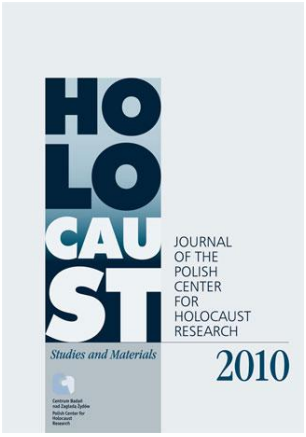

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Three Colors: Grey Study for a Portrait of Bernard Mark

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Three Colors: Grey
Study for a Portrait of Bernard Mark

> I did not waste the years in Poland. I lost [them] for myself personally, I lost them as a Jew who wants to be among Jews, I lost my health and my eyes' brightness – but I did not waste the time, I was searching and I found a lot.
>
> Bernard Mark's diary, entry of 5 January 1966

> Oh, Zion, will you not ask how in captivity
> live the exiles, who wish you well?
>
> Jehuda Halewi, *Oda do Syjonu* [Ode to Zion]
> based on Aleksander Ziemny's translation
> (excerpt quoted in B. Mark's diary)

Perhaps no other Jewish communist – a member of the Communist Party of Poland (*Komunistyczna Partia Polski,* KPP), who after WWII began rebuilding and reorganizing the "Jewish street" – was characterized in such contradictory ways as Bernard Mark. Holocaust historians dragged his name through the mire for his misrepresentation of the history of the Warsaw ghetto uprising by his ascribing the leading role in it to communists, and thus they treated him as a classic example of a scholar at the service of a regime. Highly orthodox Jewish communist activists accused him of supporting Zionists. Finally, the ministry of the interior thought him a Jewish nationalist.

In such instances the truth usually lies in the middle. And indeed, there were episodes in Mark's life which he was not, it seems, particularly proud of at the end of his life, and there were also episodes which simply do not go together with his image of a regime historian who renounced his own opinions.

A Mystical Vision of a Future World (1908–1939)

Bernard Mark was born on 8 June 1908 in Łomża, as one of the children of Hersh – a junior high school clerk and then an orphanage director – and Rachel

née Blumrosen.[1] He received a traditional Jewish and secular education. In 1927 he began studies at the Warsaw University law faculty, from which he graduated with an M.A. in 1932. He also studied Polish studies and sociology – or, according to other sources, Polish studies and history (though he did not graduate). Like many eastern European Jews of the time, he was functionally multilingual: he learnt Yiddish at home, probably at a heder (or junior high school) he learnt Hebrew (in his diary that he was writing at the very end of his life he frequently used Hebraisms; he also quoted Hebrew originals of e.g. medieval poet Judah Halevi), and he earned his living working as a Polish teacher, among others in Jewish religious schools in Białystok and Wołomin. For some time he also worked as a legal intern, but he quit this position on account of his increasing political engagement.

Mark's political views, similarly to those of many of his contemporaries and persons in his milieu, were definitely leftist. In 1927–1930 he belonged to the Communist Union of Polish Youth (*Komunistyczny Związek Młodzieży Polskiej,* KZMP) – at that time he was active among others in Łomża division of the International Red Aid (*Międzynarodowa Organizacja Pomocy Rewolucjonistom,* MOPR), and in 1930 he joined the Communist Party of Poland (*Komunistyczna Partia Polski*, KPP).[2] Two years later he began his activity in its Warsaw branch. Many acquaintances he made at that time and in that milieu stood the test of time. It was this group of Jewish communists – people identifying with communism, Jewishness and secular Yiddish culture – which was to take over the leadership on the "Jewish street" in Poland.

In the early 1930s Mark became affiliated with the so-called revolutionary group of writers to which belonged leftist Yiddish writers and journalists, who usually were also party members. They met on Saturdays to read their own works in the two-room apartment owned by a tailor, Chaim, who rented one room to eight tenants (including Mark). David Sfard, Binem Heller, Mikhal Mirski, David Mitsmakher, David Rikhter, Moyshe Shulshteyn and others belonged to the group. Apart from promoting their own works, the young revolutionary authors also gave lectures on literature and history in Jewish workers' culture clubs, often in conditions as Spartan as at tailor Chaim's. One such club was located at no. 1 Kopińska Street in Ochota, in a poor family's bedroom, where the bed served as a podium. "When I was giving lectures in the 'club' on Kopińska," Mark recalled many years later, "I was standing on a mattress and leaning onto a heap of pillows. It had its advantages, for in case the police stormed in I could immediately jump under the duvet and pretend to be a sick relative who came from the provinces.... Issues such as

[1] Mark's biographical data come from the biographical entry by A. Eisenbach in *Polski Słownik Biograficzny*, vol. 20, book 1 (Cracow, 1975), 16–18 and the article E. Mark, "Ber Mark – biografishe un bibliografishe protim", *Bleter far Geshikhte* 24 (1986): 294–298.

[2] Rossijskij Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Sotsyalno-Politicheskoi Istorii [Russian State Archive of Social and Political History] (later: RGASPI)), Fond 495 (Comintern), Opis 252, d. 8993, Teczka osobowa Bernarda Marka, Zaświadczenie dla Centralnego Biura Komunistów Polskich z 22 VIII 1944, no pagination. I would like to thank Marek Radziwon for taking notes for me of this and other documents.

Soviet literature, Jewish writers in the Soviet Union or workers' movement history triggered the most heated debates. . . . During such discussions everybody was overcome with enthusiasm and an almost mystical, enthusiastic vision of a future socialist world; and almost the whole audience consisting almost exclusively of youth believed that socialism would surely prevail in the future."[3]

Literarishe Tribune was an organ of the group, published under the aegis of the Central Jewish Bureau (*Centralne Biuro Żydowskie*) of the Communist Party of Poland (KPP) at first as a monthly and then as a biweekly devoted to social-cultural issues. After Isaac Deutscher had been expelled from the party in summer of 1932 on suspicion of Trotskyism, Bernard Mark assumed his position. The KPP published the magazine as "a legal theoretical magazine, from time to time publishing in it not only fragments of works by Lenin and other eminent theoreticians of the movement (obviously under various pseudonyms) but also longer theoretical articles on Zionism, 'Bundism,' workers' movement history, the nature of fascism, etc."[4] Much space was devoted to the Soviet Union's cultural policy and Yiddish orthography reform (the Soviet model of Yiddish orthography, i.e. phonetic writing of Hebraisms, was advocated). After the authorities had closed *Literarishe Tribune*, the core of the editorial staff moved to the *Fraynd* daily, recently created by the KPP, whose first issue was published in April 1934.

Fraynd was represented on the outside by the so-called "three K's": eccentric publisher Boris Kletskin, administrator Yitshok Kon and well-known writer Alter Kacyzne as the editor-in-chief; however, the paper's political profile was decided by David Rikhter and Moyshe Levin – Central Jewish Bureau members. Communists held key positions in the editorial staff: Zalmen Elbirt (managing editor), David Sfard (cultural policy) and Bernard Mark (political editor).[5] *Fraynd*'s main political opponent was the Bund's *Folkstsaytung* (despite the KPP's assumption of the thesis on the so-called popular front). This competition ended with *Folkstsaytung* accusing *Fraynd* of being simultaneously an organ of the communist party (which was true) and an organ of Sanation (*sanacja*) (even though these two charges were mutually exclusive). *Folkstsaytung* accused Moyshe Levin and Bernard Mark of attacking the Bund in their texts by order of the Sanation authorities. The matter never became ultimately clear, but Mark, Sfard and Elbirt opposed the KPP's suggestion to refute *Folkstsaytung*'s accusations by letting one of the "three K's" fall prey to public opinion as an alleged agent of the intelligence agency (*Defensywa*). At the end of March 1935 *Fraynd* was liquidated.[6]

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[3] B. Mark, "Literarysze Trybune i Tłomackie 13," in *Księga wspomnień 1919–1939* (Warsaw, 1960), 231.

[4] Ibidem, 240.

[5] Archiwum Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego [Archive of the Jewish Historical Institute] (later: AŻIH), Ruch Robotniczy, 188, Relacja Bernarda Marka nagrana w Zakładzie Historii Partii 24 IV 1964, no pagination.

[6] I discuss *Literarishe Tribune* and *Fraynd* in more detail in my book *Obywatel Jidyszlandu. Rzecz o żydowskich komunistach w Polsce* (Warszaw, 2009).

As we can see, in the 1930s Mark was occupied mostly with social-political journalism and literary criticism. Apart from communist and leftist press he also cooperated with *Literarishe Bleter* magazine, *Der Moment* daily and the legal communist literary magazine *Lewar* (he ceased collaboration with the latter after Jerzy Borejsza harshly criticized his review[7]). For publishing an article in non-party press (according to the biographical entry in *Polski Słownik Biograficzny* it was the noncommunist *Prese* magazine) he was suspended as a party member for half a year.[8] In his journalistic activity he used numerous pseudonyms, including: B. Markus, M. Ber, M. Kowalski, B. Markovitsh, B. Aronovitsh, M. Edin, M. Aronski, M. Esterman.[9] In that period he also wrote his first historical works. In 1936 under the pseudonym M. Aronski he published a study in six books entitled *Geshikhte fun der poylisher arbiter-bavegung* (*History of the Polish Workers' Movement*), which was confiscated by the authorities. Similarly to many others of his brochures, it was published in a series in collaboration with the well-known translator and publisher Mark Rakovsky. This cooperation ended badly for Rakovsky – he went to prison due to lack of knowledge on the part of the police, who took Mark the author for Mark the editor. The author was more lucky, even though he was present when the arrest took place.[10] Years later he recalled:

> I stormed into the shabby premises, perhaps in Nowolipie, which was bombastically called "Mark Rakovsky's Publishing House" and I see – Rakovsky pale as a ghost, his helper Jaczkowski red as a beetroot, and snoopers and policemen ferreting among heaps of books. Jaczkowski, the cunning old fox, did not lose his head and shouted at me,
> "We cannot pay for the paper today, come tomorrow!"
> Understanding what was going on, I shouted while reaching into my side pocket,

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[7] B. Mark, "Literarysze Trybune," 250.

[8] Archiwum Akt Nowych [Archive of New Records] (later: AAN), Teczka osobowa Bernarda Marka, 3840, p. 5, Życiorys datowany 20 X 1949. This information is confirmed by the already quoted certificate for the Central Bureau of Polish Communists (*Centralne Biuro Komunistów Polskich*) while adding that *Prese* was supposed to be a continuation of *Frajnd*, but not subjected to party control. RGASPI, Fond 495 (Comintern), Opis 252, d. 8993, Bernard Mark's personal file, Zaświadczenie dla Centralnego Biura Komunistów Polskich z 22 VIII 1944, no pagination.

[9] E. Mark, "Bibliografie fun di shriftn fun prof. Ber (Bernard) Mark," *Bleter far Geshikhte* 26 (1988): 241.

[10] Another time Mark was less lucky: in 1929 he was arrested for a few months during a rally in Płońsk (RGASPI, Fond 495, Opis 252, d. 8993, Teczka osobowa Bernarda Marka, Zaświadczenie dla Centralnego Biura Komunistów Polskich z 22 VIII 1944, no pagination). At other times Mark must have been less lucky as well, since in the survey of participants of the Fourth National Congress of the PPR Fraction he answered the question "Where and when were you in jail?" in the following way: "Lublin – Łomża – Płońsk each for a few months" (AŻIH, Kolekcja Michała Mirskiego, 330/10, Wyniki ankiety IV Krajowej Narady Partyjnej, p. 2).

> "And what about the check? Will it be protested?"
> The snoopers fell for that; today I think that they were deceived by my 'solid' figure, bald head, pince-nez.[11]

In 1938–1939 the Vilna publishing house Tomor published two volumes of Mark's next work entitled *Geshikhte fun di sotsyale bavegungen in Poyln* [History of Social Movements in Poland] devoted to the Middle Ages and early modern period. This monograph was also confiscated.[12] Apart from journalistic activity, Mark was also a Central Jewish Bureau instructor and member of the KPP Central Editorial Office for Jewish publications; he also cooperated with Gezerd and Agroid organizations, which promoted Jewish settlement in Birobidzhan. But his most important field of political activity – apart from journalism – was perhaps the Association of Jewish Writers and Journalists (*Związek Literatów i Dziennikarzy Żydowskich*).

Because of communist members, in the 1930s the Association abandoned its so far carefully cultivated apolitical stance. "We had almost always belonged to the Board[13] and the Association of Writers [headquarters] in Tłomackie [Street] was used not only as a meeting place of our writers but also of key activists, who came there, met with each other, conferred and fixed a number of things. There we held a number of literary evenings in our spirit, and even rallies, and then the Government Commissariat [*Komisariat Rządu*] launched attacks."[14] Communists co-organized the rally in the Association's headquarters after the pogrom in Przytyk on 17 March 1936, at which Mark, Wiktor Alter and Stefan Czarnowski delivered speeches.[15]

Communist writers' activity did draw the authorities' attention. In 1936 the party sent Mark to a cultural workers' convention in Lvov: "I prepared a long and stirring speech; I wanted to talk about the work of progressive Jewish writers, about the situation of the Jewish population in Poland in the time of Sanation, about the first pogroms and the influence of our western neighbor on the ignorant mind of our native fascists and racists."[16] But the police took him out of the train at the first station outside Warsaw and warned him that he would not be let into Lvov during the next couple of days. Consequently, he gave up the journey.

In 1938 the Polish communists' world collapsed literally and metaphorically – Comintern dissolved the Communist Party of Poland under the pretext that there

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[11] B. Mark, "Literarishe Tribune," 245.

[12] On the basis of Mark's bibliography compiled by his wife it remains unknown whether both volumes were confiscated. According to Eisenbach's entry in *Polski Słownik Biograficzny* only the second one was confiscated. Eisenbach also claims that there was a third volume, whose manuscript was burnt during the military operations in September 1939.

[13] Usually Dawid Sfard or Bernard Mark was the communists' representative in the Association of Writers' board.

[14] AŻIH, Ruch Robotniczy, 188, Relacja Bernarda Marka nagrana w Zakładzie Historii Partii 24 IV 1964, no pagination.

[15] Ibidem, Spuścizna Bernarda Marka (unsorted), 350, Relacja Bernarda Marka nagrana w ZHP 31 V 1960, p. 3.

[16] B. Mark, "Literarishe Tribune," 246.

were agent provocateurs in its ranks. KPP leaders called to Moscow were all killed. Party members plunged into chaos and deep depression. It confirmed the doubts some members had felt when they heard the spreading news on the purges in the Soviet Union. It seems that it could have been the case with Mark: "Tragic news about various crimes committed against Jews and non-Jews in the Soviet Union in all likelihood destroyed his faith, and his fervent Jewish heart was filled with doubts. However, he did not decide to abandon his youth's ideals totally just then; he did not find any other ideal, although he had always had a fondness for Eretz Israel. He did not give in, even though he did have doubts. Strong communist discipline was already deeply rooted within him."[17] This is how David Sfard, one of his longtime friends, wrote about Mark many years later.

In September 1939 Mark participated in the defense of Warsaw. As the youngest member of the Board of the Association of Jewish Writers and Journalists he acted as an orderly in the Association's headquarters (at that time already located at no. 11 Graniczna Street and not at no. 13 Tłomackie Street), which was the rallying point for Jewish authors and intellectuals. "We were directed to Wola. We marched along streets inhabited almost exclusively by the Polish working class. On the way we were joined by a Jewish Health Service workers' unit . . . . Young nurses began singing patriotic and revolutionary Polish and Jewish songs. The streets reacted very animatedly. People bowed before us, greeted us with raised fists, they responded with singing to our singing, I even heard cries: 'Long live the Polish-Jewish brotherhood of arms!' 'Away with Hitler – our common enemy!'"[18] A couple of days later Mark met Emanuel Ringelblum on Leszno [Street]. The atmosphere of fighting Warsaw made both of them think about the Polish-Jewish unification in 1861–1864 and during the Kosciuszko Uprising.[19]

Despite the bombardments, Mark was one of two editors who continued going to work for *Der Moment* daily at No. 38 Nalewki [Street]. The last issue was published on 23 September, on Yom Kippur (Mark states, perhaps incorrectly, that it was on the eve of Yom Kippur) during intensive air raids on the northern district. The fire was so strong that the last linotypes in the editor's office began to melt.[20] The same day Mark met David Mitsmakher, an acquaintance from the leftist group of writers:

> We were running in the middle of the street, between two lines of enormous flames. Micmacher began to cry.
> "Are you afraid?" I asked.
> "No," he answered, "I'm crying because my heart is telling me that we shall never see our Warsaw again."[21]

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[17] D. Sfard, *Mit zikh un mit andere* (Jerusalem, 1984), 104.

[18] B. Mark, "Wspomnienia o udziale ludności żydowskiej w cywilnej obronie Warszawy," in *Cywilna obrona Warszawy we wrześniu 1939 r. Dokumenty, materiały prasowe, wspomnienia i relacje* (Warszawa, 1964), 300.

[19] Ibidem, 301.

[20] Ibidem, 306.

[21] B. Mark, "Literarysze Trybune," 237.

And he was right. David Mitsmakher did not survive the war, and the Warsaw to which Mark returned after seven years was already a totally different city.

A Monument for Those Who Perished (1939–1946)

Like many other Jewish communists, after Warsaw's capitulation Mark decided to escape to the East. In October 1939 he went to Białystok with his wife Estera (Edwarda), née Goldhar – a teacher in the Jewish elementary school on Stawki [Street]. Many of his comrades from the former KPP and leftist group of writers also went to Białystok and concentrated around the *Bialistoker Shtern* paper. The Soviet authorities who created it intended it to be a tool of propaganda and indoctrination of the Jewish population in so-called West Belarus. Bernard Mark was to be in charge of the cultural and educational sections (among the editorial staff there were also other "*bezhentsy*," among others: Hersh Smolar, Binem Heller and David Sfard). During his stay in Białystok, Mark cooperated not only with *Bialistoker Shtern* but also with the Polish language *Sztandar Wolności* (from November 1940). He was also employed as a senior research fellow in the Institute of Literature and Language of the Academy of Sciences of the Belarusian Soviet Socialistic Republic in Minsk.[22]

Contrary to what one might expect, former KPP members did not always enjoy the new authorities' trust. Indeed, the fact that they had belonged to the party dissolved by Stalin's order often acted to their disadvantage. Sfard recalled that although Mark's open lectures on various topics, not only Jewish ones (he spoke among other things about Mickiewicz), attracted many listeners, the officials treated him "with respect … but slightly at a distance and with reserve."[23] Making matters worse, one time somebody informed on Mark as an alleged Trotskyite – an accusation that could have extremely dangerous consequences. David Rikhter and David Sfard intervened about it with the authorities, assuring them that the accusation was false. Luckily for Mark, the authorities believed them.[24] But even then he was not entirely "clean" – on the list of writers compiled in 1940 by Hersh Smolar, the secretary of the Organizational Bureau of Białystok Branch of Soviet Writers' Union, Mark figured in the worst group, "D," into which Smolar qualified those representing an unsatisfactory creative level and requiring further political-educational work.[25]

After the outbreak of the German-Soviet war, Mark and his wife were in a group of writers who left Bialystok in the last evacuation transport, which ultimately reached

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[22] RGASPI, Fond 495 (Comintern), Opis 252, d. 8993, Teczka osobowa Bernarda Marka, Zaświadczenie dla Centralnego Biura Komunistów Polskich z 22 VIII 1944, no pagination.

[23] D. Sfard, op. cit., 104.

[24] Ibidem, 104–105.

[25] W. Śleszyński, "Białostockie środowisko pisarzy sowieckich (1939–1941)," *Białoruskie Zeszyty Historyczne* 12 (2000): 105–117; idem, *Okupacja sowiecka na Białostocczyźnie 1939–1941. Propaganda i indoktrynacja* (Białystok, 2001), 417–418. For comparison, other leading communist writers, such as Heller or Sfard, were thought ready to become members of the Union of Soviet Writers of Belarus.

Nowouzensk in the Saratov Oblast. He spent some time in the Kirov kolkhoz, and then he established contact with the Jewish Antifascist Committee (*Yevreiskii Antifashistskii Komitet*, JAC) created in 1941. The Committee members were eminent representatives of Soviet Jewry – writers, actors, artists, scientists. With time also some refugees from Poland joined it, among others the writer Efroim Kaganovski, the actress Ida Kamińska and Bernard Mark himself. And even though EAK was created for purely pragmatic reasons (Soviet authorities wanted to influence the world Jewish community so that it would morally and financially support the Soviet Union fighting with fascism), quite soon it began to play a role initially not envisioned for it – a role of a national representation of Soviet Jews.

At least from March 1942 Mark was trying to get a permission to move from Nowouzensk to Saratov or Kuybyshev, where he could find a job as a correspondent and author of articles for the American Jewish press. In his letters to Leon Kasman he mentioned that work in Nowouzensk was rendered impossible among other things due to his kidney illness and lack of winter clothes; he also asked him for a recommendation to the Soviet Information Bureau (Sovinformburo), which was interested in cooperating with him. He also claimed that he signed a contract with the Moscow Jewish publishing house Der Emes for writing two brochures, one about Poland (including the history of Polish Jews) and the other one about race theory, which was impossible to execute in Nowouzensk due to lack of access to essential sources, and also because… he simply did not have paper.[26] Mark's measures apparently did have a desired effect, since at the beginning of 1943 JAC brought him to Kuybyshev and employed him at gathering materials on the Holocaust.[27] Perhaps one fruit of this cooperation was the 70-page brochure *Powstanie w ghetcie warszawskiem* [Warsaw Ghetto Uprising] published a year later by the Union of Polish Patriots in Moscow (*Związek Patriotów Polskich*, ZPP). Written on the basis of scant information and accounts, which reached the author in various ways, it stressed that one of the uprising's aims was "to demonstrate to the whole world… that Polish Jews were inseparably connected with the land their ancestors had lived on for centuries… . The insurgents wanted to show that no force could force Jews into voluntary relinquishment of the right to breathe Polish air; that no force could deprive them of the right to fight for Poland."[28]

Mark also wrote correspondences for *Eynikayt* – the official JAC organ. He devoted quite a lot of attention in them to the efforts of Jewish refugees from Poland aimed at the USSR's victory in the war. In October 1943 he wrote, for example, about the Jews in the newly-created Tadeusz Kościuszko I Infantry Division, stressing that they had been expelled from the Anders Army due to their Jewish origin or had not

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[26] RGASPI, Fond 495 (Comintern), Opis 252, d. 8993, Teczka osobowa Bernarda Marka, Listy do L. Kasmana z okresu 26 I 1942–23 VIII 1942, no pagination.

[27] S. Redlich, *Propaganda and Nationalism in wartime Russia: The Jewish Antifascist Committee in the USSR 1941–1948* (Boulder, 1982), 63.

[28] B. Mark, *Powstanie w ghetcie warszawskiem* (Moscow, 1944), 60.

been able to join its ranks at all.[29] "Polscy ewakuowani Żydzi wspaniałymi robotnikami rolnymi" ("Evacuated Polish Jews Make Wonderful Farm Laborers"), "Dzieci żydowskie z Wilna, Białegostoku, Grodna znalazły dom w Związku Radzieckim" ("Jewish Children from Vilna, Białystok and Grodno Find Home in the Soviet Union"), "Żydowski robotnik z Łodzi wyróżnił się w fabryce metalurgicznej" ("Jewish Worker from Łódź Distinguishes Himself in Metallurgic Factory") – these are examples of his correspondences' titles.[30]

However, stressing the role of Jews in the Great Patriotic War was sometimes regarded as a manifestation of Jewish nationalism. In 1943 Shakhno Epshteyn, the editor of *Eynikayt*, fired Mark for his manifestation of "nationalistic tendencies" – while editing an article for foreign Jewish press Mark listed only surnames of Jewish soldiers who distinguished themselves in fighting and removed non-Jewish surnames.[31] In a letter to Solomon Lozovsky, the head of the Soviet Information Bureau (Sovinformburo), Mark made a self-critique, an extensive excerpt from which, in my opinion, is worth quoting here:

> During the 35 years of my life I spent 15 years fighting in the ranks of the Communist Party of Poland. A victim of persecution, I was put in prisons of capitalist Poland many a time. All this – together with the books I wrote – demonstrates that I did not deserve such a severe punishment and that my mistake of 2 December 1943 was accidental. I was in a very bad state then: my sister, the only surviving relative out of our whole family who were murdered by Germans in Warsaw and Białystok, died at the end of November in the Botkin Hospital; my seriously ill wife was also in hospital; every day I was evicted from the hotel; there was a lot of work; all this occasioned my nervous breakdown. At times I had problems with comprehension. Only in such terms can I explain my grave political mistake. Because during my yearlong work in the Committee I accepted and wrote myself hundreds of correct articles and sketches on "The Friendship of Nations in the USSR."
>
> Now I have found myself in a cul-de-sac – no roof over my head, without work, depressed due to comrade Epsztejn's decision, which was actually just. This is the first stigma on my so far untarnished biography. And it had to happen when my wife is still ill, when I have no other way of earning a living apart from literary work.
>
> Depriving me of the right to this or other work in the Jewish Antifascist Committee equates to depriving me of the right to live.[32]

It remains unknown whether some other intervention was necessary in that case. Anyway, Mark's contacts with the JAC and *Eynikayt* returned to normal.

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[29] Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Rossiiskoi Federatsii [State Archive of the Russian Federation], Żydowski Komitet Antyfaszystowski, Opis 1, 267, *Yidn in der poylisher divizye af Kostiushko nomen,* p. 100.

[30] Ibidem, file number 267.

[31] *Yevreiskii Antifashistskii Komitet v SSSR 1941–194. Dokumentirovannaia istoriia,* ed. S. Redlich and G. Kostyrchenko (Moscow, 1996), 165–166.

[32] Ibidem, 171.

Besides, Mark soon gained a new and from then on the most important field of activity – the Organizational Committee of Polish Jews (*Komitet Organizacyjny Żydów Polskich*, KOŻP) in the Union of Polish Patriots (ZPP).[33]

The Committee was created in July 1944 as a separate unit to take care of the affairs of Jewish refugees from Poland. Despite its affiliation with the ZPP, it took care of all Polish Jews in the USSR, regardless of their political views. And as was the case with the JAC, it was created mainly for pragmatic reasons – as it served as an opportunity to receive material help from foreign Jewish organizations. Emil Sommerstein was the first KOŻP president, but after his departure (as a member of the Polish Committee of National Liberation (*Polski Komitet Wyzwolenia Narodowego,* PKWN) to already liberated Lublin, his position was taken over by Bernard Mark, who was responsible for general political affairs, contacts with abroad and editing the bulletin, with Szymon Zachariasz's help. Members of KOŻP Presidium included: David Sfard, Leo Finkelstein, Moyshe Broderzon, Ida Kamińska and Marian Melman. The Committee was assigned offices in the building of the ZPP Main Board in Moscow at no. 5 Pushechnaya Street. According to Mark's report on the Committee's activity, "Our task was to direct the Jewish masses and likes of influential Jewish milieus, by means of skillful tactics, toward the new Poland, toward the PKWN, toward the Provisional Government of the Republic of Poland (*Tymczasowy Rząd Polski*), toward the ZPP. It must be said that we have mostly succeeded."[34]

The issue of rebuilding Jewish life in post-war Poland was animatedly discussed among Jewish communists concentrated around the KOŻP. On 18 and 21 August 1945 Polish Worker's Party (*Polska Partia Robotnicza,* PPR) activists held a special meeting in Moscow during which the following issues were discussed: attitudes to Jewish survivors in Poland (it is important to bear in mind that the meeting took place after the Cracow pogrom of 11 August 1945), including authorities' attitudes, as well as assimilation and emigration. The party's insufficient reaction to post-war anti-Semitism (which resulted in increased emigration tendencies) was criticized by, among others, Szymon Zachariasz and David Sfard. Bernard Mark put forward the following vision:

> First of all, our party must fight anti-Semitism more vigorously and on a broader scale. Next, it must support and direct the concentrational westward movement equally vigorously and boldly. The example of Lower Silesia cannot remain the only example. Next, our party cannot be afraid of the idea that Jews constitute a nation not only of Polish Jews, but a nation in all countries. There is a certain international bond between Jews. But the Jewish community in Poland will be too great for it not to cement various territorially distant Jews.

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[33] I wrote about the KOŻP in more detail in my book *Obywatel Jidyszlandu*. See also: A. Głowacki, "Uwagi o Komitecie Organizacyjnym Żydów Polskich," in *Dzieje Żydów w Łodzi 1820–1944: wybrane problemy*, ed. W. Puś and S. Liszewski (Łódź, 1991), 282–298.

[34] AAN, ZPP w ZSRR, Prezydium ZG ZPP, 216/10, Sprawozdanie B. Marka z działalności Komitetu Organizacyjnego Żydów Polskich przy ZPP w ZSRR na posiedzeniu Prezydium Zarządu Głównego ZPP w Moskwie 7 IX 1945, p. 114.

> Jewish comrades in Poland might contrast the Zionist and Bund platform with the ideal of unity, of bringing American Jews closer to Palestine and Poland on the antifascist platform. Polish Jews might do it faster and more effectively precisely as Polish Jews. We must support all positive issues in the Jewish question, including emigration, and Palestine; but we must remember that we Polish Jews, communists, to undermine our connections with Europe, we cannot abandon thousands of years of history. The Jewish community in Poland, though a small one, might serve as a spiritual guide for Palestine; a Jewish community must remain where the grave of 6 million Jews was. A great monument must be erected here for those who perished, in the place of great martyrdom of the Jewish nation, where the ghetto was created; the monument must be erected sooner or later, and we must not turn our back on these graves – this is the platform Jew[ish] comrades must put forward.[35]

Mark also opposed the idea of creating a separate organization of Jewish communists, cut out from the PPR, claiming that "it would be of greater benefit to both Jews and the Polish cause if we remain in the ranks of one workers' party."[36] The meeting ended with adoption of a resolution which postulated creation of a "Jewish national front, which was to embrace all organizations from the PPR and the Bund to democratic Zionists and democratic orthodox forces inclusive – on the platform of fighting fascism and Jewish reaction, rebuilding Jew[ish] life and culture in the country, productivization of the Jewish masses and consolidation around Polish democracy."[37]

Three months later, on 18–20 November 1945, a congress of representatives of all major communities of Polish Jews in the USSR was held in the Moscow headquarters of the ZPP Main Board. Among the guests there was the Polish ambassador in the USSR and JAC representatives. The latter, as the participants recalled, were greatly impressed by the atmosphere of the congress. It seems that they finally realized then that most Polish Jews – despite their unquestionable ties with Soviet Jews and mutual attachment to Yiddish culture – intended to return to Poland. In the papers given at the congress appeared various bold (from the JAC's point of view) visions of the reconstruction of Jewish life in Poland (e.g. speakers postulated the necessity to open schools with Yiddish as the language of instruction, with Hebrew as a compulsory subject). Elchanan Indelman, one of the participants, recalled that the meeting ended with a farewell party during which the famous cantor Moshe Kusevitsky sang *El male rachamim*. The prayer introduced an atmosphere of mourning and depression – each participant had lost some relatives in Poland and everybody was aware of that. Suddenly Mark's voice sounded in the silence – he proposed a toast to Jewish survivors in Poland with the words: "Le-shana ha-ba'a birushalayim!"[38]

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[35] AAN, ZPP, 216/67, Organizacyjny Komitet Żydów Polskich przy ZPP, Materiały z narady PPR "w kwestii żydowskiej" 18 i 21 VIII 1945, p. 11–12.

[36] Ibidem, p. 24.

[37] Ibidem, p. 129.

[38] H. Shlomi, "Kinus yehudey Polin be-Moskva bi-shnat 1945" in *Asufat mehkarim le-toldot she'erit ha-pletah ha-yehudit be-Polin 1944–1950* (Tel Aviv, 2001), 127 in the Hebrew

What a Marxist Is Allowed to Do (1946–1949)

In January 1946 Bernard Mark returned to Poland with the task of coordinating cooperation between the KOŻP and the Central Committee of Polish Jews (*Centralny Komitet Żydów w Polsce,* CKŻP) as far as repatriation of Polish Jews from the USSR was concerned (at that time Dawid Sfard became the KOŻP president). At the CKŻP plenum on 9 February 1946 he informed about the number and distribution of those willing to be repatriated; he also described preparations for reception of repatriates so far made by the CKŻP as "minimal."[39]

However, it seems that soon the activities connected with the organization of the repatriation became less important for Mark, as he once again became more engaged in cultural and journalistic activity. He became a member of editorial boards of as many as three magazines: the Jewish communists' organ *Folks-shtime*, the literary monthly *Yidishe shriftn*, and the CKŻP and Union of Jewish Writers and Journalists' organ *Dos Naye Lebn*, where he soon replaced Michał Mirski as editor-in-chief.[40] He was also elected the president of this Union of Writers and co-opted to CKŻP Presidium.

Mark regarded convincing Jews to stay in Poland and rebuild the social-cultural life as his mission. In his letter to the writer Melekh Ravitsh, although he stressed that he did not blame emigrants from Poland, he did firmly state: „No, not for this did we come here from Moscow, to become undertakers for a live community."[41] His article in *Dos Naje Lebn* reads: "When narrow-minded people, mostly from among those who might be called 'modern Marranos,' ask the fundamental question, 'Why are you coming back?' we answer, 'Because in the most tragic, dark times… we felt stronger than before, that we, Polish Jews in Moscow, in the Urals, in Central Asia… are those who should breathe life into martyrs' ashes… .'"[42]

Moreover, it seems that Mark was among PPR Jewish Fraction activists more open to contacts with the West and the Jewish Diaspora in the world. Although *Dos Naye Lebn* was criticized by representatives of all parties present in the CKŻP (for

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part of the book. According to the report in *Wolna Polska* the cantor's prayer was at the beginning of the congress. "Le-shana ha-ba'a birushalayim!" (Hebr., "Next year in Jerusalem") – wish traditionally said during a Passover seder.

[39] AŻIH, CKŻP, Prezydium 2, Protokół 7, posiedzenie plenum CKŻP 9 II 1946, p. 29.

[40] For more on the three magazines see: M. Fuks, "Prasa PPR i PZPR w języku żydowskim (*Fołks-Sztyme* 1946–1956)," *Biuletyn ŻIH* 3 (1979): 21–35; J. Nalewajko-Kulikov, "'Syjonistyczna z lekkim zabarwieniem PPR-owskim.' *Dos Naye Lebn* (1945–1950) – gazeta Centralnego Komitetu Żydów w Polsce," in *Żydzi a lewica. Zbiór studiów historycznych*, ed. A. Grabski (Warsaw, 2007), 257–278; M. Ruta, "Der Einfluss von politischen Veränderungen auf die jiddische Kultur in Polen in den Jahren 1946–1949 im Spiegel der Monatschrift Yidishe Shriftn," *Scripta Judaica Cracoviensia* 5 (2008): 67–77.

[41] N. Cohen, „Motives for the Emigration of Yiddish Writers from Poland (1945–1948)" in *Under the Red Banner. Yiddish Culture in the Communist Countries in the Postwar Era*, ed. E. Grözinger and M. Ruta (Wiesbaden 2008), 162.

[42] B. Mark, "Mir kumen tsurik," *Dos Naye Lebn*, 10 (1946).

some it was too communist, for others too leftist), including Szymon Zachariasz, and Mark as the editor-in-chief was blamed for this state of affairs – nevertheless, postulating transformation of the paper into a daily (which never took place), Mark mentioned Sholem Asch and Yosef Opatoshu as new collaborators.[43] But in 1948 the atmosphere began to change and soon *Dos Naye Lebn* triumphantly exposed Asch as a supporter of the "reaction."[44]

One of the elements of Mark's political activity in the second half of the 1940s was also his increasing engagement as a historian. *Dos bukh fun gvure* [Book of Heroism], his next book about the uprising in the Warsaw ghetto, was published in 1947 in Łódź.[45] It aroused strong emotions among former insurgents. It was thought to contain numerous factual mistakes. During the discussion on the book organized by the Jewish Historical Institute (*Żydowski Instytut Historyczny,* ŻIH), Nachman Blumental, the chairman and the then director of ŻIH, at some point had to ask participants to refrain from using offensive language – so high was the discussion's temperature.[46] Moreover, having read the book, Yitshak Zuckerman wrote to Mark from Palestine, "If I did not know you – I would accuse you of ill will. But since I know you – then what should I think?"[47]

Zuckerman's surprise was slightly naive. From Jewish communists' perspective only the communist party could be a force that inspired the Jewish resistance movement during the Holocaust. Such an interpretation was regarded as the only legitimate and binding one for historians. As Marci Shore pointed out, "Both Zionists and communists wanted to start history anew, to create a new world, and the moment of the uprising in the Warsaw ghetto was chosen as the beginning of this new epoch.... According to communists,... a New Man was born in that uprising...."[48] At the PPR Jewish Fraction meeting held in October 1948 Szymon Zachariasz roared:

> The eclectic image of the Jewish resistance movement in Poland during the German occupation created by our writers and historians was a result of the influence an ideology alien to us had on them. Historians and writers could not bring to light the historical truth and stress the mobilizing, driving, organizational and directive role the PPR played in the underground resistance movement in ghettos, camps and particularly in the heroic Warsaw ghetto

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[43] AŻIH, CKŻP, Prezydium 7, Protokół 64, posiedzenie plenum CKŻP 10 II 1947, p. 156.

[44] J. Nalewajko-Kulikov, "Syjonistyczna z lekkim zabarwieniem," 277.

[45] B. Mark, *Dos bukh fun gvure.* Vol 1. *Oyfshtand fun varshever geto* (*Book of Heroism,* vol. 1: *The Warsaw Ghetto Uprising*) (Łódź, 1947). In some bibliographies and studies the title used on the cover of the book is: *Khurves dertseyln... Vegn dem oyfshtand in varshever geto* (*Ruins' Story... On the Uprising in the Warsaw Ghetto*).

[46] AŻIH, Spuścizna Bernarda Marka, 1005, Protokół IV posiedzenia publicznego, poświęconego zagadnieniu powstania w getcie warszawskim w związku z omówieniem książki B. Marka "Khurvos [sic!] dertseyln" 1 VI 1948, no pagination.

[47] Ibidem, list I. Cukiermana do B. Marka z 18 VIII 1947.

[48] M. Shore, "Język, pamięć i rewolucyjna awangarda. Kształtowanie historii powstania w getcie warszawskim w latach 1944–1950," *Biuletyn ŻIH* 4 (1998): 58.

> uprising. Instead of stressing our dominant and dynamic role in the fight with German fascism, they gave us a vague, nebulous image of an alleged nationwide epos of the history of the entire Jewish nation fighting the German-fascist occupier.[49]

Furthermore, Zachariasz postulated a "general Marxist-Leninist offensive" on the cultural front and criticized Mark's brochure *Oyfn keyver fun Tsvi Hirsh Grets* [At Tsvi Hirsh Graetz's] published in Wrocław in 1948 and devoted to the eminent Jewish historian Heinrich Graetz:

> Comrade Mark's latest publication on the Jewish historian Graetz is also a manifestation of eclecticism and national-Jewish ideology's influences. In his work comrade Mark is trying to demonstrate analogies between Marx and Graetz; the author is trying with all his might to bring both Marx and Graetz to the common denominator of Jewish national unity, even though the two represent completely different ideologies, conceptions, points of view. … The false conception of national-Jewish unity manifests itself characteristically in a number of comrade Mark's other works. And so, for instance, comrade Mark thinks Soviet historian Bruchman a spiritual heir of bourgeois-Jewish historian Graetz. Is a Marxist allowed to comprehend and assess contemporary Jewish-Soviet historical literature in this way?[50]

Attacked, Mark made a self-criticism on the one hand ("As for Jewish literature we have made many mistakes. We had a liberal attitude toward enemies"[51]) while on the other hand he was trying to defend himself: "I would advise acquainting oneself with the Soviet encyclopedia and with what it says about Graetz. … I ask, why should we throw Graetz out from our pantheon?"[52] Zachariasz's attack (he also criticized the lack of ideological awareness in *Fołks-Sztyme* and *Dos Naje Lebn* editor's offices) was used by Michał Mirski, who pointed out Mark's mistakes and the fact that he did not take criticism well.[53] Mark bore Mirski a grudge for many years – Mirski's description is one of the most malicious fragments of his diary.[54]

Nevertheless, after Rafał Gerber had resigned from the post of Jewish Historical Institute secretary-general, the CKŻP Presidium, dominated by communists, appointed Mark the ŻIH director. He assumed the function on 1 September 1949.[55]

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[49] AAN, Akta Szymona Zachariasza, 476/20, Referat Zachariasza wygłoszony na naradzie działaczy Frakcji 25 X 1948, p. 110–111.

[50] Ibidem, p. 113.

[51] Ibidem, p. 135.

[52] Ibidem, p. 136.

[53] Ibidem, p. 33.

[54] B. Mark, "Dziennik (grudzień 1965–luty 1966)," *Kwartalnik Historii Żydów* 2 (2008): 163–165.

[55] AŻIH, CKŻP, Prezydium 17, Protokół 40. posiedzenia Prezydium 29 VII 1949, p. 20–21; M. Horn, "Działalność naukowa Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego w Polsce w latach 1947–1996," in *Żydowski Instytut Historyczny – 50 lat działalności. Materiały z konferencji jubileuszowej*, ed. A. Żbikowski and E. Biernacka (Warsaw, 1996), 16.

"A Very Bad Historian" (1949–1960)

The Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw was created in 1947 as a continuation of the Central Commission of Polish Jews (*Centralna Żydowska Komisja Historyczna,* CKŻH). At the end of the 1940s most leading employees of the two institutions, such as Filip Friedman, Nachman Blumental, Michał Borwicz, Joseph Kermish, Isaiah Trunk, and Rachel Auerbach, emigrated from Poland. Artur Eisenbach was the only remaining person from the initial staff.[56] Consequently, Holocaust historiography in Poland became an area to be developed by communist historians. The ŻIH and its periodicals *Bleter far Geshikhte* and *Biuletyn ŻIH* became the main center of this historiography's creation.[57]

For Bernard Mark the 1950s were a period of the most intensive scholarly activity in his life. In that decade he published as many as 11 books, most of them in Yiddish: *Di yidishe tragedye in der poylisher literatur* [Jewish Tragedy In Polish Literature, 1950], *Der oyfshtand in bialistoker geto* [Bialystok Ghetto Uprising, 1950], *Victor Hugo: tsum 150-tn yortog fun zayn geboyrn* [Victor Hugo: On the 150th Anniversary of His Birth, 1952], *Ruch oporu w getcie białostockim* **[**Resistance Movement in Białystok Ghetto**,** 1952], *Powstanie w getcie warszawskim na tle ruchu oporu w Polsce. Geneza i przebieg* [The Warsaw Ghetto Uprising in Relation to the Resistance Movement in Poland**.** Genesis and Course, 1953; the 2nd extended and supplemented edition in 1954], *Di umgekumene shrayber fun di getos un lagern un zeyere verk* [Killed Writers of Ghettos and Camps and their Works, 1954], *Adam Mickiewicz (1955), Der oyfshtand in varshever geto* [Warsaw Ghetto Uprising 1955], *Di geshikhte fun yidn in Poyln bizn sof fun XV y[or]h[undert]* [Polish Jews' History Until the End of the 15th Century, 1957], *Walka i zagłada warszawskiego getta* [Combat and Destruction of the Warsaw Ghetto, marked as the 2nd edition, 1959] and *Szolem Alejchem 1859–1916. Epoka, życie i dzieła* [Sholem Aleichem 1859–1916. Epoch, Life and Works, 1959]. He was also the editor of anthologies and collections of documents, such as *Dos lid iz geblibn: lider fun yidishe dikhter in Poyln, umgekumene beys der hitlerisher okupatsye* [Song Has Remained: Poems of Polish Jewish Poets Killed During Nazi Occupation, 1951], *PPR in kamf un boy* [Polish Workers Party in Combat and Construction, 1952; jointly with S. Zachariasz), *DDokumentn un materialn vegn oyfshtand in varshever geto* [Documents and Materials on the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising**,** 1953] and *Tsvishn lebn un toyt* [Between Life and Death, 1955].

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[56] S. Stach, *Das Jüdische Historische Institut in Warschau 1947–1968*, M.A. thesis (University of Leipzig, 2008), 60. I would like to thank Jürgen Hensel, for making a copy of this M.A. thesis available to me.

[57] Apart from the above-mentioned Stach's work, for more on the first years of the ŻIH see also: J.C. Szurek, *Être témoin sous le stalinisme. Les premières années de l'Institut Historique Juif de Varsovie* in *Écriture de l'histoire et identité juive. L'Europe ashkénaze XIXe–XXe siècle,* ed. D. Bechtel et al. (Paris, 2003), 51–82.

The book which in many milieus cemented his reputation as a regime historian was of course *Powstanie w getcie warszawskim na tle ruchu oporu w Polsce* [The Warsaw Ghetto Uprising in Relation to the Resistance Movement in Poland]. With Szymon Zachariasz as its editor, it is no wonder that the role of the PPR in it was stressed while the role of Zionists was totally marginalized. What is more, "false opinions" as to the uprising being supposedly an act of despair undertaken by Jews in their sense of loneliness and abandonment were criticized. By contrast, according to Mark: "The Uprising was an element of universal liberation struggle conducted by the nation under the PPR leadership; it was a link in the universal struggle of mankind under the Soviet Union's lead against Nazi Germany…"[58] No wonder that many years later Yitshak Zuckerman thought Mark "a great journalist, but a very bad historian."[59]

The Stalinist period was not conducive to maintaining scholarly contacts with abroad and as late as in 1955 Mark in his letter to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs refused cooperation with Yad Vashem as an "institution of reactionary character" created "for sabotage purposes."[60] Simultaneously, on behalf of the ŻIH he kept up correspondence with persons such as R. Auerbach (whom he informed in 1950 about the discovery of the second part of Ringelblum's archive), J. Kermish, N. Blumental and Adolf Berman. In his letters sent abroad he often proposed mutual exchange of publications and asked for new publications to be sent to the Institute's library in return for search queries the Institute conducted and consultations it provided."[61]

Although until 1952 the ŻIH was officially subordinate to the Polish Academy of Sciences (*Polska Akademia Nauk*), it was also closely connected with the Socio-Cultural Association of Jews in Poland (*Towarzystwo Społeczno-Kulturalne Żydów w Polsce,* TSKŻ) established in 1950 to replace the CKŻP. Mark reported on the ŻIH's activity at some meetings of the TSKŻ Main Board Presidium. He and other Institute employees also participated in various TSKŻ anniversary celebrations (mostly organized on the occasion of anniversaries of the uprisings in Warsaw and Białystok ghettos), seminars for Jewish school teachers, etc.[62] He was also a TSKŻ Main Board Presidium member; what is more, he was one of three Presidium members (from among the total of fifteen in 1950–1956) who had higher education.[63] In 1954 he was made an associate professor.

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[58] B. Mark, *Powstanie w getcie warszawskim na tle ruchu oporu w Polsce. Geneza i przebieg* (Warsaw, 1953), 319.

[59] I. Cukierman, *Nadmiar pamięci (siedem owych lat). Wspomnienia 1939–1946,* trans. Z. Perelmuter (Warsaw, 2000), 292.

[60] B. Szaynok, *Z historią i Moskwą w tle. Polska a Izrael 1944–1968* (Warsaw, 2007), 280.

[61] AŻIH, Spuścizna Bernarda Marka, 1008, *Korespondencja wychodząca B. Marka w sprawach ŻIH w latach 1950–1955*.

[62] G. Berendt, *Życie żydowskie w Polsce w latach 1950–1956. Z dziejów Towarzystwa Społeczno-Kulturalnego Żydów w Polsce* (Gdańsk, 2006), 253–254.

[63] Ibidem, p. 58.

The 1956 events were a shock to Jewish communists: the disclosure of truth about the lot of Jewish Antifascist Committee activists killed in 1952, the "revolt" of local TSKŻ branches, whose representatives demanded changes in the organization's operation, the anti-Semitic comments appearing also among the highest ranking party members, and finally the desire to emigrate from Poland which had been suppressed during Stalinism and which erupted then with new intensity – all this could shake belief in the only just solution of the "Jewish question" within the socialist regime framework.[64] On the other hand, 1956 brought renewal of contacts with Jews outside Poland, in both the West and the East. At the turn of 1956 and 1957, with the permission of party authorities, which wanted to gain influential Jewish Diaspora milieus' support in trade matters, the TSKŻ renewed its contacts with the Joint, ORT and World Jewish Congress. Dawid Sfard, Hersz Smolar and Bernard Mark were among TSKŻ Presidium supporters of negotiations with the latter organization, while Szymon Zachariasz and Michał Mirski opposed it.[65] Similarly, contacts with the Jewish community in the USSR were also renewed – Polish Jews became, literally and metaphorically, its window on the world (not only the Jewish one).[66]

Despite being already very busy, in the mid-1950s Mark assumed the duties of a member of the Capital City of Warsaw National Council Culture Commission (*Komisja Kultury Rady Narodowej m.st. Warszawy*). While holding this position he controlled the operation of the Public Library on Koszykowa Street (he paid attention e.g. to the ratio of workers to readers, catalogue clarity and reading room's heating); he intervened regarding the bad condition of the Ghetto Heroes' monument and regarding complaints made by Jews who despite the fact that they were not emigrating to Israel were ordered by tenement administrators to give back their keys. His letter to the Capital City National Council Organizational Department (*Wydział Organizacyjny Stołecznej Rady Narodowej*) might testify to his treating this function seriously: "I would also like to stress that it is v. difficult for me to meet with the Jelonki electorate, where I had a meeting with citizens and a number of talks with National Front (*Front Narodowy*) activists about 5–6 months ago, for almost no postulates put forward by the electorate at that time and which I reported to

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[64] For more on the 1956 events in the Jewish context see: G. Berendt, "Żydzi jako podmiot i przedmiot wydarzeń polskiego Października 1956 roku," in *Polacy i sąsiedzi – dystanse i przenikanie kultur*, vol. 2: *Collection of Studies*, ed. R. Wapiński (Gdańsk, 2001), 268–315.

[65] For more on the TSKŻ contacts with the World Jewish Congress see: G. Berendt, "Starania organizacji działających w Polsce o przystąpienie do Światowego Kongresu Żydowskiego (1945–1961)," in G. Berendt, A. Grabski, A. Stankowski, *Studia z historii Żydów w Polsce po 1945 roku* (Warsaw, 2000), 9–66.

[66] For more on the Polish and Soviet Jews' contacts see: G. Berendt, "Udział Żydów polskich w walce o pamięć i rehabilitację twórców radzieckiej kultury żydowskiej – lata 1955–1956," in *Żydzi a lewica. Zbiór studiów historycznych*, ed. A. Grabski (Warsaw, 2007) 279–305; G. Estraikh, „The Warsaw Outlets for Soviet Yiddish Writers," in *Under the Red Banner*, 217-229.

the Organizational Department have been met so far."[67] It seems that Mark left the Culture Commission in 1956 perhaps due to the load of other duties and his ever deteriorating health.

In 1959 the Ministry of Defense published his *Walka i zagłada warszawskiego getta* [Combat and Destruction of the Warsaw Ghetto] – Mark's fifth book about the uprising in a row but the first one that could have pretensions to being a scholarly work and not only a journalistic one. In the book, the author for the first time presented an overview of literature on ghetto history (including works published in the USA and Israel) and made a self-critique for "too biased depiction of the resistance movement forces in the ghetto" in his previous publications, and for underestimating the role of Zionists and the Bund, for marginalizing the role of help provided by the Home Army (*Armia Krajowa*) and by other "democratic organizations," and also for "the influence of current political moments, which here and there could have distorted the image of ghetto reality and its resistance movement and could have lowered the scholarly value of the work by sometimes changing it into journalism."[68]

"A Sworn Enemy of Socialism and the People's Republic of Poland" (1960–1966)

The beginning of the 1960s brought a departure from the 1956 ideals. 1962 might be regarded as a breakthrough year in the People's Republic of Poland's (*Polska Rzeczpospolita Ludowa,* PRL) attitude toward the Jewish community, a year in which Hersh Smolar ceased to be the TSKŻ chairman. Then Bernard Mark resigned from membership in the TSKŻ Main Board Presidium.[69] The Jewish milieu became an object of close scrutiny of the ministry of the interior; neither the ŻIH nor Mark himself escaped invigilation. The latter was characterized by the ministry as "an ardent Jewish nationalist, a steadfast enemy of socialism and the People's Republic of Poland."[70]

At first glance such a description could seem absurd. Nevertheless, it fit that period's atmosphere perfectly, since at that time there came to dominate the so-

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[67] AŻIH, Spuścizna Bernarda Marka (unsorted), 442, List B. Marka do tow. Arciszewskiego z Wydziału Organizacyjnego, 20 X 1955, no pagination.

[68] B. Mark, *Walka i zagłada warszawskiego getta* (Warszawa, 1959), 9–10. It was also Mark's first work in which, apart from the Jewish Fighting Organization (*Żydowska Organizacja Bojowa*, ŻOB), also the Jewish Military Union (*Żydowski Związek Wojskowy*) was mentioned.

[69] H. Smolar in his memoirs (*Oyf der letster pozitsye mit der letster hofenung* [Tel Aviv, 1982], 323–324) interprets this decision as a gesture of solidarity, but judging from Mark's diary entries it was more like reluctance to represent with his surname the actions of the presidium, which was under strong political pressure.

[70] D. Libionka, "Apocrypha from the History of the Jewish Military Union and its Authors," *Holocaust Studies and Materials* 1 (2008): 147–176

called "partisans" concentrated around Mieczysław Moczar, for whom Jewish communists (and more broadly, Jews in general) were suspicious as a rule. And so they concentrated on looking for evidence that would prove the thesis of Jews' disloyalty toward Poland, their duplicity and connections with "world Zionism's spies."

Obviously Mark's (and other TSKŻ members') contacts with Israel's legation (and then embassy) in Warsaw and representatives of the Jewish Diaspora from all over the world were seen precisely in this light by the ministry of the interior. From the documents and publications I am familiar with it is not clear whether Mark ever visited Israel; however, in 1960 he was planning on going to Jerusalem to a conference organized by Yad Vashem.[71] But he did have relatives and acquaintances there, with whom he kept up correspondence, and in 1960 he asked Israel Gutman for help in obtaining an invitation to Israel for his only daughter, the then 19-year-old Zina.[72] In his diary written shortly before his death, he wrote:

> If I arrived in Israel now, I would kiss its soil.
> Many, quite many Jews in Poland, the USSR, Czechosl[ovakia] feel the same way.
> If I die here in Poland, I will demand in advance to be buried in Israel.
> After all, Israeli Jews are the avant-garde of the Jewish nation.
> I understand better and better how generations of Jews felt about their historical homeland.
> Soviet Jews are sill a great base for a subsequent renaissance of the Jewish nation and Israel.[73]

From the correspondence that has survived it transpires that Mark was also trying to establish scholarly contacts with the Jewish community in the USSR. Among other things, he strived to obtain help in gaining access to Jewish literature published in the USSR and in compiling a list of Yiddish Soviet press publications for the ŻIH.[74] But for the group centered around *Sovetish Heymland*, a magazine created in 1961 in Moscow, and its editor-in-chief Aron Vergelis,[75] TSKŻ activists were too "nationalistic" and too "Zionist," which Warsaw was aware of. Accord-

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[71] AŻIH, Spuścizna Bernarda Marka, 1010a, List B. Marka do N. Waks z 22 II 1960, p. 19–20. According to Marci Shore: "Presumably, Ber Mark visited Jerusalem before his death. Legend has it that he broke into tears, admitting that he had misrepresented the uprising's history." (M. Shore, op. cit., 60). Unfortunately, the author does not give the source of this information.

[72] AŻIH, Spuścizna Bernarda Marka, 1010a, List B. Marka do I. Gutmana z 7 IV 1960, p. 54.

[73] B. Mark, *Dziennik.*

[74] AŻIH, Spuścizna Bernarda Marka, 1010a, List B. Marka do M. Bermana z 22 X 1960, p. 120.

[75] For more on the topic see: G. Estraikh, "Aron Vergelis: the perfect Jewish homo sovieticus," *East European Jewish Affairs*, vol. 27, 2 (1997): 3–20; idem, "The Era of 'Sovetish Heymland': Readership of the Yiddish press in the former Soviet Union," *East European Jewish Affairs* vol. 25, 1 (1995): 17–22.

ing to an account of agent "Zeldin", affiliated with the *Sovetish Heymland* milieu, Mark was to ask him rhetorically: "If I want the Jewish nation to blossom – is that nationalism?"[76] Operational materials read: "On the occasion of various meetings with persons coming to the Institute, Mark is trying to stress anti-Semitism present in the USSR. He condemns the USSR's policy toward Israel."[77]

In the 1960s Mark published much less, although his legacy in the Archive of the ŻIH proves that he was gathering materials and clippings, planning future works and taking notes almost until the last moment. In his diary he admitted that: "… I was planning work after work. Perhaps I would have executed many of them if it were not for the damned position of the Institute director and intense suffering [connected with] reading and researching. Besides, it was too much for one man. Now when I am walking blindfold in the darkness and I feel my strength sapping and I, desperate, see that the rest of my life I have left is not going to be nearly enough to write all of that – what should I do?"[78]

His research interests still concentrated around the Jewish resistance movement during the Holocaust. In the early 1960s four of his books were published: the second edition of his *Der ojfsztand in warszewer geto* [Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, 1963], *Powstanie w getcie warszawskim* [Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, 1963] which was supplemented with a selection of materials, had a more popular character and was aimed at a mass audience, *Życie i walka młodzieży w gettach w okresie okupacji hitlerowskiej 1939–1944* [Life and Struggle of Youth in Ghettos During Nazi Occupation 1939–1944, 1961] and a bibliographical guide, *Męczeństwo i walka Żydów w latach okupacji* [Jews' Martyrdom and Struggle During the Occupation, 1963]. At the end of his life Mark wrote to *Folks-shtime* less often (in a letter to his acquaintance he explained why: "…I do not want to be in certain company whose opinions on a number of fundamental issues I do not share.").[79] But he still often published literary critical texts in the *Yidishe shriftn* monthly.[80]

He remained publicly active almost until the very end. After he had lost his sight due to diabetes, he continued to appear at literary evenings, ghetto celebrations and other similar events, during which he gave lectures and quoted sources or Jewish poets' poems from memory.[81] His last public appearance took place at the celebra-

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[76] Archiwum Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej [The Archive of the Institute of National Remembrance], 0231/230, vol. 9, "Doniesienie agenturalne", ściśle tajne, 18 X 1963, p. 148 (translation from Russian).

[77] Ibidem, Streszczenie materiałów „Kodak" za okres od 1 I 1964 do 31 XII 1964, 10 X 1969, p. 437. I would like to thank Dr Dariusz Libionka for making this document available to me.

[78] B. Mark, *Dziennik*.

[79] AŻIH, Spuścizna Bernarda Marka, 1010a, List B. Marka do M. Bermana z 27 X 1960, p. 5.

[80] In contemporary memoirs his excellent knowledge of Jewish literature is stressed.

[81] M. Landau, "Ester un Ber Mark – di fardinstfule Shoa-forshers," in M. Landau, *Mit shrayber, bikher un mit… Vilne* (Tel Aviv, 2003), 95.

tion devoted to Perets Markish's life and work.[82] In his article for *Yidishe shriftn*, Mark also recalled how impressed he had been with Markish as a poet in the 1920s at the time of the avant-garde poetic group Khalyastre."[83]

At the end of December 1965 Mark began writing a diary. He was already seriously ill – as he himself wrote, he suffered from "diabetes, kidney problems, uremia, high blood pressure, arteriosclerosis in the legs, stomach problems and, first and foremost, hemorrhages in the eyes."[84] In spite of that his diary entries, although written only for a very short time, testify to his great perspicacity, engagement, and sensitivity to everything that concerned Jews – in Poland, the USSR and Israel. He wrote with anxiety and bitterness about manifestations of the increasing atmosphere of "March before March" in Poland: high-ranking party members' anti-Semitic remarks, people of Jewish origin being fired.

Mark ceased writing his diary in February 1966, presumably because of his deteriorating health. In April the ŻIH board ordered Artur Eisenbach and Adam Rutkowski to direct the Institute's operation for a transitional period.[85] Bernard Mark died on 4 July 1966, being only 58 years of age. His wish to be buried in Israel did not come true. He was buried at the main lane of the Jewish cemetery on Okopowa Street in Warsaw.

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Mark's bibliography compiled by his widow lists 959 titles from 1928 to 1985 including posthumous publications – and it is incomplete! This number as well as the extent of his legacy (collected mostly in the Archive of the ŻIH and partly in the Archive of the Goldstein-Goren Diaspora Research Center in Tel Aviv) demonstrates how broad Mark's interests were. He gathered materials on various topics and in various languages (he wrote in Yiddish and Polish). Some claim that it did not necessarily translate into high quality of his scholarly work. According to Szmul Krakowski, "Professor Mark's very strong personality had an impact on the Institute's operation. He simply had quite a strong nature, almost a dictatorial one…, but at the same time Prof. Mark was a man of vast knowledge and an outstanding expert on Jewish literature. But he was not a historian and he did not really understand it. Nor did he understand the matter of forming the scholarly staff in the slightest… the professor reserved the resistance movement for himself, drew a framework for himself, extremely large, which sometimes was beyond his capabilities. He did not wish for, did not want other people's collaboration, and pushed away those

[82] A. Kwaterko, "Tsum ondenk fun Ber Mark. Shtrikhn vegn zany lebn un shafn (in der tsvantsikster yortsayt)," *Folks-shtime*, 5 July 1986.

[83] B. Mark, "Unter topltn oreol fun tragishkayt un heroism (tsum heylikn ondenk fun Perets Markish)", *Yidishe shriftn*, 12 (1965).

[84] B. Mark, *Dziennik*.

[85] M. Shore, op. cit., 32.

who wanted to take it up."[86] He was not able to maintain the objectivity required of a scholar. He left neither disciples nor successors. His scholarly career was the career of an ambitious self-taught loner.

If we wanted to portray Bernard Mark's life as a patchwork, it would have to be a patchwork in various shades of grey, against which two threads would stand out: blue and red. For Mark's life and choices, similarly to many other communists from his generation, were neither uniformly white nor black. But he was always accompanied by a longing for Zion, more or less realized and accepted by him – and by an interpretation of the revolutionary ideals of his youth which made him reconstruct life on the smoldering ruins and not turn his back on the graves.

Translated by *Anna Brzostowska* and *Jerzy Giebułtowski*

Abstract
The article presents a profile of Bernard Mark (1908–1966), a Holocaust historian and the director of the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw. Mark's biography is based on various materials, both published and unpublished, from his pre-war involvement in the Communist Party of Poland, through the war years spent in the Soviet Union, to his various activities in post-war Poland as a researcher and sociocultural activist, including his publications on the Holocaust.

Key words
Holocaust historiography, Jewish communists, the Communist Party of Poland, the Jewish Historical Institute

[86] Institute for Contemporary Jewry (Jerusalem), Oral History Division, Wywiad Benjamina Pincusa ze Stefanem Krakowskim, 29 IV 1969, pp. 9–10. I would like to thank Stephan Stach for making this document available to me.