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“This picture is a little horrific”. The story of a film, or the Polish nation face-to-face with the Jew)

Ten obraz jest trochę straszliwy”. Historia pewnego filmu, czyli naród polski twarzą w twarz z Żydem

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Iwona Kurz

**“This picture is a bit horrifying.”
The Story of a Film or the Polish Nation Face to Face
with the Jew**

“This picture is a bit horrifying. It doesn’t depart from the then reality, but when I think about what the response of the domestic and foreign viewer is going to be like, then I start wondering about it really seriously, because this image is a bit consistent with what is said about the attitude of Poles towards Jews during the war. This picture is gloomy and unfavorable to our society.”¹

This comment of Krzysztof Teodor Toeplitz made during the producer’s screening of *Długa Noc* [*A Long Night*]² directed by Janusz Nasfeter expresses – partly consciously, it seems, partly unconsciously – at least three problems connected with the raising of the so-called issue of Polish-Jewish relations in the public discourse in Poland. They are associated with the language of this comment, the suggestion of the potential viewer of the “image” (“the domestic and foreign viewer”) and the collective entity which is supposedly presented (and assessed) in this “image.”

But it must be said in the beginning that the film was a special part of the discourse. On the one hand, this “most important of the arts” was thought to be capa-

¹ Wypowiedź Ob. Krzysztofa Teodora Toeplitza [Citizen K.T. Toeplitz’s statement]. Archiwum Filmoteki Narodowej [National Film Library Archive] A-216, 132, Stenogram z posiedzenia Komisji Kolaudacyjnej w dniu 15 VI 1967. Temat posiedzenia: dyskusja nad filmem pt. “Noc” – zrealizowanym przez reż. Nasfetera w Zespole “Studio”. Przewodniczący min. Zaorski [Stenographic Record of the session of the Producer’s Screening Committee on 15 June 1967. The topic of the session: discussion on the film *Noc* [*A Night*] directed by Nasfeter with the Film Team “Studio.” Chair – Minister Zaorski], p. 2. K.T. Toeplitz was then a member of the editorial staff of “Kultura” (the Warsaw one); connected with Polish cinematography since the 1950s as a journalist, collaborator, and expert as well – among other things a member of the Script and Film Evaluation Committee at the beginning of the 1960s divided into the Script Evaluation Committee and Feature Film Evaluation Committee.

² To be more precise, the film was still called *Noc* [*A Night*] then. A change of the title was suggested at the producer’s screening, in order to “avoid unnecessary gossip about some tendencies in Polish cinematography aimed at copying Antonioni” (his film bearing the same title was present on Polish screens at that time). Ibidem, p. 7, Szczepański’s statement. It is probably Jan Alfred Szczepański (Jaszcz), the *Trybuna Ludu* film reviewer at that time.

ble of influencing the masses, but on the other, it was subjected to extraordinary control and the pressure of sometimes contradictory expectations.³

On the other hand, the film involves interpretational difficulties which stem from the nature of a visual medium. The picture escapes unequivocal interpretation or evaluation, which after all was eagerly exploited by filmmakers fighting a kind of "guerrilla warfare" with the censorship of the People's Republic of Poland.

Janusz Nasfeter⁴ was making his movie in 1967, and the press was informing about it a couple of weeks before the producer's screening. Journalists were writing in the "filmmakers-have-arrived" vein – about artificial snow which the residents of Wyszogród, where the open-air scenes were filmed, did not remove although they had been paid in advance to do so⁵ and about the onlookers watching the film crew at work. More lofty comments suggested that it was another movie devoted to "the subject of the occupation," one which would recall "the dramatic events connected with the martyrdom of the Jewish population,"⁶ the difficult "time of moral ordeal."⁷

Particularly interesting is the article which uses the production of the movie as a pretext to portray the history and contemporariness of Wyszogród, since it demonstrates, it seems, the style then allowed for the form of addressing the fate of Jews during the occupation. The author, actually contrary to the film's plot, in which only one character is a Jew, writes: "judging from the costumes and the makeup, it is evident that it is about Jews, the cruel fate Nazism prepared for them."⁸ The author reconstructs the history of the Polish-Jewish coexistence: "A Pole was always elected mayor of this small Jewish town. His deputy was a Jew. A clear proof of tact and diplomacy. . . . The Nazis destroyed the [Jewish] quarter of the town, the people

³ In short, it was supposed to educate through play. I think that Stanisław Barańczak wrote about it the most aptly, suggesting, in the context of popular culture in the People's Republic of Poland, a metaphor of a horse hitched to two wagons (i.e.: of persuasion and entertainment). Cf. S. Barańczak, "Czerwony sztandar nad dyskoteką," in idem, *Czytelnik ubezwłasnowolniony. Perswazja w masowej kulturze literackiej PRL* (Paris, 1983).

⁴ Janusz Nasfeter (1920–1984) had just been appreciated for *Niekochana* [*The Unloved*] (1966), an intimate, psychological drama in which a young Jewish woman named Noemi (an excellent performance by Elżbieta Czyżewska) broods over – 1 September 1939 – her tragic, possessive love. Eventually, the director began to be associated with films about children. Nasfeter treated the drama of his characters seriously and portrayed childhood with unusual subtlety, but also with insight, as a time of painful changes and conflicts (among others: *Kolorowe pończochy* [*Colored Stockings*] 1960, *Abel, twój brat* [*Abel, Your Brother*] 1970, *Motyle* [*Butterflies*] 1972).

⁵ Unsigned note, *Słowo Polskie*, 13 April 1967.

⁶ Unsigned note, *Express Ilustrowany*, 14 March 1967.

⁷ When somebody "not free from fear brings himself to provide a Jew with hiding. Somebody else wants to buy his own life with his death." A. Iskierko, "Noc," *Ekran*, 9 April 1967.

⁸ Apparently there is a recognizable image of the "Jewish fate." B. Hołda, "Otwarte karty miasteczka," *Trybuna Mazowiecka*, 2 April 1967.

vanished into the shades,” and those who survived the war “left for the Promised Land. Only one man stayed. The old Frajzynger.” The history of many small, Jewish towns in Poland was briefly presented here, in a tone adequately elevated and adequately impersonal.

The problem of the lack of language becomes visible here – a language that would adequately name, or at least raise the issue of Polish-Jewish relations during the war, and the most sensitive issue in particular – to what extent Poles helped the Jews and to what extent they are jointly responsible for the Holocaust. This weakness of language, signalled by Toeplitz’s comment quoted in the beginning, is not only a symptom of articulatory helplessness itself but is also the main obstacle to overt or clear description of this issue. Therefore, the visual language of the film will be juxtaposed with what...

“...is said about the attitude of Poles towards Jews during the war...”⁹

– but also with how it is discussed. The “how” is unintentionally revealed in Toeplitz’s words. Twenty-odd years after the war the speaker is speaking as if he was not. One is under the impression that he is referring to the diagnosis, which he is certain that the rest of the participants share – everybody knows what “is being said” – but, at the same time, he avoids any explicitness or literality; even in such a closed group of people he chooses allusion rather than speaking openly; he seems to have difficulty with formulating his thoughts.¹⁰ These poetics of understatements, suppression and even contradictions will be characteristic of many comments on this film and other works, and – in a broader sense – on the subject it brings up. Apparently, it is commonly believed that society possesses some secret knowledge about itself, a knowledge which is not articulated, though.

In short, *Długa Noc* [*A Long Night*] presents the events of one day and one night that transpired in the life of a small town, and to be more exact, in the lives of the residents of one house. Piekarczykowa (Ryszarda Hanin) mourns the sudden death of her husband; that day the coffin will be removed from the house. Her daughter Marta (Jolanta Wołłejko), who is secretly in love with the tenant, Korsak (Józef Duriasz), supports her. The last resident of the house is Katarzyna (Anna Cierpielewska), a married woman with one child; her husband “was taken to Lublin to the Castle.” Her brother-in-law Katjan (Ludwik Pak) visits her regularly under the

⁹ All the subheadings in the text come from the stenographic record of the producer’s screening of Nasfeter’s film.

¹⁰ Toeplitz continued in a similar vein: “In this sense I am afraid of the implications of this film, because it confirms what is said on this topic, and it was often discussed and heard about, though it does not mean that it was truth in the full sense of the word, but it seems to me that as in all cases, in this case too there is some germ of mythology, of an arrangement on the attitude of society toward certain problems, but in my opinion society was nobler in comparison with what is said about it. Being so realistic, the film – and it should be said openly – puts an end to some noble illusions of ours.” Stenogram, p. 3.

pretext of help. Unexpectedly, a curfew from six p.m. until noon the next day is announced in the town. Yet, Korsak is supposed to bring weapons to the guerrilla fighters. Making matters worse, he is hiding a Jew in his room. Marta and Katarzyna's accidental discovery of the fugitive triggers off an argument between the residents of the house. Before they make up their minds, Korsak and the Jew leave the house under cover of darkness and leave toward the forest.

The producer's screening took place a few days after the Six-Day War, which ended on 11 June with the Israeli defeat of the Arab countries. The date itself is enough to understand why *A Long Night* could not – in the then political reality – receive a welcome as warm, even if the rhetoric of understatement was to be employed, as the ads preceding the film.

Just a moment earlier it would seem that a breakthrough or at least some kind of thaw in Polish-Jewish relations was taking place. In April, after more than twenty years after the war and numerous arguments as to the form which the memory of Auschwitz should take, the monument in KL Auschwitz-Birkenau was finally unveiled. The book *Ten jest z ojczyzny mojej* [*He is from my Homeland*], edited by Władysław Bartoszewski and Zofia Lewinówna,¹¹ was also being discussed. And yet in June, as a result of the "aggression of Israel towards the Arab countries," Poland, following the USSR's example, broke off diplomatic relations with Israel, with rallies of condemnation being organized in workplaces. In a few days, in a speech at the Congress of Trade Unions [*Kongres Związków Zawodowych*], Władysław Gomułka would be warning against the "fifth column" in Poland and will remind that "each Polish citizen should have just one homeland – the People's Republic of Poland."

At the turn of 1967 and 1968 a few film projects bringing up Jewish themes were dropped: Andrzej Wajda in vain made efforts to begin the production of *Wielki Tydzień* [*The Holy Week*] based on Jerzy Andrzejewski's book (the film was to be made in 1995), Jerzy Kawalerowicz was trying to film Julian Strykowski's *Austeria* (he was to make the movie in 1982) and Aleksander Ford was trying to make *Korczak* (this film would be made abroad¹² after his leaving Poland as a result of the anti-Semitic purge). Even though some changes were suggested during the screening as well as afterwards, eventually Nasfeter's film was to be distributed. In the months to follow, the film press was announcing its premiere. Eventually, however, the film quietly disappeared and for a very long time was totally absent from the consciousness of Polish viewers.¹³ It was shown for the first time on 30 October 1989 at the Łódź Community Center.

¹¹ *Ten jest z ojczyzny mojej. Polacy z pomocą Żydom 1939–1945*, ed. W. Bartoszewski, Z. Lewinówna (Cracow, 1966), 1st edition.

¹² *Sie Sind Frei, Dr. Korczak*, FRG/Israel prod., 1974.

¹³ Janusz Nasfeter claimed that at that time the film had only one screening in Bydgoszcz. See: K. Bielas, "Jeszcze tylko ten film," *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 28 April 1992. The title of the article (*Just Beyond This Film*) is an allusion to the film *Jeszcze tylko ten las* [*Just Beyond the Forest*] (dir. Jan Łomnicki, 1992).

The discussion at the producer's screening of Nasfeter's film should be treated as a symptom. Its secret mode as well as its circumstances of crisis allow us to clearly see the contradictions and convolutions of the debate on the image of Polish-Jewish relations in post-war culture. At the same time the film itself characteristically surpasses the hitherto (as well as subsequent) dominant model of talking about the "affairs of Poles and Jews." What I mean here are the works which realistically and directly show – as their main thread or in the background – the fate of Jews during the war and the help they did or did not receive from Poles.¹⁴

The history of these presentations in the Polish cinema poses a number of problems. Two screen adaptations of Władysław Szpilman's *The Pianist* mark out the framework of their list. It starts with Jerzy Zarzycki's *Miasto nieujarzmione* [*Unvanquished City*] (a.k.a. *Robinson warszawski* [*The Warsaw Robinson*]) produced in 1950. Due to manifold interference of the censorship, the film, which was made at the dawn of the centrally-planned cinematography and Stalinism, ceased to bear any resemblance to the original. It posed a problem for a number of reasons, among others because of its Warsaw Uprising context. Somewhere along the way the fact that the main character was a Jew – a significant one, it would seem – got lost. Roman Polański's *The Pianist* (2002), the latest film in Polish cinematography to bring up the Polish-Jewish relations issue, did not escape accusations either. The director adapted Szpilman's testimony quite accurately; however, some pointed out the inappropriateness of a work showing Poles as anti-Semites and a uniformed German as a saviour of a Jew's life.

The comments of the participants of the producer's screening of *A Long Night* reveal particular sensitivity to the latter issue. The participants, as I have written, do not always formulate their various anxieties in a clear manner, but a lot of them concern precisely the image of Polish society. For example, Wincenty Kraśko said: "propaganda has portrayed Poles as a nation which helped Hitler murder the Jews. It is said that in Poland and during the occupation there was an anti-Semitic atmosphere."¹⁵ We know neither what propaganda he is referring to nor how or where it "is said" so. The poetics of understatement seems to apply here.

Only to a slight extent is the film interpreted as an autonomous voice of the artist. The committee pays attention predominantly to "how it will be received." The fundamental issue of...

¹⁴ Many films produced after the war refer to the history and the place of Jews in pre-war Polish culture (such as Wajda's *Ziemia Obiecana* [*Promised Land*] or Munk's *Zezowate Szczęście* [*Bad Luck*] very often by resorting to some form of metaphorization or mythologization of their fate (e.g. the above-mentioned *Austeria* or *Jak daleko stąd, jak blisko* [*How Far, How Near*] directed by Tadeusz Konwicki).

¹⁵ W. Kraśko, *Stenogram*, pp. 21–22. At that time (1960–1971) Wincenty Kraśko held the office of supervisor of the Culture Department of the Central Committee of the Polish United Worker's Party (*Wydział Kultury Komitetu Centralnego PZPR*), which was in fact an entity superior to the cinematographic institution.

"...who we want to convince here..."¹⁶

...clearly discerns the possible response in Poland and abroad. It is a very characteristic reading of a work – one in which coherent reading of the text is secondary to the question "what will people say?" In fact, it is the language of small-town opinion which regulates the public debate in Poland, since the fundamental question directed at the films about the Jewish issue in Polish cinematography is the question of how they will be received. After all, it is based on the assumption that they will meet with an unfavorable response. The participants devote a lot of attention to foreseeing negative reactions and actually they reveal their unwillingness to launch any debate whatsoever. The prospect of the response is also decisive both in the context of possible changes suggested in the film and of the final decision to allow its distribution.

The potential reaction in the West causes an equally great anxiety, though in this case the fear is mostly about the danger of strengthening the already existing stereotypes. Therefore, even though the plot of *A Long Night* is commented on with some degree of understanding for its verisimilitude, and even with appreciation for its aptness, at the same time it is stressed that: "it is an individual truth, but when we add to it what is said in the world about Polish society and its attitude toward the Jews during the occupation, then one will conclude that what has been produced is a film which should not be shown in the West."¹⁷

The reception of the film in Poland – that is, of course, the supposed reception; producers' screening is a realm of suggestions, suppositions and expression of fear and hopes, a great discussion of what is to come, as well as a field of the realization of personal strategies dependent on whether the participant wants to save the film or quite the reverse – is an exceptionally subtle issue. After all, the film has an educational function; it should shape beliefs and attitudes.¹⁸ At the same time, the fear of the viewer's reaction is evident; the authorities do not want to be accused of supporting the propaganda theses about Poles' anti-Semitism.

¹⁶ Ibidem, 11.

¹⁷ Ibidem, 11. Curiously enough, the context of the Czech cinema appears here – the argument that the sour film *The Shop on Main Street* (1965) met with a highly favorable reception in the West and "did a good job for Czech society" (Ford, Stenogram, p. 20). The picture directed by Jan Kadar and Elmar Klos won an Oscar for best foreign language film (the first Central European picture to do so), and Ida Kamińska (an actress from the Warsaw Jewish Theatre, who soon afterwards emigrated from Poland), who played the main role in the film, received a nomination for the Academy Award for Best Actress in a Leading Role. According to minister Zaorski, Czechs give a bad example because they transfer the responsibility onto nations other than the German ("none of the Czech movies shows the Nazi crimes or camps," *Ibidem*, 29.) – and this is where their positive reception might stem from.

¹⁸ K.T. Toeplitz: "We have a moral responsibility toward our society, to whom some things should be explained, and we should fight the conviction that in Poland there prevails fierce anti-Semitism." Stenogram, p. 27.

It is a stalemate: the authorities want neither to irritate the social atmosphere nor arouse friendly feelings towards Jews (i.e. the contemporary state of Israel). Aleksander Ford, who suggests that a discussion of such spirit and subject matter is outmoded since it was held twenty years earlier, at the producers' screening of his film *Ulica Graniczna* [*Border Street*] (1948) and which turned out to be idle, is severely scolded by Wincenty Kraśko: "It is not an old issue, it is an issue of the last few days."¹⁹ This is a direct reference to the events in the Middle East (which "cannot be ignored"). Unfortunately, they have a bad influence on Polish society. The news on the aggressive policy of Israel and the conquest of the Arab world "leads only to an arousal of anti-Semitism. . . . The leadership of the Party is concerned with this anti-Semitic atmosphere and the attitude of the Polish nation toward the issue of the Middle East. There are many cases of taking Israel's side."²⁰

Actually, one could agree with the debater that "there is something to reflect on," since the events – and consequently the film – might inspire both anti-Semitic and pro-Israeli stances. Neither of them is convenient to the authorities. Actually, no stance is, unless it becomes instrumentalized – which was to happen soon in Poland.

The fundamental framework of this discussion remains invariable, regardless of the unique circumstances of 1967. Not without reason does Aleksander Ford²¹ recall his own experience as a director. He was making *Border Street* at a bad time as well. It was one of the first films produced after the war. When its production was permitted the authorities were thinking about the pogrom in Kielce and regarded Polish-Jewish antagonism as existent and alive.²² Bolesław W. Lewicki, the artistic and programming director of the Production Department of "Film Polski" (Dział Produkcji „Filmu Polskiego”), made the following comment on the occasion of Ford's film's production: "our sensitivity is nowadays intensified and the viewer becomes irritated if he is reminded about the sins from the occupation period. *Border*

¹⁹ Ibidem, 21.

²⁰ Ibidem, 22.

²¹ Aleksander Ford (1908–1980) before the war a co-founder of the Art Film Lovers Association "Start" [Stowarzyszenie Miłośników Filmu Artystycznego „Start”] (1930), later on a co-founder of the Film Authors' Cooperative [Spółdzielnia Autorów Filmowych] (1935), which promoted artistic films in Poland. In 1934 together with Jerzy Bossak organized the Film Forefront of the First Division of the Polish Army [Czołówkę Filmową I Dywizji WP], later on transformed into the Polish Army Film Production Company [Wytwórnię Filmową WP], of which he was the commanding officer. Co-organizer of post-war Polish cinematography. The first director of the "Film Polski" enterprise (1945–1947). Artistic director of the "Blok" Film Team [Zespół Filmowy "Blok"] (1948–1948) and "Studio" (1955–1968). Taught at the National Film School in Lodz (1948–1968). Apart from *Border Street* he directed films such as *Piątka z ulicy Barskiej* [*Five Boys from Barska Street*] (1953), *Ósmy dzień tygodnia* [*Eighth Day of the Week*] (1958, not permitted for distribution) and *Krzyżacy* [*Knights of the Teutonic Order*] (1960). Forced to leave Poland in 1969.

²² The circumstances of the production and reception of Ford's film are reconstructed in Alina Madej, "Na tej ulicy nikt już nie mieszka," in *Kino. Władza. Publiczność. Kinematografia polska w latach 1944–1949* (Bielsko-Biała, 2002).

Street will not be received as an entertainment film. Certain touchy issues should not be brought up now: only in 10–15 years will it be possible to return to them.”²³ As we know, even the period of 10–15 years turned out to be too short. Lewicki also added that the film presents the reality of occupied Poland in the “how-little-Moryc-imagines-it” vein, which was an allusion to Ford spending the occupation period abroad. Doubts about the film’s possible reception by the Polish audience were also openly voiced.²⁴

Similar discussions, both open and secret, took place in Poland also on the occasion of the premiers of Andrzej Wajda’s *Samson* (1961), *Korczak* (1990) and *Wielki Tydzień* [*The Holy Week*] as well as Polański’s *The Pianist*. A characteristic bipolarity appeared in the context of their reception in the West (which was echoed in Poland): either the film was interpreted as showing Polish anti-Semitism (i.e. unfair from the Polish point of view) or as anti-Semitic (i.e. unjustly).

In this complex context – an interweaving of conflicting needs and reasons revealed in the course of the discussion on *A Long Night* – even the director was forced to take a firm position. Since the film inspires discussions or arguments (“occasions reflections and anxieties”) there appears the issue of balancing it up, the question of to what extent the drama shows the truth and to what extent it falsifies it. Yet again this does not necessarily need to be read from the film itself; anyway, it is not unreasonable to refer to the author’s intentions – at least they can be expressed clearly. It seems to be a strategy necessary to survive the producer’s screening; hence Nafeter beats his breast: “I did not want... for any conclusions unfavorable to our nation... to be drawn on the basis of my film.”²⁵

And: “I take the position that even though there were instances of denunciation of Jews, they were uncommon and they cannot be generalized.”²⁶

And so the director touches a raw nerve, apparently conscious of the essence of the argument about the attitudes of Poles and the prevailing definition of “truth.” In the post-war martyrological discourse which presented the whole nation as a victim of the occupiers, the whole nation automatically became the subject of any discussions about the war. Few individuals were excluded from this image – usually

²³ Archiwum Filmoteki Narodowej, catalogue no. S-587, The minutes of the Selection Committee session on 1 and 2 June, p. 4 quoted in: A. Madej, op. cit., 190.

²⁴ Cf. also: the minutes of the Selection Committee session on 1 and 2 June 1948. Appendix to the article by P. Litka, “Polacy i Żydzi w Ulicy Granicznej,” *Kwartalnik Filmowy* 29–30 (2000). The negative context of the reception of *Border Street* was also connected with the hostile response to Wanda Jakubowska’s *Ostatni etap* [*The Last Stage*] (1948), which was considered an anti-Polish picture.

²⁵ Nafeter, Stenogram, p. 16.

²⁶ Ibidem, p. 29 Aleksander Ford, who apparently tried to save Nafeter’s film, joins in: “the realism means that in the Polish nation there were fascist and anti-Semitic elements. In turn what history brings are the elements proving that the Polish nation rescued Jews, that it had a humanitarian attitude toward them, an attitude people should have toward one another from the point of view of socialism” (ibidem, p. 33).

traitors, half-Poles, *Volksdeutsche*, renegades and scum. Thus the filmmakers had to – and they did it due to outside pressure or the obligation they themselves felt – do justice not to their heroes but to the whole nation.

An accusation of undermining the martyrdom of Poles, and the very fact of bringing up the martyrdom of Jews, was sometimes interpreted as a sufficient argument against a work or its author. *Border Street*, beautifully depicting Jewish heroism, fell victim to this peculiar rivalry.²⁷ Anyway, there was a paradoxical aspect to it, revealed in 1957, in the course of the ongoing discussion on *Kanał* [*Canal*]. Polish audiences received it with mixed feelings, as they expected something more like a monument rather than a squaring-up with the war experiences. On this occasion Zbigniew Czeczot-Gawrak called for a film “...straightening out the previous distortions all our films about the Home Army (Armia Krajowa) fell prey to (apart from *Border Street*).”²⁸

It seems that the reviewer was referring first and foremost to the atmosphere of Ford's film – lofty, noble, full of pathos, thanks to which the heroes of the uprising in the ghetto, which was doomed to failure, are elevated to create a heroic legend.

The issue of the collective subject through the prism of which the works were interpreted (questions such as “what does the film say about the Polish nation?” and not “what does the film say about its characters?” were asked) provoked the artists to employ two dissimilar strategies. The escape into privacy was the first one. The drama of two or, better still, three or four characters seemed safer – as in *Tragarz Puchu* or *Warszawa. Rok 5703* [*Warsaw – Year 5703*] directed by Janusz Kijowski, 1992) or *Daleko od okna* [*Keep Away from the Window*] (directed by Jan Jakub Kolski, 2000) – all the more so as at that time it was gravitating more toward universalizing psychologism and usually also toward melodrama. Passion became an important factor motivating the choices and decisions of characters, effectively eliminating the questions about the moral dimension and actually, regardless of the work's merit, moving away from any analysis of the situation during the occupation. The psychological and ethical complications involved in helping a stranger (in a double sense of the word: an unknown person and simultaneously a Jew) were shifted onto the field of eroticism, somehow justifying all ambivalence, shaky attitudes or radical decisions (including denunciation). In turn, the situation of the Jewish man or woman in hiding became a metaphor of being restrained, haunted and of claustrophobic isolation from the world.

Another model was employed perhaps for the first time by Jerzy Andrzejewski – in the very beginning of the narrative struggle with the issue of the attitude toward

²⁷ “The whole tragedy of Jews is brilliantly depicted and truly shocking, because the Jewish Marxists who presented it forgot about Marxism and presented it with ordinary human affection. The whole Polish side is glaringly misrepresented, because it is shown with merely restrained reluctance” – as e.g. Maria Dąbrowska wrote in her *Dzienniki*. Quoted in: A. Madej, op. cit., 193.

²⁸ Z. Czeczot-Gawrak, “Film *Kanał*, czyli o odpowiedzialności historycznej,” *Ekran* 9 (1957).

Jews in Polish culture after the war. His story *Holy Week* was created on the spot, literally during the ghetto uprising. Read out in Stawisko in front of a group of friends and writers (among others Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz, Zofia Nałkowska, Czesław Miłosz and Ryszard Matuszewski), it aroused ambivalent feelings. The ruins of the ghetto were still smoking, and the writer in self-admiration for his oeuvre presents a work about the tragedy, and what is more, he employs a personal motive. All those present saw Andrzejewski himself in Jan Malecki, the hero, and his acquaintance Wanda Wertenstein in Irena Lilien. Moreover, they thought that the aversion to the heroine, which could be sensed in the story, was an echo of the writer's personal dislike.²⁹

This version of the story did not survive. Only thanks to second-hand accounts do we know that in the course of the changes introduced immediately after the war the author developed the story by adding new characters which allowed him to sketch a map of ideologically diverse choices of Poles, which overlapped with the map of the characters' specific attitudes toward the troublesome Jewish woman. Supposedly, he introduced these changes under Jan Kott's influence. And so a story about fear – as the participants of the meeting in Stawisko remembered it – became a story about attitudes identified with actual stances. A text so constructed was ideal for political games, because its "representativeness" was not only and not really "national" (in that very matter Andrzejewski did not actually give expected justice to Poles) but a "class" one.³⁰

Anna Sobolewska correctly spotted the insincerity of this layer of the novel, pointing out that "the psychical content is *told* rather than *shown*."³¹

Andrzejewski's decision entails a choice – since it is necessary – to construct a story which really encompasses the collective subject. It was this broad panorama of attitudes and ideas which attracted Andrzej Wajda to Andrzejewski's story. In the course of the production of *The Holy Week* he said, "Portraying the situation between Poles and Jews in such an objective manner, Jerzy Andrzejewski threw light on various aspects of Polish attitudes toward the burning ghetto."³² Showing the renowned carousel on Krasińskich Square as a useful instrument of Polish un-

²⁹ Andrzejewski himself denied it, claiming that Professor Szymon Aszkenazy's daughter was Irena's prototype.

³⁰ "It's a film about the petit bourgeois' horrifying ignorance" as e.g. comrade [Ryszard] Koniczek said at the producers' screening of *A Long Night* (Stenogram, p. 9). In the course of the discussion some participants defined the attitudes of Poles according to class lines. Wincenty Kraśko pointed out that "as for the attitude towards Jews, the intelligentsia and the petite bourgeoisie fall prey to accusations" (ibidem, 22; this "falling prey to accusations" is significant, since it was the Party itself which wanted to see the distribution of Poles' stances in such a way). However, Nasfeter protested against it, saying that he knew workmen who denounced Jews. In turn Ernest Bryll pointed out the fact that the positive character is "lordly," whereas a simple, plebeian hero is an "outright boor" (ibidem, p. 5).

³¹ A. Sobolewska, *Polska proza psychologiczna 1945–1950* (Wrocław, 1979), particularly 19–21.

³² "W realizacji – *Wielki Tydzień*". Rozmowa Andrzeja Wajdy z Wandą Wertenstein, „Kino” 7–8 (1995).

derground army scouts, Wajda “objectifies” this image to a significant extent.³³ Nevertheless, the whole movie shows the full scope of Polish stances and their various motivations. The reviewers noticed it, e.g. by writing that Irena – separated from the world by her haughty and slightly absent attitude – is actually a “litmus paper” which is supposed to “test the nation.”³⁴

Border Street has a similarly “representative” character – all the more pronounced as children are the chief characters of the film. Their attitudes reflect (and safely simplify) their parents’ opinions (also class-determined). And so we have a boy traitor (who joined the Hitler Youth, and whose guardian, a tavern owner, signed the Volksliste), a boy who needs time to see humans in Jews (just like his father – a pre-war clerk and National Democrat, who was helped by an old Jewish tailor) and a kind-hearted son of a cab driver, who supports the Jewish community from the very beginning. This “fairness” turned out to be insufficient; it is too symmetrical. What is more, the film is characterized by an aesthetic imbalance stemming from the difference in the tone employed to talk about Poles and Jews.

The authorities were also dubious about the clear metaphor of “one courtyard” or even – to underline the class dimension – of “one tenement.” “One can spot that the film lacks a decisive cut through reality. The struggle of the Jewish society was of mass character. Narrowing down a general problem to the confines of one courtyard is inappropriate, since it gives the issue too small a dimension. Director Lewicki has reservations about taking up – beside the issue of external (German) racism – the issue of inner racism, which stemmed from the antagonism of some classes of Polish society toward Jews. I doubt whether the response to the film is going to be favorable.”³⁵

Thus, the director of a film about war-time “issues of Poles and Jews” faces a task of appropriate presentation of the arguments, as if the film were to be a treatise or even a judgment. But a prejudiced judgment: one which should be passed with the application of the basic criterion of giving justice to the whole society, the nation as a whole, which as a whole helped the Jews.

“The difficulty of establishing appropriate balance,”³⁶ which Roman Zimand writes about, after having read Adam Czerniakow’s *Diary*, does not fit the public discourse, since the difficulty does not stem from the necessity of some uncontroversial synthesis, but is contained in the inability to balance the arguments, which stems from the fact that the experiences and perspectives on both sides of the wall

³³ The problems with the carousel are reconstructed in T. Szarota, *Karuzela na placu Krasińskich. Czy „śmiały się tłumy wesole”? Spór o postawę warszawiaków wobec powstania w getcie*. See also idem, *Karuzela na placu Krasińskich. Studia i szkice z lat wojny i okupacji* (Warsaw, 2007).

³⁴ M. Małatyńska, “Między winą i rozgrzeszeniem,” *Tygodnik Powszechny* 10 (1996).

³⁵ Minutes of the Selection Committee session. Appendix to the article by P. Litka, op. cit., 71.

³⁶ R. Zimand, “W nocy od 12 do 5 rano nie spałem.” *Dziennik Adama Czerniakowa – próba lektury* (Paris, 1979), 27.

differed totally – as it was in the case of Roman Polański's *The Pianist*, whose hero, regardless of what befalls him on the part of Poles (and Germans), remains first and foremost lonely in his suffering and fate.

Obviously *The Pianist*, similarly to e.g. Jan Łomicki's *Jeszcze tylko ten las* [*Just Beyond the Forest*] (1992), also tries to show in its background the "the social cross-section" and the variety of stances toward Jews in hiding. Polański, in a school-like manner, reminds viewers even of the most basic dates, beginning with the outbreak of the war on 1 September 1939 (for which he is praised; let the West know). And so he shows Home Army soldiers helping Szpilman, the people who support him and who turn their back on him as well as a Polish woman (a petit bourgeois?) who starts screaming at the top of her lungs at the sight of the Jew in her tenement. Extortionists are there too. A similar pretext in Łomnicki's film is given by a long sequence of little Rutka's journey on a train during which various stances of Poles are presented.

Jewish film characters are usually conscious of their fates' distinctness, starting with Dawidek, who in the last scene, full of pathos, of *Border Street* decides to join the ghetto uprising, and ending with Szpilman, separated both from his people and the people who are helping him. Yet in films this fundamental difference in experiences is expressed first and foremost in the visual "appearance" which evokes a feeling of strangeness.

Obviously, "good appearance" was often the key factor helping people of Jewish origin survive on the "Aryan" side. Being in hiding for a long time, in turn, was often connected with "bad" appearance. However, the visual aspect is reinforced in the context of a tendency toward (stereo)typification characteristic of films, which guarantees effective visual communication.

In this way a problem of Polish culture much deeper than the political circumstances is revealed. During the discussion at the producers' screening of *A Long Night* Krzysztof Teodor Toeplitz said: "it is even some kind of manner that seems horrifying to me. So..."

"... the Jew is in principle a disgusting man..."

... he is extremely scared himself, has a disgusting external appearance and he is a man who does not arouse feelings other than pity, which is not too noble a feeling, and it seems to me that such a character does not appeal to any elevated feelings or humanistic impulses. When you watch such a character on the screen, who is among Poles, he makes a terrible impression, all the more so because this presence of his is such a burden for the Poles around him. This character simply does not defend himself and consequently the possibility of the people around him dying just to save a disgusting Jew acquires different dimensions."³⁷

³⁷ Stenogram, p. 4. Tadeusz Konwicki agreed with Z. Toeplitz: "It is true that Jews are often presented in our films in a horrifying way, and what I mean here is their appearance." (ibidem, p. 8).

What does it mean that “the character is disgusting”? And actually for whom is he so? Who says so and who feels it in such a way?

This matter appears directly and palpably (visually) in almost all of the films mentioned. We see characters either clearly portrayed as Jews (such as the old tailor in *Border Street*, who is characterized by both his dress and his Semitic “typicality”³⁸) or recognized as such. In the first case viewers’ possible prejudices, which the opinions expressed at the screening could be symptomatic of, are attributed to aesthetics. The old man in Ford’s film becomes an embodiment of the Jewish fate, a symbol of the dying nation, from the start portrayed as a man of dignity and inner strength. The more he resembles a Jew, the stronger he contradicts the negative stereotypes.

The other case – that of recognition – appears much more often in films about the occupation. The above-mentioned reaction of the Polish woman to Szpilman in hiding, the observation of Irena in *The Holy Week*, the importunate staring at people who look “suspicious” in order to assess their ethnicity – all these behaviors describe the initial form of Poles’ attitude toward Jews, which anticipates the question about stances: it is a recognition of otherness, often a revelation of fear; only later does the impulse of hostility or the willingness to help appear.

In fact, obviously in an indirect manner, Toeplitz simply says that it is difficult to arouse positive feelings toward somebody who looks like a Jew (well, somebody who does not look like one has an easier task doing without help). The journalist is only one step away from stating that we do not want to help somebody who is very, if not almost disgustingly, “alien.” It is another motif that can be regarded as a symptom of the Polish attitude toward the Jews (in the sense that it not only describes it, but also reveals it).

One of the scenes which the commentators present at the producers’ screening of *A Long Night* found particularly offensive was the moment when Katarzyna discovers the Jew hiding behind the curtain. She literally reveals his Jewishness, what leads to the common recognition of danger by all inhabitants. Marta screams in terror: “He’s hiding a Jew”, which equates “He’ll bring death upon us”. This reaction... is involuntary – this very moment brings both the recognition of the Jew (which is connected with his “bad” appearance) and the recognition of the fear which it provokes. It is a deep and atavistic fear; the Jew’s face – the Other’s face – becomes tantamount to death. Thus, Nasfeter positions fear in the center of his diagnosis and allows the viewers to then observe the characters’ attempts at transgressing this fear. What is important is that the Jew is discovered by Katarzyna, who from the start has been presented as an honest and brave woman.

The viewer is also thrown into this situation. In some sense the violent reaction to Katarzyna’s cry becomes his reaction too. The scene is the first moment when we see the face of the man in hiding. Until then it has remained hidden, and Korsak

³⁸ Ford, returning to the discussion on *Border Street*, reminds that as for the role of Władysław Godik it was also said that “the hero of the film was disgusting, that he would not do honor to our propaganda policy.” (ibidem, pp. 19–20).

talks about him without any clear identification (he asks the partisan what he is supposed to do "with him? He came a week ago"), and "misters" him. Moreover, we never learn his name. Thus, the viewer and Katarzyna are simultaneously confronted with Jewishness. And in that violent reaction an impulse, which is of key significance to the director, is revealed – the difference is recognized and fear appears.

Jerzy Andrzejewski describes this process by pointing to the tension structural to Polish-Jewish relations: sight – appearance. *Holy Week* begins with a reminder: "Malecki has not seen Irena Lilien for a long time."³⁹ Thus, the meeting is simultaneously an introduction conducted at a special moment – the uprising in the ghetto, which has "something of a spectacle"⁴⁰ in it, has just started. A dead Jew in the window of a burning building also attracts attention. A Warsaw smart aleck will say to a woman who does not see too well, "take out your eye, lady, then you'll see."⁴¹ Hence, the story told by the writer takes place also at the level of what is only *shown* (yet in this dimension it has a "classless" character).

Irena evokes a feeling of strangeness in Malecki – strangeness he can hardly conceal and which he excuses himself from feeling. The time elapsed since their last meeting is partly the reason for it, but the uncertainty is caused first and foremost by Irena's appearance – since it arouses suspicion: "she seemed even more Semitic." And later when the woman is afraid comes a remark: "you don't need to be very insightful to think her a Jewish woman now."⁴²

Irena herself, when she talks about her father's last moments, says that he was "a completely different man. He looked like an old, sickly Jew, a frightened kike afraid of death."⁴³ Similarly, during the conversation with the janitor, Malecki is struck by his appearance: "it was a Semitic face, a face just then given away by the eyes that were undoubtedly Jewish."⁴⁴ All these situations paralyze the characters, because they evoke the feeling of strangeness, and consequently fear, and they make any action impossible – the observed person is described as the Other. Irena was passively looking at her father blending into a group of Jews similar to him; Malecki grows silent when he discovers Zamoyski's secret, he needs to overcome his own reservations about providing help to Irena. In the end it is also the strangeness, the otherness visible to the naked eye, which explains the inertia of the observers of the uprising. The Other is created by a gaze which defines the difference. Problems start with the question of the attitude toward it.

Jan Błoński in his analysis of the poem *A Poor Christian Looks at the Ghetto* shifted Miłosz's poetic image onto the whole society.⁴⁵ This shift is characteristic

³⁹ J. Andrzejewski, "Holy Week," in *Niby gaj. Opowiadania* (Warsaw, 1961), 225.

⁴⁰ Ibidem, 232.

⁴¹ Ibidem, 244.

⁴² Ibidem, 275.

⁴³ Ibidem, 270.

⁴⁴ Ibidem, 324.

⁴⁵ J. Błoński, *Biedni Polacy patrzą na getto* (Cracow, 1994) (orig. published in *Tygodnik Powszechny* 2 (1987).

of the debate on Polish faults and contributions toward Jews precisely because of its close entanglement with this collective context, in this meaningless speech, according to which the individuals' behavior varied, but the nation made the grade. Błoński – before he proposes a category of shared guilt and moral responsibility to be used for the description of Polish consciences – reconstructs this entanglement characteristic of both the Polish debate and its participants (this impulse he discovers also in himself, which makes him want to excuse the nation's behavior on its behalf). The community he describes, thus opening a new thread in the discussion on Poles' attitude toward Jews, is a community carrying the burden of “the complex of being a helpless witness of the Holocaust,” as a reviewer of *The Holy Week* wrote a few years later.⁴⁶ And for which, of course, the image of fighters riding a carousel had a therapeutic function.

Operating on a much deeper level, Nasfeter reveals something different and in doing that he transgresses the fixed conventions of showing the attitude of Poles toward Jews. In his film “a poor Pole” is looking at a Jew, which within the film's narrative construction means that he is simply looking death in the face. This is an obvious reference to the situation during the occupation and the penalties Poles who helped Jews were liable to. But first and foremost Nasfeter visually establishes Jewishness as insurmountable strangeness. The gaze by means of which a Jew is recognized and fear provoked (because something has to be done with “it”) is originally connected with reduction to strangeness, but ultimately it reaches much deeper; it penetrates the unconscious levels of culture. The visual perception evokes emotions, setting in motion the cultural whole – its realized myths and unconscious fears, desires and dreams.⁴⁷

The gaze at/of the other challenges one to a duel: it establishes the “I” and simultaneously forces one to take some action (in order to transgress the paralysis caused by what is being recognized).

However, Nasfeter stops his characters before they have taken any action; consequently, this stopping, perhaps overcautious, cements the impression of a psychological paralysis. Before the residents of the house have made any decision, Korsak together with the Jew he provided shelter to walks away into the night, not wanting to prolong the tense situation and to expose them to a risk. The participants of the producer's screening of *A Long Night* pointed to this solution, suggesting that after all the Jew would not have been denounced. This allows the debaters to move away from the analysis of the film and to return to the beaten track of objective truth and

⁴⁶ T. Sobolewski, “Lęk przestrzeni,” *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 26 February 1996.

⁴⁷ In Andrzejewski's book and later on in Wajda's film this gaze is also one of sexual fascination. Malecki and Piotrowski look at Irena that way. In this context yet another model of unconscious functioning of Jewishness in Polish culture is revealed – a model in a special way interweaved with femininity: that is fascinating, but at the same time degrading, primitive sexuality. Cf. with M. Janion's analysis of the epithet “beautiful Jewish woman” in the introduction to A. Araszkiewicz, “Wypowiadam Wam moje życie.” *Melancholia Zuzanny Ginczanki* (Warsaw, 2001).

evaluation of society. As if summing up the discussion, minister Tadeusz Zaorski says,

"... I too have some personal experiences ..."

...and I think that there are many more Poles who sacrificed their lives saving Jews than those who denounced Jews." And so the minister's "experiences" become a safeguard of the proper assessment of the Polish nation.

However, contrary to Nasfeter's declarations the matter is not so simple. Korsak, who is the cause of the whole controversy as the one who took the Jew under his roof, brings in additional danger, because he stores weapons for the partisans. According to the debaters, the character seems to be alienated "from the small town's environment." A few commenters have mentioned his fashionable (in the 1960s) white fur coat and the style of a modern young man. Nasfeter defends such artistic creativity, explaining that he aimed at aesthetic singling out of the character. This measure proved effective but it has its consequences which the screening's participants did not notice. For if one accepts the director's argumentation and examines the way in which he creates his character, then the conclusion is a harsh one: the only just one in the town is outside of this world.

A Long Night presents an immensely suggestive picture of an upcountry town; it is neither the first nor the last time that Nasfeter proves to be able to create a tense, anxious atmosphere using minimal artistic means. The impression of realism is stressed even by the participants, at times with reluctance though (this reluctance stems from the fact that the greater the realism, the stronger the impingement of the work's message). The film starts with a long sequence of posting announcements on the walls of the houses of a desolate small town resembling a stone labyrinth.

After the end of the opening titles we can see that the announcement forbids Jews to leave the Jewish quarter. And in smaller print it threatens death to anyone (without mention of nationality) who should help Jews. The small town itself seems to be located on the fringe of the occupation; the people are occupied with their own business, work, trade, mourning. The times are harsh but it seems that one can survive; however, some anxiety and uncertainty can be noticed: "we've run out of food coupons, but one needs to eat," as the salesman in a grocery store points out.

Another aspect of Nasfeter's film's subversiveness, which was noticed (or at least expressed) during the screening only by Wanda Jakubowska, is revealed en passant. "We can see here the passive attitude of part of society toward the occupation and Jewish issues,"⁴⁸ said the author of *Ostatni etap* [*The Last Stage*], which showed the prisoner community of Auschwitz as organized and active. So far Polish society during the occupation had not been pictured in such a way. Korsak is extraordinary because he transgresses the passivity in two different ways: he helps the Jews, but he is also the only character to assume an active stance at all (although with reluc-

⁴⁸ Stenogram, p. 12.

tance). Partisans or other fighting persons (Katarzyna's husband) function outside the world pictured in the movie, similarly to Germans. The director constructs the all-pervasive atmosphere of fear – which influences the moods and actions of the characters and which climaxes in the scene of the Jew's recognition – by means of gossip ("people are saying"), sounds of shots and the play of light, but without showing the perpetrators.

This realistic composition forms a whole that can be read in a metaphorical fashion, ending with two silhouettes in the dark: Korsak's light one and the dark one of the Jew. The man's white fur coat, the character of the village idiot who knows the most about Germans, a coffin leaning on the wall as if from Aleksander Gierymski's paintings – such details, although they convincingly fit in with the mode of representation, also reveal the second basis of the narrative. Korsak's decision to leave the house into the night together with the Jew does not contradict the film's consistent realism. But, at the same time, it opens the symbolic realm in which the unnamed stranger of Jewish origin does not find a place under the Polish roof. Consequently, the viewer can neither identify with the only just one in the town – because he leaves – nor regard him as a representative of the nation. The nation stays at home.

Katarzyna, with Marta's silent support, defends the Jew. The woman who made the terrible recognition speaks in a totally different manner just a moment later: "You want to denounce a man to the Germans?" It is a characteristic substitution in which the universal identification and bond is contrasted with the particular, ethnic identification and bond. Frightened Katjan and Piekarczykowa are inclined to denounce the stranger. Their arguments are to a large extent the arguments of a partly latent discussion which goes on in Polish culture. And so Piekarczykowa says that "we will not suffer for them," and she adds that "rescuing one's life is not a sin. God will forgive." Katjan, in turn, refers to another stereotype: "They'll meet their end cos of what they did to Christ."

The revelation that the argument is pointless since the Jew has disappeared from the house does not bring appeasement. On the contrary, it reveals instincts that have remained hidden. Piekarczykowa inspects the fugitive's straw mattress, looking for gold.⁴⁹ Katjan rapes his sister-in-law.⁵⁰ This ending was very badly received by the commission evaluating the film. The whole situation shown from young Marta's point of view is something of a rite of passage for her. The girl's drama, another interpretative dimension of Nasfeter's film, was regarded as inadequate in the face of the complex situation of the occupation, which was summed up by reluctant minis-

⁴⁹ "Behavior of this kind is absolutely beyond the psychology of this woman," said e.g. minister Zaorski (Stenogram, p. 30).

⁵⁰ This scene triggered a lot of comments: "At times in this film there are scenes which remind us of Swedish films, and even the scene of rape is not so important taking into consideration everything that happened during the occupation," said Ernest Bryll (Stenogram, p. 5). Director Pastuszko: "I do not think such visual reception is necessary for a film of this genre, unless we want to follow the tendencies of the entertainment film." (ibidem, p. 14).

ter Zaorski, who pointed out that "the ending pushes everything into the sphere of intimate emotions."⁵¹

But it was exactly there that the director wanted to locate his film – in the sphere of intimate emotions, not necessarily realized and wanted (perhaps even contrary to his own intentions). During the conversation with Korsak when the sounds of the residents arguing about "what should be done with it" can be heard through the door, the Jew remarks, "They must hate me now. But it's fear." Korsak admits that "everybody is a bit afraid." "I know it, one is as if not oneself," adds the fugitive, justifying their stance. And so on the verbal level the fear, somehow signalled from the first sequence showing the posting of announcements, functions as a justification or explanation of stances. However, it is of declarative character; we see people who cannot deal with the fear – and we also see the devastating consequences of that fear, which persist and turn into aggression regardless of whether its cause has disappeared.⁵² It might be added that it is fear which those who are its cause cannot be forgiven for.

Marta and Katarzyna, united by their experiences, want only "for this night to end." Yet the consequences of the events in the small town shall persist – this night has still not ended. Nasfeter's film is a consistent story about paralyzing fear of death and the feeling of strangeness toward the other. But it does not stop there, because it also shows the moment after, when this untransgressed fear gives rise to aggression and guilt. Next, this interweaving of emotions will be covered with the language of suppression and understatement. However, those who were not allowed to stay come back – like Mickiewicz's ghost.

In the review of Wajda's *The Holy Week* written at about Easter 1996 Piotr Wojciechowski asked this question directly: "What if the Jewish woman knocked on the door now?"⁵³ And he prophesied: "In a year television will introduce this elegant and emotional Jewish woman into all Polish houses during Holy Week . . . And each white tablecloth will be covered with traces of soot which was falling from the sky in 1943."

Translated by Anna Brzostowska

Abstract

The article is an analysis of Janusz Nasfeter's film, *Długa noc* [*A Long Night*] (1967), and the discussion during the producer's screening in June 1967, concerning the film's merit and approving its distribution. Both the subject matter of the film (help-

⁵¹ Stenogram, p. 31.

⁵² Krzysztof Kieślowski suggests a different outlook on the consequences of war-time experiences. In *Dekalog, Osiem* [*The Decalogue VIII*] (1988) he shows a Jewish woman (Teresa Marczevska) who thanks to the help of Poles survived the war as a small girl but until this day wrestles with the helplessness and humiliation it caused.

ing a Jew hiding in a Polish home during the occupation) and the circumstances of its producer's screening (several days after the Israeli victory in the Six-Day War) enable it to be seen as a model: the film itself and its reception are largely characteristic of the Polish memory and attitudes to the Jews during the war, their forms of expression in Polish film, and the language of public debate on this issue.

Key words

Polish-Jewish relations, representation of the Holocaust in film, visual memory