laskey, *Night Voices: Heard in the Shadow of Hitler and Stalin* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2003), 63.

When we got on the tramway, we were so smelly, so dirty, the conductor took one look and then looked away. He started to drive the tramway fast, as fast as he could. He started to sing songs like he was coming back from work. ... The smugglers got an idea to sing an insulting some about a Jewess ... the conductor knew who these two girls were. He saw how we looked. One thing certain about the tramways. All the conductors were socialists from Pilsudski's [Piłsudski's] party. They helped the Jews. They helped anybody. They were very good in this way. ... these conductors were very helpful."<sup>434</sup>

Once, later, when I was living in the Aryan section, I saw one woman, a Gentile, a neighbor who used to live in our building before the ghetto was formed. She recognized me, but she made believe that she didn't see me. She could have turned me in, yet she didn't.<sup>435</sup>

*Zosia Goldberg recounts how Franka, her Jewish "friend" from the ghetto in whom she had confided, worked closely with a Volksdeutscher plainclothes policeman to squeeze jewelry out of her after she escaped to the "Aryan side."*<sup>436</sup>

So we were walking the streets again and we were in real trouble. One day we were walking in a section of Warsaw called Praga. We came across a little house and my mother simply knocked on the door. It turned out that the owner was a tramway conductor. We said we had no relatives and needed a room. "Could you rent us a room?" He looked at us. He understood the situation immediately because no ordinary Pole would come to somebody's house asking for a room. It had to be somebody who had run away from the ghetto. He said, "All right."

"You stay in this room," he said. "You cannot go out. You give me money and I'll buy you food." He was a wonderful person. There was no bathroom, we had to use a pot, so you could imagine the pleasure he had cleaning for us. He had this one room he gave us. He lived in the kitchen with his wife ...<sup>437</sup>

We went out looking, knocking on doors. We found a place with a family, Ukrainians living in Warsaw, extremely pro-German. My mother told them we were from another town and we had had to leave. ...

But this Ukrainian woman—I can't remember her name—started to get suspicious. She was an anti-Semite who was, as I later found out, actually hunting Jews. In the beginning she helped them, but then once she had gathered enough proof, she gave them away. That was her job—collaborating with the Germans, working for the army.<sup>438</sup>

I was almost exposed three times when I was on the street. Several times I saw the trucks with the *placówka* [*placówka*, an outpost for Jewish labor forces from the ghetto], the Jews who worked outside the ghetto, and many times they would holler, "Zosia, how are you?" I made believe I didn't know them when they yelled from the trucks because ... They were not doing it on purpose to give me away, they were just hollering hello, happy to see someone they knew.

Another time there was one fellow by the name of Lifszitz whom I had known from before the war. He was tall and skinny, with curly, kinky, blond hair, and he worked for the Germans. I was told that he would go into the Aryan section and he would look for Jews to denounce. One day I saw Lifszitz on the street, and he was heading in my direction. So I went up to him, right up to him, and I said, "You know, I have a knife. I will stab you if you try to give me away. Get away!" He ran away from me; otherwise I would have been in big trouble.

Then one day I met my old history teacher, Mrs. Dinces, who was also the wife of the director of my *gymnasium*. Mr. Dinces had changed his faith and become a Catholic, but that wouldn't keep his wife safe. She spoke Polish, not Yiddish, and her Polish was so beautiful it was like music, yet now she was running away with her daughter. She had blond hair with very thick braids in the back. When she saw me I almost went over to her to say hello, but she got so scared that she crossed the street and ran away from me. I don't

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<sup>434</sup> Zosia Goldberg, as told to Hilton Obenzinger, *Running Through Fire: How I Survived the Holocaust* (San Francisco: Mercury House 2004), 60.

<sup>435</sup> *Ibid.*, 41.

<sup>436</sup> *Ibid.*, 62–63.

<sup>437</sup> *Ibid.*, 63.

<sup>438</sup> *Ibid.*, 84.

blame her—she was afraid of me, she didn't know who I was. These were the three times that I met people, and each time I could have been exposed or denounced.<sup>439</sup>

*Zosia Goldberg was caught in a German street dragnet as a Pole and taken to a detention centre along with other young Christian Poles. The Poles were held until processed for deportation to Germany as forced labourers. "When the train started we sang the Polish anthem, crying. I was crying like a baby, too. This was the last time I saw Poland." On board a train headed for Germany, Zosia recalled: "I saw Jews wearing yellow stars working the fields. I took my bread and I threw it out the window. And we all started to throw our bread to the Jews through the windows."<sup>440</sup> Once in Germany, the Poles were taken to the Arbeitfront, the place where they assigned work for ordinary German civilians. "The Germans came and looked at us in the way you hear in stories about Negro slaves in the South. They looked at us to tease. They touched our muscles, looking at our teeth, our eyes."<sup>441</sup> In Germany, Zosia Goldberg encountered many friendly Polish workers: "The Polish, when they were nice, they were really nice. They pretended they did not know. They did not ask questions."<sup>442</sup> Later, when working in a factory she noticed the marked difference in attitude of the Russian and Polish workers, who engaged in extensive sabotage at the plant, and that of the Ukrainian workers: "The Ukrainians, however, were traitors. They were working against the Russians, against the Poles, against everybody, denouncing all the time."<sup>443</sup> "The Russians had hateful eyes when they looked at the Germans. Ukrainians were always charmingly sweet and sang, 'Heil Hitler!'"<sup>444</sup> "You were not allowed to travel from one village to another. Only Ukrainians had this right because they were pro-German."<sup>445</sup> While in Germany, posing as a Pole,*

One day I met a fellow from Warsaw, from the Old Town. So many of those Warsaw Gentiles were fantastic, helping Jews wherever they were. The smugglers also came from that same part of town. The workers in the towns, especially from Warsaw, were far from ignorant. ... They did not have that hatred of the Jews and saw the Jews more as fellow citizens.<sup>446</sup>

*When Zosia was arrested, a Pole who worked as an interpreter, who suspected she was Jewish, counseled her on her appearance and the "story" she should give to her German interrogators.<sup>447</sup> She also encountered several Jews (and a Ukrainian interpreter) who would betray her, and several other Poles who helped her.*

We were always brought back by truck for interrogation. ... One time, those two German Jewish girls saw me in the truck on the way to the Gestapo.

The one that was not pretty told the policeman, "She is Jewish. She's from Warsaw, I know. I recognize her. She is from Warsaw. She is Jewish!" ...

The policeman was not paying much attention, but he reported it to the Gestapo anyway. Now they had a lead.

One day, I was sitting, waiting to be interrogated. They brought in a Jewish woman with a yellow star who was also being questioned. An older woman. She had been caught on the train. A German Jewess, she was married to a Gentile man. ...

We each understood who the other was without asking. She spoke into my ear. "You know I have this star that I took off. I have to sew it back on. Do you have a needle and thread?"

I happened to have it and gave it to her. They saw. They had purposely put me with a Jewish woman to see how I would act toward her ... They observed and saw that I gave her a needle and thread and that I ate the sandwich she gave me.

When they called me in for questioning, they asked, "Why did you eat food from that Jewish woman? Aren't you disgusted?" ...

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<sup>439</sup> Ibid., 74–75.

<sup>440</sup> Ibid., 83.

<sup>441</sup> Ibid., 85.

<sup>442</sup> Ibid., 88.

<sup>443</sup> Ibid., 93.

<sup>444</sup> Ibid., 99.

<sup>445</sup> Ibid., 130.

<sup>446</sup> Ibid., 98.

<sup>447</sup> Ibid., 129.

The next time they tried to trick me into admitting I was Jewish we were cleaning the offices. ... there was some Jewish fellow who was working with us. I was sorry for him and gave him a bunch of *shtumels* [cigarette butts] for a smoke. I made contact without realizing that this Jew was a damn traitor. He was working for the Gestapo.

He came over to me. "What is your name?" he asked. "I am from Wilno. What is your father's name?" He was talking so softly, and with a Jewish accent. ...

I found out that he sewed suits for the Gestapo men. He was a tailor. He sewed their clothing, and he translated whenever they needed it. He was a denouncer.<sup>448</sup>

#### **Ruth Altbeker Cyrprys, who often left the ghetto and ventured into Aryan Warsaw:**

I admit that at first I did not put on the armband. ... But then a pretty woman, young and strog, appeared in the streets and she terrorized young Jewesses not wearing the star. I will never know whether she was a madwoman, as some maintained, or just a German, or as some other suggested, a Pole who hated Jewesses. As soon as she would see a young Jewess she would let out a furious cry of 'Jude' and would assault and beat the unhappy victim to the accompaniment of wild screaming. I remember that one day, at the beginning of January 1940, I was walking along Marszałkowska [Marszałkowska] Street with an elderly lady chatting peacefully. Suddenly I heard the well-known shrill cry and some twenty metres ahead of me spotted that dangerous woman running toward me. There were not many people in the street at that time and my very advanced pregnancy slowed me down. I tried to scuttle away but the distance between us was getting smaller. At my wits' end I jumped on the pavement, certain that she would get me. I could not expect any help from the few passers-by who feared she might be a German. Helpless and desperate, I thought that there was no rescue for me. All at once the driver of a passing tram, having seen what was going on, stopped the tram next to me. He shouted to me to jump in quickly and with all my strength I pulled myself on to the platform and the tram started, leaving behind the horrible woman, gesticulating wildly.<sup>449</sup>

#### **Natan Gross, who relocated to Warsaw from his native Kraków, and passed as a Christian:**

But why was I mocked by the rejects of Polish society, the dregs, the scum? Hadn't the Germans showed them who was boss? Apparently not. However, the more intelligent part of the population and the more enlightened workers—simple, decent people—offered their solidarity, dread, and sympathy (even if they did so in a passive way). ...

Warsaw tram drivers showed great patriotism, devotion to the resistance movement, and loyalty to Jews who were in hiding. These two, however, were exceptional knaves. They entered Sanecka's apartment one evening and demanded a large sum of cash. They also blackmailed Sanecka's friend, who had nothing to do with Judaism. The women refused to be intimidated. As a result, the abject tram drivers went to the police. Mrs. Sanecka and her friend were jailed, but so were the two bloodsuckers, since Sanecka accused them of extortion. They spent more than half a year in the slammer and supposedly received a good beating (probably because they had tried to go into business on their own, without splitting the profits with the professional extortionists). After release, the two tram drivers moved out of Ciasna Street; they could not bear the contempt with which the other tenants treated them. Mrs. Sanecka's friend was set free after a few days, but Sanecka spent several weeks behind bars. Her freedom was won in large part thanks to the doorkeeper Mrs Kowalska, who attested to Sanecka's Aryan status and claimed to have known her before the war. ...

People were afraid to rent her [Nina] a room because they took her for a Jew. It was typical, however, that she was never bothered by extortionists despite spending whole days running around the city with underground literature. If you did not feel yourself to be a Jew, then no one would try to blackmail you, no matter how 'bad' you looked.<sup>450</sup>

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<sup>448</sup> Ibid., 132–34.

<sup>449</sup> Ruth Altbeker Cyrprys, *A Jump For Life: A Survivor's Journal from Nazi-Occupied Poland* (New York: Continuum, 1997), 24.

<sup>450</sup> Natan Gross, *Who Are You, Mr. Grymek?* (London and Portland, Oregon: Vallentine Mitchell, 2001), 130, 206, 251.

**Miriam Peleg-Mariańska, a Jew who worked closely with the Council for Aid to Jews:**

There were also other [German] posters, both in Warsaw and in Kraków, saying things like ‘Jew—lice—spotted typhus’, with an appropriate illustration and other ignominious slogans. ... I did see a large number of Poles who were offended to the depth of their beings by this vile propaganda ...

Then a young boy appeared in the tram [in Warsaw] and he was singing a vile little song ... I looked at ‘Teodor’ [Adam Rysiewicz]. I saw him clench his teeth so hard that his jaw turned white. At the next stop he took the young singer by the collar and threw him out of the carriage ... He himself remained inside. I was afraid of what the passengers’ reaction was going to be, but no one said a word.<sup>451</sup>

**Irena Bakowska, then a teenager, was part of a group of six Jews being smuggled from Warsaw to the countryside:**

“We entered into a single train compartment occupied already by the Christian Poles ... We were greeted in a friendly manner, and the man sitting by himself moved over and sat with his four companions. ... The conductor, a Christian Pole, entered the compartment to check the tickets. ... we uncovered our armbands to identify ourselves. I watched the reaction of the Christian Polish passengers with great apprehension. ... But the attitude of the Christian passengers was sympathetic and not at all hostile. They started talking with us, and urged us to throw away our armbands and our Jewish identity. ... Those five people seemed truly to care about my survival, repeating over and over again that I could be saved and survive as a Pole. They persuaded me that all Poles did not hate us, did not wish us to perish.”<sup>452</sup>

**Statement of the Jewish National Committee, July 22, 1944:**

We have especially deep and sincere ties with the fighting, democratic Polish underground. Our eyes are open. We know that a certain segment of Polish society is still infected with anti-Semitism... All the more brightly and beautifully stand out numerous acts of self-sacrificing and selfless assistance on the part of the democratic and working class elements in Polish society. The deeply humanitarian stance of a significant portion of the Polish educated classes, activists of many movements, and many good, simple people will be forever etched in the minds of Polish Jewry.<sup>453</sup>

*In view of the foregoing testimonies, it is apparent that Jürgen Stroop’s comment that the “Polish population has by and large welcomed the measures implemented against the Jews,” was purely gratuitous and undoubtedly inserted in his report to placate his superiors. In that same passage Stroop reported that he had approved a special proclamation informing the Polish population of the reasons for destroying the former Jewish quarter, in which he blamed the Jews for “recent assassinations in the city of Warsaw and the mass graves found in Katyn.” The proclamation called on Poles to assist in the fight against Communist agents and Jews.<sup>454</sup> Stroop’s earlier remark about the Poles, whom he refers to elsewhere in his report simply as “bandits,” can thus be construed as a boastful statement of the success of his mission in Warsaw. From an historical point of view, it has to be dismissed as a piece of unsubstantiated propaganda. In this regard, it is also worth noting that the Nazi propaganda machine, with its typical mendacity and inconsistency, simultaneously published reports in a number of German papers that, after learning of the Katyn massacre, the blame for which the Germans attempted to assign to the Jews, the Polish populace spontaneously attacked the ghetto in Warsaw in order to murder the Jews, and that it was the German police who had to intervene to protect the Jews. Posters containing information about the alleged Polish*

<sup>451</sup> Miriam Peleg-Mariańska and Mordecai Peleg, *Witnesses: Life in Occupied Kraków* (London and New York: Routledge, 1991), 151–152.

<sup>452</sup> Irena Bakowska, *Not All Was Lost: A Young Woman’s Memoir, 1939–1946* (Kingston, Ontario: Karijan, 1998), 142–44.

<sup>453</sup> “Głos z otchłani,” July 1944. Cited in Paweł Szapiro, ed., *Wojna żydowsko-niemiecka: Polska prasa konspiracyjna 1943–1944 o powstaniu w getcie Warszawy* (London: Aneks, 1992), 415.

<sup>454</sup> Jürgen Stroop, *The Stroop Report: The Jewish Quarter of Warsaw Is No More!* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1979)—see p.11 of Stroop’s main report; endnote 9.

assault on the ghetto were to be found in many towns in the Generalgouvernement.<sup>455</sup> At the same time, however, posters in Warsaw announced that the Germans embarked on the destruction of the ghetto because of the criminal activities of the Jews, who sympathized with the Bolsheviks, and called on Poles to murder the Jews who escaped from the ghetto.<sup>456</sup>

Another image that is often invoked as “proof” of the alleged widespread insensitivity of Warsaw’s Polish population to the fate of the Jews is that of Poles enjoying themselves on a merry-go-round that had been set up, for propaganda purposes, on Krasiński Square, near the ghetto wall, in August 1942. The metaphorical merry-go-round was made famous in Czesław Miłosz’s poem “Campo di Fiori.” However, when the ghetto uprising broke out unexpectedly on April 19, 1943, being Monday of Holy Week, those Poles (perhaps a few score?) who came to an amusement site during that solemn period when the Christian population thronged to Warsaw’s churches, were hardly representative of the Polish population. Nor could they have known what would happen that Monday. More importantly, as we know from a report by the famed underground courier Jerzy Lerski, which was confirmed by Władysław Bartoszewski and others, this image is essentially a hoax: the merry-go-round ceased to function soon after the revolt broke out.<sup>457</sup> Professor Krzysztof Dunin-Wąsowicz, a member of the Polish underground who was honoured by Yad Vashem for rescuing Jews, states categorically that he witnessed the merry-go-round operating only the morning of the day the revolt broke out, and that it was already not functioning that afternoon.<sup>458</sup> However, no one remembers another telling incident that occurred near the ghetto wall at the time of the revolt. A group of boys standing near some swings swarmed a Jew who had emerged from a sewer, pretending to shove and hit him. The distracted German guards thus failed to notice five dishevelled Jewish women who subsequently emerged from that sewer and blended into the crowd of onlookers.<sup>459</sup>

Often the most blatant anti-Semitic comments were spoken by Jews posing as Poles who believed that they needed to deflect suspicions by conforming to their stereotypes of “anti-Semitic” Poles. For example, a Jewish woman who worked for a German dentist in Warsaw “found that among the seven people working in his laboratory and office there were two other Jews with false papers. She got an inkling of this once when, during a coffee break, they tried to outdo the good doctor in their anti-Semitic remarks.”<sup>460</sup> A Jew passing as a Pole who watched the ghetto burn from the rooftop of her home competed with another Jew,

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<sup>455</sup> A number of Polish underground publications reported this at the time. See Paweł Szapiro, ed., *Wojna żydowsko-niemiecka: Polska prasa konspiracyjna 1943–1944 o powstaniu w getcie Warszawy* (London: Aneks, 1992), 152, 156–157, 163, 171, 184, 212.

<sup>456</sup> Szapiro, *Wojna żydowsko-niemiecka*, 185, 190, 201, 271.

<sup>457</sup> Jerzy Lerski, *Emisariusz “Jur”* (London: Polish Cultural Foundation, 1984), 107; Władysław Bartoszewski, “Wierni Krajowi,” *Zeszyty Historyczne* (Paris), vol. 71 (1985): 229; Zbigniew Wolak, “Efektowny symbol literacki—ale fałszywy,” *Życie Warszawy*, May 26, 1993; Wojciech Klewiec interview with Tomasz Szarota, “Miasto paragrafu śmierci,” *Rzeczpospolita*, March 26–27, 2011. According to historian Tomasz Szarota, there were two merry-go-rounds erected by the Germans near the ghetto wall for propaganda purposes; one of them was not functioning at the time the revolt broke out; the other, on Krasiński Square, was shut down soon after the revolt began. See Tomasz Szarota, “Czy śmiały się tłumy wesołe? Karuzela na Placu Krasińskich,” *Rzeczpospolita*, February 28–29, 2004; Tomasz Szarota, *Karuzela na Placu Krasińskich: Studia i szkice z lat wojny i okupacji* (Warsaw: Rytm, and Fundacja “Historia i Kultura”, 2009), 149–69; Tomasz Szarota, “The Merry-Go-Round on Krasiński Square: Did the ‘happy throngs laugh’? The Debate Regarding the Attitude of Warsaw’s Inhabitants towards the ghetto Uprising,” in *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry*, vol. 26: *Jews and Ukrainians* (Oxford and Portland, Oregon: The Litman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2014), 493–515.

<sup>458</sup> Jacek Leociak, *Ratowanie: Opowieści Polaków i Żydów* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2010), 69–70. For other such statements see Jan Żaryn and Tomasz Sudoł, eds., *Polacy ratujący Żydów: Historie niezwykłe* (Warsaw: Neriton, 2014), 318–19. For confirmation that one of the merry-go-rounds was not operating see Arthur Ney, *W Hour* (Toronto: Azrieli Foundation, 2014), 59. See also the following testimonies that refer to a functioning merry-go-round, possibly as late as Easter Sunday: Ferdynand Goetel, *Czas wojny* (London: Veritas, 1955), who refers to the merry-makers as “riffraff” (*motloch*); Adina Blady Sz wajger, *I Remember Nothing More: The Warsaw Children’s Hospital and the Jewish Resistance* (London: Collins Harvill, 1990), 164; Ruth Altbeker Cyprys, *A Jump For Life: A Survivor’s Journal from Nazi-Occupied Poland* (New York: Continuum, 1997), 133; “Kołakowski o wojnie i swoim dzieciństwie,” interviewed by Zbigniew Mentzel, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, October 13, 2007; Stanisław Śreniowski, “From the Book of Madness and Atrocity,” in *Holocaust: Studies and Materials*, vol. 1 (2008): 313–14.

<sup>459</sup> Janina Hera, *Polacy ratujący Żydów: Słownik* (Warsaw: Neriton, 2014), 163, based on an underground brochure, *Warszawa i Warszawka w okresie przedpowstaniowym*, by Aleksander Maliszewski published in 1943.

<sup>460</sup> Yehuda Nir, *The Lost Childhood: A Memoir* (San Diego, New York and London: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1989), 94.

*whose identity she did not know, in making anti-Semitic remarks. Indeed, during the uprising, thousands of Jews on the Aryan side congregated near the ghetto walls to watch what was unfolding.*

*After the revolt in the Warsaw ghetto was quashed, the Germans built a concentration camp in the ruins of the ghetto where they imprisoned Poles and Jews brought from other parts of Europe.*

**Timothy Snyder, American historian:**

The Jewish laborers of Concentration Camp Warsaw were to perform three major tasks in the ruins: destroy the buildings in the former ghetto that still stood after the arson of April and May 1943; search for valuables that Jews might have left behind; and bait Jews still in hiding to come and surrender themselves. Some of the Jewish laborers were also sent, in their striped uniforms and wooden shoes, to labor beyond the walls of the former ghetto. Friendships grew up between these foreign Jews and Poles in Warsaw, despite barriers of language. One of these laborers remembered a scene beyond the ghetto walls: “A Polish boy, maybe fourteen years old, badly dressed, was standing just next to us with a little basket, in which there were a few small apples. He looked at us, thought for a moment, and then grabbed his little basket and threw it to us. Then he ran to the other boys selling food, and suddenly bread and fruit rained down on us from all sides. At first the SS-men guarding us didn’t know what to do, they were so surprised by this unexpected [and dangerous] expression of solidarity. Then they began to scream at the boys and point their machine guns at them, and to beat us for accepting the food. But that didn’t hurt us, we paid no attention. We waved our thanks to these boys.”

After October 1943, the Jews of Concentration Camp Warsaw were forced to perform yet another task: the disposal of the bodies of Poles taken from Warsaw and executed in the ruins of the ghetto. Poles were brought in trucks in groups of fifty or sixty to the terrain of the former ghetto, where they were executed in or near Concentration Camp Warsaw by machine gunners of the local SS and another police unit. Jewish prisoners then had to form a Death Commando that would eliminate the traces of the execution. They would build a pyre from wood taken from the ruins of the ghetto, and then stack bodies and wood in layers. Then the Jews poured gasoline on the pyres and lit them. Yet this was a Death Commando in more than the usual sense. Once the bodies of the Poles were burning, the SS-men shot the Jewish laborers who had built the pyre, and tossed their bodies into the flames.<sup>461</sup>

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<sup>461</sup> Timothy Snyder, *Bloodlands: Europe Between Hitler and Stalin* (New York: Basic Books, 2010), 296–97.

## Rescue of Jews in Warsaw

### A German proclamation warned of the death penalty for aiding Jews:

A declaration signed by the ‘Chief of the Warsaw District Police’, was posted up around the city to remind the populace that anyone assisting Jews outside the ghetto in any way would incur the death penalty. It also threatened to deport to concentration camps anyone who failed to inform the police of the presence of any Jew beyond the ghetto walls.<sup>462</sup>

### Władysław Bartoszewski, Polish historian, founding member of Żegota (Polish wartime Council for Aid to the Jews), decorated by Yad Vashem:

An attempt to protect one hiding Jew for a prolonged period of time called for the cooperation of several, sometimes of a dozen or so people. Estimating the number of Jews hiding in Warsaw alone at about 15 thousand in the autumn of 1943, “placed in the homes of 2–3 thousand Polish families,” Emanuel Ringelblum [the chronicler of the Warsaw Ghetto] made the following ... calculation:

“Considering that those 2–3 thousand Polish families were acting with the knowledge and consent of their closest relatives, we will arrive at the conclusion that at least 10–15 thousand Polish families in Warsaw are helping the Jews to hide. Assuming that an average family is composed of four persons, this represents 40–60 thousand people [out of a Polish Christian population of some 800,000].”

One should add at this point that thousands of people had already previously been engaged in helping many Jews who, in spite of all the efforts, had not been saved and those people, consequently, are not covered by Ringelblum’s estimate. It is also certain that many of the Jews who, in the year 1943, were still living in a Polish environment and who had been successfully protected for a long time, did not survive to the end of the war. They were arrested at home, in many cases together with those sheltering them, or seized in the street. An undetermined number of Jews hiding in Warsaw died during the Warsaw Uprising in August and September 1944, sharing the fate of the population of the fighting and then destroyed city.<sup>463</sup>

### Gunnar S. Paulsson, Holocaust historian:

In the league of people who are known to have risked their lives to rescue Jews, Poland stands at the very top, accounting for more than a third of all the ‘Righteous Gentiles’. ...

Of the 27,000 Jewish fugitives in Warsaw, 17,000 were still alive 15 months after the destruction of the ghetto, on the eve of the Polish uprising in 1944. Of the 23,500 who were not drawn in by the Hotel Polski scheme [*in which some 3,000 well-to-do Jews on the “Aryan” side were lured out of hiding by Jewish Gestapo agents on false promises of passage out of Nazi Europe on foreign passports*<sup>464</sup>], 17,000 survived until then. Of these 17,000, 5,000 died in the 1944 Warsaw Uprising, and about 10,500 were still alive at liberation. ...

As it happens, there is an excellent standard of comparison, because it is estimated that in the Netherlands, 20–25,000 Jews went into hiding—about the same number as in Warsaw—of whom 10–15,000 survived—again, about the same number. ... The conclusion, then, is quite startling: leaving aside acts of war and Nazi perfidy, a Jew’s chances of survival in hiding were no worse in Warsaw, at any rate, than in the Netherlands. ...

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<sup>462</sup> Władysław Bartoszewski, “The Martyrdom and Struggle of the Jews in Warsaw under German Occupation 1939–43,” in Władysław Bartoszewski and Antony Polonsky, eds., *The Jews in Warsaw: A History* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell in association with the Institute for Polish-Jewish Studies, 1991), 341.

<sup>463</sup> Władysław Bartoszewski, *The Blood Shed Unites Us: Pages from the History of Help to the Jews in Occupied Poland* (Warsaw: Interpress Publishers, 1970), 222.

<sup>464</sup> See Abraham Shulman, *The Case of Hotel Polski: An Account of One of the Most Enigmatic Episodes of World War II* (New York: Holocaust Library, 1982), *passim*; Barbara Stanisławczyk, *Czterdzieści twardych* (Warsaw: ABC, 1997), 23, 26–27; Teresa Prekerowa, “Sprawa Hotelu Polskiego,” *Polityka* (Warsaw), no. 20 (1987).

The small number of survivors, therefore, is not a direct result of Polish hostility to the Jews ... The Jews were deported from the ghettos to the death camps, not by Poles, but by German gendarmes, reinforced by Ukrainian and Baltic auxiliaries, and with the enforced co-operation of the ghetto police. Neither the Polish police nor any group of Polish civilians was involved in the deportations to any significant degree, nor did they staff the death camps. Nor did the fate of the Jews who were taken to their deaths depend to any significant degree on the attitudes and actions of a people from whom they were isolated by brick walls and barbed wire. ...

The 27,000 Jews in hiding in Warsaw relied on about 50–60,000 people who provided hiding-places and another 20–30,000 who provided other forms of help; on the other hand, blackmailers, police agents, and other actively anti-Jewish elements numbered perhaps 2–3,000, each striking at two or three victims a month. In other words, helpers outnumbered hunters by about 20 or 30 to one. The active helpers of Jews thus made up seven to nine per cent of the population of Warsaw; the Jews themselves, 2.7 per cent; the hunters, perhaps 0.3 per cent; and the whole network—Jews, helpers and hunters—constituted a secret city of at least 100,000: one tenth of the people of Warsaw; more than twice as many as the 40,000 members of the vaunted Polish military underground, the AK [Armia Krajowa or Home Army]. ...

How many people in Poland rescued Jews? Of those that meet Yad Vashem's criteria—perhaps 100,000. Of those that offered minor forms of help—perhaps two or three times as many. Of those who were passively protective—undoubtedly the majority of the population. All these acts, great and small, were necessary to rescue Jews in Poland.<sup>465</sup>

For the sake of comparison, the case of the Netherlands might be examined. There, 20,000–25,000 Jews are estimated to have gone into hiding, mainly in Amsterdam, of whom 10,000–15,000 survived the war. The overall survival rate in Holland was thus 40–60 percent, and in Warsaw, after levelling the playing field, notionally 55–75 percent. Thus the attrition rate among Jews in hiding in Warsaw was relatively low, contrary to expectation and contemporary perceptions. The main obstacles to Jewish survival in Warsaw are seen to have been the Hotel Polski trap and the 1944 uprising and its aftermath [in which some 200,000 civilians perished, including several thousand Jews], rather than the possibility of discovery or betrayal.

Despite frequent house searches and the prevailing Nazi terror in Warsaw (conditions absent in the Netherlands), and despite extortionists, blackmailers, and antisemitic traditions (much less widespread in the Netherlands), the chance that a Jew in hiding would be betrayed seems to have been lower in Warsaw than in the Netherlands.

...it is clear that Warsaw was the most important centre of rescue activity, certainly in Poland and probably in the whole of occupied Europe. The city accounted for perhaps a quarter of all Jews in hiding in Poland... The 27,000 Jews in hiding there also constituted undoubtedly the largest group of its kind in Europe...<sup>466</sup>

**Gunnar S. Paulsson, the author of *Secret City: The Hidden Jews of Warsaw, 1940–1945* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2002), posted the following findings on H-Holocaust Net Discussion List on November 5, 2001:**

*Was it safer in the ghetto than on the Aryan side?*

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<sup>465</sup> Gunnar S. Paulsson, "The Rescue of Jews by Non-Jews in Nazi-Occupied Poland," *The Journal of Holocaust Education*, vol. 7, nos. 1 & 2 (summer/autumn 1998): 19–44.

<sup>466</sup> Gunnar S. Paulsson, "The Demography of Jews in Hiding in Warsaw, 1943–1945," in: *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry*, vol. 13 (2000): 78–103, at pp. 96 and 99. See also Gunnar S. Paulsson, "Evading the Holocaust: The Unexplored Continent of Holocaust Historiography," in John K. Roth and Elisabeth Maxwell, eds., *Remembering for the Future: The Holocaust in an Age of Genocide* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire and New York: Palgrave, 2001), vol. 1, 302–318; Gunnar S. Paulsson, "Ringelblum Revisited: Polish-Jewish Relations in Occupied Warsaw, 1940–1945," in Joshua D. Zimmerman, ed., *Contested Memories: Poles and Jews during the Holocaust and Its Aftermath* (New Brunswick, New Jersey and London: Rutgers University Press, 2003), 173–92.

Before the deportations, yes. Once the deportations started, no.

Statistics:

Of those who entered the Warsaw ghetto in November 1940, about 70% were still alive when deportations started on 22 July 1942. Of those who fled to the Aryan side, about 60% survived until the Warsaw Uprising in 1944 and 40% survived the war. Among those who did not flee, the survival rate was less than 1%.

If people had known the odds, I think they would have fled no matter what, with or without money, contacts, or prospects: your odds were better if you knocked on a random Polish door and asked to be taken in than if you stayed and trusted the Germans. Ringelblum writes in this vein after the 1942 Aktion:

“Everyone I talk to says the same thing: ‘We shouldn’t have allowed the deportation to happen. We should have gone out into the street, set fire to everything, blown up the walls and fled to the other side. The Germans would have taken their revenge. It would have cost tens of thousands of victims, but not 300,000.’”

Of course people didn’t know the statistics, nor did they know (until they got there) what conditions would be like on the ‘other side’. Their decision was based on guesswork, and limited by lack of knowledge.

*Did you need to have a non-Jewish appearance, good Polish, money and contacts to survive on the Aryan side?*

Of course the more you could blend in, and the more resources you had, the better. But even those who thought they could blend in perfectly were victimized by szmalcowniks (blackmailers), so that evidently they did not blend in as well as they thought. There were many cultural differences that could distinguish even highly assimilated Jews from Poles, for example: circumcision, lack of knowledge of Catholic prayers or customs,

Polish that was “too good” (literary rather than colloquial), “sad eyes”, nervousness, and so on. As an example of the many small “tells”, a Polish janitor wrote about some of his tenants: “I could tell at once they were Jews. They had no visitors, and they never got any mail.”

So even if you had all the supposed prerequisites, you were not entirely safe. But most of the Jews in hiding lacked one or more of them, and faced problems as a result.

There were ways around all these problems. First of all, if you couldn’t pass as a Pole you could live “under the surface”, like Ringelblum and his group.

A “non-Aryan” appearance could be camouflaged (for example by wearing a veil or a bandage), people with poor Polish could pose as deaf-mutes or as foreigners. People with no money (meaning nearly everyone, after a few encounters with szmalcowniks) lived by working (for example as domestics or seamstresses), through illegal trade, by selling belongings, by borrowing from friends, on private charity, or (towards the end) with the help of subsidies from the various aid agencies. If you were living “on the surface”, you could make use of flophouses and soup kitchens run by the Polish welfare agency, RGO. You could volunteer for labour in Germany. A group of children lived by selling cigarettes (the famous ‘Cigarette-Sellers of Three Crosses Square’)<sup>467</sup>; others by begging, sleeping in cellars and attics or in bombed-out ruins; or else they left Warsaw and worked on the land.

In other words the belief that escape to the Aryan side was only for the favoured few who were highly assimilated, with “good looks” and a lot of money was more a myth than a reality. Keeping in mind that

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<sup>467</sup> There was some concern expressed over these cigarette sellers, some of whom were Jewish children. They bought and sold cigarettes from Germans, and some of the Gestapo agents knew their true origin. They were known to stop passers-by and engage them in conversation, likely to gauge their reaction. See David J. Landau, alias Dudek, Janek and Jan, *Caged: A Story of Jewish Resistance* (Sydney: Macmillan, 2000), 272.

about 23% of the Jews remaining after the 1942 Aktion did manage to escape, they were clearly not such a tiny and circumscribed minority.

It should also be kept in mind that after 20 years of Polish independence, most Jews could speak fluent Polish, even if Yiddish was their native language: anyone under 30 would have been educated in Polish state schools, and Polish was the language of instruction even in [some] Jewish private schools. [*The author appears to overstate the fluency of the Jews in Polish. While most Jews in Warsaw probably spoke passable, though accented Polish, in the shtetls the knowledge of Polish was often weak, and in Eastern Poland, it was often negligible, if any. The vast majority of Jews declared Yiddish and (much less frequently) Hebrew to be their mother tongue.*]

Finally, people who had no financial resources could rely on ‘szaber’—the property of deported Jews, which Werterfassung workers could “steal” and sell.

*Did large numbers of people return to the ghetto because they couldn't establish themselves on the Aryan side?*

Yisrael Gutman guesstimates that not more than 2000 people made their way back to the ghetto (*The Jews of Warsaw*, p. 395). My own estimate is a bit lower, about 600, or about one in forty of those who escaped.

Many Jews returned to the ghetto just before the uprising broke out, to be with their families for Pesach. The Germans also set up a special orphanage for children returned from the Aryan side by Polish families, generally because the parents had been killed in the 1942 Aktion and there was nobody to keep up payments. This orphanage (on Dzika Street) was liquidated during the second Aktion in January 1943; about 100 children perished in this way.

Apart from these two specific situations, there is very little trace in the memoirs of people returning to the ghetto. For one thing, this was obviously only possible while the ghetto still existed, thus for only a short period after the main wave of escapes started in September 1942. People who had made the difficult decision to escape had generally already decided that the ghetto was doomed, and if they could not find places for themselves “on the Aryan side”, they tended to choose other options, like volunteering for labour in Germany or leaving Warsaw for the countryside. In addition, some of those who did return to the ghetto later escaped again. (I don't count them; perhaps Gutman does.)

Is it possible that cases of people returning to the ghetto are under-reported in the memoirs? I don't think so. Of every nine Jews remaining in the ghetto after the 1942 Aktion, about two escaped and one survived the war. A Jew who escaped and then returned to the ghetto is therefore very likely to have had a few close friends or family members who survived and could tell the story. Obviously the experience of others who had failed or succeeded was a critical element in the decision to escape, and looms large in memoirists' discussions on the subject.

Therefore I think that the belief that there were thousands of Jews who tried to escape but failed is something of an urban myth.

*Did inhospitable conditions on the Aryan side limit the possibilities of escape?*

Again I don't think so. Rather the main limiting factors, after the start of deportations, were (1) the availability of plausible alternatives (getting jobs in German “shops”, marrying people with exemptions, hiding in bunkers inside the ghetto, staying and fighting); (2) various barriers which prevented people from assimilating information about Treblinka (lack of knowledge, psychological obstacles); (3) the suddenness and great speed with which the deportations were carried out.

Similar factors slowed the development of the armed resistance movement.

As to conditions on the “other side”, Jews in the ghetto could only speculate about them. They didn't get to find out what the reality was until they got there.

*What happened to the Warsaw Jews who did escape?*

Of the 28,000 Jews who went into hiding in Warsaw:

- about 11,500 survived and about 16,500 perished
- of those who didn't make it, the largest number died in the 1944 Warsaw Uprising. It was an unfortunate coincidence that the areas where most Jews were hiding (mostly in and near what had been the Small Ghetto) were also involved in the fighting in August-October 1944, so that Jews were disproportionately represented among the 200,000 [civilian] victims. About 4,500 Jews died in the uprising.
- a second large group of victims were the 3,500 or so who gave themselves up voluntarily in the "Hotel Polski" scheme. This was a trap set by the Nazis, who (for big money) offered foreign citizenship papers to Jews in the summer of 1943. Those who stepped forward were supposedly going to be exchanged for German prisoners abroad, but instead they were sent to transit camps at Bergen-Belsen, Vittel and Tittmoning, from where most of them went to Auschwitz. Others were sent to Auschwitz directly, or were shot in the Pawiak prison.
- about 800 died of "accelerated natural causes" and about 600 returned to the ghetto and perished there. More about them in a moment.
- the remaining 7,000 or so were caught or betrayed; this breaks down as follows:
  - 1,000 died outside of Warsaw, most of them after the 1944 uprising
  - 3,600 were betrayed or murdered [often this was the work of Jewish agents and the like, as illustrated below]
  - 2,400 were caught without having been betrayed (in house searches, street roundups and document checks, or as "Aryans").

The gross estimate of survivors is based on post-war survivor lists and other post-war indicators. The number killed in the Hotel Polski affair is based on Nathan Eck's study of the affair, *Yad Vashem Studies* 1 (1957). The proportions between the other categories of survivors are based on cases reported in memoirs and testimonies, not including the memoirists themselves (to avoid a bias in favour of survivors). Gratifyingly, all three methods of estimating dovetailed nicely, e.g. the proportion of people whom memoirists reported to have gone to the Hotel Polski agreed with the numbers reported by Eck.

**Wladyslaw Szpilman, a Pole of Jewish origin who was sheltered by many Poles on the "Aryan" side, spoke of his experiences during an interview:**

Tadeusz Knade: What help did the residents of Warsaw provide to people of Jewish origin who hid?

Władysław Szpilman: A great deal. Poland is not an anti-Semitic country. Those who state the contrary don't speak the truth and perform a bad service that is hostile to Poland. Let us remember that for taking part in rescue activities on behalf of Jews one was threatened with death. Not everyone could muster up the strength to run this risk. Not everyone is born a hero. At least thirty Poles were engaged in rescuing me. At least thirty, at the risk of their lives. A colleague who worked with me in the Polish Radio sheltered me for ten days in his lovely home. A year before the war ended he took me from Narbutt Street to Niepodległość (Independence) Avenue, walking with me along this path at half past seven in the morning. I told him at that time, "Let's not walk together. I don't have any documents. Why should you perish along with me?" "No, we'll go together," he decided, to which he added: "Your chances of surviving the war are greater than mine." And the day before the Warsaw Uprising (August 1944) he and a colleague from the underground arrived at an agreed upon place in order to purchase weapons. Someone betrayed them. Vlasovistes put them up against a wall and executed them. Later I found out that he was a second lieutenant in the Home Army.

Tadeusz Knade: What do you think of opinions that the creation of death camps in occupied Poland was not something accidental?

Władysław Szpilman: The fact that Nazi Germany decided to create the death camps precisely in occupied Poland has nothing to do with Poland or the Poles. It was simply the most convenient place for the Germans to build their camps because they would not have to transport the prisoners far. The Poles are in no way responsible for that. The whole world knows who bears the guilt for that tragedy.<sup>468</sup>

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<sup>468</sup> "Władysław Szpilman ostatni wywiad," *Rzeczpospolita*, October 12, 2002.

**Two Jewish sisters, one of them with a distinctly Jewish appearance, who roamed the streets of Warsaw:**

Among the Jewish street children in Warsaw were two sisters, Stefcia and Marysia Szurek, aged fourteen and nine, respectively. For months they roamed the streets, earning money by singing in public places and spending the nights in the homes of women they met by chance. But because of Stefcia's distinctly Jewish appearance they constantly had to find new places to sleep and often spent the night in ruined buildings. At one stage they met a Polish girl who took them to her grandmother's home, where they slept on the floor. They were able to make a fair living from their singing in the streets, enough to support them as well as the Polish girl and her grandmother. Unfortunately, Stefcia contracted typhoid fever and pneumonia. They were afraid to call a doctor, and the old woman was scared the girl would die in her home and that the authorities would discover that she had been sheltering Jews. Over the pleas of the younger sister, she insisted that the sick girl leave the apartment. Marysia took her sister to a children's hospital, where she left her by the door of the waiting room and ran off. Stefcia was examined and transferred to a hospital for infectious diseases, where she recovered. After being released from the hospital she rejoined her sister and the two resumed their street singing.<sup>469</sup>

**Marcus David Leuchter, who lived in "Aryan" Warsaw for more than two years:**

Having escaped from the Ghetto [in Kraków], I assumed a Polish gentile identity. While everybody around me knew, or at least suspected, that I was a Jew, nobody betrayed me.<sup>470</sup>

**Feliks Tych, historian at the Jewish Historical Museum in Warsaw, who was passing as a Pole:**

Not infrequently, I would see individuals on the tramway or on the street who were, rather doubtless, Jews, looking about themselves anxiously, but no one paid attention to them, or rather pretended not to. ...

For most of the time I was in hiding, I lived with my adopted family in the Warsaw suburb of Miedzeszyn. The neighbours could not have not known that several Jews were hidden in that building. No one was denounced. They all survived.<sup>471</sup>

**Vladka Meed, a member of the Jewish underground:**

I managed to obtain a genuine *Kennkarte* from the German Municipal Bureau in the name of Stanisława Wonchalska [Stanisława Wąchalska], our faithful Gentile co-worker. Anna had arranged with her priest not to report her daughter's death, and assured me that if I would be detained as a Jewess, she would intercede on my behalf. At the same time, she told me the names of grandmothers, aunts and cousins. I was now a full-fledged Aryan with two generations of Gentile forebears.

In this manner a number of Jews acquired the names and birth certificates of deceased Poles, with which they obtained authentic Polish identification cards. Such documents afforded substantial protection, but they were not wholly dependable, for the Germans, if suspicious, could check documents against municipal and church records. ...

About the time I obtained my *Kennkarte*, I also acquired new living quarters. Bronka, a Jewish woman from Piotrków [Piotrków], who was passing as an Aryan, was planning to escape to Hungary, and she offered me her residence for a small price.<sup>472</sup>

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<sup>469</sup> Joseph Ziemian, *The Cigarette Sellers of Three Crosses Square* (Minneapolis: Lerner Publications, 1975).

<sup>470</sup> Marcus David Leuchter, "Reflections on the Holocaust," *The Sarmatian Review* (Houston, Texas), vol. 20, no. 3 (September 2000).

<sup>471</sup> "O ukrywaniu się po 'aryjskiej stronie': Z profesorem Feliksem Tychem rozmawia Barbara Engelking," in *Zagłada Żydów: Studia i materiały*, vol. 1 (2005): 234; "O ukrywaniu się po 'aryjskiej stronie': Rozmowa Barbary Engelking z Feliksem Tychem (autoryzowany wywiad)," in *Zagłada Żydów: Studia i materiały*, vol. 2 (2006): 339–50, here at 340.

<sup>472</sup> Vladka Meed, *On Both Sides of the Wall: Memoirs from the Warsaw Ghetto* (New York: Holocaust Library, 1979), 213.

In this respect the underground Polish Relief Council [*Rada Główna Opiekuńca—RGO*] helped us a great deal. This council maintained its own clandestine presses and employed reliable workers. All that was required for the forged documents was a photograph of the person to whom it was issued. All the other information—name, date, place of birth, trade or profession—could be fictitious.<sup>473</sup>

#### **Additional accounts of rescue:**

Hundreds of accounts of rescue of Jews in Warsaw, as well as assistance for the Jewish underground, are found in Israel Gutman and Sara Bender, eds., *The Encyclopedia of the Righteous Among the Nations*, volumes 4 & 5: *Poland*, Parts 1 & 2 (Jerusalem; Yad Vashem, 2004). These accounts illustrate that, without widespread Polish help, it would have been impossible for the Jewish underground to flourish and for tens of thousands of Jews to seek refuge on the Aryan side. The following entries, among others, describe assistance provided to the Jewish underground: Feliks Cywiński (p. 153), Zofia & Halina Dębicka (p. 170), Henryk & Irena Grabowski (p. 253), Henryk & Wiktoria Iwański (p. 286), Waclaw & Maria Iwański (p. 286), Maria Kasjano (p. 340), the Kobylec family (p. 357), Stanisława & Władysław Legiec (p. 449), Henryk Rolirad (p. 672), Zdzisław & Józef Szymczak (p. 806), Ryszard Jan Tryfon (p. 825), Eugenia Wąsowska-Leszczynska (pp. 851–52), Aniela Wernik-Zajączkowska (p. 858), Mieczysław Zborowicz (p. 932).

*After the failed Warsaw Uprising of August 1944, many Jews remained in hiding in the ruins of Warsaw. As after the failed ghetto revolt, the Germans employed Jewish “musers” to locate their hiding places. The refugees also engaged in widespread looting.*

#### **After the failed uprising of 1944, David Landau survived in the ruins of Warsaw until the arrival of the Red Army:**

Except for a few Christians, the bunkers were practically all occupied by Jews. ... With the option of going to the bunkers or joining the Polish exodus, Jews in general believed they had a better chance of survival in the bunkers. Everyone knew that the bunkers would be of no value if the Germans were to remain for weeks on end. However, we were sure that once the people were taken out of Warsaw the Germans would abandon it and let the Soviet Army take over, which would happen in days. For such a short time bunkers were the better choice.

Under the circumstances it was inevitable that we would know of each other's plans. In our group, more than half had been receiving assistance from the Jewish and/or the Polish Underground. Through such contacts we knew of many places where other Jews were living underground, and an informal organisation came into being. Although only the closest and most trusted friends knew the precise location of each other's bunkers, we had sufficient knowledge of where and how we could keep contact to exchange information and goods. ...

By the second night of the exodus the city was nearly empty. We went to collect the arms we had left hidden. We also began to search the basements for food. The population of Warsaw had been living for some weeks in the basements of buildings for safety, and they had stored in them most of their staple food, both for use and to prevent it from being stolen. On our first night out we managed to bring back all the weapons and a good supply of food.

As it turned out, we had to live in our bunkers for three and a half months. A great number of Jews died during that time from starvation, frost, disease and unforeseen circumstances. And many were discovered by the Germans. ...

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<sup>473</sup> Ibid., 226.

The streets of the city were inhabited by dogs—the Germans, who systematically emptied the buildings of anything valuable then put them to the torch. Berlin had decreed that Warsaw was to be erased from the map of Europe before the Germans left.

Under the ground, Jews inhabited caverns and bunkers, like moles, eking out a wait which stretched into three and a half months. A few hundred Jews were daring to defy the fury of the Germans. ...

But when we finished and went in to the next room attached to the basement it all became worthwhile. The place had belonged to a jeweller. We found a safe with the key in the lock. Inside it was a small box containing gold coins, a gold-covered cigar box, ladies' watches with wristbands and on chains, and a considerable number of smaller pieces of jewellery. In ordinary times such a safe would have made one very comfortable.

... we had five women and thirteen other men on our hands ... The contents of the safe were later divided more or less equally between us, but we soon discovered we had a thief among us. ...

Our life in the bunker took on the character of permanence. We had more than enough staple food, so much that we began to grow choosy. On arrangements with other bunkers via the boxes on the electric poles, we exchanged sugar for coffee, a dog carcass for a jar of dripping. As the winter cold set in we cut down drastically on our outings unless they were absolutely necessary. ...

The first Jewish Committee of Warsaw was already established on the Praga side of the Wisła [Vistula River] when the Polish-Soviet Army entered Warsaw proper. After a few weeks it had a register of over three hundred Jews who had survived the last three months like us in Warsaw bunkers.<sup>474</sup>

#### **Testimony of F.I. describing conditions in the ruins of Warsaw:**

When the Polish populace of Warsaw was given the order to evacuate the city, we decided to stay behind in the ruins. We found a shell of a building on Wspólna Street, whose cellar was still intact. We walled up and blocked the entrance to one of these basement rooms. ...

We left the cellar in secret and took many precautions to bring down a few bottles of water, and we also bought two sacks of flour and a sack of sugar from the "*Armia Krajowa*." ... There were ten people inside. Soon we were joined by three Jews who'd been freed when the *Aka* [Armia Krajowa] broke into Pawiak Prison on the first day of the uprising. One of them was from the group of Greek Jews the Germans brought from Auschwitz to clear away the rubble of the Warsaw Ghetto. ... At night, we crawled out for a few moments.

One night, from out of nowhere, Sukharevitch's friend appears ... He was part of a group of eighteen Jews who were staying in another cellar and he tried to get us to unite with them. Right away, we started knocking down a wall to make the hideout bigger. We scavenged through the cellars, collecting whatever we could: quilts, rugs, sheets, dishes, and most important, more food supplies.

In a few days, four basements were fixed up and linked by a corridor and kitchen. The whole bunker was piled over on every side with rubble. The only exit was through a slim tunnel we covered every morning with rubble, and swept clear in the evening. Inside, the bunker looked even luxurious. Every wall was covered with expensive tapestries. The sheets were changed every week and we burned the dirty ones. We did the same with our underwear and clothes.

It was hard to solve the problem of getting water for thirty-two people. But we were able to do this, too. Some members found a fire-fighting hose and a well which was about seventy-five meters from us. Every third night, water was drawn straight from the well through the hose and dropped into our pitchers.

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<sup>474</sup> David J. Landau, alias Dudek, Janek and Jan, *Caged: A Story of Jewish Resistance* (Sydney: Macmillan, 2000), 320–21, 324–25, 329–32.

I took care of the maintenance and was helped by three women. We also did the cooking, baking fresh bread and cakes, and the meals weren't bad. Every night two of us kept watch by the tunnel while two others crawled out. They were armed with two revolvers. During the day, everyone slept, and our "normal" life only began at night. ...

During our stay in the bunker, we had all kinds of experiences. This is what happened once:

A German patrol stopped to rest over our bunker and lit a fire. They spent a few hours sitting here, then left and didn't put out the fire. The smoke started seeping down into the cellar ... We had to wait till night to stumble outside and put out the fire. ...

On another night, Sukharevitch came upon someone else again, this time a woman with a five-year-old child, who were lying in the ruins not far from our bunker. It turned out the woman had been wandering around through the ruins for weeks and found nowhere to hide. We took them in with us. They stayed down here even though the second group, which had come in later, objected.

And still another time, we ran into a very religious Jew and a *mishimed* staying together. They'd also been wandering over the ruins. They found a bunker, but the Germans uncovered it and they only got away at the last minute. We took the in with us, but this time, a violent argument broke out. The violent people refused to keep them. They even talked about taking them outside to be shot. After a long quarrel, they finally agreed to let them stay with us.

Not far from where we were, there was a second Jewish bunker and when they discovered ours, they attacked us and it almost came to bloodshed. To this day, I have no idea what made them do it, but in the end, they realized their mistake and we united. ...

Our people often ran into Polish marauders who pillaged the cellars at night. ... We made a deal with them and they provided us with fresh meat ever few days—the only basic food we were missing. The distribution of the meat was controlled by the violent group, who tried to frighten the rest of us away.

For a month, a silence hung over everything as if we were in a cemetery. ... Finally, for several nights without stop, we heard heavy artillery barrages. This gave us hope. ... We couldn't stop arguing among ourselves in the bunker. Our "enforcers" even thought of ways to keep all the valuables we'd gotten for themselves. But most of us only thought of surviving these last few days. ...

[They emerged from the cellar when the Soviets he city.] In these first few days, two more bunkers were uncovered near us. Inside one of them, everyone had been shot dead. In the second, all the people had died of starvation. These Jews didn't have the courage to go out and look for food for themselves.

Soon, our group broke up. Everyone went their own way.<sup>475</sup>

#### **Bernard Goldstein, Bund activist, on the aftermath of the failed Warsaw Uprising of 1944:**

For the Jews the evacuation was a greater danger than for the Gentiles; for many it was too great a risk to run. It meant walking through the German lines, past soldiers and Gestapo officials who were certain to scan the stream of refugees closely. At the camps it meant examinations and re-examinations.

Some, who felt they could rely on their faces or their documents, and others ... who had no alternative, joined the refugees, hoping to get through in the confusion.

For the others, who elected to remain in the ruined city, bunkers had to be provided. They would need enough provisions to keep them alive until the Russians entered Warsaw. All this required a great deal of

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<sup>475</sup> Isaiah Trunk, *Jewish Responses to Nazi Persecution: Collective and Individual Behavior in Extremis* (New York: Stein and Day, 1979), 307–10.

money. Fortunately, two or three weeks before the surrender we had received through the Polish government a large sum of money from the Jewish Labor Committee in New York. Thanks to that timely gift we were able to help those who left for Prushkov [Pruszków] and those who remained in Warsaw.

Stocking the bunkers with food was not very difficult. The city became one tremendous market place. Since the evacuees were permitted to carry only fifteen kilograms, they sold and bartered their excess belongings in the streets. The only acceptable currency was the American dollar. No one would take Polish zlotys [złoty]. Food of all sorts, clothing, jewelry, silver and gold were bought, traded, and sold. Many buried their most precious possessions deep under the cellars, hoping to dig them out after the war.<sup>476</sup>

Our nightly expeditions continued. We searched the empty apartments of the abandoned buildings ...

Food was communal property: whatever the expeditions brought back went into the general store. But clothes or other valuables belonged to the individual or group who found them.

I learned that the families of the leaders had buried in various cellars great quantities of clothing, furs, silks, and even gold and silver articles which they had found on searching forays. ...

It was well known that many of Warsaw's citizens, before leaving the city for Prushkov, had buried their valuables in the hope of digging them out later. Some people were willing to risk their lives sneaking through German patrols at night to look for these treasures. Such people were called *shabrovniks*, underworld argot for housebreakers.

Some members of our expedition were dressed in Polish military uniforms, and all spoke Polish well. They became friendly with the *shabrovniks*, and an agreement was made: the Poles would bring food from the village in exchange for the valuables we found. ...

A lively trade began between our bunker and the *shabrovniks*. ... The barter was well worth while for both parties. ...

The inhabitants wove the most variegated and colorful plans for the future. They constantly complained against the American Jews for having given so little aid. Now that millions of Jews had been slaughtered there would be a greater share for those remaining. ...

Many bunkers had been uncovered by digging machines or detected by the specially trained bloodhounds and the listening devices of the Germans. Some Jews had been killed by fire and explosions; many had died of hunger and disease.

And the conduct of the liberators, the rank-and-file soldiers of the Red Army who did not shrink from robbery and rape, further demoralized the population.

The chaos and anarchy of Polish economic life and the dissatisfaction and disappointment of the Polish population were increased by the economic policies of the new rulers. They began to remove the machines and equipment from the factories at Lodz [Łódź] and other industrial centers. The ruin which the Nazis had spread in five years of pillage now increased. Unemployment mounted.

We found that the liberators had brought political demoralization, too. ...

The NKVD, the Soviet secret police, was carrying out mass arrests of those suspected of belonging to the Armia Kryowa [Krajowa], the military organization of the London Polish government. They imprisoned members of other sections of the underground, such as the PPS and the Peasant party—any, indeed, who

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<sup>476</sup> Bernard Goldstein, *The Stars Bear Witness* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1950), 251–52. Chiel Rajchman, who took refuge in bombed-out Warsaw, recalled how he and other Jews went to abandoned warehouses and homes of people who were forced to evacuate the city and “carried off a couple of hundred pounds of food and clothes.” See the Interview with Chiel Rajchman, December 7, 1988, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Washington, D.C.

refused to be “*gleichgeschaltet*” and who rejected the “line” of the temporary Lublin government. The wave of political terror further increased the chaos.<sup>477</sup>

**Some Jews who had hidden in the ruins of Warsaw shot at Poles who brought news of their “liberation” by the Red Army:**

When we were going down into the sewer, two Christians saw us and said “You are Jews, Jews with weapons? You are already liberated.” We thought that they were the ones who tapped on the bunker and that they were German agents. We shot one of them. We were all hardened and suspicious.<sup>478</sup>

On the third night Little Jacob, Masha Claitman’s husband, had crawled out. Near the bunker he had met two Poles and covered them with his machine gun.

They had shouted to him, “What are you afraid of? Why are you still buried? You have been free for three days.”

He had refused to believe them, had opened fire, wounding one of them, and had “escaped.”<sup>479</sup>

**Some Jews who were deported to camps from Warsaw after the failed August 1944 uprising were fortunate enough to have been saved by fellow Jewish prisoners, an act of kindness infused with ethnic solidarity that did not extend to the “Other.”**

The Jews brought hundreds of Poles, remnants of the Warsaw uprising, to our camp in Leitmeritz [in Sudetenland]. They were placed in the death camp. Every day, scores of this group were killed. Among them were two Warsaw Jews. They came to us and asked us to save them. When we related their request to Wittman, our work leader, a Berlin Jew, he went into action immediately. The two received our work clothes, joined us and thereby remained with us until we were liberated.<sup>480</sup>

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<sup>477</sup> Bernard Goldstein, *The Stars Bear Witness* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1950), 262, 270–71, 272, 276, 278–79.

<sup>478</sup> Pninah Papier, “In the Warsaw Ghetto and in the Wyzkow Forests,” in Aryeh Shamri and Dov First, eds., *Pinkas Novi-Devor (Pinkas Novy-Dvor)* (Tel Aviv: The Organizations of Former Novy-Dvor Jews in Israel, the United States, Canada, Argentina, Uruguay and France, 1965).

<sup>479</sup> Bernard Goldstein, *The Stars Bear Witness* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1950), 275.

<sup>480</sup> Isaac Landau, “Horror Journal: Years 1940–1945,” in H. Rabin, ed., *Lanovits: Sefer zikaron le-kedoshei Lanovits she-nispu be-shoat ha-natsim* (Tel Aviv: Association of Former Residents of Lanowce, 1970), 76–90; translated as *Lanowce: Memorial Book of the Martyrs of Lanowce Who Perished During the Holocaust*, Internet: <<https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/Lanovtsy/Lanovtsy.html>>.

## Risks Faced by Jews on the “Aryan” Side

*German reports from the period indicate that, after the liquidation of the ghetto, Poles helped in the round-ups of Jews only “in a handful of cases” (“in einzelnen Fällen”).<sup>481</sup> Thousands of German troops descended on Warsaw to hunt down Jews on the run and those in hiding. By way of comparison, the entire German occupation forces needed to keep Denmark in line amounted only to a few hundred, and barely 3,000 Germans were stationed in occupied France, where some 40,000 Frenchmen were on the payroll of the Gestapo. German occupation forces in Poland numbered half a million.*

**Dov Weissberg, a Jewish boy who was sheltered by a Polish family on Muranowska Street, recalled a raid in April 1943 when rumors spread that a group of Jewish fighters had managed to escape from the ghetto:**

Our block was surrounded by SS and other Nazi units. ... The search started in another house on our block. Some Jews were found and dragged away. They were not necessarily the escapees, but a Jew was a Jew. ... The Nazis were not searching all the apartments systematically, they just entered homes at random. But once in the [small] apartment, they conducted a thorough search, opening closets and other potential hiding places.<sup>482</sup>

**Martin Gilbert, British historian:**

Even those [Jews] who had managed to escape to ‘Aryan’ Warsaw were not secure. On May 3 [1943] the Germans arrested twenty-one women of Jewish or suspected Jewish, origin, in the streets. All were killed. ... Nine days later there was a second such round-up and execution.

To deter Poles from giving shelter to Jews, the Germans intensified their searches and arrests. ‘As a sort of object lesson,’ Feigele Pelter recalled, they set fire to a house on Kazimierz Place [Plac Kazimierzowski], in Warsaw, ‘killing the entire Gentile family living there because they had given asylum to Jews.’

[January 1944]: In Warsaw, hundreds of Jews in hiding were suddenly at risk when one of the surviving liaison men of the Jewish Fighting Organization was caught and tortured. Under torture, he broke; many of those in hiding were then rounded up and killed.

[On April 6, 1944], in a raid on ‘Aryan’ Warsaw, three thousand Germans were deployed from four in the morning to nine in the evening in a search for Jews in hiding. In all, seventy ‘non-Aryan’ men and thirty-one ‘non-Aryan’ women were seized: all were executed five days later.<sup>483</sup>

*On Good Friday, April 7, 1944, the Germans conducted a huge raid in the Żoliborz suburb of Warsaw. “A cordon of troops was thrown around the selected area, and the police went in and searched each house thoroughly from cellar to attic for Jews in hiding, caches of weapons, etc. In the course of this raid, in which a total of 3,000 soldiers and police were deployed and which lasted from 4 a.m. to 9 a.m., 250 persons were arrested including 30 women. Among them there were, of course, Jews and those who had given them shelter.”<sup>484</sup>*

**Mieczysław Mussil, a rescuer awarded by Yad Vashem, describes the German raid in the Żoliborz suburb on April 7, 1944 as follows:**

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<sup>481</sup> Raul Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews*, Third edition (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2003), volume 2, 540.

<sup>482</sup> Dov Weissberg, *I Remember...* (London and Tel Aviv: Freund Publishing House, 1998), 84.

<sup>483</sup> Martin Gilbert, *The Holocaust: The Jewish Tragedy* (Glasgow: William Collins, 1986), 564, 635, 654, 667.

<sup>484</sup> Tatiana Berenstein and Adam Rutkowski, *Assistance to the Jews in Poland, 1939–1945* (Warsaw: Polonia Publishing House, 1963), 43.

Since 3:30 in the morning the whole area of lower Żoliborz was surrounded by army and military police. Every house and every apartment was thoroughly searched. ... My wife and I were arrested and taken to the Pawiak Prison. Four relatives of my wife were also arrested, two sisters and two nieces, as well as three people who were hiding at our place for more than one and a half years. They were Bolesław Matusowski and his daughter Monika, and Renata Preczep, a 17-year-old orphan from Stryj, who was brought to Warsaw by a group of people rescuing Jews. ...

Bolesław Matusowski was put in a Jewish cell in the 7th division. He and his daughter were shot on April 22nd, 1944. Renata Preczep, when arrested, all the time maintained that she had been in Warsaw for only two days, and that she had run away from East Galicia from Ukrainian gangs. She claimed to have lost all her documents while escaping. After all they put her in a Jewish cell in a female division ... On the liquidation of the Pawiak Prison she and a few dozen others were transferred to "Gęsiówka." In the first days of August 1944 they were freed by Home Army units.<sup>485</sup>

**Tuvia Borzykowski, member of the Jewish Fighting Organization who hiding in Warsaw after the failed revolt:**

There are also mass arrests. The [Polish] underground fighters make efforts to free the arrested when they are taken to the Pawiak jail, and often succeed. There are mass searches in homes with the objective of finding arms. Some of those searches turn up hidden Jews, and that is why Jews living in hiding places all over Warsaw fear the increase of the activities of the Polish underground. Even when Jews are not directly involved, they suffer.<sup>486</sup>

**The rescuers of Irena Bakowska were offered a substantial amount of money to rid themselves of their Jewish charge and to take in others in her place:**

Elterman had come to see her husband and offered him a substantial amount of money if he got rid of me and took her mother and her instead. Zofia was outraged and promised that she would never let me go, no matter how much money Mrs. Elterman was willing to pay her husband.<sup>487</sup>

**Bernard Goldstein on the Hotel Polski scheme which lured thousands of Jews living on the Aryan side into the hands of the Germans:**

During the month of May [1943] there were rumors that the Gestapo had received a large number of visas from foreign consulates for citizens of neutral countries. According to the stories which made the rounds, most of the people for whom the visas were intended were no longer alive. The Gestapo was prepared to sell these visas to other persons for large sums of money and to allow them to assume the names of the dead.

Jewish Gestapo agents, like Koenig, Adam, and others, were the "official" representatives of the Gestapo in these transactions. Those who obtained the visas were to be sent temporarily to special camps for foreign citizens near Witel [Vitel] and Hanover and would then be taken out of the country.

An office was set up in the Hotel Imperial on Chmelnia [Chmielna Street] for registering foreigners. The rush was so great that there was not enough room for all the applicants, so the office had to be transferred to Hotel Polski at 29 Długa [Długa] Street. From the hotel the registrants were transferred to Pawiak [Pawiak] jail where they were held in the women's section to await transportation to Witel and Hanover. ...

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<sup>485</sup> From the article "On draughtsman duty" ("Na funkeji rysownika") in the book *Wspomnienia więźniów Pawiaka*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., (Warsaw: Ludowa Spółdzielnia Wydawnicza, 1978).

<sup>486</sup> Tuvia Borzykowski, *Between Tumbling Walls* (Tel Aviv: Beit Lohamei Hagettaot/Ghetto Fighters' House and Hakibbutz Hameuchad Publishing House, 1972), 136.

<sup>487</sup> Irena Bakowska, *Not All Was Lost: A Young Woman's Memoir, 1939-1946* (Kingston, Ontario: Karijan, 1998), 181.

It was good business for the Gestapo. Entire families put their faith in salvation through this scheme. They gladly paid thousands of zlotys [złoty] for a single passport. ... The Joint Distribution Committee contributed financially to obtain passports for a number of organizational leaders. ...

Then the Polish underground government issued a warning. According to information in its possession, all this was only a confidence trick of the Gestapo, a trap to gather in the remaining Jews and to destroy them.

Our own underground had had serious doubts about the scheme from the start. But our warnings were of little use, especially since it was known that many Jewish Gestapo agents were sending their families out of the country on these passports.<sup>488</sup>

*One of the risks faced by Jews was that of blackmailers ("szmalcowniki" or greasers), who were either members of gangs of professional criminals (extortion rings) or amateurs. Communist underground members were also active in this field and robbed Jews in hiding.<sup>489</sup> Most Jews survived their encounters with szmalcowniki, since most of them were usually content to extort small amounts of money or jewelry and did not actually denounce Jews to the Germans, hence the abundance of references to such incidents in Jewish accounts.<sup>490</sup> Amateur szmalcowniki were often young ruffians out to make some easy profit and were afraid of actual contact with the police, because extortion was a punishable offence. Jews who were extorted could sometimes get the szmalcowniki to back down with bravado denials that they were Jews and threats of reporting the szmalcowniki to the police.<sup>491</sup> As historian Gunnar Paulsson points out,<sup>492</sup>*

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<sup>488</sup> Bernard Goldstein, *The Stars Bear Witness* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1950), 202–3.

<sup>489</sup> Piotr Gontarczyk, *Polska Partia Robotnicza: Droga do władzy 1941–1944* (Warsaw: Fronda, 2003), 212 n.43.

<sup>490</sup> Marcel Reich-Ranicki wrote: "Did these young ruffians, or 'Shmaltsovniki' as they were known in the Occupation jargon, really want to hand over their victims to the German authorities? No, they were not particularly interested in that. Instead they wanted to rob the Jews, relieve them of their money, jewellery and other valuables, or at least of a jacket or winter coat." See Marcel Reich-Ranicki, *The Author of Himself: The Life of Marcel Reich-Ranicki* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2001), 194. See also his own encounter described at pp. 194–97. Dov Weissberg describes an unfortunate Jew who was robbed in Warsaw three times in a row. By the time the third blackmailer appeared on the scene he had no money to offer him: "The bum let him go. After all, he was only interested in the money, not in bringing a Jew to the police station." See Dov Weissberg, *I Remember...* (London and Tel Aviv: Freund Publishing House, 1998), 70. For other similar encounters see: Joachim Schoenfeld, ed., *Holocaust Memoirs: Jews in the Lwów Ghetto, the Janowski Concentration Camp, and as Deportees in Siberia* (Hoboken, New Jersey: Ktav Publishing House, 1985), 240–42; Bronisława Alland, *Memoirs of a Hidden Child During the Holocaust: My Life During the War* (Lewiston, New York: Edwin Mellen, 1992), 21 (the companions of a female *szmalcownik* did not allow her to leave her victim without a coat); Yitzhak Zuckerman ("Antek"), *A Surplus of Memory: Chronicle of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 441; Henryk Reiss, *Z deszczu pod rynną...: Wspomnienia polskiego Żyda* (Warszawa: Polonia, 1993), 110. Some blackmailers were careful not to take all of the victim's money and even gave tips on how to conduct oneself and dress to avoid future encounters with blackmailers. Even policemen who extorted money from Jews are known to have backed away from harming those who had no money to hand over or whom they had already blackmailed. See Małgorzata Melchior, *Zagłada a tożsamość: Polscy Żydzi ocaleni "na aryjskich papierach". Analiza doświadczenia biograficznego* (Warsaw: IFiS PAN, 2004), 170, 194. A Jew from Mosty Wielkie and his brother were stopped in Warsaw by a blue policeman who demanded money. When this same policeman ran into the brother a year later he said: "You're still alive? Get lost!" See Hersch Altman, *On the Fields of Loneliness* (New York and Jerusalem: Yad Vashem and The Holocaust Survivors' Memoirs Project, 2006); Wiesław Piechocki, "Żyję dzięki 'Sprawiedliwym wśród Narodów świata': Wywiad z panem Jerzym Czarneckim," *Nowy Kurier* (Toronto), November 2003. "The street urchins, whose only possessions were their meager clothing, did not attract any special attention from the shmalzers [szmalcowniki] (blackmailers who denounced Jews to the Germans) and were therefore in less danger than the adults." When the Jewish boy cigarette sellers did experience threats of denunciation to the Germans, it was in order to try to force them to disclose the names and addresses of wealthy fugitive Jews. See Joseph Ziemian, *The Cigarette Sellers of Three Crosses Square* (Minneapolis: Lerner Publications, 1975), 14, 52–53, 64. The "king" of the Warsaw szmalcowniki was even recruited, for payment, to help Jewish insurgents escape from the ghetto after the failed revolt in May 1943. See Anka Grupińska, *Po kole: Rozmowy z żydowskimi żołnierzami* (Warsaw: Alfa, 1991), 220.

<sup>491</sup> Henryk Reiss, *Z deszczu pod rynną...: Wspomnienia polskiego Żyda* (Warszawa: Polonia, 1993), 122–23.

<sup>492</sup> Gunnar S. Paulsson, *Secret City: The Hidden Jews of Warsaw, 1940–1945* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2002), 238.

the *szmalcowniks*, were for the most part interested in money, not blood. Those who accosted Jews on the street were generally satisfied with relatively small sums, while those who found out their victims' hiding places would take whatever they could find. Although in the latter case Jews could be left destitute and desperate, and often died as a consequence, it was relatively common for *szmalcowniks* to turn them over to the police, contrary to the general belief. Actual denunciation was done for personal or ideological reasons, brought little material benefit to the denouncer and was relatively rare.

*Professional gangs generally included Jews, Polish policemen and German officials among their members.*<sup>493</sup> *Encounters with rings of professional blackmailers could be more precarious, as these gangs*

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<sup>493</sup> Already in the fall of 1939 Chaim Kaplan remarked on mixed gangs of *szmalcowniks* which counted Jews among their members. The following entry is from November 4, 1939: "The conqueror has surrounded himself with spies, traitors, and talebearers, some of whom are found even among our Jewish brethren. The Jews fill a triple role here. First, they are "informers" pointing out the way for the thieves. Visits are made to one place and then another, and each visit ends in a loss of money and life. Valuables are brazenly stolen, accompanied by threats and most often by blows and injuries. ... The second role filled by the Jews is to serve as sacrificial victims. As a result of our sacrifices, they take nothing from the Christians except in unusual cases. A third role is, to our shame, filled by those Jews who buy the stolen goods from the robbers." See Abraham I. Katsh, ed., *Scroll of Agony: The Warsaw Diary of Chaim A. Kaplan* (New York: Macmillan; London: Collier-Macmillan, 1965), 63.

The topic of *szmalcowniks* is dealt with extensively in a recent study by historian Jan Grabowski which is based on court records from Warsaw relating to trials of persons charged by the German authorities with extorting Jews. Of the more than 240 persons charged in 1940–1943, Poles accounted for about two thirds (159 in total), 45 were Germans (almost 20 percent), more than 30 were Jews, and there were a few others (such as Ukrainians). The organized gangs targeted well-off Jews, usually included Jews among their members (some of these Jews were Gestapo agents), worked hand in hand with German officials, and often had connections with the Polish "Blue" police. Jewish bandits were indispensable for extortion operations within the ghetto itself. Grabowski's study is also important for another reason: The Polish underground is often taken to task for delaying, until mid-1942, to take measures against *szmalcowniks*. However, since the Germans were actively prosecuting *szmalcowniks* until that time, there was no need to engage the complicated procedures of the underground state: it was far easier for someone, even the Jewish victims themselves, to simply report the *szmalcowniks* to the German authorities. See Jan Grabowski, "Szmalcownicy warszawscy, 1939–1942," *Zeszyty Historyczne* (Paris), volume 143 (2003): 85–117; Jan Grabowski, "*Ja tego Żyda znam!*": *Szantażowanie Żydów w Warszawie, 1939–1943* (Warsaw: IFiS PAN, 2004), especially 45–47, 86. Until 1942, Jews could also obtain justice through Polish criminal courts which continued to operate to deal with ordinary transgressions, such as theft, robbery and assault, not involving Germans. Another recent study by Jan Grabowski of the court records from the environs of Warsaw yielded the following conclusions regarding the fairness of the criminal proceedings involving Jews as victims (witnesses) and as accused:

Once in the Polish court, proceedings involving Jews advanced along the lines prescribed by the Polish pre-war criminal code. Although the criminal law remained in force, the social context changed dramatically, and the magistrates seem to have been aware of the new reality and were ready to make certain allowances. In some cases ... the judges quite clearly commiserated with the Jews and, while weighing their decisions, took into consideration the particularly dramatic plight of the "non-Aryan population."

When Mendel Don and Izaak Butliński, both severely beaten by a group of hooligans, abruptly changed their testimony, the court "aware of the important discrepancies between the earlier testimonies of the victims and those given more recently," decided to pay heed to the original statements. "The last testimony," declared the judge, "must have been given under pressure, which could have been easily applied (especially in the case of the Jews) by Kaliński [one of the accused] who works in the mayor's office." [The accused, local peasants who assaulted and wounded a Jewish artisan, were sentenced (on appeal) to eight months in prison.] In another case, the court in Siedlce sentenced Chaim Lewin to three months in jail for charging black-market prices. The sentence was successfully appealed. The Warsaw Court of Appeals stated in its April 1941 decision that, "the accused Lewin is a poor artisan, and a sole provider for a family of six. In the present, tough times, he faces extreme financial hardship, and this speaks in his favour. In this context, the arguments of the prosecution are irrelevant."

The Polish judges were also aware of the problems facing Jewish victims and witnesses summoned to court. In most cases, in order to appear before the bench, the Jews had to apply to police authorities for special travel permits. Such permissions were usually denied, and the witnesses' absence could have been used to cut the proceedings short. The judges would have none of it, and refused to dismiss cases based on testimonies of absent Jewish witnesses or victims. The trials went ahead, and some Poles were even sentenced, although the Jewish victims had already

were often ruthless, though they too could be bargained down<sup>494</sup> or, on occasion, even befriended. It was not uncommon for *szmalcowniki* to give their victims advice on how better to avoid recognition as Jews in the future.<sup>495</sup> One notorious Jewish *szmalcownik* who appears to have ties to German intelligence (*Abwehr*) was Jefim Pironer.<sup>496</sup> Far more dangerous were Gestapo agents and informers of various nationalities

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been sent away to the death camps. [Several examples are cited of Poles being fined and sentenced to jail terms for stealing from or assaulting Jews.]

In all criminal cases heard by the Siedlce District Court, which involved Jewish victims and Polish accused, the trials went ahead even when the former were unable to testify. What may seem more surprising, in most cases the defense went along with the prosecutors' requests to have testimonies of absent Jews admitted in court. [Examples are provided.] In all sentences that were appealed in the Warsaw Court of Appeals, the higher court upheld the decisions of the Siedlce court. The fact that the victims were Jewish, and the witnesses were unable to attend the hearings, seemed to have played no role in the judges' deliberations.

The phenomenon of relative judicial impartiality as demonstrated in the Siedlce District Court and in the Warsaw Court of Appeals is corroborated by evidence from the Municipal Court in Otwock. There, the sentences imposed on Jewish defendants differed little from those imposed on Polish culprits. A comparison of fifty-four cases involving Jews with an equal sample of "Polish" cases reveals that the ethnic origin of the accused played no visible role in the court decisions. The cases heard by the court during the 1940–1942 period dealt mostly with theft and assault, and the judges were more preoccupied with the pre-war record of the accused than with their racial features. Repeat offenders were given harsh treatment regardless of their origins. Overall, the judges strayed on the side of leniency, often explaining in their decisions that the times were difficult and prison conditions were appalling. ...

Although ultimately unsuccessful, the accused and their lawyers often appealed to the "racial solidarity" of the judges. ...

A lawyer tried to link the Jews to "smugglers, thieves and Bolsheviks" who threatened the villagers east of Warsaw. Another accused peasant justified the assault on one Szwarcberg, "because the Jew pretended to be a Pole." ... these exhortations seem to have carried little or no weight with the judges ...

... The records of Municipal and District Courts in the Warsaw area testify to the fact that the sentencing of Jewish defendants was carried out, for the most part, without a visible bias.

See Jan Grabowski, "Jewish Defendants in German and Polish Courts in the Warsaw District, 1939–1942," *Yad Vashem Studies*, vol. 35, no. 1 (Jerusalem, 2007): 49–80, here at 68–70, 80.

In his important commentary on Jan Grabowski's article, Marek Wierzbicki points out that the gangs operating prior to 1942 targeted Jews and other victims not primarily because of their race, but because they were easy targets; they were thus not classic *szmalcowniki* who threatened the Jews with denunciation to the Germans, but rather common bandits who could be punished under German law. See Marek Wierzbicki, "W kwestii szmalcownictwa w Warszawie w czasie II wojny światowej," *Zeszyty Historyczne*, volume 148 (2004): 120–26. For an example of a hold-up ring consisting of German soldiers, who were apprehended by the criminal police, and a Jew found by the Germans during a raid on the apartment of an extortionist, see Sandra Brand, *I Dared To Live* (New York: Shengold Publishers, 1978), 20–27, 30–31, 110. Another case, based on the memoir of Helena Szereszewska, strongly suggests that Polish hooligans worked in the ghetto in conjunction with Jews. See Itamar Levin, *Walls Around: The Plunder of Warsaw Jewry during World War II and Its Aftermath* (Westport, Connecticut and London: Praeger, 2004), 76–77. Halina Neuberger (now Zylberman) mentions a Jewish woman from Lwów who worked together with a member of Polish Blue police in identifying Jews for extortion purposes. See Halina Zylberman, *Swimming Under Water* (Caulfield South, Victoria: Makor Jewish Community Library, 2001), 30–31.

<sup>494</sup> See, for example, Janina Bauman, *Winter in the Morning: A Young Girl's Life in the Warsaw Ghetto and Beyond, 1939–1945* (London: Virago, 1986), 111–12, 118; Irena Bakowska, *Not All Was Lost: A Young Woman's Memoir, 1939–1946* (Kingston, Ontario: Karijan, 1998), 173.

<sup>495</sup> For examples of *szmalcowniki* who befriended the Jews they extorted see Joachim Schoenfeld, ed., *Holocaust Memoirs: Jews in the Lwów Ghetto, the Janowski Concentration Camp, and as Deportees in Siberia* (Hoboken, New Jersey: Ktav Publishing House, 1985), 245–47; Helene C. Kaplan, *I Never Left Janowska ...* (New York: Holocaust Library, 1989), 74–80; Ruth Altbeker Cyprys, *A Jump For Life: A Survivor's Journal from Nazi-Occupied Poland* (New York: Continuum, 1997), 140; Marcel Reich-Ranicki, *The Author of Himself: The Life of Marcel Reich-Ranicki* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2001), 195–96. Natan Gross not only managed to bargain down the bribe, but in both instances he encountered *szmalcowniki* they actually gave him advice on how better to avoid recognition in the future. See Natan Gross, *Who Are You, Mr. Grymek?* (London and Portland, Oregon: Vallentine Mitchell, 2001), 194, 217–18.

<sup>496</sup> Jacek Wilamowski, *Pętla zdrady: Konspiracja—wróg—polityka. Za kulisami Polski Podziemnej 1939–1944* (Warsaw: CB—Andrzej Zasieczny, 2003), 102.

including Jews. As in Berlin, Jewish “catchers” also played an ignominious role in exposing Jews who endeavoured to pass as Poles.<sup>497</sup> *Szmalcownik*s were by and large members of the poor lumpenproletariat who were motivated by greed rather than anti-Semitism, and Jews happened to be easy targets for extortion because of their vulnerability and their inability, in most cases, to seek redress from the authorities. They also victimized vulnerable Poles, including members of the underground.<sup>498</sup> These blackmailers were hardly representative of Polish society, despite the claims of some Holocaust historians to the contrary, and in fact their activities were generally viewed as reprehensible by Polish society at large.<sup>499</sup> The Polish underground condemned such activities and passed a number of death sentences against betrayers and suspected Gestapo agents, but did not manage to carry all of them out because of practical difficulties associated with such executions.<sup>500</sup>

**Władysław Bartoszewski, Polish historian, founding member of Żegota (Polish wartime Council for Aid to the Jews), decorated by Yad Vashem:**

The struggle against the blackmailers was exceedingly difficult. It was nevertheless carried out systematically as far as possible by the Polish underground organizations during 1943 and 1944. If, however—as events would show in several cases—the memory of the wrongs and the personal tragedies suffered as a consequence of denunciation was stronger and more lasting in those who were rescued than the memory of the incomparably more numerous cases of proffered assistance, this has to be regarded as a characteristic, but also understandable, trait of human nature. In general, tragic and negative experiences leave a deeper and more lasting impression on the human psyche than do good and positive ones.

Aside from the German police and the informers and extortionists, who were recruited from the dregs of the Christian Polish and Ukrainian populations, it was the Jewish confidence men who represented the greatest threat to Jews living in hiding. Seduced by false hopes and promises, they frequently helped the Germans to track down fellow Jews who were hiding in the “Aryan” sector.<sup>501</sup>

*Elsewhere Bartoszewski opined that confidants, renegades and betrayers constituted a greater plague, and were much more visible, inside the ghettos than the parallel phenomenon on the Polish side.<sup>502</sup> Of course, Poles did not have a monopoly on betrayers and blackmailers. As many Jewish testimonies confirm, Jews also turned on one another after the Germans invaded Poland—a phenomenon that is not widely*

<sup>497</sup> See the account of Ruth Altbecker Cyprus below.

<sup>498</sup> Józef Garliński describes extortion directed at stores which served as drop-off points for the Polish underground in Warsaw. See Józef Garliński, *Świat mojej pamięci* (Warsaw: Volumen, 1992), 305–306. While living in the house of a Polish prostitute in Warsaw, Edward Reicher experienced this firsthand. One morning, two “policemen” came to her door. They were not trying to blackmail the woman for hiding a Jew (something that they did not know at the time), but for being a prostitute. They demanded a “tax” in exchange for not reporting, to the authorities, that she was a prostitute. When she refused, they threatened to denounce her, in which case, they threatened, she would end up paying twice as much. See Edward Reicher, *Country of Ash: A Jewish Doctor in Poland, 1939–1945* (New York: Bellevue Literary Press, 2013), 186–87.

<sup>499</sup> Historian Tomasz Szarota, an unequaled authority on occupied Warsaw, states unequivocally that *szmalcownik*s were on the margins of Polish society, a component that became more numerous because of wartime conditions. See Wojciech Klewicz interview with Tomasz Szarota, “Miasto paragrafu śmierci,” *Rzeczpospolita*, March 26–27, 2011. See also Marcin Zaremba, “‘Człowiek drży jak liść’—trwoga przed badytyzmem w okresie powojennym,” in Jerzy Eisler, et al., eds., *Niepiękny wiek XX* (Warsaw: Instytut Historii Akademii Nauk and Instytut Pamięci Narodowej–Komisja Ścigania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu, 2010), 375–76.

<sup>500</sup> Stefan Korboński, *Fighting Warsaw: The Story of the Polish Underground State, 1939–1945* (New York: Minerva Press/Funk & Wagnalls, 1968), 115–44; Stefan Korboński *The Jews and the Poles in World War II* (New York: Hippocrene, 1989), 50–51; Leszek Gondek, *Polska karząca 1939–1945: Polski podziemny wymiar sprawiedliwości w okresie okupacji niemieckiej* (Warsaw: Pax, 1988), 61–63, 123; Teresa Prekerowa, *Zegota: Commission d’aide aux Juifs* (Monaco: Éditions du Rocher, 1999), 228–54.

<sup>501</sup> Władysław Bartoszewski, *The Warsaw Ghetto: A Christian’s Testimony* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1987), 89. Jewish memoirs confirm that Ukrainian Gestapo agents were very active in Warsaw. See, for example, Gary A. Keins, *A Journey Through the Valley of Perdition* ([United States]: n.p., 1985), 116, 219–20. For more on this topic see Teresa Prekerowa’s essay (Part III, *Wojna i Okupacja [War and Occupation]*), in Jerzy Tomaszewski, ed., *Najnowsze dzieje Żydów w Polsce: W zarysie (do 1950)* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 1993).

<sup>502</sup> Władysław Bartoszewski, “Losy Żydów Warszawy 1939–1943,” in Władysław Bartoszewski and Marek Edelman, *Żydzi Warszawy 1939–1943* (Lublin: Towarzystwo Naukowe KUL, 1993), 12.

publicized, and far too many Jewish traitors, blackmailers, and Gestapo agents preyed on fellow Jews in the ghetto and on the Aryan side. Holocaust historian Yehuda Bauer has recently acknowledged that Jewish Gestapo agents and spies caused “tremendous damage.”<sup>503</sup> A recent study of German archival documents indicates that fully one third of all German hits in a particular district of the Generalgouvernement were the result of the work of a relatively small group of Gestapo agents.<sup>504</sup> The Germans sponsored an organization of collaborators known as Żagiew (“Die Fackel”—“The Torch”) [*Żydowska Gwardia Wolności—Jewish Freedom Guard*] with ties to the Gestapo, whose task it was to infiltrate all aspects of life in the ghetto. Not only did it spy on, track down and hand over fellow Jews to the Germans, but also it carefully observed the sources of outside assistance for the ghetto in order to expose Polish conspiratorial organizations. (That organization was exposed by the Home Army counterintelligence.<sup>505</sup>) Emanuel Ringelblum, who describes the shameful activities of many of these collaborators, speaks of an estimated 400 Gestapo informers in the Warsaw ghetto alone (other estimates run as high as 800), in his chronicle entry for May 18, 1942.<sup>506</sup>

After the liquidation of the ghetto in May 1943, conditions became even more perilous for fugitive Jews on the “Aryan” side. Ruth Altbeker Cyprys personally observed Jewish Gestapo agents shouting Jewish slogans or singing Jewish songs in order to provoke telltale reaction in fugitive Jews among the pedestrians in the streets of Warsaw.

### **Ruth Altbeker Cyprys, a Jewish resident of Warsaw:**

The Jewish Gestapo men who remained alive were very dangerous. Their eyes were penetrating and Jews pointed out by them were lost without hope. A little car often seen passing slowly along Marszałkowska [Marszałkowska] Street, always keeping close to the pavement, became notorious. Once I was walking along this street when suddenly I heard the shout ‘Szma Israel’ [*Shema Yisrael* – Hear, O Israel, the words of a section of the Torah that is the centrepiece of morning and evening prayers], followed by the sight of a man dragged struggling into the car. It transpired that the cry had come from the slowly driven vehicle, causing an elderly gentleman passing by to stop and look back instinctively. It was final proof for the manhunters. They must have been observing their prey for some time and, having reckoned that only a Jew would react to these words, had successfully used their subterfuge. A friend told me that the most unexpected shouts could be heard from this car.

Another time, while walking in the street, I heard behind me a low humming of the *Hatikva* [*Hatikva* – “The Hope,” a Zionist anthem]. For a moment I wanted to look back but I overcame this desire. The singing individual overtook me. He was a young fellow in a little round hat with a feather. This hat meant the same as a Gestapo uniform as we learned at the end of the war. Unfortunately under this hat was the cheeky, carefree face of one of my university colleagues—a Jew. The degradation of some people had plumbed such depths.<sup>507</sup>

### **Irena Szereszewska, a survivor from Warsaw:**

Jewish Gestapo men often went [to the sanatorium in nearby Otwock]. They were called the ‘Thirteens’, because their headquarters was at 13 Leszno Street. They all wore high boots in the German manner. High boots and a rubber truncheon. And they had beautiful girl-friends. The Thirteens didn’t wear armbands with a blue star. ...

Two Jewish Gestapo women in the other [room in a flat in Marszałkowska Street]. ... Who were they? They were attractive young Jews who were destined to die, but the Germans had spared their lives on

<sup>503</sup> Yehuda Bauer, *Rethinking the Holocaust* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2001), 148.

<sup>504</sup> Jacek Wilamowski, *Srebrniki Judasza: Zdrada i kolaboracja. Konfidenci niemieckich władz bezpieczeństwa w okupowanej Polsce 1939–1945* (Warsaw: CB Andrzej Zasieczny, 2004).

<sup>505</sup> Piotr Matusak, *Wywiad Związku Walki Zbrojnej–Armii Krajowej 1939–1945* (Warsaw: Ludowa Spółdzielnia Wydawnicza and Muzeum Historii Polskiego Ruchu Ludowego, 2002), 538.

<sup>506</sup> Emanuel Ringelblum, *Kronika getta warszawskiego: Wrzesień 1939–styczeń 1943* (Warsaw: Czytelnik, 1983), 375.

<sup>507</sup> Ruth Altbeker Cyprys, *A Jump For Life: A Survivor’s Journal from Nazi-Occupied Poland* (New York: Continuum, 1997), 165–66.

condition that they worked for them by denouncing Jews in hiding. The Germans paid them and they dressed smartly.”<sup>508</sup>

**Maximilian Tauchner, a Jewish survivor from Lwów who passed a Pole in Warsaw:**

... The blackmailers, who preyed on the misfortune of Jews, reaped where they had not sown and made fortunes. They could afford luxuries, even lard. And “lard” in Polish is “szmaliec”, hence the nickname for blackmailers, “szmalcowniki”, in slang.

These hyenas, working hand in glove with Jews who, for the price of letting them live when they were themselves discovered [*it is not at all clear, however, that this was the motivating factor in all cases*], cooperated with the “szmalcowniki”, supplying them with addresses and other details about Jews living in hiding as Aryans.

*Maximilian Tauchner describes how, after his arrival in Warsaw, he gave his address to a Jewish friend he recognized from Lwów, also living in Warsaw under an assumed identity. Soon after he was visited by “szmalcowniki” who demanded a bribe but with whom he, strangely, maintained amicable relations, and who warned him to change his address.*

When I asked him [i.e., the “szmalcownik”] who had given them my name, he said that I was not the only one on their list of Jews living in Warsaw under Polish names. ... I was beside myself when I saw the list. It contained quite a number of Jews, among them about ten from my hometown, all registered by their assumed Polish names, their addresses in Warsaw, their real names, and also their means, the size of their families, their profession before the war, and finally, the place where they were working in Warsaw, if one held a job.

Although I had my suspicions about who the author of the list was, I still was not sure and asked my friend to tell me who he was. My friend, the “szmalcownik”, gave me a few names of Jews who belonged to their gang. I was stunned to learn that, among others, there were the two colleagues of mine whom I mentioned earlier. They both came from so-called good Jewish families, and who would have believed that they could have been the source of information given to the blackmailers, by which they betrayed a fellow Jew, their former class-mate?

The walls of Warsaw were placarded with proclamations that the death penalty applied for sheltering a Jew. Indeed, announcements proclaiming the names of whole families who were shot for the crime of harboring Jews were very often posted. Therefore one must appreciate all the more, and hold in high esteem, those who lent a helping hand to Jews, knowing that by doing so they were endangering their own lives.<sup>509</sup>

**Gary A. Keins, a Jew who “passed” in Warsaw and elsewhere, recalls:**

*Keins describes several encounters with a Jewish woman, a Mrs. Salc, whom he had met in Zamość, where she first revealed his cover. Originally from Lwów, Mrs. Salc eventually moved to Warsaw and was collaborating with a gang of szmalcowniks and tailing Keins and other Jews passing as Poles. But that wasn't the author's only worry: “If Mrs. Salc only speculated about my origin, there was at least one other person who could finger me—a young man and former member of the Ghetto police who suddenly showed up on the Polish side.” The author recalls that the Nazis had their agents, including Jewish ones, all over Warsaw and “used Jewish cowards to track down their co-religionists hiding on the Polish side. We heard that they made dozens of denunciations every day to the Gestapo. The numbers were so numerous that the Nazis fell behind in their frenzied Jew-killing, so much so that betrayals from December, 1942, were not yet disposed of in March of 1943, according to the information of the underground.” He had heard that “about one hundred fifty Ghetto dwellers had pledged themselves as agents to the Gestapo. ...about one hundred*

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<sup>508</sup> Irena Szereszewska, *Memoirs from Occupied Warsaw, 1940–1945* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 1997), 214, 332, 337.

<sup>509</sup> Joachim Schoenfeld, ed., *Holocaust Memoirs: Jews in the Lwów Ghetto, the Janowski Concentration Camp, and as Deportees in Siberia* (Hoboken, New Jersey: Ktav Publishing House, 1985), 240–42.

*and fifty Jewish escapees were caught every day with the help of those betrayers and various other headhunters.*"<sup>510</sup>

**Halina Neuberg (later Zylberman), a native of Kraków who took refuge in "Aryan" Warsaw together with her parents, writes:**

At last I heard heavy steps on the stairs, followed by lighter ones I recognized as my mother's. She came in accompanied by a Polish policeman. "I'm sorry I'm so late Halinka, but I had a misunderstanding with the authorities. Everything's all right now."

From her flushed cheeks and the unnaturally high-pitched tone of her voice I knew something was very wrong, but Mama gave the policeman a glass of tea and sat down and chatted with him about things in general. He mentioned he would like to take me to the country to visit a close friend of his, a farmer. He would like to make up for inconveniencing her by buying us fresh dairy products. I could see by Mama's expression that she didn't like the idea, but she kept on smiling and acting friendly. "I'll let you know," she replied.

When at length the man left, she collapsed on the sofa, exhausted. "You've no idea what I went through today, Halinka." I went over and hugged her as the words poured out: "I was just walking in the street when I was stopped by that policeman. He asked for my identification papers, then without even looking at them, he put them in his pocket 'I'm afraid,' he said, 'You'll have to come to the police station with me.' 'On what charges?' I asked. 'I've been told that you are a Jewess,' he said. Halinka, I thought I was going to faint. How could he know? 'You're making a terrible mistake,' I told him. 'It's no use pretending that you're not, because I know for sure. There's a lady sitting in the café over there who knows you from Lwow [Lwów] as a Jewess.' I glanced over and sure enough, I saw a woman I knew from Lwow. But she was also Jewish. Why should she have turned informer? I almost panicked, but then I thought of you waiting at home and I knew I had to do everything possible to get out of this mess. I asked him, 'Do you have any children?' 'Yes' he said, 'I have a daughter.' 'So have I,' I said. 'She's waiting for me at home right now. She's very young and needs me. I'm not a Jewess,' I told him, 'but I have black market connections and I wouldn't like to be interrogated by the police. Please let me go home to my little girl.' I was crying by now, and I looked him straight in the eyes. I could see he was trying to decide what [to] do so I took off my wedding ring and watch, and my golden cross, and pushed them into his hand. Thank God he accepted the bribe. He said, 'I have a daughter waiting at home for me too, and I can't imagine how she would manage without me. But the informant is watching, so I can't just let you go. I'll have to take you home to check on your story.'<sup>511</sup>

My father was warned that a Jewish acquaintance, originally from Krakow [Kraków], had turned 'Jew-spotter' for the Gestapo. Soon after, they met in the street and although my father's blood froze, he greeted him warmly and invited him to a nearby café for a cup of tea. The informer suggested that they exchange addresses and my father readily agreed, and gave him a different pseudonym and address. He wandered the streets for some hours till he was sure he was not being followed, till he dared to go home. Fortunately, their paths never crossed again, but we were shocked to think that someone who was so well-educated and well-liked could have fallen so low.<sup>512</sup>

[After the Warsaw uprising, Halina and her mother continued to pose Poles. As Polish evacuees they were subjected to inspection and segregation by the Germans.]

There was one man standing close by the Germans who attracted my attention. He was the only civilian amongst them and was well dressed and well nourished. I thought I must be dreaming because he looked so obviously Jewish to me. "What is a Jew doing here amongst the German soldiers?" I thought. But when I heard him talking to the Germans saying, "I can't see any of them in this lot," shivers went down my spine. He was clearly in the service of the Gestapo—another Jewish 'Jew-spotter'. Suddenly I was very self-conscious and I felt a touch of ice in my heart. Would he recognise me as a Jew?

<sup>510</sup> Gary A. Keins, *A Journey Through the Valley of Perdition* ([United States]: n.p., 1985), 131–32, 145, 151, 154, 179.

<sup>511</sup> Halina Zylberman, *Swimming Under Water* (Caulfield South, Victoria: Makor Jewish Community Library, 2001), 30–31.

<sup>512</sup> *Ibid.*, 71–72.

But we stayed standing there for about fifteen minutes and then two soldiers of the Wehrmacht approached us and ordered us to follow them.<sup>513</sup>

### **Denunciations, betrayals, informers and Gestapo agents:**

*False identity documents purchased ghetto from Jewish Gestapo agents by Jews leaving the were linked to addresses where the unsuspecting fugitives could be tracked down, whether to be denounced to the Gestapo, if they were poor, or extorted, if they were well off.*<sup>514</sup>

*Zbigniew Ryszard Grabowski (then Ryszard Abrahamer), whose family passed as Christians in Warsaw, states that his father was fingered in a streetcar by a Jewish Gestapo agent. "Jews in the service of the Gestapo," he writes, "were best at recognizing other Jews."*<sup>515</sup>

*Aviva Unger was just 12 years old when she and her mother, a widow, were confined in the Warsaw ghetto. After the Germans shot her mother, Aviva escaped from the ghetto in 1942 by crawling through the sewers. She was taken to a Catholic convent where she lived with nuns and attended the convent school. She "was recognized on a tram by a Jew who was a police spy, and betrayed to the Gestapo." She was beaten viciously to extract information, but she said nothing. Risking his life, a priest from the convent was able to save Aviva by vouching for her longstanding Catholic background.*<sup>516</sup>

*Jerzy Warm (later Mikołajczyk) reported that, after her escape from the Warsaw ghetto, his 19-year-old daughter was denounced by a Jew who worked for the Gestapo. She perished in the Pawiak prison.*<sup>517</sup>

*Eliszewa Totengreber, who was sheltered by a Pole after escaping from the Warsaw ghetto with her mother, recalled that her mother was denounced by a Jew, probably working for the Gestapo, and perished.*<sup>518</sup>

*Erwin Schenkelbach, a teenager from Drohobycz who took refuge in Warsaw in 1942 and moved from place to place, recalled his encounters with Jewish Gestapo agents, some of them of German background, who denounced and blackmailed Jews hiding and passing in Warsaw.*<sup>519</sup>

*Diana Topiel, who was sheltered in Warsaw by a Polish family whose son she married during the war, was not betrayed by any of her Polish acquaintances but by a Jewish Gestapo confidant from Łódź. After her arrest she was sent to several prisons, here she was tortured, and then to Majdanek concentration camp.*<sup>520</sup>

*Zila Rennert identified a Jewish Gestapo agent by the name of Ludwik, who was active in Warsaw, but did not describe his misdeeds.*<sup>521</sup>

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<sup>513</sup> Ibid., 86–87.

<sup>514</sup> Testimony of Leon Bukowiński, Archive of the Jewish Historical Institute (Warsaw), record group 301, number 4424.

<sup>515</sup> Zbigniew Ryszard Grabowski, "W skorodowanym zwierciadle pamięci: Szkic autobiograficzny," *Kwartalnik Historii Nauki i Techniki*, vol. 50, no. 2 (2005): 7–202; Katarzyna Meloch and Halina Szostkiewicz, eds., *Dzieci Holocaustu mówią...*, vol. 4 (Warsaw: Stowarzyszenie „Dzieci Holocaustu” w Polsce, 2012), 195.

<sup>516</sup> Anton Gill, *The Journey Back From Hell: Conversations with Concentration Camp Survivors* (London: Grafton Books, 1988), 277–78.

<sup>517</sup> Testimony of Jerzy Mikołajczyk (Jerzy Warm), Jewish Historical Institute (Warsaw) archive, record group 301, number 6148.

<sup>518</sup> Testimony of Eliszewa Totengreber, Jewish Historical Institute (Warsaw) archive, record group 301, number 4577.

<sup>519</sup> Testimony of Erwin Schenkelbach (Jerzy Szeliński), Jewish Historical Institute (Warsaw) archive, record group 301, number 5900.

<sup>520</sup> Testimony of Diana Topiel, Jewish Historical Institute (Warsaw) archive, record group 301, number 1482.

<sup>521</sup> Zila Rennert, *Trois wagons à bestiaux: D'une guerre à l'autre à travers l'Europe centrale, 1914–1946* (Paris: Phébus, 2007), 209–10. Ludwik was known to help Jews for payment. Apparently, he survived the war.

Haim Grzybower also encountered a Jew who worked as an interpreter for the Gestapo when he was passing as a Pole in Warsaw. This Jew demanded a bribe of 1,000 zloty in order not to betray Grzybower.<sup>522</sup>

Barbara Abramow-Newerly did not abide by the order to relocate to the ghetto but continued to reside in her housing estate in the Warsaw suburb of Żoliborz, even though her Jewish background was widely known. The only szmalcownik she encountered was a Jew by the name of Saul, whom she knew. Saul worked for the Gestapo ferreting out Jews in hiding on the “Aryan” side. He was also engaged in extorting money and visited Barbara weekly until she was penniless. Facing denunciation, she turned to the Home Army for assistance. Witold Pilecki, the famed escapee from Auschwitz, extricated her by providing money to pay off the szmalcownik and told her not to worry. The Jewish szmalcownik did not return, and she continued to live in the safety of her home.<sup>523</sup>

Zofia Bandurska-Herman, a Polish woman who was married to a Jew, took in a Jewish family by the name of Przeworski, who escaped from the Warsaw ghetto. She hid Marek Przeworski in the cellar of the tenement building in which she lived and found hiding places for the others with her friends. A group of Jews came to her home to extort money. When Marek Przeworski recognized one of them, that Jewish blackmailer shot him. Bandurska-Herman buried Przeworski with the help of the janitor. The Jewish blackmailers continued to visit her with demands. Bandurska-Herman found out the address of one of them and reported him to the police. However, Bandurska-Herman herself was later summoned to the police station and killed.<sup>524</sup>

A Jew from Lwów who found refuge in Warsaw, where he personally encountered Jewish blackmailers, was Marion Andre, who later became a theatre director in Toronto.<sup>525</sup> Henryk Reiss, who took refuge in Warsaw, was warned by his aunt, a native of Lwów, of Jews in the service of the Gestapo: “Refugees from Lwów were exposed by others from Lwów, usually members of the so-called golden youth. She mentioned the name of the son of a known pharmacist E.”<sup>526</sup>

Ozjasz Landau, who left Lwów and took up residence in Warsaw, reported that shortly after his Jewish friend’s cousin took him to an apartment where a family of Jews was living, the apartment was visited by Kuba Perlmutter and two “Aryan bandits” who took 16,000 zloty from the Jewish family.<sup>527</sup>

Arrangements were made by the father of Danuta Lis (then Schmerler) for her to be taken from Lwów to Warsaw in May 1943 by a Jew named Hans. Hans together with his German partner took Jews from Lwów to Warsaw for payment. Then only 13 years old, Danuta was sexually abused in Warsaw by Hans, who also stole her money. Hans was arrested by the Germans and imprisoned in Kraków, but managed to survive. After the war, he was recognized by a Jew whom he had transported from Lwów to Warsaw and then betrayed. Hans was tried and sentenced to death.<sup>528</sup>

A Jewish family from Białystok was victimized by a group of extortionists, who included Germans among its members and possibly had connections to the German police, after being set up by a young Jewish

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<sup>522</sup> Henry G. Gribou, *Hunted in Warsaw: A Memoir of Resistance and Survival in the Holocaust* (Jefferson, North Carolina and London: McFarland, 2012), 186–87.

<sup>523</sup> Jarosław Abramow-Newerly, *Lwy mojego podwórka* (Warsaw: Twój Styl, 2000), 143–52. When Witold Pilecki faced trumped up charges of working for “foreign imperialism” after the war which resulted in his execution in 1948, Barbara Abramow-Newerly came forward unsuccessfully in his defence.

<sup>524</sup> Testimony of Paulina Hirsch, Jewish Historical Institute (Warsaw) archive, record group 301, number 453.

<sup>525</sup> Marion Andre’s account in the author’s possession.

<sup>526</sup> Henryk Reiss, *Z deszczu pod rynnę...: Wspomnienia polskiego Żyda* (Warszawa: Polonia, 1993), 106.

<sup>527</sup> Janusz Roszkowski, ed., *Żydzi w walce 1939–1945: Opór i walka z faszyzmem w latach 1939–1945* (Warsaw: Żydowski Instytut Historyczny in. E. Ringelbluma and Stowarzyszenie Żydów Kombatantów i Poszkodowanych w II Wojnie Światowej, 2011), vol. 3, 160–61; Testimony of Ozjasz Landau, Jewish Historical Institute (Warsaw) archive, record group 301, number 1146.

<sup>528</sup> Katarzyna Meloch and Halina Szostkiewicz, eds., *Dzieci Holocaustu mówią...*, vol. 4 (Warsaw: Stowarzyszenie „Dzieci Holocaustu” w Polsce, 2012), 134–35.

woman acquaintance of theirs from Białystok who was used as a decoy. They later met one of the extortioners, who wanted them to cooperate in a similar scheme.<sup>529</sup>

A Jew named Włodek S. got entangled with a Warsaw policeman and his wife, a prostitute; the Jews on whom he informed were then blackmailed by szmalcownik. <sup>530</sup> Another Jewish woman who was offered an opportunity to work together with szmalcownik on Warsaw's "Aryan" side after being unable to pay a ransom was Luba Gawisar.<sup>531</sup>

Joseph Rosenberg of Ostrowiec, who was passing as a Christian in Warsaw, described his family's misfortunes (a robbery) at the hands of group of szmalcownik with whom Józef Goncho, a Jewish acquaintance from Wolbrom, worked.<sup>532</sup>

A Jewish woman named Stefania K. recalled how a young Jew living in a tenement house she moved to lured those he suspected of being Jewish to other premises on the pretext that they would be safe there from denouncers. In fact, it turned out this person worked together with the Gestapo, and the "safe" premises were soon visited by Germans to extort money from the Jews who had fallen into the trap and relocated.<sup>533</sup>

A Jew, illegally outside the ghetto in Warsaw, was caught by a German gendarme. In exchange for his own life, he offered to denounce other Jews on the "Aryan" side. Scores of Jews were tracked down and executed in the Jewish cemetery as a result.<sup>534</sup>

A young Jewish woman by the name of Celina who was captured by the Gestapo disclosed the hiding place of another Jewish woman, Wanda, who had helped her find a placement in Warsaw. Both women were executed in Pawiak prison.<sup>535</sup>

Jews also wrote to the German authorities to denounce Jews who had remained outside the ghetto or for other reasons.<sup>536</sup>

A Jew, by the name of Natek, succumbed to torture and revealed to the Gestapo several apartment hiding places in Warsaw.<sup>537</sup> Simha Rotem recalled that, when he joined a group of Jews returning from work on the Aryan side to the Warsaw ghetto:

The Jews suspected I wasn't Jewish, that I had been planted among them as a provocateur. They whispered among themselves about turning me over to the German [guard]. I begged them to believe that I was a Jew, and to prove it I started speaking in Yiddish and muttering prayers. Finally, they gave in ...<sup>538</sup>

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<sup>529</sup> Gustaw Kerszman, *Jak ginąć, to razem* (Montreal: Polish-Jewish Heritage Foundation, 2003), 84–85.

<sup>530</sup> Antoni Marianowicz, *Życie surowo wzbronione* (Warsaw: Czytelnik, 1995), 115.

<sup>531</sup> Anka Grupańska, *Po kole: Rozmowy z żydowskimi żołnierzami* (Warsaw: Alfa, 1991), 152–54.

<sup>532</sup> Joseph Rosenberg, *My Name is Józef Nowak: The Life and Times of Joseph Rosenberg* (Toronto: Lifestories, 2001), 34–36.

<sup>533</sup> Małgorzata Melchior, *Zagłada a tożsamość: Polscy Żydzi ocaleni "na aryjskich papierach". Analiza doświadczenia biograficznego* (Warsaw: IFiS PAN, 2004), 168.

<sup>534</sup> Lucyna Paszkowska-Brown, "Syjonizm i 'antysemityzm,'" *Dziennik Polski* (London), May 15, 1968.

<sup>535</sup> Hanna Wehr, *Ze wspomnień* (Montreal: Polish-Jewish Heritage Foundation, 2001).

<sup>536</sup> For many examples of informing on Jews by fellow Jews see Barbara Engelking and Jan Grabowski, "Żydów łamiących prawo należy karać śmiercią!": "Przetępczość" Żydów w Warszawie 1939–1942 (Warsaw: Stowarzyszenie Centrum Badań nad Zagładą Żydów, 2010), especially 48–56, 61, 125. See also Barbara Engelking, "Szanowny Panie Gestapo": *Donosy do władz niemieckich w Warszawie i okolicach w latach 1940–1941* (Warsaw: IFiS PAN, 2003), letter no. 205.

<sup>537</sup> Simha Rotem ("Kazik"), *Memoirs of a Warsaw Ghetto Fighter* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1994), 105.

<sup>538</sup> Simha Rotem ("Kazik"), *Memoirs of a Warsaw Ghetto Fighter* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1994), 17.

Polish rescuer Kazimiera Żuławska recalls a number of raids on her Warsaw apartment which were carried out to extort large sums of money. The Gestapo was accompanied by agents who were Jews, Volksdeutsche or Poles.<sup>539</sup>

A crippled Catholic shoemaker from Prądkyńska Street was murdered by the Germans together with his wife after being denounced by a Jew previously sheltered by him. All three were executed on the spot.<sup>540</sup>

A certain Professor “Czarny,” a provocateur who posed as an arms dealer, denounced Stefan Prokopek, a People’s Army contact with the Jewish underground. Prokopek’s home on Waszyngtona Street, which served as a meeting place for the Jewish Fighting Organization (Żydowska Organizacja Bojowa), was ambushed and Prokopek killed. Two Jewish underground members managed to escape. After the war, “Czarny” found refuge in Sweden.<sup>541</sup> The Germans found a Jew hidden on the premises. Under torture he broke down and revealed another hideout, where Sara Biderman was hiding. The Germans found her, shot her and left her for dead. Miraculously, she survived. A Jew, who was seized during a Gestapo raid on an apartment in Warsaw where he was sheltered by a Pole, broke down under torture and betrayed another apartment where Jews were hiding.<sup>542</sup>

A street peddler by the name of Marczak gave shelter to a group of about ten Jews in a spacious dug-out under the floor of his house. One day a young Jewish girl came to his place demanding admission into the group, threatening otherwise to inform the Gestapo. She did this while Mr. Marczak was away. Warned about this, he did not return home that evening. The Gestapo seized the inhabitants of the building as hostages and threatened to shoot them if Mr. Marczak failed to turn himself in. He then returned home and was executed along with the Jewish charges.<sup>543</sup>

Jan Galas, the caretaker of a tenement house on Ogródowa Street, was sheltering six Jews and a small child in the cellar of the building. Another charge, Dawid Efrati, was willing to stay there only for a few days because of the frequent quarrelling among the Jews. Efrati returned to the home of the caretaker’s son, Stanisław, which he had left because in his nightmares he used to scream in Yiddish and attracted attention. Within days the Germans conducted a door-to-door search after a German official had been shot in the vicinity of the tenement house on Ogródowa Street, and discovered the hiding place of the Jews. Unfortunately, they betrayed their benefactor, the caretaker, and all of them were executed together. Despite this tragedy, Efrati was not asked to leave the son’s home.<sup>544</sup>

Rescuer Jerzy Koźmiński of Warsaw, who was awarded by Yad Vashem, recalled the boisterous quarrels that erupted among his family’s charges, especially the full-blow rage of one of the charges who hurled invectives in Yiddish at the top of his voice. The rescuer credits their survival in these perilous circumstances to the decency of his neighbours who turned a blind eye to these frequent incidents.<sup>545</sup> Similarly, Władysław Kowalski, who sheltered the brothers Filip and Jakiel Rubin in his apartment on Pańska Street in Warsaw, was exposed to danger because of their loud quarrels. However, his neighbours, who heard the commotion, did not betray them.<sup>546</sup>

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<sup>539</sup> Władysław Bartoszewski and Zofia Lewinówna, eds., *Ten jest z ojczyzny mojej: Polacy z pomocą Żydom 1939–1945*, Second expanded edition (Kraków: Znak, 1969), 461–62.

<sup>540</sup> Waclaw Zajęczkowski, *Martyrs of Charity*, Part One (Washington, D.C.: St. Maximilian Kolbe Foundation, 1987), 251 (entry 567).

<sup>541</sup> Yitzhak Zuckerman (“Antek”), *A Surplus of Memory: Chronicle of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 424–25; Waclaw Zajęczkowski, *Martyrs of Charity*, Part One (Washington, D.C.: St. Maximilian Kolbe Foundation, 1987), 251 (entry 607).

<sup>542</sup> Simha Rotem (“Kazik”), *Memoirs of a Warsaw Ghetto Fighter* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1994), 80–84. Unlike Zuckerman, Rotem does not mention that “Czarny” was a Jew.

<sup>543</sup> *Ibid.*, 255 (entry 580).

<sup>544</sup> Elżbieta Isakiewicz, *Ustna harmonijka: Relacje Żydów których uratowali od Zagłady Polacy* (Warszawa: Niezależne Wydawnictwo Polskie, 2000), 205–206.

<sup>545</sup> Jerzy Koźmiński, “Wspomnienia sprawiedliwego,” *Biuletyn Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej*, no. 11 (November 2005): 86–103, here at 94.

<sup>546</sup> Jacek Leociak, *Ratowanie: Opowieści Polaków i Żydów* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2010), 282–83.

*Henryk Grabowski, a legendary Home Army liaison between the Polish and Jewish underground, who smuggled scores of Jews out of the Warsaw ghetto, recalled that there were Jewish, as well as Polish szmalcowniks he had to watch out for.*<sup>547</sup>

In mid-April 1943, I noticed that many times, while I was walking on the streets [of Warsaw] a Jewish high school friend of mine would surface near me. I was worried because we knew that the Germans had recruited many agents—Poles, Ukrainians, Jews—through various means, often by blackmail or threatening harm to them or their families. ... On April 20, at around five in the afternoon, as I was getting into a streetcar, I again came across my Jewish friend lurking nearby. Within several minutes, in a small street, I was apprehended by two armed Gestapo agents...<sup>548</sup>

As a young girl, I participated in my family's efforts to help the Jews... Several Jews were temporarily sheltered in our home, then taken to other locations. Five lived with us until the Warsaw uprising in August, 1944. When the uprising was crushed, we all went into hiding, anticipating the arrival of the Soviet Army. In November, 1944, one of the Jewish women we saved argued with a group of Jews and brought the Germans who then killed 18 people, including her nephew and her elderly sister. One man survived. He came at night to the place where I and 10 others were hiding, informed us of the tragedy and warned us of our own imminent danger, probably saving our lives. For us, and the Jews who passed through our home, the greatest fear was that someone from the ghetto would betray.<sup>549</sup>

*Leon Skosowski and Kenigl were very officially collaborators of the SD (Sicherheitsdienst, i.e., the security service unit of the SS) and were more often on the 'Aryan' side than in the ghetto. Their task consisted in denouncing Jews who found themselves on the 'Aryan' side and denouncing Poles who engaged in political (underground) activities.*<sup>550</sup>

*Both Abraham Gancwajch and Dawid Szternfeld from the "Thirteen" are believed to have blackmailed and betrayed Jews hiding on the "Aryan" side.*<sup>551</sup>

*On February 19, 1944, a Home Army cell consisting of more than a dozen men was discovered by the Gestapo on Bracka Street in Warsaw after being betrayed by two Jewish women who had infiltrated the unit posing as escapees from the Warsaw ghetto. In reality, the women were Gestapo agents working with a 40-member group of Jewish agents led by Leon ("Lolek") Skosowski. Some of the apprehended Poles were executed.*<sup>552</sup>

*Herman Fleiszer, who passed as a Christian in Warsaw using the name Henryk Repa, was betrayed on the street by a Jewish acquaintance from his student days in Lwów who apparently was promised the freedom of his wife in exchange for his collaboration with the Gestapo.*<sup>553</sup>

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<sup>547</sup> Barbara Stanisławczyk, *Czterdzieści twardych* (Warsaw: ABC, 1997), 92.

<sup>548</sup> Józef Garliński, *Niezapomniane lata: Dzieje Wywiadu Więziennego i Wydziału Bezpieczeństwa Komendy Głównej Armii Krajowej* (London: Odnowa, 1987), 109. An English translation was published as *The Survival of Love: Memoir of a Resistance Officer* (New York: Blackwell, 1991) but does not indicate the nationality of the agent. A number of Jewish memoirs refer to the activities of non-Polish Gestapo agents in Warsaw. Blanca Rosenberg mentions a Ukrainian plainclothesman who had apprehended her and her friend upon arrival at the train station in Warsaw. See Blanca Rosenberg, *To Tell at Last: Survival under False Identity, 1941–45* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 123. She describes her experiences in looking for lodging in Warsaw as follows: "We combed the neighborhood, asking in the storefronts if there might be a room to let. We gave many in those streets occasion to wonder about the two forlorn young women, one with a black-and-blue face. But no one denounced us as Jews or escapees from the ghetto. In fact, one morning the owner of a barber shop on Rakowiecka Street offered Maria his shop to stay in." *Ibid.*, 122.

<sup>549</sup> Dana I. Alvi, letter, *Los Angeles Times*, November 6, 1994.

<sup>550</sup> Ionas Turkov, *C'était ainsi: 1939–1943 la vie dans le ghetto de Varsovie* (Paris: Austral, 1995), 140.

<sup>551</sup> Barbara Engelling and Jacek Leociak, *Getto warszawskie: Przewodnik po nieistniejącym mieście* (Warsaw: IFiS PAN, 2001), 229; *The Warsaw Ghetto: A Guide to the Perished City* (New Haven, Connecticut, and London: Yale University Press, 2009), 227–28.

<sup>552</sup> Wiesław Chrzanowski, *Pół wieku polityki, czyli rzecz o obronie czynnej: Z Wiesławem Chrzanowski rozmawiali Piotr Mierecki i Bogusław Kiernicki* (Warsaw: ad Astra, 1997), 140.

<sup>553</sup> Michał Grynberg, *Księga sprawiedliwych* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 1993), 379.

*A Jewish actor from Lwów who went by the name of Witold Kledzki became a Gestapo agent and worked in a Warsaw casino posing as a Pole. He denounced a number of Jews. At least two of the Jews he turned over to the Gestapo were executed in the Pawiak prison.*<sup>554</sup>

*Maciek Rosenblatt, a young Jewish lawyer who fled from his native Drohobycz after gouging ghetto residents with the help of his uncle Dr. Rosenblatt, who was head of the Jewish Council, took up residence in Warsaw under an assumed identity only to be tracked down by a Jewish informer from his home town operating in Warsaw and handed over to the Gestapo.*<sup>555</sup>

*In his memoirs, Alexander Bronowski recounts his arrest in Warsaw by the Sicherheitspolizei (security police) after one of their informers, a Jew from his native Lublin, recognized him.*<sup>556</sup> (Ironically, the Polish “Blue” police to whom Bronowski was handed over by the Sipo for temporary safekeeping proved to be his saviour—staff sergeant Waclaw Nowiński not only rescued Bronowski, but Nowiński and his family also selflessly assisted and sheltered other Jews.)

*Most Jewish historians and memoirists are reluctant, however, to admit the devastation caused by the many Jewish agents operating on the Aryan side, preferring instead to leave the impression that the enemy the Jews feared were not so much the Germans as the Poles. A case in point is Mordecai Paldiel of the Yad Vashem institute in Jerusalem, who fails to mention that it was a Jew who betrayed Alexander Bronowski, even though he finds time to describe Bronowski’s fate not once, but twice in his book, *Sheltering the Jews: Stories of Holocaust Rescuers*.*<sup>557</sup> Paldiel is so preoccupied with railing at Christian Poles that, in connection with Bronowski’s betrayal, he lays the blame on “local anti-Semites” and for good measure, adds: “Spotting a Jew on the street had become a sort of sport in Warsaw.”

*Irena Tarłowska (Szenberg), who survived passing as a Christian in Warsaw, after recounting her experiences with Polish blackmailers, concludes: “What is so surprising about this? Robbing Jews was such an easy way to make a profit. In every nation one can find rogues. There were after all Jewish blackmailers too.”*<sup>558</sup>

*Miriam Peleg-Mariańska, a Jew who worked closely with Żegota, the Council for Aid to Jews, writes: “In spite of the fact that the streets of Warsaw were swarming with many informers, collaborators and stool-pigeons, both Polish and Jewish ones, the city always awakened in me feelings of admiration with regard to its general attitude to the occupiers.”*<sup>559</sup>

*Ludwik Hirszfeld, a Jew who converted to Christianity and also had to hide to survive, confirms, albeit with some exaggeration, the same state of affairs: “In the city [of Warsaw] there moved about thousands [sic] of spies—Volksdeutsche, Poles and Jews...”*<sup>560</sup>

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<sup>554</sup> Michał Czajka, Marta Janczewska, and Apolonia Umińska-Keff, eds., *Relacje z czasów Zagłady Inwentarz: Archiwum ŻIH IN-B, zespół 301: Nr. 3001–4000/Holocaust Survivor Testimonies Catalogue: Jewish Historical Institute Archives, Record Group 301: No. 3001–4000* (Warsaw: Żydowski Instytut Historyczny Instytut Naukowo-Badawczy, 2005), vol. 4, 54, based on the testimony of Aleksander Bardini, dated September 18, 1947, found in the Archives of the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw, record group 301, number 3114.

<sup>555</sup> Henryk Grynberg, *Drohobycz, Drohobycz* (Warsaw: W.A.B., 1997), 42. This book also details, at 40–43, other examples of Jewish collaborators in Drohobycz, including one who informed on Jews who had dollars and valuables—something only other Jews were generally aware of.

<sup>556</sup> Alexander Bronowski, *They Were Few* (New York: Peter Lang, 1991), 30–33; Władysław Bartoszewski and Zofia Lewin, eds., *Righteous Among Nations: How Poles Helped the Jews, 1939–1945* (London: Earls Court Publications, 1969), 142–44.

<sup>557</sup> Mordecai Paldiel, *Sheltering the Jews: Stories of Holocaust Rescuers* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), 53, 153.

<sup>558</sup> See Barbara Engelking, *Na łące popiołów: Ocaleni z Holocaustu* (Warsaw: Cyklady, 1993), 157.

<sup>559</sup> Miriam Peleg-Mariańska and Mordecai Peleg, *Witnesses: Life in Occupied Kraków* (London and New York: Routledge, 1991), 150–51.

<sup>560</sup> Ludwik Hirszfeld, *Historia jednego życia* (Warszawa: Czytelnik, 1946), 286.

A bar on Senatorska Street in Warsaw named “Stanisławówka” was a popular meeting place for Jewish Gestapo agents.<sup>561</sup> Jewish Gestapo agents even organized a birthday celebration in honour of Hitler at a restaurant on Leszno Street in February 1941. The chief of the German police was reportedly invited to this festivity, but declined to attend.<sup>562</sup>

Emanuel Ringelblum noted the case of a tireless benefactor of the Jews by the name of Witold who was betrayed by Jusek Erlich (code name “Josele Kapota”), a Jewish Gestapo agent, and spent nine months in Pawiak prison.<sup>563</sup> Another Jewish Gestapo agent who actively betrayed members of the Polish underground in Warsaw was Jusek Mitzenmacher, who went by the name Józef Berdych. This did not prevent him from making a career for himself in the Communist Party in Stalinist Poland.<sup>564</sup> Józef Staszauer, a Jewish Gestapo agent who infiltrated the Home Army in Warsaw, betrayed many of its members before he was liquidated in October 1943.<sup>565</sup> Other collaborators included: Julian Apel (Appel), the boxer Anders, Baumritter, Behavier, Stefania Branstadter, Brzeziński (executed by the Home Army on February 26, 1943), Solomon Desler, Diamand, Esterowicz, Israel First, Albin Fleischman, Forster, Szuje Fastak (who betrayed both Poles, such as Home Army members Antoni Szczygielski and Witold Jernik, as well as Jews to the Gestapo before being liquidated by the Home Army), Zamek Grajek, David Gutter (executed by the Home Army), Gurman, Heller, Marian Handel, Judt (a cabaret owner and prostitute), Katz, Kohn, Willi Leitgeber (executed by the Home Army), Lejtkin, Lewin, the Lichtenbaum brothers, Lisman, Artur Loffler, Markowicz (executed by the Home Army), Mendl, Mynis, Bobi Nebel, Alfred Nosik, Israel Palanower, Peschel (executed by the Home Army), Purec, Szymon Rose, Marian Rotkopf, Rozencwajg, Selinger, Symche Spira (executed by the Home Army), Spitz, Professor Sterling (executed by the Home Army), Świeca, Süsner, Szejn, Szmerling, Szymanowicz, Ark Wajntraub, Warszawiak (code name “Parszawiak”), Weininger, Wisman, Wertal, Witkowski, and others. The Delegatura, the Delegate’s Office of the Polish government-in-exile, compiled an incomplete list of 1,378 Jewish Gestapo collaborators.<sup>566</sup> Another archival source indicates that the Sonderkommando AS, which worked closely with the German Abwehr (intelligence service), employed some 820 Jewish agents in the Generalgouvernement.<sup>567</sup>

#### **Tadeusz Bednarczyk, Polish resistance fighter in Warsaw and chronicler:**

In addition to 6,000 Jews employed by the Judenrat [Jewish Council] in Warsaw and 2,400 Jews who joined the ghetto police, the Germans had in their service several hundred armed Jewish Gestapo agents from the German-sponsored “Żagiew” [Żydowska Gwardia Wolności] organization. Some 300 of these agents continued to reside in the Gestapo premises on Szucha Street after the liquidation of the ghetto and, during 1943–1944, were employed in ferreting out Jews. It was above all because of these agents that so many Jews in hiding were captured. Previously these agents had hindered the smuggling of food into the Warsaw ghetto and had been instrumental in organizing the “Hotel Polski” affair, in which wealthy Jews were lured to come out of hiding on false promises of obtaining foreign passports and permission to leave occupied Poland. Instead they were robbed and murdered. (Polish archives hold documentation with an incomplete list of 1,378 Jewish collaborators and betrayers. One of them, Hening, directed a 70-member team at the Gestapo premises on Szucha Street who were charged with the task of obtaining information

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<sup>561</sup> Janina Hera, *Polacy ratujący Żydów: Słownik* (Warsaw: Neriton, 2014), 75.

<sup>562</sup> Janina Hera, *Polacy ratujący Żydów: Słownik* (Warsaw: Neriton, 2014), 82–83.

<sup>563</sup> Władysław Bartoszewski and Zofia Lewin, eds., *Righteous Among Nations: How Poles Helped the Jews, 1939–1945* (London: Earls Court Publications, 1969), 31.

<sup>564</sup> Stanisław Wysocki, *Żydzi w dziejach Polski* (Warsaw: Ojczyzna, 1995), 144–46.

<sup>565</sup> Waclaw Zagórski, *Wolność w niewoli* (London: n.p., 1971), 195–99, 376, 398–402, 433–48.

<sup>566</sup> Tadeusz Bednarczyk, *Życie codzienne warszawskiego getta: Warszawskie getto i ludzie (1939–1945 i dalej)* (Warsaw: Ojczyzna, 1995), 241 n.12. See also Marcin Urynowicz, “Stosunki polsko-żydowskie w Warszawie w okresie okupacji hitlerowskiej,” in Andrzej Żbikowski, ed., *Polacy i Żydzi pod okupacją niemiecką 1939–1945: Studia i materiały* (Warsaw: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej–Komisja Ścigania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu, 2006), 601; Barbara Engelking and Jacek Leociak, *Getto warszawskie: Przewodnik po nieistniejącym mieście* (Warsaw: IFiS PAN, 2001), 220–33, 712–14, 729–30; *The Warsaw Ghetto: A Guide to the Perished City* (New Haven, Connecticut, and London: Yale University Press, 2009), 218–32, 755–56, 773–74.

<sup>567</sup> Leszek Żebrowski, *Paszkwil Wyborczej (Michnik i Cichy o Powstaniu Warszawskim)* (Warsaw: Burchard Edition, 1995), 94–95.

about Polish underground organizations. Another Jew at the Gestapo premises interrogated suspected Jews on their knowledge of Catholicism and performed physical examinations.)<sup>568</sup>

*After being stopped by German gendarmes in a routine check, Lidia Kott was taken to the Gestapo headquarters on Szucha Street. Luckily, she succeeded in concealing her Jewish identity.*

Lidia was interrogated by two officers, tall blonds beautiful as archangels in their black uniforms. They told her to say her prayers, asked her to tell them the shape of the host, and tried to get her to say that it was square. Next day they sent her to the “anthropologist,” whom they addressed as “*Herr Doktor*.” He had the rank of a major. He examined her from all angles and came to the conclusion that the build of her body was Nordic and her type Euro-Asiatic. The investigations began all over again, now with the assistance of three experts: a Jew, a Ukrainian, and a Pole. ... Lidia was taken out into the corridor and told to wait. Police informers were running around the corridors constantly, several times bringing in Jews. ... After an hour or two, she was ordered to go home ...

When they had let Lidia go, she had said to the Jewish informer, with her usual sangfroid, “*Au revoir*.” “Don’t say ‘*Au revoir*’ and never come back here. It’s a horrible place.”<sup>569</sup>

*A Jewish woman from Stanisławów and her sister-in-law from Lwów, posing as Poles, were apprehended when they in Warsaw, and were leaving the train station. They were taken to a police station where they were questioned by two police interrogators:*

One of them wanted to finish, but the other was determined to destroy me. They examined each of us in minute religious matters, and went over all our documents. They spoke only Yiddish during all of this, and even sang some Yiddish songs. Then they started arguing: the first one wanted to let us go and the other to turn us over to the Germans.

We were finally freed after two hours of interrogation ...<sup>570</sup>

### **The “Thirteen” and many others:**

*The most notorious concentration of Jewish Gestapo agents was the “Thirteen,” so called after its headquarters located at 13 Leszno Street in Warsaw. They were commonly regarded as the Jewish Gestapo and engendered fear among the ghetto dwellers.<sup>571</sup> Ostensibly this was the Office to Combat Usury and Profiteering established by the Gestapo shortly after the creation of the ghetto in November 1940 to fight the black market, but which provided to the Germans detailed reports about the internal life of the ghetto, especially about the underground and illegal activities. That organization, whose tentacles reached every aspect of ghetto life and even achieved a certain degree of popularity because of its promotion of Jewish culture and other aspects of Jewish life, was headed by Abraham Gancwajch (Ganzweich), a gangster-like figure. Its staff comprised about 300–400 men and it furnished information to the Germans while also providing a range of welfare services. In this way, it aimed to supplant both the Jewish police and even the Judenrat itself. By July 1941, the Germans had tired of the “Thirteen” and closed down its office. Nearly half of its “supervisors” were incorporated into the Jewish police.<sup>572</sup> Gancwajch’s closest collaborators*

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<sup>568</sup> Tadeusz Bednarczyk, *Obowiązek silniejszy od śmierci: Wspomnienia z lat 1939–1944 o polskiej pomocy dla Żydów w Warszawie* (Warszawa: Krajowa Agencja Wydawnicza, 1982), 155–56 (1986 edition). See also pp. 26, 28, 32, 35–36, 43, 75, 78, 94, 103, 121 for other examples of collaboration. Another report indicates that at the end of 1941 and the beginning of 1942, the Gestapo had around 15,000 Jewish agents in their service in the Generalgouvernement. See *Kronika Polska*, number 8, July 1, 1944, in Paweł Szapiro, ed., *Wojna żydowsko-niemiecka: Polska prasa konspiracyjna 1943–1944 o powstaniu w getcie Warszawcy* (London: Aneks, 1992), 407.

<sup>569</sup> Jan Kott, *Still Live: An Autobiographical Essay* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1994), 77–79.

<sup>570</sup> Account of F.I. in Isaiah Trunk, *Jewish Responses to Nazi Persecution: Collective and Individual Behavior in Extremis* (New York: Stein and Day, 1979), 305.

<sup>571</sup> Ruth Altbeker Cyprys, *A Jump For Life: A Survivor’s Journal from Nazi-Occupied Poland* (New York: Continuum, 1997), 39: “In the midst of all this bustled the Jewish Gestapo men, well fed, well dressed, wearing officers’ top-boots. These were the notorious ‘Thirteen’, a sort of militia ... Collaborators of the worst kind ... we were much afraid of ‘The Thirteen’.”

<sup>572</sup> A. Rozenberg, “Trzynastka,” *Bleter far Geszichte* (Warsaw), vol. 5, nos. 1–2 (1952): 187–225, xxxiv–xxxv (English summary), and vol. 5, no. 3 (1952); A. [Adam] Rutkowski, “O agenturze gestapowskiej w getcie warszawskim,”

were Moryc Kohn and Zelik Heller from Łódź, who headed the Gestapo base located nearby at 14 Leszno Street, Zachariasz and B. Szymonowicz from Radomsko, the lawyer Herbert Stahrer from Gdańsk (Danzig), Grancwajch's legal adviser and secretary general, and the writer Jehuda Warszawiak, his press secretary. They even formed their own police headed by Dawid Szternfeld, whose closest associate was Gojcherman (Gojcherman). Other collaborators included: Gonsiorowicz from Radomsko; Stanisław Boraks, a lawyer from Warsaw; Lewin, a lawyer from Wilno; Lewin, a lawyer from Warsaw; Mandel, an engineer; Margules, a sock manufacturer from Łódź; Gurwicz (Górowicz) from Wilno; Koenigl (Kenigel) from Lwów; Reichman (Rajchman) from Łódź; the Prużański (Próżański) brothers from Warsaw; Leon Skosowski from Łódź; Hendel; Kaner; the Erlich brothers; Wolf Szymonowicz from Radomsko; Stroter, a lawyer; M. Lejzerowicz; Dr. Feldszuh; Kleinweksler, a lawyer; Bramson, a lawyer; Reszal, a lawyer; Dr. Sirota; Katz; Bialer; and "many, many others."<sup>573</sup> Some of their exploits are detailed by Jonas Turkow, who refers to this as one of the most "shameful" episodes of the history of the Warsaw ghetto.<sup>574</sup> The agents Kohn and Heller, for instance, did not hesitate to draw up lists of people to be eliminated by the Gestapo. Fanny Solomian-Loc mentions a collaborator residing in the same building her family occupied in the Warsaw ghetto.<sup>575</sup> Maximilian Tauchner describes the activities of an engineer from Lwów by the name of Koenigl, who worked with the Gestapo in Warsaw "in the department of combatting communism."<sup>576</sup> There are many more similar accounts.

When the large deportation of Jews from the Warsaw ghetto began in the summer of 1942, the families of these agents were ushered to safety on the Aryan side. Turkow also mentions a large number of Jews who worked as Gestapo agents on the Aryan side, such as the dancer Franciszka Manówna (Rozenberg), the lyricist Lipski, the director Andrzej Wlast, a German Jew named Sachsenhaus, who threw Adam Czerniakow, the head of the Judenrat, down the stairs, the Weintraub brothers, the boxer Anders, Manheimer, the brother of Franciszka Manówna, a German Jew named Fostel, [Josef] Włodawski, the boxer Fred Bobi, Milek the "redhead," Edek Ast, Szeps, the inspector Erlich (Josl Kapote), "and others." Franciszka Manówna, who was exposed by double agents working for the Polish underground, frequented nightclubs in the company of German Gestapo officers. Turkow mentions a Jew from Lublin by the name of Geier, who had assisted in the liquidation of the Jews in that city. Jewish Gestapo agents from Lublin under their leader Höfli took part in liquidation actions as part of Operation "Reinhard."<sup>577</sup> According to Isaiah Trunk, one of the Jewish Gestapo agents from the Warsaw ghetto who escaped to the "Aryan" side and continued to serve the Germans as an informant, was killed by the Polish underground in November 1943.<sup>578</sup> Polish underground sources record other Jewish Gestapo agents: Tadeusz and Waleria Rębowski from Anin, Matia Goldman (the wife of Włodawski), Hermanowski and his wife Wanda Mostowicz, the wife of Weisberg, Weintraub, Eryk Lipiński, Zuzanna Ginczanka, and many others. Jews who worked, at various times, for the Communists as well as the Gestapo included Jerzy Sawicki (Izydor Reislser) and Mieczysław Walczak.<sup>579</sup>

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*Biuletyn Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego* (Warsaw), no. 19–20 (1956): 38–59 (this study also refers to the Gestapo connections of the Jewish Ambulance Service [Żydowskie Pogotowie Ratunkowe]); Abraham Lewin, *A Cup of Tears: A Diary of the Warsaw Ghetto* (Oxford and New York: Basil Black in association with the Institute for Polish-Jewish Studies, Oxford, 1988), 18; Yehuda Bauer, *Rethinking the Holocaust*, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2001), 145–46; Barbara Engelking and Jacek Leociak, *Getto warszawskie: Przewodnik po nieistniejącym mieście* (Warsaw: IFiS PAN, 2001), 220–33; *The Warsaw Ghetto: A Guide to the Perished City* (New Haven, Connecticut, and London: Yale University Press, 2009), 218–32.

<sup>573</sup> See A. Rutkowski, "O agenturze gestapowskiej w getcie warszawskim," *Biuletyn Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego*, no. 19–20 (1956): 41.

<sup>574</sup> Jonas Turkov, *C'était ainsi: 1939–1943 la vie dans le ghetto de Varsovie* (Paris: Austral, 1995), 131–49.

<sup>575</sup> Fanny Solomian-Loc, *Getto i gwiazdy* (Wasaw: Czytelnik, 1993), 38. This author's memoirs are also available in English: Fanny Salamia-Loc, *Woman Facing the Gallows* (Amherst, Massachusetts: Word Pro, 1981).

<sup>576</sup> Joachim Schoenfeld, *Holocaust Memoirs: Jews in the Lwów Ghetto, the Janowski Concentration Camp, and as Deportees in Siberia* (Hoboken, New Jersey: Ktav Publishing House, 1985), 245–47.

<sup>577</sup> Tadeusz Bednarczyk, *Życie codzienne warszawskiego getta: Warszawskie getto i ludzie (1939–1945 i dalej)* (Warsaw: Ojczyzna, 1995), 235.

<sup>578</sup> Isaiah Trunk, *Judenrat: The Jewish Councils in Eastern Europe under Nazi Occupation* (New York: Macmillan, 1972), 552–53.

<sup>579</sup> Marek Jan Chodakiewicz, *Narodowe Siły Zbrojne: "Żab" przeciw dwu wrogom*, Revised and expanded edition (Warsaw: Fronda, 1999), 348 n.175; Zbigniew Błażyński, *Mówi Józef Światło: Za kulisami bezpieki i partii 1940–1955*, Third revised edition (London: Polska Fundacja Kulturalna, 1986), 138, 228.

Even after the liquidation of the Warsaw ghetto, according to one report the German Gestapo continued to employ some 300 Jewish agents, remnants of the Żagiew organization, to ferret out Jews who were hiding among Christians in Warsaw. It was likely because of these agents that so many Jews in hiding were captured. According to one account, "After the elimination of the Jewish quarter, a period began of diligent search for Jews on the Aryan side. A whole contingent of Jewish and Polish stool pigeons and flunkies roamed around town in the service of the Gestapo, like [Julek] Lubraniecki and others who recognized and gave into the hands of the police the last of the survivors." A Jew named Hening directed a 70-member team at the Gestapo premises on Szucha Avenue who was charged with the task of gathering information about Polish underground organizations, performing physical examinations on suspected Jews, and interrogating them about their knowledge of the Catholic faith. These agents not only combed Warsaw looking for Jews, but also were sent into the countryside where they were known to infiltrate partisan units and seek assistance from Polish villagers posing as Jews on the run. They betrayed the bunkers occupied by Mordechai Anielewicz and other insurgents of the Warsaw ghetto and were employed extensively by the Germans to locate and lure the remnants of the ghetto population out of their hideouts long after the revolt was quelled.<sup>580</sup> Jews hiding in bunkers in the ruins of the ghetto became suspicious of one other and regarded all unfamiliar Jews as potential informers and would not reveal their hideouts.<sup>581</sup> After the failed uprising of August–October 1944, Jews continued to be ferreted out from among the hundreds of thousands of refugees from Warsaw who passed through the transit camp in Pruszków by the "Heaven Brigade," composed of Gestapo agents whose ethnic composition is not known,<sup>582</sup> although at least one Jewish survivor recognized a Jewish "Jew-spotter" working with the Germans.<sup>583</sup> (On the other hand, according to historian Gunnar Paulsson, no Jews seem to have been betrayed at Pruszków by Polish civilians.<sup>584</sup>) The startling figures for Jewish Gestapo agents operating in Warsaw do not appear to be exaggerated given that the Germans employed at least twenty Jewish Greifers, or "catchers" to hunt down and betray Jews in Berlin where far fewer Jews were hiding.<sup>585</sup>

References to Jewish Gestapo agents and betrayers, operating both inside and outside the ghettos throughout occupied Poland, are abundant in Jewish memoirs.<sup>586</sup> Indeed, some historians such as Aleksander Bieberstein<sup>587</sup> consider them to have been a greater source of danger for Jews in hiding than

<sup>580</sup> Leon Najberg, *Ostatni powstańcy getta* (Warsaw: Żydowski Instytut Historyczny, 1993), 89, 110, 115, 120, 132, 142–43 (the author mentions Jews employed by the Befehlstelle Sipo, the local SS command headquarters); LeonBarbara Engelking and Jacek Leociak, *Getto warszawskie: Przewodnik po nieistniejącym mieście* (Warsaw: IFiS PAN, 2001), 740; *The Warsaw Ghetto: A Guide to the Perished City* (New Haven, Connecticut, and London: Yale University Press, 2009), 783–84; Leon Wanat, "The Warsaw Ghetto and Pawiak," *The American Association for Polish-Jewish Studies*, Internet: <<http://www.aapjstudies.org/index.php?id=215>> (author of the cited account); Tadeusz Bednarczyk, *Życie codzienne warszawskiego getta: Warszawskie getto i ludzie (1939–1945 i dalej)* (Warsaw: Ojczyzna, 1995), 233, 234, 235, 241 n.11; Tadeusz Bednarczyk, *Obowiązek silniejszy od śmierci: Wspomnienia z lat 1939–1944 o polskiej pomocy dla Żydów w Warszawie* (Warsaw: Krajowa Agencja Wydawnicza, 1982), 156–57. (In the latter book, Bednarczyk details many other cases of collaboration at 26, 28, 32, 35–36, 43, 75, 78, 94, 103, 121.)

<sup>581</sup> Leon Najberg, *Ostatni powstańcy getta* (Warsaw: Żydowski Instytut Historyczny, 1993), 68, 137.

<sup>582</sup> Michael Zylberberg, *A Warsaw Diary, 1939–1945* (London: Vallentine, Mitchell, 1969), 179, 188.

<sup>583</sup> Halina Zylberman, *Swimming Under Water* (Caulfield South, Victoria: Makor Jewish Community Library, 2001), 86–87.

<sup>584</sup> Gunnar S. Paulsson, *Secret City: The Hidden Jews of Warsaw, 1940–1945* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2002), 236.

<sup>585</sup> For accounts of how effectively that network functioned, see Peter Wyden, *Stella: One Woman's True Tale of Evil, Betrayal, and Survival in Hitler's Germany* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1992); Erica Fischer, *Aimée & Jaguar: A Love Story, Berlin 1943* (New York: HarperCollins, 1995); Doris Tausendfreund, *Erzwungener Verrat: Jüdische "Greifer" im Dienst der Gestapo, 1943–1945* (Berlin: Metropol Verlag, 2006).

<sup>586</sup> Additional references to Warsaw are found in: Wiktoria Śliwowska, ed., *The Last Eyewitnesses: Children of the Holocaust Speak* (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1998), 20 (denunciation by a Jewish collaborator in the Warsaw ghetto); Miriam Peleg-Mariańska and Mordecai Peleg, *Witnesses: Life in Occupied Kraków* (London and New York: Routledge, 1991), 152 (the liquidation in Warsaw of "one of the chief Jewish stool-pigeons, Lolek Skosowski"); Eugenia Szajn Lewin, *W getcie warszawskim: Lipiec 1942–kwiecień 1943* (Poznań: a5, 1989), 26, 52, 54; Barbara Stanisławczyk, *Czterdzieści twardych* (Warsaw: ABC, 1997), 16, 23, 24, 107. The sources on Kraków are especially copious.

<sup>587</sup> According to Aleksander Bieberstein, the chronicler of Kraków Jewry, the "greatest threat" facing Jews on "Aryan" papers, i.e., passing as Poles, was "confidants in the service of the Germans, who most often were Jewish betrayers. ...

Polish denouncers because of their familiarity with the Jewish community and the “professional” pressures stemming from their duties: if they did not turn in fellow Jews in considerable numbers their usefulness to the Germans (and thus their very existence) was spent. Antoni Marianowicz, who hid in and near Warsaw, concurs with that assessment: “Danger lurked not only from the Germans and Polish scoundrels—there were also Jewish scoundrels. I feared them no less, and maybe even more than the former. The conditions encouraged human baseness, regardless of race.”<sup>588</sup> In his published memoirs, in addition to a Jew by the name of Włodek S. working with a ring of szmalcowniks, Marianowicz mentions a Jewish woman by the name of Zaremska who denounced him to the director of the foundry in Wołomin where he worked and another Jewish co-worker who fled to Israel after the war in order to escape punishment for his role in assisting the Germans in plundering Polish property.<sup>589</sup> On May 9, 1942 leaders of the leftist underground in the Warsaw ghetto were arrested after a denunciation, thereby paralyzing the so-called Anti-Fascist Block.<sup>590</sup> Simha Rotem, who himself “dressed like a Gestapo agent” on his missions into the countryside, acknowledged that “Germans weren’t the only ones who served in the Gestapo, whose ranks included members of other nationalities, including Jews.”<sup>591</sup> Another Jewish underground leader, Yitzhak Zuckerman (“Antek”), documents the activities of numerous Jewish collaborators in Warsaw in his memoir, *A Surplus of Memory*. For example, Abraham Gancwajch, the head of the so-called Thirteen, worked for some time on the Aryan side against the Polish underground; Adam Zurawin, one of the many Jewish Gestapo agents Zuckerman mentions, moved to the United States, became a millionaire and summoned a rabbinical court to acquit him. Zuckerman also concedes that he was accosted by as many Jewish blackmailers as Polish ones, and that it was a Jewish blackmailer who almost cost him his life: “And if I consider the treason carried out against me by individuals, there were just as many Jews among them as Poles. For example, when I was condemned to be executed on April 18, 1942, it was because of a Jewish denunciation.”<sup>592</sup>

Curiously, there are historians who insist that the notion that blackmailers and police agents “included substantial numbers of Jewish turncoats, is quite mistaken.”<sup>593</sup> In fact, despite the existence of abundant evidence to the contrary, Gunnar Paulsson maintains that he has not encountered in his research a single

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Many cases of denunciation are known where Polish rescuers lost their lives along with the Jews they hid.” Bieberstein describes at great length the activities of numerous members of the Jewish police—the *Ordnungsdienst*, and various other Jewish agents active both inside and outside the ghetto. In his estimation, their cruelty and ruthlessness even surpassed that of the Germans: “They were the ones who pulled Jews out of homes to their deportation, pressing them on with screams and often with beatings. They were the ones who filled up the jail cells on the basis of lists of names drawn up with their help and the help of other denouncers. They convoyed the transports of deportees and, on their own initiative, carried out searches of homes to look for those who were staying there ‘illegally.’ ... The confidants spied on Jews in hiding especially members of the Jewish Fighting Organization, searched for hidden Jewish property and that given over [to Poles] for safekeeping, and listened in on conversations. Often the denunciations were trumped up and were the result of personal conflicts. Because of these denunciations hundreds of people were imprisoned or deported to Auschwitz where they died in gas chambers. ... The confidants blackmailed their victims and extorted money from them, and once deprived of their money and valuables, they handed them over without the slightest scruple. There were many confidants living both inside and outside the ghetto who were not known at all and consequently were very dangerous.” See Aleksander Bieberstein, *Zagłada Żydów w Krakowie* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1985), 86, 164–74, 220.

<sup>588</sup> Jolanta Wrońska, “Strażnik niewygodnej pamięci” (an interview with Antoni Marianowicz), *Rzeczpospolita* (Warsaw), August 19, 2000.

<sup>589</sup> Antoni Marianowicz, *Życie surowo wzbronione* (Warsaw: Czytelnik, 1995), 115, 163–65.

<sup>590</sup> Barbara Engelking and Jacek Leociak, *Getto warszawskie: Przewodnik po nieistniejącym mieście* (Warsaw: IFiS PAN, 2001), 648; *The Warsaw Ghetto: A Guide to the Perished City* (New Haven, Connecticut, and London: Yale University Press, 2009), 683.

<sup>591</sup> Simha Rotem (“Kazik”), *Memoirs of a Warsaw Ghetto Fighter: The Past Within Me* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1994), 70–71.

<sup>592</sup> Yitzhak Zuckerman (“Antek”), *A Surplus of Memory: Chronicle of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 63n, 441–45, 493.

<sup>593</sup> Gunnar S. Paulsson, *Secret City: The Hidden Jews of Warsaw, 1940–1945* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2002), 150.

“concrete example” of a Jew betraying his Polish benefactor,<sup>594</sup> even though such cases were already publicized during the war and confirmed afterwards.<sup>595</sup>

The phenomenon of civilian collaboration was by no means unique to Poland although some historians have attempted to elevate it to some exceptional level. Historian Norman Davies writes: “Across Europe, people wanted to settle accounts with wartime collaborators. ... Proceedings were most thorough in the Netherlands, where some 200,000 suspected collaborators were detained, and in Belgium, where, of 634,000 detained, 77,000 were sentenced.”<sup>596</sup> Philip Friedman has pointed out that a special branch of the Jewish Defence Committee in Belgium daily employed 300 persons, Jews and non-Jews, to assist post-office workers to intercept denunciations of Jews mailed to the German authorities.<sup>597</sup> In fact, thousands of letters denouncing Jews were sent to the occupying authorities—an enormous number given the size of Belgium’s Jewish community (90,000 or about one percent of that country’s population).<sup>598</sup> “Dossiers were opened on 405,067 individuals accused of collaboration, and 57,254 were prosecuted. Of these, 2,940 were sentenced to death (of whom 242 were executed); 2,340 were sentenced to life imprisonment.” French Jews were also confronted with the problem of collaboration and denunciation on a daily basis.<sup>599</sup> The French wrote between 3 and 5 million signed and unsigned letters of denunciation, often sent directly to the Gestapo, and frequently turning in Jews and their protectors.<sup>600</sup> Nearly 10,000 real or alleged collaborators were lynched during the last months of the war, or at the moment of liberation.<sup>601</sup> According

<sup>594</sup> Gunnar S. Paulsson, “Ringelblum Revisited, 1940–1945: Polish-Jewish Relations in Occupied Warsaw, 1940–1945,” in Joshua D. Zimmerman, ed., *Contested Memories: Poles and Jews during the Holocaust and Its Aftermath* (New Brunswick, New Jersey and London: Rutgers University Press, 2003), 185.

<sup>595</sup> Paweł Szapiro, ed., *Wojna żydowsko-niemiecka: Polska prasa konspiracyjna 1943–1944 o powstaniu w getcie Warszawy* (London: Aneks, 1992), 163.

<sup>596</sup> Norman Davies, *Europe: A History* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 1060.

<sup>597</sup> Philip Friedman, *Their Brothers’ Keepers* (New York: Holocaust Library, 1978), 69.

<sup>598</sup> Jean-Philippe Schreiber, “Belgium and the Jews Under Nazi Rule: Beyond the Myths,” in David Bankier and Israel Gutman, eds., *Nazi Europe and the Final Solution* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem The Holocaust Martyrs’ and Heroes’ Remembrance Authority and The International Institute for Holocaust Research, 2003), 478.

<sup>599</sup> Adam Rayski, *The Choice of the Jews under Vichy: Between Submission and Defiance* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005); Jean-Marc Berlière, *Les policiers français sous L’Occupation: D’après les archives inédites de l’épuration* (Paris: Perrin, 2001); Julian Jackson, ed., *France: The Dark Years, 1940–1944* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); Sarah Fishman et al., *France at War: Vichy and the Historians* (Oxford and New York: Berg, 2000); Lynne Taylor, *Between Resistance and Collaboration: Popular Protest in Northern France, 1940–45* (Houndsmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Macmillan 2000; New York: St. Martin Press, 2000); Simon Kitson, “From Enthusiasm to Disenchantment: The French Police and the Vichy Regime, 1940–1944,” *Contemporary European History*, vol. 11, no. 3 (2002): 371–90.

<sup>600</sup> Sheila Fitzpatrick and Robert Gellately, “Introduction to the Practices of Denunciation in Modern European History,” *The Journal of Modern History*, vol. 68, no. 4 (December 1996): 747–67; Benn Williams, “Letters of Denunciation in the Lyon Region, 1940–1944,” *Historical Social Research*, vol. 26, no. 2/3 (2001): 136–52. This phenomenon was first detailed in André Halimi, *La Délation sous l’Occupation* (Paris: A. Moreau, 1983). Some historians, like Henry Rousso, offer a more conservative estimate of “hundreds of thousands” of denunciations. Denunciation continued to be widespread in postwar France, this time aimed at alleged wartime collaborators. See Megan Koreman, *The Expectation of Justice: France, 1944–1946* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1999).

<sup>601</sup> István Deák, Jan T. Gross, and Tony Judt., eds., *The Politics of Retribution in Europe: World War II and Its Aftermath* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2000), 12, 134; Norman Davies, *Europe At War: No Simple Victory* (London: Macmillan, 2006), 302, 319. See also Herbert R. Lottman, *The Purge: The Purification of the French Collaborators After World War II* (New York: William Morrow, 1986); Herbert R. Lottman, *The People’s Anger: Justice and Revenge in Post-Liberation France* (New York: Hutchinson, 1986); H.R. Kedward and Nancy Wood, eds., *The Liberation of France: Image and Event* (Oxford and Washington, D.C.: Berg, 1995). According to a review of Julian Jackson, ed., *France: The Dark Years, 1940–1944* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001): “Some 9,000 collaborators, suspected collaborators, or people who had simply incurred their neighbors’ dislike were killed just before and during the Liberation; about 1,500 more were executed after trial; more than 40,000 were sentenced to prison terms; 20,000 to 30,000 public servants were sanctioned. Among these were few policemen [who had played a pivotal role in the round-up and deportation of French Jews to the death camps]. In August of 1944 the police in Paris and other cities had mutinied against the Germans with whom they had collaborated for so long, and thus qualified for resister status. From 10,000 to 20,000 women (though not Coco Chanel or Arletty) were accused of horizontal collaboration and had their heads shaved, or were subjected to other forms of public humiliation in repulsive and sexist acts. But 80,000 Frenchwomen of the occupied zone had by mid-1943 claimed children’s benefits from the German

to Hungarian historian László Karsai, “The ‘sentences’ of partisan courts of law and spontaneous and/or organized eruptions of popular wrath took 8,000 to 9,000 victims in France and at least 8,000 to 10,000 victims in Italy during 1944 and 1945.” In France, 350,000 people were investigated, 45,000 were convicted, and 1,500 were executed. In Holland, 120,000 to 150,000 people were arrested, and tens of thousands were fired from their jobs. The courts sentenced 50,000 people, 152 of them to death. 40 of these were executed (five were Germans).<sup>602</sup> Unlike virtually every other occupied country, Poland did not have a Quisling regime, although various persons were approached to fulfill such a role, nor did it produce organized collaborators such as native SS formations. During the course of the German occupation, Poland’s underground authorities passed approximately 5,000 death sentences against collaborators, about half of which were carried out.<sup>603</sup>

Apart from some cases of communal social ostracism, the Jews themselves have overlooked the deeds of those Jews who had collaborated with the Nazis to the detriment of their own people. Historian Piotr Wróbel has posed the following pointed questions in this regard: “But how are historians supposed to judge when such important events of the past are not resolved? How can non-Jewish bystanders be condemned for their passivity when Jewish *Kapos*, policemen, and former *Judenräte* leaders were rehabilitated? Many similar questions appear when we study the Holocaust and most of them have no satisfactory answer yet. This aspect of the Holocaust is still far from settled.”<sup>604</sup> A Jew from Tarnów recalls: “While in Linz I found out that a Jewish man who had been a ranking O.D. in our ghetto and later on a ‘Sonderkommando’ (he loaded corpses into the crematoria) lived there. Just the sound of his name Zimmet conjured up ugly memories. He was a brute of the first order; in the Ghetto, he beat a friend of mine, Srulek Fenning, to death. He committed other heinous crimes in the service of the Gestapo. I was told that the D.P. camp inmates tried to bring him to justice in Austria, but the local authorities wanted nothing to do with it. He was subsequently beaten up severely, but he stayed on in the camp, being afraid to venture elsewhere for fear of a worse fate. Some time later on, he made his way to Montreal, Canada where he was adjudicated by a ‘Bet Din’ (a Jewish court) and released. The verdict was ‘insufficient evidence’ and ‘it’s a shame before the gentiles’ to bring it out in the open.”<sup>605</sup> No such leniency was shown to non-Jewish collaborators. A Jewish family who set off from Marseilles to Australia on the SS *Derna* in August 1948 with 600 hundred other refugees recalled: “One of the Ukrainians on board boasted that he’d killed Jews during the war. One moonless night, he vanished and was never seen again.”<sup>606</sup>

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authorities and requested German nationality for their offspring.” See Eugen Weber, “France’s Downfall,” *Atlantic Monthly*, October 2001.

<sup>602</sup> See László Karsai, “Crime and Punishment: People’s Courts, Revolutionary Legality, and the Hungarian Holocaust,” *Intermarium*, The First Online Journal of East Central European Postwar History and Politics (Internet: [www.columbia.edu/cu/sipa/Regional/ece/intermar.html](http://www.columbia.edu/cu/sipa/Regional/ece/intermar.html)), vol. 4, no. 1.

<sup>603</sup> See Leszek Gondek, *Polska karzqca 1939–1945: Polski podziemny wymiar sprawiedliwosci w okresie okupacji niemieckiej* (Warsaw: Pax, 1988), 114.

<sup>604</sup> Piotr Wróbel, “The *Judenräte* Controversy: Some Polish Aspects,” *The Polish Review* 42, no. 2 (1997): 225–32. Professor Wróbel cites numerous examples to support his thesis. For additional examples, see Stanisław Wroński and Maria Zwolakowa, *Polacy Żydzi 1939–1945* (Warsaw: Książka i Wiedza, 1971), 304–305; Isaiah Trunk, *Judenrat: The Jewish Councils in Eastern Europe under Nazi Occupation* (New York: Macmillan, 1972), 548–69.

<sup>605</sup> This Jew also recalled an Austrian Jewish exile named Distler, who “fully and brutally cooperated with the Gestapo” in Tarnów. See William Kornbluth, *Sentenced to Remember: My Legacy of Life in Pre-1939 Poland and Sixty-Eight Months of Nazi Occupation* (Bethlehem: Lehigh University Press; London and Toronto: Associated University Presses, 1994), 67, 144.

<sup>606</sup> Diane Armstrong, *Mosaic: A Chronicle of Five Generations* (Milsons Point, New South Wales: Random House, 1998), 409.

## Chronicle of Death: Poles Who Died Saving Jews

As of January 1, 2015, 6,532 Poles have been awarded by Yad Vashem, the Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Authority in Jerusalem, for rescuing Jews. They represent the largest single national group of the 25,686 persons officially recognized "Righteous Gentiles".<sup>607</sup> However, awards are generally granted only to those who sheltered Jews successfully for extended periods of time, and rarely to those who perished in the process. Lesser forms of assistance such as providing food or a place to stay for a night or two, which were widespread during the occupation, do not receive recognition.

Poland was the only country in German-controlled Europe where any form of assistance to a Jew—even providing a glass of water or a piece of bread—was punishable by death. While helping Jews was punishable by death in a few other jurisdictions (such as Serbia and the Czech Protectorate), only in occupied Poland was this punishment applied relentlessly. What is more, this punishment was meted out not only to the "offender" but also to his or her family. Several thousand Christian Poles—men, women and children, entire families, and even entire communities—were executed summarily, burned alive, tortured to death in prisons, or murdered in Nazi camps specifically for the "crime" of helping Jews. In addition, a number of Poles fell while providing military assistance to the Warsaw ghetto fighters. No other nation has ever paid so high a price for helping Jews.

An example of the measures taken by the Germans is the following circular issued on September 21, 1942 by the SS and Police Chief in Radom District:

"The experience of the last few weeks has shown that Jews, in order to avoid evacuation, tend to flee from the small Jewish residential districts in the communities above all. These Jews must have been taken in by Poles. I am requesting you to order all mayors and village heads as soon as possible that every Pole who takes in a Jew makes himself guilty under the Third Ordinance on restrictions on residence in the Government General of October 15, 1941.

"As accomplices are also considered those Poles who feed run-away Jews or sell them foodstuffs, even if they do not offer them shelter. Whatever the case, these Poles are liable to the death penalty."<sup>608</sup>

**The following is a very brief chronology selected from more than 900 cases of executions of (one or more) Christian Poles for helping Jews.**<sup>609</sup>

- September 7, 1939. In Limanowa near Kraków, nine Jews were executed by the Germans together with a Catholic mailman, Jan Semik, who tried to stop the execution.

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<sup>607</sup> For a complete list of Poles awarded by Yad Vashem as of January 1, 2014, see <<http://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/righteous/statistics/poland.pdf>>. This list includes only ethnic Poles, as rescuers from other ethnic groups who assisted Jews on the territory of interwar Poland are listed under Ukraine, Belarus, Lithuania, Czechoslovakia, and Germany, as the case may be. Additionally, a number of Poles from Lithuania, Latvia, Belarus, Ukraine, Germany, Austria and France have also received recognition, but they are listed under those countries. For information about Polish rescuers from countries outside Poland see Israel Gutman, ed., *The Encyclopedia of the Righteous Among the Nations: Rescuers of Jews During the Holocaust*, volume 7: *Europe (Part I) and Other Countries* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2007), 31–32, 70–71, 86–87, 115–16; volume 8: *Europe (Part II)* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2011)—Belarus, Latvia, Lithuania, Ukraine; volumes 9 and 10: *Supplementary Volumes (2000–2005)* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2010).

<sup>608</sup> Władysław Bartoszewski, *The Blood Shed Unites Us: Pages from the History of Help to the Jews in Occupied Poland* (Warsaw: Interpress Publishers, 1970), 40.

<sup>609</sup> Except where otherwise noted, this partial chronology is based on the following sources: Waclaw Bielawski, *Zbrodnie na Polakach dokonane przez Hitlerowców za pomoc udzielaną Żydom* (Warsaw: Główna Komisja Badania Zbrodni Hitlerowskich w Polsce—Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, 1987); Waclaw Zajęzkowski, *Martyrs of Charity*, Part One (Washington, D.C.: St. Maximilian Kolbe Foundation, 1987); Maria Pilarska, ed., *Those Who Helped: Polish Rescuers of Jews During the Holocaust*, Part Three (Warsaw: The Main Commission for the Investigation of Crimes Against the Polish Nation—The Institute of National Memory, and The Polish Society for the Righteous Among the Nations, 1997).

- January 14, 1940. The Germans found the broken shackles of a Jewish prison escapee in the Warsaw apartment of Maria Brodacka, a Catholic Pole, whom they executed.
- July 1–12, 1940. The Gestapo arrested and deported to Auschwitz the Board of Directors of the Polish Bar Association in Warsaw, a total of eighty Polish Catholic lawyers, for refusing to disbar Jewish lawyers. Practically all of the Poles perished.
- May, 1941. German plans for the starvation of the Warsaw ghetto were systematically sabotaged by illegal deliveries of about 250 tons of flour a day. Józef Dąbrowski and several other Poles were shot by the Germans for such deliveries.
- November, 1941. The German Commandant of Warsaw, Ludwig Fischer, issued a decree which made the act of providing “Aryan” identity documents to Jews punishable by death. At least eleven Polish municipal employees in the registry office were murdered by the Gestapo for providing false papers to thousands of Jews during the war.
- February 21, 1942. In Lwów, two Catholic priests were shot to death by the Germans for providing shelter in their monastery to two Jewish families.
- April, 1942. In Mława, the Gestapo conducted a public execution of 50 Jews. A Polish bystander who shouted, “They are spilling innocent blood,” was seized and murdered along with the Jewish victims.
- May, 1942. In Tarnów, German military police executed 15 Polish farmers together with 25 Jews whom they had sheltered. The homes and farm buildings of the Poles were burned to the ground.
- July 1, 1942. In Biaobrzegi near Opoczno, German military police executed a Pole, Maksymilian Gruszczyński, for letting Jews bake bread in his home.
- July 20, 1942. In Warsaw, Polish socialists Tadeusz Koral and Ferdynand Grzesik were arrested by the Germans for teaching tactics of sabotage and diversion in the ghetto. Koral was executed and Grzesik sent to a concentration camp.
- July 21, 1942. In Warsaw, the Germans murdered Dr. Franciszek Raszeja, a noted professor of medicine at the University of Poznań, together with his assistant, Dr. Kazimierz Polak, and his nurse for providing medical assistance to a Jewish patient.
- July, 1942. During the liquidation of the ghetto in Kielce, about a score of Poles were rounded up and shot by the Nazis.<sup>610</sup> One Pole was shot while taking some water to Jews who were locked up in railway cars and fainting.
- October 6, 1942. In Bidaczów Nowy near Biłgoraj the Germans murdered 22 Polish farmers for sheltering Jews. The Poles’ homes and farm buildings were burned to the ground.
- October, 1942. German military and Ukrainian auxiliary police massacred over 70 inhabitants from 22 families in the Polish hamlet of Oborki, near Łuck, for feeding and giving shelter to Jews.<sup>611</sup>
- Autumn, 1942. During the deportation of Jews from the town of Chmielnik, two Poles found in the vicinity of the ghetto were executed. One of them was turned over to the German police by a Jewish Gestapo agent.

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<sup>610</sup> Główna Komisja Badania Zbrodni Hitlerowskich w Polsce, and Rada Ochrony Pomników Walki i Męczeństwa, *Obozy hitlerowskie na ziemiach polskich 1939-1945: Informator encyklopedyczny* (Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1979), 230.

<sup>611</sup> Stanisław Wroński and Maria Zwolakowa, *Polacy Żydzi 1939–1945* (Warszawa: Książka i Wiedza, 1971), 361.

- November 19, 1942. A Polish farmer from Nasutów near Lubartów was hanged for sheltering a Jewish father and son who were spotted leaving the farmer's barn by four German soldiers who were in the vicinity. The farmer's barn was burned to the ground.<sup>612</sup>
- December 1, 1942. In Studzieniec near Rzeszów, German military police executed 5 Jews and 11 Poles, whom the captured Jews had betrayed under duress, after receiving help and supplies from the Poles.
- December 4, 1942. In Przeworsk, 6 Catholics were executed by the Germans in reprisal for the aid given to Jews by Polish Christian townspeople.<sup>613</sup>
- December 6, 1942. In Ciepeliów Stary near Kielce, a motorized detachment of the SS burned alive 21 Poles for harbouring Jews.
- December 6, 1942. In Klamocha Forest near Kielce, Polish partisans battled German forces which had surrounded a hideout of Jews. Twenty Poles were killed. Two captured Jews died without betraying the names of Polish game wardens who had helped them.
- December 14, 1942. A Polish farmer and his wife from Bidaczów Nowy near Biłgoraj, were executed for sheltering a Jewish family in their attic. Although forewarned by the village reeve of an impending German raid, the Jewish charges returned unexpectedly to the home from the woods where they had moved temporarily. The homestead was burned to the ground.<sup>614</sup>
- December 28, 1942. Seven Polish villagers from Majdan Nowy near Biłgoraj, were shot by the German police for assisting Jews hiding in nearby forests. The villagers were betrayed by a young Jewish woman who was apprehended by the Germans.<sup>615</sup>
- December, 1942. In Warsaw, two members of the Polish Underground Scouting Organization "Szare Szeregi" were arrested by the Gestapo for bringing aid and weapons to the Jews in the ghetto. Zdzisław Gręcki was publicly executed while his colleague Podwysocki was tortured in the Pawiak prison and then executed.
- 1942. A Jewish mother was saved along with four children from the Warsaw ghetto and placed in the home of a Catholic teacher, who lived with her elderly mother. When the German military police came to obtain information about their hiding place, the Jews were hidden in a nearby ditch. The Germans stood the elderly mother in a hole dug in the ground and gradually were filling the hole with dirt, adding one shovel each time the old lady refused to answer a question. Finally, only her head remained above the ground and she died of suffocation. Suddenly, one of the children inadvertently came out of the ditch and betrayed the hiding place. The Jews were killed outright and the teacher was sent to Auschwitz where she died during the winter of 1943.
- January 15, 1943. In Pilica-Zamek, German policemen executed Maria Rogozińska and her one-year-old son for harbouring Jews. A local Polish policeman was also executed because he did not report the presence of Jews in the village.
- Mid-January, 1943. The Germans executed a Polish farmer from Gunatów near Puławy, who had repeatedly sheltered Jews. A Jewish tailor who had benefitted from the farmer's hospitality led a patrol of German gendarmes to the farm where he had been sheltered.<sup>616</sup>

<sup>612</sup> *Biuletyn Głównej Komisji Badania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu–Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej* (Warsaw), volume 35 (1993): 188–89.

<sup>613</sup> Iwo Cyprian Pogonowski, *Jews in Poland: A Documentary History* (New York: Hippocrene, 1993), 118.

<sup>614</sup> *Biuletyn Głównej Komisji Badania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu–Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej* (Warsaw), volume 35 (1993): 188–89.

<sup>615</sup> *Ibid.*, 186–87.

- January 29, 1943. In Wierzbica near Miechów, a Jew betrayed the hideouts of a number of Jews, including that of his own in-laws. They and six members of another Jewish family were executed. This also precipitated the execution by the Germans of three Catholic families consisting of 15 people who helped the Jews.
- March–July, 1943. Julius Gebler, the head of the Gestapo in Dębica near Rzeszów, personally led raids on farms in the vicinity to trap Catholic families sheltering Jews. He ordered the execution of 70 Poles and had their homes and farm buildings burned.<sup>617</sup>
- March, 1943. In Zarzетка near Węgrów, 16 Catholic farmers were tortured and murdered by the Gestapo during an investigation into the aid given to Jewish escapees from Treblinka. The Germans had been led there by a Jewish communist by the name of Rubin from Wołomin who had been given shelter by the local residents.<sup>618</sup>
- March 25, 1943. In Sterdyń near Sokołów, the German SS executed 47 Polish farmers and deported 140 to concentration camps for the “crime” of *Judenherbergerung*, or harbouring of Jews. The Germans brought with them to the village two Jews, one from Warsaw, the other a communist from Sterdyń, to show them where and from whom they had received assistance.<sup>619</sup>
- May, 1943. In Brody, near Tarnopol, German military police surrounded a house and shot its Polish inhabitants for refusing to divulge where they had hidden two Jewish partisans. Both of the Jews committed suicide.
- June 8, 1943. In Zwiężyca near Rzeszów, 19 Polish farmers were executed by the German Gestapo and the (Ukrainian) SS Galizien for aiding Jews and Communists.
- June 10, 1943. In Hucisko near Głogów Małopolski, 21 Poles were massacred for sheltering Jews. Seventeen farm houses, homes of the executed Poles, were burned together with a large number of farm buildings.
- June 28, 1943. In the village of Ciesie near Mińsk Mazowiecki, a raid was conducted by the Gestapo, SS and German military police to search for Jews who had escaped from a death train headed to Treblinka. Twenty-one Poles and three Jews were burned alive when the village was set on fire. Several Polish families were executed, one Jew escaped.
- July 4, 1943. In Bór Kunowski near Starachowice, the Germans murdered 43 Poles for helping Jews who had escaped from the ghetto and formed a partisan unit in a nearby forest. Twenty-three Poles were burned alive, and 20 were shot to death.
- September, 1943. The townspeople of Tarnopol were herded into the marketplace by the Gestapo to watch as a Polish family, along with their two children, were being hanged alongside the Jewish family they sheltered as a warning of what would happen to those who would befriend a Jew.<sup>620</sup>

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<sup>616</sup> Ibid., 191–92.

<sup>617</sup> Iwo Cyprian Pogonowski, *Jews in Poland: A Documentary History* (New York: Hippocrene, 1993), 121.

<sup>618</sup> *Głos Pracy* (PZW), number 20, May 13, 1943. Cited in Paweł Szapiro, ed., *Wojna żydowsko-niemiecka: Polska prasa konspiracyjna 1943–1944 o powstaniu w getcie Warszawy* (London: Aneks, 1992), 163. See also Waclaw Piekarski, *Obwód Armii Krajowej Sokółów Podlaski “Sęp”, “Proso” 1939–1944* (Warsaw: n.p., 1991), 25–27.

<sup>619</sup> *Głos Pracy* (PZW), number 20, May 13, 1943. Cited in Paweł Szapiro, ed., *Wojna żydowsko-niemiecka: Polska prasa konspiracyjna 1943–1944 o powstaniu w getcie Warszawy* (London: Aneks, 1992), 163. See also Wojciech Gozdawa-Gołębiowski, “Powiat węgrowski w latach okupacji niemieckiej 1939–1944,” in Arkadiusz Kołodziejczyk and Tadeusz Swat, eds. *Węgrów: Dzieje miasta i okolic w latach 1941–1944* (Węgrów: Towarzystwo Miłośników Ziemi Węgrzowskiej, 1991), 357–58.

<sup>620</sup> Testimony of Irene Opdyke in Carol Rittner and Sondra Myers, eds., *The Courage to Care: Rescuers of Jews During the Holocaust* (New York: New York University Press, 1986), 48.

- October, 1943. In Warsaw, the Gestapo arrested the rector of the Catholic seminary, Monsignor Roman Archutowski for helping Jews. He was sent to Majdanek concentration camp where he died after being tortured. Some 60 Polish Catholic priests were executed by the Germans for helping Jews.
- November 11, 1943. In Kraków, a member of the Polish “Blue” police, who was also a soldier of the Polish Home Army, was executed for providing Jews with Aryan papers.
- Aleksander Zielonkiewicz, a lieutenant of the Polish Home Army (OW-KB) was executed by the Germans in 1943 for giving shelter to a Jewish family by the name of Szapiro in his home in Ossów, near Warsaw. Szapiro’s wife and child escaped through the back door the moment she saw her husband approaching in the company of the German police. A Jew informing on or betraying his own family or rescuer to the Germans constituted an additional risk and impediment to Christians trying to save Jews.<sup>621</sup>
- January 29, 1944. In Kraków, the head of the SS and German military police condemned 73 Poles to death for helping Jews. The names of those who were executed were listed on an official German poster displayed in Kraków.
- March 7, 1944. The extended family of the gardener Mieczysław Wolski cared for a large group of 34 Jews which included Emanuel Ringelblum, the chronicler of the Warsaw ghetto, in a bunker built under a greenhouse at 81 Grójecka Street in Warsaw. According to one report, the hideout was disclosed by a Jewish Gestapo agent and liquidated by the Germans. The Jews and two of the Poles who had provided shelter to them for many months were executed.<sup>622</sup> A Catholic midwife who had come to the hideout to deliver a baby was also taken and executed in the ruins of the ghetto.

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<sup>621</sup> Tadeusz Bednarczyk, *Obowiązek silniejszy od śmierci: Wspomnienia z lat 1939–1944 o polskiej pomocy dla Żydów w Warszawie* (Warszawa: Krajowa Agencja Wydawnicza, 1982), 54 (1986 edition).

<sup>622</sup> Emanuel Ringelblum shared his hideout, a “bunker” on Grójecka Street in Warsaw, with 34 Jews. It was built by a Polish gardener named Mieczysław Wolski under his greenhouse. Discovered by the Germans on March 7, 1944, the Jews sheltered there, together with two their Polish rescuers (Wolski and his nephew, Janusz Wysocki), were executed in the ruins of the ghetto. See Władysław Bartoszewski and Zofia Lewin, eds., *Righteous Among Nations: How Poles Helped the Jews, 1939–1945* (London: Earls Court Publications, 1969), 23–26, 35; Maria Pilarska, ed., *Those Who Helped: Polish Rescuers of Jews During the Holocaust*, Part Three (Warsaw: The Main Commission for the Investigation of Crimes Against the Polish Nation–The Institute of National Memory, and The Polish Society for the Righteous Among the Nations, 1997), 28 (entry 667). Teresa Prekerowa maintains that the denunciation was the work of Jan Łakiński (Łakiński), an 18-year-old informer who had also betrayed members of the Home Army. (On March 30, 1944, the Polish underground published a notice that Łakiński had been sentenced to death by a special underground civil tribunal for denouncing Jews and executed. The date of sentencing or execution is not given. However, other sources state the execution took place on February 24, 1944, which was before the hideout was raided, thus casting doubt on Prekerowa’s version.) See Teresa Prekerowa, *Konspiracyjna Rada Pomocy Żydom w Warszawie 1942–1945* (Warsaw: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1982), 286; Teresa Prekerowa, *Zegota: Commission d’aide aux Juifs* (Monaco: Éditions du Rocher, 1999), 247. According to another version, Wolski was betrayed by his ex-girlfriend, Chojecka, after a falling out. See Vladka Meed, *On Both Sides of the Wall: Memoirs from the Warsaw Ghetto* (New York: Holocaust Library, 1979), 210 (Meed does not record the fate of the Polish rescuers); Samuel Willenberg, *Surviving Treblinka* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, in association with the Institute for Polish-Jewish Studies, 1989), 170; Jacob Celemenski, *Elegy For My People: Memoirs of an Underground Courier of the Jewish Labor Bund in Nazi-Occupied Poland 1939–45* (Melbourne: The Jacob Celemenski Memorial Trust, 2000), 191; Samuel D. Kassow, *Who Will Write Our History? Emanuel Ringelblum, the Warsaw Ghetto, and the Oyneg Shabes Archive* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2007), 383; Testimony of Jerzy Gero, Jewish Historical Institute (Warsaw) archive, record group 301, number 5714 (this testimony identifies the betrayer as Chojecka). Tadeusz Bednarczyk attributes the betrayal of Ringelblum’s hideout to a Jewish woman, possibly a Gestapo agent, who was refused shelter in that overcrowded hideout. See his *Życie codzienne warszawskiego getta*, 237; and his *Obowiązek silniejszy od śmierci: Wspomnienia z lat 1939–1944 o polskiej pomocy dla Żydów w Warszawie* (Warsaw: Grunwald, 1986), 147. It may be that Bednarczyk has confused this event with another similar one involving a rescuer named Marczak. See Waclaw Zajaczkowski, *Martyrs of Charity*, Part One (Washington, D.C.: St. Maximilian Kolbe Foundation, 1987), 254 (entry 580), 255 (entry 582).

- March 23, 1944. The Polish village of Huta Werchobuska near Brody, in Eastern Poland, along with its inhabitants, was annihilated by the Nazis and their Ukrainian auxiliaries for assisting Jews.<sup>623</sup>
- Spring, 1944. A street peddler by the name of Marczak gave shelter to a group of 8 to 10 Jews in an underground hideout under his home at 14 Nowiniarska Street in Warsaw. In the spring of 1944 a young, well-dressed Jewish woman came to the house seeking admission into the group and threatened to inform the Gestapo. Several days later she returned with the Gestapo who seized the Jews after a search of the house. Unable to find Marczak the Germans took a large group of Poles as hostages to be shot if he failed to turn himself in. Marczak returned and was promptly executed. The Jewish woman was suspected of being a Gestapo agent, one of many in Warsaw specializing in seeking out Jewish hideouts.<sup>624</sup>
- September, 1944. The Germans executed eight Catholic nuns from the order of the Sisters of Charity in Warsaw for refusing to surrender Jewish children sheltered in their orphanage.

In total, several thousand Christian Poles—men, women and children, entire families and even whole communities—were tortured to death, summarily executed, or burned alive for rendering assistance to Jews. Hundreds of cases of Poles being put to death for helping Jews have been documented though the list is still far from complete (the author is aware of scores of additional cases). See the following publications on this topic: Philip Friedman, *Their Brothers' Keepers* (New York: Holocaust Library, 1978), 184–85; Waclaw Zajaczkowski, *Martyrs of Charity: Christian and Jewish Response to the Holocaust*, Part One (Washington, D.C.: St. Maximilian Kolbe Foundation, 1987), Part One; Waclaw Bielawski, *Zbrodnie na Polakach dokonane przez hitlerowców za pomoc udzielaną Żydom* (Warsaw: Główna Komisja Badania Zbrodni Hitlerowskich w Polsce–Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, 1987); The Main Commission for the Investigation of Crimes Against the Polish Nation–The Institute of National Memory and The Polish Society For the Righteous Among Nations, *Those Who Helped: Polish Rescuers of Jews During the Holocaust*, Part One (Warsaw, 1993), Part Two (Warsaw, 1996), and Part Three (Warsaw, 1997). A portion of the last of these publications is reproduced in Appendix B in Richard C. Lukas, *The Forgotten Holocaust: The Poles Under German Occupation, 1939–1944*, Second revised edition (New York: Hippocrene, 1997), and an extensive list of Polish victims also appears in Tadeusz Piotrowski, *Poland's Holocaust: Ethnic Strife, Collaboration with Occupying Forces and Genocide in the Second Republic, 1918–1947* (Jefferson, North Carolina and London: McFarland, 1998), 119–23.

Some Holocaust historians who deprecate Polish rescue efforts, such as Lucy S. Dawidowicz, have attempted to argue that essentially there was no difference in the penalty that the Poles and Western Europeans such as the Dutch faced for helping Jews. See Lucy C. Dawidowicz, *The Holocaust and the Historians* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1981), 166. However, the sources on which Dawidowicz relies belie this claim. Raul Hilberg clarifies the situation that prevailed in the Netherlands as follows: “If caught, they did not have to fear an automatic death penalty. Thousands were arrested for hiding Jews or Jewish belongings, but it was German policy to detain such people only for a relatively short time in a camp within the country, and in serious cases to confiscate their property.” See Raul Hilberg, *Perpetrators, Victims, Bystanders: The Jewish Catastrophe, 1933–1945* (New York: Aaron Asher Books/Harper Collins, 1992), 210–11. According to Dutch historians, “usually, if Gentiles who helped Jews were punished, they were punished with short-term Schutzhaft, or protective custody; only severe cases were sent to concentration camps in Germany.” The extent of denunciations can be gauged from the number of Dutchmen incarcerated for helping Jews: 1,604 on May 9, 1943, or thirty percent of all Dutchmen held in “protective custody at the time; and 1,997 a year later, or about twenty percent of the total number at that time. See Marnix Croes, “The Holocaust in the Netherlands and the Rate of Jewish Survival,” *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, vol. 20, no. 3 (Winter 2006): 474–99. In Belgium, a decree of June 1, 1942 warned the local population against sheltering Jews under punishment with “imprisonment

<sup>623</sup> Stanisław Wroński and Maria Zwolakowa, *Polacy Żydzi 1939–1945* (Warszawa: Książka i Wiedza, 1971), 433. This is based on the testimony of Feiweil Auerbach, who, along with 30 other Jews, received extensive help from the Polish villages of Huta Werchobuska and Huta Pieniacka.

<sup>624</sup> Tadeusz Bednarczyk, *Obowiązek silniejszy od śmierci: Wspomnienia z lat 1939–1944 o polskiej pomocy dla Żydów w Warszawie* (Warszawa: Krajowa Agencja Wydawnicza, 1982), 146–47 (1986 edition).

and a fine.” See Mordechai Paldiel, *Churches and the Holocaust: Unholy Teaching, Good Samaritans, and Reconciliation* (Jersey City, New Jersey: Ktav Publishing House, 2006), 131–32. Helping Jews was punishable by death in Serbia, and the death penalty was also found on the books in the Czech Protectorate for those who harboured elements hostile to the Reich without specifying Jews. See Raphaël Lemkin, *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe: Laws of Occupation, Analysis of Government, Proposals for Redress* (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1944; Clark, New Jersey: The Law Book Exchange, 2005), 250 (Serbia); Livia Rothkirchen, “The Protectorate Government and the ‘Jewish Question’ 1939–1941,” *Yad Vashem Studies*, vol. 27 (1999): 331–62. A decree of October 12, 1942 provided for the death penalty for leaving or entering Norway without permission, without specifying Jews. See Samuel Abrahamsen, *Norway’s Response to the Holocaust* (New York: Holocaust Library, 1991), 20. Although the death penalty existed on the books, it was rarely imposed on those who helped Jews in those jurisdictions. Such laxity was virtually unheard of in occupied Poland, where the death penalty was meted out with utmost rigour. Several Norwegian resistance fighters were executed for helping Jews to escape to Sweden, and a number of others imprisoned. See Mordecai Paldiel, *The Path of the Righteous: Gentile Rescuers of Jews During the Holocaust* (Hoboken, New Jersey: KTAV Publishing House; New York: The Jewish Foundation for Christian Rescuers, 1993), 366. Several dozen individuals in the Czech Protectorate were charged by Nazi special courts and sentenced to death. See Livia Rothkirchen, *The Jews of Bohemia and Moravia: Facing the Holocaust* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, and Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2005), 218–27, 303–304. A small number of rescuers were also put to death in other occupied countries such as Lithuania and the occupied areas of the Soviet Union. See Alfonsas Eidintas, *Jews, Lithuanians and the Holocaust* (Vilnius: Versus Aureus, 2003), 326–27; Yitzhak Arad, *The Holocaust in the Soviet Union* (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press; Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2009), 428, 438.

## Poles and Others: In the Realm of Unfair Comparisons

**Szymon Datner, former director of the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw:**<sup>625</sup>

The Second World War is a period that I have been dealing with for several decades, and I obstinately maintain that one must be very careful in passing judgment. ...

... the Holocaust was such a specific, though unimaginable, crime. But it cannot be charged against the Poles. It was German work and it was carried out by German hands. The Polish police were employed in a very marginal way, in what I would call keeping order. I must state with all decisiveness that more than 90% of that terrifying, murderous work was carried out by the Germans, with no Polish participation whatsoever.

*At the end of 1942 the so-called Polish “Blue” police numbered 14,300 men. They could not thus be said to be typical of a nation of 24 million. Except for those members who had infiltrated the force as agents of Polish underground organizations, the “Blue” police were disavowed as traitors by their compatriots. Many of them were executed by the Polish Home Army. However, many of them also came to the assistance of Jews either actively or passively.<sup>626</sup> The Jewish ghettos, whose day-to-day affairs were run by German-appointed Jewish councils, were policed by Jews who had volunteered for their own police forces. The Warsaw ghetto, for example, had at least 2,500 Jewish policemen in the service of the Nazis, which was more than twice the number of fighters during the ghetto revolt.*

One of the arguments of those who charge Poles with complicity in the Holocaust is the fact that the Germans created the largest extermination camps—Auschwitz, Treblinka, and others here in Poland. They say that this land was not chosen without good reason.

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<sup>625</sup> Interview with Szymon Datner in Małgorzata Niezabitowska, *Remnants: The Last Jews of Poland* (New York: Friendly Press, 1986), 247–50.

<sup>626</sup> An American Methodist missionary who lived in occupied Warsaw wrote that, in September 1941, “driven by hunger, small Jewish children went begging daily outside the ghetto for anything they could get. One day I was passing the ruins of Graniczna Street, when ahead of me appeared a group of Jewish children, each carrying a small sack of garnered booty. I watched them sneak towards a gap in the incomplete ghetto wall. Before it stood a Polish policeman; behind it, on the inside, a Jewish one. Simultaneously, the two walked away, and in a flash most of the children had disappeared through the gap into the ghetto. The policemen returned. The few little ones who were still outside receded waiting for the next opportunity. A man who had stopped beside me said, ‘This goes on night and day. The policemen do what they can.’” See Hania and Gaither Warfield, *Call Us to Witness: A Polish Chronicle* (New York and Chicago: Ziff-Davis Publishing Company, 1945), 321. Indeed, on August 25, 1941, the Schupo commander for the Warsaw District, Colonel Alfred Jarke, rebuked the Polish police who “act passively and do nothing” when the German police resorted to shooting at Jews to maintain order. Jarke threatened the Polish police with punishment “with all the means at my disposal” if they did not intervene before the German police did. See Barbara Engelking and Jacek Leociak, *Getto warszawskie: Przewodnik po nieistniejącym mieście* (Warsaw: IFiS PAN, 2001), 208–209; *The Warsaw Ghetto: A Guide to the Perished City* (New Haven, Connecticut, and London: Yale University Press, 2009), 205–6; Gunnar S. Paulsson, *Secret City: The Hidden Jews of Warsaw, 1940–1945* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2002), 146. The “Blue” police refused to take part in executions of Jews; some of them were even executed by the Germans because of their insubordination. See Zbigniew Zaniewicki, *Pięć groźnych lat (1939–1941)* (London: Polska Fundacja Kulturalna, 1982), 110; 157; Michał Grynberg, ed., *Words To Outlive Us: Voices from the Warsaw Ghetto* (New York: Metropolitan Books/Henry Holt, 2002), 320. Mary Berg records in her diary entry of June 3, 1942, that the Polish police were ordered to shoot 110 Jews in the prison on Gęsia Street in Warsaw, but refused. They were forced to watch the execution. “One of the eyewitnesses told me that several Polish policemen wept,” she noted, and “some of them averted their eyes during the execution.” See Mary Berg, *Warsaw Ghetto: A Diary* (New York: L.B. Fischer, 1945), 154. During the revolt in the Warsaw ghetto in April 1943, scores of Polish police failed to report for duty to guard the ghetto wall. See Dariusz Libionka, “ZWZ-AK i Delegatura Rządu RP wobec eksterminacji Żydów polskich,” in Andrzej Żbikowski, ed., *Polacy i Żydzi pod okupacją niemiecką 1939–1945: Studia i materiały* (Warsaw: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej–Komisja Ścigania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu, 2006), 90–91.

The reason was and is very relevant: the largest concentration of Jews in Europe—greater, sometimes by an order of ten, than in other countries. The second reason is that the Poles, too, although at a slower tempo, were marked for extermination, and that in comparison with France or Holland, a ghastly terror prevailed in Poland. Such camps accorded well with the rest of the gloomy landscape here.

... Poles are not responsible for the crimes of the Holocaust. On the other hand, the Polish-Jewish problem in those days, if I can put it that way, lies in the approximately two hundred to two hundred and fifty thousand Jews who tried to save themselves. ... Among historians there is controversy over the number saved. The divergence is large: from fifty thousand according to Friedman to one hundred and twenty thousand in the opinion of Kermisz from the Yad Vashem Institute in Jerusalem. My estimate, also intuitive to some degree, is that eighty to one hundred thousand were saved.

*These figures exclude several hundred thousand Jews who fled, were evacuated or were deported to the Soviet interior in 1939–1941. By way of comparison, in Holland 9 million Christians saved some 7–16,000 Jews (the higher estimate includes those who were married to Christians or were otherwise exempt from deportation—categories unknown in occupied Poland) of that country's 140,000 Jews, out of an estimated 25,000 who hid,<sup>627</sup> and 7 million Christian Czechs rescued about 500 Jews.<sup>628</sup> It must also be borne in mind that conditions in those countries were far more favourable than in Poland, where any act of charity towards a Jew was punishable by death. Furthermore, in Poland, 3 million Christian Poles perished and approximately 7 million were deported to camps, seized as forced labour or otherwise displaced as a result of the Nazi and Soviet occupations. By way of comparison, during the German occupation, fewer than 100,000 Christians perished in Holland and fewer than 75,000 Christians in Czechoslovakia. Statistically, the incidence of saving Jews was higher in Poland than in most German-occupied countries. It would, of course, be unfair to expect, in the harsh conditions that prevailed in Poland, that there would be proportionately more Poles willing to risk a much greater punishment than that imposed elsewhere.*

In any case those Jews—approximately a quarter of a million people looking for help—were a problem for Poles. They tapped on the window of a cottage or the door of an apartment, and a question appeared alongside them: To save them or not? And how to do it? Would even a piece of bread help, or should I pretend not to hear anything? Or should I go and inform the Germans, which is what the law enjoins? Every form of aid was forbidden under pain of death for oneself and one's whole family.

*This latter punishment, the death penalty, was carried out unfailingly by the Germans only in occupied Poland. Several thousand Christian Poles, often entire families, were executed for helping Jews. There were no known consequences imposed on rescuers in Denmark, and in Holland and some other countries the penalty might be imprisonment. However, even offering a glass of water or a piece of bread in Poland was not only perilous for the donor, but also for the Jewish recipient: If a Jew was seen accepting water or bread he or she was generally shot dead on the spot. A Polish woman from a village near Zamość recalled that she had provided a Jew in a work crew with a piece of bread, as he had requested. At the end of the day's work, the German guards searched the members of the Jewish crew and found the bread. The Jew was shot dead. This incident tormented the Polish woman, who blamed herself for the death of the Jew. In the conditions that the Germans imposed on Poland, there were no easy or safe choices. Sholem Kamienny, a resident of Warsaw, recalled:*

Going to work outside the ghetto enabled one to smuggle some foodstuffs for the family and to contact Poles. Polish boys and girls used to bring bread for sale and with their help, one could also find addresses of Christian acquaintances.

Once, when we marched in military formation to work on Leszno-Żelazna, a Christian followed the group on the sidewalk. On reaching the worksite, he asked me how he could help. The following day I brought

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<sup>627</sup> Raul Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews*, Revised and Definitive Edition (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1985), volume 2, 593–94. Philip Friedman estimates that out of the 40,000 Dutch Jews who tried to survive by passing, 15,000 survived. See his *Their Brothers' Keepers* (New York: Holocaust Library, 1978), 63.

<sup>628</sup> Livia Rothkirchen, "Czech Attitudes towards the Jews during Nazi Regime," *Yad Vashem Studies*, vol. 13 (1979): 314. According to Rothkirchen, barely 424 Jews survived in hiding (p.315).

my little son. He spent seven days in the Christian's home, but he cried all the time fearing that his mother was dead. We—that is, his mother and I—decided to return the child into the ghetto.

On the way back towards our apartment at Nalwki 43, we encountered an *Aktion* and could not enter the courtyard. My four-year-old son then asked: “Dad, why did you have me—so that the Germans could kill me?”

Although we took back the child, I continued to maintain contact with the Christian.<sup>629</sup>

**Szymon Datner, former director of the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw:<sup>630</sup>**

To us today the choice seems altogether clear. And yet I was shocked not long ago by a girl I know, a Jew. She is a person my age, someone I value highly for her honesty and courage. And she told me, ‘I am not at all sure I would give a bowl of food to a Pole if it could mean death for me and my daughter.’

It was a truly satanic moral trial that Poles were subjected to. I do not know if anyone else would have emerged victorious from it. ...

On the other hand, to speak concretely of the attitude of Poles toward Jews: the majority of Poles behaved passively, but that can be explained by the terror and also by the fact that Poles, too, were being systematically murdered on a mass scale by the Germans.

*In this regard it should be noted that the vast majority of Jews also behaved passively during the German occupation in an unsuccessful effort to fend off any possible adverse consequences for themselves and their families. In any case, is it improper to refer to Poles as mere “bystanders” to the Holocaust; in the early years of the occupation they were just as likely as Jews to be persecuted by the Germans (and even more so by the Soviets who occupied Eastern Poland). In fact, endangered members of the underground were known to have donned Stars of David to escape apprehension.<sup>631</sup> After mid-1941, once the “Final Solution” got underway, Poles continued to be subjected to systematic oppression and terror unknown in most occupied countries.*

On the other hand, aside from passivity, which I regard as entirely justified by a situation in which every action was heroic, there also existed an indifference that I regard as negative—although even here one could look for a psychological explanation. Next, as if on parallel lines, come the two active groups. Those who betrayed, attacked, or murdered either from a desire for gain or out of pure hatred, and those who sheltered Jews and aided them in various ways. The second group was more numerous and more representative both of Poles and of the leadership of the Polish underground. Yet the first group was more effective in its actions.

We sometimes forget that saving one Jew often took several or even a dozen or more people, with actions that generally lasted for long years.<sup>632</sup> On the other hand, one person and one moment were enough to betray a Jew. Second, many attempts at aid ended in failure. Both the Jew and the Pole sheltering him died, and this is not counted in the positive statistics.

*The situation in German-occupied Poland, it must be pointed out, mirrored the behaviour and attitude of some Jews toward Poles in the Soviet-occupied eastern half of Poland. Between September 1939 and June*

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<sup>629</sup> Sholem Kamienny, “With Kałuszyn *Landslayt* in the Warsaw Ghetto,” in A. Shamri and Sh. Soroka, eds., *Sefer Kaluszyn: Geheylikt der khorev gevorener kehile* (Tel Aviv: Former Residents of Kaluszyn in Israel, 1961), 411ff., translated as *The Memorial Book of Kaluszyn*, Internet: <<http://jewishgen.org/Yizkor/kaluszyn/Kaluszyn.html>>.

<sup>630</sup> Interview with Szymon Datner in Małgorzata Niezabitowska, *Remnants: The Last Jews of Poland* (New York: Friendly Press, 1986), 247–50.

<sup>631</sup> Philip Friedman, *Their Brothers' Keepers* (New York: Holocaust Library, 1978), 37.

<sup>632</sup> For example, the Polish-Jewish journalist Hanna Krall identified 45 Poles who helped to shelter her. See *Polityka* [Warsaw weekly], April 20, 1968. David Landa writes: “In our case more than ten families were involved in keeping us alive, beside those who provided for our financial needs.” See David J. Landa, alias Dudek, Janek and Jan, *Caged: A Story of Jewish Resistance* (Sydney: Macmillan, 2000), 210.

1941, tens of thousands of Polish officials, officers, and soldiers were arrested, and about half a million Polish civilians were deported to distant and probable death in the Gulag. Too often it was because Jewish militiamen or NKVD agents or their Jewish neighbours hunted them down, rounded up and guarded them, fingered or denounced them, or came to arrest and load them on freight trains destined to penal camps and settlements in the Soviet interior. The famed Polish courier Jan Karski, who was decorated in Israel for his attempts to warn an incredulous and unresponsive Western world about the fate of the Jews in occupied Poland, wrote in a report in February 1940: "Jews are denouncing Poles (to the secret police), are directing the work of the (communist) militia from behind the scenes... Unfortunately, one must say that these incidents are very frequent." British historian Norman Davies aptly summed the prevailing state of affairs thus: "What I wrote, and can now confirm, amounts to this: firstly, that among the collaborators who came forward to assist the Soviet security forces in dispatching huge numbers of innocent men, women, and children to distant exile and probable death, there was a disproportionate number of Jews; and secondly, that news of the circumstances surrounding the deportations helped to sour Polish-Jewish relations in other parts of occupied Poland."<sup>633</sup> Indeed, no one could claim to have been compelled to participate in the machinery of Stalinist terror and, for one reason or another, had no choice but to round up, deport, torture or kill their innocent countrymen or political opponents. After all, no one looks for extenuating circumstances for former Gestapo members. An important study about conditions in Soviet-occupied Eastern Poland in 1939–41 – Neighbours On the Eve of the Holocaust: Polish-Jewish Relations in Soviet-Occupied Eastern Poland, 1939–1941 – is posted on the Internet at <<http://www.glaukopis.pl/pdf/czytelnia/NeighboursEveOfTheHolocaust.pdf>>.

#### **Raul Hilberg, preeminent Holocaust historian:**

Overall, the general Polish population is not mentioned in German documents in respect of its participation as harassing Jews and helping the Germans. To the contrary; many German reports indicate that Poles felt anxiety for their own safety after the Jews disappeared. There are some German documents that mention some Poles, notably Polish police, railroad-workers [who were required to report for duty and transported everyone, including ordinary passengers and Poles deported to Germany for forced labour] and low-level employees in German offices but there was no Polish central authority collaborating with the Germans, as we find in e.g. Norway and its Quisling government or France and its Vichy regime. This was never the case in Poland.

As was the case in many European countries, there were also Polish individuals that played extortion games with Jews, but then there were also Poles that helped Jews under risk of facing death penalty from the German occupants. Both categories were relatively small in comparison to the general population, albeit one must take into consideration that most survivors made it through the war by Polish help and protection. A friend of mine, Bronia Klebanski, who is Jewish but lived on the "Aryan" side of society and was an active member of the Jewish underground in the Bialystok [Białystok] area, once told me a story of how she at a time took the train during the war, and was suddenly pointed out by a little girl who yelled "Jew!". All the Polish passengers sat quietly, and nobody said anything to instigate further interest. This account is a small example of the general practice of non-collaboration among the Poles during the war.

... In Ukraine, contrary to Poland, where the Germans built secluded death camps, Jews were often massacred on the spot. The Nazi death camps in occupied Poland such as Treblinka, Belzec [Bełżec], Sobibor [Sobibór] and Chelmno [Chełmno] were all hidden to the public.<sup>634</sup>

#### **Yisrael Gutman, director of historical research, Yad Vashem Institute and editor-in-chief of *The Encyclopedia of the Holocaust*:**

This feeling of identification of Poles from all social spheres and their anti-German solidarity is a previously unheard of historical achievement and one of Europe's greatest under Nazi occupation. I should like to make two things clear here. First, all accusations against the Poles that they were responsible for

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<sup>633</sup> Norman Davies, "Poles and Jews: An Exchange," *The New York Review of Books*, April 9, 1987.

<sup>634</sup> Interview with Prof. Raul Hilberg, June 20, 2005, available on line at <[http://www.maxveritas.com/pb/wp\\_1add70b0.html?0.611384753320024](http://www.maxveritas.com/pb/wp_1add70b0.html?0.611384753320024)>.

what is referred to as the 'Final Solution' are not even worth mentioning. Secondly, there is no validity at all in the contention that ... Polish attitudes were the reason for the siting of the death camps in Poland.

Poland was a completely occupied country. There was a difference in the kind of 'occupation' countries underwent in Europe. Each country experienced a different occupation and almost all had a certain amount of autonomy, limited and defined in various ways. This autonomy did not exist in Poland. No one asked the Poles how one should treat the Jews.<sup>635</sup>

I want to be unequivocal about this. When it is said that Poles supposedly took part in the extermination of the Jews on the side of the Germans, that is not true. It has no foundation in fact. There was no such thing as Poles taking part in the extermination of the Jewish population. There were minor exceptions where the (Polish) 'Blue' police and the Jewish police took part in the expulsion and extermination of Jews. Moreover, it is the case that the Poles did assist the (Warsaw) insurgents. One has to remember, however, that at that time the Poles themselves did not have sufficient quantities of arms and were also under the occupation of the German Reich.<sup>636</sup>

**Norman Davies, British historian and author of the leading English language history of Poland:**

One of the meanest of modern historical controversies surrounds the conduct of the non-Jewish population towards the Nazis' Final Solution. Some Jewish writers, whether scholars or novelists such as Leon Uris, have spread the view that the Poles actually rejoiced at the fate of the Jews or at best were indifferent 'bystanders'... Both sides in the controversy overlook the realities of life under the Nazi Terror, which was so much fiercer and more protracted in Poland than anywhere in Europe. To ask why the Poles did little to help the Jews is rather like asking why the Jews did nothing to assist the Poles. Stories of individual gallantry, though real enough, vastly exaggerated the opportunities for chivalry which actually existed. In a world where immediate death awaited anyone who contravened Nazi regulations, the Nazis could always exact a measure of co-operation from the terrified populace. The Polish slave doctor in Auschwitz, the Polish partisan in the woods, the Polish peasant fearful of reprisals, cannot be judged by the morality of free men in normal times, any more than one can judge the Jewish informers who sought to ransom their lives by denouncing their fellows, or the Jewish prostitutes who worked in SS guardrooms. Both Poles and Jews were victims to the Terror, and were conditioned by it ... It is also true that the Home Army failed to oppose [by force] the construction of the Ghettos in 1939–40 or the mass deportations of 1941–43 [as did millions of Jews themselves]. Yet to turn such facts into evidence of wilful neglect would seem to perpetrate a libel as vicious as any which has been levelled against the Jews themselves. In the nature of things, the Underground was notoriously suspicious about all refugees, outsiders, and strangers, not only about Jews, and protected just as many as they turned away. The Polish Underground failed to oppose [by force] not only the actions against the Jews, but equally, until 1943, all the executions and mass deportations of Polish civilians. In the earlier years of the war, it was simply too weak and too disorganized to attempt anything other than local diversions. With the one exception of the Ghetto in Łódź, which survived till August 1944, the Final Solution was all but complete by the time the Underground was strong enough to take action. In the meantime, the Council of Help for the Jews (RPŻ), organized by the Government-in-Exile's Delegate, arranged for tens of thousands of Jews to be hidden and cared for. The survivors were also few, but in the circumstances, it is hard to see how it could have been otherwise.<sup>637</sup>

*In actuality, in the early years of the war, the Home Army was not organized into a coherent fighting force due to circumstances largely beyond its control. However, even during its heyday, the Home Army was never strong enough to seriously challenge German hegemony over Poland, otherwise the Warsaw Uprising of August 1944 would have taken place sooner, would have been successful and the German Army would have been chased out. It is also worth noting that in Poland, the Jews themselves were not some small or insignificant group as in most other occupied countries. In Warsaw there was a concentration of almost one-half million Jews. Also worth asking is the largely rhetorical but pointed question: If the Poles*

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<sup>635</sup> Polin: *A Journal of Polish-Jewish Studies* (Oxford: Institute for Polish-Jewish Studies), volume 2 (1987): 341.

<sup>636</sup> *Voice of America* interview, "Czy Polacy są antysemitami?" *Głos Polski* [Toronto weekly], May 14, 1994.

<sup>637</sup> Norman Davies, *God's Playground: A History of Poland* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), volume 2, 264–65.

*could not save three million Christian citizens, often their own family members and relatives, how could they have saved 3 million Jews?*

**István Deák, historian and professor of history at Columbia University in New York:**

We have been conditioned to like or dislike particular East European nations. Czechoslovakia, for example, has consistently enjoyed the favor of history textbooks because of its democratic policies between the two world wars, and because of the Western world's guilty conscience for having abandoned that country to Nazism in 1938. ... Nor are we reminded that the Czech part of Czechoslovakia harbored not only brave freedom fighters but also plenty of collaborators, and that without the Czech munitions factories, staffed by well-paid and well-fed workers, the Nazi war machine might have ground to a halt.

Poland, on the other hand, has had an infinitely worse press because of its undemocratic policies between the wars, and its more conspicuous tradition of popular anti-Semitism. *[It should be noted that the Jewish population was over 20 times smaller in the Czechoslovakia than in Poland, a much poorer country. Only about 500 Jews were successfully sheltered among 8 million Czechs during the Nazi occupation. On the other hand, the Poles sheltered at least 60,000 Jews.]* Yet Poland never surrendered to Hitler; many hundreds of thousands of Poles died fighting the Nazis, and German soldiers and officials could not feel safe here. Very few Poles collaborated with the Nazis. For that matter, the largest single group represented in the Garden of the Righteous in Jerusalem are Poles.

It has become a habit to compare Poland unfavorably with Czechoslovakia or some Western European country, often Denmark ... But Denmark allowed the German army to cross its border in 1940 [*almost*] without firing a shot, and it joined the Anti-Comintern Pact, thereby legally becoming a German ally. Following the invasion, Denmark was occupied by a single German infantry division and even that division was withdrawn, in May 1940, to participate in the campaign against France and the Low Countries. Allowed to retain its king, ministry, parliament, political parties, army, and police forces, Denmark was supervised by eighty-five German civilian officials and an additional 130 employees. ... True, an admirable resistance movement developed there, and brave Danes saved the lives of most Danish Jews. Yet we must ask: which country was more useful to the anti-Nazi cause during World War II, Denmark, or the Czech Protectorate, where German troops were sent for rest and recreation, or Poland, where the Germans got killed? As for good King Christian X ... he did not ride the streets with a yellow star on his breast. ... Certainly, the legend has helped to distort our understanding of the phenomena of collaboration, resistance, and the Holocaust.<sup>638</sup>

*Few realize, for example, that the chances of a Dane being killed during the war were ten times less than that of a Canadian. Another point worth noting is that hundreds of thousands of non-Germans—a very large portion of them from Western Europe—joined the German war effort. Virtually every European national group, except for Poles, volunteered to serve in the ranks of the Waffen-SS. By 1944, more than half of the Waffen-SS's nearly one million troops were non-Germans, mostly volunteers.<sup>639</sup> Their members included the following nationalities: Dutch—50,000, Belgians—40,000, Hungarians—40,000, Croatians—40,000, Ukrainians—30,000 (of the 100,000 who had volunteered), Cossacks—30,000, Latvians—30,000, French—20,000, Albanians—19,000, Russians—18,000, Estonians—15,000, Belorussians—10,000, Italians—10,000, Tatars—10,000, Norwegians—8,000, Danes—6,000, Slovaks—6,000, Czechs—5,000, Romanians—5,000, Finns—4,000, Serbs—4,000, Bulgarians—3,000, Armenians—3,000, Georgians—3,000, Uzbeks—2,000, Greeks—1,000, Swiss—1,000, Swedes—300, English—100.<sup>640</sup> These troops committed countless atrocities. A regiment in the Waffen-SS made up largely of Danes, recruited with some*

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<sup>638</sup> István Deák, "The Incomprehensible Holocaust: An Exchange," *The New York Review of Books*, December 21, 1989; István Deák, "Legends of King Christian: Another Exchange," *The New York Review of Books*, September 27, 1990.

<sup>639</sup> David T. Zabecki, ed., *World War II in Europe: An Encyclopedia* (New York and London: Garland, 1999), 39: "In the final months of Hitler's German Empire, it was these men who provided the most determined fighters of the *Reich*."

<sup>640</sup> George H. Stein, *The Waffen SS: Hitler's Elite Guard at War, 1939–1945* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1966); Kurt Georg Klietmann, *Die Waffen-SS: Eine Dokumentation* (Osnabrück: Der Freiwillige, 1965), 499–515.

*support of the Danish government, burned down villages and shot civilians during anti-guerrilla operations carried out under German command in the Soviet Union in 1943.*<sup>641</sup>

The penalty for assisting or even trading with a Jew in German-occupied Poland was death, a fact that makes all comparisons between wartime Polish-Jewish relations and, say, Danish-Jewish relations blatantly unfair. Yet such comparisons are made again and again in Western histories—and virtually always to the detriment of the Poles, with scarce notice taken of the 50,000 to 100,000 Jews said to have been saved by the efforts of Poles to hide or otherwise help them ... one must not ignore the crucial differences between wartime conditions in Eastern and Western Europe.

... it ought not to be forgotten that according to the Nazi scheme the entire leadership of the Polish nation was to be destroyed, beginning with the systematic extermination of officers, professionals, teachers, and priests. The Soviets seemed determined to achieve much the same goal, murdering thousands of members of the Polish elite and deporting about 1.7 million Poles.

... When will it finally be recognized that the presence of 3.3 million Jews in prewar Poland was not an accident but the consequence of the Polish kings' and nobles' having welcomed the Jews expelled from Western Europe? When will publicists cease to compare the situation in Denmark, where there were a few thousand assimilated Jews, with that in Poland, where Jews made up 10 percent of the population and, as Arno Mayer points out, easily half of all physicians and lawyers in private practice. The very high proportion of Jews in the free professions, industry, and business was natural in a society traditionally made up of noble landowners and peasants. The trouble was that during the interwar period the members of a new Polish middle class came into their own ...

**No issue in Holocaust literature is more burdened by misunderstanding, mendacity, and sheer racial prejudice than that of Polish-Jewish relations during World War II.**<sup>642</sup>

*Because of the sheer strength of the German forces and the degree of control they exercised, the objective conditions for rescue in Poland were far less favourable than those prevailing in other countries, particularly Western European ones, where "German manpower was stretched very thin" and "local administrative assistance was essential in registering, arresting, and deporting the Jews and Gypsies."*<sup>643</sup>

### **Denmark**

*Denmark had a population of around 3,900,000 in 1942, including a tiny Jewish population of 7,800. The rescue of Jews from Denmark was orchestrated by the German occupation authorities, who arranged for Sweden to accept the Jews and warned the Danish underground of the impending deportation. Consequently, there was really no risk for Danes who took part in the evacuation of Jews to Sweden, yet the price that Danish boat owners demanded for this short voyage was exorbitant. The boat owners considered these hefty payments as a form of guarantee of indemnity for any loss of or damage to their boats. Not only were they not prepared to risk their lives, but also they were not prepared to risk their boats. Thus, the rescue was orchestrated by the Germans, largely financed by the Jews themselves, and carried out by well-compensated Danish fishermen without entailing any real risk.*

*Helping Jews was not outlawed in Denmark, and virtually no Dane faced punishment on this account. According a Danish historian, not one of the 600–700 illegal transports carrying Jewish refugees was seized by German police at sea. "Rescuers caught by the Gestapo were handed over to the Danish courts to be charged with assisting illegal migration. The maximum penalty was three months imprisonment, under relatively lenient conditions, in a Danish prison. Most of the cases, however, never came to court, or court officials let the rescuers slip away through the back door. Thus the rescuers faced only very limited*

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<sup>641</sup> Christian Gerlach, *The Extermination of the European Jews, 1939–1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 399–400.

<sup>642</sup> István Deák, "Memories of Hell," *The New York Review of Books*, June 26, 1997.

<sup>643</sup> Donald Niewyk and Francis Nicosia, *The Columbia Guide to the Holocaust* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 87–88.

*sanctions. Contrary to myth, the rescuers did not risk their lives to save the Jews. Neither did they risk deportation to German concentration camps. Persons who participated in the rescue in October 1943, and continued working with illegal routes, risked arrest, prison, and deportation. Some later had to escape to Sweden. But no one was deported to a German concentration camp solely for helping Jews.*"<sup>644</sup>

The Danes themselves demonstrated that collective innocence could be nothing but a myth when they mounted what was perhaps the most thoroughgoing of all postwar domestic purges for Nazi crimes. ... Israeli Holocaust historian Leni Yahil, in *The Rescue of Danish Jewry*,<sup>645</sup> explains how, during the initial stages of the rescue operation, in 1943, only well-to-do Danish Jews could afford the short voyage to Sweden. Private boatmen set their own price and the costs were prohibitive, ranging from 1,000 to 10,000 kroner per person (\$160 to \$1600 U.S. in the currency of that period). Afterwards, when organized Danish rescue groups stepped in to coordinate the flight and to collect funds, the average price per person fell to 2,000 and then 500 kroner. The total cost of the rescue operation was about 12 million kroner, of which the Jews paid about 7 million kroner, including a 750,000 kroner loan which the Jews had to repay after the war. The rescue operation took place with the connivance of the local German naval command. Consequently, there were no casualties either among the Jews or among the boatmen.<sup>646</sup>

*Most Jews were able to leave Denmark without the assistance of the Danish underground by directly hiring Danish boatmen. In September 1943, the cost per person was around 850 kroner, or the equivalent in 2006 of 15,500 kroner or 2,080 euros. During the peak period the price vacillated between 1,300 and 1,500 kroner, or the equivalent in 2006 of 23,700 to 27,300 kroner or 3,181 to 3,665 euros. After two weeks, the price dropped to about 500 kroner, or the equivalent in 2006 of 9,100 kroner or 1,221 euros. Those leaving from Gilleleje had to pay the equivalent of one and a half year's salary when the demand for crossings was at its peak. As historian Michael Mogensen notes, "Payment was a central factor in the whole rescue operation."*

### **The question of payment**

However, it should also be said that many of the testimonies mention very considerable amounts of money in connection with the rescue. Far from all refugees were of the opinion that the payment was reasonable. People in the resistance movement shared this view. From the coast of the Sound one of the most active organizers of the escape writes the following toward the end of October 1943:

"Unfortunately many of the Danish skippers have used the opportunity to amass money in a distasteful manner. In the beginning these cons were not of great significance, as the funds were sufficient, but it is necessary to fight this gold rush. And that is probably also possible. There are by now so many people who have offered their boats that the price must fall. There are wealthy people who have in the beginning paid many thousands of kroner per person for the crossing.

"Now the most common price is 500 kr. for those who are able to pay, and those who have no money are of course allowed on board as well – this has been the case all along, but the issue is that the rich people should not have given their money to the skippers directly, but to the people who negotiated the prices per boat with the skippers. Many have also been conned by giving money to people who have pretended to want to help but then consequently let them down. Yes, it is sad to have to admit such things."

A systematic study of the Swedish police reports, written when the Danish Jews landed on the Swedish side of the Sound, shows that in the first days of the escape the crossing to Sweden was reserved for the richest among the refugees. In many cases those without sufficient means had to go into hiding and wait for an opportunity to cross. When the demand was at its highest the price per person for a crossing averaged 2,000 kroner. The price fell to 1,000 kroner and in the final period the price was down to 500 kroner. At this point most of the refugees with no funds had reached Sweden, which must be added to the list of honorable deeds

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<sup>644</sup> Sofie Lene Bak, "Between Tradition and New Departure: The Dilemmas of Collaboration in Denmark," in Roni Stauber, ed., *Collaboration with the Nazis: Public Discourse After the Holocaust* (London and New York: Routledge, 2011), 110–24, here at 116; Sofie Lene Bak, Sofie Lene Bak, "From Rescue to Escape in 1943: On a Path to De-victimizing Danish Jews," in Marie Louise Seeberg, Irene Levin & Claudia Lenz, eds., *The Holocaust as Active Memory: The Past in the Present* (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2013), 139–52, here at 143.

<sup>645</sup> Leni Yahil, *The Rescue of Danish Jewry: Test of a Democracy* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1969), 261–65, 269.

<sup>646</sup> István Deák, "Who Saved Jews? An Exchange," *The New York Review of Books*, April 25, 1991.

performed by the many groups of helpers. Apart from the Jewish funds, these groups managed to raise large amounts from other sources, accounting for around half of the total payments for the crossings. It was mainly the skippers of the vessels (fishermen and others) that received payment. To a lesser extent payment was given to Danish members of staff in the coast guard and drivers and others who took on the task of transporting the Jews on land.

The payment for the crossings could be seen as a kind of insurance for the material risk taken in shipping refugees across the Sound, or as a security for the families of rescuers if arrested by the Germans. At this point the Sound was dotted with mines, and some fishermen were convinced that the Swedish authorities might confiscate the vessels. On top of this came fuel costs and lost earnings. These are all factors to take into consideration. However, this is not sufficient to reject the notion that a desire to profit from the situation also played a role in a number of cases, even if a person also had humanitarian motives.

Altruism no doubt motivated the large number of helpers who passed on the warning and offered shelter or other assistance on land without charging money, as well as a number of fishermen and others who did not take fees. However, the dominant principle was that the Jews should pay for the crossing to Sweden. Most people charged a considerable amount considering the fact that the average hourly wage for skilled and unskilled workers in industry was around 2 kroner. It is impossible to determine whether the prices for the crossing were dictated by the relationship between supply and demand, but from examples in Gilleleje the majority of the Jews had to pay amounts equivalent to a year and half's worth of wages when the demand for crossings was at its peak. It was the size of these payments that was decisive for the numbers of fishermen and others who risked taking Jews to Sweden.<sup>647</sup>

*The heftiness of the sums exacted in wartime Denmark for transporting Jews to Sweden—approximately \$400 U.S. per person—is staggering. By way of comparison, a one-way trip by boat from Copenhagen to Malmö, Sweden, only costs about \$15 before the recently-opened bridge connection. If the money was so unimportant, why did they charge so much? That fact, however, appears to have had no impact on Yad Vashem's decision to designate the Danish nation, collectively, as "Righteous Gentiles". Poles who sheltered Jews, on the other hand, are often disqualified for having taken money, despite the much harsher economic conditions in occupied Poland and the existence of a death penalty for sheltering Jews. Very few Polish Jews could have afforded to pay the staggering sums exacted by Danish rescuers for a day's or a few days' effort.*

*Denmark, the only occupied country that was permitted to retain its government, was Germany's "model protectorate." Denmark cooperated to the fullest with Nazi Germany economically and provided large numbers of recruits to support the German war effort. British and American airmen shot down over Denmark were routinely handed over by the Danes until the tide of the war turned against the Germans.<sup>648</sup> The Germans interfered very little in its internal affairs, and remarkably the standard of living actually improved during the war.<sup>649</sup> As historian István Deák points out, "in general, Denmark remained serene and peaceful to the end, to the great benefit of the civilian population—and of the German war industry. ... if everybody in German-occupied Europe had behaved the way the Danes did, the war would have lasted much longer."<sup>650</sup> Until the fall of 1943 Danish Jews were unmolested, at which time they managed to escape to Sweden, which openly welcomed them, with the active connivance of the local German naval command, who warned the Danish underground of the impending fate of the Jews, disabled the German harbour patrol, and turned a blind eye to the rescue operation. SS general Dr. Werner Best, the man in charge in Denmark, gave a free hand to Georg Ferdinand Duckwitz, the maritime attaché at the German embassy in Copenhagen, to do whatever was necessary to derail the planned deportation of the Jews. Duckwitz flew to Sweden, where he secretly met with President Per Albin Hansson. The Swedish president*

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<sup>647</sup> Michael Mogensen, "October 1943—The Rescue of Danish Jews," in Mette Bastholm Jensen and Steven L.B. Jensen, eds., *Denmark and the Holocaust* (Copenhagen: Institute for International Studies, Department for Holocaust and Genocide Studies, 2003), 33–61.

<sup>648</sup> Anders Bjørnvad, *De fandt en vej: Den allierede overflyvning af Danmark under besættelsen og hjælpen til nedstyrede britiske og amerikanske flyvere [They Found a Way: Allied Flights over Occupied Denmark and Assistance to Downed British and American Airmen]* (Odense: Odense University Press, 1970).

<sup>649</sup> Debórah Dwork and Robert Jan van Pelt, *Holocaust: A History* (New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company, 2002), 153.

<sup>650</sup> István Deák, *Europe on Trial: The Story of Collaboration, Resistance, and Retribution During World War II* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 2015), 134.

assured Duckwitz that should the action against the Danish Jews take place, Sweden would in principle be ready to admit them. When the round-up of Jews was about to begin, Duckwitz made his way back to Sweden to alert the Swedish government to be ready to admit the fleeing Jews.<sup>651</sup>

While many Danes provided Jews with short-term assistance until they could make arrangements to leave Denmark, the Jews were expected to pay for their transportation out of the country. Taxi drivers were in “many cases” well paid to drive Jews to coastal destinations.<sup>652</sup> Danish fishermen charged exorbitant sums (on average, several hundred dollars per person) for the short the short passage to Sweden. During the initial stages of the rescue operation, only well-to-do Danish Jews could afford the exorbitant prices set by private boatmen which ranged from 1,000 to 10,000 kroner per person (\$160 to \$1,600 US in the currency of that period). Many Jews trying to leave Denmark were turned back by greedy Danish boatmen, and anti-Jewish comments were heard frequently in Denmark at that time.<sup>653</sup> Some of the rowing boats sold to Jews in the early stages were in very poor condition, and many of the known drowning accidents occurred with these small boats.<sup>654</sup> That Danish boatmen were gouging the Jews is beyond question, because Jewish organizations were able to bring Bundists fleeing from the Soviet Union in 1940, from Wilno to the United States via Vladivostok and Yokohama, for \$518 US per person.<sup>655</sup> Afterwards, when organized Danish rescue groups stepped in to coordinate the flight and to collect funds, the average price per person fell to 2,000 and then 500 kroner. The total cost of the rescue operation was about 12 million kroner, of which the Jews paid about 7 million kroner, including a 750,000 kroner loan which the Jewish community had to repay after the war.

Money was needed to organize the fishermen and their boats and ensure there were enough of them. The price was based on supply and demand. Some fishermen earned a fortune at the Jews’ expense. The average price was 1,000 kroner per person. There were some payments of 50,000 kroner, but an average of 10,000 kroner for a family of four people. The monthly wage for a skilled worker in 1943 was 414 kroner. However, in the case of Denmark, charging these exorbitant amounts has been justified. We are told that the demands for payment must be viewed in relation the danger of the crossing, the risks of losing their boats, which would bring a loss of earnings, and the ability to support their families, as well as the possibilities of arrest. However, there were no Germans policing the strait between Denmark and Sweden during October 1943, and not a single boat with Jewish refugees was captured at sea by the Germans.

According to another study,<sup>656</sup> “it can no longer be ignored that money was the hinge on which the whole escape apparatus turned.”

Danish historians now cautiously question the fairness of the high price the fishermen demanded for taking the Jews safely to Sweden. The cost per person ranged from Dkr 500 to Dkr 2,000 (\$83–\$330), when the average hourly wage for an industrial worker was about Dkr 2 (\$0.33). The sources tell of families that paid exorbitant sums of up to Dkr 50,000 for the crossing. Prices were subjected to the mechanisms of supply and demand, regardless of the need for insurance of the material risk taken by the fishermen, or security for the families of the rescuers in the event of their arrest. Humanitarian motives were undoubtedly intertwined with the desire to profit from the situation.<sup>657</sup>

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<sup>651</sup> Mordecai Paldiel, *The Righteous Among the Nations* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem; New York: Collins, 2007), 105–109 (Georg Ferdinand Duckwitz).

<sup>652</sup> Harold Flender, *Rescue in Denmark* (New York: Simon and Schuster, New York, 1969), 96.

<sup>653</sup> Emily Taitz, ed., *Holocaust Survivors*, vol. 1 (Westport, Connecticut and London: Greenwood Press, 2007), 181, 216–17; Lyn Smith, ed., *Forgotten Voices of the Holocaust* (London: Ebury Press/Random House, 2005), 196.

<sup>654</sup> Sofie Lene Bak, “From Rescue to Escape in 1943: On a Path to De-victimizing Danish Jews,” in Marie Louise Seeberg, Irene Levin & Claudia Lenz, eds., *The Holocaust as Active Memory: The Past in the Present* (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2013), 139–52, here at 149.

<sup>655</sup> Daniel Blatman, *For Our Freedom and Yours: The Jewish Labour Bund in Poland, 1939–1949* (London and Portland, Oregon: Vallentine Mitchell, 2003), 28.

<sup>656</sup> Sofie Lene Bak, *Nothing to Speak of: Wartime Experiences of the Danish Jews 1943–1945* (Copenhagen: Danish Jewish Museum, 2011).

<sup>657</sup> See Sofie Lene Bak, “Between Tradition and New Departure: The Dilemmas of Collaboration in Denmark,” in Roni Stauber, ed., *Collaboration with the Nazis: Public Discourse After the Holocaust* (London and New York: Routledge, 2011), 110–24, here at 116–17.

Although the hunt for Jews that remained behind after the evacuation lasted only three weeks and was not carried out with any severity, some 120 Jews were betrayed by informers. Only about 100 Jews survived in hiding with the local population inside Denmark. Based on research by historian Vilhjalmur Örn Vilhjalmsson of the Danish Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies, those Jews who did not manage to leave Denmark, especially stateless ones, were voluntarily handed over to the Germans by, and at the instigation of, local Danish officials (who rose to prominent positions in the police force and the legal system after the war), and scores of Jews were denounced by local Danes (60–70 Jews who had taken refuge in the loft of the Gilleleje church were captured by the Germans after being tipped off by Danish informants). According to a report from February 2000, Danish officials voluntarily handed over at least 132 Jews to the Germans between 1940 and 1944 and later tried to alter documents to make it look as if they had acted under German orders.<sup>658</sup> On their return to Denmark, many Jews found that their property and belongings had been sold to finance their rescue and met with ill-feeling and opposition from Danes who had taken over Jewish businesses. There were bitter recriminations against rescuers who had demanded money from, or even blackmailed, Jews on the run; and against wealthy Jews who had not donated funds to finance the escape of poor coreligionists.<sup>659</sup> According to a recent study, “Jewish Holocaust survivors faced severe economic and emotional difficulties on returning home to Denmark in 1945. Jewish families had used their savings, sold valuables and property and obtained improvised private loans in order to finance their escape to Sweden. Homes, businesses and property had been subject to theft and abuse. During and after the German occupation, however, Danish authorities worked to mitigate and ameliorate the consequences of Nazi persecution and the Danish government implemented one of the most inclusive and comprehensive restitution laws in Europe, taking into account Jewish victims of deportation as well as victims of exile.”<sup>660</sup>

In the book *Countrymen*,<sup>661</sup> Danish Bo Lidegaard describes some of the myths and fallacies that have grown up surrounding the German occupation of Denmark and the rescue of Danish Jewry.

- At no time did King Christian ride through the streets of Copenhagen wearing the Star, and at no time did the Germans require anyone in Denmark to wear the Star. (pp. viii-x). Although there were many Wehrmacht soldiers in Denmark, by 1943, in anticipation of an Allied invasion in western Jutland (p. 20), the first few years of the German occupation were quite light, even by western European standards. Merely 89 German officials managed 3.8 million Danes, compared with 260 German officials in Norway, 1,596 in Holland, and some 22,000 in France. (P. 32.)
- Until October 1943, there was hardly any German occupation at all: “Until the action against the Jews, the situation in Denmark was more similar to that of its unoccupied, neutral neighbor, Sweden, than to that of occupied Norway or the Netherlands, where Germany had inserted a Nazi regime.” (P. 196.)
- The author elaborates on the unfolding events leading up to the German attempt to arrest and deport Denmark’s Jews in early October 1943. Paul Hennig, a Dane who worked for the Gestapo, collected and processed information on Denmark’s Jews. (P. 57.)

<sup>658</sup> On the fate of Danish Jews see the various exchanges in response to István Deák’s September 28, 1989 article “The Incomprehensible Holocaust,” published on December 21, 1989, March 29, 1990, and September 27, 1990, and April 25, 1991; Poul Borschenius, *The History of the Jews* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1956), vol. 5, 57; Leni Yahil, *The Rescue of Danish Jewry: Test of a Democracy* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1969), 261–65, 269; Gunnar S. Paulsson, “The ‘Bridge over the Øresund’: The Historiography on the Expulsion of the Jews from Nazi-Occupied Denmark,” *Journal of Contemporary History*, vol. 30 (1995): 431–64; Emmy E. Werner, *A Conspiracy of Decency: The Rescue of the Danish Jews During World War II* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 2002), 64, 102, 152; Raul Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews*, Third edition, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2003), vol. 2, 589–99; Saul S. Friedman, *A History of the Holocaust* (London and Portland, Oregon: Vallentine Mitchell, 2004), 325.

<sup>659</sup> Richard Petrow, *The Bitter Years: The Invasion and Occupation of Denmark and Norway, April 1940–May 1945* (New York: William Morrow, 1974), 223–25.

<sup>660</sup> Sofie Lene Bak, “Repatriation and Restitution of Holocaust Victims in Post-War Denmark,” *Scripta Instituti Donneriani Aboensis*, vol. 27 (2016): 134–52.

<sup>661</sup> Bo Lidegaard, *Countrymen* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2013). This summary is based on an Amazon review by Jan Peczkis.

- Lidegaard discusses Danish fishermen requiring payments to ship Jews to Sweden. The anglers wanted payment because of the fear of loss of their boats and especially the fear of loss of their lives, and only later did they learn that the risk was minimal. (P. 336.) Lidegaard comments, "And it is characteristic that, despite the large amounts of money involved, throughout the period it was difficult to find skippers who were willing to sail at all." (P. 336.) This seems to contradict the view that "virtually the entire Danish nation" (so honoured at Yad Vashem) was actively involved the rescue of Denmark's Jews.
- Lidegaard suggests that helpers on land were not generally paid, and that no Jew was refused shipment for being unable or unwilling to pay. However, some fishermen charged exorbitant prices, certain Jews wrote sarcastically about the money made by the fishermen, and the fares tended to rise during those times that more Jews sought to be shipped to Sweden. (Pp. 334-345.) In addition, the high financial burden, imposed even by the average rescue-for-hire, must be kept in perspective: "It is estimated that the average price for a ticket was around one thousand kroner per person. That was around one-third or one-fourth of the annual salary of a skilled worker, and almost half the refugees belonged socially to the working class." (P. 335.) Individuals and organizations had to raise large amounts of money to fund the trips to Sweden. (Pp. 100-101, 178-179, 302-303, 306-308, 324, 336-337.)
- Lidegaard realizes that the Germans turned a "blind eye" (pp. 337 ff.) to the unfolding Danish rescue of her Jews in October 1943. He concludes that the German inaction stemmed not from a lack of manpower or a lack of capacity, but from a lack of will. (P. 338.) Both the rescuers and the rescued were amazed that the expected rapid German crackdown did not materialize. (P. 240.)
- As amazing as this may sound, the Germans were forbidden from breaking into Jewish homes to arrest them. Instead, they could only arrest the Jews when the Jews opened the doors to them! (P. 50.)
- Lidegaard credits this policy for playing a major role in the modest German success in arresting a significant number of Danish Jews in early October 1943. (P. 151.)
- Criminal Adjutant Hans Juhl, better known as Gestapo-Juhl, was the exception that proved the rule about German passivity. He persecuted Danish Jews with fervor, and was single-handedly responsible for half of all the Danish Jews arrested by the Germans on and after October 1, 1943. (Pp. 291, 341.)
- The author doubts the authenticity of accounts that Duckwitz arranged German navy ships to be at dry dock in October 1943. (P. 331.) In fact, Swedish reports indicate that a significant number of German patrol boats were active in the Sound at the time. (P. 332.) A number of Jews report that the boats, in which they were sailing to Sweden, went right past German boats, and were left untouched. (Pp. 209, 224.) Those Danish fishermen caught red handed, by the Germans, in the act of transporting Jews, generally went unscathed. (P. 349.)
- The author recognizes the fact that the strong Danish reaction against Nazi persecutions of Jews could only have developed because the Germans allowed it. The Germans were afraid of negative ramifications for Denmark's role as a "model protectorate," as well as interference with the continued shipment of Danish provisions to the Third Reich. (P. 363.)
- Pointedly, Lidegaard rejects those who would hold other European nations in opprobrium for not saving their Jews: "The history of the Holocaust tells a different story, and the terms of occupation, local conditions, and much else differed radically from place to place and over time, making the situation unique in each case. The special Danish example cannot be used to reproach others who experienced the German occupation under far worse conditions than Denmark." (P. 348.) Lidegaard's candor is refreshing.

Similarly, in his comparative study of rescue in Western Europe, historian Bob Moore concluded that "the circumstances pertaining in Denmark in October 1943 were very different from those elsewhere in Western Europe fifteen months earlier when the deportations had begun, and comparisons using the Danes as an example to castigate the behaviour of bystanders in other countries cannot really be sustained."<sup>62</sup>

Some 6,000 Danes enlisted voluntarily in the Frikorps Danmark (Freikorps Danmark in German), whose creation was fully approved by the Danish government. The Danish Waffen-SS was connected to Nazi ideology. In fact, 43% of its members were also members of the DNSAP (Danish Nazi Party). Later, some Danish Waffen SS members participated in more overtly treasonous units (e. g., the Hipo and the Schalburg Corps, the latter of which fought against the Danish Underground). For service in the Danish

<sup>62</sup> Bob Moore, *Survivors: Jewish Self-Help and Rescue in Nazi-Occupied Europe* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 97.

*Waffen SS, postwar Danish courts convicted 3,500 participants for treason. The participants got 2-4 years of imprisonment, which few actually had to fully serve. By 1947—a mere two years after the conclusion of WWII—the Danish population lost interest in the punishment of Danish Nazi collaborators.<sup>663</sup> While on the Russian Front, the Frikorps Danmark took part in the war against Soviet partisans and served as guards at a camp holding some 1,500 Jews at Bobruisk in present-day Belarus. The prisoners were worked extremely hard and, when the camp closed down in September 1943, only about 90 prisoners had survived. The Ersatzkompanie of the Frikorps Danmark were stationed there between October 1942 and June 1943. Some 800 to 1,000 Danish Waffen-SS volunteers were trained there, and may have been involved in the murder of these Jews.<sup>664</sup>*

### **Norway and Sweden**

Jews and other dissenters (non-Lutherans) were often seen as outsiders and subject to a cultural prejudice. Moreover, their small number and lack of visibility did not prevent antisemitic sentiments from being voiced by conservative politicians and even by the Nobel Prize winner Knut Hamsun. For them, the Jews were seen as negative influences on the economy and as the carriers of Bolshevism. Antisemitic campaigns in the 1920s had prompted a ban of ritual slaughter in the country and a wave of public protest and acrimonious parliamentary debate ... in April [1941], the Trondheim synagogue was vandalized and taken over by the Germans, and in July of the same year, Jews were dismissed from public office, and those in the liberal professions had their licences to practice withdrawn.<sup>665</sup>

*Of the 1,800 to 2,000 Jews, only about forty managed to survive in hiding inside Norway, which is less than three percent of Norwegian Jews. Those Jews who did survive the war were not sheltered in Norway but, as in the case of Danish Jews, managed to escape from Norway, usually with the help of smugglers. Both private smugglers and resistance groups typically demanded payment for their services. (Two couriers who killed a Jewish couple on their way to Sweden were acquitted of murder in a postwar trial.) About 1,000 Norwegian Jews reached neutral Sweden where they were out of reach of the Germans and their Norwegian collaborators. Almost all of the Jews who stayed behind were apprehended by Norwegian police and deported to concentration camps in the Reich. The Norwegian police were the key perpetrators who organized and carried out the arrest of the Jews. German participation in the actual arrests and transportation was minimal or even non-existent. Other Norwegian bureaucratic organizations and even private transport forms were involved in anti-Jewish measures.<sup>666</sup>*

*According to a recently published exposé:<sup>667</sup>*

[Marte] Michelet discovered documents and testimonies about anti-Semitism that was common in the resistance. She also learned that despite the resistance's decision not to help the Jews, some activists realized the economic potential in rescuing them. Thus, groups in the resistance that needed money to finance their operations against the Germans helped smuggle Jews to Sweden simply for large sums of money. The rescue operation emerges in her book as a business in every respect, one that left the surviving Jews impoverished. Wealthy people who could pay were saved, and those without means were sent to Auschwitz. Norwegian historians are confirming the findings and are revealing equally damning details about groups within the resistance that competed to save Jews for money. Archival documents show that in a number of cases people in the resistance informed on their colleagues to the Germans, jealous of their

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<sup>663</sup> Jens Pan Bjerregaard and Lars Larsen, *Danish Volunteers of the Waffen-SS: Freikorps Danmark 1941-3* (England: Helion and Company, 2017), 8, 221.

<sup>664</sup> Steffen Werther, Review of *En skole i vold: Bobruisk 1941–1944: Frikorps Danmark og det tyske besættelsesherre-domme i Hviderusland* (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 2014) by Therkel Straede and Dennis Larsen, *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, vol. 29, no. 3 (Winter 2015): 492–95.

<sup>665</sup> Bob Moore, *Survivors: Jewish Self-Help and Rescue in Nazi-Occupied Europe* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 71–73, 74.

<sup>666</sup> Bjarte Bruland, "Collaboration in the Deportation of Norway's Jews: Challenging Views and Representations," in Roni Stauber, ed., *Collaboration with the Nazis: Public Discourse After the Holocaust* (London and New York: Routledge, 2011), 125–37, here at 131.

<sup>667</sup> Marte Michelet, *Hva visste Hjemmefronten? Holocaust i Norge: Varslene, unnvikelsene, hemmeligholdet* [What Did the Resistance Know?] (Oslo: Gyldendal, 2018).

profits. The price was paid of course also by any Jews who were being hid by the group that was informed on.<sup>668</sup>

*A German decree of October 12, 1942 provided for the death penalty for entering or leaving Norway without permission (the law did not mention Jews specifically).<sup>669</sup> The death penalty was rarely used to punish those who helped Jews. (Such laxity was virtually unheard of in occupied Poland, where the death penalty was meted out with utmost rigour.) Several Norwegian resistance fighters were executed for helping Jews to escape to Sweden, and a number of others imprisoned.<sup>670</sup>*

*Norwegians were directly responsible for the deaths of more than 90 percent of the Jews who did not manage to flee the country. Worst of all was the Norwegian police, hundreds of whom willingly did the dirty work for the SS by conducting raids to capture Jews.<sup>671</sup> The first raids in Oslo began at dawn on October 26, 1942. Operating in teams of two, 124 Norwegian police pounded on doors and dragged terrified Jews to a holding facility at 23 Kirkeveien. That day 260 men were arrested and sent to the Berg concentration camp outside Tonsberg. More than 300 Norwegian police participated in a second raid on November 24–25, 1942. Prisoners at the Berg camp were called to the Appelplatz, then loaded on trucks that took them to the harbour in Oslo. There would be several other deportations from Norway.<sup>672</sup> Of the 761 Jews who were deported to camps, only 24 returned.<sup>673</sup> Approximately 8,000 Norwegians volunteered for service in the Waffen-SS. As historian István Deák points out, Norwegian collaborators and young Norwegians who volunteered to combat duty on the German side far outnumbered the active resisters ... Altogether fifteen thousand Norwegian volunteers served the Germans with arms ... thirty thousand babies were born from German father-soldiers and Norwegian mothers.<sup>674</sup>*

*Norway's Response to the Holocaust,<sup>675</sup> by Samuel Abrahamsen, is a book sponsored by the "Thanks to Scandinavia" Foundation ... but having read this eminently objective account, I wonder why Jews should be particularly thankful, at least in the case of Norway. Nearly half of that country's minuscule Jewish population of 1,600 (0.05 percent of the total population) was killed during the war and, as Abrahamsen, a professor emeritus at Brooklyn College in New York, points out, none would have died without Norwegian collaboration. Norway had only a few convinced Nazis but enough anti-Semites and law-abiding policemen and bureaucrats to make the Final Solution a near-success. To begin with, the small number of Jews in Norway was the result of a long and, at least to me, astonishing tradition of anti-Semitism combined with an extremely restrictive interwar immigration law that kept out nearly all refugees from Nazi terror. During the war, many Norwegians who would otherwise not have helped the Germans, took part in registering, arresting, and handing over Jews to the German authorities. As for the powerful Norwegian resistance movement, it resembled all the other European resistance movements in caring little about what happened to the Jews. Just as elsewhere, there were thousands of decent Norwegians who helped hundreds of Jews escape, for the most part across the Swedish border.<sup>676</sup>*

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<sup>668</sup> Ofer Aderet, "New Book Leaves Norway's 'Heroic Role' in the Holocaust in Tatters," *Haaretz*, December 22, 2018.

<sup>669</sup> Samuel Abrahamsen, *Norway's Response to the Holocaust* (New York: Holocaust Library, 1991), 20. Other sources distort the actual law. See, for example, Bob Moore, *Survivors: Jewish Self-Help and Rescue in Nazi-Occupied Europe* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 77.

<sup>670</sup> Mordecai Paldiel, *The Path of the Righteous: Gentile Rescuers of Jews During the Holocaust* (Hoboken, New Jersey: KTAV Publishing House; New York: The Jewish Foundation for Christian Rescuers, 1993), 366.

<sup>671</sup> Raul Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews*, Third edition (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2003), vol. 2, 584–89; Saul S. Friedman, *A History of the Holocaust* (London and Portland, Oregon: Vallentine Mitchell, 2004), 327–29.

<sup>672</sup> Oskar Mendelson, *The Persecution of the Norwegian Jews in World War II* (Oslo: Norges Hjemmefrontmuseum, 1991), 16.

<sup>673</sup> Raul Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews*, Third edition (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2003), vol. 2, 584–89; Saul S. Friedman, *A History of the Holocaust* (London and Portland, Oregon: Vallentine Mitchell, 2004), 327–29; Bob Moore, *Survivors: Jewish Self-Help and Rescue in Nazi-Occupied Europe* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 79, 81, 82.

<sup>674</sup> István Deák, *Europe on Trial: The Story of Collaboration, Resistance, and Retribution During World War II* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 2015), 130.

<sup>675</sup> Samuel Abrahamsen, *Norway's Response to the Holocaust* (New York: Holocaust Library, 1991).

<sup>676</sup> István Deák, "Holocaust Heroes," *The New York Review of Books*, November 5, 1992.

The only government to agree to the total deportation of its Jewish community was Norway's. No other regime completely gave in to German demands ...<sup>677</sup> In Norway, the Norwegian police handled all the arrests and detentions of Jews, as well as their transportation to German ships for deportation; 30% of the force and 60% of its officers (the highest proportion of all the professions) were members of the fascist Nasjonal Samling Party.<sup>678</sup>

*A recent overview of conditions in German-occupied Norway,<sup>679</sup> a country of some three million people in 1942 with a mere 260 German officials in place, notes the following (footnotes have been omitted):*

...in Norway residents were equated with the farmers of Friesland (*Friesen*) in Germany. Like elsewhere in occupied Europe, food was sometimes scarce and frequently of lesser quality than in normal times. But unlike the situation in many other areas, civilians never starved, even though the country was dependent on import of food and other vital commodities. Provisions had to come from Germany and occupied Denmark.

Since *Reichskommissar* Josef Terboven, the man in charge of the German civilian administration, took an interest in the well being of his 'Aryan' subjects, he was concerned that sufficient supplies should be provided at all times. In all probability, the Germans on balance brought more resources into Norway than they took out. Roughly 10,000 Norwegians lost their lives as a direct result of the war, a number that corresponds to 0.3 percent of the population. [Of these, some 3,000 were military losses and 5,800 civilian deaths, excluding Jewish losses in the order of about 700.] Part of the explanation for the low number of casualties is that German military personnel were under orders not to harm the 'Aryan' civilians. Hence, the brutality characteristic of German military campaigns during the war, did not happen on a comparable scale in Norway. Like elsewhere, however, the Germans were merciless when confronted with opposition. [Some 400 Norwegians were executed by the Germans and their collaborators, a clear indication that opposition was not at all strong, or even a significant factor in occupation of Norway.] ... Germany's use of unlawful as well as lawful sanctions in Norway must be described as both limited and lenient. Once exception was the cruel treatment of Norway's Jewish minority. Out of some 1,800 Jews, 767 were in 1942 shipped to extermination camps in Poland. Only 32 of the deportees survived the war. Whereas the attack on the Jews was a German scheme, quite a few Norwegians cooperated. Indeed, Jews were registered and arrested by the NS-authorities and thereafter passed on to the Germans for deportation. Local government, however, was not involved in this operation, as the NS-controlled State Police (*Statspolitiet*) did most of the work.

As one former Norwegian resistance fighter put it in a statement that could perhaps be used to cover most occupied countries: "If all the Allied countries had done as much to fight Germany as had Norway, Hitler and his associates would still be ruling Europe today."<sup>680</sup>

*Although officially neutral, Sweden had in fact gone out of its way to aid Nazi Germany. Sweden played a crucial role in supplying the Germans with much needed iron ore and military facilities. The bulk of Sweden's iron ore, which was indispensable for Germany's war machine, was shipped to Germany. Sweden allowed close to 100,000 railway cars carrying German troops and military supplies to cross its territory into Norway and Finland between June 1940 and August 1943. Sweden's actions enabled the Germans to turn a losing battle in Narvik in 1940 into a decisive victory that led to the conquest and brutal occupation of Norway and to the transfer of that country's Jews to the death camps. Firms in Sweden supported the Nazis' financial and industrial leadership by channelling funds and concealing important*

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<sup>677</sup> Christian Gerlach, *The Extermination of the European Jews, 1939–1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 384.

<sup>678</sup> Christian Gerlach, *The Extermination of the European Jews, 1939–1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 374, based on Samuel Abrahamsen, *Norway's Response to the Holocaust* (New York: Holocaust Library, 1991), 76, 104–5, 117, 132.

<sup>679</sup> Baard Herman Borge, "Quisling's Mayors: The Führer principle in Norwegian municipalities during World War II," in Bruno De Wever, Herman Van Goethem, and Nico Wouters, eds., *Local Government in Occupied Europe (1939–1945)* (Gent, Belgium: Academia Press, 2006), 118–19.

<sup>680</sup> David T. Zabecki, ed., *World War II in Europe: An Encyclopedia* (New York and London: Garland, 1999), 38. Interestingly, Norway's leading writer, Nobel Prize winner Knut Hamsun, "had been a long-time admirer of the Germans and a supporter of Vidkun's Quisling's (q.v.) *Nasjonal Samling*. By 1940, Hamsun was an old man in his eighties, but he still wrote sympathetically about the German cause. His wife was even more active, going on reading tours of the eastern front, where Hamsun's book *Growth of the Soil* was one of the most popular books among the troops there." Ibid.

German corporations like Bosch, IG Farben and Krupp to hide their foreign subsidiaries in order to avoid confiscation by the Allied governments. Like other nations, the Swedes cooperated with Germany when it appeared the Nazis were winning, and changed course only when it was evident the Allies would win. Fortunately, Hitler did not invade Sweden. As was revealed in February 2000, Swedish Nazis had compiled lists of Jews for liquidation and even started to gather building materials for the construction of concentration camps. Before the war Sweden had put severe restrictions on the immigration of Jews in response to protests by professionals, e.g., Uppsala doctors, and popular demonstrations against the “importation of Jews” and calling for “Sweden for the Swedes.” Anti-Jewish sentiments existed among the Swedish population and there were several anti-Semitic parades staged in Stockholm following the arrival of the Danish Jews. Sweden suppressed news of Nazi policies toward Jews and also negotiated with Nazi Germany that passports issued to Jews would bear a “J”.<sup>681</sup>

### **The Netherlands**

The Netherlands had a population of about 9 million in 1942, with a highly integrated Jewish population of 140,000, 115,000 Jews were deported to the Reich with a high degree of Dutch cooperation. It is estimated that about 16,000 out of the 28,000 Jews who attempted to hide survived with Dutch assistance. This figure may include 8,000 to 9,000 intermarried Jews who were exempt for deportation, as were almost 21,000 “half” Jews and “quarter” Jews. (“Special categories” such as these were unknown in occupied Poland.) According to Raul Hilberg, “In the Netherlands the Jews were destroyed with a thoroughness comparable to the relentless uprooting process in the Reich itself.”<sup>682</sup>

Despite the fact that Dutch rescue activity was neither numerically nor relatively more frequent an occurrence than that of the Poles, Holland has enjoyed a rather favourable treatment in Holocaust writing. This is so even though denunciation was rampant and rescue efforts faced obstacles similar to those in Poland: “In the Netherlands, for instance, experience taught the hosts as well as the hidiers that movement and frequent changes of hiding places were essential for survival. There were blackmailers anxious to inform on a Jew in hiding in return for even a petty reward. The Gestapo ... routinely paid one quart of brandy, four pounds of sugar, and a carton of cigarettes, or a small amount of money, to anyone turning in a Jew.”<sup>683</sup> In recent years, however, Holland’s rescue efforts have undergone considerable downward reassessment. Recent scholarship makes the important point the Dutch were far more likely to collaborate with the Germans than fight in the resistance.<sup>684</sup>

Although Holland had no puppet regime, the local bureaucracy and police played a pivotal role in the Final Solution. In particular, “the Dutch police played a central role in the deportation of Jews. This was especially true in the smaller cities and villages. Here, the German police were usually not involved in the deportations: as far as it is known it was handled by the Dutch police. The general impression is that the Dutch constables performed this task as intended.” Those who did not follow orders only faced dismissal, but no other punishment. In the postwar period, Dutch police who were ordered to pick up Jews at home, and merely did what they were told, were not held accountable and were not purged from the police force.<sup>685</sup>

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<sup>681</sup> Henrik Nissen, ed., *Scandinavia during the Second World War* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press; Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1983); Steven Koblik, *The Stones Cry Out: Sweden's Response to the Persecution of the Jews, 1933–1945* (New York: Holocaust Library, 1988); Gerald Aalders and Cees Wiebes, *The Art of Cloaking Ownership: The Secret Collaboration and Protection of the German War Industry by the Neutrals: The Case of Sweden* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1996); Allan Hall, “Neutral Sweden allowed Nazis to use their railways to occupy Norway ... and transfer Jews to death camps, new book claims,” *Daily Mail*, June 5, 2012.

<sup>682</sup> For a survey of conditions in Holland see Raul Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews*, Third edition (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2003), vol. 2, 600–32.

<sup>683</sup> Mordecai Paldiel, *Sheltering the Jews: Stories of Holocaust Rescuers* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), 15.

<sup>684</sup> Suzanne D. Rutland, “A Reassessment of the Dutch Record During the Holocaust,” in John K. Roth and Elisabeth Maxwell, eds., *Remembering for the Future: The Holocaust in an Age of Genocide* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire and New York: Palgrave, 2001), vol. 1, 527–42.

<sup>685</sup> Marnix Croes, “Gentiles and the Survival Chances of Jews in the Netherlands, 1940–1945: A Closer Look,” in Beate Kosmala and Feliks tych, eds., *Facing the Nazi Genocide: Non-Jews and Jews in Europe* (Berlin: Metropol, 2004), 41–72, especially 56, 61.

Sufficient native police were available to carry out mass arrests of Jews for deportation. All Dutch police forces participated in the round-up. The various Dutch police forces—the Security Police, the Order Police, the Dutch police from Amsterdam and the Hague, the Dutch auxiliary police (not to mention the Jewish Order Police from Westerbork)—were crucial to the success of German designs. The most active, however, were the police training battalions. Even the municipal police in small Dutch communities acted on its own initiative to round up the few Jews to the collection points set up on the orders of local mayors. In addition to the regular Dutch police forces, there were special “commandos” created solely for “Jew-hunting” such as the Henneicke Column (*Colonne Henneicke*). In addition to anti-Semitism, factors at play were enriching oneself at the victims’ expense and conformism.<sup>686</sup>

The Germans could use about 4,000 Order Policemen, and some 700 Security Police personnel. In addition, the Dutch police—about 20,000 men—had been brought under German supervision. In Amsterdam, where 60 percent of all Dutch Jews lived, the 2,600 men of the municipal police were commanded by a pro-Nazi police commissioner since May 1941.<sup>687</sup> It is estimated that ninety percent of the Amsterdam police cooperated with the round-ups, although only a small minority were fascists. A German occupation official (Lages, head of the Security Police and SD in Amsterdam) proclaimed after the war that without the Dutch police “it would have been practically impossible to seize even ten percent of Dutch Jewry.” In the small towns and villages “both the local mayors and the police were complicit in the round-ups.” Westerbork, the “transit camp” where Dutch Jews were loaded onto trains for the gassing centres, was guarded by the illustrious Royal Marechaussee, comparable to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. Equally accommodating and essential to the Germans were the personnel of the Dutch transport system who hauled the Jews from the localities to Westerbork and thence east—i.e., to the border where German railroad personnel took over.<sup>688</sup>

Betrayal of Jews in Holland was an extremely frequent phenomenon, and indeed, as survivor testimonies confirm, reached massive proportions.<sup>689</sup> The so-called Henneicke Column first extorted money from Jews, and then when the Germans started paying large rewards, they handed over Jews to the Gestapo. As a result of pioneering research, Dutch investigative journalist Ad van Liempt exposed the activities of this committed group of volunteers who denounced Jews, and concluded that about 8,000 to 9,000 Jews were turned in to the Germans for cash rewards. This represents almost half of the Jews who attempted to hide in Holland during the German occupation.<sup>690</sup> Jews were also known to betray or denounce fellow Jews.<sup>691</sup> As elsewhere, after the war, the Jewish survivors often met with negative reactions from the non-Jewish population.<sup>692</sup>

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<sup>686</sup> Gerhard Hirschfeld, *Nazi Rule and Dutch Collaboration: The Netherlands under German Occupation, 1940–1945* (Oxford and New York: Berg, 1988), 173–78.

<sup>687</sup> Pim Griffioen and Ron Zeller, “Anti-Jewish Policy and Organization of the Deportations in France and the Netherlands, 1940–1944: A Comparative Study,” *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, vol. 20, no. 3 (Winter 2006): 437–73.

<sup>688</sup> Based on a review by Henry L. Mason of Bob Moore’s *Victims and Survivors: The Nazi Persecution of the Jews in the Netherlands 1940–1945* (London: Arnold; New York: St. Martin’s, 1997), published in *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, vol. 1, no. 1 (Spring 1998): 199.

<sup>689</sup> See, for example, Martin Gilbert, *The Righteous: The Unsung Heroes of the Holocaust* (Toronto: Key Porter, 2003), 320–55; Mordecai Paldiel, *Sheltering Jews: Stories of Holocaust Rescuers* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), 15, 169, 170; Mordecai Paldiel, *The Righteous Among the Nations* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem; New York: HarperCollins, 2007), 53, 56, 98, 172, 208, 215, 251, 254, 519, 554; Emily Taitz, ed., *Holocaust Survivors*, vol. 1 (Westport, Connecticut, and London, 2007), 24, 108.

<sup>690</sup> Ad van Liempt, *Hitler’s Bounty Hunters: The Betrayal of the Jews* (Oxford and New York: Berg, 2005).

<sup>691</sup> Dienke Hondius, “Welcome in Amsterdam? Return and Reception of Survivors: New research and Findings,” in John K. Roth and Elisabeth Maxwell, eds., *Remembering for the Future: The Holocaust in an Age of Genocide* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire and New York: Palgrave, 2001), vol. 3, 135–41.

<sup>692</sup> Anton Gill, *The Journey Back From Hell: Conversations with Concentration Camp Survivors* (London: Grafton Books, 1988), 367, 372.

*Recent research by the Research and Documentation Centre of the Netherlands Ministry of Justice<sup>693</sup> shows that the possibility of survival for Dutch Jews had more to do with factors such as being exempted from deportation and escaping abroad, than being able to hide in Holland with the help of the Dutch. It was not that the Dutch weren't prepared to help fellow citizens in danger, however Jews did not figure prominently in that category of assistance. It is estimated that from mid-1943 until the end of the war between 200,000 and 300,000 Dutch men trying to evade forced labor in Germany found refuge underground, yet the number of Jews who were hidden was but a tiny fraction of that number. Although the Dutch government destroyed the original archival material pertaining to the registration of the Jews after the liberation, seemingly not wanting any incriminating material in the archives, copies of these records were kept by many municipalities. Of the 140,000 persons the Nazis counted as Jews, and therefore potentially subject to deportation, at least 28,000 went underground. The real number of Jews who attempted to survive in hiding was probably higher, maybe thousands higher. The number of Jews who survived the occupation in hiding is estimated to have been 16,100. (The survival rate for Jews living among Catholics was significantly higher than for those who lived in Protestant areas.) At least 12,000 Jews in hiding were apprehended, most of them betrayed or hunted down by Dutch collaborators. There are strong indications that the real number could have been several thousand higher. No Jew could have been deported or arrested in Holland without some form of Dutch collaboration. There are indications that the hunt for Jews in hiding in Amsterdam was more severe than was previously appreciated. Branches of the Dutch police arrested about 6,000 Jews in that city while the Henneicke Column, a group of 54 Dutch Nazis who hunted down Jews for blood money (Jew hunters were paid out of the proceeds of stolen Jewish property), caught between 8,000–9,000 Jews (8,370 according to one calculation). However, few of these Jews would have been apprehended without some form of betrayal or denunciation by ordinary citizens. The work was based on tip-offs. The Henneicke Column had a vast network of informants who fed him information by post and telephone. They were rewarded fairly generously and these funds also came from the proceeds of stolen Jewish property. The German authorities, in particular the Sicherheitspolizei, played an important role, but without the help of their Dutch allies and Dutch civilians they could not have succeeded in their venture. One should not overlook the help that the Dutch did provide, and the price they paid for helping. While those who were caught sheltering Jews were often not punished at all, others faced short detentions, and in severe cases a small number were sent to concentration camps:*

... on May 9, 1943, 1,604 Gentiles were incarcerated for helping Jews. This amounted to 30 percent of all the Dutch Gentiles held in “protective custody” at that time, not a small proportion (usually, if Gentiles who helped Jews were punished, they were punished with short-term Schutzhaft, or protective custody; only severe cases were sent to concentration camps in Germany). Slightly more than a year later, the number had increased to 1,997 Gentiles, 20 percent of the total number at that time.

*Few of these persons who helped Jews would have been arrested had they not been denounced or betrayed by someone. These statistics also underscore the relatively small scale of Dutch resistance to the Nazis and the leniency with which resisters were treated, as compared to occupied Poland. Tellingly, more than twice as many Dutch citizens volunteered to fight with the Waffen-SS during the war than joined the Free Netherlands forces.*

### **France**

*Regarding the situation in France, and Western Europe, historian Michael R. Marrus wrote:*

Wherever possible outside eastern Europe, the Nazis relied on local agencies to prepare the Jews for their own destruction. Remarkably few Germans were available for such work. Berlin sent fewer than three thousand civilians to manage occupied France in August 1941, for example, and not many more for the

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<sup>693</sup> Marnix Croes, “The Holocaust in the Netherlands and the Rate of Jewish Survival,” *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, vol. 20, no. 3 (Winter 2006): 474–99. See also Marnix Croes, “Gentiles and the Survival Chances of Jews in the Netherlands, 1940–1945: A Closer Look,” in Beate Kosmala and Feliks Tych, eds., *Facing the Nazi Genocide: Non-Jews and Jews in Europe* (Berlin: Metropol, 2004), 41–72; Marnix Croes and Beate Kosmala, “Facing Deportation in Germany and the Netherlands: Survival in Hiding,” in Beate Kosmala and Georgi Verbeeck, eds., *Facing the Catastrophe: Jews and Non-Jews in Europe during World War II* (Oxford and New York: Berg, 2010), 97–158.

Netherlands. Throughout western Europe the Nazis could never assign many men for this purpose and always preferred to see native police and bureaucrats remain at their posts and carry on with their jobs. One of the first tasks of occupation, indeed, was to make security arrangements with local authorities and to weed out unsatisfactory elements among them. In consequence, indigenous police remained a significant force. In France, the complement was about 100,000 men, some of them well armed, with 30,000 for the city of Paris alone.

Once deportations from western Europe began, in the summer of 1942, the Germans relied heavily upon native police and administrative personnel. ... In France. ... cooperation was indispensable. For the first wave of deportations, many involving foreign Jews, the French police participated on a massive scale—not only in the northern, occupied zone, under Nazi scrutiny, but in the south in the unoccupied zone as well. Elsewhere too the Germans had few problems with the police at this stage. Moreover, in every occupied country, homegrown fascists organized into militias that stiffened the resolve of the local gendarmerie or assisted them in rounding up their victims. Jacques Doriot's Parti populaire français, Rexist and Flemish bands in Belgium, and Anton Mussert's National Socialist Movement in the Netherlands all became small cogs in the machinery of destruction. Less dramatically, civil servants also provided crucial help. Government agencies helped snap the links that attached Jews to the structures of ordinary life—welfare, organizations, professions, schools, and so forth—while civil registries kept track of their addresses and personal backgrounds. Having worked with the Germans for nearly two years, most native officials hardly thought twice about maintaining the pattern of collaboration when it came to assembling Jews to be sent eastward.

Collaboration went particularly far in France ... because the autonomously inspired anti-Semitic program launched by the Vichy regime had already given the persecution of the Jews such momentum. Vichy leaders began their own anti-Jewish campaign immediately after the constitution of a new French government in the summer of 1940. This was not in response to a German *Diktat*, but was launched by French politicians pursuing longstanding anti-Semitic priorities. For a time, the French operated independently against the Jews, fully integrating their anti-Semitic measures with Vichy's program of "National Revolution," trumpeted by the head of state Marshal Philippe Pétain. Action against the Jews was held to be a French objective, part of a broad campaign against excessive "foreign" influence, corruption, licentiousness, and materialism. Gradually the Germans enticed Vichy even further, stimulating the French to confiscate Jewish businesses and to go beyond what they had intended in their own anti-Jewish legislation. By 1942 Vichy had not only effectively outlawed the Jews, but had taken much of their property and interned many in special camps. Scores of bureaucrats were accustomed, as a matter of official routine, to harassing Jews, marking their documents with special stamps, and sending them to internment camps. For many French officials the roundups and deportations of 1942 were simply a continuation of a program deemed by the highest authorities in the land to be in the French national interest.<sup>694</sup>

*As Marrus points out, because of the scarcity of German forces stationed in France, reliance on the French police to carry out the round-up and deportation of the Jews was absolutely essential for the German plan to succeed.*

The Germans needed and received a great deal of assistance from the French to carry out their plans. ... Most of the work was done by the French police. ... it seems highly unlikely that the Germans would have been capable of deporting large numbers of Jews from France without the help provided by the French authorities. ... Unlike Poland, where there was always a heavy German police presence, there were few men to spare for France—only three battalions for the occupied zone, for example, or about three thousand men.<sup>695</sup>

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<sup>694</sup> Michael R. Marrus, *The Holocaust in History* (Hanover and London: University Press of New England, 1987), 70–72.

<sup>695</sup> Michael R. Marrus, "France: The Jews and the Holocaust," in Israel Gutman, ed., *Encyclopedia of the Holocaust* (New York: Macmillan; London: Collier Macmillan, 1990), vol. 2, 509–13. See also the entry for the infamous French assembly and detention camp in the Paris suburb of Drancy in vol. 1, 404–406. For another survey of conditions in France see Raul Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews*, Third edition (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2003), vol. 2, 645–703.

*In total, the German police apparatus consisted mainly of some 2,400 personnel from the Security Police and 3,000 from the Order Police, a relatively small number for such a large country, forcing the Germans to rely on cooperation with the French police. Some 100,000 French policemen, 30,000 of them in greater Paris, became available for rounding up Jews. The compilation of lists with the names and addresses of the Jews in greater Paris, where about 90 percent of all the Jews in the occupied zone resided, carried out in November 1940, proved to be an easy task, as the Germans could make use of data from the Paris police, who had already carried out a secret registration of Jewish and non-Jewish foreigners in the capital in the late 1930s. In a two-day round-up which started the morning of July 16, 1942, 4,500 Paris policemen rounded up 12,884 Jews and detained them in the Vélodrome d'Hiver, a winter stadium for cycle-racing near the Eiffel Tower, which had been designated as the major collecting point.*<sup>696</sup>

*By way of comparison, there were about 150,000 SS or Waffen SS stationed in Poland in 1944.*<sup>697</sup> *American historian Joseph Rothchild writes: "the achievements of the Polish resistance movement were indeed prodigious. It tied down approximately 500,000 German occupation troops and, according to official German figures, prevented one out of every eight Wehrmacht transports headed for the Russian front from reaching its destination. ... And Poland was the only Axis-occupied country in Europe without a quisling."*<sup>698</sup>

The following findings are based on Donna F. Ryan's *The Holocaust & the Jews of Marseille: The Enforcement of Anti-Semitic Policies in Vichy France* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1996):

The motives of those French men and women who helped track down Jews in hiding or carry out the deportations ranged from high-minded support of Vichy's "spiritual" revolution to sheer greed. Some of the perpetrators welcomed the chance to appropriate "aryanized" Jewish property. Indeed, keeping the spoils of anti-Semitism in French rather than in German hands was one of the benefits of French "sovereignty" which Vichy sought to defend. Thugs from Marseille's underworld received 1,000 francs per Jew caught, plus whatever they could steal or extort from their victims. Writes Ryan: "There were always bands of [French] informers, headhunters, thieves, and murderers on whom the Nazis could depend to maintain a steady stream of Jews to fill the convoys" (p. 203).

Nor did most of the population of Marseille show much sympathy for the victims when Vichy began implementing its *statut des juifs*. In 1940 and 1941, there was little evidence of any widespread disapproval of Vichy's anti-Jewish laws, while letters of denunciation revealing the whereabouts of Jews in hiding were not uncommon. ...

Although Ryan does not use such terms, she makes it clear that the age-old dynamic of viewing "the other" as more expendable than "one's own kind" was an all too common reaction under Vichy—not only among non-Jews but among many Jews as well, especially among many French Jews who thought that the distinction between themselves and foreign Jews would save them from deportation. For a time, Vichy agreed, cooperating fully with the Germans in deporting foreign Jews and only objecting when the Germans began to demand French Jews. As German pressure increased, Vichy increasingly caved in. In 1941, Vichy regarded a handful of highly assimilated Jews as worthy of being called French, while systematically downgrading all other Jews to second-class citizenship. In 1942 Pierre Laval and the Germans agreed on a hierarchy of deportables: German and Austrian Jews first, then other foreign Jews, Algerian-French Jews, and finally, reluctantly, French Jews. Since Vichy accepted German convoy quotas, it fully understood that saving one person meant damning another. By 1943 Vichy had dropped the distinction between French and non-French Jews, hoping that its cooperation with the Nazis would benefit the vast majority of the population who were not Jews.

Between 1940 and 1943, one government-sponsored Jewish organization in France favored some Jews over others. This was the *Union générale des Israélites de France* (UGIF), an organization created by

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<sup>696</sup> Pim Griffioen and Ron Zeller, "Anti-Jewish Policy and Organization of the Deportations in France and the Netherlands, 1940–1944: A Comparative Study," *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, vol. 20, no. 3 (Winter 2006): 437–73.

<sup>697</sup> Teresa Prekerowa, *Zegota: Commission d'aide aux Juifs* (Monaco: Éditions du Rocher, 1999), 285.

<sup>698</sup> Joseph Rothchild, *Return to Diversity: A Political History of East Central Europe Since World War II*, Second edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 28. (The peak strength and accomplishments of the Polish underground occurred in 1944–1945; by that time, however, the Holocaust of Polish Jews was essentially over.)

Vichy initiative to help locate (and eventually persecute) all Jews in France. In return for its help, the UGIF was allowed to dole out small subsistence payments to Jews who risked being known to the authorities. Raymond Lambert, the Jewish director of the UGIF, supplied Vichy authorities with a monthly list of the names, addresses, ages, professions, and gender of all Jews his organization had aided, but he expected that UGIF staff members would be excluded from deportation. Lambert protested vehemently in 1943 when Vichy arrested some of his staff, only to be arrested himself soon after and—along with his wife and four children—deported to Auschwitz where they all died. ...

In 1940 and 1941, few French Jews in Marseille demonstrated much brotherhood or sisterhood for non-French and non-Mediterranean Jews. They found the influx of German or Yiddish-speaking Jews disconcerting, while hoping that thoroughly Frenchified Jews like themselves would not be deported. They also looked down on Kabyle Algerians in the Jewish population as members of a despised North African culture. Even though many Algerian Jews were long established in Marseille, they were eventually deported in numbers twice as large as their percentage in the local Jewish population. When foreign Jews became scarce and Nazi deportation quotas increased, they were among the first to be sacrificed. Ryan believes that had Jews in Marseille been less divided, they might have organized, during the first months of Vichy at least, a more effective response to their common enemies.<sup>699</sup>

*Even before the Final Solution got underway, the French authorities ruthlessly promoted their own anti-Jewish policies and persecuted the Jews on their own initiative. The first anti-Jewish legislation appeared on 3 October 1940, and “despite what Vichy apologists later claimed, the Statute was not imposed by the Germans ... over the next twelve months Vichy issued [a further] 26 laws and 24 decrees on the Jews.”<sup>700</sup> The treatment of foreign Jews was even more callous. “From 4 October 1940, they could be interned at the discretion of the prefects. Seven main camps were used for this purpose, and by the start of 1941 about 40,000 Jews were held ... Conditions were atrocious ... in total about 3,000 Jews perished in the French camps ... before the Final Solution had begun.”<sup>701</sup>*

*Sympathy for the Jews did not run high. “During the first two years of occupation the prevailing sentiment towards the Jews ranged from indifference to hostility,” and “the Jewish ‘problem’ was one of Vichy’s earliest preoccupations.” As Professor Robert Gildea explains: “in the demonology of occupied France communists were second only to Jews,” and both were therefore “excluded from national life as the price of national redemption.”<sup>702</sup> As historian Renée Poznanski has shown, French underground groups—except for the publications of the Jewish Communists—consciously followed a policy of near silence about the fate of the Jews.<sup>703</sup> On the topic of French collaboration and the phenomenon of denunciation see Laurent Joly, *L’Antisémitisme de bureau* (Paris: B. Grasset, 2011) and Laurent Joly, ed., *La Délation dans la France des années noires* (Paris: Perrin, 2012).*

## **Belgium**

*The population of Belgium in 1939 was around 8,400,000.*

In theory, the relatively moderate German occupation regime (compared with those in other countries) had no political mandate. Its priority was the economic exploitation of Belgium, and so its basic objectives were political pacification, social stability, and public order. ...

In general, anti-Jewish policies were not a top priority. However, the Brussels Militäverwaltung [military occupation regime] followed Berlin’s orders and developed anti-Jewish legislation that generally followed the standard pattern used elsewhere: from identifying and registering Jews and their assets, to exclusion and

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<sup>699</sup> Robert J. Soucy, “Review of Donna F. Ryan, *The Holocaust & the Jews of Marseille*,” H-France, H-Net Reviews, January, 1999. URL: <http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.cgi?path=22816917014155>.

<sup>700</sup> Robert Gildea, *Marianne in Chains: In Search of the German Occupation, 1940–1945* (London: Macmillan, 2002), 355.

<sup>701</sup> Julian Jackson, *France: The Dark Years, 1940–1944* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 356.

<sup>702</sup> Julian Jackson, *France: The Dark Years, 1940–1944* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 370, 355; Robert Gildea, *Marianne in Chains: In Search of the German Occupation, 1940–1945* (London: Macmillan, 2002), 288.

<sup>703</sup> Renée Poznanski, “French Public Opinion and the Jews during World War II: Assumptions of the Clandestine Press,” in Beate Kosmala and Feliks Tych, eds., *Facing the Nazi Genocide: Non-Jews and Jews in Europe* (Berlin: Metropol, 2004), 117–35, also 11.

isolation, to marking, and finally to deportation. ... The Sipo [Sicherheitspolizei—security police] and the SD [Sicherheitsdienst—security service]—by this time firmly installed in Belgium—assumed responsibility for anti-Jewish policy from the Militäverwaltung after May 1942. The Sipo and the SD managed the phase of mandatory labor, roundups, arrests, and deportations. Anti-Jewish policy in Belgium was therefore exclusively implemented through German legislation and German initiative. Nevertheless, Belgian authorities played an important role in implementing the German measures. Belgian involvement ranged from the registration of Jews, to police controls, economic and social exclusion, and physical concentration of Jews in larger cities (Brussels, Antwerp, and Liège), to, in some cases, active collaboration by the Belgian police and *gendarmérie* in searches and arrests. The German Militäverwaltung exercised only relatively soft pressure when it came to anti-Jewish policy, and this vein mediated between Belgian authorities and the radical German Sipo and SD.<sup>704</sup>

*Writing about the Holocaust in Belgium, historian Jean-Philippe Schreiber arrived at a conclusion that aptly sums up the experience of the Jewish population throughout Western Europe: The truth of the matter was that, as elsewhere, the average Belgian “does not like the Jews.” (Indeed, anti-Semitism was pervasive in Western countries where Jews constituted a microscopic minority.) Moreover, “the suggestion that there would be a direct link between democratic values and a century of emancipation of the Jews in Western Europe and a widespread readiness to help them is superficial and not substantiated by the facts revealed through a close analysis of the rescuers.”*<sup>705</sup>

*On April 14, 1941, Antwerp experienced a major pogrom, when a mob of 200 people, spurred by anti-Semitic and pro-Nazi elements, invaded the Jewish quarter, vandalizing Jewish-owned stores and two synagogues, destroying the Torah scrolls and religious artifacts, and ending with the torching of the synagogues. Similar incidents were repeated two days later, until the German authorities finally intervened to put an end to this violence. This did not stop the Flemish lawyers’ association from expelling its Jewish members, and the municipality gladly accepted the task of stamping the identity cards of Jews with a large red-coloured Jood-Juif sign, and placing its police at the service of the Germans when the round-up of Jews for deportation to the concentration camps began in August 1942.*<sup>706</sup>

*Denunciations were commonplace in Belgium, where many Jews attempted to go underground.*<sup>707</sup> *After the initial round-ups, most, of the remaining Jews who were deported fell into the clutches of the German security police (SIPO) through the work of individual informers and denouncers, Belgian Vertrauensleute (V-Leute) informers and agents provocateurs, Flemish SS members, and the like. The German Devisenschutzkommando often rewarded their henchmen with five to ten percent of the money or other valuables the Jews possessed when they were arrested.*<sup>708</sup> *A special branch of the Jewish-organized Jewish Defence Committee, which was affiliated with the national Belgian resistance movement, daily employed 300 persons, Jews and non-Jews, to assist post-office workers to intercept denunciations of Jews mailed to the German authorities.*<sup>709</sup> *In fact, thousands of letters denouncing Jews were sent to the occupying*

<sup>704</sup> Veerle Vanden Daelen and Nico Wouters, “‘The Lesser Evil’ of Jewish Collaboration?: The Absence of a Jewish Honor Court in Postwar Belgium,” in Laura Jockusch and Gabriel N. Finder, eds., *Jewish Honor Courts: Revenge, Retribution, and Reconciliation in Europe and Israel after the Holocaust* (Detroit: Wayne State University, 2015), 200.

<sup>705</sup> Jean-Philippe Schreiber, “Belgium and the Jews Under Nazi Rule: Beyond the Myths,” in David Bankier and Israel Gutman, eds., *Nazi Europe and the Final Solution* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem The Holocaust Martyrs’ and Heroes’ Remembrance Authority and The International Institute for Holocaust Research, 2003), 480. For examples of anti-Semitic attitudes among the general population see Emily Taitz, ed., *Holocaust Survivors*, vol. 1 (Westport, Connecticut, and London: Greenwood Press, 2007), vol. 1, 119–20, vol. 2, 485; Ephraim Farber, “Posing as Aryans in Belgium,” in Dov Shuval, ed., *The Szczębrzeszyn Memorial Book* (Mahwah, New Jersey: Jacob Solomon Berger, 2005), 189.

<sup>706</sup> Mordecai Paldiel, *Churches and the Holocaust: Unholy Teaching, Good Samaritans, and Reconciliation* (Jersey City, New Jersey: Ktav Publishing House, 2006), 134.

<sup>707</sup> For example, one professional smuggler who promised refuge in Switzerland worked with the Gestapo and betrayed many Jews who had paid dearly for his services. See Elaine Saphier Fox, ed., *Out of Chaos: Hidden Children Remember the Holocaust* (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 2013), 61. Paid rescuers also turned away their Jewish charges. *Ibid.*, 196.

<sup>708</sup> Pim Griffioen, “The Shoah in Belgium,” a review of Insa Meinen, *Die Shoah in Belgien* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2009), *Yad Vashem Studies*, vol. 39, no. 1 (2011): 289–96, here at 292, 294–96.

<sup>709</sup> Philip Friedman, *Their Brothers’ Keepers* (New York: Holocaust Library, 1978), 69.

authorities—an enormous number given the size of that country’s small Jewish community of 70,000.<sup>710</sup> In Belgium, a decree of June 1, 1942 warned the local population against sheltering Jews under punishment with “imprisonment and a fine.”<sup>711</sup> However, little is known about the extent to which these measures were enforced.

As in Denmark, the rescue of Jews in Belgium was in large measure paid for by the Jews themselves. Most often Jews themselves financed their attempts to evade deportation (e.g. buying false identity documents, renting rooms, buying food on the black market, paying people to help them escape across the border to France and beyond). The Belgian Comité de Défense des Juifs, which represented a broad cross-range of the Jewish community, was involved in propaganda, finance, false papers, and material aid. It is believed to have helped 12,000 adults and 3,000 children, of whom 2,443 were supported financially, and was instrumental in indirectly assisting perhaps another 15,000 people. The Comité used at least 138 separate secular or religious institutions and at least 700 individual families to hide the children. These operations required huge amounts of resources and money, especially for monthly subventions to families and institutions to feed and clothe the children. It began fundraising by appealing to rich Jews and by making richer Jews pay double for services in order to subsidize the rescue of poorer Jews. The committee was able to get a loan for the sum of BFr 3 million from the Banque de Bruxelles, and monthly subventions from the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, initially for SFr 20,000 and raised progressively to SFr 100,000, which were smuggled from Switzerland into Belgium. Additional funding came from other individuals and organizations. The committee’s total expenditure during the occupation was estimated to have reached BFr 48 million.<sup>712</sup>

A 1,100 page report, produced in 2007 for the Belgian Senate, titled *Gewillig België – La Belgique Docile* (Docile Belgium), indicated that while the persecution of the Jews was devised by the Germans, it was implemented with the large-scale cooperation of the Belgian Government. The German occupying forces could not do it alone because they did not have enough men available. The Belgian authorities organized and administered the Register of Jews; they supported the implementation of successive anti-Jewish laws, up to and including individual and collective arrests; and it was the Belgian Government itself that took the initiative in 1942 to start registering Gypsies. The Antwerp policemen who took part in the deportation of the Jews were never brought to trial.

### **Luxembourg**

Yad Vashem records that 3,500 Jews lived in Luxembourg before the German invasion and 1,945 were murdered on the death camps or in Luxembourg itself. Very few came back after the war. In a report released in February 2015, a team of historians, led by Vincent Artuso, concluded that an administrative commission governing Luxembourg during the Nazi occupation in World War II collaborated in the persecution of Jews. “The Luxembourg administrations under occupation were not forced to participate in Nazi anti-Semitic persecution under threat,” the study states. “They collaborated once they were invited to by the occupier and often fulfilled their task with diligence, zeal even – certain heads of the administration did not hesitate to take the initiative,” the report continued. The administrative commission, which took charge after the government fled the country with the Grand Ducal family, unreservedly accepted orders by Gauleiter Gustav Simon. A case in point was an order not to let Jews, who had fled the country, return to their homes, which the administration accepted even though it had not yet been fully placed under the Gauleiter’s control. From October 1941, authorities began to deport the around 800 remaining Jews from Luxembourg to ghettos and camps such as Łódź, Auschwitz and Theresienstadt (Terezín). More recently, historian Denis Scuto discovered a list of 480 Polish Jews compiled for the Germans by the Luxembourg authorities in 1940.

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<sup>710</sup> Jean-Philippe Schreiber, “Belgium and the Jews Under Nazi Rule: Beyond the Myths,” in David Bankier and Israel Gutman, eds., *Nazi Europe and the Final Solution* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem The Holocaust Martyrs’ and Heroes’ Remembrance Authority and The International Institute for Holocaust Research, 2003), 478.

<sup>711</sup> Mordecai Paldiel, *Churches and the Holocaust: Unholy Teaching, Good Samaritans, and Reconciliation* (Jersey City, New Jersey: Ktav Publishing House, 2006), 131–32.

<sup>712</sup> Bob Moore, “Integrating Self-Help into the History of Jewish Survival in Western Europe,” in Norman J.W. Goda, ed., *Jewish Histories of the Holocaust: New Transnational Approaches* (New York and Oxford: Berghahn, 2014), 193–208, here at 196–97.

## **Channel Islands**

*The Channel Islands of Guernsey and Jersey were the only part of the British Isles to be occupied by the Germans. An important revelation of the extent of West European complicity in the Holocaust surfaced only in January 1993, with the release of documents implicating the English authorities on the Channel Islands of close cooperation with the German military in identifying and tracking down members of the tiny Jewish community. Only one member of the eight-member cabinet of Guernsey categorically refused his assent to anti-Jewish edicts.<sup>713</sup> After liberation, the British authorities systematically covered up collaboration on the part of residents of the German-occupied Channel Islands and refused to prosecute known collaborators.<sup>714</sup>*

In view of the inevitable German invasion, the British government instructed the islands' leaders, in June 1940, to practice "passive cooperation" which they assiduously did over the next five years.

The elected administrators and aldermen of the Channel Islands readily cooperated with the German commanders: they consented without murmur to the conversion of Alderney Island into a lethal concentration camp for Russian and Jewish slave laborers, they carefully prepared lists of the handful of local families who were fully or partially of Jewish origin, and they handed the families over to the Gestapo. Most of these Jews later died in concentration or death camps. ... British officials arrested real and potential resisters. It is also noteworthy that the women of the islands gave birth to some nine hundred German British children.

... what is significant is that the British government never even tried to set the Channel Islands "on fire." These dangerous games were left to other Europeans. ... In the end, not a single islander was tried or punished for collaboration, war crimes, or treason.<sup>715</sup>

*The most thorough and scathing indictment was penned by David Fraser, who wrote: "The documentary record on which this book is based now clearly and beyond question establishes that high-ranking government, police and bureaucratic officials in Jersey and Guernsey participated wholeheartedly and almost without question in the persecution of resident Jews and in the programme of Aryanization aimed at the exclusion of Jewish economic and business interests. They did not protest. They did not invoke underlying principles of British justice or of basic humanity. Instead they not only complied with German commands, but they frequently took the initiative in seeking out Jewish individuals or Jewish businesses for the sole purpose of applying Nazi legalized anti-Semitism as fully as possible." Fraser concludes that these actions "were always informed by an indigenous and widespread anti-Semitism," pointing out that local officials even registered individuals who were not legally speaking Jewish. He reiterates the point that: "The entire legal, police and bureaucratic machinery of the Channel Islands actively assisted in the implementation of Nazi anti-Semitic legal norms and practices." Finally, he notes: "In the end, no Island official or lawyer was ever prosecuted or otherwise sanctioned for their participation in the imposition and implementation of the series of legal measures aimed at the Islands' Jewish population."<sup>716</sup>*

## **Slovakia**

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<sup>713</sup> "Guernsey officials put Jews into Nazi hands, records show," *The Toronto Star*, January 6, 1993; Madeleine Bunting, *The Model Occupation: The Channel Islands under German Rule, 1940–1945*, Revised paperback edition (London: HarperCollins, 1996). For a more benign evaluation, see Linda Holt and Ward Rutherford, "'The Model Occupation' – Setting the Record Straight," *Channel Islands Occupation Review*, vol. 25 (1997): 49–72; Hazel R. Knowles Smith, *The Changing Face of the Channel Islands Occupation* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

<sup>714</sup> Hazel R. Knowles Smith, *The Changing Face of the Channel Islands Occupation* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 166–67.

<sup>715</sup> István Deák, *Europe on Trial: The Story of Collaboration, Resistance, and Retribution During World War II* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 2015), 59.

<sup>716</sup> David Fraser, *The Jews of the Channel Islands and the Rule of Law, 1940–1945: 'Quite contrary to the principles of British justice'* (Brighton and Portland: Sussex Academic Press, 2000).

After the independent Slovak state was declared on 14 March 1939, the Slovak government issued a series of anti-Jewish decrees that limited Jewish participation in the economy and the professions, forced Jews out of the civil service and the army, and established special labor units for them. ...

Slovakia was the only nonoccupied German satellite state that willingly handed over its Jewish citizens to the Germans for deportation into the extermination camps and even paid the Germans 500 Reichsmarks for every deported person. From 25 March until 20 October 1942, exactly 57,628 Jews were deported from Slovakia to Auschwitz and the Lublin region, and only several hundred survived.<sup>717</sup>

*Local bounty hunters tracked down Jews who attempted to hide and exploited the sexual favour of Jewish women.*<sup>718</sup>

## **Hungary**

*Almost 440,000 Jews were rounded up by Hungarian officials and deported to Auschwitz in the course of two months, between May 15 and July 9 of 1944, as the war was drawing to a close.*

The deportation and the annihilation of Hungarian citizens deemed to be Jews was unprecedented in its speed and efficiency. Never before had hundreds of thousands of people been torn out of their day-to-day lives with such devastating haste. The Hungarian transports exceeded all expectations, arriving in Auschwitz more quickly than [sic] even the annihilation specialists could plan for them. To coordinate the deportations, however, Adolf Eichmann needed only a few dozen personnel to cope with the assignment. Although his staff consisted of a mere 60 to 80 Germans, he could count on the loyal cooperation of over 300,000 Hungarian officials. The destruction machinery in Auschwitz was thus overtaxed: overly fast deportations exceeded the ovens' capacity. ...

These events played out in the last twelve months of the war. Cooperation between the German and Hungarian authorities was smooth bordering on competitive, almost as if each sought to outperform the other. ... Without the active participation of the Hungarian state, including its economic and political leadership, deportations of such extent and speed would have been impossible. The successful segregation and expropriation measures were prepared long in advance on the Hungarian side: only then could 835,000 persons be ghettoized, expropriated, and largely deported on short notice with such bureaucratic precision.<sup>719</sup>

The success of the *Sondereinsatzkommando* under Eichmann, including 20 officers at most, was guaranteed by the fact—in accordance with the orders of the leadership of the Ministry of Interior, which collaborated in both setting up ghettos [sic] and in the deportations—the law enforcement agencies (the police and the gendarmerie) and the whole Hungarian public administrative system (altogether over 200,000 people) cooperated efficiently with the Germans. Never before had so many people been deported in so little time; between May 15 and July 9—within 56 days—437,402 people were deported from Hungary, virtually all of them to Auschwitz-Birkenau, with the exception of 15,000 people. Never before had the crematoria and the gas chambers worked with such intensity.<sup>720</sup>

## **Baltic States—Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania**

*Local functionaries also played a pivotal role in the execution of the Holocaust in the Baltic States, where most of the Jews were murdered on the spot. The Baltic peoples have the dubious distinction of not only rounding up their Jews with minimal German supervision, as did the Dutch, French, and Norwegians, but*

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<sup>717</sup> "Czechoslovakia," in Gershon David Hundert, ed., *The YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2008), vol. 1, 379.

<sup>718</sup> Jonathan Friedman, *Speaking the Unspeakable: Essays on Sexuality, Gender, and Holocaust Survivor Memory* (Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America, 2002), 60–64.

<sup>719</sup> Krisztian Ungváry, "Robbing the Dead: The Hungarian Contribution to the Holocaust," in Beate Kosmala and Feliks Tych, eds., *Facing the Nazi Genocide: Non-Jews and Jews in Europe* (Berlin: Metropol, 2004), 231–61, especially 231–33.

<sup>720</sup> Gábor Kádár and Zoltán Vági, "Plunder and Collaboration: Financial Aspects of a Genocide," in Beate Kosmala and Feliks Tych, eds., *Facing the Nazi Genocide: Non-Jews and Jews in Europe* (Berlin: Metropol, 2004), 263–88, especially 263–64.

*also playing a pivotal role in their murder on their native territory. Ninety-five percent of Estonian Jewry was shot by local paramilitary groups within three months of the German occupation in June 1941, together with even larger numbers of alleged Bolsheviks. Estonian auxiliary police were later employed to liquidate Jews from Latvia and Lithuania brought to camps in Estonia. With many more Jewish residents, matter proceeded more slowly in Latvia and Lithuania, but not less thoroughly.*

Of the more than 1,000 Jews who remained in Estonia during the Nazi occupation, at least 929 had been murdered by the end of 1941. Most of their arrests and murders were carried out by the Monakaitse ([*Omakaitse*] self-defense) squads and the Estonian police, under the supervision of Einsatzkommando 1A. By January 1942, Estonia was officially listed in German documents as *Judenrein*.<sup>721</sup>

When the Nazis captured Latvia in early July 1941, some 70,000 Jews remained there. Even before the Germans entered the cities and provincial towns, many Jews were brutally slaughtered by local Latvians. In Riga, local attackers murdered 400 Jews, and most synagogues were destroyed. Similar attacks took place across all of Latvia. In July and August of that year, the majority of the Jewish population of the cities and provincial towns was systematically eradicated. ... The Latvian auxiliary police, who worked with Einsatzkommando 2/17, were routinely responsible for the actual execution of those massacres. ... By the end of 1941, some 9,000 Jews remained in Latvia ...<sup>722</sup>

*Lithuanian collaborators played a pivotal role in the implementation of the Holocaust.<sup>723</sup> Lithuania was one of the earliest occupied country where the Jewish population was annihilated. Almost all of the killing was done locally, primarily in Ponary outside Wilno (Vilnius), with the help of local collaborators. Since the Germans had only a small occupation force in Lithuania, they relied heavily on many thousands of Lithuanians who served in various paramilitary formations, as well as local policemen and administrators, to carry out the murder operations. Lithuanian collaborators were also deployed in Belarus, Ukraine, and Poland.*

### **Ukraine**

*The indigenous police force became an essential tool for the implementation of the Final Solution in the occupied territories of the Soviet Union. Figures from the Reichskommissariat Ukraine show the SS employed some 15,000 Germans and 238,000 native police at the end of 1942, reflecting a ratio of nearly one to sixteen, a rate that rose to 1:25 or even 1:50 in some regions by 1944.<sup>724</sup> As a rule, the Schutzmannschaften, as they were known, were loyal to the German masters and carried out their orders in the killing operations against the Jews and in the persecution of their own people, even in cases when they acted, mainly in rural areas, without the attendance of the Germans. The Ukrainian police were also used extensively in the liquidation of the ghettos in the Generalgouvernement.*

The role of the Ukrainian local police is relatively easy to reconstruct. In western Ukraine and parts of central Ukraine, the two rival factions of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists helped set up the local

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<sup>721</sup> Dov Levin, "Estonia," in Gershon David Hundert, ed., *The YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2008), vol. 1, 483. See also Anton Weiss-Wendt, *Murder Without Hatred: Estonians and the Holocaust* (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 2009).

<sup>722</sup> Dov Levin, "Latvia," in Gershon David Hundert, ed., *The YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2008), vol. 1, 998.

<sup>723</sup> For conditions in Lithuania see Knut Stang, *Kollaboration und Massenmord: Die litauische Hilfspolizei, das Rollkommando Hamann und die Ermordung der litauischen Juden* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1996), 156–71; Christoph Dieckmann, "The Role of the Lithuanians in the Holocaust," in Beate Kosmala and Feliks Tych, eds., *Facing the Nazi Genocide: Non-Jews and Jews in Europe* (Berlin: Metropol, 2004), 149–68; Alvydas Nikžentaitis, Stefan Schreiner, and Darius Staliūnas, eds., *The Vanished World of Lithuanian Jews* (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2004)—see the following articles: Yitzhak Arad, "The Murder of the Jews in German-Occupied Lithuania, (1941–1944)" (pp. 175–203); Arūnas Bubnys, "The Holocaust in Lithuania: An Outline of the Major Stages and their Results" (pp. 205–221); "Lithuanian Participation in the Mass Murder of Jews in Belarus and Ukraine, 1941–44" (pp. 285–96); Karen Sutton, *The Massacre of the Jews of Lithuania: Lithuanian Collaboration in the Final Solution, 1941–1944* (Jerusalem and New York: Gefen, 2008).

<sup>724</sup> Martin Dean, *Collaboration in the Holocaust: Crimes of the Local Police in Belorussia and Ukraine, 1941–44* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999).

militias that were among those responsible for organizing the pogroms in western Volhynia and eastern Galicia during the German advance in June and July 1941. The military administration generally tolerated these militias, but soon it began disarming them and having their members screened by Einsatzgruppe C. Thus the Ukrainian auxiliary police, known as *Schutzmannschaften* after July 30, 1941, was not identical to the militias from the first days of the German-Soviet war. The auxiliary police were first subordinated to the local military administration commands, then to the Orpo, above all the Gendarmerie in the countryside. Locals generally served as individual patrolmen in posts of 10 to 20 men in the villages; in the cities, they numbered as many as several hundred, in Kiev several thousand. The first mobile battalions of indigenous policemen under German command were set up in October 1941. By the end of November, there were over 19,000 men in 53 indigenous police battalions, 14,163 men in the indigenous municipal police, and 54,794 men in the indigenous rural police in the RKU [Reichskommissariat Ukraine] and military administered Ukrainian territories. In all, over 100,000 men served in the RKU's indigenous police forces.

The participation of local policemen in persecuting and killing Ukraine's Jews took many forms. After the more or less spontaneous excesses during the first days of military occupation, it was the local police that had the most direct contact with Ukraine's Jews. They helped register Jews, conduct raids, and guard ghettos. Starting in August 1941, the local police also played an important role in mass shootings. The *Schutzmannschaften* of a given town or village drove the Jews together, loaded the convoys to the killing sites, and cordoned off the scene of the shooting. ... The auxiliary police were already active during the killing operations in the first weeks and months of the German invasion. ... In some cases, local commandants ordered the murder of Jews using the auxiliary police. ...

The massacres in Volhynia-Podolia between May and November 1942 were characterized by the systematic use of the *Schutzmannschaften*. In almost every town or village where Jews were still living, the Gendarmerie and its auxiliaries took part in the killing. Several *Schutzmannschaften* battalions have also been documented as participating in shootings. ... Of the Ukrainian battalions, at least battalions 102, 103, and 117 were used in mass shootings.<sup>725</sup>

... the Ukrainian police enforced the ghettoization process, provided cordons during ghetto clearance operations and mass shootings, escorted Jews to local killing sites or to the trains headed for the death camp Belzec, carried out house-to-house searches, and combed forests for hidden Jews. Jews found in hiding or caught trying to flee were usually shot or handed over to the Germans. The police were also deployed in mass shootings and often committed individual acts of murder on their own initiative, especially in villages or ghettos. Guard duty in the forced labor camps ... was carried out in Galicia by both the Ukrainian police and guards from the SS training camp in Trawniki.<sup>726</sup>

*The following source describes two massive drives to recruit non-Jewish female domestic workers in the military area with the help of Ukrainian collaborators:*

In September 1942, 400,000 women aged 15–31 were ordered, and in April 1943 all females born 1924–1925 had to be “fetched” ... It was the local administration alone that was ordered to deliver the girls—and they did. The full documentation of orders and reports is available in the Donetsk archives. This included not only organisation of deportations but also the search and seizure operations for those conscripts who did not present themselves to the local labour office in due time. This was done through the local policemen, who were living in the villages and knew pretty well where the desired girls lived. In the cases where the girls were unavailable, these local authorities arrested the parents and imprisoned them for an indefinite time.<sup>727</sup>

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<sup>725</sup> Dieter Pohl, “The Murder of Ukraine's Jews under German Military Administration and in the Reich Commissariat Ukraine,” in Ray Brandon and Wendy Lower, eds., *The Shoah in Ukraine: History, Testimony, Memorialization* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2008), 54–55.

<sup>726</sup> Frank Golczewski, “Shades of Grey: Reflections on Jewish-Ukrainian and German-Ukrainian Relations in Galicia,” in Ray Brandon and Wendy Lower, eds., *The Shoah in Ukraine: History, Testimony, Memorialization* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2008), 139.

<sup>727</sup> Bernhard Chiari, “Has There Been a People's War? The History of the Second World War in Belarus, 60 Years After the Surrender of the *Third Reich*,” in Bruno De Wever, Herman Van Goethem, and Nico Wouters, eds., *Local*

... there was full participation of Ukrainians in the administration, not only in moves directed against members of their nationalities, but also in raids against one's "own". This is only explainable in terms of non-political, material incentives.<sup>728</sup>

*Soviet wartime losses, including those of Ukrainians, have been grossly exaggerated in Soviet sources and these same sources are relied on uncritically in the West, with estimates for the Ukraine running as high as 11 million. Dutch historian Karel Berkhoff estimates that about one million people, including POWs, lost their lives under the Nazi regime in the territory of Reichskommissariat Ukraine or after deportation to the Reich. Jews accounted for about 350,000 of the victims. Polish historian Grzegorz Hryciuk estimates that up to 150,000 Ukrainians were killed by the Germans in Poland's Eastern Galicia and Volhynia; most of the victims were in Volhynia, which was part of the Reichskommissariat Ukraine.<sup>729</sup> (Soviet military losses, which were huge, are not counted in these statistics.) The attitude of the German authorities varied, with the harshest treatment of the civilian population being reserved for areas like Volhynia where there was significant partisan activity. On the other hand, the German command in the southern region (a jurisdiction which eventually included more than 100,000 square kilometres and at least 5 million people) had a positive view of Ukrainians as being pro-German in their orientation, and consequently there were relatively few pacifications of the non-Jewish population. Indeed, there was a policy of preferential treatment of ethnic Ukrainians in place there.<sup>730</sup>*

### **Other Countries – Conclusion**

*The Germans also relied on collaborationist regimes or collaborationist elements to carry out the Holocaust in countries like Slovakia, Hungary, and Romania, chiefly through deportation to death camps. The least amount of collaboration, by far, was to be found in the ethnically Polish territories, where the local non-Jewish population played a marginal role in the execution of the Holocaust. (A much more pronounced role was played by collaborators of other ethnic groups such as Ukrainians and Balts.) Paradoxically, it was where the concentration of Jews was the greatest and where the Germans built their largest ghettos and death camps that the role of the Jews in their ghettoization and deportation to the camps was absolutely pivotal.*

*The means that the German Reich chose to annihilate the Jewish population of Europe was a decision made at the top echelons of the state bureaucracy, not by local collaborators. The various methods chosen to implement the "Final Solution" – whether through deportation, ghettoization, mass executions, or death in concentration, work or death camps – were all equally important in the scheme of things. The fact that there were fewer Jews in a particular country had an impact on the means chosen, but the relatively small number of victims in such a country mattered not in terms of the overall plan. Whether 90 percent of Holland's Jews were deported rather than executed locally, as in the Baltic States, was merely a matter of logistics. Collaboration was pivotal in the success of the Final Solution in Western European and Scandinavian countries such as Holland, Norway and France where the Germans relied on the local administration and functionaries to carry out round-ups and deportations because of the paucity of their own numbers.*

### **Fallacy of Treating Crimes Against the Jews in Isolation from Other Crimes**

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*Government in Occupied Europe (1939–1945)* (Gent, Belgium: Academia Press, 2006), 236. It should be noted that many local German Mennonites were found in prominent positions as rayon heads, city mayors or police heads. *Ibid.*, 254.

<sup>728</sup> *Ibid.*, 256.

<sup>729</sup> Karel C. Berkhoff, *Harvest of Despair: Life and Death in Ukraine Under Nazi Rule* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2004), 307; Grzegorz Hryciuk, "Zmiany ludnościowe i narodowościowe w Galicji Wschodniej i na Wołyniu w latach 1939–1948," in Stanisław Ciesielski, ed., *Przemiany narodowościowe na Kresach Wschodnich II Rzeczypospolitej, 1931–1948* (Toruń: Adam Marszałek, 2003), 195–96, 215–18; Grzegorz Hryciuk, *Przemiany narodowościowe i ludnościowe w Galicji Wschodniej i na Wołyniu w latach 1931–1948* (Toruń: Adam Marszałek, 2005), 238–42, 266–71.

<sup>730</sup> Truman O. Anderson, "Germans, Ukrainians and Jews: Ethnic Politics in *Heeresgebiet Süd*, June–December 1941," *War in History*, vol. 7, no. 3 (2000): 325–51.

*It is a common fallacy to treat the genocide of the Jews in isolation from other genocidal crimes and on that basis draw conclusions about the “righteousness” of a particular country. A case in point is Italy. Italy was occupied by the Germans for a relatively short period (Rome, from September 1943 until June 1944); there was no known penalty for helping Jews, and, therefore, the survival rate of Jews was appropriately higher than in other countries. However, the Italians perpetrated many heinous deeds throughout the war. Hundreds of thousands perished in Italian-occupied Ethiopia (Abyssinia) in 1935–1943, where poison gas was used against the population. The Italians also committed numerous atrocities against civilians and allied POWS in Yugoslavia and Axis-occupied North Africa, especially in Libya, in 1940–1943, killing several thousand Arabs, Berbers, and Jews. Anti-Jewish pogroms broke out in major Libyan towns such as Benghazi and Tripoli. Italians plundered Jewish shops and beat or chased Jews in the streets, and incarcerated Jews in concentration camps in the Libyan desert.<sup>731</sup>*

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<sup>731</sup> R.J.B. Bosworth, *Mussolini's Italy: Life under the Dictatorship, 1915–1945* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2006), 155–58, 179; Giles MacDonogh, *After the Reich: From the Liberation of Vienna to the Berlin Airlift* (London: John Murray, 2007), 503–6; Patrick Bernhard, “Behind the Battle Lines: Italian Atrocities and the Persecution of Arabs, Berbers, and Jews in north Africa during World War II,” *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, vol. 26, no. 3 (winter 2012): 425–46.

## Gratitude and Ingratitude

### **Yisrael Meir Lau, Chief Ashkenazi Rabbi of Israel:**

“...a great many Poles cooperated with the Nazis in the annihilation...of the Jewish people. The six largest camps were located on Polish territory. They knew that with the loss of the Jews they would suffer dearly. But it did not deter them...”<sup>732</sup>

### **Menachem Begin, former Israeli Prime Minister:**

“What concerns the Jews, the Poles were collaborating with the Germans... Only at most one hundred people have been helping Jews... Polish priests did not save even one Jewish life. All these death camps were therefore established on Polish soil.”<sup>733</sup>

### **Yitzhak Shamir, former Israeli Prime Minister:**

“Poles suck in anti-Semitism with their mother’s milk.”<sup>734</sup>

### **Yitzhak Rabin, Israeli Prime Minister:**

“I do not like to comment on statements made in Israel from abroad, but I would have preferred that this statement [by Yitzhak Shamir] had not been made.

In the first place—and it is always necessary to remember this—Auschwitz was a German death camp, built by German criminals on Polish soil. Whoever cannot make a distinction between these two things and links the camp at Auschwitz with Poland, commits a cardinal error.”<sup>735</sup>

### **Simon Wiesenthal:**

“Then the war came. It is in times like these that the lower elements in society surface—the blackmailers who would betray Jews... But on the other hand, whenever I am talking on this subject I always say that I know what kind of role Jewish communists played in Poland after the war. And just as I, as a Jew, do not want to shoulder responsibility for the Jewish communists, I cannot blame 36 million Poles for those thousands of blackmailers.”<sup>736</sup>

### **Jews rescued by Poles:**

One Polish Jew who often asked Jewish survivors whether they would have risked their lives for a Pole recalled: “The answer was always the same and it is mine too. I do not know if I would have endangered my life to save a Christian.”<sup>737</sup>

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<sup>732</sup> “The Chief Rabbi of Israel Speaks: Anti-Semitism Is Something Totally Illogical,” *The Jewish Press* (Brooklyn), August 13, 1993.

<sup>733</sup> Said on Dutch television in 1979. Cited in Stewart Stevens, *The Poles* (St. James’s Place, London: Collins/Harvill, 1982), 317.

<sup>734</sup> David Landau, “We Can’t Fight the Whole World,” *The Jerusalem Post*, September 8, 1989. The interview with Shamir reads: Question: “Doesn’t it amaze you that in Poland, where hardly a Jew is left, there should still be a powerful anti-Semitic presence?” Answer: “They suck it in with their mother’s milk! This is something that is deeply imbued in their tradition, their mentality.”

<sup>735</sup> Said on April 20, 1993, during state visit to Poland to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. Reported in *The New York Times* on April 21, 1993 (“Gore Congratulates Poland on Its Democracy”).

<sup>736</sup> Said in a Radio Free Europe (Munich) interview broadcast to Poland on January 7, 1989. See Władysław T. Bartoszewski, *The Convent at Auschwitz* (London: Bowerdean Press, 1990), 30.

<sup>737</sup> Cited in Marc Hillel, *Le massacre des survivants: En Pologne après l’holocauste (1945–1947)* (Paris: Plon, 1985), 99.

When Zbigniew Romaniuk put this question to a Jew rescued by a Pole in Brańsk, after a moment's thought, the Jew replied that he would probably not have helped Poles under similar conditions.<sup>738</sup>

"I am not at all sure that I would give a bowl of food to a Pole if it could mean death for me and my daughter," a Jewish woman admitted candidly.<sup>739</sup>

Another Jewish woman wrote: "Today, with the perspective of time, I am full of admiration for the courage and dedication...of all those Poles who in those times, day in, day out, put their lives on the line. I do not know if we Jews, in the face of the tragedy of another nation, would be equally capable of this kind of sacrifice."<sup>740</sup>

And a third woman: "Now you see why we hate the Polacks," one survivor concluded her account, in which she presented many instances of Poles' help. There was no word about hating the Germans.<sup>741</sup>

The Wanderers were among the luckiest Jewish families in town. Both parents and the girls survived the war. They were hidden successively by several Polish families. After the war, the Wanderers emigrated to America. I sent the Wanderer sisters information about the Regulas, one of the Polish families in whose house on the outskirts of Brzeżany they had hid after the Judenrein roundup. I hoped that they would start the procedure of granting them the Righteous Gentiles award, but nothing came of it. ... When I called Rena, the older one, and asked whether a young Polish historian, a colleague of mine who was doing research in New York, could interview her for my project on Brzeżany, her reaction was curt and clear: "I hate all Polacks." ... Rena advised me not to present the Poles in too favorable a way "for the sake of our martyrs."<sup>742</sup>

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<sup>738</sup> Piotr Szczepański (Zbigniew Romaniuk), "Pogromy, mordy i pogromiki," *Kurier Poranny* (Białystok), April 12, 1996 (Wydanie AB).

<sup>739</sup> Cited in Małgorzata Niezabitowska, *Remnants: The Last Jews of Poland* (New York: Friendly Press, 1986), 249.

<sup>740</sup> Cited in Marek Arczyński and Wiesław Balcerak, *Kryptonim "Żegota": Z dziejów pomocy Żydom w Polsce 1939–1945*, 2nd edition (Warsaw: Czytelnik, 1983), 264.

<sup>741</sup> Eva Hoffman, *Shtetl: The Life and Death of a Small Town and the World of Polish Jews* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1997), 245.

<sup>742</sup> Shimon Redlich, *Together and Apart in Brzeżany: Poles, Jews, and Ukrainians, 1918–1945* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2002), 22.

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## APPENDICES

### Excerpts from Władysław Bartoszewski's *The Blood Shed Unites Us*

*An important study about wartime assistance for the Jews was published by Władysław Bartoszewski under the title The Blood Shed Unites Us: Pages from the History of Help to the Jews in Occupied Poland (Warsaw: Interpress, 1970). On pages 119–63, reproduced below, Bartoszewski details the assistance provided to the Jewish ghetto fighters by the Polish underground.*

In the wake of General Rowecki “Grot’s” November 1942 order (endorsing the activity of the Jewish Fighting Organization), Captain “Szyna” (Zbigniew Lewandowski) of the Sappers, as chief of the Technical Research Bureau in the Sappers Section of the Home Army Chief Command, received on order to get in touch with the Jewish fighters, to train them, to organize the transfer of explosives and ammunition to the Warsaw Ghetto, and to prepare the joint military action of the Home Army and the Jewish Fighting Organization, should the Germans try to destroy the ghetto.

On instruction from Colonel “Monter” (Antoni Chruściel), the Warsaw District Commander of the Home Army, Major “Chirurg” (Stanisław Weber), his chief of staff, contacted “Szyna” with the ŻOB liaison officers from the ghetto introduced to him by “Wacław.” From the beginning of December 1942, two fighters, a woman and a man, regularly visited the clandestine quarters of the Home Army at 62 Marszałkowska Street (ground floor, out-building on left). There, Captain “Szyna” himself was giving fighting-subversive training, aided by one of the devoted officers of the Sappers, Lieutenant “Gryf” (Leon Tarajkowicz). The men from the ghetto were handed various printed instructions on how to use the arms and explosives, studied the techniques of fighting in town, were acquainted on the spot with various anti-tank weapons effective at close range, and were initiated into the manufacture of typical incendiary materials, mines and grenades. The ŻOB fighters showed tremendous ardour, lively interest, and a great deal of military ability, as confirmed many years later by the officers of the Home Army Sappers.

In December 1942 the Jewish Fighting Organization received from the storehouses of the Home Army the first ten pistols and a small amount of ammunition. Naturally, this did not meet even a fraction of the actual needs of the Jewish military organization in the ghetto. But at the end of 1942 and in early 1943 the supplies of arms and ammunition of the Home Army were still very limited, being chiefly composed of arms hidden after the September 1939 campaign, some of them unfit for use. And until the beginning of 1943 the supplies by parachute were entirely insufficient. In a radiogram to the Commander-in-Chief of the Polish Armed Forces in London, dated February 19th, 1943 (No. 258, GAW), the Home Army Chief Commander struck an alarming note: “We are now in the seventh month of parachute dropping and have received 17 incomplete deliveries, instead of the nearly 100 promised. (...) If the supplies are continued in this manner not only will there be no possibility of equipping us for an uprising but I shall not be able to equip the current subversive action with the most essential means.” Nevertheless, during the first half of January 1943 the Jewish Fighting Organization received another ten pistols with rounds of ammunition.

Whatever the difficulties with materials, the Jewish requests for larger amounts of arms and ammunition for the ghetto were indeed treated with reserve in some Home Army quarters which entertained doubts as to the purposefulness of such action. The experience of 1942, as it were, had not revealed a willingness on the part of the Jewish masses to undertake the hopeless struggle, and it was impossible to tell if ŻOB would be successful in bringing about a radical change in attitude in the short period of time. Specifically instructed by their superiors, various Home Army cells made it possible for ŻOB to purchase arms on the free market, taking the risk of mediation in the hazardous transactions. Members of the Home Army Security Corps, on the other hand, supplied arms and ammunition to the Jewish Military Association (ŻZW) in the ghetto.

In early January 1943 the Jewish Underground was already reckoning with the possibility of the liquidation of the Warsaw Ghetto, in response to which the ŻOB units were supposed to put up armed resistance. The Home Army was of similar opinion, though they had their doubts as to whether the Jews could put up armed resistance for any length of time in view of the great disproportion in strength. Nevertheless, work on a plan of joint military action by the Home Army and ŻOB both in and outside the ghetto was begun, under order from Colonel “Monter” and in line with directives from the Home Army Chief Command. The first conference on this subject was held in January 1943 in the clandestine quarters on Wspólna Street. The conference was attended by Major “Chirurg,” Captain “Chuchro” (Jerzy Lewiński), Chief of the Kedyw (Subversion Directorate) of the Home Army in Warsaw District, Captain “Szyna,” “Chuchro’s” deputy and

operational officer of the Kedyw of the District, and Captain “Chwacki” (Józef Pszeny), chief of one of the oldest and best armed subversive-sapper detachments (from the Praga district of Warsaw), which had preserved arms and explosives from the September 1939 campaign. After detailed discussion of the situation, it was found that the only practical possibility of giving the ghetto effective aid in case of German action was by making an opening in the walls from the outside, thus providing an opportunity of escape for a large number of people otherwise doomed to death. The ŻOB representatives handed Major “Chirurg” maps of the Jewish district showing the points of concentration and resistance chosen for the ghetto fighters by the ŻOB command. After analyzing these maps it was found that the most suitable place of action would be Bonifraterska Street in the vicinity of St John’s Hospital.

Finally, Captain “Chwacki” was ordered to detail from his subversive-sapper detachment three squads, each counting a dozen or so men, and to prepare them in every way for the action at the prescribed moment. On explicit order from Colonel “Monter,” Captain “Chwacki” was assigned the first Sten sub-machineguns just received from Britain, specially for this action.

Under the final plan of operation, laid down after repeated reconnoitering of the area by “Chuchro,” “Szyrna,” and “Chwacki,” an opening was to be made in the wall on Bonifraterska Street, near Konwiktorska Street, with the aid of specially constructed mines, thus opening for the Jews a way, under cover of fire from the Home Army, towards Gdański railway station and Żoliborz District, and further on to the Kampinos Forest. “Chwacki’s” men were to stay on the alert until the outbreak of the struggle in the ghetto, being withdrawn from all other armed actions. It had been decided that the contemplated operation would be launched on the first day of the struggle, without any further consultation. For it was not known how long the ŻOB men would be able to withstand the German forces, and it was feared that the help might come too late.

\* \* \*

On January 9th, 1943, Heinrich Himmler and his staff unexpectedly visited the Warsaw Ghetto. As a result of this visit, and following a specific order addressed to Krüger, the Higher SS and Police Chief in Cracow, under which 8,000 people were to be sent from the Lublin Ghetto to concentration camps in the Warsaw District in the middle of January—a German police force under Colonel Ferdinand von Sammern-Frankeneegg entered the ghetto at 7:30 a.m. on January 18th, in order to conduct the new deportation action. It was then that the Germans encountered organized armed resistance for the first time.

“Jews!” stated a ŻOB leaflet issued on that day. “The Nazis have inaugurated the second stage of your annihilation. Do not go passively to your death. Defend yourselves. Get hold of axes, crowbars, knives, and barricade yourselves in your homes. Make them take you by force... Your only salvation is in struggle... Fight...”

The ŻOB detachments undertook the uneven fight with the Germans who were rounding up people on Gęsia, Miła, Niska, Leszno, Nowolipie and Smocza streets.

“Having met with resistance, the German police answered with shots and grenades, killing several hundred people [*an exaggeration*], but they were afraid to enter the houses that were being defended,” reported *Biuletyn Informacyjny*, the Home Army paper (No. 4, on January 28th, 1943), under the impact of the recent developments in the ghetto. “The organized resistance outposts defended themselves during Monday and Tuesday. The defenders retreated only when two companies of SS were brought into the ghetto on Wednesday in full combat array, equipped with machine-guns, howitzers, and ambulances. They began to massacre the people who, encouraged by the events of the previous days, undertook active resistance with the help of the most primitive means such as, metal rods, crowbars and stones. The SS divisions suppressed the resistance brutally. The German losses numbered dozens of dead police and SS-men [*again an exaggeration*] and as many Jewish policemen. On Thursday the Germans halted their action. The ghetto expects it to be renewed at any moment.”

The determined armed resistance of the Jewish Fighting Organization caused consternation among the Germans and did actually result in a temporary abandonment of the planned deportations.

The Germans contented themselves with deporting 6,500 people. The January fight of the Jews was of crucial moral significance for the population of the Warsaw Ghetto, who now began to gather round the Jewish Fighting Organization (ŻOB) and Jewish Military Association (ŻZW) with confidence.

\* \* \*

The armed resistance put up to the Germans by the Jews also had a decisive effect on increasing the material assistance to the ghetto on the part of the Home Army. "Wacław" had a conference on this subject with Colonel "Monter" who urged further help in arms and ammunition for the ghetto as well as instruction on as broad a scale as possible. Women serving as sappers in the Home Army under Dr Zofia Franio ("Doctor") organized the transfer of arms, ammunition, explosives and incendiary material from the Kedyw storehouses to the ghetto. The chief transfer post at 4 Krakowskie Przedmieście Street was directed by "Mira" (Kazimiera Olszewska). Room No. 11 with a separate entrance from the corridor was used as a temporary storehouse and at the same time a place to make contact with ŻOB members. To this place liaison members of the Home Army brought heavy parcels containing ammunition for guns, large amounts of explosives (TNT and cheddite) in 5-kg. marmalade tins, and material for incendiary bottles manufactured by the Technical Research Bureau under engineer "Szyna," "Mira," "Zonia" (Maria Piotrowicz), and "Micia" (Michalina Petrykowska) carried the parcels to the drapery shop at 77 Marszałkowska Street, from where the arms and ammunition were sent on to the ghetto.

Lieutenant "Sternik" (Roman Polkowski), acting under instruction from his superiors, carried to the ghetto a large transport of grenades and pistols with rounds from the jeweler's shop on Chmielna Street, where arms were hidden for the use of the subversive-sapper unit for Warsaw's Praga district. The weapons were handed over to the ŻOB men without difficulty in the area of Dzika, and Okopowa streets, under cover of "blue" policemen who worked for the organization.

At the same time "Andrzej" (Dr Józef Rybicki), chief of the separate subversive-fighting unit of the Clandestine Military Organization (TOW), met many times with liaison members from the ghetto. In the ruins of a house on Chłodna Street he handed the liaison officer "Roman" a suitcase containing pistols and rounds for the ghetto.

Altogether, the Jewish Fighting Organization (ŻOB) in the Warsaw Ghetto was supplied from storehouses of the Home Army's Warsaw District, in the winter of 1942/43 and the first quarter of 1943, with at least: 70 pistols, each with two magazines and rounds, 500 grenades, powerful explosives, together with fuses and detonators, materials for making incendiary bottles and hand grenades; and in the second transport: one light machine-gun, one sub-machinegun, 20 pistols with magazines and rounds, 100 offensive hand grenades, and subversive material like time bombs and timed detonators—all in large quantities.

In addition, "Jurek" purchased on a large scale arms and ammunition from every available source. The same had been done for a long time by the Bund leaders, chiefly with the assistance of Polish Socialists. Quite important a factor had been the secret manufacture of grenades and incendiary bottles by engineer Michał Klepfisz (Bund) in the Warsaw Ghetto.

Franciszek Łęczycki, plenipotentiary of the Polish Workers' Party, writes about the contribution made by this Party to supply arms for the fighting organization in the Ghetto:

"Carrying out the instructions that had been given to me, before the outbreak of the Uprising I supplied almost all available arms. I left only the absolutely necessary supply so that the stores were almost empty. In addition, we purchased at a high, black market price, everything we could get and smuggled it across the walls. The greatest difficulty was to supply rifles and boxes with ammunition, but luckily we managed to do this, too."

Thus the fighting potential of ŻOB was growing from day to day. As January turned into February, 22 squads totalling several hundred men including four squads put up by the Polish Workers' Party and the People's Guard were ready for combat.

"Nine groups were concentrated within the central ghetto, eight in the zone of Toebben's and Schultz's workshops, and five in the brush 'shop' ghetto. We then received a large consignment of arms from the Polish military authorities."

The above report was prepared in 1943, after the outbreak of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, by the Jewish Fighting Organization's Command and sent through Polish underground channels to Britain, to be published in the world press during the war. Colonel "Monter" thought it necessary to consider with the

ŻOB Command a redeployment of the Jewish fighters in the ghetto, in view of the partial exposition of the outposts where resistance had been put up to the Germans in January 1943. The new situation, he maintained, called for a close coordination of any future joint action by the Home Army and ŻOB around the ghetto walls.

Meanwhile, on March 6th, 1943, Arie Wilner (“Jurek”), the ŻOB liaison officer, was arrested in the flat on Wspólna Street. Taken to Gestapo headquarters on Szucha Avenue, and tortured there, “Jurek” behaved in a heroic manner and did not give away a single person known to him or the organizational premises in either the ghetto or outside. However, he had been captured with documents and arms, and it was difficult to predict future developments. In addition, for several days “Wacław” tried in vain to persuade the Jewish Coordinating Commission to delegate from the ghetto a new liaison officer, well-versed in military affairs, so as to keep up the contact with the Home Army. “Jurek’s” substitute was “Antek” (Icchak Cukierman [Yitzhak Zuckerman]) of Hehalutz, the deputy commander of ŻOB, but he did not leave the ghetto until April 13th, 1943. Thus he made contact with “Wacław” a mere few days before the outbreak of the fighting in the Warsaw Ghetto, or too late to ensure the necessary coordination of operations in conditions of underground work.

*Struggle of the Warsaw Ghetto (April–May 1943)*  
*Fighting Cooperation of Polish Formations*

On February 16th, 1943, Himmler sent to SS-Obergruppenführer, General Krüger, Higher SS and Police Chief in the Government General, a secret order for the complete destruction of the Warsaw Ghetto; at the same time, all material wealth found in the ghetto was to be safeguarded. The SS and Police Chief in Warsaw, at that time, Ferdinand von Sammern-Frankenegg, received the necessary instructions from Krüger and started preparations for the deportation of the remnants of the Jewish population. Sammern-Frankenegg certainly took into consideration the possibility of armed resistance. This had already been indicated by the January events in the ghetto. The Germans, however, had no knowledge of the degree of fighting preparedness which the Jewish Fighting Organization (ŻOB) had in the meantime attained with material aid from the Polish underground. Neither did they realize what great psychological changes had occurred among the Warsaw Jews within the few months of autumn and winter 1942/43. Those determined to sell their lives dear were now exerting a strong influence on the general mood. Thus, the events that took place in April 1943 were an unpleasant surprise to the Germans.

At that time officially approximately only 33,000 people dragged out a wretched existence inside the Ghetto, employed in German factories and establishments, as well as in the institutions of the Jewish Council (“Judenrat”). In reality, however, the Ghetto population, substantially diminished after the “action” in the summer of 1942, still amounted to over 60,000 people. The Ghetto now comprised:

- the factory area (the so-called shops), under the administration of German businessmen, such as Toebbens, Schultz and others, including the streets: Leszno, Karmelicka, Nowolipki, Ludna, Nowolipie, Żelazna up to Leszno;
- the area of the former Central Ghetto with the streets: Gęsia, Franciszkańska, Bonifratska, Muranowska, Pokorna, Stawki, Plac Paryowski and Smocza;
- the so-called brushmakers’ area between Świętokrzyska, Walowa, Franciszkańska and Bonifratska streets.

Between these sections of the Jewish district stretched deserted streets, from where the Jews had previously been expelled and which were divided from the rest by internal walls.

On Palm Sunday, April 18th, 1943, rumours were circulating in Warsaw that within the next few hours a major German action would take place in the ghetto; this was indicated, among other things, by a big concentration of collaborationist Ukrainian and Latvian auxiliary troops. These rumours also spread to the ghetto; consequently, before dawn on Monday of Holy Week, when the walls of the Jewish district were surrounded with a tight cordon, the alerted fighting groups of ŻOB took fortified positions in Nalewki, Miła, Zamenhofa Streets, in Muranowski Square [*the latter was a ŻZW position*], and in several other places.

“The night from Sunday to Monday no one slept,” recalled a participant of the events, one of the leaders of the Jewish National Committee (ŻKN), in his account published in June 1943 in the underground Catholic monthly *Prawda* issued in Warsaw. “The sentry posts of the fighting groups were on the alert. The civilian population made for shelters,

either in cellars or on upper floors. The flats were deserted. The first reports from the observation posts said: the walls of the ghetto are surrounded by German troops. This means action.”

At 6 a.m. on April 19th, sixteen officers and 850 men of the Waffen-SS entered the ghetto through the Nalewki Street gate. They met with strong resistance: the fighting groups of ŻOB threw grenades and incendiary bottles at the aggressors, setting one tank on fire and inflicting unexpectedly high losses on the Germans (12 men). Under the circumstances, the incompetent von Sammern was removed from command and replaced by SS-General Jürgen Stroop. Under the latter’s personal command, the attack on the ghetto was renewed, and the Germans seized several streets in spite of the very strong resistance put up by the Jews.

This is Jürgen Stroop’s account of the attack carried out at 8 a.m. on April 19th:

“As a result of our action, the enemy began to withdraw from the roofs and the higher-situated points of resistance to cellars, bunkers or sewers... We then sent our shock troops against the already known bunkers, with the task of driving out the inhabitants and destroying the bunkers. This way, some 380 Jews were seized. The presence of Jews in the sewers had been ascertained. We carried out the complete flooding of the sewers to render staying in them impossible. At about 5:30 p.m. we met with very strong resistance in a group of houses, including machine-gun fire. A special fighting group overpowered the enemy and broke into the houses but did not succeed in seizing the enemy. The Jews and criminals were defending themselves from one point of resistance to another and, at the last moment, escaped through garrets or underground passages.”

The armed resistance of the ghetto reverberated throughout Warsaw. Crowds of people gathered near the walls, especially on Bonifraterska Street. There one could see the red-and-white flag hanging alongside of the Jewish [Zionist] blue-and-white flag, high up on one of the houses in Muranowski Square where men from the Jewish Military Association (ŻZW) were fighting. At Stroop’s order, a special German shock troop attacked the Jewish positions in that sector and, after hard-fought battle, tore down both flags on April 20th.

This is how Stroop reported this fact to General Krüger:

“As a call to struggle against us, a Jewish and a Polish flag were hoisted on a concrete building. However, a special fighting group managed to capture both these flags already on the second day of fighting. In the course of that fighting with the bandits, *SS-Untersturmführer* Dehmke was killed.”

On the following days, Stroop attempted to get the situation in the ghetto under control and to crush the resistance of the Jewish Fighting Organization, using large forces. For more than ten days a fierce battle was being waged in the centre of a big city—the first major armed struggle in the streets of Warsaw since September 1939. A huge cloud of smoke was hovering over the ghetto. Stroop’s troops were forcing their way into the ghetto with fire.

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Already during the very first hours of fighting in the ghetto, on the morning of April 19th, 1943, especially large German forces were concentrated at the north-eastern sector of the wall, around Krasieński Square and Bonifraterska Street, from Świętojerska to Muranowska streets (including the larger area in the background), i.e., where Captain “Chwacki’s” detachment was to attack, as planned by the Home Army (AK) and the Jewish Fighting Organization (ŻOB). In spite of these difficulties “Chwacki,” upon receiving news of the fighting in the ghetto, proceeded to carry out his task that afternoon, in accordance with the orders. At 4 p.m., the section commanders received final instructions at a briefing.

One of the section commanders, Sublieutenant “Kret” (Zbigniew Młynarski) recalled:

“Reconnaissance showed that entire Bonifraterska Street was crowded with people watching the fighting in the ghetto. On the one hand, this suited our purpose very well, because, mixing with the crowd, we could take up fighting positions; on the other hand,

being scattered over a large area, we lost visual contact with one another. It turned out that each section was to act on its own.”

By 6 p.m., all the sections took the assigned positions near the ghetto. On the right wing, near St John’s Hospital were “Kret’s” men: “Miś” (Eugeniusz Domański), “Matros” (Franciszek Jabłonowski) and his brother Ryszard, “Tatar” (Tadeusz Ślesicki) and “Karcz” (Henryk Cepek). On the left wing, near Franciszkańska Street, “Chmura’s” (Józef Łapiński’s) men occupied Bonifraterska Street: “Orlik” (Józef Wilk) and “Kujawa” (Jacek Mackiewicz). On guard at the corner of Sapieżyńska and Bonifraterska Streets was “Gajowy” (Mieczysław Zborowicz), together with “Lotnik” (Bronisław Cholewiński) and “Ułan” (Stefan Gąsiorowski). They were covering the group of sappers who were to perform the main task under the direct supervision of “Chwacki”. This group waiting in the gateway and on the sidewalk at the other corner of Sapieżyńska Street, included: “Chwacki’s” brother—Zbigniew Pszeny, “Marek” (Marian Dukalski), “Pastor” (Władysław Babczyński)—commander of the section, “Tygrys” (Włodzimierz Malinowski), “Atomek” (Zygmunt Puchalski), “Kowal” (Zygmunt Puterman), “Młódek” (Eugeniusz Morawski) and “Baran” (Edward Branicki). The end of Sapieżyńska Street was covered by “Kruk” (Zbigniew Malinowski), “Jasny” (Jerzy Postek) and “Jarząbek” (Tadeusz Zieliński). Deep inside the operation area, the road of retreat in Franciszkańska at the end of Mławska Street was guarded by “Oliwa” (Czesław Młynarski).

German machine-guns were set on the roof and balconies of the houses surrounding the ghetto.

“It was amazing,” “Kret” recalled, “that under the circumstances the Germans allowed the civilian population on the ‘Aryan’ side to watch and to walk in the streets which bordered directly on the area of fighting; but, if it had not been so, it would have been absolutely impossible to approach the walls unobserved. We were standing there for almost an hour...”

The group of sappers was preparing the explosives in the entrances to the houses on Sapieżyńska Street. The engineer “Szyna” had worked out a special type of mine (in the shape of a folded cross, made of two wooden boards with trotyl charges attached) which could quickly be hung on the ghetto wall at Bonifraterska Street.

“Chwacki” was waiting for the right moment to give all the section commanders a pistol-shot signal to start action, when suddenly a car with policemen appeared in Bonifraterska Street. Obviously, something suspicious must have been noticed in the area. “Marek” shot at the first policemen who jumped out of the car; this became the signal to open fire all along Bonifraterska Street occupied by “Chwacki’s” men. German machine-gun fire resounded from various sides. The crowd on Bonifraterska Street took flight in panic, causing confusion and completely cutting off “Chwacki,” who was in command of the operation, from the commanders of the various sections and their men.

“Kret’s” men were firing from their position by the walls of St John’s Hospital at the Germans on the other side of the street. At the same time, the group of sappers at the corner of Sapieżyńska and Bonifraterska streets were trying to perform their task under the most difficult circumstances. Under German fire, “Młódek,” “Jasny,” “Tygrys” and “Marek” came out with the mines to the middle of Bonifraterska Street. At the corner of Sapieżyńska Street, Eugeniusz Morawski was killed and so was Józef Wilk from “Chmura’s” section. “Jasny,” badly wounded in both legs, was completely immobilized. Also wounded were: “Atomek” (in the course of the shooting exchange), “Miś” and “Karcz.” he street was deserted. “Chmura” and “Kujawa” engaged in fighting with a strong group of SS-men who took position at the very wall of the ghetto in Bonifraterska opposite Franciszkańska Street.

The men from “Chwacki’s” detachment now found themselves in an almost desperate situation, under German fire from several sides: from the ghetto walls, from balconies and roofs of houses in the ghetto, from Krasieński Square and from Muranowska Street. “Chwacki” himself set on fire the mines which they had not managed to bring to the wall, and ordered retreat. It was high time, too. No sooner did they manage to spring back into Sapieżyńska Street towards Mławska Street, dragging their wounded with them, than the mines exploded blowing to pieces the dead bodies of their companions, “Młódek” and “Orlik,” left behind in Bonifraterska Street. “Oliwa” terrorized a porter in Franciszkańska Street with his pistol when the latter, frightened by the shooting, wanted to shut the doors of a house with a public passageway through it. Zbigniew Pszeny was carrying the heavily wounded “Jasny,” on his back. He then left him in a private flat from where he was taken to a hospital by cab after the curfew hour.

From the military point of view, the armed action carried out by “Chwacki’s” detachment at the ghetto wall on Bonifraterska Street on April 19th, 1943, must be considered unsuccessful: while it is true that a dozen or so German policemen and other participants of the criminal extermination of the ghetto were killed in the struggle, the detachment did not accomplish the main task ordered by the Commander of the Warsaw District of the Home Army: to destroy the wall. In the unequal struggle on Bonifraterska Street, two devoted and brave soldiers had been killed, and four wounded were eliminated from further armed action for a period of time.

The attempted attack on the ghetto wall in Bonifraterska Street was one of the first major fighting operations carried out openly in Warsaw by Home Army troops. Apart from objective difficulties (the exceptionally unfavourable situation at the time and in the place of the operation which had been agreed upon with ŻOB), the unsuccessful outcome was therefore certainly due to the lack of necessary fighting experience. However, the attempt to bring armed aid to the ghetto, undertaken by the soldiers of the Home Army during the first hours of the struggle of the Jewish Fighting Organization against the superior Nazi force, had particularly great moral significance: “Młódek” and “Orlik” who fell in that struggle, “Jasny,” “Atomek,” “Miś” and “Karcz” who shed their blood in Bonifraterska Street, were the first sacrifices attesting to the solidarity of the Polish underground with the Jewish fighters of the Warsaw Ghetto fighting against the common enemy.

In Franciszek Łęczycki’s reminiscences we read about the decision to give armed aid following the order given by the Polish Workers’ Party:

“A meeting of the Warsaw Command of the People’s Guard was held on Brzeska Street in the Praga district of Warsaw. All of us were already there when Comrade Skrypij, who performed the function of deputy commander for Warsaw, arrived. His tense face and tight-drawn lips indicated that he brought an important decision. Our apprehension turned out to be justified: in measured words, emphasized with the energetic gesticulation of his right hand, he gave the order, like the stroke of a sword:

‘Comrades! Tomorrow we shall carry out an armed operation at the foot of the Ghetto walls. The plan is as follows: Two members of the People’s Guard will stand on Bonifraterska Street at the curb with hand grenades, the others, mixing among the crowd, are the rear guard and should not lose sight of the first two. We are to liquidate the German heavy machine-gun nest on the other side of the street which keeps the Ghetto under fire. The withdrawal is through Traugutta park.’

“Faces lit up, silently we shook hands. The plan found general approval and the technical discussion of the details did not take much time. We were fully aware of the fact that this action was an armed demonstration and would not have any decisive influence on the course of events, but the consciousness that we were joining the direct armed struggle was a relief for our taut nerves, close to breaking point.”

On April 20th, at 6:45 p.m. a special group of the People’s Guard (GL) with Zygmunt Bobowski (“Zyg”), Niuta Tajtelbaum (“Wanda”) and Jerzy Duracz (“Felek”) under the command of Franciszek Bartoszek (“Jacek”), attacked a German heavy machine-gun post in Nowiniarska Street. This is how one of the participants, Jerzy Duracz, recalled this action:

“On April 20th, the High Command of the People’s Guard issued the order: on the very same day, i.e., the second day of the uprising, we were to attack and destroy the heavy machine-gun post at the wall on Nowiniarska Street. That machine-gun was holding in check a group of fighters from the so-called brush-makers’ area. The ŻOB fighters were not able to destroy that machine-gun nest by themselves because the range of fire was such as to make all attempts at counter-attack impossible. The task was assigned to our group. Our actions were, as a rule, carried out either by the entire group or by those who volunteered. This time all of us volunteered. ‘Jacek,’ who assumed command of the foray, designated four. Thus, taking part in the action were: ‘Jacek,’ ‘Wanda’ (Niuta Tajtelbaum), ‘Tadek,’ I, and another comrade whose name I unfortunately do not remember.

“At the designated hour (about 6 p.m.), we reported at the agreed upon place in Krasieński Square. ‘Jacek’ decided that he would throw the grenades himself and we would cover

him. We started circling the operation area. From Nowiniarska Street, one could already see the machine-gun nest. The machine-gun team consisted of men from Waffen-SS, while behind them were 'blue' policemen. The machine-gun was spitting long series of shots. People were walking along the street, even a group of onlookers gathered. We moved up in that direction. 'Jacek' moved forward, 'Wanda' and I stopped nearby. Then, one of the 'blue' policemen patrolling the street asked 'Jacek' to show his documents. At that moment 'Jacek' drew his pistol quickly, and fired. This shot was a signal for us. When 'Jacek' threw the grenades at the machine-gun nest, we fired at the 'blue' police. The SS-men with the machine-gun fell, and so did the 'blue' police. Panic broke loose among the onlookers. Mixed with the fleeing crowd, we managed to withdraw without losses."

Upon receiving the report on the failure of "Chwacki's" action, Colonel "Monter" gave the order to repeat it. Yet the Germans considerably increased their vigilance in the Bonifraterska Street area, and there was no chance for carrying out any major fighting operation in the same place. Besides, the painful failure after many weeks of waiting at instant readiness had a depressing effect on the men of that unit.

On the morning of Holy Thursday, April 22nd, 1943, Captain "Chuchro" (Jerzy Lewiński,) Captain "Szyna" (Zbigniew Lewandowski), Captain "Chwacki" (Józef Pszenny) and Lieutenant "Jotes" (Jerzy Skupieński)—commander of a sabotage-sapper unit from the district of Wola, met in a secret contact place on Trzeciego Maja Avenue. It was decided to launch a new attack on the ghetto wall, this time in Okopowa Street between the exits of Dzielna and Pawia streets, not far from the Jewish Cemetery. The plan was to attack the closed gate on Pawia Street, at the corner of Okopowa Street, to blow it up with a mine and thus make possible for armed ŻOB troops and for a part of the population to escape from the ghetto towards Powązki Cemetery, and then to the city. The operation was to be carried out by the "Jotes" unit, well acquainted with the Wola-Powązki district but poorly armed. "Chwacki" was therefore to give "Jotes" a few Sten machine-guns from his store. On Thursday evening, "Szyna" personally reconnoitred the area of the planned action, checking the position of German sentries in Zegarmistrzowska (Wolność), Okopowa, Dzielna and Pawia streets, up to the corner of Okopowa and Gęsia streets. At the same time, the news was received that "Jotes" group was not able to carry out the action on the next day. In view of the categorical order of Colonel "Monter" that the task was to be carried out by Friday noon at the latest, irrespective of the situation and the possible losses, it was decided that the attack would be carried out by officers from the Kedyw (Subversion Directorate) District Command; the main burden of the task fell to "Chuchro" as chief of Kedyw and to "Szyna" as his deputy.

The time and place to meet were fixed for 11 a.m. on Good Friday, April 23rd, in the ruins of Kerceli Square. "Chuchro," "Szyna," Lieutenant "Marynarz" and four men were to meet there. The whole operation was to be carried out under the command of "Chuchro." The tactical plan was as follows: Lieutenant "Marynarz" was to liquidate the police sentry in Okopowa Street between Dzielna and Pawia streets, then "Szyna" accompanied by one gunner ("Sęp") and by one sapper was to attack the gate, starting from behind the opening of the ghetto wall between Zegarmistrzowska and Dzielna streets. "Chuchro's" task and the men accompanying him was to provide fire protection by covering Okopowa Street towards the Jewish Cemetery, and Pawia Street, parallel to the ghetto wall, towards the German guard-house.

While riding along Okopowa Street in a tram, the members of the group saw that two German policemen were on guard on Pawia Street, at the closed gate of the ghetto. German police patrols were walking in Okopowa Street along the wall, especially near Gęsia Street and, deeper inside the area of the planned operation, soldiers from collaborationist formations were standing guard in the courtyards. "Szyna" undertook a final reconnaissance in order to examine the possibilities for retreat after completing the action. On Zegarmistrzowska near Nowolipki Street he met two armed Germans standing by a motorcycle with a sidecar. Ukrainians and Latvians were making the rounds of the courtyards on Zegarmistrzowska Street. Reconnaissance showed that the only possible way for retreat led from Okopowa Street through the backyards to Karolkowa Street. They did not know, however, that the German police troops around the ghetto walls were to change guard at noon, and that at the same time new enemy forces would arrive at the ghetto from the direction of Gęsia Street. This, in consequence, was to cause serious complications.

At about noon, "Szyna" accompanied by two men, took the starting position within the walls, between Zegarmistrzowska and Dzielna streets (in the part of the ghetto no longer inhabited and where access was therefore allowed to Poles)—and he awaited the first shot to be fired by "Marynarz." The latter, meanwhile, approached the German sentry from Okopowa Street, pretending that he wanted to prove his identity and

thus obtain permission to go to a lonely house nearby. Instead of the single SS-man he had expected to find—there were two: they were just changing the guard. He drew his pistol swiftly and with two perfect shots killed both Germans. “Szyna,” hearing the shots, but not able to see the events from behind the wall, ran through the opening in the wall, together with his two men. They encountered two German guards who came running up from the gate that was to be blown up; moreover, four SS-men appeared from behind a house close to the guard-house. It turned out that “Chuchro” had been unable to liquidate the German patrol at the gate immediately after “Marynarz” had started firing; his gun was stuck. “Szyna” and the sapper, armed only with pistols, and “Sęp” with a machine-gun, now attacked six Germans who had already been alerted by “Marynarz’s” shots and were ready to fight. The situation was difficult: there was no real possibility of approaching the ghetto gate with the explosive charge. “Szyna” decided to inflict the greatest possible losses to the police and SS-men at the ghetto wall—and then withdraw. Suddenly, a German police lorry full of men arrived on Okopowa Street from the direction of the Jewish Cemetery. Now there was no way out. “Szyna” and the two men with him were shooting back while retreating towards Zegarmistrzowska Street through the opening in the wall, and then they ran across Okopowa Street. “Marynarz” also retreated that way; stopped by a “blue” policeman, he killed him with one shot. As “Szyna” was running along Okopowa Street, a car with four SS and uniformed police officers on their way to the ghetto unexpectedly stopped by him. “Szyna” fired from two guns at close range into the windows of the car. All the Germans were killed. The patrol now proceeded without further difficulty towards Karolkowa Street.

In the early afternoon, “Chuchro” reported to Colonel “Monter” in a secret meeting place on Filtrowa Street, on the liquidation of German sentries in Okopowa Street, the shooting of SS and police officers on their way to the ghetto by car, and the retreat of the patrol without losses. Colonel “Monter” ordered continued actions, harassing German sentries at the ghetto wall and providing cover for the Jews attempting to flee from the ghetto to the Polish side. In compliance with these orders, the Kedyw of the Warsaw District of the Home Army and various district commanders of the Home Army in Warsaw organized several harassing and relief actions of this kind during Holy Week and the week following.

The DB-19 Unit (Combat Subversion of Mokotów District) was one of the Home Army units that took active part in anti-German action at the ghetto walls. On Holy Thursday—April 22nd, 1943, the commander of DB-19, Lieutenant “Klimek” (Tadeusz Jaegerman) together with Cadet Officer “Stadnicki” (Zbigniew Stalkowski), reconnoitered the area of the proposed action thoroughly and decided to attack in the vicinity of Bankowy Square. The spot offered convenient possibilities for retreat after completing the task because nearby Żelazna Brama Square was a swarming and crowded market place of Warsaw at that time. On the Jewish side of Leszno Street, between Karmelicka and Żelazna streets, a fierce battle was being fought behind the wall, on the grounds of the Toebbens and Schultz workshops.

On April 23rd, a group of six men started from the rallying point at Mokotowska Street to Bankowy Square—under cover. The group included Cadet Officers: “Stadnicki,” “Zbigniew Dunin” (Zbigniew Dunin-Wąsowicz), “Felczer” (Feliks Sobczyński) and “Zbyszek”—armed with pistols (2 VIS pistols, 1 parabellum and one P-37 pistol), and 2 defensive grenades. The task of two remaining men—“Zdzisław” and “Staszek,” was to maintain contact with the group, watch the action and warn of possible imminent danger. “Stadnicki” was in command of the whole operation. Lieutenant “Klimek,” still unfit for fighting after a surgical operation on the hand, watched the course of events on the spot without participating directly.

They roamed Bankowy Square for almost an hour waiting for a convenient moment to liquidate the German reinforcements proceeding to the ghetto. But, no suitable target for attack appeared. They consequently decided to liquidate immediately the regular sentries of the German police in that area. “Stadnicki” and “Dunin” went up Rymarska Street to the corner of deserted Leszno Street. There, “Dunin” resolutely walked up to the policeman, pretending to reach for his documents he drew his pistol and fired two shots at close range killing the German. Afterwards, quickly but quietly and efficiently, they withdrew through Rymarska Street towards Bankowy Square, which had in the meantime been deserted by the passers-by, alarmed by the shooting. At the corner of Elektoralna Street and Bankowy Square, the two liaison men on guard—“Zdzisław” and “Staszek”—informed them that the immediate vicinity was free of German patrols. Therefore they proceeded with the second part of their task.

“Stadnicki” and “Dunin” now remained on covering duty at the corner of Elektoralna and Zimna streets, while “Felczer” and “Zbyszek” went up Orla Street towards Leszno Street. The other German sentry in the area was guarding the access to the ghetto walls in Orla Street. “Felczer” walked up to him, drew his pistol and fired... The policeman was wounded and tried to escape, offering no resistance. Three more shots—

and he fell dead on the pavement of Orla Street. At that moment “Staszek” reported that a German car was approaching from Chłodna Street. They could not wait any longer. “Felczer” and “Zbyszek” turned into Zimna Street, running behind them were “Dunin” and “Stadnicki”. Zimna Street was filled with people engaged in trading which made it easier to mix with the crowd. “Stadnicki” as commander of the operation withdrew last. A few minutes later, the whole group met at Grzybowski Square. The task had been carried out, two German police sentries at the ghetto walls on Leszno Street had been liquidated—with no losses on our side.

Among those participating in the action against German sentries in the Leszno area, two men directly responsible for the main fighting task did not live to see the end of the war. Zbigniew Dunin-Wąsowicz, student of the Warsaw Technical University, a model soldier, who distinguished himself by self-discipline and courage, participant of many a fighting action in the years of underground struggle, fell in Mokotów District during the Warsaw Uprising in 1944. Sixteen-year-old Feliks Sobczyński, the youngest soldier of the DB-19 unit, was arrested by the Gestapo ten days after the action in Leszno Street, and was lost without trace. In spite of great efforts, we did not manage to get him out of prison or even find out the cause of his arrest; it was suspected that it had been an informer’s job.

At about the same time, in the last week of April 1943, another Home Army unit from the district of Żoliborz, undertook fighting action at the ghetto walls. Its commander was Lieutenant Tadeusz Kern-Jędrychowski (“Szrapnel”), who was also an instructor in the underground Officers’ School. His students were Scouts, organized in the underground Polish Boy Scouts (Grey Ranks), who were, at the same time, soldiers of the Home Army. This is how Tadeusz Kern-Jędrychowski recalled the above-mentioned operation:

“During one of the classes we analysed the military situation in the ghetto. I pointed to the difficulties involved in undertaking possible subversive action to aid the insurgents. The boys insisted all the more that I should prepare and carry out action to aid the ghetto. Some had friends and school-mates behind the ghetto walls and one of the troop leaders had two Scouts of Jewish origin in his troop. They, therefore considered it their natural duty to manifest our ties with the insurgents by fighting with them.

“I had a record of many fighting operations but with experienced soldiers, while this undertaking would be a baptism of fire for my pupils, and one under extremely difficult conditions. I began to contemplate various possible solutions of such an undertaking and, discussing them with the boys all the time, I elaborated the following plan. In view of the great concentration of German forces, the operation should be carried out by small and very mobile forces; it should take place in daytime, when there were many people around; the action should be centred on the SS guard-house on Konwiktorska Street.

“We established the following course of action: a) a striking group of three men was to open fire on the two-men sentry at the corner of Konwiktorska and Zakroczymska Streets; this would sound the alarm in the guard-house and more SS-men would come out; b) a supporting group of three men was to open fire at these SS soldiers and force them either to lie down on the ground or run back into the guard-house; c) both groups were to withdraw on bicycles prepared ahead; d) a reserve covering group of four men was to remain on the spot and engage in action should the two former groups be unable to withdraw from the enemy. The task of the covering group was the most difficult. They had to stay on the spot until their colleagues withdrew completely, and then leave the place individually relying on their own resources.

“I submitted the plan of action and reported the fighting readiness of my boys to Lieutenant Colonel Niedzielski (“Żywiciel”), and obtained his consent. The action was carried off according to the plan presented above. (...) Fifteen boys took part, including a few soldiers from the ‘Żmija’ group in the Żoliborz District. In accordance with the plan, fire was opened, first on the sentry, then on the SS-men who, as we had anticipated, ran out from the guard-house. After being shot at by the supporting group, the Germans ran for cover, thus giving us precious time for the withdrawal of the first two groups. As a result, the covering group did not have to engage in the fighting.

“The result of our armed action was three Nazis killed and one wounded. Our group had no losses. The success was partly due to the fact that the attacked SS unit misconstrued the situation. According to the information of the Home Army intelligence service, the

Germans believed the attack was launched by a group of Jews forcing their way out of the ghetto. (...)

“The time that has elapsed since the action described here, and the further vicissitudes of our group account (...) for the fact that I am unable to remember the names and pseudonyms of all the boys who took part in the attack on the ghetto wall. Here are some of them: Cadet Officer “Janek” (Jan Barszczewski) died in the Warsaw Uprising; Wojciech Zaczekiewicz died in 1947 as a result of wounds received during the occupation; Cadet Officer Sławomir Zieliński died in the Warsaw Uprising; Cadet Officer “Mały Janek” (Jan Dobsch) died in the Warsaw Uprising; Cadet Officer Stanisław Bontemps, now residing in Warsaw; Cadet Officers: “Figa,” “Cis” and Roman Bartoszewski.”

On April 23rd, 1943, a foray group of the People’s Guard (GL) under the command of Henryk Sternhel (“Gustaw”) attacked a German police car with grenades in Freta Street, not far from the ghetto wall, inflicted losses on the enemy, and withdrew with no loss on their side. The same day, Jerzy Lerner (“Mietek”) from the People’s Guard (GL) was killed in an abortive fighting engagement attempted in Leszno Street. On April 27th, an 18-men unit of the KB-AK (Security Corps–Home Army) under the command of Captain Henryk Iwański (“Bystry”) and his deputy Władysław Zajdler (“Żarski”) undertook an armed intervention in the ghetto, in the Muranowska Street–Muranowski Square area, together with fighting group of the Jewish Military Association (ŻZW). This hard-fought battle of many hours against German forces was thus described by Władysław Zajdler:

“April 26th, 1943. Through Janek Pika, liaison officer from the Jewish Military Association (ŻZW) we received the message that the sector commander, Dawid Moryc Apfelbaum, was wounded and requested immediate help in arms and ammunition. The tunnel at 7 Muranowski Square had been recaptured by Jewish fighting groups which had repaired it so that it could be used. The situation had already been reconnoitered from the ‘Aryan’ side and the entrance to the house at 6 Muranowska Street was at that time occupied by ‘Roch’ (Paweł Kowalski) and his men. On the basis of these reports, the Supreme Command of the Security Corps (KB) gave orders to arrange the transfer of our fighting group to the ghetto where it could engage in fighting. Our task was to repel the Germans from the tunnel and to guard it. After, we were to evacuate the wounded and all those within our range, women and children.

“Our transfer points were alerted; preparations were made to receive the wounded and those rescued.

“The command of the whole operation was given to ‘Bystry’ (Henryk Iwański); ‘Żarski’ (Władysław Zajdler) was second in command. ‘Roch’ (Paweł Kowalski) was in command of the covering group. The transportation of the rescued people to hiding places was to be carried out by a hearse of the Grabowski undertaking firm.

“After the briefing and assigning tasks to the various groups, the time for starting the action was fixed for April 28th at 10 a.m.

“Already at seven in the morning I called on ‘Długi’ (Edward Zaremba) who was employed in the Fermentation Institute at 66 Krakowskie Przedmieście. I collected arms and ammunition from him. Together with ‘Skóra’ (Heniek Głowacki) we quickly carried the parcels to a ricksha, and proceeded to the next ‘den’ to get grenades and the rest of the weapons.

“By 10 o’clock we were at the spot. Our men had been doing their job very well. Our entrance and exit from the tunnel was covered by ‘Sęp’ (Kowalski) with six men. This tunnel, dug by men from units under Federbusz and ‘Rudy,’ went under the roadway up to the cellar of a house on the other side of the wall. We passed one by one, protecting our weapons from the falling sand. Our group consisted of eighteen men. We were armed with machine-guns and grenades; in addition I took my VIS pistol.

“The exit from the tunnel into the cellar on the Jewish side was narrow and one had to crawl through. Waiting for us at the exit was Chaim Łopatko with a few men. Unshaven and dirty, they embraced us.

“The liaison officer came running with the report that Latvians were approaching from Nalewki Street, covered by tanks. A fighter wearing an SS uniform and civilian trousers

led our group. We moved through the trenches, passing through holes bored in the walls, stepping over burned-out rubble which was still hot and smouldering.

“Our guide moved with the agility of a monkey through that tangle of scrap iron, rubble and wire: we, loaded down with ammunition for machine-guns, grenades and automatic guns, moved on, stumbling at every step. At long last we reached the inner courtyard of a large burnt-out house.

“From somewhere in the rubble came out Dawid Apfelbaum. After a military greeting, ‘Bystry’ reported. We moved aside. Apfelbaum told us about the present situation (...)

“Noticing resistance in the Muranowski Square area, it was there that the Germans were pressing the strongest. The insurgent forces were fighting for the tunnel, for communication with the city. That was why the fighting in the area had been particularly fierce and relentless from the first days of the uprising. In spite of losses, in spite even of the temporary capture of Muranowski Square by the enemy, the heavily armed troops of the Jewish Military Organization (ŻZW) launched a counter-attack and regained the positions destroyed and burnt by the Nazis.

“That day, we were to relieve and replace the weary fighters so as to make it possible for them to rest and to evacuate their wounded.

“Our group was divided into two parts: one under the command of ‘Bystry’ and the other by me. Attached to each group were liaison officers and some Jewish fighters.

“Both groups were placed in the area of the burnt-out ruins of Muranowski Square and Nalewki Street.

“Around 12 noon, the caterpillars and the roar of engines announced the approaching Germans. Two tanks were coming, and SS infantry under their cover. (...)

“By about 5 p.m., the Germans realized that by attacking us they were suffering too great losses and not gaining ground—and so they stopped firing, withdrawing their armoured cars. While our cover fighting was going on, nearly all the wounded either passed or were dragged through the tunnel to the ‘Aryan’ side.”

From the first day fighting in the ghetto, “Wacław”—head of the Jewish Department in the Home Army Information and Propaganda Bureau (BIP) maintained daily contact with “Antek.” Through the latter’s intermediary, he transmitted an extensive order to the ghetto from Colonel “Monter,” addressed to the Jewish Fighting Organization (ŻOB) and welcoming the soldierly action of the Warsaw Jews.

“Together with the original text of ‘Monter’s’ order,” “Wacław” recalled, “I transmitted to the ghetto through ‘Antek’ information at which points of the wall collaboration of the Home Army was possible. I remember that it specified in detail from which side and at what moment the attacks would take place. I do not know, however, whether the information reached the Command of the Jewish Fighting Organization through ‘Antek.’”

In Stroop’s report on the destruction of the Jewish district, prepared for the Higher SS and Police Chief in the Government General and for Himmler, the facts of armed cooperation of Poles with the Jews, and of Nazi position outside of the ghetto being attacked by “Polish bandits,” are mentioned several times. In his daily reports on the fighting in the ghetto, Stroop noted the seizing and execution of several scores of Poles collaborating with the Jews.

“As we broke into the ghetto for the first time, the Jews and Polish bandits managed—by attacking with fire prepared in advance—to repel the forces engaged in the fighting, including tanks and armoured cars.” (From part I, p. 11 of the Report.)

“The main fighting group of the Jews, mixed with Polish bandits, withdrew to so-called Muranowski Square, already on the first or second day. It was reinforced there by a considerable number of Polish bandits.” (From part I, p. 12 of the Report.)

“It should also be reported that since yesterday a part of the troops engaged in action has been fired upon continually from outside the ghetto, i.e., from the Aryan side. The shock troops which counter-acted immediately, succeeded in one case in seizing 35 Polish

Communist bandits who were liquidated forthwith. (From the Report of April 22nd, 1943.)

“Various Jews who had maintained close contact and cooperated with a Polish terrorist group have been seized.” (From the Report of April 26th, 1943.)

“(…) seventeen Poles have been seized, including two Polish policemen who must have known about the existence of the band. It has been ascertained beyond doubt that among the seized or killed bandits there were Polish terrorists.” (From the Report of April 27th, 1943).

#### “TO THE GOVERNMENTS AND NATIONS OF ALL ALLIED STATES AND TO THE CONSCIENCE OF THE WORLD”

From the first moments of fighting in the ghetto, the radio stations of the Home Army Supreme Command and of the Government Delegate’s Office endeavoured to alarm the world by broadcasting reports on the course of events obtained from representatives of the Jewish underground (“Antek,” “Borowski” and “Mikołaj”). On April 22nd, or only three days after Strop’s troops had entered the Warsaw Ghetto, Świt radio-station, broadcasting from London on the basis of messages received from Poland, stated:

“The heroic struggle of the Warsaw Ghetto is continuing. A number of strongly fortified positions are still holding out. The Jewish fighting groups demonstrate great fighting experience and courage. The leader of the Jewish Bund, Michał Klepfisz, in the forefront of the resistance, died a hero’s death in glorious battle.”

Transmitted abroad, day after day, were latest reports on developments in the ghetto, dispatches from leaders of the Polish underground, messages from the Jewish Section of the Government Delegate’s Office, or from the Information and Propaganda Bureau of the Home Army Chief Command (BIP-KG-AK). In a message addressed to Dr Ignacy Schwarzbart and Szmul Zygielbojm, members of the Polish National Council, and delivered on the second day of the fighting in the Warsaw Ghetto to the Jewish Section of the Government Delegate’s Office—to be transmitted to London by radio, the authors Adolf Berman and Leon Feiner stated:

“Great excitement throughout the city. The people of Warsaw are watching the struggle with admiration and open sympathy for the fighting ghetto.”

In their next radio dispatch of April 28th, 1943, they wrote:

“The bearing of the defenders rouses admiration amongst the country’s population, embarrassment and fury among the Germans. Immediate, effective aid can now be provided by the might of the Allies. On behalf of millions of Jews already murdered, on behalf of those now being burned and massacred, on behalf of those fighting heroically and of all of us doomed to die, we call on the whole world: Let the Allies’ mighty retaliation on the blood-thirsty foe be carried out now, not in the distant future—and in a manner that will be understood by all as retaliation.”

Unfortunately, these appeals and others that followed, remained ineffective. After a certain period of time, a message arrived from Tel Aviv, signed by the Committee to Save Jews in Occupied Europe. It was addressed to the Jewish National Committee (ŻKN) in Warsaw and delivered to Berman. Its content explained much:

“All during the war, we have been seeking ways and means of getting in touch with you and bringing you help. Unfortunately we meet with unsurmountable indifference and resistance on the part of those who could facilitate our assistance to you. We shall not relax in our efforts, however, and hope that this resistance will finally be overcome. We are seeking various ways and doing everything within our power.”

The author of this message was Icchak Grynbaum, a distinguished Jewish leader and former member of Polish parliament who, as chairman of the above-mentioned Committee sought in vain to persuade the representatives of governments of the anti-Nazi coalition to undertake retaliatory steps against the German Reich and special action aimed at saving those Polish Jews who were still alive. The world maintained complete passivity in the face of the crimes.

Nazi propaganda cynically justified the crimes perpetrated on the Jews with arguments of “defence of Christian civilization and struggle against bolshevism.” On April 30th, 1943, the Government’s Delegate in occupied Poland, Jan Stanislaw Jankowski, issued an extensive proclamation in this connection in this connection in which, among other things, he stated:

“(…) Crimes against the Jews are another proof of the German’s hypocrisy and barbarity. More than a year has elapsed since the Germans, after years of cruel persecution, began the mass murder of the Jewish population in Poland—which they are still continuing. In the past few weeks, the capital of Poland has been the scene of the bloody liquidation of the remnants of the Warsaw Ghetto by the German police and Latvian mercenaries. Now taking place is the cruel pursuit and killing off of those Jews who are hiding in, the ruins of the ghetto and outside of its walls. The Polish people, imbued with the Christian spirit, refuse to allow double standards in morality and abhor the German bestialities towards the Jews. Since the unequal fight in the Warsaw Ghetto erupted on April 19th, the Polish people have shown respect and sympathy for the Jews who are so bravely defending themselves and contempt for their German murderers. The political leadership of the country has already given expression of the most severe condemnation of the German bestialities towards the Jews and most emphatically reaffirms this condemnation today. The Polish population does right by nourishing a feeling of sympathy for the pursued and persecuted Jews, and by aiding them. This aid should be continued.

“While branding the hypocrisy of the Germans who incessantly commit horrible crimes and, by means of perverse propaganda attempt to pass for defenders of civilization and Christianity, and to win over the Polish people for their ends—I appeal to all who realize the essence and the goals of German political machinations to expose and relentlessly fight them.”

This proclamation was a great moral help for the work of “Żegota.” Of even greater importance were the momentous words General Sikorski addressed by radio on May 5th, 1943, to the Poles in the occupied country.

“The greatest crime in the history of mankind is being perpetrated. I know that you are helping the distressful Jews as best you can. I thank you, my countrymen, on behalf of the Government and on my own behalf. I ask you to show them all help and, at the same time, to fight against these monstrous cruelties.”

On May 16th 1943, General Stroop cabled General Krüger in Cracow:

“(…) The former Jewish District of Warsaw has ceased to exist. The great operation was completed at 20:15 hours with the blowing up of the Warsaw synagogue. (...) The total figure of Jews seized and of those whose death it has been possible to ascertain amounts to 56,065.”

## THE COMMON STRUGGLE CONTINUES

The Staff of the Jewish Fighting Organization (ŻOB) did not give themselves up alive into the hands of the enemy. Mordechaj Anielewicz and his closest companions in struggle, including Arie Wilner, took their own lives on May 8th, 1943, in a bunker encircled at 18 Miła Street. (Wilner, arrested on the “Aryan” side in March 1943, behaved heroically during the interrogation: he disclosed nothing and involved no one. With the help of Polish friends, he managed to escape from German prison, and then returned to the ghetto of his own free will, holding that his place was there in the days of trial awaiting the Jewish community).

Several score of those who had taken part in the fighting in the ghetto in the ranks of the Jewish Fighting Organization and the Jewish Military Association (ŻZW) succeeded, with the help of Poles, members of the military organizations—the People’s Guard (GL) and the Home Army Security Corps (KB-AK)—in reaching the “Aryan” side by underground sewers; among the rescued were members of the ŻOB Staff:

Hersz Berliński, Marek Edelman and Michał Rojzenfeld. A description of that unusual and extremely hazardous feat of the People's Guard can be found in the reminiscences of Władysław and Stanisława Legec, members of the Polish Workers' Party (PPR), who distinguished themselves in the cooperation with the ghetto:

“At the beginning of May (1943), a group of fighters, composed of about forty armed men, got through during the night, by sewers, as far as Prosta Street, corner of Twarda (now: National Home Council Street); at reasonable distance from the manhole to avoid grenade explosions they stopped and waited for the agreed upon signal from the surface. Their caution was a result of tragic experience. The Nazis controlled manholes by throwing grenades into them, letting in poison gas, or arranged ambush hunts, lying in wait with machine-guns over open manholes, for people who were crawling in the sewers.

“Getting the expected group of fighters out to the surface and their further transportation had been prepared by the command of the People's Guard (GL). The operation was entrusted to Colonel ‘Sęk’-Malecki on behalf of the People's Guard; assigned to him for help and the execution proper of the task was Władek Gaik (‘Krzaczek’).

“The spot for ‘landing’ was known: the manhole at the corner of Prosta and Twarda streets.

“A detachment of Guardsmen, though small (five men) was well situated. The boys were courageous and sure, and quite well, although discreetly, armed (pistols, grenades). On the other hand, the vicinity—that is, the houses and courtyards in the immediate neighbourhood—was unknown to Colonel Sęk. Gaik, therefore, received appropriate directives: to explore the neighbourhood, prepare means of transport and select an escort that would take the group to the first staging point.

“In the morning of the following day, the group was expected to reach Prosta Street through the sewers. There remained little time, all the more so since the day was limited by curfew hours, and the task—according to Gaik—could not be carried out in the dark.

“Gaik was a courageous man, and one of prompt decision. In dangerous situations, this looked quite risky. Actually it was simply tactics that consisted in surprising the enemy with audacity or with simply desperate action.

“Everything was to take place in the early morning, at about 6-7 a.m. There was some delay because the lorry did not arrive on time. It was not brought to the manhole until about 8. The points occupied by the covering men were checked. Everybody was in his place. The manhole was opened, the rear flap of the lorry was let down, and the signal was given. Soon the first head appeared in the manhole. They were all pulled out, one after another, helped in getting out to the surface quickly, and then to the lorry. The whole operation took about half an hour. The sign was given, the flap was fastened, and the covered lorry started suddenly via Żoliborz to Łomianki.

“All precautionary measures were taken. The driver wasn't forgotten also. Gaik sat with him in the front, showing the directions.

“They reached Łomianki without incident. The men were unloaded and placed in a thick young forest, in a spot specially prepared as the first staging point.

“Some publications state that the group of fighters was taken from Prosta Street directly to the partisan units in the Wyszaków forests. This is not quite accurate. They actually stayed in Łomianki forest for more than a week, waiting for further transport to partisan units. During that time, food and warmer clothing were supplied to them for the nights in May of that year were very chilly and in the mornings there was even frost. Care over the rescued group, supplies and further transport to partisan units—were entrusted to Gaik.

“One day, when some food and clothing were being prepared for transport, the ordered car did not turn up. It was necessary to find another one immediately. Gaik brought another car the same day. He simply went to a private transportation firm and hired a lorry to transport wooden-soled shoes which the Germans had allegedly ordered from him for the Central Institute of Physical Training in Bielany. After loading the food and clothing, the driver was told that they would now call for the main lot, namely the shoes which were to be found in the neighbourhood of Gdański Station, right on their way.

They set forth. Gaik was giving the directions to Łomianki, the same way as during the trip from Prosta Street. The baggage was unloaded—for the sake of precaution—at a reasonable distance from where the group was encamped. (...) After dismissing the lorry, they proceeded towards the forest and the group of fighters they expected to find there. Gaik was accompanied on that occasion by Jurek Zołotow. About to enter the forest, they noticed deep marks on the damp ground left by heavy vehicles. The tracks crossed many times indicating a large concentration of vehicles. Gaik and Zołotow were rather alarmed, all the more so since they found nobody in the very spot in the forest where they had left 40 men two days earlier.

“They returned to the place marked by the wheels to try and reach some conclusion after examining the tracks again. Several hundred paces away, they noticed the figure of a man, his head coming out from the roadside ditch, concealed behind bushes, and cautiously surveilling the area. Gaik left Jurek behind and moved towards the ditch. The man hid deeper, however, and after a moment disappeared from sight. Gaik increased his pace. At a distance of about 100 metres, a man emerged from the ditch and openly came out on the road, moving straight towards Gaik. He was one of the fighters who had been brought there from Prosta Street two days earlier. He had recognized Gaik, observing him from his hiding place. He said that in the afternoon of the previous day the group waiting in the forest had heard the noise of approaching motors. Shortly after, the cars stopped; there must have been several of them. The noise of the engine gradually calmed down. The fighters waited for some time, hoping that the liaison man might appear. As time went on, however, doubts began to arise. Further waiting made the time seem very long; doubts and misgivings began to appear. They decided to send a scout to the edge of the forest. Reconnaissance was undertaken by the very same man who had come out of the ditch. He found that a dozen or so Germans were hovering around four lorries tightly covered with tarpaulin, and one passenger car. It was hard to guess what their purpose was. After receiving this information, the group decided to burrow deeper into the forest.

“After about a quarter of an hour, the noise of engines was heard again but it receded into the distance. Some time later, several distant rifle shots were heard. The purpose of the visit by the Nazis was found out a few days later, while the fighters were still at Łomianki. According to the local peasants, on that day the Germans had brought in the tarpaulin-covered lorries prisoners sentenced to be shot. The spot by the young forest apparently did not suit them, and so they moved a little further. The shots were the act of murder.

“In the middle of May, a decision was reached as to the partisan operating area where the group from Łomianki was to be taken. Preparations were made to leave their temporary location. Around May 20th, an open lorry arrived, guarded by two ‘Nazis’ with machine-guns. Save for the ‘pectoral plates’ on their chests, they had complete equipment and, in spite of that missing detail, they made brilliant figures. The men were loaded into the lorry in one compact standing mass, and the two ‘Germans’ were placed—one in the front, the other in the rear. The route chosen led through Żoliborz, along the Vistula, Kierbedź bridge, Zygmunntowska Street, Kawęczyńska and Radzymińska streets, the railroad crossing, and further on along the Radzymin-Wyszków road.

“Gaik, as usual, sat with the driver in the front observing all security and precautionary measures. In his hand on the knee, he was clutching a pistol with the safety catch off.

“Up to the railroad crossing in Radzymińska Street, the trip was without incident but the emotions were high—both those escorted, eager to be free and to go on fighting, and of those escorting them. Suddenly, right under our noses, the railway crossing barrier was lowered. The lorry stopped. The manoeuvring of a freight train lasted for a quarter of an hour or more. Nervous tension spread even to the escorting ‘Germans’ who, holding their machine-guns ready and watching their ‘prisoners’ severely, tried to avoid the curious glances of the authentic Germans passing by the lorry. At long last the barrier was lifted, the lorry started and left the city onto the Radzymin road. (...)

“They stopped in the designated place, by a lonely barn. From behind, a liaison man appeared. Information and instructions were exchanged. We took the shortest way to the forest, skirting the buildings of a small village that could be seen in the distance. A few

days later, this message was received at Szczygła Street in Warsaw: ‘We have reached our destination. Everything is all right.’”

The final extermination of the Warsaw Ghetto in May 1943 was accompanied by increased terror against the Polish intelligentsia in Warsaw and other major cities of the Government General. Thus, for instance, one day after the blowing up of the Warsaw synagogue, about 700 persons (20 per cent of them—women) from well-known and respected Polish families, were committed to Pawiak and, a fortnight later, secretly executed in the well-ried manner, without court trial or any attempt to prove guilt. This time, the murder took place in the deserted ghetto grounds; from May 1943, this became the regular place where the Germans put to death both Polish prisoners of the Gestapo and those Jews whom the Nazi hangmen managed to track down on the “Aryan” side.

It was not the first time during the occupation in Poland that an attempt was made to intimidate the population by means of terror and to paralyze their will of resistance. The effects of these moves were just the opposite. In the wake of Warsaw, the Jewish youth resisted in June 1943 in Lwów and Częstochowa; on August 3rd, in Będzin; on August 16th, a large-scale Jewish uprising broke out in Białystok—the Germans used artillery and air force to suppress it. Even the few survivors at Treblinka and Sobibór sprang into action (on August 2nd, and October 14th, respectively): in both these extermination camps armed rebellions took place, a part of the inmates escaped and were saved.

Jewish partisan units were formed of those who fled the ghettos, prisons and camps. A number of Jews fought in the partisan units of the Home Army (in Cracow and Kielce regions, in the 27th Volhynian Division), the People’s Guard (GL) and the People’s Army (AL), as well as in the Soviet partisan units operating mainly east of the Bug and the San rivers. Many took part in various activities of the underground political parties (e.g., Democratic Party, Polish Socialist Party, Polish Workers’ Party), and in the services of military organizations in Warsaw (including the Staff section of the Home Army).

## Roman Gerlach's Review of Yitzhak Zuckerman's memoir *A Surplus of Memory*

Roman T. Gerlach's review of Yitzhak Zuckerman's memoir *A Surplus of Memory*,<sup>743</sup> exposes the duplicity of the ŻOB's dealings with the Poles and the Home Army and provides insight into why the ŻOB fighters' chances of survival were considerably better than that of ordinary Jews in the ghetto. Indeed hundreds of self-proclaimed Jewish ghetto fighters surfaced after the war, thus demonstrating that their survival rate was considerably higher than that of an ordinary resident of the Warsaw ghetto.<sup>744</sup> Tellingly, unlike the ŻZW (Jewish Military Union), the ŻOB demonstrably did not raise a Polish flag during the revolt alongside the Jewish one. As Zuckerman made it clear, "anyone who tries to attribute the flag to the ŻOB is distorting them and history."<sup>745</sup> As mentioned earlier, historian Teresa Prekerowa shows, based on the Jewish underground press in the Warsaw ghetto, that leftist Zionists's loyalty was to the Soviet Union rather than Poland. Mordechai Anielewicz, the ŻOB commander, advocated a pro-Soviet stance that undermined the integrity and independence of the Polish State and applauded the German-Soviet partition of Poland in 1939. Gerlach's review originally appeared in volume 150 of the Paris-based historical journal *Zeszyty Historyczne* (1996). Another Jewish historian reveals that there was as well at least one red (i.e., Communist) flag hoisted over the highest buildings in the ghetto.<sup>746</sup> Indeed, among the ŻOB fighters there were four or five Communist combat units, not to mention pro-Soviet fighters scattered throughout the fourteen Zionist and four Bundist units.<sup>747</sup>

### ***No Bears! No Forest! No Nothing: The Tragedy of the Warsaw Ghetto***

"The past lives in the present and in the future; if not, it has no meaning." With these words Yitzhak Zuckerman deputy commander of the Jewish Fighting Organization (ŻOB) in the Warsaw ghetto concludes his highly forthright memoir of his and his youth movement's activities in World War II.<sup>[1]</sup> At once without having this object in mind he lays to rest the charges of the Jewish historians for the past fifty years that the main reason for the reluctance of the Polish Home Army to come to the aid of the ghetto fighters in their desperate fight for the honor and dignity of the Jews consisted in the supposedly endemic Polish anti-Semitism.

Zuckerman graduated from the Hebrew *Tarbut* high school in Wilno, in which Polish was taught as a foreign language and the history of Poland was limited to its economic and cultural history, taught, with an emphasis on the development of the Jewish culture in Poland, in the fifth grade only and the political history of Poland, with an emphasis on minority rights, in the seventh.<sup>[2]</sup> The result was that he didn't feel that he "belonged to that land or that culture or that life. I was a Jew in all the bones and sinews of my body, a Halutz Zionist." (Pg. 622.) He was not an ordinary *Halutz*, however; he was the leader of the *He-Halutz Ha-Tzair* (Young Pioneer) youth movement, which constituted one of the principal components of the Halutz pioneering organization that aimed at the creation of a Jewish socialist state in Palestine. All of them remaining under a strong influence of Marxism, they varied in their more or less radical conceptions of the new social order they intended to establish. But they all agreed on the need of going about it in the spirit of brotherhood with the international proletariat in their common struggle with the "bourgeoisie" and capitalism of all kinds and shades. For a socialist world order seemed to be promising them the best chance of the survival of their own.<sup>[3]</sup>

In World War II, therefore, they saw an "imperialist" war that, upon the entry of the Soviet Union into it, would turn into an "anti-imperialist" war. And, attending to their own affairs in the meantime, they were

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<sup>743</sup> This article first appeared in Polish under the title "Ani niedźwiedzi, ani lasu ani nic: Tragedia getta warszawskiego," in *Zeszyty Historyczne* (Paris), volume 150 (1996): 3–21.

<sup>744</sup> The same curious phenomenon appears to have been repeated in other ghettos. For example, forty members of the 150-strong underground movement in the Kielce ghetto survived the German occupation, whereas nearly all of the population of the ghetto perished. See Michał Grynberg and Maria Kotowska, eds., *Życie i zagłada Żydów polskich 1939–1945: Relacje świadków* (Warsaw: Oficyna Naukowa, 2003), 189.

<sup>745</sup> Yitzhak Zuckerman ("Antek"), *A Surplus of Memory: Chronicle of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 412.

<sup>746</sup> Reuben Ainsztein, *Jewish Resistance in Nazi-Occupied Eastern Europe* (London: Paul Elek, 1974), 624.

<sup>747</sup> Reuben Ainsztein, *Jewish Resistance in Nazi-Occupied Eastern Europe* (London: Paul Elek, 1974), 602.

waiting patiently for the Red Army to turn the tide and give them the opportunity of greeting it with flowers as harbingers of a new, “progressive” world order of tomorrow. (Pg. 83, 503.) For, “our response to the Soviet regime was a positive attitude to its ideals as a way of socialist realization... We didn’t yet know the full meaning of the dictatorship [of the proletariat] in the Soviet Union... We weren’t interested in such questions... In our innocence, we thought that the most advanced regime in the world was being realized there.” (Pg. 26, 169.)

When the “imperialist” war, however, turned into an “anti-imperialist” one—not at Stalin’s but at Hitler’s timing—the Red Army disappointed them. Instead of scoring a swift victory, it was suffering one defeat after another. And before long, news started coming from the East of massacres of the Jews on an unprecedented scale, foreboding a similar fate for the Warsaw ghetto. Religious Jews put their faith in the will of God; Zionist parties in the sound sense of the Germans who would never think of doing anything of the kind in the very heart of Europe. Only the *Halutz* youth, who had neither faith in God nor in the sound sense of the Germans, took the warnings of impending doom seriously. The problem was only that, as far as they were concerned, “the Polish government disappeared completely. The Poles stopped governing.” (Pg. 167.) So they turned to those who were “close to their hearts”—the newly reconstituted Polish Communist party—and established under its aegis a Jewish Anti-Fascist Bloc with the aim of “mobilizing all healthy forces of the Jewish people for the struggle, together with the Red Army, for complete national and social liberation.” (Pg. 181ff.)

The Communists, however, disappointed the *Halutzim* likewise. They themselves didn’t have any arms as yet and saw in the youth of the ghetto, not its defenders against any German designs on its very existence, but prospective partisans who ought to be able to procure the arms they needed by stealthily assaulting German sentries and railroad guards in the outlying forests. The *Halutzim* took the Communist call to action seriously—only to discover that “the places indicated to us as partisan bases... turned out to be nonexistent: no bears, no forest, no partisans, no nothing.” (Pg. 199.) Or, as put by a Dror activist and Zuckerman’s close friend, Mordechai Tennenbaum: “They weren’t waiting, they didn’t know, they didn’t want to know.” (Pg. 219.)

The Jewish Anti-Fascist Bloc turned out to be an ephemera—“more thunder than acts performed.” And when a major “resettlement” operation burst upon the ghetto in July 1942, the aspiring fighters had only one pistol at their disposal and, except for the fully armed Betar units of the Revisionists, no trained combat units of their own. But, to them, the *Betarim* were abominable “fascists,” with whom no self-respecting *Halutz* would have anything to do.

A new Jewish Fighting Organization (*ŻOB*) was now established by the leadership of the *Halutz* and a frantic scramble for arms began. Zuckerman and his friends bethought themselves that some underground Polish government existed after all. And while they “didn’t feel the nonexistence of the government so much, now that we were in trouble, any government at all meant weapons, organization, advice, and civilian cooperation.” (Pg. 167.) And they bethought themselves, too, that one of their most reliable liaison girls with the outside world, Irena Adamowicz, was a Scout-master with ties to Aleksander Kamiński, a prominent member of the Polish underground Scouting and the Home Army’s High Command, whose existence the leftist Zionists only now discovered.

Adamowicz arranged thereupon a meeting of *ŻOB*’s representative Arye Wilner with Kamiński. But, instead of putting him directly in touch with the Home Army’s High Command, as expected, Kamiński advised Wilner that *ŻOB* would first have to expand its political base and, in accordance with the international law, become a military arm of a civilian authority to be set up in the ghetto. And this was an anathema to the self-appointed command of the prospective fighting organization.

Accordingly,

“Arye Wilner came back to the ghetto and reported to us...that the representatives of the AK (Polish Home Army) wouldn’t talk to him because they didn’t consider He-Halutz, Dror, and Ha-Shomer Ha-Tzair partners for negotiations, but only a youth movement... We told Arye to tell them that he represented two institutions: the political one, the

Jewish National Committee (ŻKN), which united all the forces in the ghetto, and the Jewish Fighting Organization (ŻOB), its military arm, which had existed previously, but was now reorganized in the ghetto. We agreed to reorganize it so we'd be covered in case the Poles began investigating. So Wilner went back to the Aryan side and now came to them on behalf of the Jewish National Committee, which in fact didn't yet exist." (Pg. 220.)

Taking Wilner's words at their face value, Kamiński now put him in touch with the head of the Department of Jewish Affairs of the Home Army's High Command, Henryk Woliński. A member of the liberal Democratic Party, Woliński was well disposed toward the Jews, especially Jewish youth, in their plight. But he was also well informed about their affairs and, since he had never heard about the existence of the Jewish National Committee, he wanted to know more about it.

Back to the ghetto Wilner went with the news that a fictitious National Committee wouldn't do as a party to negotiations with the AK. And all through October 1942, parleys with the political parties now went on, with ŻOB adamantly opposing the very concept of two authorities and the parties refusing to serve merely as a legal cover for ŻOB's unfettered activities. Finally, ŻOB saw itself forced to yield, be it only ostensibly. On October 30, the Jewish National Committee was formally established as the supreme civilian authority in the ghetto and representative at once of the country's Jewish population. A new command of the expanded ŻOB was then appointed, including representatives of the political parties that were to provide the combined fighting organization with their own combat units. (Pg. 220–23, 248ff.)

Only two parties refused to join the committee: the "fascist" Revisionists and the socialist Bund. The former counted among its members a number of commissioned and noncommissioned officers with combat experience and had managed, with the help of the members of the Polish Security Corps, to build a veritable arsenal of assorted weapons—machine and submachine guns, rifles and carbines, pistols of all kinds and rucksacks full of ammunition.<sup>[4]</sup> But while insisting on a "merger" of their arsenal with ŻOB's, which consisted of one pistol, the command of the latter refused to admit into its ranks any members of the former, whereupon the Revisionists formed their own Jewish Military Union (ŻZW).

By contrast, the Bund agreed to join the ŻOB in military matters concerning the Warsaw ghetto, but refused to see in the basically Zionist committee a rightful representative of the Jewish population at large. And since Bund was in good standing with the Office of the Plenipotentiary Delegate, the so-called *Delegatura*, a new committee had to be set up—the Jewish Coordinating Committee (ŻKK)—that would enable the Bund to cooperate with the National Committee as a partner with equal voice in the decision making process and would act at once as the formal authority over the joint fighting force. On November 9, 1942, two declarations of the Jewish National Committee were submitted to the military and civilian authorities of the Polish Underground. The former requested a provision of arms for ŻOB, and the latter, recognition of the Committee as the representative of the country's Jewish population. Since, unlike the Revisionists, neither of the members of ŻOB's command had any military training or combat experience, the Home Army's commander, General Stefan Rowecki (*nom de guerre* "Grot"), merely commended ŻOB for its getting ready to fight as a paramilitary organization and released ten pistols for its use in training the prospective fighters.

Finally, on December 2, 1942, a statute of bylaws of the Jewish Coordinating Committee was presented to the Polish authorities. Signed, on behalf of the Jewish National Committee, by Arye Wilner and, on behalf of the Bund, by its representative on the Aryan side, Leon Feiner, it listed as its members the Bund, four Zionist parties, and three youth movements. The Communists, who had four combat units among ŻOB's twenty-two and a representative on ŻOB's command, did not appear on the list. In their stead, the Revisionists were written in, although they remained apart from the ŻOB. The ruse was consistent with Zuckerman's belief that the Poles "couldn't check up on or know what was done in the darkness of the ghetto." (Pg. 249.) And without the names or even *noms-de-guerre* of the representatives of the given parties having been provided, the AK would never know the difference. Nor would it know the exact relationship between the Coordinating Committee and the ŻOB, whose new supreme authority it claimed to be, beyond a vague provision that "in order to maintain close contact between both bodies,...the

Commander of the Combat organization will participate in the meetings of the Coordinating Commission.”<sup>[5]</sup>

This was all Zuckerman needed to settle the gnawing problem of two authorities. He admitted openly that

“as commander of ŻOB, Mordechai Anielewicz, like me, sat on the Jewish National Committee and on the Coordinating Committee. There was a collective presidency, and I was General Secretary of both bodies. I headed them, whereas Mordechai, as the commander of ŻOB, was my commander, that is, commander of whoever was head of the political arm... Under those conditions, there was no particular virtue in the division of roles... Our people were at the head of all three organizations (ŻOB, ŻKN, ŻKK), and I was the coordinator (secretary). I called the meetings and set the agenda... We were the actual decision makers; we had force and influence. We were the guiding force, and the parties accepted our authority and obeyed us.” (Pg. 229, 250.)

Before long, the Home Army started receiving “imperative requests” for equipping ŻOB with arms, and doing it without delay; organizing the purchase of weapons from black market dealers; and providing military instructors for the prospective fighters, for “the only ones with proper training are serving in the police force and do not enjoy the confidence of the ŻOB.”<sup>[6]</sup> And neither did the “fascist” Revisionists.

But it was only after the January 1943 events, when the would-be fighters proved themselves capable of actually chasing the Germans out of the ghetto, that the Home Army supplied them with additional fifty pistols and fifty grenades in order that they might acquaint themselves with their use. And they lost no time on doing just that—by executing real or suspected informers and collaborators and relieving rich Jews, the so-called “economic collaborators,” of their ill-gotten gains. (Pg. 268, 319–34.)

It didn’t take long now before Zuckerman could state with pride: “A new effective force arose, the Jewish Fighting Organization, which revolutionized the lives of the Jews,” who knew that it was not the Jewish National Committee that was issuing death sentences, but ŻOB. And he began to wonder whether the Jews, who were now taking hats off to him, were doing it out of fear or admiration—only to come to the conclusion that it must have been “an expression of a positive attitude, of honor” being rendered to him. (Pg. 273f.) Even the Revisionists began seeing in ŻOB the real authority in the ghetto and acting in accordance with it. (Pg. 311, 324f, 330.)

With deep satisfaction, Zuckerman could also say: “Now we got plenty of money for the purchase of weapons—millions of zlotys,” (Pg. 232) or more precisely, ten million, according to one of the leaders of the ghetto uprising, Marek Edelman.<sup>[7]</sup> And before long, arms of all kinds started flowing into the ghetto. Of these, however, ŻOB’s master of arms, Zuckerman, chose to acquire only pistols. For, “of all the weapons we bought, the rifle was easier to get than other weapons, but we needed it less than the pistol. You didn’t know what to do with a rifle, because it was hard to carry... We needed rifles, too, but it was hard to bring them into the ghetto and hard to hide them.” (Pg. 253.)

It is strange that the Revisionists didn’t have any such problems. And stranger yet that, after the purchase of some 400 pistols for ŻOB’s fighting units and ammunition for them, millions of zlotys remained, for which there is no account. But it was much easier for Zuckerman to put the blame for ŻOB’s lack of weapons heavier than pistols in the ghetto uprising on the Home Army: “We asked for a few scores of weapons, and they didn’t give them to us. That was their crime!” (Pg. 254.) It was also the Revisionists’ crime. For they, too, had an ample supply of arms, but “kept them in their own units and wouldn’t turn them over for general disposition.” (Pg. 226, 255.)

But, after all, what could one expect of “fascists”—the Polish ones or the Jewish ones? With Communists, it was something different.

“They listened to us sympathetically, but they didn’t have anything to give and couldn’t help us much... They were friendly with the Jews, for, after all, the Jews had played a central role in the Communist Party of Poland... So they would give me [at least] good

advice... They didn't see my contacts with the AK as a violation of our pact with them... They knew that the AK and the Delegatura were the main force and that we had to stay in communication with them. Not only did that not matter to them, they encouraged it." (Pg. 419, 502.)

In his conversations with them, Zuckerman's "principle was to tell the whole truth... Tell the truth, or you're liable to get yourself into trouble. I didn't act like that with the AK, and I concealed my contacts with the Communists from them." (Pg. 392.) Great was, therefore, his consternation when, in his conference with Major Janiszewski of the AK's counter-intelligence, he found out that the AK knew all about it. And in his indignation, he came to the conclusion that the AK was only using their contacts with the Communists as an excuse for its refusal to provide the ghetto fighters with more substantial amounts of arms:

"Their anti-Communist argument...was obviously only a pretext. Those people who sentenced the Jews to death [by denying them the badly needed arms] must have known who Mordechai Anielewicz or Yitzhak Zuckerman was. ... Didn't they know who the Zionists were and who their leaders were in Poland? Didn't they know about the Halutz movement? Of course, they knew all that and it was only a pretext, like any other." (Pg. 364.)

It doesn't occur to Zuckerman that, precisely because the AK knew very well who the leaders of the Jewish National Committee and the ŻOB were, it didn't trust them. Neither did it trust the military acumen of ŻOB's command or its intent. For ŻOB demanded contradictory forms of help from the AK: arms, with which in hand its members could die with honor; partisan bases; and, above all, breaching the walls of the ghetto in order that its defenders may be rescued.

On the one hand, Zuckerman says that "our whole strategy was built with a clear awareness that the fighters had no escape." And in this, he finds justification for the failure of the ŻOB's command to prepare in advance tunnels through which the fighters could receive succor and additional supplies of arms and ammunition from the Aryan side. And its failure to provide any means of communication between the four parts of the ghetto, separated from one another. (Pg. 312f.)

On the other, he says that the ŻOB's command counted on a battle lasting three days (pg. 376) or a few days at the most (pg. 313). By then, "the AK was to attack the ghetto from the *Umschlagplatz*, in the north, and the Brushmakers' area, in the east, and to connect with our forces as they burst through the walls with explosives... And the AL (Communist People's Guard) force was to attack from Leszno, in the south." (Pg. 339f.)

When, following the arrest of Arye Wilner, ŻOB's representative on the Aryan side, Zuckerman took his place, the first thing he did was to storm the commands of both the AK and the People's Guard, urging them to speed up the supposed plans for a rescue operation. Unfortunately, since no such plans were being taken seriously into consideration by either the AK or the Communists, the relief operations, carried out by them upon the outbreak of the uprising, amounted to no more than "humanistic gestures. They didn't change the struggle in the ghetto one iota; it didn't create an opening for rescue." (Pg. 374.)

Nothing is said here about dying with honor on the ruins of the ghetto—only about being rescued once a symbolic battle for the honor of the Jews as fighters for human dignity had been taken up and carried on for a few days. And, for this, one had not necessarily had to have rifles; pistols and grenades, if judiciously employed, might have sufficed, as the subsequent events were to prove. Hence, when on the first day of the uprising, Zuckerman received twenty-eight rifles from the Communists, he was in no hurry to dispatch them to the ghetto.

In his message of April 20, 1943, to ŻOB's command, he "didn't tell them about the rifles...because I didn't know if I could ship them... And I didn't tell Schmidt [ŻOB's contact man in the Leszno "Shops" area] about it either. For, I didn't intend to ship the weapons to Többens-Schultz, but to the Central Ghetto." The problem was that the Communists knew about the tunnel under Leszno Street, which they

were using for the delivery of arms and ammunition to their two squads stationed there.<sup>[8]</sup> Zuckerman thus had to find more valid a reason for holding the rifles back. To Többens-Schultz he would not deliver them because the Central Ghetto needed them more urgently. And to the Central Ghetto he could not ship them because he knew of no way of doing it. He turned, therefore, to the AK with a request to do it for him and, having breached the wall, deliver the rifles to Többens-Schultz after all. As could be expected, the AK replied that it had no force ready for such an undertaking. And this was absolving Zuckerman of making any more strenuous efforts at transferring the rifles to the men in a dire need of them while providing him at once with another example of AK's perfidy: "They didn't even help me with shipping twenty-eight rifles into the ghetto!" (Pg. 358, 374.)

Instead, he concentrated now on organizing an evacuation of the fighters through the sewers, finding temporary quarters for them on the Aryan side, and getting ready some means of transport to the prospective partisan bases—with the same results: AK wouldn't and the Communists couldn't. The Communists, of course, were not to blame for it, for "they were weak; they had neither weapons, nor money, nor important bases." (Pg. 419.) This at a time when, aided by Soviet airdrops, the Communists had over fifty well-established partisan bases, as compared with not even a dozen of the AK's, which it had started setting up only in the spring of 1943.<sup>[9]</sup> But Zuckerman could not very well hold a grudge against the Communists, for, after all, they were "friends" of the Jews, who listened to them with sympathy while professing that they themselves couldn't help them much. The AK, by contrast, was a bunch of spiteful anti-Semites, who could, but "didn't give us weapons...didn't do anything [to follow up on a joint plan with us for the defense of the ghetto]...didn't give us people to remove the fighters through the sewers or a base on the Aryan side." (Pg. 416.) These are serious charges levied about a time when Warsaw's sewers were an undisputed domain of Jewish smugglers.<sup>748</sup> But also a time when "the AK didn't trust us..., the parties didn't trust us..., [and] the masses didn't trust us." (Pg. 201, 32, 214.) How could the smugglers—those "economic collaborators"—have been expected to trust Zuckerman and his extortionist squads? How could the AK have trusted Zuckerman and his comrades who were often lying to the Poles?

Notwithstanding, on the second day of the uprising, April 20th, he sends a message to his friends in ŻOB's command that the AK had "promised to give us a partisan base, temporary apartments in Warsaw, and transport." (Pg. 355f.) And he phrases it in a way that is producing in his friends dreams and fantasies about their forthcoming rescue and the way to Eretz Israel about to be opened to them.<sup>[10]</sup>

Anielewicz replies in his letter of April 23rd, in which he states: "Things have surpassed our boldest dreams: the Germans ran away from the ghetto twice. One of our units held out for forty minutes, and the other for more than six hours. ... So far, we have had only one casualty: Yehiel, who fell as a hero at the machine gun. ... From this evening, we are switching to a system of guerrilla action. [During the day, we sit in hiding places and] At night, three of our units go out on two missions: an armed reconnaissance patrol and the acquisition of weapons." (Pg. 357.)

Zuckerman concedes that ŻOB didn't have any machine gun, but the Jewish National Committee's representative on the Aryan side, Adolf Berman, had pressed him to translate the "automatic rifle" in the Hebrew original as a machine gun—"for better effect." And he sees nothing wrong with it, for "those were the needs of the hour," even if subsequently they should be creating problems for historians. (Pg. 358.)

He neither asks nor tries to answer the question of how it was possible for ŻOB to have suffered in five days of fighting just one casualty—five days, in the course of which 553 Jews and "bandits" from various wild resistance groups and 35 Polish "bandits," helping them from outside, had been killed and, on the eyes of those who had vowed not to yield a single Jew to new deportations, 19,450 Jews rounded up for "resettlement."<sup>[11]</sup>

Nor does he ask or try to answer the question of what kind of guerrilla warfare ŻOB's command was proposing to carry on by sitting in bunkers all day long and waiting for the Germans to leave the ghetto for

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<sup>748</sup> In fact, the Home Army engaged a Jew whom they had freed from the Gęsiówka Street prison camp to help penetrate the city sewers during the Warsaw Uprising of August 1944. See Norman Davies, *Rising '41: The Battle for Warsaw* (London: Macmillan, 2003), 269.

the night in order to send out “reconnaissance patrols.” He doesn’t ask, for he knows the answer; he only leaves it to his faithful companion on the Aryan side, Simha Ratajzer [“Kazik”], to put it in a more straightforward way than he himself would be willing to do: “Our comrades there are waiting and counting on us... [to find] a way to rescue them.” (Pg. 367n.) Since, except for the stubborn defense of the Revisionists’ headquarters in Muranów Square, no major battle had taken place in the Central Ghetto, Anielewicz’s words that “another one of our units held out...for more than six hours” can only refer to the clash—for that is what Yisrael Gutman, himself a participant in those events, calls it—at the corner of Nalewki and Gęsia Streets that corresponded in time with “*the main battle of April 19 [that] raged at the corner of Zamenhof and Miła Streets [emphasis added]*” and lasted about thirty minutes.<sup>[12]</sup> By counting the time elapsed between the first engagement of ŻOB fighters there with the Germans at 6:00 am and the time they were forced to retreat from their positions by a renewed German assault at noon, Anielewicz thus arrives at six hours of “holding out,” which might be true enough without denoting a six-hour battle as interpreted by Jewish historians—Ber [Bernard] Mark foremost among them: “armed resistance at Nalewki—Gęsia position lasted for, *a total of six hours, without interruption [emphasis added]*.”<sup>[13]</sup>

And how was the time between the first clash and the final German assault spent—on building a barricade or two perhaps in order that the fighters would be better able to repel a renewed German assault? Nothing of the kind. “We had a chance,” says Tuvia Borzykowski, deputy commander of the *Dror* unit charged with the defense of that crucial intersection, “to catch our breath and eat. Food was plentiful, and we had a good breakfast. While the lull continued, we exchanged yarns about the battle. Some of the men tried to doze off... [while others listened to] Moshe Rubin who pulled out of his pocket his mouth organ and played Beethoven and Schubert tunes.” The Germans, in the meantime, “set up a barricade on the corner of Nalewki and Franciszkańska Streets using mattresses from the nearby storehouse of the *Werterfassung* office... [and began] firing on our positions, using all sorts of weapons.”

The *Dror* fighters managed to set the German barricade and the *Werterfassung* building on fire with bottles filled with gasoline, but the Germans replied with incendiary shells, forcing them to withdraw to Berson and Bauman Children’s Hospital at 6 Gęsia Street. Finding it surrounded by the Germans, they withdrew to 37 Nalewki Street that was supposed to be defended by the Communists, but wasn’t. They sought to hide in the bunker there, but found the civilian Jewish population hostile to them. So they retreated once again until they found refuge in a narrow, dead-end, Rabbi Majzels Street. And here they waited all the following day and the day after for the Germans to arrive, but “they didn’t appear in our vicinity.” Could they help it that they didn’t get another chance to engage in a fight?<sup>[14]</sup>

Largely due to Anielewicz’s letter of April 23, this heroic feat of Artstein’s *Dror* unit found a permanent place in the annals of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising. What Anielewicz failed to mention, however, was that two real battles took place, in the meantime, elsewhere. One was the stubborn defense of the Brushmaker’s area which, under the leadership of Marek Edelman of the Bund, held out against repeated German assaults until it had been set on fire, thus forcing its defenders to retreat to the Central Ghetto. But, to Anielewicz, this didn’t matter. For, among ŻOB’s five and the Revisionists’ three combat units there, only one was a *Halutz* unit—*Dror*’s. Neither did it matter that, in the course of that battle, fell an outstanding fighter of the Bund, Michael Klepfisz, Bund’s secretary, Berek Sznajdmil, commander of the Scout combat unit *Ha-Noar Ha-Zioni*, Yakov Praszker, and his faithful companion at arms, Szoszana Mastbojm—all resolute fighters, looking for no place to hide, just determined to fight the Germans with any means at their disposal. But they didn’t count. Only Yehiel, had who had died in the first thirty minutes of the uprising, did; for he was a Shomer.<sup>[15]</sup>

The other real battle not mentioned by Anielewicz was the equally stubborn defense of the Revisionists positions in Muranów Square—the only one meriting a special mention by General Stroop: “The stiffest resistance was offered by a rebel group which raised a barricade at 7 Muranowska Street. This position held out longer than any other... The rebels [there] were able to obtain a constant supply of ammunition furnished them by a Polish resistance group. The attacks launched by our forces on this position were repeatedly repelled...[and] the fighting there was particularly fierce.”<sup>[16]</sup>

It was fierce enough to cost the Betar fighters sixteen killed, including two of their leaders, and many wounded, not to speak of four members of the Polish Security Corps who lost their lives while helping them. Lasting four days, it was finally contained by the Germans on April 22, when SS Lieutenant Dhemke

managed to tear down the Polish and Zionist flags from the roof of their headquarters, paying for it with his life.<sup>[17]</sup>

For four days, two battles thus raged 200–300 yards away from ŻOB's command bunker at 29 Miła Street and then, when Anielewicz decided to move it to 18 Miła Street, not even one hundred yards away. But, to Anielewicz, they didn't deem to be important enough to take note of them and either bring some relief to the fighters engaged in a mortal struggle or, at least, mention their genuine heroism in his letter to Zuckerman. Important was only *Dror's* and *Shomer's* defense, on the first day of the uprising, of ŻOB's original headquarters at 28 Miła Street and *Dror's* skirmish at Nalewki-Gęsia intersection, each lasting no more than thirty minutes. For they ought to have served as an ample proof of ŻOB's military prowess and its will to fight. And if anyone should have doubted it, he would be proving himself poisoned by the venom of anti-Semitism. As put by Adolf Berman in the purported letter to him from Anielewicz of March 13, 1943, which was "doctored" by him on the Aryan side: "We do not intend to convince anyone of our readiness or ability to fight. Whoever denies or doubts it is no more than a spiteful anti-Semite."<sup>[18]</sup>

At stake here was the creation of a historical record that ŻOB meant indeed to fight but, having been denied help in arms and ammunition, had no other choice than to retreat into bunkers and turn them into a collective Masada. A record at once of the claim that *Halutz* was the principal force in the ghetto to take up arms in its defense and, in the face of overwhelming odds, to carry it on to the bitter end, thus proving Zuckerman's contention that "no other force has the power to exalt and raise our youth except He-Halutz... [whose way is] the way of all Jewish youth." (Pg. 591f.)

When, therefore, the Polish Government awarded posthumously the highest decoration for bravery in the face of the enemy, the Order of *Virtuti Militari*, to Michael Klepfisz, the surviving members of the ŻOB's command voiced an angry rebuttal. In the memorandum, drawn up in the name of the Jewish National Council "with the help of Yitzhak Zuckerman" and transmitted on May 24, 1944, to a member of the Polish National Council in London, Ignacy Schwarzbart, they stated:

"The struggle in the Warsaw Ghetto was initiated and waged by us and our affiliated organizations...[which had] conducted and waged the battles, provided the overwhelming majority of combatants and sacrificed the greatest number of lives... We were, therefore, highly astonished when the Order of *Virtuti Militari* was awarded to Michael Klepfisz, a member of the Bund... [This] decoration should rightfully have been awarded to the commander of the Jewish Fighting Organization, Mordechai Anielewicz... The labor movement all over the world should namely know that it was the Zionist Labor organizations that organized and headed the Warsaw Ghetto Revolt, and that the hundreds of fighters who took part and fell in the struggle did so imbued with the firm conviction that their death would serve as a foundation for the socialist future of the Jewish masses in Eretz Israel."<sup>[19]</sup>

Zuckerman states that Anielewicz had indeed many attributes that were making him fit for the post of ŻOB's commander. "And it doesn't matter that, at a certain moment, he broke down... [which] didn't detract from his honor." (Pg. 258.) Zuckerman promises to get to it later on, but never does. Instead, Marek Edelman does it for him:

"Anielewicz wanted very much to become a commander, so we chose him. He was a little childlike in his ambition, but he was talented, well-read, full of energy... He had a lot of youthful verve and enthusiasm... [But] when I saw him on April 20, he was a different man... He was just sitting there and muttering: 'We're all going to die... There's no way out... We'll die for our honor and history.' He managed to get roused again only once—when we got a message from the Home Army to wait in the northern part of the Ghetto...[but] it didn't work out anyway."<sup>[20]</sup>

We are thus dealing here with a deliberate creation of a myth—a myth of ŻOB's heroism, especially of its *Halutz* units and its commander, Anielewicz, with hardly any mention, or no mention at all, of genuine heroism of other units and their commanders. And we are dealing here with its vociferous propagation by

the left-wing Zionist parties and organizations even as the events conducive to its creation were taking place and historical documents pertaining to them were being drafted with an eye to their eventual evaluation by historians. Fortunately, Zuckerman warns us that “historians tend to think that everything written in a document is the truth, but it is not so. Sometimes, we ‘fabricated’ things, and they weren’t quite precise.” They were a product of *Dichtung und Wahrheit*—part truth, part poetical inspiration, as demanded by the exigencies of the moment. (Pg. 371.)

A prime example of the employment of the principle of *Dichtung und Wahrheit* we find in Mordechai Tennenbaum letter of April 2, 1943, addressed to the Directorate of Civil Resistance, an arm of the *Delegatura*. Tennenbaum had been dispatched to the Bialystok ghetto as a representative of the Jewish National Committee to effect a unification of two Anti-Fascist Blocs active there, A and B, of which one represented the conception of setting up partisan bases in the outlying forests and the other of staging an uprising in the ghetto. In his letter, Tennenbaum assured the *Delegatura* that the charges of a pro-Communist orientation of the National Committee had no basis in facts. He then appealed to it for being given “the possibility of dying with dignity” by having the ghetto fighters armed and provided with partisan bases.<sup>[21]</sup>

When shown this letter by Woliński, Zuckerman was astonished and remarked that “the spirit of it didn’t fit Mordechai’s views, but apparently it responded to the immediate needs of the Jewish Fighting Organization” in the Bialystok ghetto. (Pg.407.) He was astonished for two reasons. One was that any cooperation with nonsocialist forces was seen by him as compromising the ideological position of the *Halutz* and the parties constituting the National Committee as a socialist force working for a socialist future of Eretz Israel. Having to appeal for help to the reactionary AK was bad enough, but at least it had the encouragement and blessings of the Communists without involving any break with them. But to state officially, as Tennenbaum did in his letter, that the National Committee saw in the Soviet Union a persecutor of its component parties was a betrayal of the common socialist platform with it.

Zuckerman was astonished, too, by Tennenbaum’s attempt to have the AK “take our men out of the ghetto for active combat service in the countryside” without having staged an uprising in the ghetto first. For, to his mind, these two things went together, but the uprising had to come first and only then the escape to the forest. One was for the “effect,” and the other for saving as many lives of the prospective builders of a socialist Eretz Israel as possible. (Pg. 349.)

“We thought,” he says, “that uprising and rescue went together... We always said that those two things didn’t contradict each other, and we told the Jews that...we had to save as many of them as we could.” The problem was, however, that there were too many Jews to be saved. “What did we want to do with all those Jews? Even in Warsaw we didn’t have any place to hide them. So we wanted to move them to partisan units in the forest.” (Pg. 514ff.) But that was “no solution for hundreds or thousands... That was no solution for the masses.” (Pg. 478.) As Chaim Weizman said, addressing Lord Peel’s Royal Commission in 1937, “In the depth of the Jewish tragedy, we want at least to save the youth, with their lives before them. The old ones will pass; they will bear their fate or they will not. But they are dust, economic and moral dust, in a cruel world... ‘*Sheerith Hapleita*’—only a branch shall survive. The rest has to accept it; the rest must leave it to the future, to its youth .”<sup>[22]</sup>

The *Halutz* saw itself as a branch to be saved out of the conflagration by putting up a token fight that would qualify its members as fighters for freedom and human dignity. This would have served two purposes at once. It would have furnished a proof that the *Halutz* was the standard-bearer of Jewish youth in its struggle for a better, socialist, world of tomorrow and of Zuckerman’s claim that only *Halutz* and the groups of the Zionist Labor movement associated with it had fought for Jewish honor and dignity. (Pg.592.) And it would have imposed on the AK a moral obligation to become a savior of the branch by providing it with arms and partisan bases, and on the world at large, a moral obligation to save the remaining Jews as best it could. (Pg. 266.)

This view is confirmed by Yisrael Gutman, who says: “The thinking of the ŻOB leadership was...that the fighters [would have to] thwart the evacuation because the removal of the Jews from the ghetto would

destroy their basis for action... *Thwarting evacuation was an essential prerequisite for the revolt* [emphasis added].<sup>[23]</sup>

And the same rationale for the revolt is given by one of the leaders of the Białystok Fighting Organization, Chaika Grossman:

“Our couriers were scattered throughout the ghetto, explaining and persuading: ‘Jews, don’t go willingly... Hide, then fight with anything you can find!’ [They] ran after the groups of Jews, but the wave was streaming, flowing endlessly without end... They would not listen; they closed their ears to our appeals... It was clear to us that we would remain isolated islands in the desolate ghetto. We had no masses behind us. The Germans would take out the transport and we would remain, small groups of fighters bent on suicide. *We had been deprived of the public purpose of our struggle... [For] what justification could be found for any plan except defending the masses and saving them, organizing them and leading them to liberation and death with honor?* [emphasis added]”<sup>[24]</sup>

This is the language of a true revolutionary: by exhorting the unarmed Jews to fight “with anything you can find,” the fighters were exhorting them to commit a mass suicide in order that they—the select few—might take advantage of the resulting melee and escape to the forest to save their own lives while taking credit for having been the leaders of the masses in their fight unto death. “To die with honor” in the defense of Jewish honor and dignity was not an empty phrase; the point was only that it was the masses of unarmed Jews that were expected to do so and not their leaders whose survival was seen as a prerequisite for a continued struggle for their own objectives.

It was precisely their insistence on being recognized as standard-bearers of a distinct ideological and political movement that was causing even the Communists to be reluctant to accept the *Halutzim* into their partisan units, not to speak of providing them with special partisan bases. For the *Halutz* acknowledged no other authority than its very own in the pursuit of ends by any means promising of success. “I was one of those,” says Zuckerman, “who didn’t believe in legality... I didn’t believe in legal means.” (Pg. 54.) Hence the parties didn’t trust him, the masses didn’t trust him, even his friends, the Communists didn’t quite trust him.

For all the *Dichtung und Wahrheit* imbuing Tennenbaum’s letter, he could not have been trusted by the AK either. His professions of anti-Communist orientation were seen as a stratagem meant to facilitate the establishment of a conduit of arms to the Soviet partisans in order to make them friendly to the Jewish cause. This especially in the view of close ties between the Anti-Fascist Bloc in the ghetto and the Anti-Fascist Bloc in the city of Białystok, both of which had been providing the Soviet partisans with a steady flow of arms, ammunition, and various materials.<sup>[25]</sup>

There was another problem causing distrust. On February 24, 1943, the Jewish chronicler of the Nazi occupation, Ludwik Landau, noted: “The Jewish bands active in various regions are often reproached with murdering and robbing local population.”<sup>[26]</sup> And the executive orders of the Commander of the AK, General Rowecki, of February and May, 1943, on rendering all possible help to the Jews escaping from the various ghettos, including their enrollment in Home Army units, met with a frank rebuttal on the part of the regional commands of the AK: “The atmosphere regarding armed Jews is so completely hostile that we are unable, within the limited possibilities of underground activities, to accept responsibility for the safety of Jewish units in the field. What carries weight here is the hostility engendered by the Jewish attitude toward us at the time of the Soviet occupation and the present conduct of Jewish armed groups, harassing the population by acts of pillage and brutality.”<sup>[27]</sup>

What it looked like in practice, we are informed by Itzhak Arad (Rudnicki), a former partisan leader in Poland’s northeastern territory and then Brigadier General of the Israel Defense Forces:

“I was part of a group of ten sent on an ‘economic action.’ A Polish village near Hoduciszki was chosen as the target. Upon arriving, we left a patrol on guard and ordered

four farmers to harness horses to their wagons. We then went from house to house, taking sacks of potatoes, flour, and meat. We took two cows as well. After loading our booty on the wagons and tying the cows behind, we started back for the base, the owners of the wagons driving. We left them on a river bank, unloaded the provisions at the base, and then sent the farmers home with their empty wagons.”<sup>[28]</sup>

Before long, however, Arad had to concede that this was not the best of solutions: “Thirty of us went on an ‘economic action.’ The target was a large Lithuanian village twenty-five kilometers from partisan territory... [For], by this time, there was nothing left to take from villages nearer by, as they had gradually been relieved of their food reserves and cattle by the partisans in the Naroch [Narocz] region. It was becoming increasingly difficult to acquire provisions, and more often than not the ‘economic actions’ involved armed combat.”<sup>[29]</sup>

Jewish historians contend that this was self-apparent, for, after all, the partisans had to acquire food somewhere in order to carry on their struggle with the German occupant. But this was not exactly how the Soviet partisans, for example, who were active in the same areas, saw it. According to Arad,

“The leaders of the Soviet partisans considered fighting the Germans their principal aim and viewed their activities as part of the overall Soviet war effort. The rescue of Jews was not one of their objectives. Hence all available manpower, weapons, and equipment had to be devoted to the war against the Nazis... The aims and objectives of the Soviet partisans were different from those of the Jews...[whose goal it was] to rescue the thousands of Jews who had survived the massacres and found refuge in the forests... According to the Soviet conception, the Jewish camps constituted a source of manpower and weapons which were being wasted since they were not being used to fight the enemy... [And] the confiscation of food by the Jews was liable to undermine the support for the partisans by the local population... [Hence] the incidents of murder, robbery, and confiscation of weapons [by Soviet partisans].”<sup>[30]</sup>

Hence, too, nearly 80% of Jewish combat casualties were suffered in the course of “economic actions.”<sup>[31]</sup> Even Zuckerman has to concede that, while some of the Jewish partisans he had met after the war were indeed fine men and brave fighters, many others were not exactly paragons of fighters for freedom and human dignity. “A cloddish force and hooliganism burst from them. If our Movement cannot take them firmly in hand...they are the first to be liable to turn into a terrorist gang in Eretz Israel and, God forbid, into criminals... Those fellows love Jews and are willing to die for them, but that doesn’t prevent them from stopping a car with Jews and robbing them from head to foot.”(Pg. 591.) No wonder, therefore, that “they were not poverty stricken. Many of them had brought property with them and started dealing in it at once...[boasting] ‘I sold a little, I paid a little. We took all kinds of junk with us... And I paid [with it] for the gentile girls I slept with.’” (Pg. 610.)

But this, too, was AK’s fault or, as put by Shmuel Krakowski, the fault of the *Delegatura* that could have easily solved the problem of providing some ten to twenty thousand Jews hiding in the forests with means of survival instead of condemning them to the life of brigands.<sup>[32]</sup> In his abusive letter to the successor to General Rowecki in command of the AK, General Tadeusz Bór-Komorowski, of November 26, 1943, Zuckerman says: “We appealed about the camps, and we were not answered; we asked for weapons to die with honor, ... and were not answered in that either.” (Pg.417.)

Their determination to die with honor in the name of Jewish dignity was demonstrated best by the ŻOB fighters rescued from the Ghetto. Unlike most Jewish partisan groups which, composed mainly of fugitives from other ghettos, transports, and extermination camps, had reached the forests with hardly any arms, combat experience, or organization, the Warsaw Ghetto evacuees represented the elite of well organized armed units<sup>[33]</sup> that “in addition to the personal weapons they had brought out of the ghetto, ...got the [twenty-eight] AL rifles and also had grenades.” (Pg. 398.)

Neither the AK nor the People’s Guard had any plans ready for their employment as partisans. But by the time they arrived in Wyszaków forests, they were received by top officials of the People’s Guard in the area:

its commander, Osiewicz, his deputy, Ponichtera, chief of staff, Skoczeń, commander of the partisan units in the area, Maciejewski, and operations officer, [Jan] Załęski. And having been organized by their hosts into three Jewish and one mixed combat unit, as well as one guard unit for the Jewish family camp, they were assigned areas of their prospective partisan activities that, at first at least, were to be carried out under the guidance of the People's Guard staff.<sup>[34]</sup>

They thus had an infinitely better start on their way toward becoming the foremost Jewish partisan group than any other. Alas, they were expected to set up their own partisan bases—something the People's Guard was not about to do for them—and, unlike the partisans of the AK, were provided with no clothing sturdy enough for the rugged forest life or the means of procuring the basic stocks of food and medical supplies.<sup>[35]</sup> Little wonder, therefore, that Zuckerman was far from enthusiastic about the prospects of conducting partisan warfare under the aegis of People's Guard. Coming to the conclusion that, after all, “the partisan activities didn't constitute an advance, but rather the opposite, a tragic fall,” he decided to dismantle the partisan unit [in Wyszaków Forest] and gradually bring the people back to Warsaw.” (Pg. 393, 401.) But he needed time for finding clandestine apartments for them. He thought that he had found a suitable half-way station for them in a shut-down celluloid factory in Praga. Unfortunately, through the negligence of the fighters brought there from Łomianki, it burned down, taking the lives of all of them except Eliezer Geller. Thereupon, he told our people at the Bug not to rely on us, but to try to get to Warsaw any way they could.” And they needed no prodding—they did just that without even waiting for Zuckerman's advice or permission to do so. (Pg. 394–97.)

Foremost among them was ŻOB commander of the Central Ghetto, Israel Kanał, whom Zuckerman had placed in charge of the fighters evacuated to Wyszaków. Without as much as letting Zuckerman know about his plans, he returned to Warsaw, registered at the Hotel Polski, acquired a spurious South American passport for a substantial sum of money, and prepared himself for the expected departure to the exchange camp for foreign nationals in Vittel, France. And he was joined in this endeavor by commander of the Productive Ghetto, Geller, and Helen Schupper, wife of the commander of *Akiva* unit in the Central Ghetto, Lutek Rotblat, who, on May 8, had committed suicide in the bunker at Miła 18. Instead of Vittel, however, they were shipped on July 7, 1943, to Bergen-Belsen and thence to Auschwitz. (Pg. 367, 438–45, 457.)

Returning also to Warsaw on his own, Kanał's deputy at Wyszaków, Marek Folman, declared that the things in the forest were “dreadful” and he had no intention of going back there. He was dispatched, therefore, to Częstochowa where he lost his life a few months later. (Pg. 401, 405f.) David Nowodworski's *Shomer* [Hashomer] unit decided in the meantime to make its way to Hungary, but was intercepted by the Germans and wiped out. (Pg. 465f.) And another *Shomer* unit, Merdek Growas's, crossed the River Bug at Brok and disappeared from history, giving rise to accusations that it must have been annihilated by the partisans of the AK—something for which there is not a shred of evidence. (Pg. 402f.)

The news from Wyszaków was thus becoming ever more discouraging. For, as put by the commander of the People's Guard in Wyszaków area, Franciszek Osiewicz, “The newcomers from the ghetto consisted primarily of young intelligentsia, for whom it was difficult to adjust to the crude, primitive conditions of partisan life (involving) hunger, bad weather, occasional sickness...and constant moving from place to place in order to avoid German raids.”<sup>[36]</sup> When finally, on September 2, 1943, the only fully active unit of the Defenders of the Ghetto Detachment GL, commanded jointly by “White Janek” Szwarcfus on behalf of the ŻOB and Tadeusz Maciejewski on behalf of the People's Guard, was obliterated by the German Gendarmerie and the SS, there remained only one Jewish partisan unit in the Wyszaków forests—the guard squad of a small Jewish family camp, called “Islanders,” under the command of Gabryś Fryszdorf.<sup>[37]</sup> The rest evaporated—a few crossing the Bug and joining the much better equipped Soviet partisan units and others returning to Warsaw and joining those who had never left the city for the forest. For, as put by Zuckerman, “We didn't go to war to die. We did everything to survive.” (Pg. 476ff, 532.)

#### ENDNOTES

1. Yitzhak Zuckerman, *A Surplus of Memory: Chronicle of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).
2. Miriam Eisenstein, *Jewish Schools in Poland, 1919–39* (New York: King's Crown Press, 1950), 44–46.

3. Ezra Mendelsohn, *Zionism in Poland* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), 272–98; Walter Laqueur, *History of Zionism* (New York: Schocken Books, 1989), 297–301, 484–88.
4. On the arsenal of the Revisionist Military Union at Muranów Square see Emanuel Ringelblum, *Polish-Jewish Relations During the Second World War* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1974), 169f [afterward *Polish-Jewish Relations*].
5. Negotiations of the *Halutz* with the political parties, leading to the creation of the Jewish National Committee and the Jewish Coordination Committee, are touched upon by Zuckerman in a way that give us no clear picture of their progress. Their chronology is based, therefore, on the following sources: Yisrael Gutman, *The Jews of Warsaw* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982), 285–301 [afterward *The Jews of Warsaw*]; Lucy Dawidowicz, *The War Against The Jews, 1933–1945* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1975), 314–20; Waław (Henryk Woliński), “Memorandum to the Polish Government-in-Exile regarding the Jewish Combat Organization,” in Lucy Dawidowicz, ed., *A Holocaust Reader* (New York: Behrman House, 1976), 339f [afterward *A Holocaust Reader*]; “Bylaws of the Coordinating Commission and the Jewish Combat Organization,” in Dawidowicz, *A Holocaust Reader*, 337ff; Joseph Kermish, “Postscript” to Ringelblum, *Polish-Jewish Relations*, 284f.
6. Gutman, *The Jews of Warsaw*, 299f.
7. Marek Edelman, *Getto walczy* [The Ghetto Fights] (Warsaw: Bund, Komitet Centralny, 1945), 50.
8. Ber Mark, Powstanie w Getcie Warszawskim [Warsaw Ghetto Uprising] (Warsaw: Żydowski Instytut Historyczny, 1953), 184, 227, 245.
9. Józef B. Garas, *Oddziały Gwardii Ludowej i Armii Ludowej, 1942–45* [Combat Units of the People’s Guard and People’s Army, 1942–45], 2nd ed. (Warszawa: MON, 1971), 500ff, 512 [afterward *Oddziały GL i AL*].
10. On her leaving the ghetto through the sewers a few days later, the thoughts of Zuckerman’s common-law wife, Zivia Lubetkin, were: “She was on her way to the Land of Israel. Soon she would be meeting her old friends on a kibbutz... She hadn’t asked to survive, had she? Was it her fault that God had singled her out?”—quoted in Dan Kurzman, *Bravest Battle* (New York: G.P. Putnam, 1976), 316.
11. Jurgen Stroop, *Jewish Quarter in Warsaw is No More: The Stroop Report*, trans. by Sybil Milton (New York: Pantheon Books, 1979), daily reports for April 19–23, 1943 (n.p.).
12. Gutman, *The Jews of Warsaw*, 372f.
13. Ber Mark, *Uprising: Warsaw Ghetto*, trans. by Gershon Freidlin (New York: Schocken Books, 1975), 26 [afterward *Uprising*].
14. Tuvia Borzykowski, *Between Tumbling Walls*, trans. by Mendel Kohansky (Tel Aviv: Ghetto Fighters House, 1972), 50–56.
15. Chaim Lazar Litai, *Muranowska 7* (Tel Aviv: Massada–P.E.C. Press, 1966), 244–50 [afterward *Muranowska 7*]; Mark, *Uprising*, 15, 36.
16. Lazar, *Muranowska 7*, 238.
17. Lazar, *Muranowska 7*, 230–42; Reuben Ainsztein, *The Warsaw Ghetto Revolt* (New York: Holocaust Library, 1979), 110ff [afterward *The Warsaw Ghetto*].
18. Text of Anielewicz’s purported letter of March 13, 1943, in Gutman, *The Jews of Warsaw*, 358; Zuckerman’s reaction to it: Zuckerman, *A Surplus of Memory*, 358.
19. Lazar, *Muranowska 7*, 11f.
20. Hanna Krall, *Shielding the Flame: An Intimate Conversation With Dr. Marek Edelman*, trans. by Joanna Stasinska & Lawrence Weschler. (New York: Henry Holt, 1986), 4f.
21. Ringelblum, *Polish-Jewish Relations*, Editorial Appendix, 253–56.
22. Quoted in David Wdowinski, *And We Are Not Saved* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1985), 13.
23. Gutman, *The Jews of Warsaw*, 345.
24. Chaika Grossman, *The Underground Army: Fighters of the Bialystok Ghetto* (New York: Holocaust Library, 1987), 285 [afterward *The Underground Army*].
25. Grossman, *The Underground Army*, 414–20; Reuben Ainsztein, *Jewish Resistance in Nazi-Occupied Eastern Europe* (New York: Harper & Row, 1974), 527, 537 [afterward *Jewish Resistance*].
26. Ludwik Landau, *Kronika lat wojny i okupacji* [Chronicle of the War and Occupation] (Warsaw: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1962), 2: 223.
27. Kermish, “Postscript,” 290.
28. Yitzhak Arad, *The Partisan: From the Valley of Death to Mount Zion* (New York: Holocaust Library, 1979), 118 [afterward *The Partisan*].
29. Arad, *The Partisan*, 151.

30. Yitzhak Arad, "Jewish Family Camps in the Forests," *Rescue Attempts during the Holocaust: Proceedings of the Second Yad Vashem International Historical Conference, 1974* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1977), 345–48; A. Zwi Bar-On, "The Jews in the Soviet Partisan Movement," *Yad Vashem Studies*, IV (1960), 173f.
31. Joseph Tenenbaum, *Underground* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1952), 407.
32. Shmuel Krakowski, *The War of the Doomed: Jewish Armed Resistance in Poland, 1942–1944*, trans. by Orah Blaustein (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1984), 16, 23, 298f [afterward *The War of the Doomed*]; Shmuel Krakowski, "The Polish underground and the Jews in 1943–1944," in Yisrael Gutman and Shmuel Krakowski, *Unequal Victims: Jews and Poles During World War Two*, trans. by Ted Gorelick and Witold Jedlicki, (New York: Holocaust Library, 1986), 125ff; Kermish, "Postscript," 290.
33. Thus, for example, the 18-men strong unit of "White Janek" Szwarcfus was armed with a submachine gun, two rifles, five shot guns, nine pistols, and some hand grenades. On this, see: Tadeusz Pietrzak et al., eds., *Warszawa–Prawa Podmiejska, 1942–1944* [Suburban Warsaw–The Right Bank, 1942–1944] (Warsaw: MON, 1973), 390 [afterward *Warszawa–Prawa Podmiejska*].
34. Pietrzak, *Warszawa–Prawa Podmiejska*, 382, 385, 674; Garas, *Oddziały GL i AL*, 128.
35. On the upkeep of the Home Army's partisans, see Krakowski, *The War of the Doomed*, 298; Maria Fieldorf and Leszek Zachuta, *General "Nil": August Fieldorf* (Warsaw: PAX, 1993), 302f, 307.
36. Pietrzak, *Warszawa–Prawa Podmiejska*, 674.
37. Zuckerman has nothing to say about Adam Szwarcfus or Gabriel Fryszdorf beyond a brief statement that the latter was "killed in the forest" and his wife, Hanna, was brought back to Warsaw (pg. 403). On Szwarcfus and his last stand at Krawcowizna, see Garas, *Oddziały GL i AL*, 129; Pietrzak, *Warszawa–Prawa Podmiejska*, 92, 390, 764. On Fryszdorf, see Garas, *Oddziały GL i AL*, 130; Pietrzak, *Warszawa–Prawa Podmiejska*, 385, 395, 686, 688. On Fryszdorf, see also: Vladka Meed, *On Both Sides of the Wall*, trans. by Moshe Spiegel and Steven Meed (Tel Aviv: Ghetto Fighters House, 1972), 280f, 285.

**Kobi Ben-Simhon's Article "World of our (god)fathers,"  
*Haaretz*, Tel Aviv, November 2, 2004**

**World of our (god)fathers**

*By Kobi Ben-Simhon*

Basing his conclusions on carefully culled scraps of evidence, historian **Mordechai Zalkin** states that until World War II, the underworld in Warsaw, Vilna, Odessa and other large cities was controlled largely by Jewish syndicates. By 'our' people.

He takes them out with two hands and makes room for them. The stories are spread on the table. Historian Motti Zalkin looks at the dozens of documents that he has brought up to his fifth-floor office and smiles. The characters who form the background of the history of the Jewish people are enfolded in photocopied pages, waiting for it to happen. He prefers the small-scale histories, Zalkin says. He is a historian who doesn't like to deal with the central currents.

Dr. Mordechai Zalkin, senior lecturer in the Department of the History of the Jewish People at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev in Be'er Sheva, is sitting opposite shelves crammed with books. On the top shelf is a hefty collection of vodka bottles that he has brought back from his travels, during which he looked for documentary material on Jewish criminal organizations in Eastern Europe. His studies indicate that until World War II, the underworld in Warsaw, Vilna, Odessa and other large cities was controlled largely by Jewish syndicates. By "our" people.

Outside his office, workers are dragging a table along the corridor and whispering. The corridor goes on like an endless pipe, winding through a vast concrete structure, which preserves an academic silence, a late-afternoon tranquillity. Zalkin takes the conversation into the backyard of Jewish history, in mid-19th and early-20th century Eastern Europe. He spends a lot of his time there, trying to apprehend Jewish criminals who know no God.

**Mystery man**

The mystery surrounding the identity of "harodef hane'alam" (literally, the "pursuer who disappeared") remains intact. The so-called "pursuer" belonged to the realm of institutionalized crimes that were perpetrated in the Jewish communities of Eastern Europe 150 years ago. His identity was one of the communities' best-kept secrets. His task: to hire mercenary killers to operate against people who threatened the community. He was chosen from within a small leadership group and only the group's members knew his identity. The local leadership entrusted him with responsibility for the community's internal security.

This man left behind a great many traces and thereby became an intriguing Jewish legend. "Every community of the time had its informers," Dr. Zalkin says. "It was a profession -- just as there was a rabbi and a shoemaker, there was also an informer. As long as the informing concerned only 'small' matters, everything proceeded smoothly -- the informer earned his pay and nothing happened. The problem arose when the informers gave the authorities information that was liable to harm the integrity of the community concretely."

This was why the communities established a security apparatus headed by an official anonymous "pursuer."

There is very little documentation on the subject, Zalkin notes:

"The Slonim community in White Russia inserted regulations concerning the 'pursuer who disappeared' into their charter. The man's position is also mentioned in the ledger of the Minsk community. In 1836 the body of a Jew was found in the river next to the town of Oshitz, in the Ukraine. The investigation turned up the fact that his name was **Yitzhak Oxman**. He was an informer, usually passing on information about Jews who evaded military service or tax payments. Some people in the community decided that Oxman had gone too far and that he, along with another Jew, **Shmuel Schwartzman**, had to be liquidated. The police

investigation got nowhere. No one in the community revealed who gave the order to murder the two Jews, but the person responsible was probably the unknown ‘pursuer.’”

In another case, a member of the Jewish community broke under police interrogation, revealing the existence of the secret apparatus. **Hirsch Ben Wolf**, whose father was a well-known rabbi in Vilna, left home and converted to Christianity. The view was that a convert was liable to endanger the community he sprang from, so it was decided to kidnap Ben Wolf.

Zalkin: “In the police investigation one of the Jews testified that there was an apparatus within the community with the power to harm people and even to do away with them.”

While the “pursuer” remained in the shadows, Jewish underworld figures roamed the streets without fear. Everyone knew them, they even entered Jewish literature. In his work, “In the Vale of Tears,” **Mendele Mocher Sforim** (penname of **Shalom Jacob Abramovitch**, 1835 -- 1917) provides an exceptional description of one type of Jewish criminal organization, cruel and dark. In the novel Jewish mobsters use underhanded methods to kidnap Jewish girls from poor, remote towns and then force them to work as prostitutes.

This was a fairly common phenomenon. The Jewish society described here by Mendele is perverted and rotten. Sixteen-year-old Biela, from the town of Kavtsiel, falls victim to this well-oiled scheme. She was promised work in a household and one of the prostitutes explains what she must do: “The virgins of Kavtsiel are in demand here, and if they are clever and know why they are in demand, they end up getting rich and everyone is happy.” The innocent Biela doesn’t have a clue about what is meant, but afterward learns from the older prostitutes and the pimps how to be seductive and how to perform.

Dr. Zalkin is familiar with the phenomenon. He pulls a book by an American researcher from one of the shelves. The entire volume is about Jewish organizations that rounded up Jewish girls and sold them into prostitution. Zalkin says he can map the network of Jewish brothels in 19th-century Eastern Europe, but immediately reneges.

“That plum I won’t give you,” he says with pleasure.

#### Rubles and jewelry

One of the major episodes in which a Jewish criminal organization was involved occurred in Vilna in February 1923. It received unusual coverage in the local Yiddish paper. For four consecutive days the paper’s lead stories dealt with the events.

A Jewish gang that called itself the “Gold Flag” kidnapped a boy from a wealthy family for ransom. According to the police, the man behind the kidnapping, **Berl Kravitz**, had belonged to the Capone gang in the United States a few years earlier. **Zelig Levinson**, the head of Gold Flag, gave the green light for the operation to proceed despite objections by some of the gang’s members.

The kidnap victim was **Yossele Leibovitch**, a student in the Hebrew Gymnasium in Vilna. His father was a money lender. The kidnapping was done by **Abba Vitkin** and his assistant **Reuven Kantor**. The two grabbed Yossele as he left school, bundling him into a peasant cart. The ransom note sent to the family declared: “Money or death.” The kidnapers demanded 15,000 rubles plus gold, diamonds and pearls in return for the boy.

Yossele was held in Vitkin’s house. “The moment it became clear that a child had been kidnapped, all the forces aligned themselves against Gold Flag,” Zalkin says. “The Jewish community, the police -- everyone cooperated.” A wave of arrests followed. Finally the gang decided that enough was enough and returned the boy to his neighborhood. That same day the headline of the local paper was “How the kidnapped boy was returned.” The sub-headline, Zalkin says, translating from the Yiddish, was “Yossele Leibovitch’s own story; 12 arrested, including the member of the Capone gang in America; how the child kidnapper was caught.”

The next day the paper’s lead story described how the police reached the kidnapers. The headline of March 1 revealed that “Gold Flag planned to kidnap another child.” The rival organization to Gold Flag was the “Brothers Society,” the federation of the Jewish thieves in Vilna -- they even had a secretary who

represented the society vis-a-vis the community's institutions. One of the society's missions was to provide legal assistance to members that were arrested and placed on trial, and to smuggle people who were wanted by the police out of the city. The Brothers Society was known for the original names its members were given -- such as "Yankele the Pipe," "Avraham the Anarchist," "Tall Elinke" and "Arka Moneybags."

"The thieves and criminals were part of the local folklore, part of the daily reality. The Jewish underworld was also reflected in song, in literature and in the press," Zalkin says as he takes out a book of old folk songs and recites one of them. "There is music for it, too," he says. "Here, this song tells about someone whose mother is a thief and whose father is a thief, whose sister does what she does and whose brother is a smuggler." Looking up from the page, Zalkin explains that historians ascribe great importance to folk songs. "They spring from the actual situation, they are very authentic, a very important way to express social feelings."

A report dated February 1905 from the Hebrew paper *Hazman* ("The Time"), which was published in Vilna, sheds light on one of the sophisticated methods of operation of the Jewish criminals. They seem to have had no shame. According to the item, **Gershon Sirota**, one of the world's leading cantors, was robbed. "They did steal clothing and other items," the paper states, adding that the thieves let it be known to the cantor that they were ready to return the property, on one condition: "That he pay them a ransom of 25 rubles in cash and pray in the synagogue twice out of turn ... Because the prayer leader has been stingy with prayers and thus their profits were reduced and they couldn't make money."

Zalkin explains:

"They wanted something very precise from him. The thieves asked Sirota to give cantorial concerts in midweek, because on Shabbat people didn't bring their wallets with them to the synagogue, and the thieves needed a crowd with wallets and purses. The two concerts in fact took place, the pickpockets had plenty of work and the cantor's property was returned to him."

#### School for thieves

Vilna was not an exceptional hothouse of crime. Organizations like Gold Flag and the Brothers Society operated also in Warsaw, Odessa, Bialystok and Lvov. Zalkin explains the context: The late 19th and early 20th century were bad years, in which the Jews of Eastern Europe did their best simply to survive. People didn't know where their next meal was coming from, whole families were crowded into cellars the size of a regular room. Masses of people lived from hand to mouth. Whoever could, emigrated, mainly to America. Between 1888 and the outbreak of World War I, in 1914, two million Jews from Eastern Europe moved to America.

These people were driven not by great ideologies but by sheer want. At the same time, though, the want nourished the ideologies. "For days on end I was genuinely hungry," Ben-Zion Dinur (1884-1973), a historian who was Israel's education minister from 1951-1955, wrote in his autobiography, "In a World that Declined." Poverty and a sense of hopelessness were fertile ground for people searching for a detour en route to making a living.

"People realized that they had little prospect of advancing on the normal track," Zalkin notes.

"The major catalyst for the consolidation of the Jewish criminal organizations was poverty, poverty so profound that there was no chance to break out of it. The Jews had it even harder, because they were a minority within a majority that placed restrictions on them."

Until World War I, however, Jews had been a key element in the population of Eastern Europe. "From a certain point of view, these were Jewish cities," Zalkin explains. "For example, 50 percent of the residents of Vilna were Jews. Because most of the cities had a large Jewish population, it follows that the percentage of Jews involved in crime was also [proportionately] high. The biggest gangster in Odessa, a huge city, was none other than Benya Krik" -- the same one from the title of the book by the Soviet-Jewish author Isaac Babel: "*Benya Krik, The Gangster, and Other Stories.*"

Jews could be found at almost all levels of underworld activity, from the individual thief to gangs that numbered more than 100 members. The large organizations operated in the cities, which they divided into

sectors among themselves. Each organization had a charter, a clear hierarchy and internal courts, and its work was divided according to different areas, such as theft, protection money, prostitution, pickpocketing and murder. The art of crime was treated seriously, as it was a major source of livelihood for many people. Between the world wars the idea was even raised of establishing a school for thieves in Vilna. It's not known if the idea was put into practice.

In 19th-century Russia the best place to rob people was on the roads. There weren't enough policemen and there were a great many forests. The convoys that traveled the roads were easy pickings. Saul Ginzburg, one of the important historians of Russian Jewry, describes groups of Jewish thieves, whom he calls "toughs and predators." After the heist the thieves slipped away into the woods. A typical gang of roadside robbers numbered between 10 and 15 men, who provided for themselves and their families by means of their booty.

One of the most famous roadmen, Dan Barzilai, a Jew by all accounts, who ran a well-known gang of thieves in the Warsaw area, was captured in 1874. His gang had 27 members, 14 of them Jews. They descended upon estates around Warsaw and attacked merchants' coaches on the roads, making off with furs, jewelry and horses. A Polish researcher found statements made by the accused men after their arrest, as preserved in the files of the police. The statement by the accused, Yaakov Yankel, began as follows: "I am Yaakov Yankel from the city of Yanov. My mother Leah is still alive, my father died six years ago. I am 24 years old."

Yankel went on to describe the robbery in the wake of which he was apprehended, along with seven of his accomplices:

"We were standing in the forest next to Glokhov, without going onto the road. We left the wagons in the forest, and two of us, Hershak the wagoner and Shlomke, and we eight went by foot to the estate. Dan and Lieber had three pairs of pistols and wore masks ... First they started to smash windows ... We stayed there for about an hour and filled up three bags with things and then went to the wagons."

#### No end to information

Mordechai Zalkin has spent much of the past 13 years burrowing in Eastern European archives. They are his laboratory, the place where he looks for the remote margins of Jewish history and brings them to life in his academic work.

"When I work in an archive in Eastern Europe, and it doesn't matter whether it's in St. Petersburg or Moscow, one of the things that interests me is the collection of police files," he says. "What used to be classified intelligence files are now open. The police collected information as part of their work, and when I open the files, from 150 years ago, I find detailed reports about Jewish criminals. The archives have enough material for 100 historians and for 100 years, and even then they won't finish."

Zalkin is respectful of every document he finds. "This, for example, is a document from 1820, from the archives in Lithuania," he says, holding it up. It's a leaflet, in Yiddish and Polish, published by the rabbinical and political leaderships of one of the Jewish communities, threatening a boycott of anyone who engages in smuggling or gives shelter to smugglers.

"At that time the Jews smuggled everything that moved and in some places the Russian authorities pressured the leaders to take action before they intervened," Zalkin relates. "A leaflet like this shows that smuggling was a concrete social phenomenon that characterized the Jewish community, not a marginal issue."

The task of reconstruction is long and arduous and ridden with disappointments. It's only rarely that a lead turns up that can be followed, in the form of the description of an event in the local press, a detail from a book, a document of a Jewish community. This triggers an exhausting search for additional details and cross-references, with the constant expectation of the moment at which the picture will begin to clarify itself and metamorphose into a coherent story. "In the end it's all stories," Zalkin says. "We historians, like journalists, are always after a good story."

The most exciting moments in the archives are not necessarily related to Zalkin's specific field of research. Holocaust survivors and relatives of Zalkin who know about his work in Eastern Europe often ask him to look for information about their families. One woman, for example, furnished him with information about her older brother, who was a student at the university in Kovno, was taken away by the Nazis and never heard from again. "I knew which university he attended, so I was able to find his student file," Zalkin says. "I brought the whole file to Israel, including letters he wrote, certificates and a photograph of him. It is very moving to hold a file like that in one's hands."

#### The Haganah connection

The Jewish mobsters in the United States are far more widely known than those of Eastern Europe and have been the subjects of quite a few films and books. The gangsters Bugsy Siegel and Meyer Lansky have become legendary figures.

Ten years ago Prof. Robert Rockaway, from the department of Jewish history at Tel Aviv University, published the first important study of these criminal organizations (in English: *But He Was Good to His Mother: The Lives and Crimes of Jewish Gangsters*, Gefen Publishing House, paperback edition, 2000). According to Rockaway's findings, the vast majority of the Jewish criminals in America were from Eastern Europe or the sons of immigrants from there. They did not continue a tradition of crime, but created a home-grown tradition in their new homeland.

Generally, the reason for their criminal activity was not to obtain bread, but butter. Most of the Jewish criminals in the U.S. were from working-class families and grasped at a very early age that hard work was not a recipe for economic advancement. They didn't have capital to invest, and the underworld offered a way to get rich quick.

Jews were among the biggest criminals in the U.S. at the beginning of the last century. "In terms of crime they did everything," Rockaway says. "Drugs, murder, smuggling alcohol. They had no limits. A Jew, Arnold Rothstein, was the head of the New York underworld in the 1920s. He created the largest gambling empire the U.S. have ever seen until then. He controlled most of the gangs in New York, including drugs and liquor. Rothstein was the first entrepreneur in the U.S. who created a well-oiled organization to smuggle liquor during Prohibition."

Another Jew, Abner Zwillman, ruled the crime syndicate in New Jersey for 30 years from his Newark base. As a boy he acquired the nickname "Der Langer," "the Tall One" in Yiddish, or "Longy" in the Jersey version. Together with another Jew, Joseph Reinfeld, he ran the largest and most profitable contraband organization in the U.S. The two imported about 40 percent of the alcohol that entered the country during the Prohibition era. U.S. Treasury officials stated that between 1926 and 1933 Zwillman took in more than \$40 million from his smuggling operation (more than half-a-billion dollars in today's terms). He translated his vast economic clout into political power. In the 1940s, the mayor of Newark, three of his deputies and four city councilmen needed his approval to get the nod for their posts.

Jewish-American gangsters also helped in the struggle for Israel's creation during the 1940s. In his book, Rockaway describes how an emissary of the pre-state Haganah defense organization (the forerunner of the Israel Defense Forces) approached Meyer Lansky, one of the major players in the crime scene in America, and with his intervention, shipments of weapons and military equipment were smuggled out of New York harbor, bound for Palestine. Lansky wasn't the only one. According to Rockaway, other Jews from the underworld donated tens of thousands of dollars to the Haganah.

#### Shmuel Isser's bunker

Members of the Jewish underworld are absent from the well-known narrative of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising in 1943, but were involved in the day-to-day life of the ghetto, and their connection to the Jewish underground groups during the uprising is a fascinating episode. The Nazi Aktion to liquidate the ghetto was launched on the eve of Passover, 1943. When the Nazis encountered resistance they used flamethrowers to set fire systematically to building after building in the ghetto. On May 8 they uncovered the central bunker of the Jewish Fighting Organization, at 18 Mila Street. What is less known is that this symbol of tenacity of the revolt, the fighters' headquarters, where the commander of the uprising, **Mordechai Anielewicz**, fought until his death, belonged to the Jewish criminal **Shmuel Isser**.

Prof. **Israel Gutman** from the Yad Vashem Holocaust remembrance authority, who took part in the Warsaw Ghetto uprising as a boy of 15, doesn't remember Isser. "I can't say that I spoke with a character like that," Gutman says. "The underground was an ideological body which didn't have anything to do with people like that." On the other hand, Gutman definitely acknowledges the contribution of underworld types to the life of the community in the ghetto.

"The criminal organizations in the ghetto were somehow able to create an important mode of existence," he says. "The ghetto lived from smuggling -- above the wall, through the gates by cajoling the police, under the wall. The property that remained in the hands of the Jews was transferred to the other side [of the wall], and that is what the criminal organizations dealt in. It was a highly organized business."

As for the fighting against the Nazis, Gutman says, the criminal groups "played a minimal role. Their main involvement was in smuggling, which was the ghetto's key to life. They also employed a great many assistants. There was an underground economy in the ghetto -- workshops, small, illegal factories, which created a survival base for quite a few people in the ghetto. The economic foundation that those organizations created helped support the community's existence." In his book on the Jews of Warsaw during the war years, Gutman estimates that 80 percent of the ghetto's foodstuffs were smuggled in.

The professional smugglers -- a euphemism for underworld figures -- lived a debauched life in the ghetto. They made a great deal of money very quickly and became the social elite. They brought in luxury items such as sweets or other goods that earned them large profits. In the book, Gutman quotes one person's testimony: "The smugglers had enormous revenues ... most of them accumulated millions. The smugglers were the richest class in the ghetto and were glaringly set apart from the gray, meager and hungry Jewish quarter. The easy profits and the uncertainty about tomorrow led the smugglers to spend all their spare time drinking, visiting night clubs and in the company of women."

In the end, the admired fighters and the members of the underworld linked up. Based on their ideological approach, the members of the Jewish Fighting Organization did not build bunkers. Their basic assumption was that they would fight to the end, so no withdrawal or escape routes were planned (the other underground group in the ghetto, the Jewish Military Organization, led by the Revisionists, built a protected, well-equipped bunker with an underground passage out of the ghetto). When the members of the Jewish Fighting Organization found that they could no longer move about and hide aboveground, because of the Germans' flamethrowers, they had no choice but to take cover in underground bunkers. The largest and best equipped of these fortified sites were those of the underworld.

According to **Havi Ben Sasson**, 32, a doctoral student who works at the International School for Holocaust Studies at Yad Vashem, the Jewish criminal organizations were part of the Warsaw landscape. In the course of a few hours of archival research and reading of testimonies, she was able to come up with a great deal of information: "At Mila 18, which became one of the symbols of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising, a concrete connection existed between the Jewish underworld and the Jewish Fighting Organization," Ben Sasson says. "In fact, that bunker was built by and belonged to people from the Warsaw underworld. It was a huge shelter, with a number of rooms, a power hookup and even a well for water. Tremendous amounts of food were stored there, which the underworld was able to bring into the ghetto, thanks to its connections with the Polish underworld."

The leader of the bunker was Shmuel Isser, Ben Sasson says. He dealt mainly in the production of illegal goods, which were smuggled out of the ghetto.

"We have a number of testimonies about this from fighters who survived," she notes. "Those who succeeded in getting out of the bunker definitely say that the bunker belonged to people of the underworld and that the fighters were received their like princes. Shmuel Isser's bunker was intended to hold his family, which numbered between 80 and 100 people. It was one of the best equipped bunkers in the ghetto."

"Every self-respecting bunker made sure it had weapons for self-defense, and the members of the underworld were definitely self-respecting, so I have no doubt that weapons were stored there, too. That was why the Jewish Fighting Organization chose Mila 18. What happened was that the people of the underworld let the people of the underground into their bunker. According to testimonies, the underworld

people also served as guides for the fighters. They were familiar with the ghetto even after it was burned and its form changed.”

### False image

This is actually a war of images. Dr. Zalkin wants to draw us a different social portrait. “What interests me is the ordinary person,” he says. “I am not interested so much in the great rabbis and the philosophers. I am interested in the society, the people. My studies go in that direction. As a social historian, I map and classify the society, and when I came to all the places that have to do with the social history of the Jews in the 19th century and in the period between the world wars, I didn’t have to go looking for crime. It was simply there, leaping up everywhere.”

In his Jerusalem home Zalkin has a large collection of books on crime. Criminals would never believe how much has been written about them. He himself isn’t sure what attracts him to these dark corners -- to these dubious, often violent, characters.

“The assumption among researchers is that your field of study doesn’t necessary say anything about your inclinations,” Zalkin says evasively, but adds an argument that is both very mainstream and very provocative.

“In my view, what shapes the great historical processes is not the great figures, but the masses. You can ask of any historical study why it is important. Why is it important to study Moses Mendelssohn, or David Ben-Gurion? In my opinion, historical research is vastly important for shaping the contemporary consciousness of the society. What I want to say is that beyond my interest as a historian, the contribution of this research lies in understanding that, with all respect to us, the image that all the Jewish children went to heder [religious school] and studied Torah and were great religious scholars is mistaken or invented. My argument is that the Jews were a normal society.”

If this conversation had taken place before World War II, that argument would not have surprised anyone. Jewish society knew itself. “After the Holocaust,” Zalkin says, “there was an inclination to view the Jewish world through a rosier prism. Zionist historiography had a vested interest in drawing a distinction between the ‘new Jew,’ the pioneer-farmer, and the wretched, pale ghetto Jew who studied in the yeshiva and was a moneylender. The image today is that they were all righteous and saintly. But it just wasn’t so.”

## Preliminary Report on the NBC Miniseries “Uprising”

(broadcast November 4 & 5, 2001)

### All references to Poles are uniformly negative and many are simply untrue:

- it is falsely claimed that Poland surrendered to Germany after less than a month of fighting: the September 1939 campaign lasted 36 days, with the last major battle of Kock ending October 6, when Hitler announced the end of the campaign against Poland in the Reichstag
- a German officer reports to General Stroop that the Jews have held off the Germans longer than the entire country of Poland—a propaganda touch worthy of Goebbels: this is demonstrably false—the ghetto revolt lasted 20–28 days and the events are not at all comparable in magnitude; note that the words were spoken well before the bunker at 20 Miła Street (ŻOB headquarters) is captured, which occurred on May 8, i.e. 20 days after the revolt began, the implied suggestion being that Poland was defeated in well under 20 days (i.e. well before Warsaw fell on September 27)—so the “Big Lie” appears to be rooted in the Communist propaganda ploy that Poland fell before the Soviet invasion on September 17, something which would be close to the heart of Mordechai Anielewicz, who championed the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact, which dismembered Poland, as a “wise and justified” move
- a Polish woman is shown pointing out a Jew in a German bread line (recall that, at that time, in the Soviet zone, Jews were fingering, capturing and guarding Polish officials, officers and soldiers and handing them over to the Soviet invaders)
- a Polish guide betrays one of the main characters (Anielewicz’s friend), who tries to cross over the mountains to Romania (?)—he is captured and tortured by the horsemen who were possibly dressed in Polish uniforms (they did not look like Germans), though there was no such Polish formation in the services of the Germans
- 23 Jewish hostages are taken and shot because a Polish police officer was roughed up—they were allegedly executed for crimes against the Polish people, the suggestion being that Germans were protecting Polish interests when they were not
- Jewish girls are allegedly forced to go over to the Aryan side in order to earn money as prostitutes (no such known account exists)
- Polish blackmailers are shown on the Aryan side, whereas Jewish agents and denouncers were just as dangerous
- walking around on the Aryan side Zivia encounters Polish szmalcownikis (blackmailers)—but there were also Jewish traitors, especially Gestapo agents lurking about
- the mass in St. John’s Cathedral with its blasphemous imagery (Christian beliefs are allegedly responsible for what was happening, and Christians are allegedly indifferent, at best, to the suffering of the Jews) is intended to be an indictment of Polish society; but what could Poles have done and why shouldn’t they have celebrated mass on the holiest day of the Christian calendar—after all the Jews in the ghetto commemorated Passover during the revolt; note that this mass saved Zivia from the blackmailers, and even though she did not cross herself after receiving Communion, which and would have immediately given her away as a Jew, no one turned her in, not even the priest or the nun at the back of the church (obviously this wasn’t written consciously and would doubtless come as a complete surprise to the script writers & their historical consultant); a technical point, but again very telling: stained glass windows don’t open in historic churches like St. John’s Cathedral, so having the priest insist that they be closed to keep out the noise and smoke (a symbolic averting of eyes) is a crude anti-Polish/Catholic hoax—something that has never stopped Hollywood; “Uprising” is determined to conceal the well-known fact that the ŻOB liaison people on the Aryan side used to meet and stay over at the Carmelite convent on Wolska Street, just outside the ghetto wall, and even stored weapons for the revolt there
- Zuckerman complains that the Polish Home Army won’t give the Jews any more weapons, without having mentioned that they had already provided two shipments of weapons; more importantly blaming the Poles for not providing rifles is simply dishonest: the People’s Guard (GL) delivered 28 rifles to Zuckerman the day the revolt started but not only did he not make

any effort to deliver them to the ghetto, he never even told the ŻOB about them because he didn't know how to ship them

- some of Zuckerman's lines during the meeting with the Polish Home Army anticipate some of the crude anti-Polish propaganda mouthed by acknowledged bigots like Begin and Shamir: "maybe you're secretly grateful to the Nazis"
- the portrayal of Polish guides (drunkards and cowards who did not show up when needed and who would have turned back if not threatened at gunpoint) is uniformly negative, even though many Jews were able to leave the ghetto with Polish assistance

**Some episodes are obviously concocted—an exercise in deception and myth-building:**

- one scene shows a Jewish ghetto fighter shooting some Germans in the ghetto before the great deportation (this allegedly occurs when some Jewish musicians are forced to play their musical instruments for some German soldiers)
- during the great deportation, when some 265,000 Jews are deported to Treblinka in the summer of 1942, the Jewish police are conspicuously absent even though they played a major role in the round-up of the Jews (otherwise, the portrait of ghetto life that included wealthy gangsters, the Judenrat, and Ghetto police, although true, was quite surprising for an American film)
- Janusz Korczak, the famed educator, received an offer of rescue from his Polish colleagues which he heroically turned down, whereas in the film a German officer is shown as trying to save him from boarding a train headed for Treblinka
- there is no mention that the fledgling Jewish ghetto organization (ŻOB) was decimated because of Jewish Gestapo agents during the great deportation
- news about Treblinka is shown as being first gathered by a Jewish scout, whereas in fact that information had already been conveyed by Polish railway men, and a Jew simply went to confirm it
- the ŻOB organization announces it will send a map of Treblinka to England via one of its couriers on the Aryan side (Sawicka), the suggestion being that this is a Jewish courier: in fact, all messages from the ghetto to the West were conveyed by Polish couriers who were part of the Home Army or answered directly to the Delegate of the Polish government in exile in London; in the second episode, it is mentioned briefly that the "Polish" courier must have gotten the message to London (for those who caught and understood it, this is the first and only positive reference to a Pole in the film)
- after the great deportation, but before the January 1943 assault on the ghetto, ŻOB members are shown as staging a spectacular assault on some Germans in a café, presumably on the Aryan side, killing a number of them and seizing their weapons; they are also shown blowing up a munitions depot—no such exploits ever occurred, rather these incidents are loosely based on events after January 1943, the most significant of which were carried out not by the ŻOB but by the ŻZW<sup>749</sup>
- during the January 1943 assault on the ghetto, the Jewish fighters are shown using and seizing automatic weapons, but it is known that they did not have these at the time, and only a few during the April 1943
- the scenes of fighting shown in "Uprising" bear little resemblance to the actual events of January 1943: the ŻOB was caught by surprise and only a few small groups took part in a street skirmish that lasted no more than 15 minutes; almost all of the ŻOB fighters fell and a

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<sup>749</sup> For example, in March 1943, an SS warehouse at 31 Nalewki Street was set on fire and two Germans were shot in the ghetto. Yitzhak Zuckerman claims this was the work of the ŻOB, and bemoans the retaliation that ensued (170 Jews from nearby houses were shot): "This enraged the people against us. Many of us also regretted it." Yitzhak Zuckerman ("Antek"), *A Surplus of Memory: Chronicle of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 316. Yisrael Gutman, the leading Jewish historian on this topic and a former ŻOB member, does not assign credit to the ŻOB for these accomplishments, and ŻZW sources maintain that it was they who torched the SS storage depot at 31 Nalewki Street. See Chaim Lazar Litai, *Muranowska 7: The Warsaw Ghetto Rising* (Tel Aviv: Massada-P.E.C. Press, 1966), 198–99.

- few German soldiers were killed; Anielewicz escaped and maybe one or two rifles & some revolvers were taken from the Germans, but no automatic weapons (as shown in the film)<sup>750</sup>
- in preparing for a revolt, there is no indication whatsoever of assistance received from Polish Home Army for the ŻOB organization in providing weapons, smuggling them into the ghetto, providing instructions on how to manufacture bombs, hand grenades, and incendiary bottles (the film falsely claims that a Jew who worked in a hospital taught them how to do this), and providing military training (the film falsely claims that the young ŻOB members were versed in military tactics and trained themselves); nor is there any mention in the film of Polish relief assaults on the ghetto wall and on German posts during the uprising
  - there is no mention of the activities of the second Jewish underground group in the ghetto, the Jewish Military Organization (ŻZW), which had close contacts with members of the Home Army, even though the ŻOB seems to want to take credit for their Polish flag and even though the ŻZW's tunnel under Muranowska Street is mentioned
  - a Polish flag is shown briefly in one scene flying next to a Jewish [Zionist] flag: the ŻOB fighters did not fly a Polish flag—Zuckerman makes it clear in his memoirs that the ŻOB would never do so; this was done by the ŻZW, the other Jewish fighting organization
  - the ŻOB never had a (heavy) machine gun during the April 1943 revolt (it only had a light machine gun and some automatic weapons)—that was a bit of propaganda inserted in a ŻOB report prepared by Yitzhak Zuckerman<sup>751</sup>
  - during some dialogue outside the ghetto Zuckerman says that the ŻOB “fought” or “held out” for six 6 hours: this 6-hour battle was also a fiction put in a report; moreover, generally speaking, the scale of the fighting and number of German casualties appear to be greatly exaggerated (in movies, Nazis are easy to kill and “Uprising” is no exception)
  - Zuckerman admits that pistols were of little use in street fighting, they needed rifles—but although the ŻOB had gathered 10 million zlotys to acquire arms, they acquired only pistols because rifles were thought to be too difficult to smuggle in, even though they knew as early

<sup>750</sup> Israel Gutman provided the following description: “Anielewicz chose a dozen fighters with pistols ... The fighters were to join the lines going to the *Umschlagplatz*, and at a certain point on the way and at a given signal, they were to burst out of the lines and attack the German guards escorting the queue. ... the signal was given and the battle began. Each Jewish fighter assaulted the nearest German. Even on a one-to-one basis, this was not a battle between equals. The Jews were armed with a few pistols and limited ammunition, while the Germans had semiautomatic rifles and ample ammunition. The Jews had the momentary advantage of surprise... After a few minutes, the Germans recovered from the shock of being attacked, and the initial forces were soon augmented by reserves. Most of the Jewish fighters fell in battle. ... Another group led by Yitzhak Zuckerman defended themselves from a house in Zamenhof Street. They had entrenched themselves in an apartment, and when the Germans entered to search, the fighters opened fire. ... According to some of the participants, two Germans were wounded. At the end of this defensive action, in which a Jewish fighter was killed, the group retreated to a house on Muranowska Street.” See Israel Gutman, *Resistance: The Warsaw Ghetto Uprising* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1994), 182–83.

<sup>751</sup> This is confirmed by Yisrael Gutman, *The Jews of Warsaw, 1939–1945: Ghetto, Underground, Revolt* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1982), 349. Marek Edelman describes the fighting thus: “But no, they did not scare us and we were not taken by surprise. We were only awaiting an opportune moment. Such a moment presently arrived. The Germans chose the intersection at Miła and Zamenhofa Streets for their bivouac area, and battle groups barricaded at the four corners of the street opened concentric fire on them. Strange projectiles began exploding everywhere (the hand grenades of our own make), the lone machine-gun sent shots through the air now and then (ammunition had to be conserved carefully), rifles started firing a bit farther away. Such was the beginning.” He compares this to the ŻZW fighting: “At the same time heavy fighting raged at Muranowski Square. Here the Germans attacked from all directions. The cornered partisans defended themselves bitterly and succeeded, by truly superhuman efforts, in repulsing the attacks. Two German machine-guns and a quantity of other weapons were captured. A German tank was burned, the second tank of the day.” See Marek Edelman, “The Ghetto Fights”, in *The Warsaw Ghetto: The 45th Anniversary of the Uprising* (Warsaw: Interpress, 1988), posted online at <<http://www.english.upenn.edu/~afilreis/warsaw-uprising.html>>.

as January 1943 that pistols were of little use (moreover, most of the money acquired for this purpose was not spent on arms or ever accounted for)

- interestingly, the movie admits that a Gestapo informer told the Germans where the Miła Street bunker was located—of course, it didn't say that it was a Jewish Gestapo agent
- as for a Jew ("Kazik") hijacking a truck with Polish writing driven by a Pole, that is yet another fabrication—the People's Guard (GL) arranged for the pick-up of the Jewish fighters at a manhole on Prosta Steet and took them by truck to a forest near Łomianki near Warsaw

## **Critique of the NBC Miniseries “Uprising”**

**Critique by Dr. John Radziłowski posted on H-Holocaust Net Discussion List on November 6, 2001:**

The first question to ask is whether it is possible to present to an American audience television shows that are both historically accurate and entertaining. Uprising is entertaining, certainly. Some of the scenes are very moving. I think the fear expressed on this list that Americans would equate some scenes with Israeli actions in the West Bank are completely unfounded. The conclusion of the film contains some strong endorsements of Israel (though veiled).

However, its historical accuracy is questionable at some points. It seems to veer into a post-modern approach to reality where truth is relative and depends on who is behind the camera. This is brought out in a series of scenes in Uprising featuring a Nazi filmmaker speaking with Gen. Stroop. The filmmaker repeats the line that a lie told often enough is believed as true.

The first half of the film is in some ways the best and in some ways the worst. The filmmaker clearly strove to portray a more complex picture of Ghetto life than has heretofore been shown in popular portrayals of the Holocaust. I was shocked to see them actually portraying Ghetto police in any way since at least in popular films on the Holocaust such a thing is taboo (and as we know from recent experience raising the subject of Jewish collaboration get one into hot water with “fellow scholars”). The role of Adam Czerniakow was well played by Sutherland. But, it was a reality that just as on the Polish side of the wall heroism coexisted with cowardice and treachery.

Aside from a few minor details (e.g., tomatoes in the market at the wrong time), the setting and the costumes were quite accurate. The tremendous resistance to the idea of armed rebellion among the Ghetto residents is underplayed and is shown as emanating mainly from the Judenrat. The first half was also a problem because from the standpoint of the average viewer with only rudimentary knowledge of the history of the Holocaust and Occupied Poland, much of the history is lost. The German invasion in 1939, the Ghettoization process, building of the wall, etc., are crunched together in a confusing way. The scene of Anielewicz’s attempted escape to Romania and Zionist camp outside of the city makes little sense, especially when interwoven with a variety of unrelated scenes that are used to develop the characters.

Anielewicz is uniformly heroic and romantic with some love scenes tossed in for various audiences that might otherwise be bored. Korczak’s part in the film was I think a mistake. (Was he really a go-between between the Jewish resistance and the Judenrat?!) It is put in to tug at the heartstrings but his story is so overwhelmingly powerful that it simply does not work as a sidelight.

The Uprising is shown as beginning on Jan. 18, 1943 which is questionable (to say the least). As one might expect, the resisters are shown as being equal to elite Israeli paratroopers in their fighting ability. (Nazis die easily in the movies.) The amount of arms captured in a couple of these encounters should have obviated the need for smuggling arms into the Ghetto. Alas, in real life it was not so. The heroism of the fighters would have been more poignant and realistic had they been shown as they were—ordinary civilians who had taken up arms in desperation.

The second half of the film has a more coherent story line but is far less accurate in its history. Many of the scenes are moving and appropriately heroic and I think if one of the stated goals of films was to show the Ghetto Uprising in a heroic light, it did succeed.

Here, however, we must turn to the question most responsible for angrying up the blood of certain members of H-Holocaust—namely Polish-Jewish relations.

In the first half of the film Poles barely appear at all (weapons and explosives appear as if by magic in the arms of couriers). In the second half, they are more frequent in appearance. The

filmmaker had a clear choice in several scenes, particularly those that show escape from the Ghetto via the sewers, to show Polish-Jewish cooperation and make this film a step toward better Polish-Jewish relations. Even if other scenes showed negative aspects of the wartime relationship, here was a chance to be historically accurate, socially responsible, and make a good story.

Sadly, the filmmaker made a deliberate choice to distort the past to show Poles in the most negative light possible and stimulate feelings of hatred toward Poles in the viewing audience (“the Eternal Pole!”). All Poles are cowards, drunks, or traitors.

Naturally we encounter the utter canard of comparing the Ghetto resistance to “the entire country of Poland” in 1939. (This line is placed in the mouth of a Nazi officer, a nice propaganda touch.) The AK is shown refusing all assistance (apparently on orders from London!) when in fact they had been providing aid all along. The Jewish underground is shown getting word of the Holocaust out to the free world, not the AK. The scene inside the Catholic Church, using sacred Catholic religious imagery, is extremely offensive. (All the more so when you know that Catholic religious institutions near the Ghetto directly assisted the smuggling of arms into the Ghetto.)

Also ignored are:

—Efforts by the AK to blow up part of the Ghetto Wall (April 19) in which two AK [Home Army] fighters were killed along with several Germans; and a second attempt to blow up a gate on April 23 in which 6 Germans were killed.

—Attacks on Nazi forces surrounding the Ghetto (on April 20 on an SS machine post by a force of the GL [People’s Guard]; on April 22 on a force of Lithuanian police by the AK)

—Constant sniping at German forces from the “Aryan” side as reported by Stroop and several other actions. According to Stroop, on April 22 his forces executed 35 “Polish bandits. ... At their execution the bandits collapsed shouting ‘Long Live Poland.’”

The role of Cpt. Henryk Iwański of the AK who entered the Ghetto with a detachment of his and fought alongside the Jewish resisters is ignored. They relieved exhausted Jewish fighters and repelled several German attacks. Iwanski lost his brother and both of his sons during the fighting. He was badly wounded and carried out through the sewers by his men who also led 34 Jewish fighters to safety through the sewers. Iwanski’s story is relatively well-known to Holocaust scholars and he was even decorated by the Israeli government after the war. Yet, even this was ignored.

So, again we see a filmmaker, advised by a senior Holocaust historian, who when given a choice (he cannot plead ignorance) of showing both positive and negative views of Poles and Polish-Jewish relations consciously chooses to show Poles in the worst light possible, even distorting the historical record to do so. All Polish characters are racist stereotypes. Again, either the filmmaker and his advisor are stupid (which I doubt) or this is deliberate. So when we ask why Polish-Jewish relations do not improve, we know right where to turn.

The end of the film contains several not-so-veiled references to the establishment of the state of Israel, which in itself is of passing interest.

In sum, although the film has some good aspects, this is a thoroughly post-modern work in which truth is a malleable quality. As the Nazi filmmaker in Uprising notes, whoever is behind the camera determines the truth and a lie repeated often enough is taken for truth. The eternal wisdom of Joseph Goebbels lives on in Hollywood.

### **Dr. John Radziłowski about the comparison of the Ghetto Uprising to the September Campaign:**

The first question to ask is why this comparison is being made at all, since the two situations were completely different. The destruction of Poland was a major objective of Nazi foreign policy (not to mention Soviet foreign policy). The Nazis and Soviets deployed huge armies with air, mechanized, and naval assets. The Ghetto Uprising was a very small action by comparison.

There is no need to demonstrate the heroism of one ethnic group by denigrating the heroism of another, especially when we consider that in both instances Poles and Jews fought together against a common enemy. There were Jewish soldiers in the Polish army in 1939 (and thereafter) and during the Ghetto Uprising 55 fighters of the Polish Home Army lost their lives assisting the Ghetto fighters (primarily the ŻZW and Bund).

The final German effort to liquidate the Ghetto began April 19, 1943, which is considered the start of the Uprising. Significant resistance continued until about April 23 (4 days) but fighting then continued as the Germans tried to burn out the Jewish survivors from their underground bunkers. The ŻOB commander died on May 8 and on May 16, Stroop blew up the Tłomackie Synagogue to signal the end of the Uprising: 28 days. German casualties were estimated by the Poles to be about 1,000 (dead and wounded; note that this is much higher than the German estimate of about 100).

Germany attacked Poland on Sept. 1, 1939. General Kleeberg's Group Polesie surrendered on Oct. 6, which ended significant resistance (36 days). (Resistance would have been prolonged by several weeks if Stalin's troops had not intervened to help his friend Adolf Hitler.) Fighting continued in forest areas, however, until December 1939 or January 1940, with small groups of soldiers being led in partisan operations by lower-level officers such as the legendary Major Hubal. If we use the same standard to judge the end of resistance as we do in the case of the Ghetto, Polish resistance then lasted almost five months.

Total German casualties to organized Polish resistance were about 48,000 (dead and wounded; this estimate may be low) through October 6, not to mention nearly 900 tanks, 500 aircraft, and one ship. (This amounted to about one fourth of all German tanks and one-fifth of all German aircraft.) Soviet losses were at least 1,000, but probably more, considering the fierce battles around the Sarny forts, the operations of Group Polesie, and the battle for Grodno.

It also should be stressed that although Polish units were forced to lay down their arms due to lack of ammunition and overwhelming opposition, Poland itself never surrendered.

We may compare this with other Nazi victims:

§ Belgium (May 10 to 26, 1940 or 16 days; formal capitulation)

§ Denmark (April 9 or 0 days, no resistance offered)

§ France (May 10 to June 17, 1940 or 38 days; formal capitulation on June 2)

§ Greece (April 6 to April 23 or 17 days [this came after fighting the Italians for 5 months]; armistice signed)

§ Netherlands (May 10 to May 14 or 4 days; army surrendered but Dutch Royal family escaped to Britain)

§ Norway (April 9 to June 10 or 62 days; Norwegian King and government escaped to Britain)

§ Poland (Sept. 1, 1939 to Oct. 6 or 36 days; no formal capitulation).

§ Yugoslavia (April 6 to April 17, 1941 or 11 days; formal capitulation)

In the French campaign of 1940 (which lasted almost the same amount of time as the Polish campaign), Allied forces outnumbered the Germans in manpower, tanks, aircraft, and ships. They had to defend a single border that was heavily fortified along most of its length. In addition, the Germans' strength was lessened by the need to commit troops to occupy Poland and Denmark to continue operations in Norway. Following the Allied defeat, there was no immediate effort to carry

on partisan warfare in Western Europe against the occupiers. This only emerged later in the war. In 1939, Poland faced almost the entire might of the German army including all its armored and air forces, the forces of Slovakia (a German ally), and some 50 divisions of the Red Army after Sept. 17. Poland was attacked from all directions and had minimal fortifications. Prior to the Battle of Stalingrad (1942), German army publications regularly described the Polish campaign in 1939 as the toughest battle of the war.

In short, there is no reason to denigrate the soldiers of the army who fought alone in 1939 without help from any ally or friend. The resistance of the Ghetto fighters was heroic in its own right and there is no need to set up a false competition or comparison between the two.

Although the Poles were not able to save the majority of Jews, many Jews were saved. The percentage of Jews rescued in Warsaw was similar to that percent rescued in Holland.

The Poles helped the Ghetto fighters. Poles gave arms and aid to the ŻZW and Bund but did not trust the ŻOB for a variety of reasons. The Poles only had enough weapons to arm 1 in 10 of their own underground forces, which is about the same percentage as Jewish fighters in the Ghetto.

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**Dr. John Radziłowski in response to criticism of his review, posted on H-Holocaust Net Discussion List on November 10, 2001:**

I agree, too, that we cannot expect a filmmaker to avoid a degree of artistic license. However, the film is portrayed as being factual and used a senior Holocaust historian as academic consultant. Furthermore, scholars, filmmakers, and authors who portray historical topics in a popular genre (especially very important topics like the Holocaust) have a duty not to distort the past, especially in the American case where such genres are a primary source of historical knowledge and shape the popular consciousness. To ignore the social implications of such work or to use the past to flog a particular party line is highly irresponsible. Even more so when the Holocaust is used in this way.

Although it is true that Uprising was not meant as a vehicle for portrayal of Polish-Jewish relations per se, please note that:

1. The filmmaker deliberately inserted certain scenes and situations that did portray that relationship in a distorted way;
2. The filmmaker himself raised the issue of Polish-Jewish relations as a major point (JTA interview) prior to any protest by Poles or Polish Americans and this was picked up in major media reviews of the miniseries (e.g., New York Times and Washington Post);
3. From the outset the filmmaker, NBC, and even the academic consultant promoted the distorted comparison between the Ghetto Uprising and the September Campaign.

From this we can conclude that there was some sort of agenda at work here!

Regarding Iwański, Dr. Manuel Bekier repeats the canard about his actions being unauthorized by the AK. This runs contrary to the evidence and to common sense since the AK was a military organization. Iwański was a highly placed officer in command of a significant detachment of troops and well trusted. He and the AK command were well aware of what was going on in the Ghetto and of the various Jewish factions. Nor were the contacts entirely with Iwański. Nor was Iwański the only AK member who assisted the Ghetto fighters (though his role was the most famous). The AK kept thorough reports and sent copies to London and no reprimands, courtmartials, etc., were issued to my knowledge. (Of course those who make bizarre claims about Poles generally don't bother with such petty details as sources.)

Bekier writes: “Correct me if I’m wrong, but didn’t the AK spend more effort killing Jews than Nazis?” This is the usual nonsense that we see emerging from the lips of pseudo-scholars like Yaffa Eliach. It demonstrates, however, the origin of the racist paradigm we see in *Uprising*: namely, revisionists who are flogging a political agenda and care not a whit about their responsibilities as scholars or the fact that they are promoting ethnic hatred.

*Historian Gunnar S. Paulsson also responded to this canard in unequivocal terms (posted on H-Holocaust Discussion Network on November 21, 2001): “The portrayal of the AK as a ‘fascist’ organization which ‘spent more of its time attacking Jews and Soviet partisans than the Germans’ is a propaganda relic of the Stalinist era which hasn’t been put forward by serious historians in about 45 years. The AK were neither angels nor devils; it is time to get away from both blind apologetics and blind denunciations and start writing some proper history.”*

On the question of Jews outside the Ghetto, Dr. Paulsson has written extensively on this topic. To wit: “As it happens, there is an excellent standard of comparison, because it is estimated that in the Netherlands, 20–25,000 Jews went into hiding—about the same number as in Warsaw—of whom 10–15,000 survived—again, about the same number. ... The conclusion, then, is quite startling: leaving aside acts of war and Nazi perfidy [e.g. Hotel Polski], a Jew’s chances of survival in hiding were no worse in Warsaw, at any rate, than in the Netherlands.” [Gunnar S. Paulsson, “The Rescue of Jews by Non-Jews in Nazi-Occupied Poland,” *The Journal of Holocaust Education*, vol. 7, nos. 1 & 2 (Summer/Autumn 1998): 19–44.] One should also note—further on Dr. Bekier’s remarks—that although Polish blackmailers and collaborators were a very significant danger to hidden Jews, the danger was not merely from Poles. Such people came from more than one ethnic background and more than one religious confession. There were a significant number of Jewish “catchers” and agents and these were also a real danger to those in hiding and their benefactors. (Which only goes to prove that human beings will act like human beings in such situations and that artificial attempts to prove the superior moral fiber of either Poles or Jews is bound to run aground on the shoals of reality sooner or later.)

Dr. Bekier writes: “The filmmaker did show indifference on the part of Polish church outside the ghetto. While the ghetto was burning, smoke came in through the church window during Easter services, and the only visible concern expressed was to close the window. The filmmaker couldn’t show a sermon being given to help their former Jewish neighbors, because it never happened.”

In fact, such sermons are noted by Emanuel Ringelblum. [On this and related cases, See Kazimierz Iranek-Osmecki, *He Who Saves One Life* (New York: Crown Publishers, 1971), 125, 126; Richard C. Lukas, *The Forgotten Holocaust: The Poles under German Occupation, 1939–1944* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1986), 141–42; Jacob Sloan, ed., *The Journal of Emmanuel Ringelblum* (New York: Schocken, 1974), 66, 68, 117.]

What is sad about this scene is that Catholic churches and convents inside and near the Ghetto were used to directly assist Jews in the Ghetto, including the Jewish resistance. Hanna Krall, among many others, records this [Hanna Krall, *Shielding the Flame: An Intimate Conversation with Dr. Marek Edelman, the Last Surviving Leader of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1986), 100–101.] I hope the reader will pardon my reproducing a fragment of Krall’s moving account:

“As the ŻOB’s representative on the Aryan side...Jurek Wilner used to get in touch all the time with “Wacław” and the [other Polish officers], and when he was unable to take all the packets to the Ghetto, he would leave them at [Henryk] Grabowski’s or with the Barefoot Carmelite nuns on Wolska Street: sometimes guns, sometimes knives, or even explosives. ...

I am sitting now in the same locutory on one side of a black iron bar, with the Mother Superior in a nook on the other side, at dusk, and we are talking about those arms transports for the Ghetto that went through the convent for almost a year.

Didn't they have any misgivings?

The Mother Superior does not understand... "After all, arms in such a place?" "You mean, perhaps, that arms serve to kill people?" asks the Mother Superior. No, for some reason she had never thought about it that way. Her only thought was for the fact that Jurek would eventually be making use of these arms and that when his last hour came, it would be good if he managed to make an act of contrition and make his peace with God. She even asked him to promise this to her, and now she asks me what I think; did he remember the promise when he shot himself in the bunker, at Miła Street? While Jurek and his friends were making use of those arms, the sky in this part of the town became red and this glow even reached into the convent's vestibule. That's why precisely there, and not in the chapel, the barefoot Carmelite nuns would gather each night and read psalms ("Yea, for Thy sake are we killed all the day long, we are counted as sheep for the slaughter. Awake! Why sleepest thou, oh Lord?"), and she prayed to God that Jurek Wilner might meet his death without fear."

Dr. Bekier's remarks on the Ghetto police are quite interesting: the Ghetto police were not collaborators, merely nice—but occasionally "over zealous"—Jewish boys just trying to put food on the table ("it's a tough job but..."). Others take a less charitable view. Zuckerman, for example: "But the Jews, the Jewish police, did the despicable work of the Germans. Some people try to defend them, others accuse them. What do I think is our great guilt, my guilt (since most of my comrades are no longer alive)? Our guilt was that immediately, from the first day, we didn't begin our harsh war against the Jewish police! Would we have saved the people? No! Absolutely not! But clearly the Germans wouldn't have done the job so easily or so fast, without the Jewish police. Because the Jews would certainly have run away from the Germans, but, when they saw a Jewish policeman, it didn't occur to them that he would lead them to their death. And the Jewish police knew, as I knew, and no later than I did, what Treblinka was, since it was the Jewish police themselves who brought the information about the slaughter taking place there." [See Yitzhak Zuckerman, *A Surplus of Memory: Chronicle of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 192–94, 196–97.]

And Ringelblum says: "During the time when there were blockades, the resettlement period, hideouts assumed a new importance. People took special pains to build good hiding places, because they had become a matter of life and death. Old folks, children, and women hid out there. ... In 90 percent of the cases it was the Jewish police who uncovered the hideouts. First they found out where the hideouts were; then they passed the information along to the Ukrainians and Germans. Hundreds and thousands of people are on those scoundrels' conscience." [Sloan, ed., *The Journal of Emmanuel Ringelblum*, 339–41.]

Of Dr. Bekier's intriguing theory I'll only add that he has certainly made the term "collaboration" a moveable feast and wonder about the application of his theory to the Polish Blue Police, who, after all, had families to feed as well. (What's sauce for the goose...) And what about the Ukrainian Trawniki men? And the SS and Gestapo footsoldiers? All "just following orders" with hungry mouths to feed. (I hope the gentle reader will not need to ponder this theory too long.) But I wish Dr. Bekier would explain why it was necessary for the ŻOB to execute so many of those nice but slightly overzealous Jewish boys in Ghetto police. That one does puzzle me.

### **Critique by Hanna Sokolska Critique posted on H-Holocaust Net Discussion List:**

Re: the letter by Dr. John Radziłowski that so offended Mr. Włodzimierz Rozenbaum. After reading Yisrael Gutman's book *The Jews of Warsaw, 1939-1943: Ghetto, Underground, Revolt* (Indiana University Press, 1982), I can confirm that:

- (1) the January 1943 events bear little resemblance to what was shown in the film;
- (2) the extent of German casualties alleged by Mr. Rozenbaum ("the Germans withdrew with 20 killed and 40 wounded SS and policemen") is an invention; and
- (3) Gutman identifies additional inventions and crucial omissions not mentioned by Dr. Radziłowski.

Gutman states (at pp. 312-15) that the Jews (and ŻOB) were caught by surprise and only a few small ŻOB groups took part in the January 18 skirmish which lasted maybe 15 minutes. “A number” of Germans were killed and wounded, while others fled. “Most of the Jewish fighters fell as well.” Anielewicz escaped. Perhaps a rifle and a revolver were captured but certainly no automatic weapons (as shown in the film). There was also a clash inside a building raided by the Germans where some 40 ŻOB members under Zuckerman’s command were stationed. Maybe two Germans were killed.

Gutman concludes: “We do not know how many German soldiers were killed and wounded in the January fighting, Neither do we have accurate information on the number of Jewish fighters who were lost or the names of all the fallen.” According to a Polish underground report published on January 29, about 12 gendarmes and S.S. men were killed and 10 (or more) were wounded.<sup>752</sup>

“Uprising” also features an extended scene showing the training of ghetto fighters and the manufacture of grenades and incendiary bottles. All the credit, of course, goes to ŻOB. In fact, it is claimed that a Jew who worked in a hospital showed them how to manufacture explosive devices and the explicit suggestion is that the young ŻOB members were versed in military tactics and trained themselves.

Gutman, at p. 345, thoroughly debunks those claims: “The local manufacture of weapons (following formulas obtained from the Poles) also contributed substantially to the arming of the ŻOB. Michael Klepfisz received special training in a course run by the military section of the PPS, and a group of Jews was trained in the use of explosives by the AK. Once a larger quantity of explosives had been smuggled into the ghetto with the aid of the Poles, the manufacture of incendiary bombs began in special arms workshops. ...they were used very effectively in the April revolt.” And later (at p. 357) Gutman again writes that the AK provided the formula for the manufacture of explosives.

Gutman also acknowledges (at p. 369) that it was the Polish underground who warned the ghetto underground, on April 18, that an Aktion might commence the next day. Otherwise ŻOB would have been caught off guard (again). Is it little wonder then that Marek Edelman has stated unequivocally that without the help of the Poles “we couldn’t have started the uprising”.

None of this finds its way into the film, nor the fact that the Home Army provided additional help in the form of weapons and materiel (one shipment in December 1942, another larger one in January 1943). Nor is there any mention that the Home Army took part in diversionary attacks outside the ghetto walls. According to reliable sources Cpt. Henryk Iwański of the Home Army’s Security Corps (KB) and his men actually fought and fell alongside the ŻZW inside the ghetto. Later they were to be decorated by Yad Vashem, some of them posthumously.

In a brief scene a Polish flag was shown flying alongside a Jewish [Zionist] flag in the film suggesting that this was the ŻOB’s doing. However, Yitzhak Zuckerman makes it clear in his memoirs (*A Surplus of Memory*) that it was not, nor would ŻOB have contemplated flying a Polish flag. Indeed Gutman confirms, as per Gen. Strop’s report, that the flag was hoisted by the Revisionist ŻZW, who are not mentioned at all in the film. The ŻZW, consisting of at least 250 well-equipped & well-trained fighters (vs. 500 ŻOB fighters—Gutman’s estimate), was in close contact with the Home Army throughout, and received extensive assistance from them before and

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<sup>752</sup> According to Simha Rotem, “When the second aktsia began on January 18, 1943, I and my companions in the ŻOB were determined to fight, but we had almost no weapons, except for a few scattered pistols. Our group of a few score members, including Zivia Lubetkin, possessed an arsenal of sticks, knives, iron bars, and anything that came to hand. We holed up in the attic waiting for the Germans to come, but they didn’t. In other places, where there were weapons, there was shooting, which amazed the Germans. A few of them were killed and their weapons were taken as loot...” See Simha Rotem (“Kazik”), *Memoirs of a Warsaw Ghetto Fighter: The Past Within Me* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1994), 18–19.

during the fighting, and in evacuating from the ghetto. As for why people like Anielewicz and Zuckerman of the ŻOB had no use for the Polish flag is explained by historian Teresa Prekerowa, herself a decorated Żegota member. There were strong pro-Soviet sentiments among certain Zionist factions and Leftist Zionists saw their future linked with the Communists, whom most Poles considered to be an enemy on par with the Nazis. The Hashomer Hatza'ir faction regarded the Soviet-German Non-Aggression Pact of August 1939, which partitioned Poland between those two invaders, to be a "wise and justified move." Anielewicz edited a periodical ("Neged Hazerem") that openly embraced Communism over capitalism and the Soviet Union over Poland. Needless to add, the Polish underground was well aware of those leanings, despite Zuckerman's attempts to conceal them in his dealings with the Polish Underground. (Teresa Prekerowa, "The Jewish Underground and the Polish Underground," in *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry*, volume 9 (1996): 151-53.)

As for the scene showing "Kazik" hijacking a truck driven by a Pole in order to effect the evacuation of a large group of ŻOB members who left the ghetto via the sewers, that too is a fabrication. Gutman makes it quite clear that the People's Guard is to be credited for sending a truck to collect the ŻOB members and taking them to a base in the Łomianki forest outside Warsaw.

In closing it is difficult to resist the temptation to paraphrase Mr. Rozenbaum's remarks directed at Dr. Radziłowski: "Does Mr. Rozenbaum know something that historians of that period missed? Somehow, I doubt."

One more observation: The producers and historical consultants that worked for years on "Uprising" could not have not known and read Yisrael Gutman's book. That they chose to "reinterpret" history in a manner that runs contrary to well-known and well-documented facts speaks volumes about them and the integrity of the film that has been repeatedly billed as a "true" account of the events. At least \$22 million was lavished on creating a film with a very deliberate vision of Polish-Jewish relations during this period. But why should any of this concern Mr. Rozenbaum?

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### **Non-Polish Voices**

Excerpt from "The Pole toll in World War II" by Msgr. Owen F. Campion  
*Our Sunday Visitor*, December 2, 2001

My criticism is that the plight of Poles who were not Jews was presented as much better than it was in fact. Life outside the ghetto was no paradise in any sense of the word.

At least to my estimate, the television drama suggested that life outside the ghetto was quite tolerable. In one scene, a heroine of the show, a Jew who secretly passed from the ghetto to the city outside, passed through an open-air market where flowers were for sale.

No Pole, Jewish or otherwise, had the money to buy many flowers in those days. Another scene showed a church, apparently near the ghetto, in which Mass was being celebrated.

(As an aside, the actor who spoke the Latin of the Mass pronounced the language quite well. He was wearing vestments in style a half-century ago, and he stood with his back to the congregation. NBC researched the part well, but not perfectly. He read the words of the consecration aloud. This was a grave breach of rubrics at the time.)

The church was filled. Polish churches were likely filled during the German occupation. Poles were, and are, devout. But the scene implied a general tranquillity that did not exist anywhere.

Lurking in a corner was a nun. She eyed the escapee from the ghetto suspiciously. Certainly Catholic Poles denounced Jews to German authorities on occasion. Anti-Semitism was strong. War makes people do horrible things. But many nuns hid Jews. The caricature was unfair because it was at best selective.

Evaluating human agony is difficult. The task is especially hard when the case in point is German occupation of Poland from 1939 to 1945. The terror was so universal. The evil was so overwhelming. The suffering was so immense.

Jews were special targets. Pointing to all that Poles who were not Jews suffered should not be a way to avoid the fact that, most of all, the Germans wanted to exterminate Jews, or to diminish what the Jews endured.

Still, all Poles suffered indescribably. Remembering the terrifying German occupation of Poland reminds us all of the depths of depravity to which humans can fall. It also reminds us of the special price Jewish Poles had to pay *simply because they were Jews. But, all Poles, Jewish or otherwise, paid a heavy price.*

## The Warsaw Ghetto Myth

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### The Warsaw Ghetto myth

The ghetto fighters may have been brave, but they didn't fight as long as has been depicted. And what right did they have to decide the fate of 50,000 others?

By Eli Gat

Like many Holocaust survivors, I've always felt uncomfortable about the way the memory of the Holocaust has been shaped. The myth of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising is an excellent example. The Warsaw Ghetto Uprising – the very name is deceptive. The Jews of the Warsaw Ghetto never revolted. In the summer of 1942 some 300,000 Jews from the ghetto were sent to Treblinka and murdered. Around 50,000 people were left in the ghetto; they were spared death at the time because they were skilled professionals who worked in German factories both inside and outside the ghetto. These people never thought about revolt, they thought about survival.

Only a small group of young people revolted, whose size and efforts were inflated to mythic proportions in Israel after the state was established in 1948. More importantly, the uprising, which started on April 19, 1943, contradicted the survival strategy of the masses of Jews who remained in the ghetto.

The idea of the revolt and armed warfare jibed with the ethos of the prestate Jewish community in Palestine and the young nation. It was exaggerated by the activist part of the Labor movement – the Ahdut Ha'avoda party and its affiliated kibbutz movement – which also laid claim to the uprising while repressing the memory of other movements that took part, like the Bundists, Communists and right-wing Revisionists.

Due to pressure from this part of the Labor movement, the memorial day for the destruction of European Jewry was named Holocaust and Heroism Remembrance Day, as if there was any proportionality between the two parts of the phrase. Ahdut Ha'avoda attacked David Ben-Gurion and Mapai – another precursor to the Labor Party – and waved its banner of military activism: In Israel the Palmach, in the Holocaust the ghetto fighters.

The uprising was also inflated by a blurring of the numbers: the number of German casualties, the number of ghetto fighters and the length of the uprising. In the first works after the Holocaust, writers talked about hundreds of Germans killed. But the daily reports sent out by the commander who destroyed the ghetto later came to light. Based on these reports from SS Gen. Jurgen Stroop, which no one questions, 16 Germans were killed in the fighting. After these reports came to light, the original writings on the uprising were filed away and never mentioned.

A second murky figure is the number of people who took part in the uprising, in which two umbrella organizations participated. One was the left-wing Jewish Combat Organization (Zydowska Organizacja Bojowa, or ZOB), which included groups from movements with socialist and communist leanings, both Zionist and non-Zionist. The second consisted of the people from right-wing Beitar, which operated within the Jewish Military Union (Zydowski Zwiazek Wojskowy, or ZWW).

Yitzhak (Antek) Zuckerman (Icchak Cukierman) was a ZOB leader and a key figure in building up the uprising's image after the war in Israel. He claimed that around 500 fighters took part in the revolt. Another participant in the uprising, Stefan Grayek, put the figure at 700.

Among historians, Prof. Yehuda Bauer of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem states (without giving details) that there were some 750 to 1,000 fighters, while Prof. Israel Gutman, who took part in the uprising and wrote a book after doing separate research, put the number at only 350. None of these numbers – except it seems Bauer's – include the fighters of the right-wing organizations from which there were no survivors to provide testimony and whose contribution was met with thunderous silence for many years.

The most reliable testimony on many points about the uprising, including the number of participants, was given by one of its leaders, Marek Edelman. Edelman, a Bundist, remained in Poland after the war and therefore became an untouchable as far as the institutions that organized the remembrance in Israel were concerned.

Edelman put the number of ZOB fighters at about 220. When asked what he based his figures on, he responded: "I was there and knew everyone. It's not hard to know 220 people." As for the gap between this figure and Zuckerman's, Edelman said: "Antek had political motives and I didn't." Assuming that the number of fighters in the right-wing organization – for which there are no clear numbers – was smaller, it's reasonable to assume that the total number of participants in the revolt was less than 400 people, out of some 50,000 people in the ghetto.

### **Just two days of hard fighting**

The figures on the length of the real fighting were also inflated. Gutman stretches out the uprising to a month. But Stroop's reports, as well as the testimony of the uprising's leaders, show that the actual battles took place over only two days. This was because the ZOB's battle plans were never carried out in full. Their conception was to take positions in windows, fire guns and throw grenades, and then take new positions.

At the start of the revolt on April 19, the Germans were surprised by the armed resistance and retreated from the ghetto. But after they reorganized, they had no intention of chasing the Jews from house to house and suffering casualties. Instead, they decided to destroy the ghetto and set it ablaze.

The members of the ZOB who thought the fate of the Jews in the ghetto was set in any case – to die – had planned to fight and die with their guns in their hands. But they found themselves hiding and searching for an escape from the destruction and flames. In the end, they were forced to flee and burned up with the ghetto's inhabitants, in opposition to their original plans.

Zivia Lubetkin, a leader of the revolt, wrote about it this way: "We were all helpless, shocked with embarrassment. All our plans were ruined. We had dreamed of a last battle in which we knew we would be defeated by the enemy, but they would pay with a great deal of blood. All our plans were ruined, and without any other opening the decision was made: We would leave. It was no longer possible to fight."

Zuckerman wrote: "We knew all the exits very well, all the rooftop passages. If the war had been carried out ... without flamethrowers, thousands of troops would have had to be sent into battle to defeat us."

The first group of ZZW fighters left the ghetto on April 20, the revolt's second day, through tunnels prepared in advance. A second group left on April 22 and a last group on April 26. Most if not all were killed when they were discovered on the Polish side.

The ZOB fighters, who had not intended to leave the ghetto, had not prepared escape routes. Only thanks to the sewage tunnels and help from the Polish side could they leave the ghetto. On April 28 a first group left. On May 8, Mordechai Anielewicz, the ZOB's commander, committed suicide after his group's basement hiding place was revealed. On May 9 the remnants of the ZOB left the ghetto. All told, some 100 ZOB fighters fled.

Within a few days the two military organizations left (or fled) the bombed and burned-out ghetto and its 50,000 inhabitants, leaving the residents to the terrible revenge of the Germans. It is thought that the Germans murdered 10,000 ghetto residents; they sent the rest to camps near Lublin.

### **Ruining a survival strategy**

The uprising thus interfered with the survival strategy of the masses of Jews in the ghetto. To understand this, one must first understand the change in the situation between the mass transports in 1942, when the vast majority of Jews in Poland were exterminated over a short period of time, and the situation in 1943.

During this time came the turning point of World War II. In November 1942 the Russians broke through the front around Stalingrad and by the beginning of February 1943 the entire Sixth Army had surrendered. At the same time the Germans were defeated at El Alamein in the Egyptian desert, and the Allies landed in French Northwest Africa.

These routs breathed hope in occupied Europe for a relatively quick defeat of Germany. Even the Jews' hopes were buoyed. If they could somehow hang on another day, maybe they could be saved.

There was even something of a change in the German policy toward the Jews. The destruction of every last Jew may still have been the highest priority, but the urgency eased a bit after most of the goal had been reached and in light of the war's economic needs. The Germans needed workers for its factories after the entire fit German workforce had been drafted for fighting. Forced labor was used all over Europe.

The 50,000 or so Jews who remained in the Warsaw Ghetto after the transports of 1942 had survived, as in other ghettos in occupied Poland, largely because they worked in factories for Germany. Many of these factories were owned and managed by Germans, who negotiated with the German authorities and the SS to hold on to their workers.

In light of all this, the Jews' belief grew that somehow they could survive. They had two bad options: Flee the ghetto to the hostile Polish side or continue working in the German factories. Both options meant living day to day in the hope the war would end quickly.

At the end of the war, hundreds of thousands of Jews survived in Poland and Germany. In Warsaw alone the number of survivors is estimated at about 25,000. Death in battle, as the ghetto fighters planned, did not keep with the intentions of the vast majority of Jews remaining. Many historians of the Holocaust and the uprising came from a political camp enlisted for political purposes. Their influence on the Yad Vashem Holocaust museum was great. They wrote our history books and shaped our remembrance of the Holocaust.

Their influence on their students and followers is still greatly felt today. Thus the question has never been raised: What right did a small group of young people have to decide the fate of the 50,000 Jews of the Warsaw Ghetto?

*Eli Gat is a Holocaust survivor and the author of "Not Just Another Holocaust Book."*

## **“The Song of the Murdered Jewish People”**

Yitzhak Katzenelson, an eyewitness to these events, penned “The Song of the Murdered Jewish People,”<sup>753</sup> in which he bemoaned the role of the Jewish police.

*Ani ha-gever*, I am the man who watched, who saw  
How my children, my women, my young and old, were thrown  
Like stones, like logs, into wagons,  
Brutally beaten, rudely abused.

I watched from the window and saw the brutes—O God!  
I observed the beaters and the beaten—  
I wrung my hands in shame. O what disgrace and shame.  
Jews were being used, ah, to destroy my Jews!

Apostates and near-apostates with shiny boots on their feet,  
Hats with the Star of David, like a swastika, on their heads,  
An alien, corrupt and vile tongue on their lips,  
Dragged us from our homes, flung us down the stairs.

They smashed doors and forced their way  
Into closed Jewish homes with raised clubs in their hands—  
They hunted us, beat us and drove young and old to the wagons,  
Into the street! They spat in God’s face, profaned the light of day.

They pulled us out from under the beds and closets, cursing:  
“The wagon is waiting! Go to hell, to the *Umschlag*, to death!  
They dragged us to the street and continued to prowl—  
The last dress in the closet, last bit of cereal, last morsel of bread.

Look into the street and you’ll go mad!  
The street is dead, yet full of shrieks and screams—  
He street is empty, yet the street is full.  
Wagons laden with Jews, with mourning and grief!

Wagons laden with Jews, wringing their hands, pulling their hair—  
Some are silent—their scream is loudest!

They watch, they look ... Is it a nightmare? Is it real?  
Around the wagons, alas, woe is me! Jews in police uniforms, in boots and hats!

The German stands aside, as if smugly sneering—  
The German stands aloof—he doesn't interfere.  
Woe unto me—the German had Jews destroy my Jews.  
Look at the wagons, behold the shame, look and see the suffering!

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<sup>753</sup> Yitzhak Katzenelson, *The Song of the Murdered Jewish People* (Tel Aviv: Ghetto Fighters' House/Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 1980), 23–24.