

Polish Historiography of the Holocaust—Between Silence and Public Debate¹

Natalia Aleksium (*Skirball Department of Hebrew and Judaic Studies, New York University*)

In the introductory remarks to his essay on the Jewish historiography of the Holocaust of Polish Jewry, Shlomo Netzer states:

The rewriting of history, which is one of the outstanding characteristics of historiography, reflects the viewpoint of the contemporary generation as it looks at the past. . . Furthermore, if historiography is fashioned by an up-to-date, after-the-event perspective, and research both adds to what is known and changes it, then these rules certainly are valid for the historiography of the Holocaust. The events of the period are close to our generation and have not yet been subjected to the filter of too many historians.²

Indeed, contemporary Holocaust scholarship in Poland confirms Netzer's observation. Within the last three years a number of important publications have appeared that challenge the long-held assumptions of Polish historians about the fate of Polish Jewry under Nazi occupation. These works have transformed the field with respect both to the key topics for investigation and the questions asked by historians researching these aspects of the Holocaust.

In this regard, Jan T. Gross has recently led the way by asking a question that runs counter to traditional Polish self-perceptions: 'Is it possible to be simultaneously a victim and a victimizer?' *Neighbors*, Gross's much acclaimed book on the mass murder of Jedwabne Jews by Poles in the summer of 1941, opened a heated discussion that became an important trigger in the process of changing Polish Holocaust historiography.³ As Gross himself

¹ See Natalia Aleksium, 'Zagłada Żydów w historiografii Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej 1945–1998' [The Jewish Holocaust in the Historiography of East Central Europe], in Jerzy Kłoczowski (ed.) *Historia Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej*, vol.2, (Lublin, 2000), pp. 237–263; 'Mekharim historiim b'noseh ha-Shoah she-yatzu l'ohr be-Polin 1944–1998', *Gal-Ed* (2000), vol. 17.

² Shlomo Netzer, 'The Holocaust of Polish Jewry in Jewish Historiography', in Yisrael Gutman and Gideon Greif (eds), *The Historiography of the Holocaust Period: Proceedings of the Fifth Yad Vashem International Historical Conference, March 1983* (Jerusalem, 1988), p. 133.

³ Jan Tomasz Gross, *Sąsiedzi: Historia zagłady żydowskiego miasteczka* (Sejny, 2000). Further references from the English edition of the book: Jan T. Gross, *Neighbors: The Destruction of the Jewish Community in Jedwabne, Poland* (Princeton and Oxford, 2001).

predicted, the revelation of the so-called ‘Jedwabne affair’ overturned much of historiography on Polish–Jewish relations during the Second World War:

After Jedwabne the issue of Polish–Jewish relations during the war can no longer be put to rest with . . . ready-made formulas. Indeed, we have to rethink not only wartime but also post-war Polish history, as well as reevaluate certain important interpretive themes widely accepted as explanations accounting for outcomes, attitudes, and institutions of those years.⁴

Thus, in Gross’s analysis, Poles were in fact both victims of the Germans and victimizers *vis-à-vis* the Jews. Moreover, ‘Poles hurt the Jews in numerous interactions throughout the war . . . [I]t is not exclusively killings that are stressed in people’s recollections from the period.’⁵ The image of Polish–Jewish relations that emerges from Gross’s book is radically different from the mainstream of traditional Polish historiography on the subject, which has tended to stress the activities of those who assisted the Jews, with only a token nod to such ‘marginal’ phenomena as the activities of the so-called extortionists.⁶

The story of Polish historiography on this theme, however, lends itself to additional divisions beyond those of before and after Gross. Specifically, I will attempt to show that there was a great deal of valuable activity in the period immediately after the Second World War (1945–48) and, to a lesser extent, up to 1968, and that the revitalization of the field at the end of the twentieth century has roots that go back to the late 1980s. Thus, I will investigate this new domain in the Polish historiography of the Holocaust in the context of the early developments of memorialization among Jewish survivors in Poland which constitute the roots of the Holocaust scholarship in general.

The publication of the original Polish edition of *Neighbors* in 2000 triggered a vehement public discussion in the major Polish daily newspapers and journals, in which leading scholars of both the younger and older generation participated.⁷ Numerous books appeared ‘against’ and

⁴ Gross, *Neighbors*, p. 139.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 133.

⁶ Gross stresses that ‘Sedatives that were administered in connection with this subject by historians and journalists for over fifty years have to be put aside. It is simply not true that Jews were murdered in Poland during the war solely by the Germans, occasionally assisted in the execution of their gruesome task by some auxiliary police formations composed primarily of Latvians, Ukrainians, or some other ‘Kalmuks’, not to mention the proverbial ‘fall guys’ whom everybody castigated because it was so easy not to take responsibility for what they had done—the so-called szmalcowniki, extortionists who made a profession of blackmailing Jews trying to pass and survive in hiding. By singling them out as culprits, historians and others have found it easy to bring closure to the matter by saying that there is “scum” in every society, that these were a few “socially marginal” individuals, and that they were dealt with by underground courts anyway’, *ibid.*, pp. 138–139.

⁷ See Robert Jankowki (ed.), *Jedwabne: Spór historyków wokół książki Jana T. Grossa ‘Sąsiedzi’* [Jedwabne: The Historians’ Debate about the book by T. Gross, *Neighbors*] (Warsaw, 2002). See also Ruth Henning (ed.), ‘Jedwabne-Debatte’, in *polnischen Zeitungen und Zeitschriften* (Potsdam, 2001); William Brand (ed.), *Thou shalt not kill: Poles on Jedwabne* (Warsaw, 2001).

‘in favour’ of Gross.⁸ The most important immediate response, however, was the two volumes of research published by the Institute of National Memory.⁹ These impressive studies carried on where Gross left off in terms of presenting a thorough view of the events in Jedwabne, events that represent a category hardly acknowledged in earlier Polish Holocaust historiography.

In the closing paragraph of *Neighbors*, Gross expressed his hope that ‘we have reached a threshold at which the generation, raised in Poland with freedom of speech and political liberties, is ready to confront the unvarnished history of Polish–Jewish relations during the war.’¹⁰ In what may come to be called the post-*Neighbors* era it has already become more common for Polish historians to dig into what was previously taboo ground with respect to the Holocaust. One notable work in this regard is Anetta Rybicka’s monograph on the Institute of German Eastern Work.¹¹ Rybicka devotes a whole chapter of this book to the contribution of Polish employees to the Institute, among whom were a number of future luminaries in the Polish humanities.¹² In so doing, Rybicka takes up the controversial question of collaboration that is a major theme of *Neighbors*.¹³

Gross’s call for rewriting Polish historiography of the Holocaust in the light of findings about the Jedwabne massacre also touched on the question of Polish collective responsibility. Gross argues not in favour of assigning collective responsibility but for an honest revision of national heritage: ‘if people are indeed bonded together by authentic spiritual affinity—I have in mind a kind of national pride rooted in common historical experiences of many generations—are they not somehow responsible also for horrible deeds perpetrated by members of such an “imagined community”?’¹⁴ Gross insists that Jedwabne, ‘though perhaps one of the most excessive (the most excessive, it must be hoped) of all murderous assaults by Poles against the Jews—was not an isolated episode.’¹⁵ He thus challenges the accepted

⁸ See Jerzy Robert Nowak, *Sto kłamstw J.T. Grossa o Jedwabnem i żydowskich sąsiadach* [A Hundred Lies by J.T. Gross about Jedwabne and the Jewish Neighbours] (Warsaw, 2001); Henryk Pająk, *Jedwabne gospodki* [The Jedwabne business] (Lublin, 2001); Eugeniusz Marciniak (ed.), *Jedwabne w oczach świadków* [Jedwabne in the eyes of the witnesses] (Wrocław, 2001); Jakub Kopeć, *Lokalny Holocaust: przypowieść o zabijaniu i o kłamstwie* [The regional Holocaust: a parable about murder and lies] (Warsaw, 2001); Lech Niekraś, *Operacja ‘Jedwabne’: mity i fakty* [Operation Jedwabne: myths and facts] (Wrocław, 2001). On the change in popular public opinion see: *Polacy wobec zbrodni w Jedwabnem: przemiany społecznej świadomości: komunikat z badań* [Poles facing the crimes of Jedwabne: changes in social consciousness: a summary of research] (Warsaw, 2001).

⁹ *Wokół Jedwabnego* [About Jedwabne], ed. by Paweł Machciewicz, Krzysztof Persak (Warsaw, 2002), vols. 1–2.

¹⁰ Gross, *Neighbors*, p. 173.

¹¹ Anetta Rybicka, *Instytut Niemieckiej Pracy Wschodniej: Institut für Deutsche Ostarbeit, Cracow 1940–1945* [Institute of German Eastern Work, Cracow 1940–1945] (Warsaw, 2002).

¹² Rybicka, pp. 139–154.

¹³ Gross, *Neighbors*, pp. 152–163.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 134–135.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 143–144.

boundaries of Polish war-time self-image, which are closely tied to notions of victimhood and suffering.¹⁶

Although *Neighbors* is notable for the depth of its impression on the Polish general public and scholars alike, its author was not the first to question the Polish self-image with respect to Polish–Jewish relations during the war. A text that sent out similar shockwaves was an article entitled ‘The Poor Poles Look at the Ghetto’, published by Jan Błoński in the Kraków-based Catholic weekly *Tygodnik Powszechny* on 17 January 1987.¹⁷ Błoński argued that questions like “‘Have you looked with acquiescence at the death of the Jews?’ . . . will have to be asked. Everybody who is concerned with the Polish–Jewish past must ask these questions, regardless of what the answer might be.”¹⁸ Błoński wrote, ‘instead of haggling and justifying ourselves, we [Poles] should first consider our own faults and weaknesses. This is the moral revolution which is imperative when considering the Polish–Jewish past. It is only this that can gradually cleanse our desecrated souls.’¹⁹ Błoński’s concern with the moral consequences of Polish passivity in the face of the Holocaust led to vocal public discussion, but the subject of actual collaboration remained largely untouched until *Neighbors*. The next step in this progression was the publication of an article in the largest Polish daily, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, by Michał Cichy. In this article Cichy discussed the murder of several Jews by a Polish Home Army detachment in Warsaw during the Warsaw Uprising in the summer of 1944.²⁰ The publication triggered yet another public discussion in which the question of the murder of Jews by Poles was raised and hotly debated.

These new publications stand out among the scholarship on the Holocaust produced in Poland between the Second World War and the end of the twentieth century. Indeed, with the exception of the period immediately after the Second World War, twentieth-century Polish historiography of the Holocaust scarcely seems to exist as a category. At the very least, it was in many ways separated from the discourses crucial to the field in Western Europe, Israel and North America and left numerous topics untouched.²¹ According to Gross one might even speak of

two separate histories (and ipso facto historiographies) of the war, one Polish and one Jewish, and that they overlap only marginally when there is talk of

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 135–136.

¹⁷ On the context in which Błoński’s text appeared and the discussion that followed, see Antony Polonsky, ‘Introduction’, in Antony Polonsky (ed.), *‘My Brother’s Keeper?’: Recent Polish Debates on the Holocaust* (New York and London, 1990), pp. 1–33.

¹⁸ Jan Błoński, ‘The Poor Poles Look at the Ghetto’, in *‘My Brother’s Keeper?’*, p. 42.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 45.

²⁰ See Michał Cichy, ‘Polacy–Żydzi: czarne karty Powstania Warszawskiego’ [Poles–Jews: black cards of the Warsaw Uprising], *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 29–30 Jan. 1994.

²¹ See Gutman and Greif, *The Historiography of the Holocaust Period*; Lucy S. Dawidowicz, *The Holocaust and the Historians* (Cambridge, Mass., and London, 1981), pp. 22–42, 125–141; Dan Michman, *Holocaust Historiography: A Jewish Perspective. Conceptualizations, Terminology, Approaches and Fundamental Issues* (London and Portland, 2003), pp. 335–388.

extortionists and of heroes (these proverbial ‘social margins’ of wartime historiography)²²

In Polish historiography, there existed a tendency to present the suffering of the Jews as part of the general Polish fate under Nazi occupation. Polish and Jewish versions particularly differed with respect to the scope of the aid said to have been given to the Jews by individual Poles and by Polish underground groups.²³ Holocaust scholarship published in Poland from the 1950s through to the 1980s focused primarily on the ‘widely understood martyrology of the Jewish nation, Nazi plans for extermination of the Jews, and the carrying out of these plans . . . Such writings touched only to a lesser extent on the Jewish resistance, and only incidentally on the everyday life in the ghettos (hardly at all outside of the ghetto) and on various forms of assistance extended to those persecuted.’²⁴

Polish historiography of the Holocaust is not monolithic. Rather, there is great variation in the way historians presented the fate of the Jews at various times in which the research was carried out.²⁵ These stages correspond to a large extent to periods in the country’s political history that served as background to the research in question. In this regard, the most interesting material appeared before 1968 and especially in the years immediately after the Second World War (1945–48). The field was only revitalized in the second half of the 1980s. As discussed above, however, it was not until the last decade of the twentieth century that it became particularly vibrant and to some extent open to new approaches and ideas.

The tragedy of the Jews and the abhorrence of Nazi policies had already become a subject of interest in Poland during the Holocaust itself. The staff of the underground *Oneg Shabbat* Archives, founded by Dr. Emanuel Ringelblum in October 1939 in Warsaw, initiated research on the Nazi policies and accumulated diverse documentary material.²⁶ The members of

²² Jan T. Gross, ‘A Tangled Web: Confronting Stereotypes Concerning Relations between Poles, Germans, Jews, and Communists’, in *The Politics of Retribution in Europe. World War II and its Aftermath*, ed. by István Deák, Jan T. Gross, and Tony Judt (Princeton, 2000), pp. 91–2. Shmuel Krakowski, ‘The Holocaust of Polish Jewry in Polish Historiography and Polish Émigré Circles’, in Gutman and Greif, *Historiography*, pp. 117–131; Shlomo Netzer, ‘The Holocaust of Polish Jewry in Jewish Historiography’, in Gutman and Greif, *Historiography*, pp. 133–148.

²³ See Yisrael Gutman, ‘Discussion on the Polish Jewry in Jewish Historiography’, in *Historiography*, pp. 149–150.

²⁴ *Wojna żydowsko-niemiecka, Polska prasa konspiracyjna 1943–1944 o powstaniu w getcie Warszawskim* [The Jewish-German war and the Polish underground press 1943–44 on the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising], ed. by Paweł Szapiro (London, 1992), p. 1.

²⁵ Krakowski, ‘The Holocaust of Polish Jewry in Polish Historiography and Polish Émigré Circles’, in Gutman and Greif, *Historiography*, p. 118.

²⁶ Netzer, ‘The Holocaust of Polish Jewry’, p. 135. On the Ringelblum Archive see Ruta Sakowska (ed.) *Archiwum Ringelbluma. Getto warszawskie lipiec 1942—styczeń 1943* [The Ringelblum Archive. The Warsaw Ghetto, July 1942–January 1943] (Warsaw, 1980); Artur Eisenbach, ‘O pracach naukowo-badawczych w getcie warszawskim’ [On the scholarly research work in the Warsaw Ghetto], *Biuletyn ŻIH*, 1951, nr 1; Michał Szulkin, ‘Emanuel Ringelblum—historyk i organizator podziemnego archiwum getta warszawskiego’ [E.R.—historian and underground organizer of the Warsaw Ghetto archive], *Biuletyn ŻIH*, 30(1973), pp. 111–125; see also Samuel Kassow, ‘Vilna and Warsaw, two ghetto diaries: Herman Kruk and Emanuel Ringelblum’, in Robert M. Shapiro (ed.), *Holocaust Chronicles: Individualizing the Holocaust through Diaries and other Contemporaneous Personal Accounts* (Hoboken, 1999), pp. 171–215.

Oneg Shabbat attempted to transmit information to the free world about what was happening to the Jews in occupied Poland. On the basis of materials collected by the underground beginning in the autumn of 1941, the Allies received information about the treatment of the Jews by the occupiers, and in the middle of 1942 well-documented reports prepared by the Bund called attention to the beginning of the mass extermination of the Jews.²⁷

Many professional historians were involved in the activities of *Oneg Shabbat* and in other initiatives that aimed to document the fate of the Jews under Nazi occupation. These historians were convinced that such documentation would be invaluable to future generations. In one account, Icchak Schipper—one of the leading historians of inter-war Poland—stressed in a conversation with Aleksander Donat at the Majdanek camp that:

everything depends on who transmits our testament to future generations, on who writes the history of this period. History is usually written by the victor. What we know about murdered peoples is only what their murderers vaingloriously cared to say about them. Should our murderers be victorious, should they write the history of this war, our destruction will be presented as one of the most beautiful pages of world history, and future generations will pay tribute to them as dauntless crusaders. Their every word will be taken for gospel. Or they may wipe out our memory altogether, as if we had never existed, as if there had never been a Polish Jewry, a Ghetto in Warsaw, a Maidanek.²⁸

According to the existing scholarship, in the aftermath of the Second World War and its revelations of mass murder, Jews did not engage in writing history of the Holocaust. Summarizing the development of the field of Holocaust studies, Michael R. Marrus stated:

Up to the time of the Eichmann trial in Jerusalem, in 1961, there was relatively little discussion of the massacre of European Jewry. At Nuremberg, immediately after the war, crimes against the Jews were part of the proceedings conducted by the International Military Tribunal, but such crimes never assumed a prominent place.²⁹

Marrus's analyses fail to take into consideration early stages in the development of Holocaust historiography, especially research carried out in Poland.

In the period immediately after the Second World War many Jewish survivors and in particular professional historians shared the conviction

²⁷ See David Engel, *In the Shadow of Auschwitz. The Polish Government-in-Exile and the Jews, 1939–1942* (Chapel Hill and London, 1987), pp. 157–202.

²⁸ Alexander Donat, *The Holocaust Kingdom. A Memoir* (New York, 1965), pp. 210–211.

²⁹ Michael R. Marrus, *The Holocaust in History* (Hanover and Toronto, 1987), p. 4; see also Orna Kenan, *Between Memory and History. The Evolution of Israeli Historiography of the Holocaust, 1945–1961* (New York, 2003), pp. 43–75.

regarding the importance of their historical enterprise.³⁰ After years of persecution and struggle for survival, setting the foundations for research on the fate of Polish Jews during the war was defined as crucial for their future.³¹ On 29 August 1944 in Lublin, only one month after the Soviet Army entered the city, a group of Polish Jews gathered to form a *Historishe Komisje* (Yiddish for ‘Historical Commission’) of the local Jewish Committee.³² At this meeting they stressed the importance of their historical research, laid down an agenda for the Commission’s future activities and discussed methods for collecting testimonies.³³ Four months later this commission was transformed into the Central Jewish Historical Commission in Poland. In March 1945 the headquarters of the Central Jewish Historical Commission moved from Lublin to Łódź.³⁴ Beginning in the spring and summer of 1945, regional, district and local historical commissions were created in, among other cities, Cracow, Warsaw, Białystok, Katowice, Gliwice, Bytom, Będzin and Przemyśl.³⁵ Moreover, correspondents sent materials from other localities, such as Częstochowa, Wrocław, Peterswald (Piotroleś in Lower Silesia), and Parczew.³⁶ At the height of its activities, the Commission numbered 25 branches. This number was reduced to six over the course of 1946 due to budgetary shortages.³⁷ The Jewish Historical Institute—one of the crucial institutions of Holocaust research in Poland—was formed in

³⁰ According to Rabbi Dawid Kahane, Philip Friedman began gathering materials pertaining to the fate of the Jews in Lvov in the summer of 1944, immediately following the liberation. Dawid Kahane, *Aharei ha’Mabul: Nisayon le’chehayot al ha’kechilot ha’datiyot be’Polin she’leachar milhemet ha’olam ha’shniya* (1944–1949) (Jerusalem, 1981), p. 17. Philip Friedman held a Ph.D. of the Philosophical Department of the Viennese University, taught in the Institute of Jewish Studies (Instytut Nauk Judaistycznych) in Warsaw. See Diana Grunbaum, ‘Zbiory Centralnej Żydowskiej Komisji Historycznej w Polsce’, in Noe Grüss, *Rok pracy Centralnej Żydowskiej Komisji Historycznej w Polsce* [A year’s work of the Central Commission for Jewish History in Poland] (Łódź, 1946), p. 53.

³¹ In the report from the first year of the activities of the Central Jewish Historical Commission, Noe Grüss declared: ‘Every Jew was aware of the fact that he was a witness of a horrible epoch in the history of his nation and if he was able to survive, he is obliged to immortalize and consolidate not only his personal experiences and suffering, but above all [to document] the tragic fate and extermination of four millions Jews that died as martyrs in Polish lands from the hands of the Nazi occupiers.’ Noe Grüss, *Rok pracy*, p. 5.

³² Archiwum Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego (further AŻIH), Centralny Komitet Żydów w Polsce (further CKŻP), Komisja Historyczna, 336/11, p. 1, Yiddish, Protocols of the Historical Commission during 1939–1944.

³³ AŻIH, CKŻP, Komisja Historyczna, 336/11, p. 1–4, Yiddish, Protocols of the Historical Commission during 1939–1944. In a memorandum of the Central Jewish Historical Commission in Poland to Jewish organizations abroad, the activists of Commission reported: ‘Beginning from December 1944, when the victorious Red Army and the Polish Army liberated the Polish lands, and consequently gave back the Jewish survivors of the occupation their right to live, we began diligently to gather and secure all materials and historical documents that would enable [us] to reconstruct the most tragic page in the history of our nation.’ ‘Memorandum CZKH do zagranicznych organizacji’, AŻIH, CKŻP, Komisja Historyczna, 336/4, p. 15.

³⁴ Grüss, *Rok pracy*, p. 8.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 10–13.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 34.

October 1947 on the basis of the experiences of the Central Jewish Historical Commission.³⁸

The resolution announcing the establishment of the Central Jewish Historical Commission in Poland called for gathering ‘any kind of printed and hand-written materials, photographs, illustrations, documents, [and] material proofs as well as documenting and putting in writing any oral testimonies and transmissions of the victims and witnesses of the Nazi terror.’³⁹ Indeed, the participants at the organizational meeting in the autumn of 1944 declared gathering testimonies to be the chief item on the agenda of the commission and prepared a questionnaire to be used in collecting testimony from survivors.⁴⁰ Already in the second half of 1944, the Historical Commission in Lublin planned to gather and subsequently publish about 100 testimonies.⁴¹ Less than a year later, in the annual report of 1946, Noe Grüss mentioned 1800 interviews conducted by its associates in the Commission’s offices, private homes and orphanages.⁴² As early as 1946, the Commission prepared and published special instructions and questionnaires that would help its *zamlers* (collectors) to carry out interviews and to collect material on Jewish partisans as well as other historical and ethnographical data.⁴³

The goals of the Commission encompassed ‘establishing archives, libraries and collections of periodicals’, in addition to its mandate to

sponsor and carry out research into the history of Polish Jewry under German occupation and to publish materials and historical examinations in order to educate both the

³⁸ Maurycy Horn, ‘Żydowski Instytut Historyczny w Polsce w latach 1944–1949’ [The Jewish Historical Institute in Poland in the Years 1944–49], *Biuletyn ŻIH*, 1979, nr 1, pp. 3–15; ‘Scholarly activity of the Jewish Historical Institute in Poland, 1947–1996’, in Eleonora Bergman (ed.), *Jewish Historical Institute. The First Fifty Years 1947–1997* (Warsaw, 1996), pp. 42–49; see also Philip Friedman, ‘Problems of Research on the European Jewish Catastrophe’, in Israel Gutman and Livia Rotkirchen (eds), *The Catastrophe of European Jewry. Antecedents, history, reflection. Selected papers* (Jerusalem, 1976), pp. 635–6.

³⁹ Resolution adopted at the meeting of the CKŻP and The Union of Jewish Writers, Journalists and Artists (Związek Literatów, Dziennikarzy i Artystów Żydowskich) about forming the Central Jewish Historical Commission, undated, AŻIH, CKŻP, Komisja Historyczna, 333/2, p. 1.

⁴⁰ AŻIH, CKŻP, Komisja Historyczna, 336/11, p. 1–2, Yiddish, Protocols of the Historical Commission during 1939–1944.

⁴¹ Grüss, *Rok pracy*, p. 6.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 16.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 18–19. See Józef Kermisz, *Instrukcje dla zbierania materiałów historycznych z okresu okupacji niemieckiej* [Instructions on collecting historical material from the period of German occupation] (Warsaw, 1946), and *Instrukcje dla zbierania materiałów etnograficznych z okresu okupacji niemieckiej* [Instructions on collecting ethnographic material from the period of German occupation] (Warsaw, 1946). Another example of utilizing the YIVO models was the establishment of the Society of the Friends of the Central Jewish Historical Commission whose members were involved with collecting documents and work on selected topics, such as Jewish schools and teachers under the German occupation.

Jews and the larger Polish society about the history of German crimes against Polish Jewry.⁴⁴

In the latter regard, research was to focus on

Jewish history in Poland under [Nazi] occupation and in particular on documentation of the bestial crimes committed against the Jewish nation by Nazi Germany, of the process of the annihilation of the Jews, of the [Jewish] nation's fight against the hateful enemy, of the moral standing of the Jewish society—its cultural life, literary and folk creativity at the time of the occupation—[and] the influence of various groups and individuals on Jewish life of that period.⁴⁵

Thus, the Commission's work concentrated on the fate of Jews in Poland, although there were also efforts to gather materials pertaining to the fate of Polish Jews in camps outside of Polish territory.⁴⁶

The first materials to be published by the Historical Commission were monographs in pamphlet form on the Holocaust in different cities and camps. In 1945 Philip Friedman published the first outline of the history of the Auschwitz-Birkenau camp on the basis of available documentation and survivors' testimonies.⁴⁷ That same year he published *Zagłada Żydów lwowskich* (The Liquidation of the Jewish Community of Lvov).⁴⁸ In 1946 Michał Borwicz (Maksymilian Boruchowicz) released a book on the Janowska camp in Lvov entitled *Uniwersytet zbirów* (The University for Thugs), in which he described the way the camp functioned, the work of its various brigades, crimes committed on its inmates and the attempts of inmates involved in the underground to obtain weapons.⁴⁹ Also in 1946,

⁴⁴ Grüss, *Rok pracy*, p. 9, 8. By 1946 the archives of the Central Jewish Historical Commission in Poland headed by Józef Kermisz housed about 7000 documents, including German civil and military documentation, Gestapo files, archives of the Judenrat, the JUS (Jüdische Unterstützungsstelle, *Żydowska Samopomoc Społeczna*), and plans of various ghettos and camps. See 'Memorandum CŻKH do zagranicznych organizacji', AŻIH, CKŻP, Komisja Historyczna, 336/4, p. 16. See Diana Grunbaum, 'Zbiory Centralnej Żydowskiej Komisji Historycznej w Polsce', in Grüss, *Rok pracy*, p. 40–44. Likewise, the Commission gathered over 3000 photographs. See Grüss, *Rok pracy*, p. 14. The collection was headed by Gerszon Taffet. According to Noe Grüss, Polish Jewish survivors frequently requested materials from the Commission's archives searching for information on the fate of their dear ones. Grüss, *Rok pracy*, p. 25.

⁴⁵ 'Statut Centralnej Żydowskiej Komisji Historycznej w Polsce przy Centralnym Komitecie Żydów Polskich', AŻIH, CKŻP, Komisja Historyczna, 336/4, p. 1. 'Memorandum Centralnej Żydowskiej Komisji Historycznej do zagranicznych organizacji', AŻIH, CKŻP, Komisja Historyczna, 336/4, p. 15.

⁴⁶ See 'Memorandum CŻKH do zagranicznych organizacji', AŻIH, CKŻP, Komisja Historyczna, 336/4, p. 15–16.

⁴⁷ Philip Friedman, *To jest Oświęcim!* [This is Auschwitz!] (Warsaw, 1945).

⁴⁸ Łódź, 1945; see also Gershon Taffet, *Zagłada Żydów żółkiewskich* [The Holocaust of the Jews from Żółkiew] (Łódź, 1946); M. Balberyszki, *Likwidacja getta wileńskiego* [The liquidation of the Vilnius Ghetto] (Warsaw, Łódź and Cracow, 1946), copy from *Dokumenty i materiały do dziejów okupacji niemieckiej w Polsce*, vol. 2; Henryk Rudnicki, *Martyrologia i zagłada Żydów warszawskich* [Martyrology and Holocaust of the Jews from Warsaw] (Łódź, 1946).

⁴⁹ Cracow, 1946.

Rudolf Reder wrote on the death camp in Bełżec⁵⁰ and Natan E. Szternfinkel researched the fate of the Jews of Sosnowiec based on documents collected by the Regional Jewish Historical Commission in Katowice; he also analysed stages in the Nazi oppression of the Jews: from robbery to armbands to the establishment of the ghetto and ultimately to the various stages of the ghetto's liquidation. Szternfinkel also devoted a separate chapter to the underground movement. In this regard he focused on the activities of members of the Zionist youth organizations Hashomer Hatzair and Hanoar Hatziyoni as well as members of the Communist youth and on attempts to organize passive resistance among the ghetto inhabitants.⁵¹

The fate of the Warsaw ghetto and especially the tale of the Warsaw ghetto uprising attracted the attention of Jewish historians from the start,⁵² despite being highly political topics. In 1945 Marek Edelman published a brochure entitled *Getto walczy* (The Ghetto Fights). Edelman described the struggle of the fighters from the moment the decision was taken to fight back and to organize the Jewish Fighting Organization; he stressed the contribution of the socialist Bund in the preparation for the uprising and in the fighting.⁵³ On the other hand, Ber Mark published a historical account of the Warsaw ghetto uprising that focused on the Communists and their role.⁵⁴ To a lesser extent, the Białystok ghetto also became a focus of historical inquiry from early on. Among the first to investigate on this topic was Szymon Datner. In 1946 he published *Walka i zagłada białostockiego getta* (The Struggle and the Annihilation of the Białystok Ghetto), which was based on documents collected by the Central and Regional Jewish Historical

⁵⁰ Rudolf Reder, *Bełżec (Rzecz o grobie milionów Żydów jedyne ocalonego z komory gazowej w Bełżcu)* [The man from Bełżec (On the grave of millions of Jews by one saved from the gas chambers in Bełżec)], introd. by N. Rost (Cracow, 1946); see also Róża Bauminger, *Przy piktynie i trotylu: obóz pracy przymusowej w Skarżysku-Kamiennej* [A forced labour camp in Skarżysko-Kamienna] (Cracow, 1946); W. Bednarz, 'Obóz straceń w Chełmnie nad Nerem' [The death camp in Chełmno on the Ner], *Biuletyn Głównej Komisji Badania Zbrodni Hitlerowskich (GKBZH)*, Warsaw 1946, nr 1; Philip Friedman, Tadeusz Hołuj, *Oświęcim* [Auschwitz], introd. by W. Barcikowski (Warsaw, 1946); Z. Łukasziewicz, 'Obóz zagłady Treblinka' [The Holocaust camp of Treblinka], *Biuletyn GKBZH*, I; Z. Łukasziewicz, 'Obóz zagłady w Sobiborze' [The death camp in Sobibór], *Biuletyn GKBZH*, III; Z. Łukasziewicz, 'Obóz koncentracyjny i zagłady Majdanek' [The concentration and death camp in Majdanek], *Biuletyn GKBZH*, IV.

⁵¹ Natan E. Szternfinkel, *Zagłada Żydów Sosnowca* [The Holocaust of the Jews of Sosnowca] (Katowice, 1946).

⁵² Józef Kermisz, *Powstanie w ghetcie warszawskim 19 IV 1943* [The uprising in the Warsaw Ghetto 19.4.1943] (Łódź, 1946); H. Rudnicki, *Martyrologia*.

⁵³ Marek Edelman, *Getto walczy. Udział Bundu w obronie getta warszawskiego* [The Ghetto Fights. The participation of the Bund in the defence of the Warsaw Ghetto] (Warsaw, 1945). See Daniel Blatman's introd. to the Hebrew edn, *Ha-Geto lohem: tse'ire ha-Bund be-geto Varshah* (Tel Aviv, 2001).

⁵⁴ Ber Mark, *Walka i zagłada warszawskiego getta* [The fight and the annihilation of the Warsaw Ghetto] (Warsaw, 1959).

Commissions, especially on the testimonies of Jewish survivors regarding the Jewish resistance movement in the ghetto.⁵⁵

Others prepared materials to benefit future researchers studying such topics as German policies, the situation in various camps and ghettos, the plight of Jewish children, Jews in hiding on the so-called Aryan side, armed resistance and partisan units and artistic creativity in the ghettos. Diaries, memoirs, collections of such documents followed these and other primary sources on the destruction of Polish Jewry. In the years 1946–47, a number of essential diaries and memoirs were prepared for publication. These included that of Gusta Dawidsohn-Draengerowa, who was among the founders of the Jewish Fighting Organization in Cracow, Róża Bauminger's account of the forced labour camp at Skarżysko-Kamienna, and Noemi Szac-Wajnkranc's account of her experiences in the Warsaw ghetto and on the so-called Aryan side.⁵⁶ The publication of Ludwik Hirszfeld's memoir entitled *Historia jednego życia* (History of One Life) caused controversy in Jewish society due to the way in which the diary portrayed the Jewish population in the Warsaw ghetto.⁵⁷ Maria Hochberg-Mariańska and Noe Grüss prepared for publication *Dzieci oskarżają* (Children accuse), an important collection of testimonies pertaining to the fate of Jewish children under the Nazi occupation in a variety of settings.⁵⁸ The first section included testimonies that pertained to various ghettos—Warsaw, Przemyśl, Będzin, Lvov, Horodenka and Borysław—and described the conditions in those ghettos, deportations, and attempts to find hiding places both in the ghetto and on the Aryan side. The second part of the book included testimonies: the Płaszów, Mauthausen, Auschwitz and Ravensbrück camps. The third and the fourth chapters included particularly interesting material on children's experiences surviving with false identities and in hiding. The last chapters, which are rather modest in size, included descriptions of children

⁵⁵ Łódź, 1946. See also B. Mark, *Ruch oporu w getcie białostockim* [The Resistance in the Białystok Ghetto] (Warsaw, 1952). On the fate of the Cracow ghetto see E. Sandel-Podhorizer, 'Zagłada Żydów w dystrykcie krakowskim', *Biuletyn ŻIH*, 1959, nr 30. See also Abraham Melezin, *Przyczynki do znajomości stosunków demograficznych wśród ludności żydowskiej w Łodzi, Krakowie i Lublinie podczas okupacji niemieckiej* [Contribution to the understanding of the demographic relations among the Jewish population of Łódź, Cracow and Lublin under German occupation] (Łódź, 1946).

⁵⁶ Róża Bauminger, *Przy piketynie i trotylu*; Gusta Dawidsohn Draengerowa, *Pamiętnik Justyny* [The memoirs of Justyna]; Leon Weliczker, *Brygada śmierci* [The death brigade], introd. by Rachela Auerbach (Łódź, 1946); Janka Heschel, *Oczyma dwunastoletniej dziewczyny* [With the Eyes of a Twelve-year-old Girl], introd. by M. Hochberg-Mariańska (Cracow, 1946); Noemi Szac-Wajnkranc, *Przemiętło z ogniem. Pamiętnik pisany w Warszawie w okresie od założenia getta do jego likwidacji* [Gone with the Fire. Memoir written in Warsaw in the period from the establishment of the ghetto until its liquidation] (Warsaw, 1947). The diary was published again in Warsaw in 1988; Władysław Szpilman, *Śmierć miasta. Pamiętnik 1939–1945* [The Death of a City. Memoirs 1939–1945] (Warsaw, 1946); Krystyna Nowakowska, *Moja walka o życie* [My Fight for Life] (Warsaw, 1948); T. Pankiewicz, *Apteka w getcie krakowskim* [The Chemist in the Cracow Ghetto] (Cracow, 1947); Dorka Goldkorn, *Wspomnienia uczestniczki powstania w getcie warszawskim* [The Memoirs of a Participant in the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising] (Warsaw, 1951).

⁵⁷ Warsaw, 1946. Subsequently, the memoir had numerous editions, the last one in 2000.

⁵⁸ Edited by Maria Hochberg-Mariańska and Noe Grüss (Cracow, Łódź and Warsaw, 1947).

who found themselves in partisan units or in prison as well as testimonies of adults about the children.⁵⁹ As a part of the research carried out under the auspices of the Central Jewish Historical Commission in Poland, Betti Ajzensztajn edited and released a collection of documents pertaining to the underground movement in the ghettos and camps that included many unpublished testimonies and materials.⁶⁰ Finally, *Starvation Sickness: Clinical Research into Starvation Carried out in the Warsaw Ghetto in 1942*, which contained the results of research by Jewish doctors, was among the most interesting documentary publications of the Commission.⁶¹ In addition to these and related works, the Commission oversaw the publication of much of the literature written under German occupation.⁶²

The achievements of the Central Jewish Historical Commission are striking when compared with the research on the Holocaust that was carried out in Poland in the years following its dissolution. According to Ewa Koźmińska-Frejłak, publications on the Holocaust in Poland during the years 1945–47 constitute over 25% of all scholarly production on the topic between 1945 and 1989. The majority of these books were published in Polish under the auspices of the Central Jewish Historical Commission.⁶³

The Commission operated not only with a sense of mission but also with an awareness of its novelty. As Noe Grüss, writing in 1946, explained,

⁵⁹ In the latter category, the volume included recollections of Józef Gitler-Barski about childcare institutions in the Warsaw ghetto, Sabina Mirowska's text on the orphanage in Cracow and Liber Brenner's account of Jewish children in Częstochowa.

⁶⁰ Betty Ajzensztajn (ed.), *Podziemny w ghettach i obozach: Materiały i dokumenty* [The Underground Movement in the Ghettos and Camps: Materials and Documents] (Warsaw, 1946). See also *Powstanie w getcie warszawskim 1943 r. Zbiór dokumentów* [The Uprising in the Warsaw Ghetto 1943. Collection of Documents] (Warsaw, Łódź, 1945); *Dokumenty i materiały do dziejów okupacji niemieckiej w Polsce* [The Documents and Materials on the Time of the German Occupation of Poland], vol. 1: Obozy [Camps], ed. by Nachman Blumental (Łódź, 1946); *Dokumenty i materiały do dziejów okupacji niemieckiej w Polsce*, vol. 2: 'Akcje' i 'wysiedlenia' [Actions and resettlement], ed. by Josef Kermisz (Warsaw, 1946); *Dokumenty i materiały do dziejów okupacji niemieckiej*, vol. 3: *Getto łódzkie* [The Łódź Ghetto], ed. by A. Eisenbach (Warsaw, 1946); Michał Borwicz, Nella Rost and Józef Wulf (eds), *Dokumenty zbrodni i męczeństwa* [Documents of crime and martyrdom] (Cracow, 1945); *Proces Artura Greisera przed Najwyższym Trybunałem Narodowym* [The Process against Artur Greiser in Front of the National Supreme Court] (Warsaw, 1946).

⁶¹ E. Apfelbaum, J. Fliederbaum (eds), *Choroba głodowa: Badania kliniczne nad głodem wykonane w getcie warszawskim w roku* (Warsaw, 1946).

⁶² See Mordecai Gebirtig, *S'brent* [It burns] (Cracow, 1946), ed. by J. Wulf; Michał Borwicz (ed.), *Literatura w obozie; Sz. Szajewicz, Lech L'cha* (Cracow, 1946).

⁶³ See Ewa Koźmińska-Frejłak, 'Polsko-żydowskie rozrachunki. Wyzwania Holocaustu. Analiza listów do redakcji 'Tygodnika Powszechnego' nadesłanych w odpowiedzi na dyskusję Błoński-Siła-Nowicki' [Polish-Jewish Accounts. Challenges of the Holocaust. Analysis of the letters sent to the editorial board of 'Tygodnik Powszechny, answering to the debate Błoński-Siła-Nowicki] (Warsaw, 1992) (M.A. thesis written under the supervision of Prof. Paweł Śpiwak, Warsaw University). According to Koźmińska-Frejłak in the years 1945–1947, 35 books were published (of which 29 under the auspices of Jewish institutions); in the years 1950–1954, six titles; 1955–1959, only one or two titles per year (with none published in 1956 and 1959); in 1960–1969 between one and five titles per year (five published in 1960 and 1968); in 1970–1974 four publications altogether; 1975–1980, one to two titles per year (none in 1972, 1976). See N. Grüss, *Rok pracy*, p. 20.

We set to our work with a different approach. Neither we nor anyone else in the world had had any experience in the research of such issues as the theory and practice of the German fascism with regards to the Jews. In the course of our work we educated ourselves.⁶⁴

However, the Commission faced various difficulties stemming from this novel character of its work. These related not only to the process of collecting information on such unprecedented events but also to writing and publishing the results.⁶⁵ One of the recurring dilemmas for Jews involved in the activities of the Commission was the question of scholarly objectivism. In the annual report of the Central Jewish Historical Commission, Noe Grüss admitted that although 'we set out to do our work as "objective" researchers, other motives were at work than academic and theoretical interests.'⁶⁶

In the agenda of the Central Jewish Historical Commission one observes a recurrent internal conflict. On the one hand, its mission was to document the fate of the Jews under German occupation and therefore to stress the particular character of the Jewish tragedy. On the other hand, in numerous political announcements, members of the Commission stressed the universal character of the suffering that went on under occupation. That might have been—to some extent—a result of the dual goal in popularizing the results of the research both among Jews and non-Jews. For the latter, stressing the particular Jewish fate during the war might have seemed politically risky.⁶⁷ The political context seemed to influence the Commission's agenda from the very outset. In the protocol of the press conference organized by the Central Jewish Historical

⁶⁴ Grüss, *Rok pracy*, p. 9–10. The Commission often compared its activities to those of the underground archives of *Oneg Shabbat* in the Warsaw ghetto. In the case of the Warsaw Regional Commission, the link was particularly evident since it was run by Hersz (Henryk) Wasser who had served as Emanuel Ringelblum's secretary. See Israel Gutman, *Żydzi Warszawscy, 1939–1943* [The Warsaw Jews, 1939–1943] (Warsaw, 1993), p. 221–223.

⁶⁵ In the discussion on Józef Kermisz's *The Warsaw Ghetto Uprising* held in the Central Jewish Historical Commission in the fall of 1946, Jasny defended the concept of the book: 'Usually one writes historical works about events that took place relatively long ago, from a certain historical perspective. As far as our work is concerned, it deals with recent events, witnesses of which are still alive, [but] at the same time the documents are usually lacking. This is the case with Dr. Kermisz's work. There are no documents. There are memoirs, testimonies and reports of organizations... There is no other way of conducting research.' 'Protokół posiedzenia naukowego pracowników CŻKH dnia 28 października 1946', in *AŻIH, CKŻP, Komisja Historyczna*, 336/20, p. 32.

⁶⁶ Grüss, *Rok pracy*, p. 10. He described the atmosphere in which the Commission operated as 'graveyard' and 'deathly mood'. On the other hand, at the press conference organized in Łódź on 21 March 1945 Philip Friedman declared that the attitude of the researcher 'should not be sentimental or emotional since the only right approach is insightful and sharp analysis'.

⁶⁷ See 'Statut Centralnej Żydowskiej Komisji Historycznej w Polsce przy Centralnym Komitecie Żydów Polskich', *AŻIH, CKŻP, Komisja Historyczna*, 336/4, p. 1. 'The resolution on the establishment of the Central Jewish Historical Commission' passed by the Central Committee of Jews in Poland and the Union of Jewish Writers, Journalists and Artists in Poland, promised that 'the work of the Commission will underline... and bring to the light of the day the sophisticated methods of [Nazi] sadism and barbarism, which accompanied this historically unprecedented campaign [against the Jews]', 'Rezolucja przyjęta na zebraniu CKŻP i Związku Literatów, Dziennikarzy i Artystów Żydowskich w sprawie powołania do życia Centralnej Żydowskiej Komisji Historycznej', b.d., *AŻIH, CKŻP, Komisja Historyczna*, 333/2, p. 1.

Commission in the spring of 1945, Philip Friedman reflected on the goals of the Commission in the following words:

The goal of the Commission is to carry out research on the period of the German occupation that lasted five years. For such a short period of time this period was extremely eventful. It ended with a catastrophe for the Jewish nation. There were already parallel events in history, even more tragic than this one, since they brought to some extent a destruction of the Jewish national essence. However, in contrast to the previous periods, when one could discuss the Jewish problem in isolation, in the present case it is closely connected with the question of the existence of other nations, because fascism attempted to destroy all the nations of Europe.⁶⁸

In the years 1946–47, the Central Jewish Historical Commission became increasingly political and access to its materials was increasingly controlled and limited.⁶⁹ With political tensions growing within the Commission, various camps including the Jewish Communists attempted to influence its activities.⁷⁰ In 1947 the Central Committee of the Jews in Poland decided to close down the regional branches of the Historical Commission. The Central branch was closed down in 1949, coinciding with the liquidation of the majority of independent Jewish institutions in Poland.

Between the mid-1940s and the wave of official anti-Semitism that rocked Polish society in 1968 several comprehensive publications appeared. One of the first attempts to put together a monograph on the fate of Polish Jews under the Nazi occupation was Philip Friedman's *Zagłada Żydów polskich 1939–1945* (The Holocaust of Polish Jewry, 1939–1945) published in 1946.⁷¹ Later similar efforts included Artur Eisenbach's work on the Nazi extermination policy and the writings of Ber Mark.⁷² Both Eisenbach and

⁶⁸ AŻIH, CKŻP, Komisja Historyczna, 336/15, pp. 1–2. 'W protokole z konferencji prasowej', przy CKH z dnia 21 marca 1945 r. w Łodzi.

⁶⁹ In March 1947 Chajka Grossman had to request permission to copy the documents from the Ringelblum Archives in the possession of the Central Jewish Historical Commission in order to 'acquaint her with the records pertaining to the kibbutz movement'. AŻIH, CKŻP, Prezydium 303/6, Protokół 32 posiedzenia prezydium CKŻP w dniu, 27 March 1947, p. 162. Similarly Rachel Auerbach requested permission to copy her works written in the ghetto and transferred to the Ringelblum Archives and to recover her strictly personal correspondence. See AZIH, CKZP, Prezydium 303/2, protokół 79 z posiedzenia prezydium 4 Oct. 1946, p. 1946, p. 168–169. See *ibid.*, protocol 97, 25 Nov. 1946, p. 59.

⁷⁰ In the discussion over the publishing plans for 1947 Hersz (Grzegorz) Smolar complained to the Commission's representative Kermisz that 'the issue of the Jewish resistance should be reflected in the works of the Historical Commission. There is so much on Jewish suffering and so little on their heroism'. AŻIH, CKŻP, Prezydium 303/4, protokół 108 posiedzenia prezydium, 19 Dec. 1946, p. 100. Kermisz defended his positions pointing out that there is a documentary study devoted to the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. See *ibid.*

⁷¹ Published in *Buletyn Głównej Komisji Badania Zbrodni Hitlerowskich w Polsce*, 1 (1946). See also Philip Friedman, *Zagłada Żydów Polskich w okresie okupacji niemieckiej 1939–1945* [The Holocaust of Polish Jews during the German occupation, 1939–1945] (Munich, 1947).

⁷² See Artur Eisenbach, *Hitlerowska polityka zagłady Żydów* [Hitler's Holocaust policies towards the Jews] (Warsaw, 1961). It was based on his previous study, *Hitlerowska polityka eksterminacji Żydów w latach 1939–1945 jako jeden z przejawów imperializmu niemieckiego* [Hitler's extermination policy against the Jews in 1939–1945 as one of the symptoms of German imperialism] (Warsaw, 1953).

Mark based their publications on materials collected in the period immediately after the Second World War. Eisenbach's *Hitlerowska polityka eksterminacji Żydów w latach 1939–1945 jako jeden z przejawów imperializmu niemieckiego* (Nazi Policy of Extermination of the Jews 1939–1945 as one of the Symptoms of German Imperialism), published in 1953, might serve as a good example of the Holocaust scholarship of that period. It was written in the language of political propaganda; nevertheless, it constituted a sincere attempt to describe German policies *vis-à-vis* the Jews, with particular emphasis on Nazi-occupied Poland. Another book worth mentioning in this context is the volume edited by Berenstein, Eisenbach and Rutkowski entitled *Eksterminacja Żydów na ziemiach polskich w okresie okupacji hitlerowskiej* (The Extermination of the Jews in Polish lands during the Nazi occupation), which was published in 1957.⁷³ This work was a selection of documents and materials illustrating Nazi genocidal policies in occupied Poland. It focused on political and economic aspects of the Nazi anti-Jewish policies. It failed, however, to address issues relating to internal Jewish life of the period.⁷⁴

Between 1956 and 1968 a number of diaries and memoirs appeared, some of which had been written during the war.⁷⁵ Among those publications two

⁷³ Edited by Tatiana Berenstein, Artur Eisenbach and Adam Rutkowski (Warsaw, 1957).

⁷⁴ Articles of considerable scholarly significance appeared in *Biuletyn żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego* (Bulletin of the Jewish Historical Institute), which remains a prime organ for the publishing of Holocaust research in Poland. Articles from the 1950s by Tatiana Brustin-Berenstein, Adam Rutkowski and Danuta Dąbrowska are still a valuable point of reference in Holocaust research, especially as far as local studies are concerned. See T. Brustin-Berenstein, 'Deportacje i zagłada skupisk żydowskich w dystrykcie warszawskim' [Deportations and the liquidation of the Jewish centers in the Warsaw district], *Biuletyn ŻIH*, 1952, nr 3, pp. 83–125; *idem*, 'Martyrologia, opór i zagłada ludności żydowskiej w dystrykcie lubelskim' [Martyrology, resistance and the Holocaust of the Jewish population in the Lublin district], *Biuletyn ŻIH*, 1957, nr 21, pp. 21–92; T. Berenstein, 'O hitlerowskich metodach eksploatacji gospodarczej getta warszawskiego' [On Hitler's methods of economic exploitation of the Warsaw Ghetto], *Biuletyn ŻIH*, 1953, nr 8; T. Berenstein, 'O niektórych zagadnieniach gospodarczych w Generalnej Guberni w świetle Dziennika H. Franka' [On several economic conditions in the General Government in the light of H. Frank's diary], *Biuletyn ŻIH*, 1954, nr 9–10; Danuta Dąbrowska, 'Zagłada skupisk Żydowskich w 'Kraju Warty' w okresie okupacji hitlerowskiej' [The Annihilation of the Jewish centers in the 'Warthegau' in the period of the Nazi occupation], *Biuletyn ŻIH*, 1955, nr 1/2, pp. 122–184; Adam Rutkowski, 'Hitlerowskie obozy pracy dla Żydów w dystrykcie radomskim' [The Annihilation of the Jews in the Radom district], *Biuletyn ŻIH*, 1956, nr 1/2, pp. 106–128; *idem*, 'Zagłada Żydów w dystrykcie radomskim' [The Jewish Holocaust in the Radom district], *Biuletyn ŻIH*, 1955, nr 3/4, pp. 75–182; *idem*, 'Martyrologia, walka i zagłada ludności Żydowskiej w dystrykcie radomskim podczas okupacji hitlerowskiej' [The Martyrology, struggle and liquidation of the Jewish population in the Radom district during the Nazi occupation] *Biuletyn ŻIH*, 1955, nr 15–16.

⁷⁵ See for example Chaim A. Kapłan, 'Księga Życia' [The books of life], *Biuletyn ŻIH*, 1963, nr 1/2, pp. 174–211; Adolf and Batia Berman, 'Zagłada getta warszawskiego' [The annihilation of the Warsaw Ghetto], *Biuletyn ŻIH*, 1963, nr 1–2, pp. 138–158; Gustaw Alef-Bolkowiak, *Gorące dni (Pamiętnik partyzancki)* [Hot days (Memoirs of a Partisan)] (Warsaw, 1959); Dawid Fogelman, 'Pamiętnik pisany w bunkrze w Warszawie' [Memoir written in the bunker in Warsaw], *Biuletyn ŻIH* 1964, nr 4, pp. 107–141; S. Różycki, 'To jest getto' [This is the ghetto], *ibidem*, 1967, nr 2; Henryk Bryskier, 'Fragmenty pamiętnika' [Fragments of a memoir], *ibidem*, pp. 77–99; A. Lewin, 'Dziennik z getta warszawskiego' [Diary of the Warsaw Ghetto], transl. from the Yiddish by Adam Rutkowski, *Biuletyn ŻIH*, 1956, no 19/20.

first-hand accounts had tremendous subsequent importance for research on the Nazi occupation in Poland. They were Zygmunt Klukowski's *Dziennik z lat okupacji Zamojszczyzny (1939–1944)* (A Memoir from the Years of the Occupation of the Zamość Region)⁷⁶ and Ludwik Landau's *Kronika lat wojny i okupacji* (The Chronicle of the War and Occupation Years).⁷⁷

In these years new works were also published that were devoted to the topic of the assistance given to the Jews under the Nazi occupation by individual Poles as well as by their various underground agencies. Tatiana Berenstein and Adam Rutkowski prepared a monograph entitled *Pomoc Żydom w Polsce 1939–1945* (Assistance to the Jews in Poland, 1939–1945), in which they presented a variety of examples of assistance, both individual and organized, from various periods of the occupation.⁷⁸ An entire chapter is devoted to the activities of the underground Rada Pomocy Żydom (Żegota) (The Council for Aid to Jews). The book also included an appendix containing testimonies of Jews who survived the war thanks to the assistance of Poles. The publication was prepared on the basis of German documents and archival materials collected by the Główna Komisja Badania Zbrodni Hitlerowskich w Polsce (Main Commission for Investigation of Nazi Crimes in Poland), the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw (mainly those preserved in the so-called Ringelblum Archives), and the Department of Party History of the Central Committee of the Polish Communist Party (KC PZPR, Komitet Centralny Polskiej Zjednoczonej Partii Robotniczej). The authors of *Pomoc Żydom w Polsce 1939–1945* pointed out that pre-existing Polish anti-Semitism fuelled by the Nazi propaganda 'had a belittling influence on the scope of the assistance and saving Jewish lives by the Poles'.⁷⁹ They also drew attention to various types of direct and indirect incentives that the Nazis used in various stages of the occupation to encourage Poles to assist in the persecution and murder of the Jews.⁸⁰ The authors discussed the motivations of those Poles who helped the Jews, especially in the early stages of the Nazi occupation. According to

⁷⁶ Lublin, 1958; see also Klukowski, *Niedola i zagłada Żydów w Szczebrzeszynie* [The Misery and Holocaust of the Jews in Szczebrzeszyn], *Biuletyn ŻIH*, 1956, no. 19/20.

⁷⁷ Ed. in 3 vols. by Zbigniew Landau and Jerzy Tomaszewski (Warsaw 1962–63). Among important editions of source materials one has to mention also Lucjan Dobroszycki (ed.), *Kronika getta łódzkiego* [The Chronicle of the Łódź Ghetto] (Łódź, 1965). Dawid Sierakowiak, *Dziennik* [Diary] (Warsaw, 1960) and Jakub Poznański's *Pamiętnik z getta łódzkiego* [A Memoir from the Łódź Ghetto] (Łódź, 1960) are particularly worth mentioning for their wealth of information on life in the Łódź ghetto.

⁷⁸ Tatiana Berenstein and Adam Rutkowski (eds), *Pomoc Żydom w Polsce* [Help for the Jews of Poland] (Warsaw, 1963); 'O ratownictwie Żydów przez Polaków w okresie okupacji hitlerowskiej' [On the saving of Jews by Poles in the period of the Hitlerite occupation], *Biuletyn ŻIH*, 1960, nr 3, pp. 18–46.

⁷⁹ Berenstein and Rutkowski, *Pomoc Żydom w Polsce*, p. 13.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 17–18.

Berenstein and Rutkowski, diverse motives played a role in the decision to help the Jews:

Apart from ideological and political and social motivations . . . simple interpersonal relations played an important role (for neighbours, colleagues, friends and professionals) . . . There were however numerous instances of taking an interest in the fate of persecuted strangers, and sometimes Jewish children . . . Here motivations of purest humanitarianism and empathy for human misery and suffering were at work. It was a kind of internal imperative of giving help to the weaker and unjustly persecuted. Deeply religious Poles—Christians—were also guided by the religious imperative and were ready to make enormous sacrifices to fulfil their Christian duty.⁸¹

Władysław Bartoszewski and Zofia Lewinówna published a classic work on the topic of Polish assistance to the Jews in 1966 under the title *Ten jest z ojczyzny mojej* (Righteous Among the Nations).⁸² The editors utilized materials that had not previously been published, including answers to the questionnaire 'Polacy z pomocą Żydom' (Poles assisting the Jews) that was conducted by *Tygodnik Powszechny* in 1963, and testimonies from the collection of the Reverend Jan Zieja.⁸³

The political context of the Holocaust research changed in Poland in the 1960s and especially after the Six Day War. Particularly interesting in the context of Polish Holocaust historiography seems to be the case of the official attack against the editors of *Wielka Encyclopedia Powszechna* (the Great Popular Encyclopaedia). Already in 1967 they were criticized for undermining the suffering of the Polish nation under Nazi occupation, which allegedly was evident in the article on Nazi concentration camps.⁸⁴ Following 1968, the activity of the Jewish Institute in Warsaw was also reduced since 'entire divisions of the collections were transferred to regional Polish archives throughout the country [and many] of its workers left and even emigrated from Poland, and its activity diminished.'⁸⁵

The assistance given to the Jews by Poles remained at the centre of the Holocaust scholarship published in Poland after 1968. Szymon Datner published a number of articles and primary sources pertaining to the topic.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 35–36.

⁸² Cracow, 1966. An expanded edition of the book was published in 1969. See also W. Bartoszewski, 'Akcje solidarnościowe pod murami getta' [Solidarity actions under the walls of the Ghetto], *Stolica*, 1957, nr 5.

⁸³ See also Basia Temkin-Bermanowa, 'Akcja pomocy Żydom w okresie okupacji hitlerowskiej' [The action in help of Jews during the period of the Hitlerite occupation], *Biuletyn Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego* (1957) nr 22, pp. 61–84; Irena Sandlerowa, 'Ci, którzy pomagali Żydom' [Those who helped the Jews], *Biuletyn ŻIH*, 1963, nr 1/2, pp. 234–247; S. and W. Legec, 'Żołnierze Żydowskiej Organizacji Bojowej i Ich Przyjaciele' [Soldiers of the Jewish Fighting Organization and their Friends], *Biuletyn ŻIH*, 1953, nr 1, pp. 117–155; Szymon Datner, 'Niektóre dane o zbrodniach hitlerowskich na Polakach ratujących Żydów' [Some information on the Nazi crimes committed against Poles who were rescuing Jews], *Biuletyn Głównej Komisji Badania Zbrodni Hitlerowskich w Polsce*, 1967 (16) pp.158–170.

⁸⁴ See Dariusz Stola, *Kampania antyżydowska w Polsce 1967–1968* [The Anti-Zionist Campaign in Poland, 1967–1968] (Warsaw, 2000), pp. 63–64.

⁸⁵ Netzer, 'The Holocaust of Polish Jewry in Jewish Historiography', p. 140.

Among others he published *Las sprawiedliwych: Karta z dziejów ratownictwa Żydów w okupowanej Polsce* (Forest of the Righteous: a page from the tales about saving Jews in occupied Poland), in which he established that at least 343 Poles—including 64 women and 42 children—paid with their lives for hiding Jews.⁸⁶ In 1982 Teresa Prekerowa published a well-documented monograph on the Committee to Aid the Jews, ‘Żegota’.⁸⁷ Her important work fits the general pattern of Polish historiography on the topic by focusing on the organized assistance given to the Jews.⁸⁸

Little research was carried out focusing on the Jewish experience during the Nazi occupation. Ruta Sakowska’s 1975 monograph *Ludzie z dzielnicy zamkniętej* (People from the closed district) was an important exception and analysed the internal life of the Warsaw ghetto and Nazi policies.⁸⁹ It included such important topics as support systems in the ghetto, social activities, relations with the *Judenrat*, and manifestations of the armed resistance. Discussing its first edition Shlomo Netzer even suggested that despite the late date of the book’s publication: ‘We must add it to the books on historical subjects that appeared within the context of the *Yiddish Bukh* under the auspices of the Jewish Historical Institute and other Jewish bodies.’⁹⁰ Thus, Netzer included it in the realm of the Jewish scholarly production of the late 1940s.

In the 1980s and 1990s a number of books central to the field were published in Poland, both sources and monographs. Among source materials one should mention Adam Czerniaków’s *Dziennik getta warszawskiego 6 IX 1939–13 VII 1942* (Diary of the Warsaw Ghetto, 6 September 1939–13 July 1942) and Emanuel Ringelblum’s *Kronika getta warszawskiego* (Chronicle of the Warsaw Ghetto).⁹¹ Ringelblum’s notes cover almost the entire period of the war and the occupation, from September 1939 until the death of the author in March 1944. He recorded not only his

⁸⁶ Warsaw, 1968; ‘Materiały z dziedziny ratownictwa Żydów w Polsce w okresie okupacji hitlerowskiej’ [Materials from the field of saving the Jews in Poland during the Nazi occupation], *Biuletyn ŻIH*, 1970, nr 73, pp. 133–138; ‘Polki warszawskie z pomocą Żydom’ [Polish women of Warsaw to the help of Jews], *Biuletyn ŻIH*, 1969, nr 70, pp. 113–116; ‘Udział polskich jeńców wojennych w ratowaniu Żydów w okresie II wojny światowej’ [The participation of Polish prisoners of war in the rescue of Jews in the period of the Second World War], *Biuletyn ŻIH*, 1978, nr 107–108, pp. 73–86; Stanisław Wroński, Maria Zwolakowa, *Polacy, Żydzi 1939–1945* [Poles, Jews] (Warsaw, 1971).

⁸⁷ Teresa Prekerowa, *Konspiracyjna Rada Pomocy Żydom w Warszawie 1942–1945* [The Underground Council for Aid to Jews in Warsaw 1942–1945] (Warsaw, 1982).

⁸⁸ Krakowski, ‘The Holocaust of Polish Jewry in Polish Historiography and Polish Émigré Circles’, pp. 128–129.

⁸⁹ Warsaw, 1975, new edn 1993. See also, Sakowska, *Dwa etapy. Hitlerowska polityka eksterminacji Żydów w oczach ofiar. Szkice historyczne i dokumenty* [Two stages. Hitler’s extermination policy against the Jews in the eyes of the victims. Sketches and documents] (Wrocław, 1986).

⁹⁰ Netzer, ‘The Holocaust of Polish Jewry in Jewish Historiography’, p. 138.

⁹¹ Czerniakow (Warsaw, 1983); Ringelblum, ed. by Artur Eisenbach and A. Rutkowski (Warsaw, 1983). Fragments appeared earlier in *Biuletyn Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego*, E. Ringelblum, ‘Notatki z getta’ [Notes from the Ghetto], *ibidem*, 1955, nr 3/4. See also Władysław Szlengel, *Co czytałem umarłym* [What I Read to the Dead] (Warsaw, 1979; 1st edn 1977).

own reflections and observations, but also the gossip, mood, and cultural life of the ghetto in general. In the same period, the *Pamiętnik* (Diary) of Dawid Rubinowicz—a twelve-year-old Jewish boy from Krajno—was also published.⁹² His family was forced to move to the ghetto in Bodzentyn and most probably in September 1942 he was sent to the death camp in Treblinka. Józef Barski published his *Przeżycia i wspomnienia z lat okupacji* (Experiences and memories from the years of the occupation), a memoir of great interest due to the author's public function in the Warsaw ghetto: he was active in the Joint Distribution Committee and Centres, which operated a network of soup kitchens and orphanages and underground educational institutions.⁹³ Particularly interesting are Barski's remarks on the fate of Jewish children in the ghetto, his polemic on the nature of the Jewish uprising, his opinion about the activities of Żydowska Samopomoc Społeczna and his notes from Bergen-Belsen, where he was an inmate from 1943 until 1945. In 1993 Paweł Szapiro edited and released the memoir of Calel Perechodnik, which was written in Warsaw in the summer of 1943.⁹⁴ Perechodnik, who was in the ghetto in Otwock, near Warsaw, until its liquidation and then hid in Warsaw, described the fate of his close relatives and at the same time the history of the annihilation of the whole Jewish community. However, the edition of the book

had itself taken considerable liberties with its author's own memory, both through the outright expurgation of fairly extensive passages and the careful doctoring of others, to the point where the published Polish version cannot be taken as an accurate, or even altogether truthful, reflection of Calel Perechodnik's own thoughts.⁹⁵

Among other interesting memoirs—mainly from the Warsaw ghetto—that were published in Poland in the early 1990s one should mention those of Janina Bauman,⁹⁶ Henryk Makower,⁹⁷ Helena Szereszewska⁹⁸ and Irena Birnbaum.⁹⁹

⁹² Warsaw, 1987. Among other memoirs published during this period were some written years after the events described, such as Halina Birenbaum's *Nadzieja umiera ostatnia* [Hope is the last to die] (Warsaw, 1988). See also Jack Eisner, *Przeżyłem!* [I survived!] (Warsaw, 1988); Arnold Mostowicz, *Żółta gwiazda i czerwony krzyż* [The Yellow Star and the Red Cross] (Warsaw, 1988); Pola Wawer, *Poza gettem i obozem* [Outside the Ghetto and the Camp] (Warsaw, 1993).

⁹³ Wrocław, Warsaw and Cracow, 1986. This publication consisted in fact of a number of articles that were published before mainly in *Biuletyn Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego*.

⁹⁴ Calel Perechodnik, *Czy ja jestem mordercą* [Whether I am a murderer], ed. by Paweł Szapiro (Warsaw, 1993).

⁹⁵ David Engel, "On the Bowdlerization of a Holocaust Testimony: The Wartime Journal of Calel Perechodnik," *Polin*, vol. 12 (1999), p. 317.

⁹⁶ Janina Bauman, *Zima o poranku. Opowieść dziewczynki z Warszawskiego Getta* [Winter in the Morning: A Young Girl's Life in the Warsaw Ghetto and Beyond] (Cracow, 1989).

⁹⁷ Henryk Makower, *Pamiętnik z getta warszawskiego październik 194–styczeń 1943* [Memoir from the Warsaw Ghetto, Oct. 1940–Jan. 1943] (Wrocław and Warsaw, 1987).

⁹⁸ Helena Szereszewska, *Krzyż i mezuzah* [The Cross and the Mezuzah] (Warsaw, 1993).

⁹⁹ Irena Birnbaum, *Non omnis moriar. Pamiętnik z getta warszawskiego* [I shall not die entirely. Memoirs from the Warsaw Ghetto] (Warsaw, 1982); A. Meroz, *W murach i poza murami getta. Zapiski lekarki warszawskiej* [Within and without the Ghetto. Notes of a Warsaw doctor] (Warsaw, 1988).

Finally, the Association of Children of the Holocaust in Poland prepared for print in 1993 a very interesting collection of testimonies of its members entitled *Dzieci Holocaustu mówią* (Children of the Holocaust Speak), which included both testimonies collected after the Holocaust years and others from the archives of the Jewish Historical Institute (partially published earlier in the above-mentioned volume edited by M. Hochberg-Mariańska and N. Grüss).¹⁰⁰ Testimonies from Warsaw, from the eastern Polish territories and from the camps dominate the volume. The publication also includes a section of testimonies from people born shortly before the outbreak of the war or under German occupation, whose memories of the aftermath are much clearer than of the period of the war itself. Several books also appeared that were based on interviews with Polish Jewish survivors. One of the most important was Hanna Krall's *Zdążyć przed Panem Bogiem* (Outsmarting God), which was based on her conversations with Marek Edelman, one of the leaders of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising.¹⁰¹

Among important editions of source materials pertaining to the Holocaust was Michał Grynberg's selection of excerpts from diaries and memoirs written in the Warsaw ghetto. This work was divided into such topics as offices and institutions in the ghetto, deportations, armed resistance in the ghetto, and living conditions on the so-called Aryan side.¹⁰² Ruta Sakowska prepared a critical edition of fragments from the Ringelblum Archives, which constituted the first extensive presentation of the materials from the *Oneg Shabbat* collections.¹⁰³ It also included materials documenting the life of Jews in the Warsaw ghetto until the first attempt

¹⁰⁰ Wiktoria Śliwowska (ed.), *Dzieci Holocaustu mówią* [The Holocaust children speak] (Warsaw, 1993). See also two volumes of testimonies published by the Association of Jewish Combatants and Injured in the Second World War: Marian Turski (ed.), *Losy żydowskie. Świadeństwo żywych* [Jewish Fates. The Testimony of the Living] (Warsaw, 1996–1999), vol. 1–2.

¹⁰¹ Cracow 1977; further Polish editions: 1979, 1987, 1989, 1992, 1997, 2001. Anka Grupińska published *Po kole. Rozmowy z żydowskimi żołnierzami* [On the Circle: Conversations with Jewish Soldiers] (Warsaw, 1991), which included testimonies from Marek Edelman, Pnina Grynspan-Frymer, Luba Gewisar and Adina Błady-Szwajgier, among others. Joanna Wiszniewicz presented an account of the fate of a young boy from the Warsaw ghetto. *A jednak czasem miewam sny: historia pewnej samotności Joannie Wiszniewicz opowiedziana* [And yet I still have dreams: the story of a certain loneliness, told to Joanna Wiszniewicz] (Warsaw, 1996), see also Abraham Cytryn, 'Wyrazić duszę getta' [To express the spirit of the Ghetto], *Polis*, 1997, nr 3; Michał Głowiński, 'Ułamki z getta' [Fragments from the ghetto], *Tygodnik Powszechny*, 1997, nr 18; Katarzyna Meloch, 'I ja byłam córką', *Więź*, 1997, nr 7. Barbara Engelking collected interesting testimonies from Arnold Mostowicz, Władysław Szpilman and Helena Merenholt. See Barbara Engelking, *Na łące popiołów: ocaleni z Holocaustu* [On the meadow of ashes: saved from the Holocaust] (Warsaw, 1993).

¹⁰² *Pamiętniki z getta warszawskiego. Fragmenty i rejestry* [Memoirs of the Warsaw Ghetto], ed. by Michał Grynberg (Warsaw, 1988).

¹⁰³ Ruta Sakowska (ed.), *Listy o zagładzie* [Letters on the Holocaust] (Archiwum Ringelbluma: Konspiracyjne Archiwum Getta Warszawy, 1—The Secret Archive of the Warsaw Ghetto] (Warsaw, 1997).

at armed resistance in January 1943. Among these materials were excerpts from diaries, official ghetto announcements and literary materials and research carried out under the auspices of *Oneg Shabbat* as well as political underground materials.

The question of the public discussion on Polish–Jewish relations under the Nazi occupation took place in Poland in the period immediately after the Second World War but was limited mainly to the discussion of moral consequences of the tragedy with the participation of writers and scholars such as Jerzy Andrzejewski, Tadeusz Breza, Mieczysław Jastrun, Stanisław Ossowski, Stefan Otwinowski, Kazimierz Wyka, Jerzy Andrzejewski and Stefan Żółkiewski publishing on the issue in the journals *Kuźnica* and *Tygodnik Powszechny*. A relatively small fraction of the Commission's work and the material it uncovered pertained to Polish–Jewish relations under German occupation.¹⁰⁴ In Michał Borwicz's *Organizowanie wściekłości* (Organizing Fury), the author devoted one chapter to the influence of the Nazi propaganda on the stance taken by the Poles witnessing the mass murder of the Jews. In 1988 Emanuel Ringelblum's crucial study *Stosunki polsko-żydowskie w czasie drugiej wojny światowej* (Polish–Jewish Relations during the Second World War), which was written while in hiding on the Aryan side in Warsaw.¹⁰⁵ Paweł Szapiro prepared a collection of over 500 articles of various lengths from over 150 Polish underground newspapers across the political spectrum that pertained to the Warsaw Ghetto uprising.¹⁰⁶

In the 1980s the subject of the assistance given to the Jews during the Nazi occupation continued to attract the attention of Polish scholars. Among publications on the topic the works of Marek Arczyński and Wiesław Balcerak¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁴ Grüss, however, describes 'exceptional' the case of a Pole who saved a number of Jews, providing a 'beam of light through the clouds'. Grüss described another exceptional case of a Pole who 'instead of robbing and looting the Jewish property, . . . preserved about 5,000 photographs, records and lists of camps' documenting the fate of the Jews, and brought them to the office of the Commission, Noe Grüss, 'Dokumenty wrodzonej szlachetności', *AŻIH, CKŻP, Komisja Historyczna*, 336/7, p. 45.

¹⁰⁵ Emanuel Ringelblum, *Stosunki polsko-żydowskie w czasie drugiej wojny światowej* [The Polish–Jewish Relationship in the time of the Second World War], ed. by Artur Eisenbach (Warsaw, 1988). E. Ringelblum, 'Stosunki polsko-żydowskie w czasie II wojny światowej', *Biuletyn ŻIH*, 1959, nr 28,29,30.

¹⁰⁶ Paweł Szapiro (ed.), *Wojna Żydowsko-niemiecka. Polska prasa konspiracyjna 1943–1944 o powstaniu w getcie Warszawy* [The Jewish–German War. The Conspirational Polish Press 1943–44 on the uprising in the Warsaw Ghetto] (London, 1992). See also Paweł Szapiro, 'Prasa konspiracyjna jako źródło do dziejów stosunków polsko-żydowskich w latach II wojny światowej—uwagi, pytania, propozycje badawcze' [The conspirational press as source for the history of Polish–Jewish relations in the years of the Second World War], *Biuletyn ŻIH* 3–4 (1988), pp. 197–210.

¹⁰⁷ Marek Arczyński, *Kryptonim Żegota. Z dziejów pomocy Żydom w Polsce 1939–1945* [The Cryptonym Żegota. From the history of helping Jews in Poland 1939–45] (Warsaw, 1979; 2nd edn 1983).

as well as those of Władysław Smólski¹⁰⁸ deserve note. Michał Grynberg prepared a collection of short articles on Poles who assisted the Jews and who were honoured with the title of 'Righteous among Nations' in the years 1963–1989. Each short biography included data about the assistance given and about the Jews who were given help, sometimes also about survival strategies and conditions based on the testimonies from the Jewish Historical Institute.¹⁰⁹

One of the most interesting aspects of the phenomenon of Polish assistance to the Jews was the fate of Jewish children in the years of the Nazi occupation. Ewa Kurek-Lesik published a monograph on the contribution of women's religious orders in saving Jewish children in Nazi-occupied Poland, entitled *Gdy klasztor znaczył życie* (When the Monastery Meant Life).¹¹⁰ The author based her work on testimonies collected in convents as well as archival research carried out in archives of various orders. Kurek-Lesik pointed to the situation of the Catholic Church in Poland and especially to crises in its administrative structure that resulted in the lack of a centralized authority to take a decision regarding the attitude towards the persecuted Jews. As a result, the decision to take in Jewish children was taken individually in each of the convents, sometimes by nuns of low rank. The convents first became a temporary asylum for the children late in 1940. The book covered such issues as the conditions in which the children were hidden, techniques to make their stay appear legal and the conversion of Jewish children. The attitude of the Polish government in exile to the fate of the Jews has also attracted scholarly attention in recent years. Among

¹⁰⁸ Władysław Smólski, *Za to groziła śmierć. Polacy z pomocą Żydom w czasie okupacji* [This was Threatened with Death. Poles who help Jews in the Occupation Period] (Warsaw, 1981). See also studies carried out under the auspices of the Main Commission for the Study of Nazi Crimes in Poland, which have a strong bias: Waclaw Bielawski, Czesław Pilichowski, *Zbrodnie na Polakach dokonane przez hitlerowców za pomoc udzielaną Żydom* [Crimes against Poles committed by the Hitlerites for helping Jews] (Warsaw, 1981). The authors claimed that there were 3 million Poles involved in assistance to the Jews and succeeded in saving 100,000 to 120,000 Jews (p. 6–7). See also W. Bielawski, *Zbrodnie na Polakach dokonane przez hitlerowców za pomocą udzielaną Żydom* [Crimes against Poles by the Hitlerites for helping Jews] (Warsaw, 1987).

¹⁰⁹ Michał Grynberg, *Księga sprawiedliwych* [Righteous Among Nations] (Warsaw, 1993).

¹¹⁰ Ewa Kurek-Lesik, *Gdy klasztor znaczył życie. Udział żeńskich zgromadzeń zakonnych w akcji ratowania dzieci żydowskich w Polsce w latach 1939–1945* [When the monastery meant life. The participation of monastic circles in the action of saving Jewish children in Poland in the years 1939–1945] (Cracow, 1992). See also H. Balicka-Kozłowska, 'Kto ratował, kogo ratowano' [Who saved, who was saved], *Więź*, 1988, nr 4; Władysław Bartoszewski, '75 lat w XX wieku. Pamiętnik mówiony' [75 years of the 20th century. A spoken memoir], *Więź*, 1997, nr 7; W. Bochniak, 'Polacy i Żydzi w latach okupacji niemieckiej. Przyczynek do historii niesienia pomocy Żydom przez Polaków w okresie drugiej wojny światowej' [Poles and Jews in the German occupation period. Contribution to the knowledge about the history of Poles helping Jews during the Second World War], *Wrocławski Przegląd Teologiczny*, 1995, nr 2; Krzysztof Dunin-Wąsowicz (ed.), *Spółczesność polskie wobec martyrologii i walki Żydów w latach II wojny światowej* [Polish society on the martyrology and the fight of the Jews in the years of the Second World War] (Warsaw, 1996); Cesary Gawryś, 'Turkowice—śmierć i ocalenie' (Turkowice—Death and Escape), *Więź*, 1987, nr 4; 'Turkowice, śmierć i ocalenie' [Turkowice, Death and Escape], in Cesary Gawryś (ed.), *Szeżki ocalenia* (Warsaw, 1997).

important studies on the subject one should mention Dariusz Stola's work on Ignacy Schwarzbart, a Jewish representative to the Polish National Council in exile during the war years.¹¹¹

A topic that attracted much attention from scholars in the 1980s and early 1990s was the life of Jews in the ghettos, particularly in the Warsaw ghetto.¹¹² Aldona Podolska wrote an interesting monograph on the Jewish Police in the Warsaw ghetto.¹¹³ Barbara Engelking published *Zagłada i pamięć* (Holocaust and Memory),¹¹⁴ in which she attempted to describe the experiences of the Holocaust survivors. She stressed the radical differences in the way Poles and Jews experienced Nazi occupation and argued that the fate of the latter remained on the margins of the Polish memory about the war. She also reconstructed certain psychological aspects of life in the ghetto with respect to such categories as overcrowding, starvation, work and study, and social and cultural life.¹¹⁵ In 2001 the same author, in collaboration with Jacek Leociak, published an impressive study of the Warsaw ghetto in the form of a comprehensive guide to its life and destruction.¹¹⁶

¹¹¹ Dariusz Stola, *Nadzieja i zagłada: Ignacy Schwarzbart—żydowski przedstawiciel w Radzie Narodowej RP (1940–1945)* [Hope and Holocaust: Ignacy Schwarzbart—the Jewish representative of the National Council of the RP] (Warsaw, 1995). Stola, 'Pół wieku później: rząd polski i Żydzi w latach II wojny światowej' [Half a century later: the Polish government and the Jews in the Second World War], *Biuletyn ŻIH* 1–2, 1993, pp. 151–60. The author discussed the stance of the Polish government in exile toward the Jews, which David Engel's monographs had previously explored. See Engel, *In the Shadow of Auschwitz*.

¹¹² See for example Tomasz Grosse, *Przeżyć! Obrona życia jako wartość podstawowa społeczności getta warszawskiego* [Survive! The defence of life as the basic value of the society of the Warsaw Ghetto] (Warsaw, 1998); Alicja Grochowska, *Elementy prania mózgu w procesie zagłady Żydów* [Elements of brainwashing in the process of the Jewish Holocaust] (Warsaw, 1996).

¹¹³ Aldona Podolska, *Slużba porządkowa w getcie warszawskim w latach 1940–1943* [Jewish Police in the Warsaw Ghetto in the years 1940–1943] (Warsaw, 1996).

¹¹⁴ Barbara Engelking, *Zagłada i pamięć. Doświadczenie Holocaustu i jego konsekwencje opisane na podstawie relacji autobiograficznych* [Holocaust and Memory. The Experience of the Holocaust and its consequences: an investigation based on personal narratives] (Warsaw, 1994); *Czas przestał dla mnie istnieć...: analiza doświadczenia czasu w sytuacji ostatecznej* [Time Stopped for me...: an analysis of time in the ultimate situation] (Warsaw, 1996).

¹¹⁵ Numerous publications also explored the history of the Nazi death and concentration camps. Notable among these was an encyclopaedia of Nazi camps in occupied Poland, which included information on 400 ghettos, and 437 labour camps for Jews, see Czesław Pilichowski *et al.* (eds), *Obozy hitlerowskie na ziemiach polskich 1939–1945. Informator encyklopedyczny* [Hitlerite camps on Polish territory 1939–1945. Information in encyclopedic form] (Warsaw, 1979); see also Józef Kapustka *et al.* (eds), *Ośrodek zagłady w Chełmnie nad Nerem i jego rola w hitlerowskiej polityce eksterminacyjnej* [The extermination camp in Chełmno on Ner and its role in the Nazi policy of extermination] (Konin, 1995). Wacław Długoborski and Franciszek Piper (eds), *Auschwitz 1940–1945. Węzłowe zagadnienia z dziejów obozu* [Auschwitz 1940–1945. Main issues on the history of the camp], vols. 1–5 (Oświęcim and Brzezinka, 1995); R. Gicewicz, 'Obóz pracy w Poniatowej 1941–1943' [The Labour Camp in Poniatowa], *Zeszyty Majdanka*, 10 (1980); Bogdan Cybulski, 'Żydzi w filiach obozu koncentracyjnego Gross-Rosen' [The Jews in the branches of the concentration camp of Gross-Rosen], *Studia nad Faszyzmem i Zbrodniami Hitlerowskimi* 2, (1975) pp.93–128; T. Olejnik, 'Zagłada ludności Żydowskiej w powiecie wieluńskim w latach okupacji hitlerowskiej' [The Jewish Holocaust in the Wieluń district in the years of the Hitlerite occupation], *Rocznik Łódzki*, 29 (1989).

¹¹⁶ Barbara Engelking, Jacek Leociak, *Getto warszawskie: przewodnik po nieistniejącym mieście* [Warsaw ghetto: a guide to a non-existent city] (Warsaw, 2001).

In 1988 Shlomo Netzer criticized the lack of a comprehensive academic edition of the Ringelblum Archives materials, which ‘should serve as an inestimably important tool for the study of Polish Jewry during the Holocaust.’ According to Netzer ‘until now tiny portions of this archive have been published in journals and books in Poland, at times with deletions, and various chapters from the archive have been published in articles or books in Israel.’¹¹⁷ This wrong was finally righted with the project undertaken by the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw and the editions of the materials published by it.¹¹⁸ Additionally, in the last two decades numerous diaries and Holocaust memoirs were published in Poland.¹¹⁹

In fact, a proliferation of studies on topics in the history of the Holocaust has appeared in Poland in the recent years. These books and articles cover a diverse range of subjects, such as various aspects of German occupation policy, living conditions in the ghettos (especially devoted to the fate of the Warsaw Jewry, and only recently to other towns and regions), and various forms of resistance. The relations between Jews and Poles are also described. In this regard, emphasis remains on the latter’s actions on behalf of the Jews.¹²⁰ However, the issue of anti-Semitism has proved to be among the most crucial topics to be undertaken by Polish scholars in recent years.¹²¹

The broadening of Holocaust research in Poland from the second half of the 1980s was to a great extent facilitated by international co-operation and by contacts with scholars from the field outside Poland. In 1986 the journal *Polin* began to appear, which was initiated at the international conference organized in Oxford in September 1984, where historians from Poland, Israel and the USA convened to discuss controversial issues of the Polish–

¹¹⁷ Netzer, ‘The Holocaust of Polish Jewry in Jewish Historiography’, p. 136–137. See also Ruta Sakowska, ‘Biuro Informacji i Propagandy KG Armii Krajowej a Archiwum Ringelbluma’ [The Office of Information and Propaganda of the National Army and the Ringelblum Archive], *Biuletyn ŻIH* 162–3 (1992), pp. 19–34.

¹¹⁸ *Archiwum Ringelbluma: Konspiracyjne Archiwum Getta Warszawy*, vols.1–3, vol. 1: Ruta Sakowska (ed.), *Listy o Zagładzie* [Letters about the Holocaust] (Warsaw, 1997); vol. 2: Ruta Sakowska (ed.), *Dzieci–tajne nauczanie w getcie warszawskim* [Children: underground schooling in the Warsaw ghetto] (Warsaw, 2000); vol. 3: Andrzej Zbikowski (ed.), *Relacje z Kresów* [Testimonies from the Borderlands] (Warsaw, 2000).

¹¹⁹ E. Szajn-Lewin, *W getcie warszawskim* [In the Warsaw Ghetto] (Poznań, 1989); M. Berland, *Dni długie jak wieki* [Days as Long as Centuries] (Warsaw, 1992).

¹²⁰ Netzer, ‘The Holocaust of Polish Jewry in Jewish Historiography’, p. 139. The problem was discussed at the conference coorganized together by the Yad Vashem, the Jewish Historical Institute and the Mordechai Anielewicz Center for the Study and Teaching of the History and Culture of Polish Jews in the summer of 1999.

¹²¹ As Jan Gross remarked: ‘This so-called question of Polish-Jewish relations during the war is like a loose thread in the historiography of this period. If we grasp and pull it, the entire intricately woven tapestry comes undone. It seems to me that antisemitism polluted whole patches of twentieth-century Polish history and turned them into forbidden subjects, calling forth stylized interpretations whose role was to cover, like a fig leaf, what had really happened.’ See Gross, *Neighbors*, pp. 168–169.

Jewish past.¹²² *Polin* became a tribune for polemics on various disputed subjects in Polish–Jewish relations.¹²³

The political changes that took place in Poland beginning in 1989 enabled a more open discussion of various historical topics, including the history of the Second World War and the fate of the Jews. As Jan T. Gross points out:

For all the impact it made and the coverage it received, as long as the communists held the reins of power in Poland, the Second World War was a deeply politicized subject. And despite a multitude of excellent monographs on a wide range of topics, historiography of the war could not grapple with fundamental subjects.¹²⁴

According to Gross, one of the most controversial topics that long remained untouched was the question of Polish–Jewish relations during the war. Writing in 2000, Gross asserted that this question had ‘been left in limbo for most of the time [since the war], with predictable consequences.’¹²⁵ In the same essay Gross pointed out that though still marginalized, voices critical of the Poles’ idealized myth of Polish heroism were heard:

the Polish population took advantage of the opportunities created by the Germans to exploit the Jews and thus shares responsibility for the Holocaust, write critics of the Poles’ behavior whose voices are barely audible in Poland. Either way, the myth producing quality of the war period is shattered. And, as a result, the whole experience gets compartmentalized in the collective memory of the nation and in the works of historians as well.¹²⁶

While Polish historiography has not ignored the Holocaust of Polish Jewry, it is not free of tendentiousness and factual distortions.¹²⁷ In this regard Gross points to the need for a scholarly recognition of the full scope and nature of the Holocaust in Polish historical circles. In his words, the

Holocaust . . . was not confined to the pitch dark interiors of gas chambers and covered vans. It took place in full daylight and was witnessed by millions of Poles who, as we have been seen, by and large did little to impede it, to slow it down, or to interfere with it. In Polish historiography the significance of these circumstances has not been evaluated and is only barely recognized . . . I submit that the Holocaust of Polish Jews is a central feature of Polish history of the Second World War, and that it cannot be excised for some special treatment.¹²⁸

As Yehuda Bauer stresses in one of his essays: ‘The historical perspective demands, first of all, a basic knowledge of stark facts.’¹²⁹ He argues that

¹²² Chimen Abramsky, Maciej Jachimczyk and Antony Polonsky (eds), *The Jews in Poland* (Oxford, 1986).

¹²³ See Dariusz Stola, ‘In the Shadow of Facts’; David Engel, ‘Reading and Misreadings: A Reply to Dariusz Stola’, *Polin*, 8, 1994. pp.330–344.

¹²⁴ Gross, ‘A Tangled Web’, pp. 74–75.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 75.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 115.

¹²⁷ Krakowski, ‘The Holocaust of Polish Jewry in Polish Historiography and Polish Émigré Circles’, p. 131.

¹²⁸ Gross, ‘A Tangled Web’, pp. 91–92. See also Gross, *Neighbors*, pp. 139–142.

¹²⁹ Yehuda Bauer, *The Holocaust in Historical Perspective* (Seattle and London, 1978; 2nd edn, 1980), p. 4.

there are two possible approaches: 'One is the approach of generalization, of trying to see whether patterns exist in that vast sea of events that was the Holocaust [. . . and the other one is] the examination of a central but limited topic in great detail and based on as varied source material as possible.'¹³⁰ The first approach appears to be particularly missing in the Polish historical perspective on the Holocaust. To date no comprehensive study by a Polish historian has attempted to summarize the Nazi policies toward the Jews nor to describe their fate under German occupation. The Holocaust of Polish Jewry is described marginally in the comprehensive research that deals with the Nazi policies toward the Polish nation and its fate during the years of conquest. In fact, scant space is often devoted to the description of the history of Poland's Jewish citizens during the Second World War.¹³¹

It is worth mentioning that of the 9,000 entries in a bibliographic work that appeared several years ago on anti-Nazi fighting in Poland, only 116 are devoted to the Jewish struggle. Indeed, in hundreds of books authored by Poles—primarily memoirs—while there are references to Jewish fighting, generally the struggle of Polish Jewry is described marginally and briefly. Polish authors reveal significantly shallow understanding of the special conditions of the struggle of the Jewish population.¹³²

The publications of the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw and the bodies that preceded it embody a sizable achievement, the product of about four decades of research into the history of Polish Jewry during the Holocaust period and before. Polish historians must begin to deal with this material, study it, and treat it critically, while considering and filtering out the various interpretations that reflect the political idiosyncrasies of different periods.¹³³ They must also seek actively to redress the balance in critical attempts at understanding in past treatments of Polish and Jewish experiences of the Holocaust in Poland:

Historians in Poland . . . refuse to recognize the uniqueness of the Holocaust: they cannot understand Jewish life under the Nazi occupation; they confine, characteristics and special conditions under which the Jewish Underground and Jewish partisans had to act. They also tend to falsify the relationship between Jews and Poles and to deny the hostile acts inflicted on the Jews from sectors of the Polish underground and Polish community.¹³⁴

Given all the criticism wanting in Holocaust research in Poland, one can still take heart in the fact that there is, as Gross points out, 'a new generation of scholars who in recent years have taken on the subject with critical and open minds.'¹³⁵ One can hope that Gross is justified in the optimism he

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

¹³¹ Krakowski, 'The Holocaust of Polish Jewry in Polish Historiography and Polish Émigré Circles', p. 119.

¹³² *Ibid.*, pp. 124–125.

¹³³ See Netzer, 'The Holocaust of Polish Jewry in Jewish Historiography', p. 140.

¹³⁴ Krakowski, 'The Holocaust of Polish Jewry in Polish Historiography and Polish Émigré Circles', p. 129.

¹³⁵ Gross, 'A Tangled Web', p. 129.

proceeds to express about the future of Polish Holocaust studies: 'We are on the verge . . . of a major reassessment of the epoch by Polish historiography, and a new sensitivity and awareness concerning all matters Jewish among the Polish public.'¹³⁶

Abstract

The story of Polish historiography of the Holocaust lends itself to divisions when one analyses the number of publications, and the questions asked by the scholars in the field. There was a great deal of valuable activity in the period immediately following the Second World War and, to a lesser extent, up to 1968; the revitalization of the field at the end of the twentieth century has roots that go back to the late 1980s. Holocaust scholarship in Poland has changed in many respects since the end of the war. Within the last three years a number of important publications have appeared that challenge the long-held assumptions of Polish historians about the fate of Polish Jewry under Nazi occupation. These works have transformed the field with respect both to the key topics for investigation and the questions asked by historians researching these aspects of the Holocaust. Jan T. Gross led the way with *Neighbors*, published in 2000. This book opened a heated discussion, and became an important trigger in the process of changing Polish Holocaust historiography.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*

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