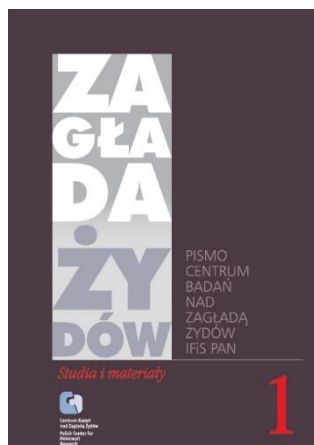




Holocaust Studies and Materials

Zagłada Żydów. Studia i Materiały

VOL. 1 (2005)

ISSN: 1895-247X

eISSN: 2657-3571

DOI: 10.32927

WWW: www.zagladazydow.pl

Centrum Badań nad Zagładą Żydów IFiS PAN
Polish Center for Holocaust Research

Apocrypha from the History of the Jewish Military Union and its Authors

***Apokryfy z dziejów Żydowskiego Związku Wojskowego i
ich autorzy.***

Dariusz Libionka

Institute of Philosophy and Sociology of the Polish Academy of Sciences

libion@wp.pl

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0180-6463>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.32927/ZZSiM.153>

Strony/Pages: 165-190



Dariusz Libionka

Apocrypha from the History of the Jewish Military Union and its Authors

1.

On 30 September 1963, Major Banaś, senior operations officer of Division V of Department II of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, finished the eighty-four-page long surveillance report on an “ardent Jewish nationalist, steadfast enemy of socialism and of the People’s Republic of Poland (Polska Rzeczpospolita Ludowa, PRL),” an individual whose “life’s purpose was to inspire and carry out Zionist activity, vilify whatever is Polish and socialist, defend, care for and help the state of Israel at the expense of PRL interests, with premeditation, aided and abated by the Israeli Embassy in Warsaw.”¹ The document was the profile of the then director of the Jewish Historical Institute (Żydowski Instytut Historyczny, ŻIH), Bernard Mark. The case code name was “Kodak”, and the Security Service took care of Mark in its unique manner: by means of agents, room and telephone bugging. Several years’ efforts of the [State] Security Organs (Służba Bezpieczeństwa, SB) are documented in materials collected in the archives of the Institute of National Remembrance in Warsaw. However, this text does not deal with the description of SB operations against Bernard Mark and the ŻIH, although it would be an interesting and even edifying subject for various reasons. Neither do I deal with the surprising evolution of Mark’s ideological and scientific views reflected in these materials. The collective subject of this text is a group of Poles, operating in Mark’s circle, former members of a small and fairly opaque underground organisation, known as the Security Corps (Korpus Bezpieczeństwa, KB).² From our point of view, it is less important that some of them

¹ AIPN, microfilm 11922/2, microcard No. 10. The summary of materials on “subject”, code name “Kodak” of 15 September 1963, Warsaw 30 September 1963, frame a3.

² As of today, no serious study of the KB’s history has been published. According to a historian from Gdańsk, Janusz Marszałec, it was “a cadre formation, politicised, gathering people with big ambitions, even political troublemakers. This is confirmed by the fact that they gave themselves not only officer but general ranks as well, and also their surprising political somersaults, which led them to eventual collaboration with the PPR (Polska Partia Robotnicza, Polish Workers’ Party) and the Soviets (whether this formation was infiltrated by Soviet agents remains an open question). After 1939, the KB underwent a number of political and structural transformations, changed its name several times and incorporated minor formations (the last changes of November 1943 led to Andrzej Petrykowski, “Tarnawa”, taking command and change of the name of the formation from

were used by the SB to keep the ŻIH director under surveillance, especially that they were used to manipulate the history of Polish-Jewish relations during the German occupation.

It is difficult to determine the exact date when the group established closer contact with the ŻIH. But we know that in February 1957, the first meeting of the former members of the KB took place to establish its separate environmental commission of the Society of Fighters for Freedom and Democracy (Związek Bojowników o Wolność i Demokrację, ZBoWiD), which was to commemorate the history of the KB and verify the military ranks and decorations. Eventually, it was set up on 18 November of that year.³ In the above-mentioned report, Major Banaś thus writes about it:

At the end of 1956 and in early 1957, Mark established closer contacts with the former members of the Polish resistance movement, especially former members of the Military Units Security Corps (Oddziały Wojskowe-Korpus Bezpieczeństwa, OW-KB). According to Karpiński [pseudonym of a secret collaborator active in the milieu of the former members of the KB – D. L.], in 1957 some KB members started to describe their organisational activity, their collaboration with the Jewish resistance movement and help to the fighting ghetto. This was primarily dealt with by Iwański Henryk, closely connected with Mark Berman. . . . Also the following people prepared and submitted their testimonies-memoirs: Roliard Henryk, [Kazimierz] Madanowski, [Tadeusz] Bednarczyk, [Władysław] Zajdler, Bajon and Kosak Eugeniusz. In 1958, the collaboration . . . started to loosen up because they realized that they wouldn't receive any financial benefits which they had expected. Others broke up with Mark, because of his biased studies . . . , among them Bednarczyk, who currently opposes Mark. Others still . . . collaborate, among them: Iwański, Madanowski and Zajdler, who systematically supply him with different materials and information. Mark offered them financial help via the TSKŻ and e.g. Zajdler was given a flat, . . . and Iwański, Madanowski and Kozak . . . still receive financial help. . . . Mark also established contacts with former members of the KOP [Korpus Obrońców Polski, the Corps of Poland's Defenders, D. L.], the PAL [Polska Armia Ludowa, Polish People's Army – D. L.], and especially Henryk Borucki . . . and Cezary Ketling, who prepared and sold Mark a lot of materials, which depart far from the truth, but which Mark found satisfactory.⁴

Indeed, during that period the ŻIH received autobiographical materials, often very extensive, regarding the contacts of the Polish and Jewish undergrounds in the Warsaw ghetto. Their authors came from the same circles and presented them-

"Military Units Security Cadre" to "Military Units Security Corps)." See: Janusz Marszałec, *Oddziały Wojskowe – Korpus Bezpieczeństwa* – typescript in author's archives.

³ See archives of the Wojskowe Biuro Badań Historycznych (WBBH) III/117/4, Korpus Bezpieczeństwa. Dokumenty, ch. 12. The majority of the materials concerning the KB comes from Władysław Zajdler's collection, purchased by Wojskowy Instytut Historyczny (WBBH predecessor) in 1975.

⁴ AIPN, microfilm 11922/2, microcard No. 10., *op. cit.*, frame d3-d4.

selves as brothers in arms of the fighters from the Jewish Military Union or even members (officers) of this formation. Some of these materials, in slightly changed or extended versions, soon began to appear in the press, often on anniversaries (such as the subsequent anniversaries of the Warsaw ghetto uprising). With the help and under the auspices of the state security, (not only during the anti-Zionist campaign of 1967–1968), they received a broader circulation in Poland and abroad. Treating them as a serious historical source, in my opinion, led to a permanent and difficult to overcome perversion of historical writing, especially as far as the ŻZW was concerned, which was a military organization set up in the Warsaw ghetto by members of a youth organization subordinated to the Zionist-revisionist party Betar. Such a situation was possible for a number of reasons. Only several members of the organization survived the war. Those who did left very few source materials.⁵ The fact that the Zionist-revisionist organisation functioned outside the military and political structures of mainstream underground in the Warsaw ghetto, established in the autumn of 1942 (the Jewish Fighting Organisation and the Jewish National Committee), deprived it of contacts with Polish Underground State agencies. Polish underground press barely mentioned it during the ghetto uprising. Even the AK structures dealing with the issues of the Warsaw ghetto, particularly its counter-intelligence, had only dim and random information about the ŻZW. An analysis of the causes of the exclusion or isolation of the ŻZW is beyond the scope of this text. They are usually sought for in its conflict with the ŻOB about the leadership or in the ideological differences which are difficult to overcome.⁶ More importantly however, the distance, indifference and even antipathy toward the revisionists by the political forces behind the ŻOB and the ŻKN did not wane after the uprising. Its history was compiled on the basis of accounts of ŻOB combatants: members of the Bund on the one hand, and Zionist youth organisations on the other. The existing ideological and personal conflict is already reflected in the correspondence sent during the war from Poland to the representatives of the Jewish population in the National Council in London and Jewish organisations. A symbol of this fight for remembrance is a conflict surrounding the decision to award a Bund member, Michał Klepfisz, the order of *Virtuti Militari* and overlooking the ŻOB commander Mordechaj Anielewicz.⁷ Therefore, commemoration of the revisionists' fight was even less likely.

The purposeful elimination of the remembrance of the revisionists is confirmed by Emanuel Ringelblum's complaint, who in a letter sent from a bunker (to Berman), of 13 December 1943, wondered about the reasons for the lack of materials concerning the revisionists:

⁵ Especially the memoirs of a doctor and political activist, one of the Betar leaders, David Wdowiński, *And We Are Not Saved* (London, 1964), are worth mentioning.

⁶ However, this issue is raised mainly by former ŻOB members: C. Lubetkin, I. Cukierman, M. Edelman.

⁷ Klepfisz was posthumously awarded the Order of *Virtuti Militari* by General Kazimierz Sosnkowski upon the initiative of the socialist Adam Ciołkosz, who suggested to the supreme commander that Klepfisz be awarded the order to honour all the Warsaw ghetto combatants. See: Adam Ciołkosz, "Dzielnica żydowska' obozu w Jabłonninie", *Zeszyty Historyczne* No. 20, 1971, 186.

I received a list of collaborator operators of the company [ŻOB]. I have biographical details of some of them. . . . We should collect details of all of them (birth date, address, parents' occupation, education, character traits, participation in various activities, latest activities, etc.). . . . *Why aren't there any data about the ŻZW? There should remain a trace of them in history, although we do not sympathise with them* [emphasis – D. L.].⁸

We do not know whether he received a reply at all, and if he did, what it was. Certainly, however, he did not receive the requested materials, although it is possible that upon Cukierman's initiative an account of the ŻZW participation in the uprising was provided by the fighter "Red Paweł" (Pinia Besztynt⁹) with Ringelblum in mind. According to his memoirs, Cukierman handed it over to Adolf Berman. The above-mentioned list of the dead ŻOB members was sent to London, as were the numerous accounts concerning the ŻOB: Paweł's testimony remained in the archives for years, and the history of the ŻZW and the names of its members sank into oblivion.¹⁰ The image of the ŻOB as the only military force in the Warsaw ghetto appeared probably for the first time in Józef Kermisz's study.¹¹ No wonder that in such circumstances for the Israelis, who wanted to know and promulgate the history of the ŻZW, every account on this issue was worth its weight in gold. Such materials were "discovered" in the PRL. In the summer of 1962, an Israeli journalist, Chaja Lazar, came to Warsaw. It is not completely clear whether she and her husband, Chaim Lazar, were inspired to come [to Poland] by the above-mentioned articles in Polish press regarding the ŻZW or whether she came without such a purpose in mind. It was probably the first one. The documents of the SB, which routinely "secured" her stay, reveal a number of traces, but from our point of view, they are not the most important ones. It is not certain either whether she contacted [former] KB and PLAN members via Bernard Mark, or whether she had already had contacts with some of them before.¹² Initially, her journalistic investigation led to a series of articles in the Israeli press and then to a book written by Chaim Lazar.¹³ It was his study that renewed the interest in the ŻZW on the one hand, and made this historical falsehood international and fixed it in the public perception, while her sources became, even after the author's death and after the fall of communism, if not an integral part of the historical discourse on Polish-Jewish relations during World War II, then a substantial part.

⁸ Cf. the document published in *ibid.* and compiled by I. Gutman.

⁹ This account marked as anonymous is currently in the Beit Jabotinski archives in Tel Aviv.

¹⁰ A collection of materials concerning the uprising in the ghetto was sent to London as an attachment to the ŻKN and Bund reports for 15 November 1942–23 May 1944. It included testimonies of ŻOB members: S. Grajek, K. Ratajzer, T. Borzykowski, materials of Ringelblum's collaborator H. Wasser and the reports: "Rozwój działalności ŻKN po stronie aryjskiej" (The development of the ŻKN activity on the Aryan side) and "Powstanie i rozwój ŻOB" (Establishment and development of the ŻOB). All these materials are kept in the London archives, see: AIP, A.9.III.2a/27.

¹¹ J. Kermisz, *Powstanie w getcie warszawskim (19 kwietnia – 16 maja 1943)* (Łódź, 1946).

¹² This interesting matter will be discussed, on the basis of Lazar's correspondence, by D. Libionka and L. Weinbaum in a separate text.

¹³ Ch. Lazar Litai, *Muranowska 7. The Warsaw Ghetto Rising* (Tel Aviv, 1966). The Hebrew edition was published a few years earlier.

In recent years we have seen the issue make a big comeback, largely caused by the latest book about the ŻZW (*Dwa Sztandary*) by an amateur historian, the French doctor Marian Apfelbaum, who is a relative of Mieczysław Apfelbaum, considered by many to be one of the founders and leaders of the ŻZW.¹⁴ It was soon translated into Polish and very favourably received. The few critical voices passed completely unnoticed. Soon, it was even published by Yad Vashem.¹⁵ Also, the latest publication concerning the ŻZW by Israeli authors demonstrates their helplessness when faced with materials produced in the PRL.¹⁶ In Poland, one of the most important Polish newspapers, the *Rzeczpospolita* daily, became involved in the promotion and promulgation of this material, fraught with theses of dubious quality. The daily published a few texts by the historian Maciej Klędzik, who not only “creatively” developed the history of the ŻZW, but also tried, in the new circumstances, to harness the military organisation of the revisionists to serve various political purposes.¹⁷

Taking it all into consideration, it has now become necessary to critically examine this set of materials. So far, no one has done that, although many respected authors (e.g. I. Gutman) approached them with substantial reserve, and in part incorporated them in their analysis.¹⁸ But this is not enough. In her polemic with Apfelbaum in *Tygodnik Powszechny*, Anka Grupińska warned: “Soldiers of the ŻZW left no testimonies, accounts or memoirs. They did not have friends who would write about them. The stories could not be verified; no myth emerged. What was left was a vacuum so big that no one noticed it. Today, after 60 years, we can see a number of people who are trying to fill it. One needs to be very careful so that it is not occupied by the ordinary squatters.”¹⁹ But it has already happened. We are dealing with a situation (as tellingly demonstrated by Apfelbaum’s book) as dangerous as it is absurd: the fundamental historical sources on the history of the ŻZW are either ignored or, at best, marginalised, while primary importance is attached to memoirs of dubious quality, now treated as undisputed truth. I aim at a critical analysis of these materials, supplemented by a discussion of the documents of the communist state security, that allow us to become acquainted with the context in which they were written and find unknown wartime details and PRL-era biographies.

Proper assessment of the historical material of the PRL era and the deconstruction of the image of the past created on its basis are the necessary conditions for studies of the history of the ŻZW.

¹⁴ Polish edition: M. Apfelbaum, *Dwa sztandary. Rzecz o powstaniu w getcie warszawskim*, M. Maliszewska, trans. (Cracow, 2003).

¹⁵ M. Apfelbaum, *Return to the Warsaw Ghetto* (Yad Vashem, 2004).

¹⁶ See, for example, M. Arens, “The Jewish Military Organization (ŻZW) in the Warsaw Ghetto”, *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 2005, vol. 19, No. 2, 201–225.

¹⁷ M. Klędzik, “Apfelbaum w cieniu Anielewicza,” *Rzeczpospolita*, October 12, 2002; *idem*, “Zapomniani żołnierze,” *Rzeczpospolita*, June 12, 2004; *idem*, “Biało-czerwona opaska z gwiazdą Dawida,” *Rzeczpospolita*, March 12/13, 2005, “Plus-minus” supplement.

¹⁸ This concerns primarily T. Bednarczyk’s testimonies.

¹⁹ A. Grupińska and B. Choroszewski, “Zgubne szukanie (jedynej) prawdy historycznej,” *Tygodnik Powszechny* 29 (2003).

2.

As I mentioned above, the history of the ŻZW is full of gaps and question marks. Professional historians do not even agree about the fundamental facts: the name of the organisation, the date of its establishment, the members of its command structure and, finally, the scale of its activity during the Warsaw ghetto uprising. The materials that are of interest to us in this text seem to contain answers to all these questions. Who of the people interested in the history of the ŻZW has not heard the story about the meeting, in the autumn of 1939, of a Polish officer with young Jews who declared their readiness to continue fighting against the Germans: "One day in November, four young Jews came to me at the Saint Stanislaw's hospital (Szpital św. Stanisława) . . . Those were: Maurycy Apfelbaum, a first lieutenant of the Polish Army, Second Lieutenant Henryk Lipszyc, Białoskóra and Kalme Mendelson. I knew Apfelbaum very well, because he fought under my command during the siege of Warsaw. 'Captain Iwański,' said Apfelbaum, 'we do not want to go to a German Oflag. Please help us organise and train Jewish youth to fight with the enemy. We are facing hard times. . . . We cannot stand idly and look at the oppression.'" Only one reaction was possible. The Polish officer, having admonished the arrivals that since then they should address him by his pseudonym "Bystry", not only did order them to organise themselves to fight, but handed each of them a ViS pistol, on behalf of the underground organisation the Security Corps as well.

This passage comes from an interview with Iwański that was published in the Warsaw *Kultura* on 21 April 1968, ostensibly to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the Warsaw ghetto uprising, and in fact as an element of an anti-Zionist campaign.²⁰ Iwański (born 14 April 1903),²¹ honoured both in the PRL and Israel, was not only perceived as a hero of the Polish underground but as a credible witness of the beginning and the end of the armed Zionist-revisionist underground in Warsaw. In popular and scholarly texts, his long-lasting and varied activity to help the persecuted Jews was discussed, which was to be crowned by the participation of Iwański's unit in the fights of the Warsaw ghetto uprising, alongside the ŻZW (or perhaps rather the ŻZW alongside the KB) on 27 April 1943. Given the scale of the action, it would have been the largest of the solidarity actions during the Warsaw ghetto uprising by the Polish underground. For his good acts, Iwański was awarded the silver cross of the Order of Virtuti Militari (Council of State resolution of 12 April 1963) and the medal of the Righteous Among the Nations (13 December 1964).

Let us take a look at the materials on the basis of which Iwański was decorated. Ostensibly, they are numerous and quite varied. In the Jewish Historical Institute archives, there are several documents concerning Iwański's activity during the occupation: his own testimonies, those of his brothers in arms, of saved Jews and,

²⁰ H. Iwański, "Czy można było ratować ludzi...? Mówi major 'Bystry'," *Kultura*, 21 April 1968. See also: M. Apfelbaum, *op. cit.*, 19.

²¹ His characterisation of a forgotten hero, trying hard to make ends meet, presented in *Muranowska 7*, was extremely poignant, to such an extent that the prime minister of Israel Menachem Begin became interested in this matter (information from L. Weinbaum).

finally, statements issued by his former AK or KB military commanders or the leadership of the ŻIH. Most of them are notarised. However, the matter turns out to be more complicated because, as it happens, these statements contain many, sometimes very serious, contradictions. To mention but one, the scene of the establishment of the ŻZW described above unfolds in several substantially different versions. Iwański started to collect the documents about himself after the events of October 1956. It will be worthwhile to examine the chronology of his dossier. The statement that confirms his activity during the occupation, issued by the ŻIH, opened for him the door to AK milieus. On 5 July 1957, he obtained Jan Mazurkiewicz “Radosław’s” statement confirming that “he organised a cell to help the Jews in the Warsaw ghetto that would facilitate their leaving the dangerous area and organised hiding and supplying the documents for the persecuted.” However, from this document we can infer that “Radosław” had not known “Bystry” before and he issued the statement on the basis of the ŻIH statement submitted by Iwański.²² Particularly important is the untrue statement that Iwański was honoured several times by the underground authorities.²³ The same motif appears in a statement issued by the chief of staff of the 27th Volhynian AK Division, Major Tadeusz Sztumberk-Rychter, “Żegota”, to Iwański. In the light of this document, Iwański “during the Nazi occupation sent to the 27th AK Division Poles who were threatened by arrest, especially those of Jewish origin . . . from Warsaw as commander of a combat unit. Thus, he saved many lives.”²⁴ This time again, however, as it turns out, all the details came from the testimony given by Iwański himself. Neither of the documents mentions the KB or the ŻZW.

Not until January 1958 did Iwański receive the statement certified by the KB commandant, Andrzej Petrykowski, “Tarnawa”,²⁵ and his chief of personnel, Edward Biernacki, “Wilk”. Both gentlemen claimed that Iwański “took active part in the fight with the occupier and acted as commandant of the ‘W’ detachment,” and on 9 April 1944, he was promoted to the rank of major.²⁶ In virtually identical statements, issued a year later, by Kazimierz Madanowski (Kałme Mendelson) and Józef Niemirski (Josef Celmajster), who presented themselves as the last surviving ŻZW officers, Iwański appears as the commander of a detachment helping the Jews, “commandant of special detachments to protect life and health and involved in all kinds of help to Polish citizens of Jewish origin in the Warsaw ghetto and outside it” [Mendelson]; “the commander of special detachments to help the Jews during the Nazi occupation” [Celmajster].²⁷

With the statements by “Radosław”, “Żegota”, “Wilk” and “Tarnawa” in hand, Iwański obtained another statement from Bernard Mark (12 June 1958). It is in-

²² Issued on 7 October 1948 (the document has not been preserved).

²³ Radosław’s statement of 5 July 1958, attached to Iwański’s testimony (AŻIH 301/5790).

²⁴ Ibid. “Żegota’s” statement, 5 July 1957.

²⁵ On 6 March 1945 Petrykowski was arrested and sentenced to 10 years’ imprisonment; rehabilitated in February 1958.

²⁶ Ibid. Biernacki’s and Petrykowski’s statement, 20 January 1958.

²⁷ Ibid. K. Mendelson’s and J. Celmajster’s affidavits, 2 December 1959.

teresting for many reasons as it specifies forms of Iwański's co-operation with the ghetto, including some new elements: "executing death sentences on traitors, blackmailers (*szmalcownicy*) and Gestapo informers (*konfidenti*)," training of Jewish combat units and "participation in solidarity actions during the Warsaw ghetto uprising." All these data, the ŻIH director stressed, were to have been confirmed by "Major Iwański's superior military agencies from the days of the occupation."²⁸ However, it does not fully correspond to the facts. The ŻIH archives do not contain documents signed by AK officers (incidentally, we know that Iwański's unit was not subordinated to the AK), on combating blackmail (*szmalcownictwo*); nor do they contain credible materials concerning the participation of Iwański's group in the ghetto uprising.²⁹ It needs to be stressed however, that Bernard Mark must have realised how weak the evidence was, because in the second edition of his study on the ghetto uprising (1959) he mentioned Iwański and his achievements in a way radically different from the statements he had received.³⁰ It is difficult to explain the reasons for this ambivalence rationally.

At that time however, Iwański's story underwent further evolution. At the end of 1959, Iwański (and his wife) sent a letter to Cywia Lubetkin, "Celina", of the ŻOB, which is an extremely important link in the history of writing the history of the ŻZW, at least for two reasons. The letter contained a statement that as soon as October 1939, General Sikorski "decided to set up . . . a detachment to help the Jews" which was to be "commanded by a man experienced in combat with the Germans." Iwański was to be this very person: "I was chosen . . . I met with my Jewish acquaintances from the Warsaw ghetto and we set up the ŻZW organisation in the ghetto. This was the order I received and I supplied them with weapons, ammunition and grenades before, during and after the ghetto uprising." Second, the death of members of Iwański's family is mentioned there ("my son and my brothers lost their lives and I was heavily wounded in the head in these actions") in the actions to save the Jews.³¹ Iwański's son's death, not in combat but during the evacuation of the ghetto wounded through the sewers, is mentioned in Niemirski's affidavit from the same period as quoted above.³² Several years later it would be one of the most important elements in Iwański's story. In 1963, Bernard Mark, pressurised by Iwański, issued a statement about Iwański's wife's engagement in the action to help the Jews, from which it is clear that in the ghetto fight two of his sons died [sic].³³

It turns out that there is a simple way to verify the credibility of the information. On 18 June 1948, Henryk Iwański submitted to the ŻIH an extensive testimony no-

²⁸ Ibid. Statement, 12 June 1958.

²⁹ Accounts to this effect appeared much later. For combating blackmail see Iwański's testimony (AŻIH 301/5792, The testimony of citizen Henryk Iwański on combating blackmailers in Warsaw during the Nazi occupation.). The testimony is so odd that it was probably never used.

³⁰ *Walka i zagłada warszawskiego getta* (Warsaw, 1959).

³¹ Document dated 8 October 1959 in the Ghetto Fighters House/Beit Lohamey Hagetaot archives. In his memoirs Cukierman confirms his correspondence with Iwański; even several letters are mentioned. He is quoted by Apfelbaum, *op. cit.*, 14–15.

³² Henryk Iwański's materials, J. Niemirski's affidavit, 1959, AŻIH 301/5792.

³³ Statement of 30 April 1963, AŻIH 301/5792.

tarised by Henryk Włoskowicz.³⁴ It was signed by 18 people, mostly from Iwański's milieu, from the days of the occupation. In my opinion, it is the most important text on this subject, not only because of its date. This material was published in Władysław Bartoszewski and Zofia Lewin's *Ten jest z ojczyzny mojej*, although rather imprecisely summarised.³⁵ Let us note however, that it was not used in Marian Apfelbaum's study – and not without reason. The reason for this restraint is that the facts most important in terms of the history of the ŻZW are presented in this document in a completely different light.

The testimony is entitled "Wojskowy Związek Walki Zbrojnej" ("The Military Union of Armed Combat"). According to its signatories, it was to be the first underground organisation set up in Warsaw, supposedly upon the initiative of the employees of St. Stanisław's Hospital at No. 37 Wolska Street. However, we will never know anything about its founders or their activity in September 1939. We only read that the "conveniently located" "hospital [for infectious diseases] kept the Germans away." It is unclear why contact with other underground organisations, including the Jewish Czyste hospital, was established.

This account describes the forms of the organisation's activity: issuing medical certificates, hiding prisoners, especially Jews, purchase and storage of weapons, production of the "Filipinka" [home-made] grenades, distribution of newspapers, keeping in touch with other organisations, transport of threatened people (especially Jews) to the East, training of military detachments. One of its major areas of activity was to be Jewish matters:

Thanks to establishing contact with the Jews, widespread action was launched. . . . Skoczek, former administrator of the Jewish Czyste hospital, contacted Dr Celmajster, director of the hospital. Dr Maurycy Goldfarb and Dr Temerson . . . held this conference in Dr Szpilkowski's flat in Nowogrodzka Street as early as at the end of 1939. The Christian participants were: Iwański, Skoczek, Szpilkowski and citizen "Helena", who thanks to her brother-in-law had her own contacts as well. It was decided that the Union of Armed Combat [in later testimonies from Iwański's milieu, the "Sikorszczycy" mentioned, but it is not identical with the ZWZ – D.L.] was to offer help to the Jews, the scope of the help was determined, and immediate transfer of those Jews threatened by imprisonment and their hiding until contact with the commandant of the "Wschód" ("East") base, Warsaw pseudonym "Grabiec" [Gościński], was established.

It is here that one needs to seek the origins of the ŻZW founding meeting described above, but, apart from Iwański, totally different people were present there. Let us note that this document repeatedly refers to Jan Soczek, who later was to be arrested and executed. In texts written by Iwański's opponents, he will be the person placed in the centre of the story, instead of "Bystry".

³⁴ Henryk Iwański, "Bystry's" testimony, AŻIH 301/3809. Copy in the archives of the Wojskowe Biuro Badań Historycznych (WBBH, III/117/5, Materials concerning Henryk Iwański).

³⁵ "O Henryku Iwańskim i jego grupie," in: *Ten jest z ojczyzny mojej. Polacy z pomocą żydom 1939-1945*, ed. W. Bartoszewski and Z. Lewin (Cracow, 1969), 2nd edition, 237-238.

The description of the group's activity during the ghetto uprising is equally interesting: "Even before the fall of the Jewish uprising, the ghetto Jews were transferred through the tunnels from the church in Leszno Street to the houses across the street. The action was led by Iwański Henryk and his brother Waław, 'Sęp' Kowalski and others. Among those transferred were: Janina [surname illegible], with her two children, Rachla Dudek with her ten-year-old daughter Rojza and Gusińska Anna with her son Moryc. On Major Apfelbaum Mieczysław's request two Soviet parachutists, Aleksy Konstieniow and Fedor, were led out from the ghetto." Further on: "After the fall of the ghetto uprising, from the Jewish district to the Aryan district, a group of 34 fully-armed Jewish fighters, including Łopato, Pika and Paweł . . . The group hid at No. 6 Muranowska Street. They were received by Captain Bystry and his deputy for this operation, Second Lieutenant 'Sęp' [Tadeusz - *D.L.*] Kowalski, who, together with Iwański Waław and others, led the group to St. Stanisław's Hospital in Wolska Street, where Paweł 'Roch' Kowalski hid them . . . in Skoczek's wife's flat, on the hay and in the boiler room of the fire brigade shed. Some of the group were transported in a hearse by Second Lieutenant 'Sęp' Kowalski to the 'Błoto' colony near Michalin. The rest of the Jews left the hospital with the others on their own request, led by Captain Bystry's people. Captain 'Roch', Second Lieutenant 'Sęp', Płodowski and Ogrodowski took part in it and they led people to the Hotel Polski in Długa Street."

Let us recapitulate a number of points. (1) The names of the KB and the ŻZW are not mentioned at all. (2) Apfelbaum (who was to have been the central figure at the founding meeting of November 1939) appears twice here, but not in the context of the founding meeting of 1939. He is only one of the Jewish fighters, not the commandant of the ŻZW, although once he is mentioned in the rank of major (however, he becomes major only in the subsequent testimonies). (3) No reference is made to Kazimierz Madanowski (Kałme Mendelson),³⁶ an alleged ŻZW officer, the only surviving officer of the organisation or other "participants" of the ŻZW founding meeting. This is not the full list of contradictions and ambiguities. Others will be discussed below.

This document is also very important for other reasons. As it turns out, materials collected by Major Banaś shed some light on how this source was written. Among them, there is an undated note (written in the late 1940s or early 1950s) by an anonymous Urząd Bezpieczeństwa (the Office of Security, UB) functionary. This UB functionary expressed his doubts as to the veracity of Iwański's story: "The characters and forms of this organisation's (WZWZ) activity, during its existence, are rather mysterious and suspicious. The alleged organisation WZWZ, headed by Iwański, was rather a clique of selected people, who under the cover of a pro-independence organisation were involved in all kinds of wheeling and dealing, mostly with the Jews, which brought them only financial profit." The UB became interested in some signatories of this document and the people it mentioned. It was established that:

³⁶ His name appears in a hand-written note of one of the signatories of the testimony, resident of Radość, Stefan Szczepaniak, who admitted to hiding people of Jewish origin on "Bystry's" order, Madanowski among them.

“a number of people identified in this document as former activists of the organisation did not know and they still do not know that such an organisation existed on the hospital premises. . . . For example, citizen Paradowski [a person mentioned in the testimony – D.L.] . . . stated that he was not a member of any organisation during the occupation . . . but is aware of the fact that Jan Skoczek (who traded in weapons) was arrested and shot. He sold some weapons to unknown individuals who subsequently denounced him to the Germans. . . . Father Smyrski Władysław, chaplain of the hospital, stated that he was not a member of any organisation during the occupation, nor was he aware of . . . its existence.” Father Smyrski was not a signatory of the testimony submitted to the ŻIH.³⁷

A particularly interesting passage is devoted to Apoloniusz Kozakowski, who together with his two sons signed the testimony. This fragment demonstrates both the nature of Bystry's contacts with the ghetto and the background of the said testimony. Kozakowski admitted that “during the occupation, he had contacts with Iwański, from whom he received sacks of grain and food, which he later transported to the ghetto, where he received money, but whether it had been organised by the WZWZ, he could not confirm. At this point he added that in 1948, Iwański approached him and stated that Kozakowski would now receive an award for helping Jews during the occupation and this is why he had to sign an appropriate document in some office. Kozakowski, a man of limited intellectual capacity (a caretaker) did not know what it was about, but signed an authorised document written by Iwański confirming his grand activity Citizen Kozakowski's ignorance was thus commonly used. He is expecting the award until now.” The party activists from the hospital were also interrogated. A certain Bawarski, a secretary of the Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza – PZPR (The Polish United Workers' Party) cell in the hospital was to have stated that “he was not a member of any organisation during the occupation, nor was he aware of its existence.” The UB functionary's conclusion (although he did not verify all the testimonies) was as follows: Iwański “refers to people who know nothing.” The UB functionary was indignant about the words of Celmajster, who on Iwański's order was to have established the PPR cell in the hospital in Wolska Street. Iwański, who was not a member of the party, could not issue such an order and Celmajster himself joined the PPR in 1946 in Poznań. However, Celmajster himself was not interrogated.

From our point of view, equally important is information about Iwański's trials and tribulations concerning his accession to the ZBOWiD: “The files of Iwański and other members of this group are extremely divergent. In the [party] questionnaires of these people, different organisational affiliations are mentioned, such as the KOP, the PAL, the AK, but never the WZWZ. Iwański himself did not declare membership in the WZWZ, but in the AK as a captain He also declares that he is a member of the PPR. When the ZBOWiD found out that he was not and is not a

³⁷ The only clergyman who signed this testimony was Father Tadeusz Nowotko. He did that on behalf of the priests of the All Saints Church in Warsaw, including the late Father Marceł Godlewski. He stated that they co-operated with Professor Matuszczyk and “Bystry” giving extensive help to Jews in various matters.

member of the party, he was expelled for providing false information As an alleged captain from the days of the occupation, he was summoned by the verification commission to complete the formalities related to the confirmation of his military rank. Upon our inspiration via Wydział Mobilizacyjny (Conscription Department) of the MPB, this commission instructed Iwański to fill in a special questionnaire to provide biographical facts that we were interested in. However, Iwański failed to fill in certain fields, excusing himself with his bad memory, caused by his wounds. It should be mentioned that in the document submitted to the Jewish Committee, there is no trace of gaps in his memory, because he gives precise names, dates and facts. The verification commission did not confirm Iwański's captain's rank because he was unable to provide appropriate evidence." What follows is the information about Iwański's substantially high financial status, which made it possible to formulate the accusation of his involvement in foreign intelligence service."³⁸ The doubts concerning Iwański's military rank remain: in a number of testimonies, he presents himself as a Polish Army officer (captain or major). In 1948, he used an ID of the Związek Weteranów Powstańców Śląskich (Association of the Silesian Uprising Veterans) in Katowice, issued on 20 July 1947.

Although it is possible that the people interrogated by the UB decided not to reveal their underground activity, we cannot dismiss this information in its entirety. Unfortunately, so far I have not managed to find Henryk Iwański's personal file, which contains both the materials of Iwański's problems with the PRL [security] services and his collaboration with them.³⁹ This is however, only the beginning of contradictions and ambiguities connected with the ŻZW. The above-mentioned testimony of 1948 does not mention the fight in Muranowski Square of 27 April 1943 at all. In this fight, Iwański is said to have lost his brother and son [sons?] and was to have been severely injured. "Bystry's" brother, Waław Iwański, appears in the testimony several times. The last entry regards leading the saved ghetto Jews to St. Stanisław's Hospital. However, the author of the testimony does not mention his death. His son [Roman] is not mentioned at all.

Interestingly, Iwański was not the author of either the first or the other, "classical" description of the "battle" in question. Józef Lejewski (born 1903), pseudonym "Grabarz", who introduces himself as a former sergeant of the KB, is probably the first to mention this episode. In his affidavit notarised by H. Włoskiewicz in early De-

³⁸ AIPN 01224/993, microfilm 11922/2, microcard 4. Summary of the case of Iwański Henryk, signature illegible, bd. d4-d10.

³⁹ From the file note written by Lieutenant Colonel Grobecki, an employee of Department III of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. It is clear that Iwański was extremely eager to collaborate. Earlier, he was occasionally used by the 2nd Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs (he passed the information concerning Szymon Wiesenthal, who received him in Vienna, which "was subsequently used to expose Wiesenthal's activity") and he passed information concerning the situation in the ŻIH. In Grobecki's assessment [Iwański] "is personally ready to continue collaboration and may provide information about the Jews, as they trust him because of his activity during the occupation, for which he was decorated with his wife in the Israeli embassy in 1966. (AIPN, 01224/993, microfilm 11922/2. File note from H. Iwański's interrogation, 16 April 1970, frame D11-E2). This is however, a subject for another text.

cember 1959, he admits not only to participating in the actions to deliver weapons to the ghetto and leading the Jews out, but also to participation in armed combat in the ghetto. He claimed that on “Bystry’s” order, together with four soldiers, he entered the ghetto, where he was to fight in Kałme Mendelson’s detachment in Muranowska Street, while “at the same time, Commander ‘Bystry’, leading his sixteen-man strong detachment, attacked the Nazis on the ‘Aryan side’ and stormed into the ghetto, where he took part in armed combat against the Nazis with the detachments . . . of the Jewish Combat Union (Żydowski Związek Walki).”⁴⁰ Although the author is not precise, there is no doubt that Iwański’s detachment entered the ghetto above the ground. The information concerning the date of this event is also important: the precise date is missing and the actions of both groups (Lejewski’s and Bystry’s) are described as simultaneous. Furthermore, in the testimony of 1948, Józef Lejewski is not mentioned at all.

The most vivid descriptions of the joint combat of the KB and the ŻZW in the Warsaw ghetto were provided by Władysław Zajdler, “Żarski”, a member of the verification-historical section of the former KB of the ZBOWiD.⁴¹ He is most definitely an interesting figure. He was the only KB combatant awarded the Cross of Virtuti Militari of the V class by General Tadeusz Bór-Komorowski during the Warsaw Uprising.⁴² His first work on the ŻZW comes from 1958 and contains all the elements characteristic for his later writing – flourishes and many details. His subject is the smuggling of weapons into the ghetto through the sewage system on the eve of the uprising, through a manhole in Karmelicka Street. “Żarski” presents himself here as Iwański’s deputy, although the testimony of 1948 does not mention him at all. This does not prevent him from writing in the first person and acting as a participant in these events. What is important, a comparison of this testimony with Zajdler’s text reveals significant similarities. Zajdler writes, for example: “When we found ourselves in a low and windowless basement, I saw Boruch Federbusz, platoon sergeant of the Polish Army, and a porter. Beside him stood: Chaim Goldberg, Moryc Apfelbaum and Henryk Sobelsohn. Boruch shook our hands and kept asking: ‘How was it, tell me, how was it?’ ‘It was shit,’ I answered truthfully.”⁴³ In the text of 1948, we read about the same event: “We were led through the sewer by a retired employee of the Municipal Water Supply and Sewage Department, ‘Tomasz’. The exit from the sewers was located at No. 4 Karmelicka Street, through a basement tunnel. We were collected on the Jewish side by: platoon sergeant of the Polish Army and porter, Federbusz Boruch, Goldberg Chaim, Moryc Apfelbaum, Sobelsohn Henryk and others.” Everything fits ... only Władysław Zajdler is missing. The Polish participants were: Iwański, Piotr Włodarz, Konstantyn Piotrowski and others.

⁴⁰ Józef Lejewski’s affidavit, 2 December 1959, AŻIH 301/5794.

⁴¹ WBBH, III/117/4, ch. 12.

⁴² See: WBBH, III/40/6, AK KG, Staff – Division I. The Warsaw Uprising. Decoration orders, ch. 48.

⁴³ *Ekspresz Wieczorny*, 19–20 April 1958 (Bartoszewski). See also: “Ostatni transport”, in: *Ten jest...*, *op. cit.*, 341–343.

Once this testimony was published in the volume *Ten jest z ojczyzny mojej*, Zajdler's "testimony" thus received the necessary legitimacy for years. Regrettably, Władysław Bartoszewski did not notice the contradictions in both of these sources, although he knew Iwański's testimony of 1948. Unfortunately, it was not Zajdler's only work published in the volume. Another text reprinted here was "Wypad do getta. Fragment walk na placu Muranowskim" from the ZBOWiD's organ *Za Wolność i Lud*. This is an abbreviated version of the testimony from the ŻIH archives, dated 27 April 1961.⁴⁴ Again, Żarski is represented as an eyewitness and Iwański's deputy. It is immediately apparent that the details of his story are substantially different from Platoon Sergeant Lejewski's confessions quoted above. The detachment that entered the ghetto through the sewers at No. 6/7 Muranowska Street about 10 a.m. was supposed to be composed of 18 men armed with automatic weapons. Apfelbaum was to have been the commander of the Muranowska section. The German attack, supported by tanks, was to have started at noon and finished at 5 p.m. The decimated detachment was to have withdrawn to the "Aryan side". There is no need to quote this text; it is, so to speak, canonical in the literature regarding the ŻZW.⁴⁵ One should bear in mind that the veracity of this account was confirmed by Iwański in the presence of a notary public. It is not without any significance that, as we remember from the testimony of 1948, there was no mention either of the action in the ghetto or of the alleged deputy, Żarski. This document mentioned, as Iwański's deputy, one of the signatories of the document: Tadeusz Kowalski, "Sęp". Let us recall: only the evacuation of a 34-man strong Jewish detachment on the "Aryan side" (undated) is described here. What are missing in Zajdler's story are the civilians, primarily two Soviet parachutists allegedly led out from the ghetto. It is also possible that this motif appears in the materials of 1948 for opportunistic reasons.⁴⁶

There are other arguments to disprove the authenticity of Żarski's "memoirs". J. Stroop's report, although it was no doubt the inspiration of Iwański and Żarski, mentions intensified combat on 27 April after 4 p.m. Meanwhile, according to Żarski, Bystry's detachment was to have been involved in heavy fighting, as early as 10 a.m. Stroop also mentions an episode overlooked by Żarski: the discovery of a group of armed Jews in a house near the ghetto in the evening hours and the group's liquidation by Storm Troops. ŻIH employees tried to question Iwański himself about it; he obviously gave detailed information about it.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ *Za Wolność i Lud* 8 (1962), *Ten jest.... op. cit.*, 361–367; AŻIH 301/5790, "Walki na placu Muranowskim w dniu 27 IV 1943".

⁴⁵ Recently, M. Apfelbaum, *op. cit.*, 198–204. Earlier, Zajdler's story was uncritically received by Tomasz Strzembosz, see *Akcje zbrojne podziemnej Warszawy 1939–1944* (Warsaw, 1978), 208–210.

⁴⁶ Incidentally, the mysterious issue of two Soviet parachutists (NKVD agents), staying in the Warsaw ghetto, has not been explained. The fact is that the information about this subject appears in AK materials, including even reports sent to London by General Stefan Rowecki in autumn 1942. But they are not confirmed by any Jewish sources. For more on this issue see: P. Wróbel, "An NKVD residentura (residency) in the Ghetto of Warsaw, 1941–1942"; the Author made a typescript of this text available to me via Barbara Engelking.

⁴⁷ For those interested: testimony of citizen Henryk Iwański, 30 October 1961, AŻIH 301/5792.

Further arguments that demonstrate the limited credibility of this testimony are provided by Zajdler himself. In his “testimony” of January 1960, the course of events in the ghetto was described differently: “‘Bystry’, heading his detachment, and I attacked the Nazis from the ‘Aryan side’ in Muranowska Street. He repelled the enemy with grenades and machine gun fire, and having entered the ghetto with a Jewish detachment of the ŻZW, he pushed back the Germans, which enabled a big Jewish detachment to leave the ghetto.”⁴⁸ Clearly, it echoes Lejewski’s affidavit quoted above.

In April 1968, Zajdler published another text also in the ZBOWiD press organ, on armed help for the Warsaw ghetto. This time however, it was “historical material” – Zajdler’s personal testimony regarding the KB was incorporated in a general picture of the AK, GL and SOB engagement. Again this time, this text also contains changes and discrepancies from the earlier versions. Now, Iwański’s detachment’s aim was to maintain access to the tunnel to evacuate the wounded, including civilians. It also contains information that Iwański’s son (Roman) died in combat and his brother, Wacław, died the next day.⁴⁹ One should also mention here that the statements for Maria Iwańska issued one year earlier, signed by Iwański’s brothers-in-arms, including Zajdler, contained the information that her husband died on 27 April in Muranowski Square.⁵⁰

Second, Zajdler’s text ends with a touching scene: “I turned to the wounded Apfelbaum . . . Why aren’t you coming, Mietek? You see that I’m wounded, but as long as I can think I have to stay here. I have my people and I cannot leave them.” In the version kept in the ŻIH, his utterance continues: “I lived to see the most beautiful moment – the moment I devoted everything to. I saw my nation in combat. In combat it has to win. I want to be in this combat until the end.” The reasons for crossing this fragment out are obvious: it was too reminiscent of the fragment of Mordechaj Anielewicz’s famous letter to Icchak Cukierman of 23 April 1943.⁵¹ Nevertheless, we can see the bricks and mortar for Apfelbaum’s story as an antithesis of Anielewicz’s.

And the last issue: it seems that no one quotes Zajdler’s “study” on the Białystok region, kept in the ŻIH archives. He claims that in the Białystok ghetto from 1941 there existed an organisation called the ŻZW (Żydowski Związek Wojskowy, Jewish Military Union, later Żydowski Związek Walki, the Jewish Fighting Union), estab-

⁴⁸ Władysław Żarski’s affidavit, 3 January 1960, AŻIH 301/5792.

⁴⁹ W. Żarski-Zajdler, “Pomoc walczącym”, *Za Wolność i Lud* 8 (1968). What is interesting, the list of the members of the organisation belonging to the KB kept in WBBH Archives only Roman Iwański’s name is mentioned. What is more, there are also 16 Jews on the list, but these are not the names of the ŻZW members mentioned in the memoirs! (See: *Lista poległych żołnierzy z oddziałów OW KB, Orłęta, PSK, Skąta, WSKB, Powstańców Śląskich, Zbrojnego Wyzwolenia, Podoficerów Rezerwy i członków RON. 1939–1945*, no date, WBBH, III/117/4).

⁵⁰ Maria Iwańska’s letter to the director of the ŻIH, 22 April 1967; Testimony, 26 April 1967, AŻIH 301/6364.

⁵¹ “. . . The dream of my life has come true. Jewish self-defence in the ghetto is a fact, Jewish armed resistance and revenge has materialised. I was a witness of a great heroic combat of Jewish fighters.” Quoted in *Na oczach świata* (Warsaw, 1943), 34.

lished by officers and non-commissioned officers of the Polish Army. Similarly, as in the case of Warsaw, the text lists a number of names. The Białystok ŻZW was to be in contact with the Vilna and Warsaw ŻZW and keep close contacts with the local AK at the same time. Those revelations were to come from the commandant of the Białystok District of the AK, Colonel Władysław Liniarski “Mścisław.”⁵² In the light of historical knowledge, all this does not correspond to reality and is another argument that demonstrates the limited credibility of the author.

3.

The stories of Henryk Iwański and his deputy are but a fragment of the Polish discourse concerning the ŻZW. An enormous “contribution” has been made by Tadeusz Bednarczyk (born 28 August 1913), author of a number of memoirs, press articles and books, largely, although it is not confirmed by the titles, devoted to the history of the ŻZW: *Walka i pomoc. OW-KB a organizacja ruchu oporu w getcie warszawskim* [Combat and Help. The OW-KB and the Organisation of Resistance Movement in the Warsaw ghetto] (1968); *Obowiązek silniejszy od śmierci* [Duty Stronger than Death] (1982); *Życie codzienne warszawskiego getta* [Everyday Life of the Warsaw Ghetto] (1995). It is because of the creative invention of this cobbler, an aspiring historian, that Iwański’s group activity (which progressively pales in Bednarczyk’s narrations) was placed in a broader historical context. His activities for the [benefit of] the Jews were to be a mere episode, and not the most important one, of the OW-KB cooperation with the ŻZW. The true hero of the story was to be none other than Bednarczyk himself – the actual *spiritus movens*, organizer and coordinator of the actions to help the Jews and the true founder of the ŻZW. In his interpretation, the cooperation with the ŻZW dating back to 1949 was to be a part of a general strategy of the KB, commanded by Andrzej Petrykowski, “Tarnawa” (with Iwański being a mere executor of his orders), and being a direct result of the origin of the orders of the commander in chief, Władysław Sikorski and the Polish Government delegate. This kind of primitive historiosophy, from the point of view of the history of the KB, was by all means useful. It enabled him to present his underground activity, dating back to the autumn of 1939. Paradoxically, the AK milieu did not protest against this pesky mythomania and ascribing to himself someone else’s deeds, probably because Bednarczyk’s words concerned, after all, Polish help for the Jews and could turn out to be useful in one way or another.⁵³

⁵² AŻIH, Władysław Zajdler-Żarski, *Żydowski ruch oporu i martyrologia w Białostockiem w świetle dokumentów Armii Krajowej*, 15 November 1965, 31–32.

⁵³ Bednarczyk was supported and his stories were endorsed by Colonel Ludwik Muzyczka, former chief of the Auxiliary Military Administration, that the KB was formally subordinated to. The only one to contest Bednarczyk’s claims was the former chief of the Information and Propaganda Bureau of the KG AK, Colonel Jan Rzepecki (“Kierownictwo polskiego podziemia 1939–41”, *Przegląd Historyczny* 1974, vol. LXV, No. 1). Bednarczyk’s file contained a letter to the Presidium of DO (District Board, Zarząd Okręgowy) of the Mokotów district. General’s Sikorski’s secretary, Zofia Kopczyńska, with a request to deal with Bednarczyk’s false statement harmful to the memory of General Sikorski. We learn from it that she had been harassed by Bednarczyk since 1961. Not only

Bednarczyk's earliest statements on the issue in question come from 1958. It was already then that he assumed both the role of a witness and a historian, presenting himself as "a KB soldier and member of the historical commission, and, at the same time, a participant in the help action and deliveries of weapons and supplies to the ghetto, as well as an expert on ghetto issues, because of his everyday presence there throughout its existence."⁵⁴ This was the role that he played, with better or worse results, until the end of his life.

There is no need for a detailed summary of Bednarczyk's works. Suffice it to recall that he supposedly was not only a participant, but a central figure of Zofia Leśniowska's (General Sikorski's daughter) meetings with Adam Czerniaków, being responsible for all the matters concerning the ghetto on behalf of the Polish Underground, taking part in the January self-defence and the Warsaw ghetto uprising, etc. For anyone with an elementary knowledge of the Polish Underground, confessions like that have no cognitive value whatsoever. However, as far as the reception of Bednarczyk's literary [heritage] is concerned, we are dealing with a paradox. On the one hand, both in Poland and Israel he was treated with more suspicion than Iwański and Zajdler, long before his pathological anti-Semitism was revealed (it is no accident that none of his texts were published in the volume "Ten jest z Ojczyzny mojej").⁵⁵ On the other hand, even the cursory reading of the literature on the ŻZW demonstrates how difficult it is to understand in rational terms the [general] receptiveness to his argument. Partly, it is because his works bring a synthetic view of the history of the ŻZW and at the same time provides the largest number of details (dates, facts and names), without which some find it difficult to imagine the history of this organization. Bednarczyk gives the organisational chart of the ŻZW and makes Apfelbaum its commandant. The fact that he calls him "major" suggests a possible borrowing from Iwański, and perhaps even from Zajdler.⁵⁶ If Bednarczyk had been able to read Apfelbaum's book and Kledzik's text, he would certainly have felt satisfied. He is treated as the chronicler of the revisionists' organisation, the

does she share her own feelings about him, but she also quotes extremely critical opinions about him, given by General's Sikorski's wife, Adam Romer, Aleksander Ładoś, minister in Sikorski's government and the commander of the Warsaw AK District, General Albin Skroczyński, "Łaszcz". On behalf of the general's family, she complains that none of the historians proved Bednarczyk was lying. As far as the topic interesting us in the text is concerned, she says: "I've been asked frequently whether the facts given by Bednarczyk in his book concerning the Jewish question correspond to the truth. I cannot answer that as I was not involved in these matters . . . However, probably as in General Sikorski's case, [those are] false statements." Zofia Kopczyńska's letter, ch. 85-90, AIPN, IPN, 0259/525, vol. 2.

⁵⁴ T. Bednarczyk, *Na fali wspomnień powstańczych*, 21 April 1958, AŻIH 310/5810. The following testimonies of Bednarczyk are also in the ŻIH archives: 5808, 5809, 5809a.

⁵⁵ During the anti-Zionist campaign, Bednarczyk openly attacked Bartoszewski for diminishing the scale of Polish help to the Jews. See: T. Bednarczyk, "Refleksje w 25 rocznicę walk w getcie warszawskim", *Wrocławski Tygodnik Katolików* (15), 1968. On the other hand, however, the Warsaw monthly *Więź* published Bednarczyk's text concerning the help given to the Jews by the Catholic clergy, see T. Bednarczyk, "Księża w akcji pomocy żydom", *Więź* (10) 1962, 120-124. NB, it was the first text on this issue published in *Więź*.

⁵⁶ T. Bednarczyk, *Na fali wspomnień powstańczych*, 3, AŻIH 310/5810.

key witness in all the controversial matters and even a person without a fault and unquestioned authority. But in reply to Anka Grupinska's suggestion as to Bednarczyk's unclear past, the author of *Dwa Sztandary* answers: "No one has the right to say lightly that someone was a German agent. Criticising my work is absolutely legitimate, but none of us should tarnish the memory of heroes, neither Poles nor Jews, nor the ŻOB members, nor the ŻZW members."⁵⁷ The Paris doctor referred to the sources that were to confirm Bednarczyk's wartime merits. Incidentally, he published them in his book, apparently unaware of the fact that from the point of view of a professional historian they are totally unconvincing.⁵⁸ Therefore, instead of examining Bednarczyk's "work", we should take a look at the circumstances of their origins, his occupation and post-war biography.

In the Warsaw archives of the IPN, a few personal files of Tadeusz Bednarczyk have been preserved. The first concerns his service in the Ministry of Public Security (Ministerstwo Bezpieczeństwa Publicznego, MBP). It contains questionnaires, résumés, information about the course of the service. Those materials, initialled by Bednarczyk himself, demonstrate that he participated in the Polish-German campaign of 1939 and in the Warsaw Uprising. During the occupation, he worked in the internal revenue office and at the same time ran a cobbler's shop. From our point of view, particularly interesting is the information about his service in the KB. It turns out that he did not join this organisation until the autumn of 1942, and he was given the pseudonym "Bednarz" on the day the Warsaw Uprising broke out (1 August 1944). During the uprising he was to have been promoted twice. Finally, on 20 October 1944, he was to have been promoted major. He was also to have been decorated by the commander of the Combined Armed Forces (Połączone Siły Zbrojne, established on 16 September 1944 by joining the KB with the PAL and the AL), General Juliusz Skokowski.⁵⁹ In the questionnaire he confesses: "My membership in the KB had a purely military character. I only fulfilled my duties as a reserve officer for my homeland by fighting against the Nazi bandits. In the KB I knew only Colonel Leon [Korzewnikjanc – D.L.] and other junior officers; I do not know and have never seen General Tarnawa. I was in the KB because it was a democratic formation . . ."⁶⁰

His involvement in political and military activity and Jewish matters are obviously not mentioned at all. Inasmuch as his distancing from the KB leadership, which was at that time examined by the UB, can be understood, the purposeful silence about his services for the Jews seemed totally unnatural – especially as his efforts to get a job in the MBP was supported by two officers of Jewish origins. One of them, Major Kamil Warman, knew Bednarczyk from his university days. In the letter in which he recommended him to the superior, he wrote: "I have known Major

⁵⁷ M. Apfelbaum, "O powstaniu w getcie i Żydowskim Związku Wojskowym", *Tygodnik Powszechny*, 20 July 2003.

⁵⁸ Those are: statements concerning Bednarczyk by Colonel Ludwik Muzyczka, "Benedykt" (4 May 1967), mentioned several times by Madanowski [Mendelson], 4 April 1968 and a Karol Szwarc (19 April 1983).

⁵⁹ AIPN, 0193/255. Tadeusz Bednarczyk's personal file, resume, 26 March 1945, ch. 3; Special questionnaire, ch. 4–8.

⁶⁰ Ibid., Special questionnaire ch. 10.

Bednarczyk for a long time . . . He was a KB member during the occupation – he has always been a good Pole and really . . . I know this from my acquaintances – he helped many Poles and Jews.” The second person [a doctor], he met during military training on the eve of the war. Here are the details of their wartime acquaintance: “After I returned from German captivity, citizen Bednarczyk was keenly interested in my fate, and as a clerk of the Revenue Office he did me great favours and helped me in the calculation of [my] taxes. During the whole ghetto period he did not abandon me, kept visiting me in my flat . . . always ready to give good advice and offering comforting words.”⁶¹ And here we have a grain of truth in Bednarczyk’s narration: he did actually contact reserve officers, but in matters of taxation . . .

In Bednarczyk’s dossier we find another interesting detail. After the fall of the Warsaw Uprising, he found himself in Piotrków, where he worked for Toebbens’ firm (once the owner of the largest factory in the Warsaw ghetto) as an auditor, office supervisor and the head of the food and kitchen department. Probably, he was employed there as a long-familiar person, something he did not try to hide. An anonymous note (denunciation) of 5 March 1946, in the file attached to the “Kodak” case, says that after the liquidation of the ghetto began, Bednarczyk, an employee of the Revenue Chamber in the ghetto, was given a six-room “post-Jewish” furnished flat in Chłodna Street. The author of the denunciation claimed that he saw Bednarczyk in that period in the company of a senior German official, who was giving Bednarczyk a lift home in his car.⁶² This does not obviously prove his collaboration, but it is fairly important circumstantial evidence. It should be added that the UB was never interested in this episode and never charged Bednarczyk with collaboration.

The material quoted above surfaced during disciplinary proceedings in Bednarczyk’s case. It turned out that he was demoted by one rank (the MBP recognised his KB military rank) and he was discharged for “conduct unbecoming an MBP employee.” According to Major Sobczak’s report (NB, known from the Kielce affair) for Minister Stanisław Radkiewicz (1 March 1946), Bednarczyk, who was the manager of the MBP sanatorium in Kudowa, proved to be a sadist and rapist (“he ordered the local MO [Milicja Obywatelska, Citizens’ Militia] station to administer corporal punishment to German men and women [employees of the sanatorium] for disobedience in the workplace; he had sexual relations with German women. One of them, an employee of the sanatorium, the handsome 22-year-old Klara Rinke, he ordered to have whipped, because she refused to copulate with him. . . . He admitted he had ordered the whipping of two German men and three German women, to have copulated with three German women, to trying to copulate with Rinke, and that he did not realise that the draconian methods he applied against the Germans might cause an uproar in the area, especially that they might be used by interested agencies from the Czech side.”)⁶³ He was dismissed on 4 April 1946, because he refused to take a lower post.

⁶¹ Ibid. Statements, ch. 11–12.

⁶² AIPN, AIPN 01224/993, microfilm 11922/2, microcard 5. Information concerning Major Bednarczyk, 5 March 1946, frame e2–e3.

⁶³ AIPN, 0193/255. Tadeusz Bednarczyk’s personal file, Report for the Minister of the MBP, from MBP division head Major Sobczak, 1 March 1946, ch. 6v.

In 1949, Bednarczyk met the attaché of the British embassy, Turner and his girlfriend, Barbara Bobrowska. He was arrested when she was trying to cross the border illegally. During the interrogations in this case, further details of Bednarczyk's activity in the Warsaw ghetto surfaced. On 22 June 1950, Bednarczyk testified that in autumn 1942 he established contacts with a Jewish organization in the Warsaw ghetto, whose name he did not know. With the help of a member of this organization, Tadeusz Makower, he transferred a few pistols purchased in Żelaznej Bramy Square on the market from people he did not know.⁶⁴ He also testified that he joined the KB in 1943, but was not involved in any serious activity until the Warsaw Uprising. In his later publications, Bednarczyk made Makower one of the key figures of the nearly formed ŻZW, but he dated his contacts with him back to 1939. A functionary who interrogated him wrote in his report that Bednarczyk was hiding some part of his wartime biography. On the other hand however, it is difficult to imagine that the UB would not have discovered the truth, had he been a key underground figure. Nothing was discovered, because Bednarczyk was nobody in the underground.

We are getting to the heart of the matter – Bednarczyk's contacts with state security in the early 1960s. Lazar appears in Poland in August 1962. While she was under surveillance, Bednarczyk was discovered. On 24 October 1962, he was listed by the SB as a "confidential contact" (*kontakt poufny*). After establishing contact, Banaś reported: "As per instructions, I did not propose collaboration in the full sense of the term, but we agreed with Bednarczyk that after reading his press article and projects, after giving them back to him, we would discuss the matters that were of interest to me. . . . From the general conversation with Bednarczyk it appears that he is prepared to provide us with interesting information."⁶⁵ From the SB's point of view, Bednarczyk was vulnerable both as a source of information on ŻIH's director and because of his "academic interests". According to Banaś's reports, Bednarczyk was eager to fulfil the task, hoping to find a generous patron and publisher of the book on which he was working then. It was to concern the Jewish resistance movement and the ghetto uprising, but most of all "expose" false statements by "Jewish nationalists" regarding the passivity of the Jews and the scale of their collaboration with the occupier. He even provided the SB with a manuscript of this work's fragments.⁶⁶ He complained about Chaja Lazar, who allegedly promised him to co-author the book about the ŻZW published in Israel and consequently the money. He also execrated Bernard Mark and Władysław Bartoszewski, who in his opinion were involved in anti-Polish activity. He claimed that from the very beginning, he acted because of ideological motives, although many times he hinted at financial matters.⁶⁷

⁶⁴ AIPN, 0259/525, vol. 1. Plan of the investigation, 23 June 1950, ch. 11–13.

⁶⁵ AIPN, card 5. Report signed by Banaś, 31 October 1962, frames c9–d1.

⁶⁶ AIPN, card 5, frame b10 and *ff.*; *ibid.*, e8 and *ff.*

⁶⁷ This is how Major Banaś described Bednarczyk's motives to write: "He said that he was motivated to write those articles by the unjustified accusations of the Poles by the Jews for failure to help the Jews during the occupation and during the ghetto uprising. He stressed that in those articles he could not speak in the way this problem deserves, because they would never be published, so he compromises in part, changes some sentences according to the editor's or censorship

One month after establishing the contact, Banaś reported: "It seems . . . advisable to use Bednarczyk to write a book under our supervision, as a counterweight and dismissal of Uris's slanders [published] in *Exodus*, *Miła 18* and others. In his book, he could expose Mark, who offers a biased presentation of wartime affairs, who carefully hides in his works all kinds of collaborators from the Jewish milieu and slips in nationalistic tendencies. I kindly request the leadership to take a position according to which the next interview with Bednarczyk will be carried out." However, Bednarczyk had certain conditions. "It can be done if we safeguard his future, that is his living existence [sic] and personal security, he will receive financial help from us, we will guarantee him a job in which he could earn a living for his family. . . . He asked to reply to him within a week." His enthusiasm was diminished by the statements that in Israel Bednarczyk was being "side-tracked."⁶⁸ Nonetheless, there was a hope that he could rally people who did not agree with "the theory promulgated by Mark, Bartoszewski and Israeli factors about the alleged passivity of the Poles and their bearing co-responsibility for murder of the Jews by the Germans, as well as effective resistance to these theories . . . [he] is currently in dire straits, which is conducive to winning him to our cause, which is possible by offering him financial help".⁶⁹ Clearly, we see here both the expectation of the security service and the primitive character of Bednarczyk's motivation.

But we do not know why his offer was acted upon with some delay. Already in early March 1963 Bednarczyk shared with Banaś his apprehension that the texts he sent to the press would not be printed. He even expressed the need to see Miczysław Moczar about it and he asked for advice because of that.⁷⁰ We do not know what later happened in this case. What is certain, however, is that Bednarczyk's time came in 1968. His book was published by Iskry publishers,⁷¹ although not without some difficulties, as the SB documents demonstrate: Bednarczyk's opinions were too radical, even in the light of the standards of the day.⁷² During the "anti-Zionist campaign", Bednarczyk did what he could do best: to use Michał Głowiński's excellent term, he specialised in producing "model propagandistic texts which passed as documentary accounts."⁷³

wishes, but he still says that help of Poles to the Jews and in the ghetto uprising was substantial, by means of which he deprives Jewish nationalism of propaganda arguments." AIPN, 001102/1935, microfilm 24345/1. Characteristics of official contact, 30 November 1962.

⁶⁸ AIPN, microcard 5. File note, 26 November 1962, card e11-e12.

⁶⁹ AIPN, microcard 5. Banaś's report to the Director of Department II of the MSW, 7 November 1962, frame g5.

⁷⁰ Ibid. File note, 8 March 1963, frame c7

⁷¹ T. Bednarczyk, *Walka i pomoc. OW-KB a organizacja ruchu oporu w getcie warszawskim. OW-KB a organizacja ruchu oporu w getcie warszawskim* (Warsaw: 1968).

⁷² According to the information of a secret collaborator active in the circle of the KB combatants, no publisher wanted to release Bednarczyk's book and its revised version was shelved in the publishing house *Książka i Wiedza*. AIPN, 0259/525, vol. 2. Information from secret collaborator "Karpiński", 8 April 1968, ch. 13.

⁷³ M. Głowiński, "Marcowe fabuły (Rzecz o propagandzie roku 1968)" in: idem, *Pismak 1863 i inne szkice o różnych brzydkich rzeczach*, (Warsaw, 1995), 81.

It seems that for some time the SB treated Bednarczyk very seriously. In February 1963, a [SB] functionary wrote about Bednarczyk: "In the space of the last few years, we have noted Bednarczyk's markedly increased activity in the traditional pro-Piłsudski circles, where he presents himself as a former legionnaire, colonel." He took part in various anniversaries – Grot's, Bor's Mikołajczyk's – he laid a plaque to commemorate Sikorski in the Saint Cross Church. "Moreover, he has had published or he is editing his book about KB cooperation with the Jewish organizations in the Warsaw ghetto and a historical sketch about the KB's activities. Generally, Bednarczyk is described by the former Legions and the AK officers as a cobbler who claims to have played a major role in the activity against the Germans, which does not correspond to reality."⁷⁴ It was probably not insignificant that both Bernard Mark and Henryk Iwański realized who stood behind Bednarczyk. Incidentally, as I have already said, Iwański also co-operated eagerly with the SB.⁷⁵ Despite Bednarczyk's eagerness, after Bernard Mark's death it was decided that he was no longer useful for state security and he was struck off from the register,⁷⁶ unlike Iwański, who was favoured by the next ŻIH director, Szymon Datner, and as such remained useful.

No wonder Bednarczyk felt abandoned and betrayed. In June 1971, he offered his services to the Iraqi ambassador, presenting himself as a professor and researcher of Jewish issues. He submitted a "sample" of his "work" and in his conversation with the ambassador, he specified a number of conditions on which he would be prepared to carry out educational activity. He demanded, among other things, not only remuneration, but also the organisation of an academic tour throughout the Middle East. He employed an endearing tone: "I think that my offer is reasonable and beneficial for the state of Iraq and for the joint fight in which I am also involved, although under communism, in my difficult conditions and on my own." He requested that "the matter be considered and favourably presented in Baghdad in the Ministry of Propaganda." All this was of course reported by a secret SB collaborator placed in the Iraqi embassy.⁷⁷ However, this offer was not accepted by the Iraqis.

This is not the place to describe Bednarczyk's activity in its entirety. Suffice it to say that a favourable climate for his works appeared in the 1980s. In 1982 *Krajowa Agencja Wydawnicza* published his book in a historical and autobiographical tone that blocked the further development of his confabulation. Again, this time, the adventures of the author and his colleagues from the KB were presented against an authentic background. Its second edition was published four years later by the *Grunwald* association with a preface by Colonel Józef Bolesław Garas, a famous historian of the communist underground.⁷⁸ Under the auspices of the anti-Semitic *Grunwald*, Bednarczyk, which is not particularly surprising, felt himself at home,

⁷⁴ IPN, 0259/525, vol. 2. Note file, 8 February 1968, comp. by Major Krawczyk, ch. 3–4.

⁷⁵ The summary of Mark's and Iwański's conversation of 19 December 1962. They were to have decided to break off contacts with Bednarczyk. AIPN, microcard 9, frame a2.

⁷⁶ AIPN, microcard 6. Decision to send case to the archives, 29 October 1970, frame d9.

⁷⁷ Ibid. Summary of TW "Lord" report, 11 September 1976, ch. 6–12.

⁷⁸ T. Bednarczyk, *Obowiązek silniejszy od śmierci. Wspomnienia z lat 1939–1944 o polskiej pomocy dla Żydów w Warszawie* (Warszawa, 1982), second edition, 1986.

both socially and ideologically. More or less at the same time, Bednarczyk unexpectedly resurfaced in the context of Iwan (John) Demianiuk's case. He was to be involved during the interrogation and look for false defence witnesses, which is a subject for a separate study.⁷⁹ Eventually, in 1995, the nationalist publishing house *Ojczyzna* released a final version of his notes, thoroughly reconstructed according to the anti-communist standards. Taking into consideration details of his biography as per the materials kept in the IPN archives, Bednarczyk's accusations concerning the presence of Jews in the MBP and the UB seem rather humorous.⁸⁰

Let us now come back to the atmosphere in which the sources about the ŻZW were written in the KB combatant circles. It is difficult to ignore the element of competition between Iwański and Bednarczyk and their exacerbating conflict. It stems from varied mundane issues, the fight for splendour and honours in Poland and Israel. "Bystry" received them. Their antipathy was after all mutual.⁸¹ This conflict can be examined not only on the basis of SB files. The individual members were used as experts and asked to give opinions on the accounts submitted to the ŻIH, especially those concerning the contacts of the ŻZW and the KB. For a certain period of time we can talk about common aims of Iwański and Bednarczyk, e.g. in an affidavit of February 1962 by a Tadeusz Żmudziński, who was a former Warsaw policeman and who was an alleged member of Major Bednarczyk's detachment, we read that, as he found out later, he was "Bystry's" subordinate. It seems that he tolerated the retouching of his official biography without the slightest objection. However, Iwański's correction draws attention: "... on my order [Żmudziński] took care of the Jews through Bednarz and he saved many people."⁸² He reacted in a completely different manner to Teodor Niewiadomski's extensive account concerning help to the ghetto by a KB cell in the City Cleaning Department (ZOM) in Małalińskiego Street. In the typescript, there is a handwritten addition by Iwański: "nonsense and downright lies throughout."⁸³ However, the veracity of the information included in the testimony was confirmed by Żarski. This is not all. Iwański's comment is

⁷⁹ Jacek Wilczur, the then employee of GKBZHWP, writes about it in his memoirs: *Ojczyzna nie udziela urlopów* (Warsaw, 1997), 162–165. Although the author gives only the initials TB, it is easy to guess who it is. In the book, probably for the first time, appeared information about Bednarczyk's work for the MBP. For Bednarczyk's position in this case, see T. Bednarczyk, *Wiesenthal contra Demianiuk, Waluś i inni* (Warsaw, Ojczyzna, 1997).

⁸⁰ T. Bednarczyk, *Życie codzienne warszawskiego getta. Warszawskie getto i ludzie (1939–1945 i dalej)* (Warsaw, 1995), 8–9.

⁸¹ According to the information received by the SB, Iwański treated Bednarczyk's first book as a provocation against him (AIPN, 0259/525, vol. 2. Information from TW "Karpiński", 8 April 1968, ch. 13). On the other hand, in Bednarczyk's opinion, Iwański, "who as a KB member ... commanded fighting units in the ghetto and during the uprising took part ... has major merits for the Jews," "he is not a very intelligent man ... he spends too much time with the Jews, especially with Mark." It is to be motivated financially. (AIPN, 001102/1935, microfilm 24345/1. Characteristics of official contact, 30 September 1962).

⁸² T. Żmudziński's affidavit, AŻIH 301/6112. To this document are attached: affidavits of 1949 of the Jews whom Żmudziński helped, saving them from the hands of the denouncers. During the occupation Żmudziński was captain of the Blue Police.

⁸³ Teodor Niewiadomski's testimony, AŻIH 301/6400.

dated 28 February 1968. Less than two months later, Niewiadomski's memoirs were published in the Warsaw *Kultura*, alongside an interview with Bystry, *Trzeba było ratować ludzi*, quoted above.

Another problem is the mutual relations between Bednarczyk, Iwański and Kazimierz Madanowski, who claimed to be the last surviving officer of the ŻZW. I will not analyse them in this text for lack of space.⁸⁴

Historians use these sources consciously or not, ignore the mutual relations between their authors, although from the point of view of the critique of sources it is a very important problem.

4.

Quite similar is the approach to the story of another witness, Janusz Ketling-Szemlej (later referred to as JKS), pseudonyms "Arpad" and "Janusz", member of Polska Ludowa Akcja Niepodległościowa PLAN (Polish People's Independent Action), an organisation subordinated to the AK. In early 1943, he was the commander of an armed unit of Oddział Dywersji Bojowej (Detachment of the Military Sabotage Action) in AK City Centre (Śródmieście). According to his account kept in ŻIH archives (*Wspomnienia z walk i działalności żydowskiego Związku Walki Wyzwoleńczej, zorganizowanego na terenie getta warszawskiego na przełomie 1942/1943*, 1951) at the end of 1942, he was accidentally approached by ŻZW representatives seeking contact with the Polish underground. They expressed their readiness to subordinate their organization to the Polish agencies, declaring their full loyalty, and asked for help in the purchase of weapons. JKS was to have promised them to act as a liaison officer, but, for some reasons, he did not keep the promise. However, he did deliver to the ghetto some weapons, and during the uprising he organised a hideout near Warsaw for a group of ŻZW fighters. He also claims that even before the uprising he took part in several combat actions with ŻZW fighters.⁸⁵

Here I will only focus on his study written in 1963 for Chaim Lazar. This 34-page long account is entitled: *Przyczynek do historii mojej walki i współpracy z żydowskim Związkiem Walki Wyzwoleńczej na terenie getta warszawskiego w latach okupacji*. This material was later submitted to the archives of the Jabotynsky Institute in Jerusalem. Obviously, the SB also obtained a copy of JKS's study.⁸⁶ This material

⁸⁴ He issued statements concerning the activity for the ŻZW, for both Iwański and Bednarczyk. He published texts about the ŻZW in: *Kronika* 19 and 20 (1970); *Argumenty*, 15 April 1973; *Prawo i życie*, 21 April 1974, *Rzeczywistość*, 3 April 1983, always on anniversaries. He diminished the role of Iwański in favour of Jan Skoczek, whom he made one of the most important figures in the hospital in Wolska Street. According to the SB materials, he was planning to prepare the book with Bednarczyk about Polish help to the Jews and the ŻZW.

⁸⁵ AŻIH, 301/4469. Six-page typescript testimony is supplemented by two pages of longhand. Apart from that, there are several attachments with different dates.

⁸⁶ AIPN, microfilm 11922/2, microcard 2. File note, 26 March 1963. He also sent a copy of the affidavit he received from Mark, according to which he delivered weapons and evacuated around 500 Jews from Muranów to the "Aryan side" in 1943; published in 1951.

is interesting for a number of reasons. First, in JKS's assessment it was to be, as opposed to the account submitted to the ŻIH, written under the pressure of censorship ("persuaded by some agencies to present historical material in such a manner that it did not represent even in half the actual state of affairs"), the first comprehensive description of his engagement in helping the ŻZW. Second, the study is largely in response to the version of events prepared by KB members.

JKS's study was used in the literature on the ŻZW in an equally uncritical manner as the other accounts analysed in this text. What is also important, authors using this source fail to notice the sarcasm and irony toward the theses propounded by KB members. After all, JKS says poignantly that "the pedestals, monuments, memoirs and chronicles are unfortunately crowded with swarms of paper heroes." Does he mean the KB, the ŻOB or the competition of the KB? Probably all of them. He also complains that his memoirs "were not fully reflected in Mark's work, probably for political reasons."

JKS presents himself as the sole righteous person in oblivion. Unlike the KB members, he openly criticises the position of the leadership circles of the ŻWZ-AK. This anti-AK resentment is absolutely understandable, taking into consideration his problems with the underground judiciary. Familiar with Iwański's and Bednarczyk's accounts, he also tries to shift the beginning of his contacts with the ghetto to 1940, although he stresses that until mid-1942, they were "rather sporadic." There are also many traces of his megalomania. For example, he claims that from 1940 to late 1943, he "headed the section of paramilitary organisation at the level of the KG (High Command of the) ŻWZ-AK" and he was obliged to submit periodic reports concerning the Jewish population. (In the following years, he went even further and obtained a certificate that he was a clerk in the section for Jewish affairs in KG AK.)⁸⁷ JKS, competing for the victory palm with Iwański and Bednarczyk, convinced the Lazars that it was his idea to dig the tunnel in Muranowska Street and that he was the one who built it. He also claimed that he organised military training in the Parczew forest, where he transported people from the ghetto.

In late 1942, a new chapter in his contacts with the ŻZW began. The account in the ŻIH archives leaves no doubt that this was his first meeting with the representative of the ghetto underground. This section in the study [written] for the Lazars is entitled: *Powtórne nawiązanie kontaktu* (Contact Re-established). Apart from that, the accounts are congruent.

We should pay particular attention to the passage from the text that was omitted in other studies, concerning his feats during the Warsaw ghetto uprising. JKS writes: "I surveyed the defence positions, checked the placement of explosives under the ghetto wall . . . I visited the barracked detachments." Let us note, in particular, his statement that "there was no one from the KB."⁸⁸ JKS traded in weapons. It is also possible that

⁸⁷ He received this certificate from Juliusz Wilczur Garztecki. In 1942, JKS, who allegedly was a clerk in the section for Jewish affairs in the Information and Propaganda Bureau, was to ask Garztecki to become an instructor in the ŻOB. See IPN 0246/1208. Operation report, 11 May 1978, ch. 118.

⁸⁸ *Przyczynek do historii mojej walki, op. cit.*, 29.

it was he that Ringelblum saw in the ŻZW headquarters.⁸⁹ However, the numbers he gives are pure fantasy, because he writes that he delivered 50 home-made grenades, 20,000 rounds of ammunition, 7 machine guns, 40 rifles, 50 kilograms of explosives, 100 Molotov cocktails, several dozen time bombs and 1,200 pistols.”

It was he who was to have given Paweł Frenkel “advice and tips concerning the defence tactics during the Nazi assault, advising him to apply mobile defence, which he used skilfully.” But this is not all. It turns out that JSK participated in the battle in Muranowski Square: “I had the honour to take part in the battle, hurrying with the rescue from the outside. My brave brothers in arms were: Śmiały, Zan, Edward, Wiesław and others.”⁹⁰ He argues with Bernard Mark about the false presentation of his role in one of the solidarity actions near the ghetto wall.⁹¹ Władysław Bartoszewski also met with criticism as he writes about minor actions near the ghetto wall, but forgets about those who fought together with the Jews.

It was he who was allegedly mentioned in Stroop’s report. “Those bandits, it needs to be said once and for all, were the fighters of the peoples’ pro-independent organization PLAN – we attacked the Nazis with machine guns and grenade launchers lined in the backyard of Muranowska Street on the ‘Aryan side’, hidden in the attics of the ‘Aryan’ part of Muranowska Street. Where were then the detachments of Kedyw AK, armed to their teeth? Where were the KB detachments which the entire ŻZW was allegedly subordinated to and completely armed, as the KB chroniclers write?” The detachment under JKS command was to have carried out several raids on the ghetto wall and killed “several dozen Nazi criminals” in the process.

JKS reproaches Bernard Mark, who believed in the testimonies of KB members concerning the evacuation of the Jewish insurgents to Michalin: “The fact is that the fight [rather the villa] in Michalin, in the Błota colony, had been rented several weeks before the uprising by Colonel Mak-Piątkowski, a member of Stronnictwo Demokratyczne (the Democratic Party) and my personal friend. They were transported by cadet Ryszard Więckowski, my direct subordinate, who had nothing to do with the KB. The group was exposed upon arrival, as a consequence of failing to follow the security instructions. While some of its members died and some joined on my consent the PAL partisan unit under Tadeusz Bilewicz’s command. . . . All in all, through the tunnel at Muranowska Street, about 500 people crossed to the ‘Aryan side’ and went to the forest to different partisan units, while some hid in the circus in Wola and some went to the Hotel Polski”⁹²

Unlike the Iwański case, not to mention Bednarczyk’s confabulations, there is a possibility to contrast the image presented by JKS with documents and files: docu-

⁸⁹ “In my presence, [they] purchased weapons worth a quarter of a million zloty from a former Polish Army officer with the downpayment of 50,000 zloty, they purchased two machine guns, 40,000 zloty each; a substantial quantity of hand grenades and bombs.” See E. Ringelblum, *Stosunki polsko-żydowskie...*, *op. cit.*, 126.

⁹⁰ *Przyczynek...*, *op. cit.*, 30.

⁹¹ On 23 April 1943, several soldiers from JKS’s detachment without him took part in the action near the ghetto wall. Cf. T. Strzembosz, *Akcje zbrojne podziemnej Warszawy 1939-1944* (Warsaw, 1978), 196-198.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 31.

mentation of JKS's trials before the Special Military Court of September 1942–May 1943.⁹³ They confirm many of the facts from JKS's testimonies regarding his contacts in the ghetto, weapons trade [those were supposed to be his detachment's weapons], and also about JKS's failed attempt to liaise between the ŻZW and the AK High Command.⁹⁴ There are also some compromising episodes.⁹⁵ JKS's story about the evacuation of the ŻZW fighters outside Warsaw is also subject to comparison, but the scale is different: it was about 30, not 500 fighters. Two independent sources confirm the affidavit of JKS's subordinate⁹⁶ and the memorandum of the KG AK counter-intelligence chief for the chief of the Kedyw (5 May 1943), concerning his help in leading communists out of the ghetto.⁹⁷ Those "communists" were obviously ŻZW fighters, who were evacuated to Michalin by JKS.

⁹³ In late September 1942, the Special Military Court began an investigation against JKS, with respect to his alleged denunciations of the editorial board of the underground newspaper *Z Dnia na Dzień* to the Gestapo. On 4 February 1943, WSS sentenced Arpad to death. General Grot did not approve the sentence. The second trial took place on 24 and 26 May 1943. The death sentence was issued again. Ultimately, it was not carried out because of JKS's transfer to the Polish Peoples' Army.

⁹⁴ A BIP employee characterised those contacts as follows: "Arpad established contact with the ghetto. There are said to be 180 Jews, young and determined to do anything and quite well-armed. He trades in weapons with this group: he supplies them with weapons and, as they say, in large quantities, for money or clothes. He claims that he was in the ghetto and saw advanced defence preparations, e.g. camouflaged basements, different underground tunnels, especially a tunnel that was several dozen metres long." "Małecki" also informed that the group via JKS was seeking contact with Teodor . . . to agree on some major sabotage actions, which they want to carry out in the nearest future. AAN, AK, 203/IX – 12. WSS documents in the case of Janusz Szemley Ketling, ch. 51. Among the charges against JKS there was also this one: "In the first half of 1943, he sold to the ghetto Jews a substantial quantity of the officially assigned weapons and ammunition, but a considerable amount of the money and valuables, which came from robberies and trade in weapons, he kept for himself, allegedly for organisational purposes." JKS, which should not surprise us, dismissed these charges. "I wanted to deliver the weapons, but it came to nothing. I delivered to the ghetto only a substantial number of bottles with explosives. I prepared the bottles together with 'Ryszard'. We earned 5 zloty on each bottle." AAN, AK, 203/X-33, ch. 52. Case against Janusz and Ryży, Indictment; *ibid.*, ch. 37a. Janusz's affidavit, 28 August 1943.

⁹⁵ In March 1942, presenting himself as a Gestapo functionary, JKS terrorised and robbed Jewish dollar forgers, taking 60,000 zloty. He was reprimanded by the Citizens' Tribunal. His deed was found unethical, but there were no consequences. AAN, AK, 203/IX – 12, ch. 10, 39. WSS documents in the case of Janusz Szemley Ketling.

⁹⁶ One of JKS's subordinates testified: "One day, I don't remember the exact date, it was few days before Easter (in April). 'Janusz' proposed that I act as a false leaseholder of a villa in Michalin. 'Janusz' told me that the villa was leased by Colonel Piątkowski for organisational purposes. I agreed. I know that he paid 18,000 zloty for the lease of the villa. It was there, that on Piątkowski's or Janusz's order, about 30 Jews were hidden. Some of them escaped from the villa after they were exposed, some were killed by the Germans; after this incident, the lease on the villa was taken away from me. AAN, 203/X – 33, ch. 36. Case against Janusz and Ryży. Edward's testimony, 28 July 1943. During the interrogation, JKS also confirmed that the villa was leased, but the matter of hiding Jews did not arouse interest.

⁹⁷ Bernard Zakrzewski "Oskar" informed Colonel Fieldorf, "Nil" about JKS's involvement with the "Jewish communist movement in the Warsaw ghetto" and he saw the need to liquidate him

5.

Before I move on to a summary of the issues discussed in the text, let me present one more item connected with the matter that interests us. In *Stadium Polski Podziemnej* published in London, in the collection of testimonies regarding Jewish issues, there is one more interesting item from our point of view. It is the “memoirs” of a Tadeusz Borowski, “Ireneusz” dated 1979, in which he introduces himself as an AK second lieutenant, soldier of the “Czata” battalion and a subordinate of Major Jan Tarnowski, pseudonym “Waligóra”. Not only does he claim that Waligóra co-operated with Iwański in Jewish matters as early as 1940, but he gives a number of addresses of contact points (the ŻZW “training centre” commanded by 38-year-old Mordechaj Appelbaum was to be located at No. 68/70 Ogrodowa Street). He also boasts about his participation in delivering weapons to the ghetto. And he claims that as a patrol commander, he took part in fights during the ghetto uprising, enabling the delivery of a hearse which was later used to evacuate ŻZW fighters from Warsaw and in the fights of 27 April 1943 in the ghetto in the AK ranks [sic]: “On 27 April, two AK units, Irek with them, went through the tunnel from No. 6 Muranowska Street to No. 7 Muranowska Street to the Warsaw ghetto, supporting the heroic Jewish units in combat in the Muranów area, suffering losses – killed and wounded. Toward the evening, because the retreat through the tunnel was jeopardised, after severe combat the positions were regained and the wounded as well as the Jewish fighters willing to leave the ghetto were evacuated to the ‘Aryan side’, where everyone was located safely and those who were healthy were transported to the Kampinos forest.”⁹⁸

This affidavit was not sent disinterestedly. Its author demanded from the verification commission of the SPP an official document confirming his wartime past. A Tadeusz Bielecki (an attorney, resident of California) wrote about this matter to the chairman of the commission, Colonel K. Wałęga. Borkowski was, no more or less, to complicate anti-Polish intrigues of American Jews: “I think it is necessary to issue Mr T. Borkowski a certificate that he took part in helping the fighting ghetto Jews. This is an undisputed fact. We find it very important that at least one person in our region have ‘legitimacy’ to correct the slanders and defamation. Mr. T. Borkowski is not seeking honours. He only wants to have the documented right to speak in public and in the press as someone who helped them and has the right to deny insinuations and slanders.”⁹⁹

Those arguments seem to have made no impression on Colonel Wałęga, because Borkowski did not receive the demanded certificate.

because of “significant transfers of armed Jews outside Warsaw where they planned to carry out sabotage acts on their own.” What is more, JKS was to involve in “this work circles of disoriented youth pushing it toward more communist positions. This is a dangerous act of treason, unpredictable in its political and military consequences.” The document attached to the account of Janusz Cezary Ketling-Szemley (AŻIH 301/4469) is to have come from the “Muszkietierowie” archives.

⁹⁸ SPP, B.I. 36/4. Warsaw ghetto, General memoirs of “Ireneusz”, 1979.

⁹⁹ Ibid. T. Bielecki’s letter to K. Wałęga, 3 December 1979.

6.

As a result of the lack of documents and files concerning the ŻZW history, as it soon turned out, and of a very meagre number of memoirs by members of the fighting Zionist-revisionist organisation, there appeared a wave of collective and individual memoirs, accounts and publications from various groups that during the occupation had contacts with the Warsaw ghetto in one way or another. Those materials were produced from 1948 to the mid-1990s. Initially, they were adjusted to the needs of the board of the ŻIH. Later, they were produced for the Israelis, who wanted to commemorate the armed effort of the revisionists. It soon turned out that the materials were becoming extremely useful from the point of view of PRL propaganda, bracing itself for battle for the SB remembrance, and, in the 1980s, for the communist-nationalist circles (the *Grunwald* association). On the other hand, in the 1990s, nationalist circles used them willingly. The opinions of historians writing about the ghetto uprising were and still are divided. From the point of view of those who did not forget the attempts to erase the memory, they became the key to reconstruct its history. Professional historians, as I have already mentioned, looked at them with embarrassment and justified scepticism. However, we are dealing with an interesting phenomenon from the cognitive point of view. For example, Israel Gutman completely dismisses the testimony of Bednarczyk, who for such authors as Apfelbaum is a fundamental source, whereas for other testimonies from this group he shows more understanding. In his assessment “there is no doubt that there is much truth in them [Iwański’s, Ketling’s and Petrykowski’s testimonies – *D.L.*], although they contain contradictory and exaggerated statements.”¹⁰⁰ The problem is, however, where the border between reality and fiction is. For example, Gutman questions the thesis of the ŻZW’s establishment in 1939 and the information about a serious engagement of the KB in the ghetto fights in April 1943. After all, this information comes from Iwański’s circle.

I think that a critical analysis of those testimonies concerning the details and scale of this involvement presented in this text, combined with an attempt to reconstruct post-war biographies of their authors, makes it possible to dispel a number of doubts in this matter. Obviously, Bednarczyk’s case is the easiest – not only because of his grotesque arguments, but also details of his biography that we are acquainted with thanks to material of the communist security service (we cannot exclude, however, that for those prejudiced against using the “files” as an archive material, Bednarczyk becomes another victim of the communist security service). Henryk Iwański’s case is more ambiguous. But we cannot ignore that, first, even a cursory reading of the materials about him reveals that they were written with the intention to create his own legend and their purpose was to emphasise his own merits. Equally important were also the financial motives. Second, from the point of view of the signatories of the testimonies and those who issued those or other certificates, the history of the ŻZW and, in general, of armed resistance of the Jews, were treated instrumentally.

What is more, the AK documentation in JKS’s case (regardless of numerous perversions in the most credible witness’s testimony), e.g. the entries concerning

¹⁰⁰ I. Gutman, *Żydzi warszawscy*, op. cit., 462.

the Michalin case, is further evidence for the limited credibility of the testimony of Iwański, who, as we remember, as early as 1948 claimed to have been behind this action. What is more, in the historical literature it became customary to present Iwański as a disinterested person in contrast to JKS, who according to trial documents did business with the ŻZW.¹⁰¹ The problem is, however, that we do not have any independent sources regarding Iwański's motivation. In this text, I did not tackle the issue of the veracity of the details appearing in his testimony and concerning the cases of individual help to the ghetto refugees or the information about his cooperation with Catholic clergy in helping the Jews.¹⁰² However, the scale of contradictions, nonsense and lies, and even more Iwański's acquiescence in Bednarczyk's manipulations, cast a shadow on those issues as well. And here, a more general question arises: if the scale of the KB's involvement in the ghetto was really as serious as testimonies describe it, then certainly these or other cells of the AK Warsaw District or the KG AK would not have been ignored, as was the case with JKS's activity.¹⁰³

The combat organization of the revisionists deserves a reliable monograph, but the first step should be a radical separation of its history from that of the KB.

Apocrypha from the history of the Jewish Military Union and its authors

This article is an attempt at a critical analysis of the history of the Jewish Military Union (JMU) and a presentation of its authors based on documents kept in the archives of the Institute of National Remembrance in Warsaw. The author believes that an uncritical approach and such a treatment of these materials, which were generated under the communist regime and used for political purposes, resulted in a perverted and lasting picture of the history of this fighting organisation of Zionist-revisionists both in Poland and Israel. The author has focused on a deconstruction of the most important and best known "testimonies regarding the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising", the development and JFU participation in this struggle, given by Henryk Iwański, Władysław Zajdler, Tadeusz Bednarczyk and Janusz Ketling-Szemley.

A comparative analysis of these materials, supplemented by important details of their war-time and post-war biographies, leaves no doubt as to the fact that they should not be analysed in terms of their historical credibility and leads one to conclude that a profound revision of the research approach to JMU history is necessary.

Key words

Holocaust, Jewish Military Union, Security Corps, Warsaw Ghetto Uprising

Translated by Jerzy Giebułtowski and Patrycja Rojek

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 500. E.g. I. Gutman writes: "Some Poles did a lot to help the Jews. Especially helpful was an AK officer, Henryk Iwański. On the other hand, there were people who offered help to the Jews only for financial reasons." See: I. Gutman, *Walka bez cienia nadziei*, op. cit., 225. The second case concerns JKS.

¹⁰² I never questioned them in my publications. See: D. Libionka, *Antisemitism, Anti-Judaism and the Polish Catholic Clergy during the Second World War, 1939-1945*, in: R. Blobaum, ed., *Antisemitism and its Opponents* (Ithaca: London), 2005.

¹⁰³ In mid-1943, AK counterintelligence carried out an investigation concerning the KB. No contact of this organization with the ghetto was established. See: AIPN, AK, file 127.