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Anti-Jewish Violence in Postwar Poland as Presented in Memorial Books

Przemoc antyżydowska w powojennej Polsce w świetle ksiąg pamięci

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Abstract
This article critically analyzes descriptions included in memorial books of anti-Jewish violence in postwar Poland. Its objective is to familiarize the reader with the narrative form, structure, and main threads about this subject. The author discusses topics including placement of texts about postwar violence against Jews in memorial books, their composition, genre diversification, and issues connected with the multitude of points of view and the status of authors (including testimonies given by those who were direct victims of violence, repatriates from the USSR, Jewish 'travelers' visiting postwar Poland, and Christian witnesses). Along with analyzing descriptions of acts of violence, the author focuses on selected issues: survivors' physical and mental condition on returning to their hometowns, reactions to their returns of the Christian population, and reasons for the postwar violence (traditions of prewar antisemitism, Polish complicity in Holocaust crimes, and the demoralizing impact of German occupation). The most important research problem, though, is addressing the question of the overall vision in the memorial books of Polish-Jewish relations immediately after the war, as well as indicating that vision's most characteristic denominators.

Keywords
memorial books, anti-Jewish violence in postwar Poland, Polish-Jewish relations during the first years after the Second World War, narratives about antisemitism

The main goal of this article is to critically analyze descriptions of anti-Jewish violence in postwar Poland, which are found in memorial books. This intentional limiting of the source pool to this single type of text necessarily resulted in limiting the research perspective. For my objective is a presentation of forms and manners of its depiction in this specific kind of source, not a comprehensive, exhaustive characterization of the phenomenon mentioned in the title. In principle I do not juxtapose information from memorial books with that from other sources, except in rare caseswhere such juxtaposition is a direct

consequence of the specificity of the research problem – for instance, a question about the credibility of the message being analyzed. Occasionally, depending on the degree to which individual acts of violence have been researched in the reference literature, I add and expand on some of the descriptions in the margins of the main narrative.

To date, the subject of how postwar anti-Jewish violence was presented in memorial books has not been discussed in a comprehensive, separate study. This is not to say that it has remained completely unaddressed. Many scholars who deal with the history of Jews during this period have made references to the contents of memorial books, treating them as an important and valuable source of information. Nevertheless, research on the subject specified in the title above remains largely fragmentary. Monika Adamczyk-Garbowska, the first researcher who conducted more extensive research on this issue, treated it as an important element of the narration created by Holocaust survivors returning after the war to localities where they had grown up.[1]

For the purpose of this study I carried out a search query encompassing 152 memorial books, that is, about half of all publications of this type devoted to localities situated within Poland's postwar borders.

Lying at the source of shaping the memorial-book phenomenon is collective anti-Jewish violence, which was almost genetically connected with the genre's creation, development, and popularization. The genesis of memorial books dates back to the Middle Ages, when *Memorbücher* – books commemorating victims of that era's anti-Jewish riots and pogroms – began to be written in western and southern Germany and in Switzerland. These books usually contained lists with the names of the murdered members of the communities. They were read out in synagogues on the anniversaries of the pogroms, during prayers for the dead. Those in attendance were also reminded of circumstances of the victims' deaths. Lists of murdered victims could run to several thousand names. In Germany that tradition survived until the nineteenth century,[2] while among Polish Jews it was still alive during the interwar period, with examples including the memorial books of Zhytomyr,[3] Płoskirów (Proskurov, now

[1] Monika Adamczyk-Garbowska, *Patterns of Return: Survivors' Postwar Journeys to Poland* (Washington, D.C.: USHMM, 2007); Monika Adamczyk-Garbowska, Adam Kopciowski, "Zamiast macewy. Żydowskie księgi pamięci [Instead of a Matzeva. Jewish Memorial Books]," in *Następstwa zagłady Żydów. Polska 1944–2010* [The Aftermath of the Holocaust. Poland 1944–2010], eds Feliks Tych, Monika Adamczyk-Garbowska (Lublin: Wydawnictwo UMCS & ŻIH, 2011), pp. 441–470.

[2] Olga Goldberg-Mulkiewicz, "Księgi pamięci ('Memorbuecher') a mit żydowskiego miasteczka [Memorial Books ('Memorbuecher') and the Myth of the Jewish Town]," *Etnografia Polska* vol. 35, 2 (1991): 187.

[3] *Yizker dem ondenken Zhitomirer kdoyshim / Yiskor: the Community of Zitomir, Russia: Pogroms of 1905–1917, 18, 19, 20* (New York: United Zhitomir Relief Committee, 1921).

Khmelnytskyi),[4] and Felsztyn (now Skelivka),[5] published in the United States, which commemorate victims of the Ukrainian pogroms in 1919.

A turning point in the genre's history came with the destruction of Europe's Jews during the Second World War. That genocide's unprecedented scale breathed new life into the fading tradition. Individual publishing initiatives became a grassroots editorial mass movement, resulting in the publication of 540 memorial books devoted to localities in the Second Republic of Poland. Their authors – chiefly *Landsmannschafts* scattered around the globe bringing together prewar émigrés and Holocaust survivors – conceived the books as performing a twofold role. First, those publications functioned as studies documenting individual-community histories, with the objective of saving those tragic histories from oblivion and transferring them to subsequent generations. Second, they constituted commemorations of and tributes to Holocaust survivors.

Titles of most memorial books state which town, region, or country they concern. They also contain expressions such as *yizker-bukh*, *gedenkbukh*, *ondenkbuhh*, and *sefer zikaron*, which mean "memorial book" in Yiddish and Hebrew, as well as *pinkas*/*pinkes*, that is, chronicle. Titles of other books contain words such as *khurbn*, *umkum*, and *shoah* (the Holocaust), *matsevet zikaron* (memory matsevah), and *gal-ed*/*denkmol* (memorial). Authors' central points of reference, the Holocaust, also affects the contents' order, with most memorial books consisting of three parts, which describe the prewar history of the given community, in the midst of the extermination, and after the Holocaust. In the first part one can find the community's earliest, often mythologized history and its development; texts presenting the social, economic, political, cultural, and religious life; short biographies of eminent or characteristic people; and topographic descriptions (streets, characteristic places and buildings). The second part is a description of the Holocaust, often in the form of eyewitness testimonies. The third and last part is a description of survivors' postwar returns to their hometowns and the activities of the *Landsmannschafts*. Most books end with a list of people killed during the Holocaust and obituaries.[6]

[4] *Khurbn Proskurov; tsum ondenk fun di haylige neshumes vos zaynen umgekumen in der shreklikher shhite, vos iz ongefirt gevoren durkh di hajyamakes, 15 hodesh adar I, 679* [The Destruction of Proskurov: in Memory of the holy Souls murdered during the terrible Slaughter carried out by the Haidamaks on February 15, 1919] (New York: 1924).

[5] *Felshtin; zamlbukh tsum ondenk fun di felshtiner kdoyshim* [Felsztyn: a Memorial Almanac of the Martyrs of Felsztyn] (New York: First Felshteener Benevolent Ass'n, 1937).

[6] More about memorial books see Monika Adamczyk-Garbowska, Adam Kopciowski, Andrzej Trzciński, "Księgi pamięci jako źródło wiedzy o historii, kulturze i zagładzie polskich Żydów [Memorial Books as a Source of Knowledge about the History, Culture and the Holocaust of the Polish Jews]," in *„Tam był kiedyś mój dom…" Księgi pamięci gmin żydowskich* ['There was once my home…' Memorial Books of the Jewish Community], selection, edition, and foreword by Monika Adamczyk-Garbowska, Adam Kopciowski, Andrzej Trzciński (Lublin: Wydawnictwo UMCS, 2009), pp. 11–86.

Last in the long chain of acts of anti-Jewish violence the memorial books describe is the wave of antisemitism that rolled across Central-Eastern Europe immediately after the war. Texts on this topic vary in length and can be found in most books about localities within the post-1945 Polish borders. However, except for studies of the Kielce pogrom, these are rarely separate articles. Violence against Jews is usually discussed in texts of a general character describing life after the Holocaust. Their titles contain expressions such as "Shtetl nokh der bafrayung" (Shtetl after liberation) and "Shtot nokh milkhome" (Town after the war), the survivors' lot, including "Di sheyre hapleyte" (Holocaust survivors), returns to hometowns, including "Tsurik keyn Poyln" (Back in Poland), and visits of various lengths, including "A bazukh in shtetl nohhn khurbn" (Visiting the shtetl after the war), "A bazukh in mayn khorever heym" (Visiting my destroyed home), "Oyf di khurves" (On the ruins), "Oyf di shpurn fun farshvundn yidish lebn" (Following traces of destroyed Jewish life), and "Mayn letster blik oyf unzer shtetl" (My last look at our shtetl).

The number of separate texts about specific instances of violence is small. These include Hersh Leyb Radzinski's[7] testimony "Arum geringlt durkh vilde hayes" (Surrounded by wild beasts), a description of an attack on a house inhabited by Jews in Pińczów,[8] Eliezer Levin's "Di moyredike shkhite " (Bestial slaughter), on the murder of five Jews in Skarżysko-Kamienna,[9] Hanka Olszak's "Mayn tragishe nakht in Zhelehov" (My tragic night in Żelechów), about the murder of four Jews,[10] the description of the death of Mendel Laks from Leżajsk,[11] and a chapter of Genia Szpigl's longer study "Poylishe merder" (Polish

[7] In this article, I use a varied rendering of Jewish personal names. As a rule, I strive to preserve their Yiddish or Polish pronunciation. In the main text and descriptive footnotes, I use the English transliteration of Yiddish/Hebrew given names (e.g., Leyb rather than Lejb) and the Polish spelling of surnames (e.g., Czarnocha rather than Tsharnokha). In source footnotes referencing Yiddish and Hebrew, I apply English phonetic spelling based on Ashkenazi (Yiddish) and Sephardic (Hebrew) pronunciation. As a result, the same person's name may appear differently in the main text and in the footnotes (e.g., Przepiórka in the main text and Pshepiurka in the footnotes).

[8] Hersh Leyb Radzhinski, "Arum geringlt durkh vilde hayes," in *Sefer-zikaron li-kehilat Pintshev; in Pintshev togt shoyn nisht / A Book of Memory of the Jewish Community of Pinczów (Poland)*, ed. Mordechai Shner (Tel Aviv: Union of the Remnants of the Jewish Community of Pinczów (Poland), 1970), p. 324.

[9] Eliezer Levin, "Di moyredike shkhite," in *Skarzhisko Kamienna; sefer zikaron / The "Yizchor" Book in Memoriam of the Jewish Community of Skarzysko and Surroundings* (Tel Aviv: Organization of Skarzysko Former Inhabitants in Israel in cooperation with the Organization of the United States, 1973), pp. 156–159.

[10] Hanka Olshak, "Mayn tragishe nakht in Zhelehov," in *Yizker-bukh fun der Zhelehover Yidisher kehile* [The Memorial Book of the Jewish Community of Żelechów], ed. A. Wolf Jasni (Chicago: Tsentraler Zhelekhover Landsmanshaft in Shikago, 1953), pp. 318–319.

[11] M. Sz., "Mendele Laks toyt [The Death of Mendele Laks]," in *Lizhensk; sefer zikaron li-kedoshei Lizhensk she-nisepu be-shoat ha-natsim* [Leżajsk: the Memorial Book of the Martyrs

murderers), on the murder of two Jews in a village near Leżajsk and a Polish underground unit's attack there in winter of 1945.[12]

Although chronological division of books' contents is relatively strict, much information about anti-Jewish violence after 1944 can be found both in parts about the postwar period and in those about the war. There are several reasons for this. First, many authors describing their experiences between 1939 and 1944/1945 managed to survive until the liberation by hiding in Poland, where they then remained for some time. Thus their postwar experiences constitute an integral part of their experiences, constituting the last, inseparable element of the narration, which ends not so much with the end of the occupation as a few years later with the authors' departure from Poland. The lack of a clear *caesura* between wartime and the time of 'peace', observed in many testimonies, also stems from survivors' perception of numerous similarities and parallels between 'free' Poland and the occupation period (widespread antisemitism, constant danger of death, and in some cases the necessity to hide one's Jewish identity). Many scholars who study this period have found that anti-Jewish violence was not a postwar phenomenon, a sudden and inexplicable eruption of hatred. Quite the opposite: it was a direct continuation of earlier events, that is, organized complicity among a large portion of Polish society in crimes committed on Jews from 1942 to 1945, during the Holocaust's "third phase."[13]

Shifra Nusbaum's testimony published in the Tarnobrzeg memorial book is characteristic in this regard. Liberated by Soviet troops in March 1944 in Kolomyia, Nusbaum returned to her hometown in summer. The reality of life for Jews on that terrain was similar in many respects to their situation before the 'liberation'. When Nusbaum and Tzvi Korn, a young boy who was accompanying her, wanted to enter a lodging house in Przeworsk they were met by a sign forbidding entry to Jews. The couple was removed from the house in the middle of the night at the insistence of the remaining guests who suspected that Tzvi and Shifra had kept their Jewish identities secret. Following her traumatic experiences connected with the pogrom in Rzeszów, Nusbaum decided to completely sever her ties with the Jewish community and leave that town posing as a Polish woman. She recalls:

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of Leżajsk, murdered during the Holocaust by the Nazis], ed. Khayim Rabin (Tel Aviv: Yirgun Oley Lizhensk be-Israel, 1970/1971), p. 330.

[12] Genia Shpigl, "Tsvey shvesterlekh in natsi teg [Two Little Sisters in Nazi Days]," in ibidem, p. 281.

[13] Alina Skibińska, "Powiat biłgorajski [Biłgoraj county]," in *Dalej jest noc. Losy Żydów w wybranych powiatach okupowanej Polski*, eds Barbara Engelking, Jan Grabowski (Warsaw: Stowarzyszenie Centrum Badań nad Zagładą Żydów, 2018), vol. 1, p. 362; Karolina Panz, "Powiat nowotarski [Nowy Targ county]," in ibidem, vol. 2, p. 358. English edition: *Night without End: The Fate of Jews in German-Occupied Poland*, eds Jan Grabowski, Barbara Engelking (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2022).

> We left for Cracow the same night. With a Russian officer's help and Christian documents we managed to reach Bytom. After all that I lived on fake 'Aryan' papers in Bytom, a liberated Polish town. Today this looks almost like madness but that was the situation the 'liberated' Jew was in back then. In the new documents it was written that I was the widow of a Polish officer murdered by Russians in Katyń.[14]

Owing to her 'good appearance' Nusbaum managed to blend in with her surroundings:

> They took me for one of them, so I did not fear. After the Kielce pogrom in 1946 they came to me for a party. They drank, enjoyed themselves, and the general mood was this: let's drink to Polish 'heroes' every Pole should emulate.[15]

A while later Nusbaum's customers demanded that she put a sign on her newsstand with the German inscription "*Für Juden eintritt verboten*" (No entry for Jews). Rejecting one's Jewish identity, however, was no guarantee of safety. Srulke Kot, describing Yom Kippur celebrations in a Białystok synagogue in fall of 1944, turned his attention to a man who was participating in the prayer:

> There is a Jew dressed just like a Pole. A bushy moustache, a Polish cap, high boots, and a cross on the chest. It is difficult to see a Jew in him. The only indication is his eyes puffy from crying. […] Some time later I learned that he was murdered by Poles when he had returned with 10 other Jews to his hometown.[16]

As exemplified by Shifra Nusbaum's testimony, the location of an event being described doesn't always match the place that publication is about. One clear example is texts recalling the Kielce pogrom, as these are found in the Kielce memorial book, grouped in a separate part, "Ha-pogrom be-shanat 1946" (The 1946 pogrom),[17] and also in the memorial books of Chmielnik (testimonies of two eyewitnesses, Yosef Kantor and Isroel Turkeltaub,[18] and a long biographical

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[14] Shifra Nusboym, "In bafraytn Poyln [In liberated Poland]," in *Kehilat Tarnobrzeg-Dzhikow (Galitsya ha-maaravit); sefer zikaron ve-edut* [The Jewish Community of Tarnobrzeg/Dzików (Western Galicia): a Book of Remembrance and Testimony], ed. Yakov Yehoshua Flaysher (Tel Aviv: Vaad Irgun Yotsei Tarnobzheg-Dzhikov be-Israel, 1973), p. 360. Unless otherwise stated, all English translations are based on the author of the article's translations into Polish.

[15] Ibidem, p. 361.

[16] Srulke Kot, "Der ershter yom-kiper in der heym-shtot [The First Yom Kippur in the Hometown]," in *Der Byalistoker yizker bukh / The Bialystoker Memorial Book*, eds I. Shmulevytsh et al. (New York: The Bialystoker Center, 1982), pp. 252–253.

[17] "Ha-pogrom be-shanat 1946," in Pinhas Tsitron, *Sefer Kyelts; toledot kehilat Kyelts mi-yom hivasda ve-ad hurbana* [The Book of Kielce: the History of the Kielce Community from its Founding to its Destruction] (Tel Aviv: Irgun Olei Kyelts be-Israel, 1956/1957), pp. 248–264.

[18] Yosef Kantor, "Tsurik keyn Poyln nokh der milhome [Back to Poland after the War]," in *Pinkes Khmielnik; yizker-bukh nokh der khorev-gevorener yidisher kehile / Pinkas Chmielnik:*

entry about one victim, Shmul Wajnberg[19] from Chmielnik, Sierpc (shocking testimony given by Borukh Dorfman,[20] who was beaten there by the crowd), and Wieruszów (testimony by Karola Frajlich-Manes who was staying in Kielce in summer of 1946).[21] Similarly, an extensive description of the Rzeszów pogrom is in the Tarnobrzeg memorial book, while the Cracow pogrom is discussed in the Staszów publication.[22] The book about Kazimierz Dolny provides information on the murders of four halutzim near Łódź,[23] while the Markuszów book recounts details of the murder of Isroel Fiszbejn in November 1945 at the Lublin railway station.[24]

Yizker Book in Memory of the annihilated Jewish Community, ed. Efraim Shedletski (Tel Aviv: Irgun Yotsei Khmielnik be-Israel, 1960), pp. 923–924; Isroel Turkeltoyb, "Khmielniker korbones in keltser pogrom [The Chmielnik Victims of the Kielce Pogrom]," in ibidem, pp. 925–926. During the mob's attack on the building at 7 Planty Street, Turkeltoyb was in the study of Seweryn Kahane, the chairman of the Jewish Committee, and witnessed his death. According to his testimony, four Jews from Chmielnik were killed in Kielce: Shmul Wajnberg, Moshe Yudel Eisenberg, Mendel Mikolowski, and a woman with the surname Plotno (according to Joanna Tokarska-Bakir, Gienia Samborska/Golda Plotno from Sandomierz miscarried during the pogrom but survived. See Joanna Tokarska-Bakir, *Pod klątwą. Społeczny portret pogromu kieleckiego* [Cursed: A Social Portrait of the Kielce Pogrom] (Warsaw: Czarna Owca, 2018), vol. 1, p. 478.

[19] Khaya Rozenblum-Fruht, "Shmul Vaynberg – der korbn fun keltser pogrom [Shmul Vaynberg – the Victim of the Kielce Pogrom]," in *Pinkes Khmielnik*…, pp. 929–930.

[20] Boruh Dorfman, "Der lebn-geblibener [The Survivor]," in *Kehilat Sierpts; sefer zikaron* [The Jewish Community of Sierpc: a Memorial Book], ed. Efraim Talmi (Vloka) (Tel Aviv: Irgunim shel Yotsei Sierpts be-Israel u-va-Huts la-Arets, 1959), pp. 476–477. Cf. Tokarska-Bakir, *Pod klątwą*…, vol. 1, pp. 40–42.

[21] Karola Fraylikh-Manes, "Der keltser pogrom in zumer 1946 yor [The Kielce Pogrom in the Summer of 1946.]," in *Virushov; sefer yizker* [Wieruszów: a Memorial Book], ed. Yehoshua Aybushits, Avraham Kloshiner, Yosef Zelkovits (Tel Aviv: 1970), pp. 737–738.

[22] Nusboym, "In bafraytn Poyln," p. 361; Yosef Goldshteyn, "Tog-bukh fun geto [Diary from the Ghetto]," in *Sefer Stashov / The Staszow Book*, ed. Elhanan Erlih (Tel Aviv: Irgun Yotsei Stashov be-Israel, 1962), pp. 445–446.

[23] Khayim Gutman, "Yorn fun umglik un shoyder [Years of Disasters and Suffering]," in *Pinkes Kuzmir* [Kazimierz: Memorial Book], ed. Dovid Shtokfish (Tel Aviv: Irgunei Yotsei Kuzmir bi-Medinat Israel u-wa-Tfutsot, 1970), p. 537. The murder was committed near Piotrków Trybunalski on February 28, 1946. The attack was on a group of halutzim from Bnei Akiva traveling from Łódź to Cracow. Among those murdered were Abraham Feld, Shmul Richbard, Yechiel Frydman, and Tsipora Starawinska (*Dos Naye Lebn* 8 [March 13, 1946]). The obituary and a photo of the Łódź funeral of Strawinska were included in the Radomsko memorial book, where she came from (in it, her full name is Pola Strawinska). Cf. "Tsezayjt un tseshprayt iber gants Eyrope [Scattered and Spread across all of Europe]," in *Sefer-yizkor li-kehilat Radomsk ve-ha-seviva* [The Memorial Book of the Radomsko Jewish Community and the Vicinity], ed. L. Losh (Tel Aviv: Irgun Yotsei Radomsk be-Israel be-shituf im ha-Irgunim shel Nyu-York ve-Los Andzheles ve-shel Argentina, 1967), p. 397.

[24] Isroel Fishbeyn, "Mayne iberlebungen beys daytsher okupatsye [My Experiences during the German Occupation]," in *Khurbn un gvure fun shtetl Markushov* [The Destruction and

As for their literary values and composition, these texts containing information about the postwar violence are characterized by broad syncretism. This diversity, an immanent characteristic of memorial books as a genre, is also an indirect reference to Jewish literature's historical traditions. The vast majority of these texts are testimonies and recollections. The remaining types of texts are victims' biographical entries (including Shmul Wajnberg from Chmielnik, mentioned above, the former partisan Hayim Aleksandrowicz from Przedbórz, and Kościuszko Division soldier Henryk Pszenica from Sierpc, who was murdered in summer of 1946),[25] letters,[26] diaries,[27] press-article reprints,[28] and completely sporadic scholarly studies. Those who have been murdered are sometimes recalled by family members, as is the case with Rakhel recalling her brother Pinkhas Wajnberg from Sochaczew.[29] Precious information is also found in obituaries of Holocaust victims, including the occasional ones of those murdered after the war. Details included in obituaries sometimes make it possible to learn more about the killings, including their date and victims' personal data. A good example of connections of this type is descriptions of the murder of nine Jews from Przedbórz, transported out of town by truck by a band of unidentified individuals and executed in nearby Radoszyce Forest. Two texts about this crime name only one victim, Hayim Aleksandrowicz,[30] but the victims' names can be found in the obituary at the end of the book.[31]

Heroism of the Town of Markuszów], ed. Dovid Shtokfish (Tel Aviv: Markushover Landslayt in Isroel, 1955), p. 255.

[25] Mordekhai Urshteyn, "Gefalene in shlaht [The Fallen in the Slaughter]," in *Yizker-bukh tsum faraybikn dem ondenk fun der khorev-gevorener yidisher kehile Pshedbozh / Przedborz: 33 Years since the Destruction of the Jewish Community: Memorial Book*, ed. Shimon Kants (Tel Aviv: Przedborzer Association in Israel and USA, 1977), p. 487; Golde Goldman, "Henrik Pshenitsa," in *Kehilat Sierpts…*, pp. 477–478.

[26] "Zatn letster briv [His last letter]," in ibidem, p. 478.

[27] Goldshteyn, "Tog-bukh fun geto," pp. 417–448.

[28] Shalom Samet, "Ha-retsakh be-Partshev – februar 1946 [The Murder in Parczew in February 1946]," in *Partshev; sefer zikaron le-kedoshei Partshev ve-ha-seviva* [Parczew; Memorial Book of the Martyrs of Parczew and the Vicinity], eds Shlomo Zonenshayn, Elkana Niska, Rakhel Gotsdiner (Haifa: Irgun Yotsei Partshev ve-ha-Seviva, 1977), pp. 259–264 (article reprinted from *Haaretz* issue of March 29, 1946).

[29] Rakhel, "Pinkhas z"l (Pinye) [Pinkhas (Pinye), blessed Memory]," in *Pinkas Sohatshev; mekudash le-zekher kedoshey irenu* [Sochaczew Chronicle: dedicated to the Memory of the Martyrs of our City], ed. A. Sh. Shtayn, Gabriel Waysman (Jerusalem: Irgun Sohatshev in Isroel bay der mitbataylikung Faraniktn Sohatshever Relif Komitet, 1962), pp. 747–748.

[30] Urshteyn, "Gefalene in shlaht," p. 487; idem, "Oyf di shpurn fun farshvundn yidish lebn [On the Traces of lost Jewish Life]," in *Yizkor-bukh tsum faraybikn dem ondenk fun der khorev-gevorener yidisher kehile Pshedbozh*, p. 500.

[31] Those were Leyzor Lizband, Shlomo Szwarc, Khil Sholem Niepamientny, Isroel Blumenzon, Betsalel Wyszyński, Pintsie Miedzinski, Sara Litwin, and Yosel Maszlak ("Yizkor am Israel [Remember, People of Israel!]," in ibidem, p. 537). The murders were committed by an

A problem is posed by the issue of accuracy of information provided in many of the testimonies and recollections. Witnesses often proved unable to recall exact dates, names of victims, and other details of crimes. Some only specify where the victims were from. At other times they detailed victims' occupations and names (for instance, the murder of an examining magistrate in Radom with the first name or nickname Bolek, a Jewish physician and his wife in Chełm, or Khume, a poultry saleswoman in Ostrów Mazowiecka),[32] the victims' membership in certain groups (the murders of three halutzim from Białystok Gordonia near Małkinia and two kibbutz members from Lower Silesia),[33] or victims' other distinct features (for instance, a pregnant woman murdered in Żelechów).[34] Some victims were identified by name and patronym, characteristic of Yiddish (for instance, Shepsel of Avrum Itshe and Shyia of Mordkhe Getsel were killed shortly after the war in Sarnaki).[35] At other times, particularly in the instance of murders of entire families, only the head of the family was mentioned by first and last name, with the remaining individuals identified in relation to that person. In yet other cases, the authors of the testimonies, without knowing any details, limited themselves to merely stating the number of victims.[36]

However, some testimonies are detailed and meticulous records that provide particulars of the crime (place, time, perpetrators, victims) and also its grounds,

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NSZ detachment commanded by Władysław Kołaciński (codename 'Żbik') on May 27, 1945 (Tokarska-Bakir, *Pod klątwą*…, vol. 1, pp. 166–167).

[32] Yakov Vayngort, "Yidish lebn in Radom nokh der bafrayung [Jewish Life in Radom After the Liberation]," in *Sefer Radom / The Book of Radom: the Story of the Jewish Community in Poland destroyed by the Nazis*, eds Yitzhak Perlov, Alfred Lipson (Tel Aviv: United Radomer Relief of the United States and Canada, 1961–1963), p. 373; Tzvi Treger, "Zikh bataylikt in kamf [Participated in the Fight]," in *Sefer zikaron li-kehilat Shebreshin / Book of Memory to the Jewish Community Shebreshin*, ed. Dov Shuval (Haifa: Association of Former Inhabitants of Shebreshin in Israel and the Diaspora, 1984), p. 230; Dan Burshteyn, "[Testimony]," in *Sefer ha-zikaron li-kehilat Ostrov-Mazovietsk* [Memorial Book of the Ostrów Mazowiecka Jewish Community], eds Aba Gordin, M. Gelbart, Arye Margalit (Tel Aviv: Irgun Olei Ostrov-Mazovietsk be-Israel and Ostrover Landsmanshaft in Amerike, 1960), p. 526.

[33] Dvoyre Flaysher, "Opgeratevet 24 kinder fun kristlekhe hent [Rescued 24 Children from Christian Hands]," in *Sefer zikaron li-kehilat Shebreshin*…, p. 302; Burshteyn, "[Testimony]," p. 526.

[34] Olshak, "Mayn tragishe nacht in Zhelehov," p. 319.

[35] Peysakh Perlman, "Toyznt teg in geto un in untergrunt [A Thousand Days in the Ghetto and Underground]," in *Sefer yizkor li-kehilat Sarnaki / "Izkor" Book to the Memory of the Sarnaki Jewish Community*, ed. Dov Shuval (Haifa: Irgun Yotsei Sarnaki be-Israel, 1968), p. 266. "Shepsel Avrum Itshes" and "Shiye Mordhe Getsels" are used in the original, which can be read as Shepsel Avrum of Itshe and Shyie Mordkhe of Getsel. First names with possessive suffixes do not have to refer to the father and can also indicate more distant kinship, for instance, the grandfather.

[36] Cf. Aleksander Kantorovski, "Sokolka tahat avel ha-kibushim [Sokółka under the Shadow of Occupation]," in *Siferey zikaron li-kehilot ha-gola; sefer Sokolka; dos bukh fun Sokolka / Memorial Library of Jewish Communities: Sokolka* (Jerusalem: Irgun Yotsei Sokolka be-Israel and Entsiklopedia shel Galuyot, 1968), p. 345.

course, and consequences. One example is the article about the murder of five Jews in Skarżysko-Kamienna in winter of 1945. Its author discussed the postwar situation of Jews in the town and the victims' earlier circumstances (detention in a concentration camp) and described the crime scene (he participated in inspections), the investigation's course, and the later trial of the killers. According to an original version pushed by local militia, the motivation had been revenge for a forcible attempt to take away a Jewish child who had been sheltered during the war by Christians. After local Jewish community members intervened, the investigation was taken over by the Security Office (*Urząd Bezpieczeństwa*, UB) in Kielce. It was then conducted by the UB office's director, Alter (Albert) Grynbaum. It was evident in short order that the actual perpetrators were two MO (*Milicja Obywatelska* [Citizens' Militia]) functionaries (including the local chief of the MO) and a woman named Gzymek. The motivation was robbery, with key evidence constituted by victims' possessions discovered in the homes of those arrested. The trial before the Regional Court in Łódź ended in three death sentences carried out by hanging.[37]

The accuracy of this testimony stems to a large extent from the relatively rare epilogue of the murders of Jews – that is, the case launched by the local investigative division. This led to the detection of the perpetrators, while providing the author with the necessary information to broadly present the case's background. This element is missing from many other descriptions. The author of a testimony describing the killing of an officer named Wiślicki, manager of Skalski's mill in Ryki, emphasized that no one even considered launching an investigation into the Jew's death even though he had been a Polish soldier.[38]

As far as structure is concerned, certain testimonies resemble crime chronicles. Their authors give highly detailed accounts, usually in chronological order, of instances of anti-Jewish violence they were aware of, whether in their hometowns or in nearby or more distant provinces. This model is followed, for example, by two extensive articles included in Siedlce's memorial book. They describe about a dozen attacks on Jews, the death toll of which exceeded 30. For instance, those killed in Mordy probably still in 1944 included the brothers Abraham and Shimen Grabarz, a woman named Forman, two girls from the village of Czołomyje, a woman from Warsaw, and two unidentified men. On

[37] The victims of that murder were currency trader Itshe Varshauer, Shamay Varshauer, Shmul Milet, a woman from Warsaw by the surname of Lewitowa who worked after the war in a Jewish soup kitchen in Skarżysko, and Herszenfus, son of Ayzik Blacharz (Levin, "Di moyredike shhite," pp. 156–159). According to Joanna Tokarska-Bakir, the murderers were Czesław Półtorak, MO functionary Marian Kępa, and the Skarżysko MO chief, Stefan Tomaszewski (eadem, *Pod klątwą*..., vol. 1, pp. 141–142, 494).

[38] Yakov Mandelbaum, "Ayaratenu tahat ha-kibush ha-natsi [Our Town under Nazi Occupation]," in *Sefer Riki* [Ryki: a Memorial to the Community of Ryki (Poland)], ed. Shimon Kants (Tel Aviv: Irgun Yotsei Riki be-Israel be-hishetatefut Yiotsey Riki be-Kanada, Los Andzheles, Tsarefat u-Verazil, 1973), p. 418.

March 10, 1945, a group of Jews preparing to leave for Łodź was attacked in Mokobody. Killed were Leya Góra (sister of the testimony's author), Jakob Szpadel, Hayim Mordechai Piontkowski, Eli Piekarz, Khana Dombak, Hasia Rzepa, and a man from Węgrów. On the same day in Sarnaki Shiye Kaplan and Shepsel Kleidenmacher were murdered. The latter was escorted by bandits to a field outside town and buried alive after brutal torture. Isroel Shuster was killed in a village near Sarnaki, while seven Jews who'd survived the war in nearby forests were killed in the village of Krzymosze. Some victims were people that local Christians had sheltered during the occupation. Having been rescued in the village of Głupianka by a peasant, two women, Ruda Granatower and her daughter Fayga, were murdered on their first night after returning to Kołbiel, their hometown, shortly after the Germans retreated. A similar fate befell Henokh Chaskielewicz (sheltered at the Siano estate by landowner Aleksander Witaszewicz) and also Kalman Orzel, who having escaped from a Treblinka transport found shelter in the village of Pruszyn with his prewar secondary-school teacher. The former was murdered by "familiar peasants" from the village (the author does not specify the crime's place or time); the latter died on February 2, 1945, shot dead in front of his house at 38 Asłanowicz Street in Siedlce. In summer of 1945 another escapee from Treblinka, Motel Orlanski, was thrown from a moving train. Two years later, an armed band dragged Yosef Wunderbaum of Radzyń Podlaski from a train car and shot him dead on spot. Last but not least, in Siedlce in this same period Mendel Shteinberg from the village of Krześlin was also killed.[39]

An article about postwar Jewish life in Radom is similarly detailed. It describes, in chronological order, the murders of the examining magistrate Bolek who is mentioned above, the young married couple and the Soviet officer, and also the tailor Tankhem Gutman (attacked on the *Praca* Cooperative's grounds) and Aron Hendel.[40]

The narration in the Brańsk memorial book is double-tracked. On one hand the author describes in a relatively detailed way instances he knew about of murdered Jews: Zisia Topczewska, Rakhela Tykocka and the Christian woman who employed her, Adela Sztejnman, were killed in March 1945; Itshele Braude and an unidentified Drohiczyn boy died several months later; and a "Poktsheve" (?), "rescued from the gas chambers of Treblinka," was murdered near the village of Siemiony. On the other hand, where the author is unfamiliar with victims' personal data and the exact circumstances of their deaths, he limits himself to specifying the number of victims and their places of death: 15 victims

[39] Moyshe Mendel Gura, "[Testimony]," in Elimelekh Faynzilber, *Oyf di khurves fun mayn heym (khurbn Shedlets)* [On the Ruins of my Home (The Destruction of Siedlce)] (Tel Aviv: self-published, 1952), pp. 160–161; "Goym, vos hobn geratvet un goym, vos hobn gemordet Yidn [Gentiles who saved, and Gentiles who murdered Jews]," in ibidem, pp. 210–213.

[40] Vayngort, "Yidish lebn in Radom…," p. 373.

in Sokołów Podlaski, 12 in Czyżew, 5 in Siemiatycze, 4 in Ciechanowiec and the same number in Drohiczyn, and a single victim in Boćki.[41]

Information about a given murder is often scattered over several testimonies in a memorial book. In many instances one has to carefully read the entire publication to piece together a course of events, basic facts about the victim, the crime's place and time, and sometimes the identity of the perpetrators as well. This was the case with, for example, reconstructing details of Mayer Frydberg's murder, included in five testimonies in the Jędrzejów memorial book. The first text indicates that he lived in Jędrzejów before the war and was murdered upon returning to town to sell his house.[42] The author of the second testimony claims that Frydberg was accompanied by a girl from Wodzisław and that the two of them were shot dead, while the third author states that the woman was Frydberg's cousin, who came to Jędrzejów to find him. Frydberg was a seller of coal and fuel wood and was at the time of his murder the only Jew remaining in town.[43] According to the fourth testimony, Frydberg had survived the war hiding in a bunker with four other Jews, after which he took over the fuel yard from his father. He intended to leave town but was awaiting the end of a trial against the thief of his horse-drawn wagon loaded with coal. "A naive boy," the author of this testimony states in concluding, "he won the trial but lost his life."[44] According to the fifth text, shortly after the war's end over 60 Jews returned to Jędrzejów, but most left immediately after an armed band attacked a house they were living in, with only Frydberg and two other Jews remaining in town.[45]

Several murders were described in different memorial books. The killings of the young married couple and the Soviet officer, noted above, were mentioned in the Przytyk and Radom memorial books. In the former the victims remain anonymous, while in the latter publication we learn that the newlywed man's name was Eli Gutman, and that the couple had been married for four days. The

[41] "Braynsk nokh der bafrayung [Bransk after Liberation]," in *Braynsk; sefer ha-zikaron: a bashraybung fun unser heym, ire folks menshn, ire helden un firer fun di religyetse, sotsyale, polityshe un ekonomishe institutsyes. Vi azoy Braynsk hot gelebt unter di farshidene okupatsye fun bayde welt milhome, ir endlikher shoyderlikher umkum als a yidishe kehile / Brainsk: Book of Memories*, eds Alter Trus, Dzhulyus Kohen (New York: Braynsker Relief Komitet in Nyu-York, 1948), pp. 382–383.

[42] Tsipora Gotfried-Kozlovska, "Fun mayne zihroynes [From my Memories]," in *Sefer ha-zikaron li-Yehudei Yendzhzeev* [The Memorial Book of the Jędrzejów Jews], ed. Shimshon Dov Yerushalmi (Tel Aviv: Irgun Olei Yendzheyov be-Israel, 1965), p. 197.

[43] Binyamin Gutman, "Mayne iberlebenishn un mayn bazukh in Yendzheev [My Experiences and my Visit to Jędrzejów]," in ibidem, p. 200; Isroel Gortman, "Yendzheev erev ir khurbn un nokh im [Jędrzejów: before and after its Destruction]," in ibidem, p. 204.

[44] Itshok Riterband, "A bazukh in mayn khorever heym (ayndrukn) [A Visit to My Ruined Home (Impressions)]," in ibidem, p. 258.

[45] Mordkhe Shledzhiak, "Fun mayne iberlebenishn in Hitlers tsaytn [From my Experiences during Hitler's Time]," in ibidem, p. 266.

victims had their hands tied behind their backs, were gagged, and had their throats slit. Not all were robbed, indicating the killings' antisemitic character.[46]

Some articles are supplemented with iconography, mostly victim portraits accompanying people's recollections of those individuals or biographical entries about the victims.[47] There are also photos of corpses, funerals, and graves. The Wieluń memorial book, for instance, includes two shocking photos showing corpses of eight Jews killed in the village of Bolesławiec in the Wieruszów district.[48] Equally disturbing is a photo published in the Ostrowiec Świętokrzyski memorial book. On March 12, 1945, a group of armed bandits attacked Jews living at Peysach Lederman's at 1 Starokunowska Street. Four Jews were murdered, including three women who had survived the war with 'Aryan' papers: Khaya Shayndla Szpigel, Khaskiel Krongold's daughter, and an unidentified woman who had lived in nearby Ćmielów before the war. The fourth victim was Leybl Lustik, who survived the camp in Gliwice. He begged the murderers for mercy, showing the prisoner number tattooed on his arm. He was buried in the local Jewish cemetery, and shortly after the funeral his father and cousin were photographed standing at his grave. The father, who like his son had survived the inferno of the German camps, was devastated and died some time later of a heart attack.[49]

Holding a special place among the testimonies are shocking recollections from those who managed to escape miraculously from murderers' hands. Some would-be victims discuss what they went through without sparing the graphic details. The Sierpc memorial book, for instance, contains the testimony mentioned above by Borukh Dorfman, a member of the No'ar ha-Tsiyoni kibbutz in Kielce, who during the 1946 pogrom was mauled by the rabid mob. He was dealt blows with rifle butts, stones, and ironware all over his body until he fainted:

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[46] Shaul Kirshentsvayg, "Fragmentn fun gvure un peyn [Pieces of Courage and Pain]," in *Sefer Pshitik; matsevet-zikaron li-kehila yehudit; a matseyve far a yidisher kehile / Pshitik: a Memorial to the Jewish Community of Pshitik*, ed. Dovid Shtokfish (Tel Aviv: Irgun Yotsei Pshitik be-Israel, Tsarefat ve-Arh"V, 1973), p. 297; Wayngort, "Yidish lebn in Radom…," p. 373. According to Łukasz Krzyżanowski, the Soviet officer was an airman named Aron Gerlach, while the married couple's names were Bela Apel and Josef Gutman (idem, *Dom, którego nie było.. Powroty ocalałych do powojennego miasta* [Wołowiec: Czarne, 2016], p. 132; English edition: *Ghost Citizens: Jewish Return to a Postwar City*, trans. Madeline G. Levine [Harvard University Press 2020]).

[47] Rakhel, "Pinhash"l (Pinye)," p. 748.

[48] M. Beserglik, "Khurbn Vielun [The Destruction of Wieluń]," in *Sefer zikaron li-kehilat Vielun / Wielun Memorial Book* (Tel Aviv: |Irgun Yotsei Vielun be-Israel we-Edut ha-Sefer be-hishetatefut "Vieluner Yizker Bukh-Komitet" be-Amerika, 1971), p. 344. Both photos were reprinted from a 1946 issue of *Landsberger Lager-Tsaytung*, a periodical published after the war by Jewish DPs in Bavaria.

[49] Leybish Milshteyn, "Di likvidatsye fun ostrovtser geto [The Liquidation of the Ghetto in Ostrowiec Świętokrzyski]," in *Ostrovtse; a denkmol oyf di hurves fun a farnihtete yidishe kehile / Ostrowiec: a Monument on the Ruins of an annihilated Community*, eds Meir Shimon Geshuri, Gershon Zilberberg (Tel Aviv: Irgun Yotsei Ostrovtse be Israel, 1971), pp. 292–293.

> I heard a pogrom participant say to another one that I should be shot dead. The latter told him that it would be a waste of a bullet because I would die anyway. After as many as three days I came round in hospital in Kielce. I lay there for a year. I underwent two serious surgeries and a few minor ones. I walked out of there an invalid: missing an eye (I have only 10 percent vision in the other eye), toothless, with three broken ribs, a broken nose, and a healed head wound.[50]

Mordechai Sledziak was shot straight in the face by bandits attacking his house in Jędrzejów. The bullet, stuck in his jaw left of the mouth, was never extracted.[51] Authors of several testimonies had survived mass executions. In late 1945, Jewish inhabitants of Działoszyce were the objects of an attack. According to Abraham Langer, in the dead of night a few armed individuals stormed into his apartment, demanding gold and watches from residents. A horse-drawn wagon was waiting outside, already loaded with radios and sewing machines stolen from other Jewish homes. Jews arranged by a wall were shot dead with machine guns. Benzion Czarnocha and Hayim Jurysta died on the spot, while Berish Jurysta and Eli Ostry, wounded, were transported the next day to a hospital in Cracow by Jews who remained in town. The testimony's author, wounded in the leg, also survived. He buried victims, including Shmul Piekarz, who had been murdered elsewhere.[52] In Kołbiela a woman by the surname of Tsebula and her daughter Fayga were killed, while Bluma Katz-Rubinshteyn survived.[53] The author of a testimony from the Sochaczew memorial book was wounded during an attack launched by a band, while Hershel Tajchman took shelter in a well in Ryki during an attack in May 1945, during which Hershel Nachtajler, Shaul Miliczkiewicz, and two young women from Dęblin, Pola Abenszejn and Rozenkiewicz, were killed.[54] In Opatów the attackers spared Ita Rokhel Engel – she gave them $10,

[50] Dorfman, "Der lebn-geblibener," p. 477.

[51] Shledzhiak, "Fun mayne iberlebenishn in Hitlers tsaytn," p. 266.

[52] Avrum Langer, "Beys un nokh der milhome [During and after the War]," in *Sefer yizkor shel kehilat Dzhialoshits ve-ha-seviva / Yizkor Book of the Jewish Community in Dzialoszyce and Surroundings* (Tel Aviv: Vaad Yotsei Dzhialoshits, Skalbmizh, Kazimizh and Irgun Yotsei Dzhialoshits be-Aretsot ha-Berit, 1973), pp. 386–387; Moshe Bayski, "Yamey ha-shoa [The Days of the Holocaust]," in ibidem, p. 260; Shalom Shulimowich, "Roa ha-gzera [Cruel Decree]," in ibidem, pp. 278–279. Shmul Piekarz was chairman of the Jewish Committee in Działoszyce. Cf. Dariusz Libionka, "Powiat miechowski [Miechów county]," in *Dalej jest noc. Losy Żydów*…, vol. 2, p. 202.

[53] Bluma Kats-Rubinshteyn, "Tsvishn lebn un toyt (zikhroynes fun milkhome yorn)," in *Parisover izker-bukh*, ed. Yekhiel Granatstein ([Tel Aviv:] Irgun Yotsei Parisov be-Israel, 1971), p. 446.

[54] B. Irlikht, "Azoy iz farpaynikt gevorn di sokhachever kehile [Thus the Sochaczew Community was destroyed]," in *Pinkas Sohachev*…, p. 476; Hershel Tayhman, "Der nes baym keyver [A Miracle at the Grave]," in *Sefer Riki*…, pp. 444–445; Mandelbaum, "Ayaratenu tahat ha-kibush ha-natsi," p. 418.

which was all the money she had – but murdered one of her companions, Leybl Zilberberg.[55] To conclude, Leyb Tug miraculously survived a bandit attack in Kosów Lacki.[56]

Some testimonies were written by repatriates arriving from the USSR. Many described deeply antisemitic atmosphere in trains heading to Poland. Let's consider the description of a journey with Poles from Eastern Galicia to Lower Silesia in spring of 1946, during which Jewish repatriates were mocked, cursed, and beaten, to be eventually locked in three separate cars and only let out after the train had reached Warsaw.[57] Other such testimonies described the "welcome" given to transports by locals, such as throwing stones or even armed groups stopping the train to seek out Jews.[58] Some accounts were about the hostile attitude of Jews in Polish detachments formed in the USSR.[59]

Interesting testimonies were recorded by individuals who returned and lived in their hometowns, at least for a while, and also by various kinds of "travelers" – mostly inhabitants of cities and town in Poland and the Recovered Territories as well as those who came from the abroad to see places they had lived in before the war. Several testimonies were written by representatives of international Jewish organizations and envoys of various institutions in Palestine (Israel). For instance, Hayim Ofek-Ofenbach, sent to Poland by the Jewish Agency, visited his hometown of Dobrzyń in 1950. This is how he described his encounter with the town inhabitants, years later:

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[55] Ita Rokhel Engel, "Nokh der bafrayung [After the Liberation]," in *Apt (Opatov); sefer zikaron le-irva-em be-Israel asher hayeta ve-eyenena od / Apt: a Town which does not exist any more*, ed. Tzvi Yashiv (Tel Aviv: Yotsei Apt be-Israel, Arh"V, Kanada, Brazil we-Hule, 1966), p. 273.

[56] Leyb Tug, "Zikhronot mi-yemey ha-okupatsya [Memories from the Days of the Occupation]," in *Sefer Prushkov, Nadazhin ve-ha-seviva* [The Book of Pruszków, Nadarzyn, and the Vicinity], ed. David Brodski (Tel Aviv: Irgun Yotsei Prushkov be-Israel, 1966), pp. 245–246 (in Polish: "Wspomnienia z dni okupacji," trans. Dariusz Dekiert, in *Sefer Pruszków. Księga pamięci Pruszkowa, Nadarzyna i okolic*, trans. Monika Adamczyk-Garbowska et al., eds Monika Adamczyk-Garbowska and Andrzej Trzciński [Pruszków: Książnica Pruszkowska, 2016], p. 288).

[57] Rivke Mendzhelevski (May), "Milkhome iberlebenishn [Experiences during the War]," in *Sefer Serotsk* [The Book of Serock], ed. Mordechai Gelbart (Tel Aviv: Irgun Yotsei Serotsk be-Israel, 1971), p. 311.

[58] Kantor, "Tsurik keyn Poyln nokh der milkhome," p. 923; Israel Taytelbaum, "Hazara le-Polin le-ahar ha-Shoa [Return to Poland after the Holocaust]," in *Katovits; perihata u-shekiyata shel ha-kehila ha-yehudit; sefer zikaron* [Katowice: The Rise and Fall of the Jewish Community: Memorial Book], eds Yosef Hrust, Yosef Frankel (Tel Aviv: Ha-Amuta le-Hanetsakhat Yahadut Katovits, 1996), p. 309; L. Fridman, "Mezrich in 1946 [Międzyrzec in 1946]," in *Sefer Mezrich; le-zekher kedoshey irenu hi"d / The Mezritch Book*, eds Yitzhak Ronkin, Binem Heler (Israel: "Ha-Merkaz ha-Merichai" be-Israel ve-Irgunej Benei Irenu bi-Tefutsot, 1978), p. 765.

[59] Avrum Mayrants, "Mayne iberlebungen in Rotnfarband [My Experiences in USRR]]," in *Kehilat Sierpts; sefer zikaron*, pp. 469–470.

> Everybody already knew that a Jew from Israel had arrived. Curious, people surrounded our car. They were behaving in a hostile way, directing antisemitic remarks at us. But none of them dared speak with us directly. It seems that I saw a familiar Jewish face in the first row of those gathered – the only man who seemed to want to talk with us. But he was afraid to approach us…[60]

Henokh Verdi, a soldier of the Jewish Brigade stationed in Italy who in winter of 1946 came to Poland, contributed his extensive testimony to the Serock memorial book. Traveling by train from Cracow to Jelenia Góra, he was involved in an attack by an armed underground unit. The train was stopped in the middle of a forest. An officer appeared in the door and ordered "all Jews and PPR members" to get off. Verdi, told to show his documents, pretended not to understand Polish, then the order was repeated in English and French. After explaining that he was an UNRRA representative traveling to Lower Silesia with a transport of condensed milk for orphans, Verdi was escorted outside and the men began to carefully inspect his documents. When they noticed Judaism designated as his religion in his British military ID, he admitted being a Jew born in Palestine. Most members of the detachment wanted to hang him right away, but the unit's commander overruled them. To the would-be victim he explained in impeccable English that although he "knew no mercy for Jews," he wouldn't act against the British and international organizations.[61]

Hiding one's Jewish identity and using various means of camouflage was a frequent motif in recollections of people who traveled through the Polish provinces after the war. Hayim Itsel Goldstein, who lived in Paris before the war, wore a tricolor bow pinned to his lapel on his way to his hometown, Łosice, in January 1945 and introduced himself as a native Frenchman to peasants who were transporting him.[62] Mordechai Tsanin, a famous author from Sokołów Podlaski (many memorial books reprinted excerpts from Tsanin's reportage

[60] Khayim Ofek-Ofenbakh, "Di shtot fun toyte – a bazukh in Dobzhin [The City of the Dead – a Visit to Dobrzyń]," in Shmuel Rusak, *Izkor bletlekh* [Pages of Memory] (Tel Aviv: Defus Davar, 1972), p. 73.

[61] Henokh Verdi, "Ich zukh mayne brider un shvester [I Search for my brothers and sisters]," in *Sefer Serotsk*, pp. 454–458.

[62] Khayim Itsel Goldshteyn, "A bazukh in Loshits glaykh nokh der Hitler-mapole [A Visit to Łosice, right after the Devastation of Hitler's Deluge]," in *Loshits; lezeykher an umgebrakhte kehile / Łosice: in Memory of a Jewish Community Exterminated by Nazi Murderers*, ed. Mordechai Shner (B. Feder) (Tel Aviv: Union of the Remnants of the Jewish Community of Łosice [Poland], 1963), pp. 359–360. During the war the author was a prisoner in the Auschwitz and Gęsiówka camps. After the Warsaw Uprising collapsed, he was hiding in the capital's ruins with a group of six Jews. He recorded his recollections of that period in a book; see Chaim Icel Goldstein, *Bunkier*, trans. Sara Arm (Warsaw: Ośrodek Karta, 2006); Yidish edition: Khayim Itsl Goldshteyn, *Zibn in bunker* (Varshe: Yidish Bukh, 1962); English edition: Charles Goldstein, *The Bunker*, trans. from French Esther Malkin (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1970).

book about his Polish travels in 1946–1947),[63] in his contacts with Poles, posed as an English journalist and pretended to barely understand Polish.[64] Similarly, when Melekh Cukierkop was traveling to Ryki, he deemed it safer to pose as a Soviet soldier than to declare himself a Jew. Consequently, he arrived in town wearing a Red Army uniform with medals pinned onto its chest. Contrary to his expectations, even that guise didn't protect him from trouble instigated by locals. After an argument with the owner of what had been his family's house, Cukierkop was taken away by the MO and jailed.[65] Many people going to places where they grew up avoided talking with fellow travelers or covered their faces to reveal their true identity in any way.[66]

A handful of testimonies regarding anti-Jewish violence were written by Poles. Most were translated from Polish into Yiddish for publication. One such testimony, describing several dozen murders Christians committed during and after the war, can be found in the Leżajsk memorial book. The testimony titled "What I Saw and What I Heard" is signed "*A kristn*" (A Christian). In the subtitle,

[63] Mordechai Tsanin, *Iber shteyn un shtok. A rayze iber hundert khorev-gevorene kehiles in Poyln* (Tel Aviv: Farlag "Letste Nayes", 1952). Reprints of this book's chapters about specific cities and towns have been published (at times in modified or abridged form) in several dozen memorial books, including idem, "Sokolov… nokh alemen [Sokołów after the Holocaust]," in *Sefer ha-zikaron; Sokolov-Podliask* [The Memorial Book of Sokołów Podlaski], ed. Mordechai Gelbart (Tel Aviv: Irgun Yotsei Sokolov-Podliask be-Israel and Sokolover Landsmanshaft in Amerike, 1962), pp. 544–547; idem, "Zamoshch di shtot fun I. L. Perets [Zamość: the City of I. L. Peretz]," in *Pinkes Zamoshch; yizker-bukh nokh der farshnitener durkh di natsim ir va-em be-Israel; dershaynt tsum fuftsntn yortsyt (1942–1957) nokh der ershter shchite fun di zamoshcher Yidn* [The Chronicle of Zamość; a Memorial Book of the City destroyed by the Nazis, the City and Mother in Israel; published on the Fifteenth Anniversary (1942–1957) of the First Massacre of the Jews of Zamość], ed. Mordechai W. Bernshtayn (Buenos Aires: Tsentral-Komitet far Pinkes Zamoshch, 1957), pp. 1199–1201. (For more on Mordechai Tsanin and his work see Monika Adamczyk-Garbowska, "Samotna misja Mordechaja Canina [Mordechai Tsanin's lonely mission]," in Mordechaj Canin, *Przez ruiny i zgliszcza. Podróż po stu zgładzonych gminach żydowskich w Polsce* [Through Ruins and Rubble. A tour of one hundred exterminated Jewish communities], trans. and ed. Monika Adamczyk-Garbowska (Warszawa: Nisza, 2018), pp. 7–21; Łukasz Krzyżanowski, "Ile siły musi mieć człowiek, by chodzić po świecie z tak strasznym bagażem?" Wędrówka Mordechaja Canina po wymordowanym świecie [How much strength must a man have to walk around the world with such terrible baggage?" Mordechai Tsanin's wandering through a murdered world]," in ibidem, pp. 23–32).

[64] Monika Adamczyk-Garbowska, "Krajobraz po Zagładzie – relacje dziennikarzy żydowskich z powojennej Polski [Landscape after the Holocaust – accounts by Jewish journalists from postwar Poland]," *Midrasz* 1 (2012): 16.

[65] Meylekh Cukierkop, "Di tsvayte velt milkhome [Second World War]," in *Sefer Riki*…, pp. 519–522.

[66] Mikhel Itskovich, "A shoyder-rayze keyn Pintshev nohn khurbn [A terrifying Journey to Pińczew after the Destruction]," in *Sefer-zikaron li-kehilat Pintshev*…, p. 379; Sholem Honig, "In yene fintstere teg [In those Dark Days]," in *Sefer Pshitik*…, pp. 327–328.

the book's editorial staff specified that the author was a Polish female friend of Mania Ribenfeld, a Jewish woman from Leżajsk.[67]

In most cases the Poles who actively contributed acted as informants for Jewish authors. Several articles are interviews with Christians conducted and recorded by Jews who returned to their hometowns. Most Polish witnesses who gave these interviews had a favorable attitude to the visitors and described with relative frankness specific murders and the prevailing antisemitic atmosphere. The Czyżew memorial book includes I. Dawidowicz's interview with Kazimierz Barcik, who reported on murders committed in that small town, of about a dozen Jews, six months after its liberation. The crimes, purportedly perpetrated by Polish underground members, were referred to by locals as the "night of the long knives" and the "St. Bartholomew's Day massacre."[68] Characteristically, several testimonies of this kind feature a very strong connotative link between crimes committed against Jews and misfortunes that befell locals after the war, often interpreted as a punishment for past sins. This thread appears, for instance, in a conversation Davidovich had with a young married couple then living in what had been a Jewish house on Mazowiecka Street:

> "Jews lived here before you, didn't they?"
> They showed no sign of confusion at all. My question did not make them feel ashamed in the slightest.
> "Why, of course. Who else would have lived here? This used to be a Jewish town after all."
> "And nobody survived? Nobody at all?"
> "They did, but later ours murdered them."
> I barely manage to stay calm.
> "Your bandits…"
> "Why, of course they were bandits," says the woman. "[…] they have brought many a misfortune on this town. Every year there is an epidemic or some other catastrophe. One time Kazimierczyk cut his arm on a nail and he had to have it amputated. Is this not a punishment from God? He had stolen his fill in the ghetto. A bull went amuck on the Kazimierczaks' farm and trampled their daughter. Who knows how many misfortunes still await us. The horseshoes we put on the stairs don't help. The bad spirits in town want to take revenge."[69]

[67] A kristn, "Vos ikh hob gezen un gehert," in *Lizhensk; sefer zikaron*…, pp. 319–322.

[68] I. Davidovich, "Oyf di shpurn fun farshvundn yidish lebn [On the Remnants of destroyed Jewish Life]," in *Yizker-bukh nokh der khorev-gevorener yidisher kehile Tshizheve / Memorial book Tshijewo*, ed. Shimon Kants (Tel Aviv: Tshizhever Landsmanshaftn in Isroel un Amerike, 1961), pp. 1125–1126.

[69] Ibidem, pp. 1130–1131. Interestingly, an almost identical set of punishments that befell locals can be found in an article published 12 years later in the Ryki memorial book, bearing the same title as the article from the Czyżew memorial book. Thus this may be a case of plagiarism. Strolling in his hometown, its author hears from Poles he spoke with about the rabid bull that wounded its owner's daughter, the arm cut on a nail and then amputated,

Dawidowicz's last interlocutor, commune head Bronisław Sieńko, expressed a similar opinion: "You're right – we've sinned against the Jews and against God. I'm often seized by fear of punishments we might face."[70]

In several testimonies Christians appear on the sidelines of the main narration, mostly as background characters informing the authors about their families' hard lots. In the Kock memorial book Hershel Krajcman's neighbor with the surname Piątek apprised him of his brother Yitzhok's death and those of his two companions, murdered by the local forester in Białobrzegi Forest on liberation day. Piątek then escorted Krajcman to the crime site and showed him the grave.[71]

Many texts about postwar acts of violence follow a similar model. Most begin with a collective portrayal of individual Jewish survivors or their groups returning to their hometowns: human wrecks, emaciated physically and devastated psychically, exhausted by several years' of fighting for survival and by living conditions in the camps, in forests, in hiding, or on the 'Aryan' side. The horrible condition they were in was only worsened by the terrifying emptiness they found after returning and hatred manifested in various ways by Poles around them. A shocking depiction of one such confrontation can be found in the Siedlce memorial book:

> The living shadows, the dried skeletons with wax-yellow faces as proof that they had spent years suffering and hungry, are roaming about small towns and villages. Young people with grey hair, old men whose age is difficult to tell with their dull, half-blind eyes that hadn't seen rays of sunshine for several years. They're looking for their relatives' nonexistent graves. They're floating about as if in an abyss, suspended between reality and dream. They have no place they can return to. Their homes have been destroyed and if they have survived they're inhabited by Polish robbers. […] The air reeks, polluted with the stench the German angel of death has left behind. It is hard to breathe. Their souls are burdened, their hearts empty. Wherever they go they are surrounded by cold, hostile stares filled with hate, contempt, and mockery or, in the best case, pity expressed in such a disgusting form it merely becomes ordinary derision.[72]

Seeing the returning Jews, their Polish neighbors and friends usually reacted with disbelief and surprise. Many authors remember that Christians, surprised at seeing Jewish survivors, greeted them with the offhand question: "You're still

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horseshoes hung above doors, and the presence of vengeance-seeking spirits. Cf. Yakov Handshtok, "Oyf di shpurn fun farshvundn yidish lebn," in *Sefer Riki*…, pp. 554–556.

[70] Davidovich, "Oyf di shpurn fun farshvundn yidish lebn," p. 1131.

[71] Hershel Kraytsman, "A bazukh in Kotsk bald nokh der bafrayung [A Visit to Kock soon after the Liberation]," in *Sefer Kotsk* [The Book of Kock], ed. Eliyahu Porat (Tel Aviv: Irgun Yotsei Kotsk be-Israel be-ezrat Irgun Yotsei Kotsk be-Argentina u-ve-Tsarefat, 1961), p. 306.

[72] "Goym, vos hobn geratvet…," p. 207.

alive?" Tzvi Liberzon, who returned to Radzyń Podlaski, reported that just after arriving in town he heard surprised voices all around saying: "They're still alive? There's a whole host of them coming out of the forest."[73] Mostly this surprise was accompanied with disappointment, contempt, anger, and curses. In Włodawa, survivors were called the "underslaughtered" (*niedorżnięci*).[74] Repatriates passing through Cracow could hear Poles standing on a platform say: "There's that onion stench again," and near Lublin they heard spiteful comments: "Where are all these Jews coming from? Cause Hitler promised he'd slaughter them all."[75] In Białystok, two MO functionaries called after a Jew they encountered on a street: "Shame Hitler didn't finish you all off."[76] Curses often took the form of open threats. This is how Berta Zalc remembered peasants conversing as she listened at a Leżajsk tavern, after the murders of nine local Jews: "In the end they all reached the same conclusion […] that if there any Jews happened to be willing to return to Leżajsk, they'd learn that they [the peasants] would exterminate them like rats."[77] Yosef Goldsztejn and his friends, fleeing Cracow after the August 1945 pogrom, were seen off at the train station by an old railyard hand shouting that Poles would finish what Hitler hadn't.[78]

Looking for traces of family and friends and asking around about them often met with refusals to give information, a lack of compassion, and ever-present derision. Arye Kuperbaum, wandering near the Parysów synagogue, was stopped by a local MO functionary:

> He asked me who I was and what I was looking for. With tears in my eyes, I said that I had come to find my brothers and sisters and my friends. The MO functionary burst into laughter. He looked at me as if I was a lunatic. "You'll see them in the other world," he said with irony. "You won't find anybody here."[79]

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[73] Tzvi Liberzon, "Oyf di khurves in mayn shtetl [On the Ruins in my Town]," in *Sefer Radzhin; yizker-bukh* [The Book of Radzyń Podlaski], ed. Yitzhak Zigelman (Tel Aviv: Vaad Yotsei Radzhin [Podlaski] be-Israel, 1957), p. 301.

[74] Brukha Rozentsveyg-Shchupak, "Der veg fun peyn [The Path of suffering]," in *Sefer zikaron Vlodava ve-ha-seviva Sobibor / Yizkor Book in Memory of Vlodava and Region Sobibor*, ed. Shimon Kants (Tel Aviv: Irgun Yotsei Vlodava we-ha-Seviva be-Israel, 1974), p. 722.

[75] Yehoshua Bobek, "Der veg fun peyn [The Path of Suffering]," in *Sefer Serotsk* [The Book of Serock], p. 374; Yechezkiel Boymshteyn, "Zikhroynes [Memoirs]," in *Sefer Turobin; pinkas zikaron / Sefer Turobin (The Turobin book): in Memory of the Jewish Community*, ed. Meir Shimon Geshuri (Tel Aviv: Irgun Yotsei Turobin be-Israel, 1967), p. 298.

[76] Kopel Pirokwits, "Milhama le-haim [War to Life]," in *Sefer Tiktin* [The Book of Tykocin], eds M. Bar-Yuda, Z. Ben-Nakhum (Tel Aviv: Irgun Yotsei Tiktin be-Israel, 1959), p. 484.

[77] Berta Zalts, "Ayner fun di hside umes hooylem [One of the Righteous Among the Nations]," in *Lizhensk; sefer zikaron*…, p. 307.

[78] Goldshteyn, "Tog-bukh fun geto," p. 446.

[79] Arye Kuperboym, "Yorn fun milkhome un vander [Years of War and Wandering]," in *Parisover yizker-bukh*…, p. 516.

Few and far between in these recollections were positive responses on the part of Christians. Those who welcomed Jews under their roofs or even maintained contacts risked being ostracized. Dawidowicz wrote in his testimony that Kazimierz Barcik from Czyżew, who's been mentioned above, "was looked at in town like a Jewish lackey."[80]

Hostility from those around them incited widespread fear among survivors. Concerned for their own safety, many, particularly in smaller localities, opted for living in a group in separated, closely guarded enclaves; they moved into deserted houses or those they'd recovered from Poles. Jews who lived in larger urban centers also took precautions. Hayim Gutman described the situation after moving to Łódź from provincial Rogów:

> Antisemitism was intensifying by the day, with the handful of survivors living in constant fear. Almost every day one heard that a Jew had been killed somewhere […]. Fear was growing. It got so that I stopped sleeping. Every night we would bar the door and lock a few locks. But even protected like that we were afraid to sleep in our apartment and went to sleep at our friends' place. Hitler had lost, the war was over, but many Poles still hadn't had their fill of Jewish blood. I was afraid to go out in the evening.[81]

Fear of death hovered over survivors since the first moments after they left their hideouts. Just one night after the liberation (August 1, 1944) an armed band attacked Khone Berger's house in Połaniec and murdered several members of his family.[82] The day after pushing the Germans out of Kolbuszowa (July 27, 1944) some Poles apprehended Leybush Nesel and Naphtali Kaner, led them to the local cemetery and executed them there though, as the testimony's author emphasized, "the Soviets were already in town."[83] Violence assumed very different forms. Murders were committed by planting bombs under houses

[80] Davidovich, "Oyf di shpurn fun farshvundn yidish lebn," p. 1129. I came across only one testimony where locals showed a favorable attitude to Jews visiting their hometown after the war. In the Tyszowce memorial book one reads that in 1946 peasants from nearby villages who were driving to a fair on a Wednesday were greeting guests from Łódź whom they encountered on their way. They were happy to see the Jewish survivors: "each of the peasants assured us that we could settle down in Tyszowce and live with them in peace". See Berl and Elke Aydelsberg, "A bazukh in Tishivits nokhn khurbn [A Visit in Tyszowce after the Destruction]," in *Pinkes Tishivits* / *Tiszowic book*, ed. Yakov Ziper (Tel Aviv: Irgun Yotsei Tishvits be-Israel, 1970), p. 266.

[81] Gutman, "Yorn fun umglik un shoyder," pp. 536–537.

[82] David Shniper, "Ayarati Plontsh [My City of Połaniec]," in *Sefer Stashov*…, p. 633. According to other sources, the Berger family was killed on April 9, 1945. Cf. Tokarska-Bakir, *Pod klątwą*…, vol. 1, p. 488.

[83] Naftali Zaleshits, "Di martirologie fun di kolbushover Yidn [The Martyrdom of the Kolbuszowa Jews]," in *Pinkes Kolbushov (Kolbsov)* / *Pinckas* [sic!] *Kolbushov*, ed. M. I. Biderman (New York: United Kolbushover, 1971), p. 456. The last of the murders I located in the memorial books was that of Khayim Finkelsztejn, formerly commandant of a Jewish family

inhabited by Jews (Siemiatycze, Leżajsk), for instance, or by throwing grenades in their direction (Zamość). Many attacks were just shows of force, for example, opening fire on Isroel Chustecki's house in Szydłowiec. Their primary objective was intimidation and forcing survivors out of town.[84] In certain localities, local authorities used practices taken from the occupation period. For instance, in summer of 1944 Węgrów's mayor ordered the handful of local Jews to do forced labor. According to Ruben Przepiórka's testimony, they worked for Polish farmers reaping and threshing grain crop and performing other harvest-related duties.[85]

Jews of all categories fell victim to the violence: (Polish and Soviet) civilians and the military, MO functionaries, former prisoners of concentration camps, repatriates, envoys sent from abroad by Jewish organizations. There were also instances of Poles who were murders who during the occupation had rescued Jews. The Polish man who had sheltered Dina Rotsztejn-Ricer and several other Jews from Kurów was killed in that locality in his own home. Just before killing him the murderers told him: "You're dying from our bullet because you are a communist – you sheltered Jews."[86]

Almost all authors of testimonies agreed as to the main causes for postwar anti-Jewish violence, pointing predominantly to traditional antisemitism deeply rooted in Polish society, which only intensified during the war. It was also generally thought that Poles had participated in Holocaust crimes. "It is difficult to forget the zoological hatred against Jews in Poland before the war. And the role which Polish society played during the occupation, under the damned Nazi regime, has become deeply engraved in memory," one author stated in the Tomaszów Mazowiecki memorial book. Poles, according to him, witnessed the wholesale murder of Jews "with silent satisfaction" and it was no accident that the camps had been built on Polish lands.[87] An identical view was expressed

camp in forests near Brańsk. Finkelsztejn was shot on February 24, 1947 at a fair in Brańsk ("Braynsk nokh der bafrayung," p. 385).

[84] Yankiel Zilberman, "Mayn letster blik oyf unzer shtetl [My last View of our Town]," in *Shidlotser yizker*-bukh / *Yizkor book Szydłowiec*, ed. Berel Kahan (New York: Shidlovtser Landsmanshaft in Nyu-York, 1974), p. 51.

[85] Ruben Pshepiurka, "In Vengrov nokh der bafrayung [In Węgrów after the Liberation]," in *Kehilat Vengrov; sefer zikaron* [The Jewish Community of Węgrów; Memorial Book], ed. M. Tamari (Tel Aviv: Yotsei Vengrov be-Israel be-hishetatefut Yotsei Vengrov be-Argentina, 1960/1961), p. 235.

[86] Dina Rotshteyn-Ritser, "Vi azoy ikh bin gebliben lebn [How it happened that I survived]," in *Yizker-bukh Koriv; sefer yizkor matsevet zikaron le-ayaratenu Koriv / Izkor Book: in Memoriam of our Home-Town Kurow*, ed. Moshe Grosman (Tel Aviv: Irgun Yotsei Koriv be-Israel, 1955), pp. 551–552. The murdered Pole's name was Stanisław Gajda. Cf. Antoni Sułek, "Gajdowie, Samarytanie z łąk między Krupą a Podborzem [The Gajda family, the Samaritans of the meadows between Krupa and Podborze]," *O Nas… Kwartalnik Gminy Kurów* 2 (2015): 24.

[87] Sh. Meldung, "Nokh der bafrayung [After the Liberation]," in *Sefer zikaron li-kehilat Tomashov Mazovietsk / Tomashow-Mazowieck: a Memorial to the Jewish Community of*

in the Wieruszów book: "also during the war, under the German occupation, Poles had not abandoned their zoological antisemitic traditions and faithfully collaborated with the Nazis on the extermination of the Jewish nation."[88] The forms of postwar violence were in many ways similar to the crimes committed by the Nazis, which is why the latter were often presented as an ideological and organizational model for Polish antisemites. The author of a testimony included in the Kałuszyn book had no reservations about this, laying clear emphasis on German inspiration for postwar crimes.[89] Elimelekh Fajnzylber, in one Siedlce memorial book, held a similar view:

> The handful of survivors swells, in the eyes of those wanting a Poland "without Jews." They cannot in any way accept the thought that after everything that happened there are still "so many Jews" who have to be disposed of. And local murderers know very well how to get rid of them. For not long ago they witnessed this and learned it from their ideological kin: Germans and Ukrainians. So they attack Jewish survivors, murdering them with as much brutality and cruelty as their German and Ukrainian teachers had.[90]

In the same book Fajnzylber pointed to another cause for violence: the desire to eliminate witnesses of wartime crimes, fearing their expected revenge:

> As the Red Army was approaching, there were persistent rumors that Jews would take revenge on those Poles who murdered or helped murder Jews. Hence, the increase in the brutal bacchanalia involving discovered Jews, for the purpose of erasing any trace of living witnesses.[91]

While almost all murders were paired with robbing victims' property, rarely was theft stated as the sole motive, unconnected with ethnic and/or political

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Tomashow-Mazowieck, ed. Moshe Vaysberg (Tel Aviv: Irgun Yotsei Tomashov-Mazovietsk be-Israel, 1969), p. 494.

[88] Fraylikh-Manes, "Der keltser pogrom…," p. 737.

[89] Khayim Rayzman, "Daytchen un Polyakn in der farnikhtungs-arbet [Germans and Poles in the extermination Labor]," in *Sefer Kalushin; gehaylikt der khorev gevorener kehile / Sefer Kaluszin; dedicated to the destructed and annihilated Community of Kaluszin*, eds Arye Shamri et al. (Tel Aviv: Irgun Yotsei Kalushin be-Israel and Kalushiner Landsmanshaftn in Amerike, Argentine, Frankrakh un Andere Lender, 1961), p. 364.

[90] "Goym, vos hobn geratvet…," p. 209.

[91] Ibidem. Except for the more or less reliable, relatively general testimonies given by Jews who had been members of the repression apparatus in postwar Poland, who said they worked in it to punish Poles who had been co-perpetrators of the Holocaust (discussed later in this article), in memorial books that I read I located only one mention of a revenge attempt on Poles, and it ended tragically. In September 1944, the former partisan Shimon Elenbogen went to Łany, a village near Kurów, to avenge his brutally murdered wife and child. He never returned. Cf. Shmuel Honigsman, "Khurbn Koriv [The Destruction of Kurów]," in *Yizker-bukh Koriv…*, p. 265; Malka Knoplikh-Shtern, *Tamid erev toyt* [Always on the brink of Death]," in ibidem, p. 425.

factors. For instance, killing people wanting to reclaim what they once owned were rare. One such case was the murder of Peysach Kuskis from Kałuszyn, who demanded repayment from a Sierociński who had received money from Kuskis' father. Another was the murder of Hayim Frost from Łazy near Łuków who, wanting to recover his family home, was shot dead by its new owner.[92] Also, not all killings were motivated by specific steps former owners took to recover their property. Often their presence, having survived the war, was enough. For instance, a man with the surname Berkovitch, on returning from a camp in Germany, was shot dead by new owners of a farm in Bolków near Wieluń that once belonged to his family.[93]

In several cases, including that of the 1946 Kielce pogrom, aggression stemmed from an accusation of ritual murder, sometimes a mere rumor or unverified information about a missing child. In Płock, for example, the purported victim, alive and well, was found a day after attempts to instigate anti-Jewish tumult.[94] At other times, a corpse was the trigger, discovered with the culpability for it attributed to Jews; this was the underlying cause for the antisemitic attack in Rzeszów in June 1945.[95] Descriptions of this type of event usually include an element of surprise, clearly emphasized, that accusations were formulated against Jews, which to writers of the testimonies seem a relic of what should be the distant past. Authors also note clear links between atrocities committed during these events and occupation-period legacies (a mob following German models). It is precisely in this vein that Nusbaum recounted events in Rzeszów in the Tarnobrzeg book:

> A great pogrom of survivors took place on the first day of the festival [Shavuot]. A vast crowd of people from the area assembled in the morning. Holding bats, whips, and scourges, they were ready to "fight" the helpless and weak Jews. The old accusation of ritual murder served as pretext. Jews had [purportedly] killed a Polish child and added its blood to matzo to strengthen the returning Jews… Accusations of ritual murder in the 20th century… The crowd of pogromers was led by the Polish Citizens' Militia [MO], whose members dragged Jews from three houses they lived in. Some of the Jews were chased out of town, while the rest were gathered in the courtyard outside the MO station. Jews with

[92] Rayzman, "Daychen un Polyakn in der farnihtungs-arbet," p. 364; Shlomo Prengler, "Der umkum fun yidishn Lukov [The Destruction of Jewish Łuków]," in *Sefer Lukov; gehaylikt khorev-gevorener kehile*, [The Book of Łuków: In Memory of a destroyed Community] ed. B. Heler (Tel Aviv: Lukower Societies in Israel and United States of America, 1968), p. 436.

[93] Beserglik, "Khrbn Vielun," p. 344.

[94] "Yidn in Plotsk nokh krig [Jews in Płock after the War]," in Shlomo Grinshpan, *Yidn in Plotsk / Jews in Plotzk* (New York: A & H Printing and Publishing Corp., 1960), p. 297.

[95] Mikhael Shneyways, "Khilatseti nafeshi mi-mot [I saved my Soul from Death]," in *Kehilat Resha; sefer zikaron / Rzeszów Jews: Memorial Book*, ed. Moshe Yari-Vald (Tel Aviv: Rzeszower Societies in Israel and USA, 1967), pp. 330–331.

> baggage were forcedly removed from railway stations and led to a third square. The MO men divided the stolen items of value among themselves. They threw the unfortunate Jews to the crowd like one throws bones to hungry dogs. One can see that Poles had learned their lesson from their Nazi teachers, as the poor victims were beaten mercilessly. They were ordered to run and hit the dirt again and again. The young all took part in that "entertainment" – students were throwing stones from upstairs.[96]

Several times it is stated that the upheavals were prevented or stopped only by external intervention, usually attributed to the new regime. This role was usually played by the Soviets, occasionally by representatives of the local authorities. Depending on the source, the Rzeszów riots were stopped either by NKVD stationed in the city center (alerted by a man named Shprung) or by a "savior angel in the guise of the Russian officer who ordered MO men to restore order and disperse the crowd."[97] The author of a testimony in the Wieruszów book, who witnessed the Kielce pogrom, said the murder of Jews on July 4, 1946 ended only after Soviet soldiers dressed in Polish uniforms intervened, arresting "hooligans" then guarding mourners during the victims' funeral.[98] Riots in Płock were prevented due to decisive steps taken by Wincenty Kępiński, a local Polish Socialist Party activist.[99]

Soviet troops were regarded as a guarantor of safety, a view voiced by authors of testimonies including those in memorial books of Brańsk, Pułtusk, and Kazimierz Dolny.[100] In the latter of these, the author stated: "As long as the Russians were stationed in town, it was peaceful and we did not feel threatened. But when the offensive moved across the Vistula River and power went into Polish hands the situation deteriorated and we again began to fear for our lives."[101] Shifra Nusbaum held a similar view, observing that as long as Soviets were stationed in Tarnobrzeg, the town was relatively peaceful, while even on the day after their departure Poles set fire to the house of Peysakh Hauser from Alfredówka. Its owner burned alive.[102] Another author, Serla Bursztyn, discussing a slightly later situation, expressed her conviction that the lack of pogroms in Lower Silesia was "only owing to heroic Jewish youth who helped the Red Army prevent them."[103]

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[96] Nusboym, "In bafraytn Poyln," p. 361.

[97] Ibidem; Shneyways, "Khilatseti nafeshi mi-mot," p. 331.

[98] Fraylikh-Manes, "Der keltser pogrom…," p. 738.

[99] "Yidn in Plotsk…," p. 297.

[100] "Braynsk nokh der bafrayung…," p. 381; Khava Vajnkrants-Kravietska, "Oyf der arisher zayt [On the Aryan Side]," in *Pultusk; sefer zikaron* [Pułtusk: Memorial Book], ed. Yitzhak Ivri (Tel Aviv: Pultusker Landsmanshaft in Isroel, 1971), p. 447.

[101] Gutman, "Yorn fun umglik un shoyder," p. 534.

[102] Nusboym, "In bafraytn Poyln," p. 360.

[103] Serla Burshtin (Zayerman), "Farshikt in a 'posholek' baym Vaysn Yam [Sent to a'small village by the White Sea]," in *Sefer yizkor li-kehilat Sarnaki*, p. 309.

Postwar testimonies in the vast majority end with an individual or group escape from Poland. To quote Yosef Goldsztejn, for Jews stigmatized with the horror of the Holocaust then persecution once it had ended, Poland seemed a "bloodstained 20th-century Spain" or even "a God-forsaken place."[104] Years later Hayim Krawiec expressed a similar view in the Goniądz memorial book:

> It pains my heart to see that the Poles who had murdered our brothers now live in formerly Jewish houses. […] When you see the sheer magnitude of the destruction and you realize what happened to your loved ones, you ask yourself whether you should stay here. Should you stay here on Polish land where very single inch of ground is soaked with the blood and tears of Jewish fathers, mothers, and children, and where every cobblestone is a mute witness to the leading of the Jews to death? No! This is not a place where survivors can find peace. One has to find a safer place. We all want to escape and we are fleeing this forsaken land through various channels.[105]

The recollections about postwar Polish-Jewish relations recorded for inclusion in the memorial books have all the characteristic strengths and weaknesses of narrative sources. One should bear in mind that the books were usually written for a small inner circle of readers. The core audience was usually either Landsmanshaft members or people connected in some way with the locality the given publication was about. The print runs were usually small and the books were written predominantly in Yiddish and Hebrew, limiting the range of potential readers to speakers of those languages – that is, in practice, to Jews. Another factor contributing to these publications' hermetic quality was their semi-official circulation (mainly among members of the Landsmanshaftn) and limited distribution and also that some 95 percent were published in just three countries: Palestine (Israel), the United States, and Argentina (only two books were written and published in Poland).[106]

Thus unlike publications appearing in, for example, postwar Poland, the message contained in the books is characterized by greater openness. This is mainly due to the absence of external censorship or other barriers (e.g., concerns about the reaction of Christian audiences)' that limit freedom both in the choice of events described and in the judgments and opinions expressed. This lack of limits of an ideological nature enabled certain authors – those with a negative attitude to Poland's postwar regime – to express negative views of the course of political changes and the new authorities' indolence concerning

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[104] Goldshteyn, "Tog-bukh fun geto," pp. 445–446.

[105] Khayim Kraviets, "A bazukh in shtetl nokhn khurbn [A Visit to the Town after the Destruction]," in *Sefer yizkor Goniadz* [The Memorial Book of Goniądz], eds Moshe Shlomo Ben-Meir (Tel Aviv: Irguney Yotsei Goniazh be-Aretsot ha-Berit u-ve-Israel, 1960), p. 709.

[106] Adam Kopciowski, "Wstęp [Introduction]," in *Księgi pamięci gmin żydowskich. Bibliografia* [Jewish Memorial Books: A Bibliography], ed. Adam Kopciowski (Lublin: Wydawnictwo UMCS, 2008), pp. 9–11.

Jewish affairs and even that certain of them held responsibility for instances of anti-Jewish violence. Disappointment with the political system and with newly "democratic" Poland is notable particularly in books published in Israel and among authors strongly identifying themselves with a Zionist worldview. They were critical of the regime in Poland and also activities of Jewish institutions that were submissive to the authorities, in particular the Jewish faction of the Polish Workers' Party, which led the way in this respect. In the Jędrzejów memorial book, Isroel Gortman termed it a "Jewish faction," accusing it of various actions detrimental to its own community.[107] The Communist state security's negative attitude to Jews became a main thread in Yankiel Zylberman's testimony included in the Szydłowiec memorial book.[108] It seems that a author's ideology – or that of a book's editors and other authors – is among the key criteria affecting evaluations both of the postwar reality in Poland and of the scale and scope of antisemitism in Polish society during that period.

Entirely different opinions were expressed in the books prepared by radical left-wing milieus, mostly in Argentina and France. For instance, the Warsaw memorial book, copublished in Buenos Aires by the leftist Union of Jewish Culture (Yidisher Kultur-Farbund, IKUF), contains a text by Yosef Sandacz, "What I Saw in People's Poland," presenting an enthusiastic vision of developing Jewish life in liberated Poland while not mentioning the wave of antisemitism which, not long before, had broken across the country.[109]

Along with this relatively high degree of freedom of expression, another undisputed strength of the memorial books lies in their uniqueness. Differing from descriptions of the occupation and the Holocaust that were often reprinted from archival materials chosen by the books' editors (for instance, Holocaust-survivor testimonies deposited with the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw and with YIVO in New York City), in the vast majority the texts about the situation of Jews after the Second World War were recorded exclusively for the purpose of the memorial books, where they were published for the first and often last time. In the case of certain localities, particularly smaller ones, the message included in a given book is the basic if not the only source of more detailed information on that topic.

At the same time one has to bear in mind that a significant degree of subjectivity characterizes almost all testimonies recorded for the memorial books, usually representing their authors' points of view. Consequently, judgments made in them contain plenty of oversimplifications and often have the tone of not entirely legitimate generalizations. These construct a schematic,

[107] Gortman, "Yendzhev erev ir khurbn un nokh im," p. 203.

[108] Zilberman, "Mayn letster blik oyf unzer shtetl," p. 513.

[109] Yosef Sandach, "Vos ich hob gezen in folks-Poyln," in *Pinkes Varshe* [The Chronicle of Warsaw], ed. Pinye Kats (Buenos Aires: Landslayt-Farayn fun Varshe un Umgegnt in Argentine bay der mitarbet fun Argentiner "Ikuf", 1955), pp. 1283–1294.

black-and-white historical vision of the postwar period, usually void of any attempts at nuance. They reduce the complicated sociopolitical situation during the period to a narration subject exclusively to Polish-Jewish ethnic conflict. This seems a pervasive phenomenon, characteristic of almost the entire genre. Categorizing the civil war in Poland in the late 1940s as simple, dichotomized, and entirely reliant on the criterion of nationality is a result of the convergence of several factors: convincing those who were leaving Poland that they made the right decision, and strengthening Zionist views of those who decided to leave for Palestine/Israel.

These generalizations are noticeable predominantly in how the two main groups appearing in narrations about postwar violence are represented – that is, its victims and perpetrators. There is a clear tendency in many memorial book towards an internal standardization within both categories, making each uniform by reducing its differences and emphasizing its common features. It is difficult, however, to say whether this is intentional. This leads to a relatively substantial stereotyping of either group.

By focusing predominantly on victims' fates, the authors described postwar reality from their perspective. Perpetrators constituted something of a secondary backdrop, usually shown as members in the generic mob gripped by anti-Jewish hatred. They were described using collective nouns varying in emotional resonance, from the relatively mild term "hooligans" to negative, strongly judgmental epithets such as "Polish murderers," "Polish fascists," and "Nazi-imitators thirsty for Jewish blood." The most frequent among identifications found in the memorial books, though, is the universal conflation of perpetrators with the Home Army (*Armia Krajowa*, AK). In vast majority, the texts pointed to those guilty of the violence as "murderers from the AK" or simply "AK murderers" or "AK members." In informing readers about the situation in wartime and postwar Poland, authors of certain texts included short explanations of what the Home Army was, which at times assumed relatively peculiar forms. In the Serock memorial book, the formation was called an "illegal reactionary antisemitic armed organization," while in the Garwolin book it was presented as a "Polish partisan organization that busied itself chiefly with murdering Jews, including after the war."[110]

Attempts at nuance regarding ideological motives in the underground and for perpetrators were rare and usually did not get past clichés. A telling example here is this excerpt from the Siedlce memorial book:

> There are differences between the murderers of Jews who have left their hideouts. Sometimes [perpetrators] are those who have become such old

[110] Mayer Herts, "Mayne iberlebungen fun september [My Experiences from September]," in *Garvolin yizker bukh / Garwolin: a Memorial to the Jewish Community of Garwolin (Poland)*, eds Zishe Nokhgelt, Moshe Zaltsman (Tel Aviv – New York – Paris: Yirgun Yotsey Garvolin, 1972), p. 193; Verdi, "Ikh zukh mayne brider un shvester," p. 454.

> hands at murder and robbery that these became the professions they have been practicing for several years. At other times these are nameless bands with no ideology other than their "sacred duty" to rob and murder Jews. But in most cases this is the doing of bands of a nationalist character – the remainders of the half-destroyed Sanation [prewar movement] fascist army, which now use such resounding names as the Home Army or the National Armed Forces. They have been consumed by their utter helplessness in the fight against the powerful German enemy and now they are gnawed at by the awareness that Poland has been liberated by the victorious Red Army, the goddamned Bolsheviks.[111]

Authors identified the murderers relatively infrequently. That didn't result from intentional anonymization or attempts at generalizing, obviously, or from attributing responsibility for individual acts of violence to a larger, clearly defined group or organization. The actual reason in most cases was the authors' insufficient knowledge and the nature of the murders: in very large majority, victims were killed treacherously. Some authors' attempts to identify murderers proved impossible due to the prevailing conspiracy of silence and to the general lack of interest among the authorities in launching investigations to find the guilty.[112] Those who succeeded did provide their readers with specific names. In Kolbuszowa, the two Jews killed the day after the liberation were murdered by bus driver Stasiek Zieliński and a man with the surname Kisiel, who worked in the tax office and came from Sokołów Małopolski.[113] The Miechów book mentions Yankiel Matuszyński, murdered in the village of Maciejów by Jędrek Kania, while in Mordechai Ursztejn's description of the murder of nine Jews from Przedbórz, he remarked: "everybody in town knew it was the doing of Dobski and his helpers, but nobody wanted to point at him."[114]

In authors' views, the murders of these Jews were motivated almost exclusively by hatred on nationalistic grounds. The attackers were at times said to have been spurred to robbery, but impulses of a political nature were never mentioned. This doesn't mean, however, that issues connecting some victims in operations of the Communist regime's structures weren't discussed. Many authors openly stated when murdered victims worked in state security or the MO (serving in the latter were, for instance, the three victims of the attack in Parczew in February 1946).[115] Interestingly, according to authors of these texts, the main reason for

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[111] "Goym, vos hobn geratvet…," p. 209.

[112] Davidovich, "Oyf di shpurn fun farshvundn yidish lebn," p. 1126.

[113] Zaleshits, "Di martirologie fun di kolbushover Yidn," p. 456.

[114] Mordkhe Hershkowicz and Aron Matushinski, "Di mishpokhes in di bunkers [Families in the Bunkers]," in *Sefer yizker Miekhov, Kharshnitse un Ksionzh / Miechov Memorial Book: Charshnitza and Kshoynge*, ed. Nakhman Blumental, Aviva Ben-Azar (Broshi) (Tel Aviv: Irgun Yotsei Miekhov, Khurshnitse ve-Ksionzh, 1971), p. 267; Urshteyn, "Gefalene in shlaht," p. 500.

[115] Shamay Zunshayn, "Tsum ondenk fun der farpaynikter yidisher kehile fun Partshev [In Memory of the destroyed Jewish Community of Parczew]," in *Partshev; sefer zikaron*…,

joining those formations wasn't ideological considerations or a willingness to aid the new regime, it was ethnic factors, which fits in with the context of narration that's been highlighted – that is, the Polish-Jewish conflict. In characterizing the murdered UB, MO, and KBW (*Korpus Bezpieczeństwa Wewnętrznego* – The Internal Security Corps) functionaries, the authors usually emphasized that their decisions to join those formations were motivated solely by the willingness to take revenge on Poles who murdered Jews during the occupation and to protect what was left in postwar Poland of the Jewish community.

Such generalizations were usually accompanied by biographical idealization, an excellent example of which is the short biography included in the Chmielnik memorial book of Alter (Albert) Grynbaum, the deputy director of the Office of Public Security in Kielce who has been mentioned above. Recounting Grynbaum's life (prewar communist, volunteer in the Spanish Civil War, Auschwitz prisoner deported from Belgium) and characterizing his postwar UB career (in Skarżysko-Kamienna and Kielce), the author stated: "He performed his duties with great enthusiasm. He took part in the validation and execution of death sentences passed on Poles accused of helping the murderers of Jews. He often stressed that the only reason for his return to Poland was taking revenge on Poles who had helped exterminate the Jews."[116] Grynbaum also manifested his heroism during the Kielce pogrom:

> When a Jewish house in Planty was surrounded by hooligans, he forced his way through the crowd on a motorcycle, holding a machine gun in an attempt to prevent the pogrom. He unsuccessfully tried to organize forces against the pogromers. He barely survived, fleeing at the last moment before the slaughter.[117]

After the pogrom Grynbaum gathered evidence for the indictment then during the weeks before his death he was ordered to take up a position in the Paris embassy and with his wife was readying to leave. "But the AK bands could not forgive him for fighting against them. Tricked with a falsified document, he left for Warsaw and was brutally murdered on the way."[118] Jewish witnesses and/or testimonial authors gave descriptions of their service in state security that were similar. Moyshe Hof from Leżajsk, in describing his motivation for joining the UB ranks and details of attacking the house of a "known anti-Semite" from the AK, Zygmunt Kaczmarczyk, wrote: "Before my eyes I saw all the victims

p. 191; Moyshe Duman, "Zikhroynes fun a partizaner [Memories of a Partisan]," in *Sefer-yizker Ostrow-Lubelski / Memorial-Book Ostrow-Lubelski*, ed. Dovid Shtokfish (Tel Aviv: Ostrow-Lubelski Cociety [sic!], Israel, 1987), p. 263.

[116] "Alter Grinboym (Albert) – a nohmilhome korbn [Alter Grynbaum (Albert) – a postwar Victim]," in *Pinkes Khmielnik*…, pp. 931–932.

[117] Ibidem.

[118] Ibidem. More about Alter Grinbaum and his role during the Kielce pogrom see Tokarska-Bakir, *Pod klątwą*…, vol. 1, pp. 328–330.

murdered by the AK in town and villages. First and foremost, I remembered the time when the AK threw a bomb into a house inhabited by several [Holocaust] survivors, killing the last handful of Jews in Leżajsk."[119] Eliezer Horoszocha from Tykocin recounted that while helping the Red Army deal with Christians whom he knew had collaborated with the Germans, "he had sent many Polish collaborators to Siberia."[120] Tzvi Treger stated in the Szczebrzeszyn book that near Chełm he served against "the reactionary bands," chiefly to protect local Jews from "hooligans."[121]

Descriptions of Jewish resistance are as problematic as accounts of motives for engaged cooperation with the Communist regime are. It seems in this regard that we have to contend with two radically different modes of narration. The first is factual reconstruction of events that took place, recorded in most cases by participants or eyewitnesses. The other consists of exaggerated, fairly improbable descriptions of armed resistance in the face of attackers. These latter accounts were usually written by individuals who didn't witness the attacks. Among the first category, special attention should be given to testimonies provided by former partisans who, having returned from the forests to their hometowns, retained some of their organizational structures and worked together. Their combat experience and weapons they kept enabled them to protect themselves effectively from attack. The largest number of these descriptions can be found in books about places in Białystok Province. For instance, in Siemiatycze a group of 28 Jews living together in Leyzor Szuster's house successfully repelled an attack by underground members on April 6, 1945. Their success came after a whole night's struggle during which the attackers managed temporarily to take control of part of the property the Jews were defending.[122] Similarly, in the Goniądz book, Shabtay Finkelsztejn described 60 Jews from Jasionówka being attacked by "Polish bandits from the AK," against whom they "put up heroic resistance – they opened fire, caused losses to the attackers and forced them to retreat."[123]

The other category of descriptions focused mostly on heroic deeds by individuals, Jewish men and women commanding Polish or Soviet armed units (the military, the militia). Usually arriving shortly before the tragedy, they prevented the massacre, almost miraculously saving their compatriots. In many cases it's difficult to say whether such events did actually take place and if they did, it re-

[119] Moyshe Hof, "Alayn in di felder [Alone in the Fields]," in *Lizhensk; sefer zikaron*…, p. 318. Cf. Tokarska-Bakir, *Pod klątwą*…, vol. 1, p. 652, footnote 881.

[120] Eliezer Horoshokha, "Im ha-partizanim ha-rusim [With the Russian Partisans]," in *Sefer Tiktin*, p. 505.

[121] Treger, "Zih bataylikt in kamf," p. 230.

[122] D. Pristor, "Unter di natsis [Under the Nazis]," in *Kehilat Siemiatitsh / The Community of Semiatych*, ed. Eliezer Tash (Tur-Shalom) (Tel Aviv: Irgun Yotsei Siemiatitsh be-Israel we-Aretsot ha-Berit, 1965), p. 402.

[123] Shabtay Finkelshteyn, "Vi azoy ikh hob es ibergelebt [How I survived]," in *Sefer yizker Goniadzh*…, p. 699.

mains unknown if the course they took matched that which is described. Most of these accounts were thirdhand testimonies, including the text by Isroel Turkeltaub, an eyewitness of the Kielce pogrom, which is included in the Chmielnik memorial book. Though Turkeltaub was not in Chmielnik (his hometown) on July 4, 1946, he included a short account of events that took place there that day:

> A few thousand peasants gathered in Chmielnik on that day. Only ten Jews were living in town. Four took shelter at the town hall, hoping that they would be safe there. Suddenly, a few cars with soldiers arrived in Chmielnik. They were led by a Jewish heroine from Chmielnik, Edka Lewkowicz. The detachment opened fire at the crowd. A machine gun in hand, Edka fired left and right. The crowd dispersed. That was how the Jews who were in Chmielnik on that tragic day were saved.[124]

This excerpt raises a fundamental question concerning the content of memorial books: the issue of their credibility.[125] Most articles in the books have the character of narrative sources, as they are based almost exclusively on recollections of their authors, who seldom used alternative sources of information, such as historical studies, the press, or archival sources. Instead,

[124] Turkeltoyb, "Khmielniker korbones in keltser pogrom," p. 928. A description of a similar event was published in *Kol Lublin*, the mouthpiece of the Lublin compatriots' association, published in Israel. This event took place in Lublin a day after Yom Kippur 1945 – that is, on September 18. According to the testimonial's author, Rabbi Ovadya Farbiarrz, around midday a group of armed MO men stormed into his apartment in the Chevra Nosim Synagogue building, located on Lubartowska Street. The men were looking for evidence of the rabbi's participation in ritual murder of a Christian, the purported victim of which was 16-year-old Zofia Niemczyńska. The rumor about this "crime" spread and a large crowd of Poles assembled on the square outside the tenement to "reckon" with the Jews. As their apartment was searched, the rabbi's wife managed to sneak out, forcing her way through the crowd then contacting "higher-rank Jewish officers" who commanded army units stationed in town. Farbiarrz recounted events that followed: "After a while army vehicles pulled up. They brought a hundred armed Jewish soldiers and officers. A struggle began, resembling a real battle during a war. The situation was brought under control in an hour. With great exertion, the Jewish soldiers managed to disperse the enraged crowd of a thousand Poles" (Ovadya D. Farbiazh, "Yom kiper in der khorever Lublin [Yom Kippur in the destroyed Lublin]," *Kol Lublin* 17 [1982]: 13–16).

[125] According to Eisenman-Lewkowicz's testimony (in conversation with Michał Chęciński in 1973), she did lead the action to rescue Jews from Chmielnik when the group went to that town, assisted by 10 armed soldiers. But there had been no need to open fire. She recalled: "When we entered the town I saw a crowd gathered in the market square, approximately 200–300 people. […] So I quickly ordered two men to find out what was going on there and to disperse that band at any cost. […] I gave the order to not open fire no matter what and to shoot in the air if need be. There was no such need". See "Edka Eisenman [Eisenman-Lewkowicz], sekretarka w Wydziale ds. Funkcjonariuszy WUBP Kielce, 1973. Wywiad [Edka Eisenman (Eisenman-Lewkowicz), secretary in the Department for Officers of the WUBP (Voivodship Office of Public Security) Kielce, 1973. Interview]," in Tokarska-Bakir, *Pod klątwą*…, vol. 2, p. 703).

they tended to stick to their memories and to information obtained from other survivors. The authors' memories were sometimes of short duration, with passing time proving detrimental to maintaining an appropriate level of detail. Testimonies written for inclusion in the memorial books were recorded shortly before publication, and it should be borne in mind that only 29 percent of these books were published in the 1940s and 1950s, and fully 71 percent of them were published in the 1960s or later.[126] The editors of the Lublin book, aware of these circumstances, wrote in their introduction:

> This book consists chiefly of witness recollections and testimonies. Because of their vivid and personal character, such materials are more valuable than succinct documents. However, they lack the accuracy characteristic of documents. Of course, it is impossible to find two witnesses who describe one event in the same way, particularly when they refer in part to events that took place 20–30 years in the past.[127]

The same facts, due to the wide chronological distance and to varied degrees of participation in the events recounted, could be remembered differently by different authors. Hence, in many books one can find mutually exclusive accounts next to ones supplementing one another. The editors of the Lublin book went on to state:

> Sometimes the same facts are described differently in different articles. Similarly, interpretations of various facts often differ across the articles. In such cases the editorial staff was unable to verify certain facts. Thus, it has been decided that witness recollections and testimonies will be presented in the form in which they were recorded. At the same time we are of the opinion that juxtaposing these facts would give a varied portrayal of Jewish life in Lublin. However, the editors have to hold the authors fully accountable both for facts and for their interpretation. Every article or interpretation in this book has been incorporated into it as the sole responsibility of its author.[128]

These differences usually regard less essential issues, including, for instance, the context of individual events. Sometimes, however, there are discrepancies

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[126] Adamczyk-Garbowska, Kopciowski, Trzciński, "Księgi pamięci jako źródło wiedzy o historii, kulturze i Zagładzie polskich Żydów," p. 19.

[127] "Araynfir [Introduction]," in *Dos bukh fun Lublin; zikhroynes, gvis-eydes un materialn ibern lebn, kamf un martirertum fun lubliner yidishn yishev* [The Book of Lublin: Memories, Testimonies, and Materials on the Life, Struggle, and Martyrdom of the Lublin Jewish Community], eds Mordechai Litvin and Mordechai Lerman (Paris: Parizer Komitet fun Shafn a Monografie vegn yidishn yiszhev in Lublin, 1952), p. 14 ("Wprowadzenie do księgi [Introducion to the Book]," trans. Adam Kopciowski, in *Księga pamięci żydowskiego Lublina* [The Memory Book of Jewish Lublin], introduction, selection and edition by Adam Kopciowski [Lublin: Wydawnictwo UMCS, 2011], p. 135).

[128] Ibidem.

of a fundamental nature, e.g., with regard to the number of victims or their personal data. For example, it is not entirely clear how many people died as a result of the bombing of the Potaszer house in Leżajsk in February 1945, which has been mentioned above. According to one testimony, there were nine victims, while another one mentions thirteen.[129] Similarly ambiguous is the murder of a group of Jews in Kazanów. According to Fishel Szerman, who gave the most comprehensive account of this tragedy in the Zwoleń book, on the town's market square in spring of 1945 the AK murdered four men (including Moyshe Kaplan) who had arrived from Zwoleń to trade shirts for food.[130] By contrast, Ita Rotfarb listed two victims along with Kaplan (Abraham Aron Przylinger and Miriam Lilienblum) and one wounded man (Yitzhok Kuperman). She dated the event in the "first weeks after the liberation."[131] Conversely, Hayim Szarit-Szlofman claimed that Itshe-Leyb Kuperman was wounded in the arm, not on the Kazanów market square but in the shooting at night at Miriam Kahan's house in Zwoleń.[132] At the same time it is worth noting that the Zwoleń book was created relatively late – it was published in New York in 1982, which may be the main reason for these discrepancies.

In an article published two years earlier devoted to the memorial books' significance and reception, Yehoszua Rotenberg expressed the view that testimonies published in memorial books, unlike scattered personal recollections not drawn together in a coherent publication, are characterized by a greater degree of objectivity. For unlike the latter, the former are subject to an unofficial control apparatus in that "the author knows that he is writing for his fellow inhabitants who would ridicule him if he were to write something untrue – the editorial committee and also other local inhabitants would not accept any falsities or exaggerations."[133] Rotenberg's point of view seems overly optimistic. It may be that in reality editorial work on the books was more in keeping with the publishers' description given in the Lublin memorial book (with editorial interventions limited to a necessary minimum along with holding authors fully accountable for information they provided) than overly idealistic views expressed by Rotenberg.

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[129] A kristn, "Vos ich hob gezen un gehert," p. 321; Zalts, "Ayner fun di hside umes hooylem," p. 307.

[130] Fishel Sherman, "Poylishe partizanen hargenen 70 Yidn [Polish Partisans killed 70 Jews]," in *Zwoliner yizker bukh* [Zwoleń Memorial Book], ed. Berl Kohen (New York: Zvoliner Landsmnshaft in Nyu-York, 1982), p. 367.

[131] Ita Roytfarb, "Antlofn nokh der bafrayung [Escape after the Liberation]," in ibidem, p. 417.

[132] Khayim Sharit-Shlofman, "Fun Zvolin – oyf aybik [rom Zwoleń – gone forever]," in ibidem, p. 421.

[133] Jehoshua Rotenberg, "Yizker-bikher – tsi bloyz a sheyne matseyve? [Yizker Books – just a beautiful Tombstone?]," *Di Goldene Keyt* 103 (1980): 155–160 (as cited in Adamczyk-Garbowska, Kopciowski, Trzciński, "Księgi pamięci jako źródło wiedzy o historii, kulturze i Zagładzie polskich Żydów," p. 23).

To sum up, it should be emphasized yet again that possible discrepancies were unintentional and that they resulted from factors that have been indicated in the article. Intentional misrepresentations were extremely rare, usually consisting of ideologically motivated manipulation of certain events or phenomena, mostly including the perpetrators' motives, some of the victims' political entanglements, and forms of Jewish resistance. In an optimistic scenario, one should subject memorial-book testimonies to a critical analysis identical to that used with regard to sources characterized as accounts, and also to confront them with alternative sources if any exist.

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