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Critical History and its 'Shadow Cabinet'. Polish Historiography and the Holocaust during 2003–2013

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In this sketch[1] I analyse the most important phenomena in the Polish historiography of the Holocaust published during 2003–2013. I do not claim a right to an exhaustive overview of the subject matter or to compiling a complete bibliography. Instead, I make an attempt, naturally highly subjective and made with an awareness of my own limitations – to pinpoint *certain* tendencies in the Polish Holocaust historiography of the last decade (in fact, I shall need to go back a little in time, so the reader shall be provided with a concise picture of the historiography of the last three decades) and *selected* books written in Polish and published in Poland during that time. The chronological framework is symbolically marked out by two discursive facts – on the one hand, the end of the dispute over Jan Tomasz Gross's *Neighbours*, that is, the publication of the book *Wokół „Sąsiadów". Polemiki i wyjaśnienia* [About the *Neighbours*. Polemics and explanations] (2003),[2] which is a summing up of the most important Polish debate on the Holocaust so far, and on the other hand, the Polish publication of Raul Hilberg's fundamental study *Destruction of the European Jews*[3] in 2014, 53 years (!) after its first edition.[4]

[1] The research which this article is based on was financed by the National Science Centre within the framework of financing an internship after a doctoral degree on the basis of decision No. DEC-2012/04/S/HS2/00194.

[2] Jan Tomasz Gross, *Wokół „Sąsiadów". Polemiki i wyjaśnienia* (Sejny: Pogranicze, 2003).

[3] Raul Hilberg, *Zagłada Żydów europejskich*, vol. 1–3, trans. Jerzy Giebułtowski (Warsaw: Piotr Stefaniuk, 2014). This edition of Hilberg's book is the latest and at the same time the most complete. The author supervised it until his death in 2007, sending annotations and corrections to the Polish publisher until the last moment.

[4] See Raul Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews*, 1st edition (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1961). Hilberg's study has had about a dozen English-language editions and it has become a milestone and a basic point of reference in Western research on the Holocaust. According to Michael R. Marrus, it is "the most important work ever written on this topic. Its scope is breathtaking" (idem, *Holocaust. Historiografia*, trans. Agata Tomaszewska [Warsaw: Wiedza Powszechna, 1993], p. 15).

To put things in yet another way, in the first issue of *Zagłada Żydów* (the Polish language version of *Holocaust. Studies and Materials*) issued in 2004 Natalia Aleksiun made an ambitious attempt to answer the question about the form of the Polish historiography of the Holocaust and Polish-Jewish relations during World War II in her text "Historiografia na temat Zagłady i stosunków polsko-żydowskich w okresie drugiej wojny światowej," with the extended version of that sketch entitled *Polish Historiography of the Holocaust – between Silence and Public Debate*.[5] On her way from silence to the debate, Aleksiun concluded her reflections at the end of the 1990s, that is, a moment before the Polish publication of *Neighbours*. Now, ten years later, in the same periodical, I begin this journey a little later, already after that largest public debate died away.

This article is actually a continuation of my reflections included in my book *Opowiedzieć Zagładę. Polska proza i historiografia wobec Holocaustu 1987–2003* [To tell of the Holocaust. Polish prose and historiography towards the Holocaust, 1987–2003] (2013). Consequently, I shall often be forced to repeat the most important observations I made in that publication. Both in *Opowiedzieć Zagładę* and in this text, I treat historiography as a type of literature. Consequently, the methods of producing the text, that is, the research methods and the volume of the analysed archival materials, backed up with footnotes, so important in historical argumentation, are not essential to me. Instead, I am interested predominantly in the end product – the historical book, treated as 'historical prose', to use Hayden White's term.[6] Such an approach results in the necessity to follow the footsteps of the 'narrativists' and Wojciech Wrzosek's epistemology of history,[7] and also to analyse the narration modes and the historiographic metaphors used, which are a testimony to thinking about the Holocaust. I am interested in their shape, the language and narrative strategies used in them, that is, equally in what is said and how it is said. I take inspiration here from both historical and literary research, which can constitute a substitute for what Ewa Domańska calls 'criticism of historiography'. This criticism is "interested in a concern for the future, which is manifested in showing possible effects, which various visions of the past have on reality."[8]

It seems that the works analysed may be divided into two basic research currents and the discourses they offer – critical historiography, which notices

[5] See Natalia Aleksiun, "Polish Historiography of the Holocaust – between Silence and Public Debate," *German History* vol. 22, 3 (2004): 406–432.

[6] Cf. Hayden White, *Proza historyczna*, trans. Rafał Borysławski et al., ed. Ewa Domańska (Cracow: Universitas, 2009).

[7] The publications I have particularly in mind here are: Wojciech Wrzosek, *Historia – kultura – metafora. Powstanie nieklasycznej historiografii* (Wrocław: Fundacja na rzecz Nauki Polskiej i Leopoldinum, 1995); idem, *O myśleniu historycznym* (Bydgoszcz: Oficyna Wydawnicza Epigram, 2009).

[8] Ewa Domańska, "Wprowadzenie do krytyki historiografii," in eadem, *Mikrohistorie. Spotkanie w międzyświatach*, 2nd edition (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Poznańskie, 2005), p. 176.

and explores the dark pages in the attitude of Polish society to the extermination of Jews, and the historiography that is antagonistic to it, which glorifies Poles' stances. Revealing and ethical, the former contributes to a reformulation of the discourse, while the latter is clearly conservative and uses martyrological and mythical clichés. As Wojciech Wrzosek has put it, "any picture of the past offered by a historian is accepted [by the milieu] only when it fulfilss the expectations present in culture."[9] Currently, these expectations vary. It seems that one may even venture to say that there exist two historical cultures (paradigms) and disparate models of historical explanation, where most pictures of the past painted by the opponents are dismissed. Often the choice of the topic – the rescuing or the murdering of Jews by Poles – becomes itself an ideological manifestation. Of course, there is no neutral historical axiological discourse and every vision of the past is assessed by the scholarly milieu, but in this case consensus seems almost impossible.

One final remark: in this article I take a relatively broad view of the topic of the Holocaust, at some point also analysing publications attempting to determine its consequences by discussing, for instance, the issue of the post-war violence against the Jews and Polish society's 'evil infection'.

Rebirth of the Discourse – Research Centres and Publication of Sources

There is relative unanimity that the mid-1980s brought the actual opening and discursive reemergence of the subject matter of Jews in Poland. In October 1985, public television broadcast a significantly abridged version of Claude Lanzmann's *Shoah*,[10] Aleksander Smolar's bitter essay "Tabu i niewinność" [taboo and innocence][11] and Jan Błoński's memorable article "Biedni Polacy patrzą na getto" [English title: "The Poor Poles Look at the Ghetto"] were published in 1986 and 1987 respectively.[12]

The 1980s brought the publication of important sources, for instance the editions of important texts from the Warsaw ghetto, which 'prepared the ground'

[9] See Wrzosek, *O myśleniu...*, p. 27.

[10] Two hours were removed from the nine-and-a-half-hour documentary, mostly the parts regarding the stances of the Poles. Consequently, as Anna Bikont wrote, "one could have an impression that the documentary's main theme was Polish anti-Semitism" (eadem, "A on krzyczał: 'Wszyscy jesteście kapo'," *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 4 October 1997, p. 10).

[11] Aleksander Smolar, "Tabu i niewinność," *Aneks* 41/42 (1986): 96–98. *Gazeta Wyborcza* reprinted that text years later, on the occasion of the debate on Jan Tomasz Gross's *Neighbours* (see idem, "Tabu i niewinność," *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 12 May 2001, p. 22 [part 1]; 19 May 2001, p. 22 [part 2]).

[12] Jan Błoński, "Biedni Polacy patrzą na getto," *Tygodnik Powszechny* 2 (1987): 1, 4. This essay was also reprinted in: idem, *Biedni Polacy patrzą na getto* (Cracow: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1994) (2nd edition 2008).

for later research.[13] "It is possible that the number of such books published during 1980–1989 was greater than during the previous thirty years altogether," wrote Jerzy Tomaszewski.[14] At the beginning of the 1990s, that is, after the 1989 political transformation, it became possible to go to the West without impediment, and English-language texts gradually began to stream in from the West.[15] The 1990 reestablishment of diplomatic ties between Poland and Israel and the opening of the Israeli embassy in Warsaw testified to the warming of Polish-Jewish relations. It was also the beginning of institutional foundations of new research units, which during the next decade conducted research also on the Holocaust, for instance, the Interdepartmental Institute of History and Culture of Jews in Poland (*Międzywydziałowy Zakład Historii i Kultury Żydów w Polsce*), established in 1986 by the Jagiellonian University's senate, and the Mordechaj Anielewicz Centre for Teaching and Researching the History and Culture of Polish Jews (*Centrum Badania i Nauczania Dziejów i Kultury Żydów w Polsce im. Mordechaja Anielewicza*), established in 1990 at Warsaw University.[16] 1993 saw the establishment of the Laboratory of the Culture and Languages of Polish Jews (*Pracownia Kultury i Języków Żydów Polskich*) at the Polish Studies Institute of the University of Wrocław,[17] while the Institute of Jewish Culture and History (*Zakład Kultury i Historii Żydów*) began to function in October 2000 as an independent unit of the Faculty of Humanities of the Maria Curie-

[13] To name only the most important ones: *Archiwum Ringelbluma. Getto warszawskie lipiec 1942–styczeń 1943*, ed. Ruta Sakowska (Warsaw: PWN, 1980); *Adama Czerniakowa dziennik getta warszawskiego 6 IX 1939–13 VII 1942*, ed. Marian Fuks (Warsaw: Czytelnik, 1983); Mary Berg, *Dziennik z getta warszawskiego*, trans. Maria Salapska (Warsaw: Czytelnik, 1983); Henryk Makower, *Pamiętnik z getta warszawskiego, październik 1940–styczeń 1943*, edited and supplemented by Noemi Makower (Wrocław: Ossolineum, 1987); Emanuel Ringelblum, *Stosunki polsko-żydowskie w czasie drugiej wojny światowej*, ed. Artur Eisenach (Warsaw: Czytelnik, 1988); *Pamiętniki z getta warszawskiego. Fragmenty i regesty*, ed. Michał Grynberg (Warsaw: PWN, 1988); Eugenia Szajn-Lewin, *W getcie warszawskim. Lipiec 1942–kwiecień 1943*, ed. Maria Line and Anka Grupińska (Poznań: a5, 1989).

[14] Jerzy Tomaszewski, "Historiografia polska o Zagładzie," *Biuletyn ŻIH* 2 (194) (2000): 163.

[15] Of course, some Polish historians participated in foreign conferences earlier, also in the 1980s, for instance, in the conference "Poles and Jews – Myth and Reality in the Historical Context," which took place in March 1983 in New York, and in the one titled "The Jews in Poland," held in Oxford the following year. See: *Proceedings of the Conference of Poles and Jews – Myth and Reality in the Historical Context*, ed. John Micgiel, Robert Scott, Harold B. Segel (New York: Columbia University, 1986); *The Jews in Poland*, ed. Chimen Abramsky, Maciej Jachimczyk, Antony Polonsky (Oxford–New York: Blackwell, 1986).

[16] Since 2001, the Centre has operated as a unit of the Warsaw University's Institute of History. See the Centre's website: http://www.ca.uw.edu.pl/, access 24 July 2014.

[17] 2003 saw the Department of Jewish Culture and Languages (*Studium Kultury i Języków Żydowskich*), eventually followed by the independent Jewish Studies Institute. See: http://www.judaistyka.uni.wroc.pl/judaistyka/index.php, access 17 July 2014.

Skłodowska University in Lublin.[18] Undoubtedly, the most important research unit dealing with the subject matter of the Holocaust is the Centre for Holocaust Research, established in 2003 at the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology of the Polish Academy of Sciences in Warsaw (*Centrum Badań nad Zagładą Żydów przy Instytucie Filozofii i Socjologii PAN*). Another unit, the Centre for Holocaust Research (*Centrum Badań Holokaustu*) of the Jagiellonian University, began to operate in January 2008.[19]

The editing of sources continued after 1989; publications that included interviews with survivors were also appearing on the market.[20] One of the most important Holocaust testimonies under the telling title *Czy ja jestem mordercą?* [Am I a murderer?], a moving memoir of Calek Perechodnik, a Jewish policeman from the Otwock ghetto, was published in 1993.[21] During that decade, Ruta Sakowska from the Jewish Historical Institute (*Żydowski Instytut Historyczny*, ŻIH) continued the editing of the documents from the Ringelblum Archive, which commenced in the 1980s. The ŻIH launched its monumental series "Archiwum Ringelbluma. Konspiracyjne Archiwum Getta Warszawy" [The Ringelblum Archive. The underground archive of the Warsaw ghetto], which so far includes 15 volumes.[22] In June 2001, the KARTA Centre (Ośrodek Karta) published the

[18] See the Institute's website: http://kulturoznawstwo.umcs.lublin.pl/struktura-instytutu/struktura/zaklad-kultury-i-historii-zydow, access 17 July 2014.

[19] See the Centre's website: http://www.holocaust.uj.edu.pl/start, access 17 July 2014.

[20] Some of the 1990s editions of testimonies: Leon Guz, *Targowa 64. Dziennik 27 I 1943–11 IX 1944* (Warsaw: ŻIH, 1990); *Wojna żydowsko-niemiecka. Polska prasa konspiracyjna 1943–1944 o powstaniu w getcie Warszawy*, ed. Paweł Szapiro (London: Aneks, 1992). Works using the interview technique: Anka Grupińska, *Po kole. Rozmowy z żydowskimi żołnierzami* (Warsaw: Alfa, 1991). See also: eadem, *Ciągle po kole. Rozmowy z żołnierzami getta warszawskiego* (Warsaw: Twój Styl, 2000); Barbara Engelking, *Na łące popiołów. Ocaleni z Holocaustu* (Warsaw: Cyklady, 1993); eadem, *Zagłada i pamięć. Doświadczenia Holocaustu i jego konsekwencje opisane na podstawie relacji autobiograficznych* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo IFiS, 1994). In 1996, the Association of 'Children of the Holocaust' in Poland (*Stowarzyszenie Dzieci Holocaustu w Polsce*) published an interesting book, *Czarny rok… czarne lata…*, edited by Wiktoria Śliwowska. It is a selection of 86 testimonies written in response to the Association and *Polityka*'s appeal to send in testimonies about the Holocaust.

[21] Calel Perechodnik, *Czy ja jestem mordercą?*, ed. Paweł Szapiro (Warsaw: Ośrodek Karta, 1993). In the third edition published by the KARTA Centre, the text was thoroughly reedited and had its original form and missing fragments restored. See Calek Perechodnik, *Spowiedź*, ed. David Engel (Warsaw: Ośrodek Karta, 2011). Another noteworthy publication is Kazimierz Sakowicz's *Dziennik pisany w Ponarach od 11 lipca 1941 r. do 6 listopada 1943 r.* (1999), a shocking account of the massacres in forests near Vilna (ed. Rachela Margolis [Bydgoszcz: Towarzystwo Miłośników Wilna i Ziemi Wileńskiej, 1999]).

[22] By the end of the 20th century, three volumes had been published, with Feliks Tych as their scientific editor: vol. 1: *Listy o Zagładzie*, ed. Ruta Sakowska (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 1997); vol. 2: *Dzieci – tajne nauczanie w getcie warszawskim*, ed. Ruta Sakowska (Warsaw: ŻIH, 2000); vol. 3: *Relacje z Kresów*, ed. Andrzej Żbikowski (Warsaw: ŻIH, 2001). The editing team is led by the series' editor-in-chief Doctor Tadeusz Epsztein, a Professor of

first two volumes of the "Żydzi polscy" (Polish Jews) series (Baruch Milch's *Testament*[23] and Halina Zawadzka's *Ucieczka z getta* [Escape from the ghetto]).[24] After a break, the series continued in a new graphic design.[25]

In 2008 the 'Homini' Publishing House and the State Museum at Majdanek (*Państwowe Muzeum na Majdanku*) published an anonymous diary written by a woman named Maryla entitled *Patrzyłam na usta* [I looked at the lips].[26] The left-hand pages displayed photocopies of the manuscript, a notebook discovered at Majdanek, while the right-hand ones presented their typewritten reconstruction with footnotes. The presentation of the manuscript enables the reader to concentrate on what is external to a diary, that is, its tangible existence. What constitutes mostly a curiosity or a way to build historical experience (in the Ankersmitian sense), for instance, in editions of medieval treaties, here

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the Institute of History of the Polish Academy of Sciences, and coordinator Doctor Eleonora Bergman (http://www.jhi.pl/instytut/pracownia_badan_nad_edycja_archiwum_ringelbluma). 2011 saw the publication of the next three volumes of the series, prepared by the ŻIH and the DiG Publishing House (*Wydawnictwo DiG*): vol. 4: *Życie i twórczość Geli Seksztajn*, ed. Magdalena Tarnowska; vol. 5: *Getto warszawskie. Życie codzienne*, ed. Katarzyna Person; and *Inwentarz Archiwum Ringelbluma*, ed. Tadeusz Epsztein (Warsaw). The next volumes were published in 2012 by the ŻIH and the Warsaw University Publishing Houses (*Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego*, WUW): vol. 6: *Generalne Gubernatorstwo*: *relacje i dokumenty*, ed. Aleksandra Bańkowska; vol. 7: *Spuścizny*, ed. Katarzyna Person (Warsaw); vol. 8: *Tereny wcielone do Rzeszy: okręg Rzeszy Gdańsk-Prusy Zachodnie*, *rejencja ciechanowska, Górny Śląsk*, ed. Magdalena Siek; vol. 9: *Tereny wcielone do Rzeszy: Kraj Warty*, ed. Magdalena Siek. 2013 saw re-editions of the following volumes published by the ŻIH and WUW: vol. 10: *Losy Żydów łódzkich (1939–1942)*, ed. Monika Polit; vol. 11: *Ludzie i prace „Oneg Szabat"*, ed. Aleksandra Bańkowska and Tadeusz Epsztein; vol. 13: *Ostatnim etapem przesiedlenia jest śmierć. Pomiechówek, Chełmno nad Nerem, Treblinka*, ed. Ewa Wiatr, Barbara Engelking, and Alina Skibińska. The volumes published in 2014: vol. 12: *Rada Żydowska w Warszawie (1939–1943)*, ed. Marta Janczewska; vol. 14: *Kolekcja Hersza Wassera*, ed. Katarzyna Person; vol. 15: *Wrzesień 1939. Listy kaliskie. Listy płockie*, ed. Tadeusz Epsztein, Justyna Majewska, and Aleksandra Bańkowska. In 2008, the KARTA Centre (*Ośrodek Karta*), the History Meeting House (*Dom Spotkań z Historią*), and the ŻIH published a selection of texts from Ringelblum's Archive: *Archiwum Ringelbluma. Dzień po dniu Zagłady*, selected and edited by Marta Markowska. One should also remember that in 1999 UNESCO included Ringelblum's Archive on the list of the most important documents in the world.

[23] Baruch Milch, *Testament* (Warsaw: Ośrodek Karta, 2001). Milch's account is one of the most important Holocaust testimonies. As Andrzej Żbikowski stresses in the afterword, it can be matched only by "Calel Perechodnik's testimony and certain materials from Ringelblum Archive" (p. 281).

[24] Halina Zawadzka, *Ucieczka z getta* (Warsaw: Ośrodek Karta, 2001).

[25] Other titles from the "Polish Jews" series published by the KARTA Centre are: Chaim Icel Goldstein, *Bunkier* (Warsaw, 2011); Henryk Schönker, *Dotknięcie anioła* (Warsaw, 2011); Richard Glazar, *Stacja Treblinka*, trans. Ewa Czerwiakowska (Warsaw, 2011); and Marceli Najder, *Rewanż* (Warsaw, 2013).

[26] *Patrzyłam na usta. Dziennik z warszawskiego getta*, ed. Piotr Weiser (Cracow: Homini, and Lublin: Państwowe Muzeum na Majdanku, 2008).

acquires an extraordinary, clearly ethical and salvaging dimension. The gesture of using the manuscript's appearance as 'a value in itself' should be treated as fundamental and to be implemented with regard to all Holocaust testimonies.[27]

Let one not forget the joint publishing initiative of the Centre for Holocaust Research and the Jewish Historical Institute – the "Biblioteka Świadectw Zagłady" series (Library of Holocaust Testimonies), which presents diaries, memoirs, and testimonies written *hic et nunc*, that is, during the war and the occupation.[28] Alina Skibińska's guidebook *Źródła do badań nad zagładą Żydów na okupowanych ziemiach polskich* [Sources for research on the Holocaust on the occupied Polish territories][29] aids orientation in various types of sources and archival/bibliographical searches. Barbara Engelking and Jacek Leociak's *Getto warszawskie. Przewodnik po nieistniejącym mieście* (2001) (English title: *Warsaw Ghetto. A Guide to the Perished City*)[30] is a great achievement, which compiles knowledge on the Warsaw closed quarter. It is an attempt, based on various primary sources, to reconstruct that place, which is no longer on the map of Warsaw with its topography, conditions, and atmosphere.

Camp Monographs, Syntheses, and Regional Studies

Systematic, though relatively traditional, the research on the history of death camps and concentration camps continues during the period of my interest. Let me list only some of the monographs published in this millennium: *Nazistowskie obozy zagłady. Opis i próba analizy zjawiska* [Nazi death camps. Description and analysis of the phenomenon] (2002) by Michał Maranda,[31] *Sztafety Ochronne [SS] w systemie niemieckich obozów koncentracyjnych. Rozwój organizacyjny, ewolucja zadań i struktur oraz socjologiczny obraz obozowych załóg SS* [Protection

[27] I also expressed this opinion in my review of this astonishing testimony. See Bartłomiej Krupa, "Palimpsest pamięci," *Kwartalnik Historii Żydów* 1 (2009).

[28] Published so far: Szmul Rozensztajn, *Notatnik*, foreword, translation, and editing by Monika Polit (Warsaw, 2012); Perec Opoczyński, *Reportaże z warszawskiego getta*, foreword, translation, and editing by Monika Polit (Warsaw, 2009); Symcha Binem Motyl, *Do moich ewentualnych czytelników. Wspomnienia z czasu wojny*, ed. Agnieszka Haska (Warsaw, 2012); *…Tęsknota nachodzi nas jak ciężka choroba… Korespondencja wojenna rodziny Finkelsztejnów, 1939–1941*, ed. Ewa Koźmińska-Frejlak (Warsaw, 2012).

[29] See Alina Skibińska, *Źródła do badań nad zagładą Żydów na okupowanych ziemiach polskich*. *Przewodnik archiwalno-bibliograficzny* (Warsaw: Centrum Badań nad Zagładą Żydów and Cyklady, 2007).

[30] Barbara Engelking, Jacek Leociak, *Getto warszawskie. Przewodnik po nieistniejącym mieście* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo IFiS PAN, 2001); English edition: *The Warsaw Ghetto. A Guide to the Perished City* (Yale University Press, 2009). In 2013 the Centre for Holocaust Research published the second revised edition of this monumental work, supplemented with a unique ghetto atlas, consisting of 14 maps.

[31] Michał Maranda, *Nazistowskie obozy zagłady. Opis i próba analizy zjawiska* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo ISNS UW, 2002).

squadrons (the SS) in the German concentration camps system. Organisational development, evolution of objectives and structures, and a sociological profile of SS camp personnel] (2007) by Aleksander Lasik,[32] *Zagłada Żydów w obozie koncentracyjnym na Majdanku* [The extermination of Jews in the concentration camp at Majdanek] (2007) by Tomasz Kranz,[33] *Erntefest 3–4 listopada 1943. Zapomniany epizod Zagłady* [Erntefest 3–4 November 1943. A forgotten episode of the Holocaust] (2009) edited by Wojciech Lenarczyk and Dariusz Libionka,[34] *Z dziejów obozów IG Farben Werk Auschwitz 1941–1945* [The history of the IG Farben Werk Auschwitz camps. 1941–1945] (2006) by Piotr Setkiewicz,[35] *Deportacja Żydów z getta łódzkiego do KL Auschwitz i ich zagłada* [Deportation of Jews from the Łódź ghetto to KL Auschwitz and their extermination] (2004) by Andrzej Strzelecki,[36] *Praca w systemie KL Gross-Rosen* [Work in the Kl Gross-Rosen system] (2003) by Aneta Małek,[37] *Zagłada Żydów w obozie koncentracyjnym Stutthof w latach 1939–1945* [The extermination of Jews in the Branches of Stutthof concentration camp during 1939–1945] (2001) by Danuta Drywa,[38] *Filie obozu koncentracyjnego Stutthof w latach 1939–1945* [Branches of Stutthof concentration camp during 1939–1945] (2004) by Marek Orski,[39] and finally *Konzentrationslager Warschau. Historia i następstwa* [Warsaw Concentration Camp. The history and consequences] (2007) by Bogusław Kopka.[40] Robert Kuwałek's *Obóz zagłady w Bełżcu* [Death camp in Bełżec] (2011)[41] holds a special place among these publications, for it fills a blank space in historiography, as the camp in Bełżec had been forgotten for many years, unlike, for instance, the

[32] Aleksander Lasik, *Sztafety Ochronne [SS] w systemie niemieckich obozów koncentracyjnych. Rozwój organizacyjny, ewolucja zadań i struktur oraz socjologiczny obraz obozowych załóg SS* (Oświęcim: Państwowe Muzeum Auschwitz-Birkenau, 2007).

[33] Tomasz Kranz, *Zagłada Żydów w obozie koncentracyjnym na Majdanku* (Lublin: Państwowe Muzeum na Majdanku, 2007).

[34] *Erntefest, 3–4 listopada 1943. Zapomniany epizod Zagłady*, ed. Wojciech Lenarczyk, Dariusz Libionka (Lublin: Państwowe Muzeum na Majdanku, 2009).

[35] Piotr Setkiewicz, *Z dziejów obozów IG Farben Werk Auschwitz 1941–1945* (Oświęcim: Państwowe Muzeum Auschwitz-Birkenau, 2006).

[36] *Deportacja Żydów z getta łódzkiego do KL Auschwitz i ich zagłada*, ed. Andrzej Strzelecki, (Oświęcim: Państwowe Muzeum Auschwitz-Birkenau, 2004).

[37] Aneta Małek, *Praca w systemie KL Gross-Rosen* (Wałbrzych: Muzeum Gross-Rosen, 2003).

[38] Danuta Drywa, *Zagłada Żydów w obozie koncentracyjnym Stutthof w latach 1939–1945* (Gdańsk–Sztutowo: Wydawnictwo Gdańskie and Muzeum Stutthof, 2001).

[39] Marek Orski, *Filie obozu koncentracyjnego Stutthof w latach 1939–1945* (Gdańsk–Sztutowo: Wydawnictwo Gdańskie i Muzeum Stutthof, 2004).

[40] Bogusław Kopka, *Konzentrationslager Warschau. Historia i następstwa* (Warsaw: IPN, 2007).

[41] Robert Kuwałek, *Obóz zagłady w Bełżcu* (Lublin: Państwowe Muzeum na Majdanku, 2010). This is the second and significantly extended edition of the 2005 publication, which had a popular scientific character.

Birkenau or Treblinka camps. Moreover, it is not only the first comprehensive monograph of a death camp written in Poland, but also a story about the origin of the camp on the Kozielsk Hill. As the author writes in the introduction, the monograph 'attempts to show not only the death camp's creation process, operation, and liquidation; this publication is also an attempt to reconstruct the whole course of events, which led to the decision to establish the camp" (p. 11).

One of the most painful and still partially unresolved problems is the lack of a Holocaust history synthesis, which would be timely and fresh in terms of the form and content. For many different reasons, which I have discussed elsewhere,[42] this function is served neither by Teresa Preker's textbook *Zarys dziejów Żydów w Polsce w latach 1939–1945* [An outline of the history of Jews in Poland during 1939–1945] (1992)[43] nor by Marian Fuks' *Z dziejów wielkiej katastrofy narodu żydowskiego* [From the history of the great tragedy of the Jewish nation] (1999).[44] Also of interest are the volumes published in the "Konferencje IPN" [IPN conferences] series, which were to constitute an integral whole (*Akcja Reinhardt. Zagłada Żydów w Generalnym Gubernatorstwie* [Operation Reinhardt. The Holocaust in the General Government] edited by Dariusz Libionka[45] and *Zagłada Żydów na polskich terenach wcielonych do Rzeszy* [The extermination of Jews on the Polish Territories incorporated into the Reich] edited by Aleksandra Namysło][46] could not fill that blank space either due to their post-conference character; though intended as compendiums, they discussed a broad spectrum of phenomena and included opinions of respected scholars, also from abroad, for instance, Peter Black, Felicja Karay, Klaus-Michael Mallmann, Dan Michman, Dieter Pohl, and Stephen Tyas. The publication of the Polish translations of two English-language syntheses: Saul Friedländer's *The Years of Extermination* (Polish title: *Czas eksterminacji*) (2010)[47] and Raul Hilberg's *The Destruction of the European Jews* (Polish title: *Zagłada Żydów europejskich*) (2014), is undoubtedly an important though insufficient attempt to fill that gap.

The central problem is the fact that, in my opinion, the traditional Polish historiography has not fully internalised the dilemmas connected with repre-

[42] See Bartłomiej Krupa, *Opowiedzieć Zagładę. Proza polska i historiografia wobec Holocaustu (1987–2003)* (Cracow: Universitas, 2013), here: chapter 13, "U-historycznianie i od-historycznianie Zagłady, czyli problemy historycznej syntezy Holocaustu." Teresa Preker, *Wojna i okupacja* and Marian Fuks, *Z dziejów wielkiej katastrofy narodu żydowskiego*, pp. 340–360.

[43] Teresa Preker, *Zarys dziejów Żydów w Polsce w latach 1939–1945* (Warsaw: WUW, 1992).

[44] Marian Fuks, *Z dziejów wielkiej katastrofy narodu żydowskiego* (Poznań: Sorus, 1999).

[45] *Akcja Reinhardt. Zagłada Żydów w Generalnym Gubernatorstwie*, ed. Dariusz Libionka, (Lublin: IPN, 2004).

[46] *Zagłada Żydów na polskich terenach wcielonych do Rzeszy*, ed. Aleksandra Namysło (Warsaw: IPN, 2008).

[47] Saul Friedländer, *Czas eksterminacji. Nazistowskie Niemcy i Żydzi 1939–1945*, trans. Sławomir Kupisz, Anna Maria Nowak, and Krzysztof Masłowski (Warsaw: Prószyński i S-ka, 2010).

sentation of the Holocaust, present primarily in English-language theory of history, a certain idea of which may be obtained from famous collective works, such as, *Probing the Limits of Representation*,[48] *Writing and the Holocaust*,[49] or *Thinking About the Holocaust*.[50] Most historians are unaware of (or intentionally dismiss) the constatation that the existing positivistic manners of formulating explanations are incapable of meeting the challenge, which the Holocaust poses to historians. The scholarly attempts to explain Shoah fail because they overlook a great deal of what was essential to that event. "In every synthesising work the author should endeavour to produce an explanatory narration […]. A reader of such a synthesis should constantly feel that the author wishes to explain the presented stages or aspects of the historical process, meaning that when the reader learns about the facts he is at the same time instructed about the causes of their occurrence," wrote Jerzy Topolski at the beginning of the 1980s.[51] It seems that in the case of the Holocaust it is precisely the opposite – the accumulation of knowledge does not result in better understanding, the presentation of the possible aspects of the genesis of the Holocaust solves little, and the description of the historical process does not do justice to the victims, which are still objectified by most traditional, enlightening, and fact-collecting narrations.[52] As Zygmunt Bauman[53] and others argue, in this respect historiography and the classic syntheses are an element of the same modernising project, which facilitated the Holocaust.

Paradoxically, the best, most modern, and richly illustrated Polish book that provides a comprehensive presentation of the Holocaust and does this in a 'fresh' way in terms of the form, is still the 2003 educational publication (in fact, a high school textbook) by Robert Szucht and Piotr Trojański entitled *Holokaust – zrozumieć dlaczego* [The Holocaust. To understand why], with its altered version entitled *Zrozumieć Holokaust*[54] [To understand the Holocaust]. Its significance consists in the fact that instead of giving ready answers, it encourages the reader

[48] *Probing the Limits of Representation: Nazism and the "Final Solution"*, ed. Saul Friedlander (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992).

[49] *Writing and the Holocaust*, ed. Berel Lang (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1988).

[50] *Thinking about the Holocaust. After Half a Century*, ed. Alvin H. Rosenfeld (Bloomington–Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1997).

[51] Jerzy Topolski, *Nowe idee współczesnej historiografii. O roli teorii w badaniach historycznych* (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Poznańskie, 1980), p. 157.

[52] Some of these problems are discussed by Robert Braun in "The Holocaust and Problems of Historical Representation," *History and Theory* 4 (1994).

[53] Of course, I am referring here to: Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press 1989).

[54] Robert Szuchta, Piotr Trojański, *Holokaust – zrozumieć dlaczego* (Warsaw: Mówią Wieki i Bellona, 2003). In the second edition, the authors removed some of the mistakes and introduced new content. It was published under a new title: *Zrozumieć Holokaust. Książka pomocnicza do nauczania o zagładzie Żydów* (Państwowe Muzeum Auschwitz-Birkenau and Ośrodek Rozwoju Edukacji, 2012).

to study sources and ask them (and him or herself) fundamental questions. The main virtue of this synthesis consists predominantly in sensitising the reader, absorbing him in the narration, and making him a rightful narrator, instead of building a safe, facto-graphic distance and constructing an omniscient narrator such as those of the 19th century. Thus this book constitutes an excellent counter offer and an inspiration for academic, positivist historiography. This is also the historiography, which should endeavour to understand the Holocaust and not the other way round, meaning that the said publication should not become subject to the principles of scientific narration.[55]

From the mid-1980s most authors, often amateur historians, have been advocates of writing in the context of 'private homelands' and have valued memory and remembrance more than history and learning. It is also noteworthy that the emergence in the late 1980s of the nostalgic presentations of the Polish-Jewish past coincided with the intensifying interest in regionalism.[56] That led to a rapid development of regional research on the history and extermination of the Jews, where the nostalgia for the lost multicultural world played an important role.[57]

[55] Let me stress yet again that I treat historiography as a type of storytelling, so I am not interested in its factual aspect, which is so important for the objectivising historiography. Adam Puławski's review of *Zrozumieć Holokaust* (*Zagłada Żydów* 9 [2013]), in my opinion totally erroneous, is a convincing proof of the distinctness of my approach and the fetishation of fact-finding and traditional, linear narration in classic historiography. Puławski points out the authors' structural mistakes (for instance, that the liquidation of the ghetto was discussed in the chapter on indirect and not actual extermination, p. 580, even though it is a matter of opinion, imposed by scholars on facts), interpretative errors (when Puławski writes: "as we know, the genesis of the camp in Bełżec was different," p. 583, or "The authors, incorrectly interpreting the declaration of 13 January 1942," p. 587, he proves that he believes the genesis myth and that he does not accept that interpretations are not exclusive by nature), and factual mistakes (the reviewer criticizes, for instance, the absence of a mention of the camp in Budzyń, p. 585, which means that he ignores the fact that no synthesis, even a most complete one, a thousand pages long, could not give a full presentation of a phenomenon and would certainly have some gaps. Puławski also criticises the authors, in the characteristic, scientistic vein, for inaccurate numerical data). Szuchta and Trojański quite rightly observed that "the author is one of those historians who think that only learning all the facts about every, even minor, incident connected with the Holocaust gives them a right to talk and write about it" ("Jak pisać podręczniki szkolne o Zagładzie? Na marginesie recenzji książki pt. „Zrozumieć Holokaust," *Zagłada Żydów* 9 [2013]: 591). The authors also recognised their errors and defended themselves saying that their textbook publication is governed by other genre principles than a scholarly monograph and that it has different specificity and readers.

[56] Of course, this does not mean that there had been no regional historiography earlier. The main tendencies in Polish regional historiography during communism were summed up by, for instance, Henryk Samsonowicz (see idem, "Historiografia regionalna w Polsce po II wojnie światowej," *Kwartalnik Historyczny* 1 [1987]: 279–292).

[57] What I mean here are numerous regional publications from Kazimierz Parszewski, Aleksander Drwęcki, *Pamięci tych, którzy żyli z nami* (Ostrołęka: Muzeum Okręgowe, 1987); Andrzej Jaworski, Bohdan Strynkowski, *Żydzi kazimierscy. Dzieje, kultura, kuchnia* (Kazimierz

A substantial percentage of the regional histories were texts originally written for evaluation (MA theses or doctoral dissertations), produced on the commission of the local government, or resulting from their authors' amateur interests. This is what Krzysztof Makowski wrote about the works that represented that trend: "it is difficult not to notice that in conceptual terms they have basically remained the same for years […] and they often copy the schemata developed back in the 1960s."[58] It is impossible to list all the historical monographs of the regional Polish-Jewish communities published after the 1989 transformation. In the new millennium, that trend faced a challenge.

The Breakthrough Year 2000

The year 2000 proved a turning point for historiography, and not only for it. That year saw the publication of Tomasz Szarota's study *U progu Zagłady* [On the threshold of the Holocaust],[59] where the historian analysed anti-Jewish incidents in European cities under German occupation: Warsaw, Paris, Amsterdam, Antwerp, and Kaunas, with the bloodiest events having taken place in the last one. That work brought a pioneering description of anti-Jewish pogroms conducted by Poles in Warsaw, immediately after the German troops had marched into the capital and at Easter 1940. The author did two things: he broadened the responsibility for the Holocaust, pointing at the shameful elements of the individual nations' past, and at the same time he questioned the validity of using national categories in the Holocaust historiography, for which they are after all fundamental. As he writes: "The comparative approach proposed in this book has proved a good idea, for it finally revealed the similarities, often surprising, between the events, which took place in different countries at different times." (p. 9).

But more importantly, the beginning of the new millennium brought the publication of the book, which even more clearly showed the readers that Jews in Poland had been murdered also by Poles. The work that I am referring to is, of course, Jan Tomasz Gross's *Neighbours* (Polish title: *Sąsiedzi*) published in

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Dolny–Lublin: Towarzystwo Przyjaciół Kaizmierza Dolnego i Wydawnictwo Polonia, 1989); Aleksander Pakentreger, *Żydzi w Kaliszu w latach 1918–1939. Problemy polityczne i społeczne* (Warsaw: PWN, 1988), and Paweł Fijałkowski, *Żydzi sochaczewscy* (Sochaczew: Muzeum Ziemi Sochaczewskiej and Pola Bitwy nad Bzurą, 1989), to contemporary publications. More on the topic of nostalgia in regional historiography of the Holocaust in my text "„Nie masz już, nie masz w Polsce żydowskich miasteczek". Nostalgiczny mit stosunków polsko-żydowskich w historiografii regionalnej," *Porównania* 11 (2012): 301–317.

[58] See Krzysztof A. Makowski, "Przedmowa," in *O nowy model historycznych badań regionalnych*, ed. Krzysztof A. Makowski (Poznań: Instytut Zachodni and Centrum „Instytut Wielkopolski" UAM, 2007), p. 7.

[59] Tomasz Szarota, *U progu Zagłady. Zajścia antyżydowskie i pogromy w okupowanej Europie. Warszawa, Paryż, Amsterdam, Antwerpia, Kowno* (Warsaw: Sic!, 2000).

2000,[60] which struck the bastion of national comfort and questioned the myth of Polish innocence, initiating the greatest Polish post-war dispute on the Holocaust. The scope of the surrounding debate was tremendous and the number of the publications cannot be accurately estimated. Historians and a number of people who had not dealt with that topic entered into the discussion.[61]

Neighbours proved a dreadful shock predominantly to regional historiography, which often failed to even notice the Jews and offered a soothing narration that emphasised Polish-Jewish brotherhood. As Gross wrote in his polemic with Tomasz Strzembosz:

> Tomasz Strzembosz devoted several decades of his work as a historian to research on the World War II period in Podlasie and the Białystok region. Limited to this period and area, his numerous works have never mentioned the fate of the Jews […] How could Strzembosz write nothing about the Jews during the decades he has spent researching the war-time history of those several hundred square kilometres, with Jedwabne at its centre? Well, one could do that provided that nothing out of the ordinary had happened to the Jews in Jedwabne. Then Strzembosz would be justified. He was simply not interested in Polish-Jewish relations and it was his perfect right. But as the Jews from Wąsosz, Radziłów, and Jedwabne had been murdered by their Polish neighbours, then this regional historian who remains silent about that has either discredited himself as an ignoramus or has been deliberately falsifying history.[62]

Whether the opponents of Gross's book like it or not, his work radically altered the perception of Polish-Jewish relations. After Gross, it is difficult to write about mutual, neighbourly relations between these two communities and notice only their positive aspects, as was the case in the late 1980s and throughout the 1990s. It is no longer possible to speak of a multicultural community where everybody was different but nobody was alien. *Neighbours* made a substantial departure in that respect and since then regional historiography has needed to take a closer look at the meeting point of Poles and Jews. To quote Przemysław Czapliński graphical remark on nostalgic prose, which may well be applied to regional historiographies: "after the publication of *Neighbours*, the Polish literature of little homelands turned grey overnight."[63] Besides, as early as in the 1990s, in his

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[60] See Jan Tomasz Gross, *Neighbours: The Destruction of the Jewish Community in Jedwabne, Poland* (London: Penguin Books, 2002).

[61] Though concise, the summing up of the discussion in Piotr Forecki's book *Spór o Jedwabne. Analiza debaty publicznej* (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Naukowe INPiD UAM, 2008) shows the enormity and the wide scope of the public debate.

[62] Jan Tomasz Gross, "*A jednak sąsiedzi*," *Rzeczpospolita*, 11 April 2001, 10, 12.

[63] See Przemysław Czapliński, "Prześladowcy, pomocnicy, świadkowie. Zagłada i polska literatura późnej nowoczesności," in *Zagłada. Współczesne problemy rozumienia i przedstawiania*, ed. Przemysław Czapliński and Ewa Domańska (Poznań: Poznańskie Studia Polonistyczne, 2009), p. 164.

book *Upiorna dekada* [Ghastly decade], Gross made an appeal to notice the actual role of individual Poles in the Holocaust: "the fate of the Jewish compatriots is at the centre of the occupation period experience of the Polish inhabitants of every locality," and our task is to "grab by the lapels the people we know from the generations of our parents and grandparents and ask them: Where were you, what were you doing when Jews were being murdered in your locality?"

That shift in thinking affected the choice of the topics of Polish publications. The new millennium saw the publication of books resulting from research on the shameful pages in the past of Poles', such as, Barbara Engelking's study on denunciations of Jews entitled *„Szanowny panie gistapo"* [Dear Mr Gestapo] [64] or Jan Grabowski's book *„Ja tego Żyda znam!"* [I know this Jew!], which was devoted to their blackmail.[65] Hence, it seems that the caesura of the year 2000 shaped, sometimes overtly, the texts themselves. Even if the books published during this period seem to ignore Gross's publications and do not even include them in their bibliographies, the regional histories of the Holocaust published in the new millennium have a slightly different approach to the fate of the Jewish neighbours. Of course, this does not mean that they have completely liberated themselves from the conventions of this type of writing. They remain traditional to a large extent. Local communities still suppress the inconvenient truths, which often cause offence to the family past of the current inhabitants, and this affects the shape of the texts, which have to be subordinated to the regional discourse masters. Consequently, Michel Foucault's observation that "History is the discourse of power,"[66] made during his lectures, still applies. But there were also new revealing publications, which I shall call 'the peasant current', *per analogiam* to the phenomenon in Polish prose. But before I move on to them, I must devote some space to Gross's two subsequent books, which also initiated discussions, though not as major as his first book.

Gross Once Again

In 2008, the Znak publishing house published the Polish language version of Jan Tomasz Gross's *Fear*,[67] which caused quite a stir, though relatively short-lived, particularly in comparison to the one regarding Jedwabne. Church hierarchs were

[64] Barbara Engelking, *„Szanowny panie gistapo". Donosy do władz niemieckich w Warszawie i okolicach w latach 1940–1941* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo IFiS PAN, 2003). More on the theme of the Polish informer in literature see Buryła, "Literatura polska o donosach i donosicielach," *Zagłada Żydów. Studia i Materiały* 2 (2006): 76–98.

[65] Jan Grabowski, *„Ja tego Żyda znam!". Szantażowanie Żydów w Warszawie, 1939–1943* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo IFiS PAN, 2004).

[66] Michel Foucault, "Wykład z 28 stycznia 1976," in idem, *Trzeba bronić społeczeństwa. Wykłady z Collége de France*, trans. Małgorzata Kowalska (Warsaw: KR, 1998): 74.

[67] See Jan Tomasz Gross, *Strach. Antysemityzm w Polsce tuż po wojnie. Historia moralnej zapaści* (Cracow: Znak, 2008). In its original American edition the book had a slightly different

warning against that book. Znak's Chairman Henryk Woźniakowski received an open letter from Cardinal Stanisław Dziwisz, who instructed him to "take a closer look at authors' intentions and to remain cautious regarding decisions to print their works in the name of the greater responsibility for good."[68] Moreover, the Regional Prosecutor's Office in Kraków launched an investigation to verify whether Gross had slandered the Polish nation (article 132a of the Penal Code), while Jerzy Robert Nowak commenced a series of lectures against 'Gross's new lies'.[69]

In a nutshell, one may say that the main thesis of Gross's *Fear* consisted in the 'revelation', which according to the author, "has escaped that epoch's historiographers' attention, [the revelation] that the Holocaust, the extermination of Jews, had been conducted *amidst* society, *witnessed* by members of the generation of our parents and grandparents, *in front of* the 'crowds of onlookers' who participated in it in various ways" [all emphases as in the original] (p. 34). Consequently, the entire society became 'infected with the germ of Nazism' (p. 46), while "murdering Jews during the occupation was a public matter, and an object of popular interest," (p. 42), and after the war it continued to be regarded as something "normal" ("back then in Poland, there was an unofficial social contract, which suspended the 'do not kill' norm with regard to Jews," p. 165). That overlapped with the issue of the appropriated Jewish property and the fear that it could become necessary to return it and also with the sharp pangs of remorse for the wrongs done to the Jews, the symbol of the sin committed (p. 298). But as Gross writes, there is almost no trace in either textbooks or specialist studies on Polish history of those criminal acts repeated on the territory of about twelve thousand square kilometres" (p. 231).

Of course, numerous adversaries disagreed with that statement, accusing Gross of over-generalisations, jumping to conclusions, and a non-scholarly approach to the topic. In terms of the polarisation of stances and opinions voiced, it was a repetition of the discussion on Jedwabne, though, as Piotr Forecki rightly observed, in that case one might doubt whether it was a debate at all, as "the participants usually did not refer to each other's texts, while dispersed and unconnected statements replaced the 'dialogue and references typical of a debate."[70] I agree with Jerzy Jedlicki, who wrote: "I cannot resist the impression

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title: *The Fear. Anti-Semitism in Poland after Auschwitz. An Essay in Historical Interpretation* (New York: Random House, 2006).

[68] Qtd. in: "List otwarty kardynała Stanisława Dziwisza," in *Wokół „Strachu". Dyskusja o książce Jana T. Grossa*, ed. Mariusz Gądek (Cracow: Znak, 2008), p. 75.

[69] The discursive events connected with *The Fear* were discussed in detail in Piotr Forecki, *Od „Shoah" do „Strachu". Spory o polsko-żydowską przeszłość i pamięć w debatach publicznych* (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Poznańskie, 2010), here the chapter "Strach po Jedwabnem. Debata, której prawie nie było."

[70] Ibidem, p. 387.

that the persistent depreciation of this book is a form of defence against the explosive power of its narration and the logic of its arguments."[71]

Coming back to the publication itself, one must acknowledge Gross's considerable rhetorical skills. According to Anna Ziębińska-Witek, his language is an example of "a journalistic rhetoric."[72] Indeed, he is sometimes excessively harsh in his judgements (for instance, the famous *katoendecja* [Catholic National Democrats], p. 185, or in saying: "they did not share the majority of the episcopate's theological cannibalism," p. 137) and commits linguistic blunders ("hurry-scurry," p. 69, "I shall not multiply the horrors," p. 83, "Klajnerman was indeed too minor to have the last say in such a matter," p. 183, "this hypothesis is like a roly-poly toy," p. 215). But first and foremost, Gross uses a set of highly persuasive devices:

– a language filled with symbolism ("once let out of the bottle, evil ghosts begin to live a life of their own," p. 262),

– addressing the reader ("What were the moral consequences of ransacking the Jewish ashes? I shall leave the answer to the Readers' imagination," p. 92),

– gradation of suspense ("As we are going to find out in a moment," p. 160),

– occasional irony, filled with contained passion, evocative of, for instance, Borowski's short stories (for instance, when Gross describes the robbing of Jews during the Kielce pogrom, he states the following: "For a number of people it must have been a memorable day when they took advantage of various opportunities," p. 149).

One of the examples of the narration's (successful!) absorption of the thriller formula is the brilliantly written third chapter, devoted to the Kielce pogrom events, entitled "I approached the chauffeur and said that we had Jews and wanted to transport them out of the city to kill them" in the Polish edition. Gross's narration does not obscure the author's engagement, it criticises the stances of revered figures (for instance, Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński's, pp. 135–136), and reduces the adversaries' argumentation to absurdity (for instance, Bishop Kaczmarek's 1946 memorial, reprinted in *Rzeczpospolita* on 4 July 2006, is summed up with the following sentence: "According to the authors of the report, the analysis of the role of the order services, the official propaganda, and the international situation, the Jews in Kielce murdered themselves," p. 202). There are also personal threads in *Fear* (on p. 234 Gross recalls his mother, a messenger of the Office of Information and Propaganda of the Union of Armed Combat-Home Army [*Biuro Informacji i Propagandy ZWZ-AK*]). But first and

[71] See Jerzy Jedlicki, "Tylko tyle i aż tyle," *Tygodnik Powszechny* 4 (2008).

[72] See Anna Ziębińska-Witek, "Czy Jan Tomasz Gross jest „wampirem historiografii"? Analiza metodologiczna „Sąsiadów", „Strachu" i „Złotych żniw"," *Res Historica* 34 (2012): 158. It is difficult not to have an impression that the author used Gross' books as a pretext to talk about something different (Jerzy Topolski's and Berel Langa diagnoses) and even though I basically agree with her in theoretical matters, I must point out that her article is simplistic and lacks a thorough overview of the books analysed. Also, her observations are not supported with appropriate quotations.

foremost, no matter what one thinks about this book, it does demonstrate respect towards texts and sources ("Let us read the witness testimonies quoted below carefully and without haste," p. 24), a significant dose of imagination and empathy (for instance, when Gross wonders how the anti-Semitic attacks that the oppressed and devastated Jewish children fell victim to could be explained to them, p. 117), and also a concern for the social dimension of his own writing (the approving quotation of Stanisław Ossowski's opinion that "there are no isolated phenomena in social life – and this is precisely what so significantly broadens the scope of our responsibility," p. 214). Gross enters into a dialogue with texts to such an extent that he sometimes adds to them in a way. One may take, for instance, Sala Ungerman's testimony, which ends with the following sentence: "I visited the public prosecutor, but for now nothing can be done," while the historian comments: "Of course, it would have been possible to do something if the public prosecutor had had such an intention and if there had been witnesses willing to testify" (p. 100). But sometimes this identification fails him, for instance, when he writes: "Stalin sometimes liked to keep his targeted victims in suspense" (p. 266). Finally, *Fear* openly reveals the issues towards which one might be at a loss ("I do not know how to effectively polemicise with the stereotype, particularly when it is burdened with criticism," p. 246).

The Birth of the 'Shadow Cabinet'

The 'anti-Gross *wunderwaffe*'[73] brought forward against *Fear* was the 2008 Polish edition of Marek Jan Chodakiewicz's study *After the Holocaust: Polish-Jewish Conflict in the Wake of World War II* (Polish title: *Po Zagładzie. Stosunki polsko-żydowskie 1944–1947*) published by the IPN five years after its first American edition (without any updating!),[74] probably to deaden the echo of Gross' book. "From the very beginning, they have functioned not as two complementary historical works, but as a version of the 'truth/false' game, with the IPN as the referee, the representatives of symbolic elites as the participants, and social memory as the stake,"[75] wrote Piotr Forecki. It is particularly significant that Chodakiewicz's doubtful publication was authenticated by a public institution – the IPN advertised it as "factually reliable" and written by a "competent historian" in compliance with "the methodology used in this profession."

Despite their seemingly identical subject matter, *Fear* and *After the Holocaust* differ in almost every respect: both in terms of terminology (Gross's "*katoendecja*" and "bandits" versus Chodakiewicz's "pro-independence activists" and "insur-

[73] Paweł Machcewicz's expression from his review of Chodakiewicz's book "Gabinet historycznych osobliwości," *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 18 January 2008, p. 24.

[74] Marek Jan Chodakiewicz, *After the Holocaust. Polish-Jewish Conflict in the Wake of World War Two* (Boulder: East European Monographs, 2003).

[75] Forecki, *Od „Shoah" do „Strachu"…*, p. 396.

gents") and the interpretation of the same events (in *Fear*, the communists were disposing of Jews because they wanted them out of Poland, while in *After the Holocaust*, the objective was "just to cause more confusion in the West," p. 44). They also presented a totally different course of the same events (in Gross's book, the Jews after the war were unable to recover their property, while according to Chodakiewicz, the courts of lower instance "usually adjudicated ownership to the rightful owners," p. 42; for Gross, the Catholic Church was guilty of a failure to act, while according to Chodakiewicz, the Church expressed objection to "the anti-Jewish violence," p. 66). But the biggest difference was the form and the genre, with *Fear* intended as a historical essay and *After the Holocaust* as an objective, informative historical work (as opposed to Gross's "non-scholarly journalism"). Disregarding the factual and logical mistakes,[76] Chodakiewicz's work is a book with a clear thesis (and so is Gross's *Fear*, by the way). The interpretative key is to be found in the fifth chapter entitled "Jewish self-defence or revenge?" Despite that seeming question, supposedly directed at 'dialogicality', the author tries to prove throughout this chapter (and throughout the book) that after the war Jews were motivated by taking revenge on the Poles. And when Jews were killed by Poles, for instance, by the AK in Ostrowiec [Świętokrzyski] on 12 March 1945 (p. 133), then it was only in a fight, by accident. And when the source leaves no doubts, the historian says that "in certain cases the motive of the murder might have been anti-Semitism, but one should always carefully examine the circumstances" (p. 141). Moreover, words apparently did not lead to actions ("Hostility towards Jews had its reflection in the underground propaganda, but it was transformed into practical actions only to a relatively small extent," p. 56). The author also accuses the sources of being incomplete, of ignoring "the activity of Jews in Soviet and Polish communist structures" (p. 162). Chodakiewicz's basic rhetorical strategy is that of a 'sheep skin' – posing as an objective scholar and anti-anti-Semite, he lulls the reader with statements such as "one needs to be cautious," only to then immediately add "but…" and question the seemingly balanced and conciliatory opinions and foment the anti-Jewish fire, as in the following sentences: "I beg forgiveness of supporters of conspiracy theories, but there was no national 'Jewish conspiracy', but this does not mean that some Jews did not act together" (p. 98), and, "Nevertheless, it should be stressed that at that time Jewish banditry was a marginal phenomenon. Though no research has been conducted on this topic, it can be assumed that criminals of Jewish origin were definitely in the minority. Despite that, their presence was also a source of conflicts with the Polish population" (pp. 118–119).

The most striking aspect of *After the Holocaust* is Chodakiewicz's total lack of empathy. The author succumbs to the 'book-keeping' scandal of calculating

[76] In their crushing review of Chodakiewicz's book, Bożena Szaynok and Dariusz Libionka proved the author's lack of professionalism and listed various absurdities and misrepresentations ("Głupia sprawa," *Tygodnik Powszechny* 5 [2008]).

the dead and estimating on which side – the Polish or the Jewish one – their number was larger. The most disturbing in this regard is the tenth chapter entitled "Statistical issues." The following passage is one of many that reveal Chodakiewicz's striking lack of sensitivity and reflection on his own language: "the rally in Parczew resulted in *a relatively small number of victims*. In comparison to the Polish-Belarussian fighting, and particularly to the Polish-Ukrainian combat, during which whole villages were massacred, in Parczew the WiN detachment exercised *much more restraint* [my emphasis – B.K.]" (p. 139). The summing up is even worse, as Chodakiewicz seems to suggest that certain massacres can be justified: "A scholar's duty is to examine the circumstances of the Jews' death in order to assess whether the motif was anti-Semitism, banditry, or anti-communism. It is morally inappropriate to compare a racist murder of an innocent Jewish civilian to a killing, for political reasons, of a state security functionary who was a Jew" (pp. 211–212).

Let me stress once again that symptomatic here was the stance of the Institute of National Remembrance. That public institution, with the votes of its functionaries – Janusz Kurtyka, Jan Żaryn, or Piotr Gontarczyk – undertook a task of forming something that I would call a 'historiographic shadow cabinet', even though this cabinet, though secondary, has a lot more tangible power and often much more substantial financial resources. From then on – one may say, since Janusz Kurtyka became the IPN Chairman in 2005 – the Institute has offered an alternative vision of the Holocaust history, reacting to the new publications with opposing propositions.[77]

At the end, let me remark that the subject matter discussed by Gross and Chodakiewicz – the Polish society's 'infection with evil' after the war – is the main topic of a monograph of impressive proportions written by Marcin Zaremba, one of Gross' opponents.[78] *Wielka trwoga* [Dreadful fright][79] – for this

[77] The beginning of the decade that I am writing about, that is, the period when Leon Kieres was the chairman (2000–2005), did not herald the Institute's future course. A testimony to this are both the investigation regarding the pogrom in Jedwabne (cf. two volumes of *Wokół Jedwabnego*, ed. Paweł Machcewicz and Krzysztof Persak [Warsaw: 2002], vol. 1: *Studia*, vol. 2: *Dokumenty*) and the research project regarding the fate of Jews and Polish-Jewish relations. The turning point was the publication which was an effect of the said project regarding Polish-Jewish relations: *Polacy i Żydzi pod okupacja niemiecką 1939–1945. Studia i materiały*, ed. Andrzej Żbikowski (Warsaw, 2006). Prepared before the change of the IPN Chairman, it was given a new foreword by Jan Żaryn after Janusz Kurtyka's appointment to that position. It preceded and corrected ("the shadow cabinet"!) the earlier introduction by the publication's editor Andrzej Żbikowski.

[78] In his review of *Fear*, Marcin Zaremba metaphorically wrote that while discussing the Last Judgement [that is, post-war Poland], Gross looked at only one panel of the triptych, which "not only fails to give an idea about the whole, but also makes it more difficult to understand the author" (see idem, "Sąd nieostateczny," *Polityka* 3 [2008]: 12).

[79] See Marcin Zaremba, *Wielka trwoga. Polska 1944–1947. Ludowa reakcja na kryzys* (Cracow–Warsaw: Znak and ISP PAN, 2012).

is the publication I have in mind, is a polemic with Gross, a monograph, which is purportedly a result of the methodological and also ideological changes in writing about the Polish-Jewish relations. This book undoubtedly constitutes a useful, and very extensive in content, broadening of the context of the issues discussed by Gross. Zaremba managed to move beyond the dichotomy known from the 'Jedwabne case' where the Jews were murdered – if at all – only by the underclass (according to Gross's adversaries) or by 'ordinary' Poles (according to *Neighbours*' supporters). In the writer's opinion, due to the weakening of social structures, all Poles at that time constituted a margin in a way, which makes the whole problem disappear. Consequently, his books cannot be treated on a par with, for instance, Chodakiewicz's publication.[80] But with regard to the issues I am interested in, *Wielka trwoga* is a highly inconsistent narration. The author stresses the anti-Semitic elements of the pogroms, concentrating almost entirely on the myth of *żydokomuna*, only to then write, though he warns that this is only a hypothesis, that "there would have been no pogroms had it not been for the post-war lack of stabilisation and that human rubble" (p. 631). Thus, his vision of anti-Semitism is grossly simplistic, and, as Joanna Tokarska-Bakir put it, "[t]he history of everyday life, which Zaremba put forward against Gross's interpretation is to relativise the scope of Polish anti-Semitism in a similar way – keeping all the proportions – that German *Alltagsgeschichte* attenuated the tenor of accusatory versions of the history of Nazism."[81] Furthermore, Zaremba's narration does not stand the test of reading it through the prism of gender either. For instance, in the chapter "I am terribly afraid of them," which talks about rapes by Red Army soldiers, there is the following passage:

> There might be several answers to the question about the causes of the mass rapes at that time. The prosaic one is that Red Army Soldiers, unlike Germans or Anglo Saxons, did not get leave, so most of them had not seen their wives for several years. Moreover, the women of the liberated countries saw them differently than the English, Americans, or Poles, euphemistically speaking, as not particularly attractive, or to put it bluntly, as primitive and boorish. In other words, in Italy and France, the Allied soldiers did not have to resort to rape to have sexual intercourse. By contrast, male citizens of the Soviet Union could rarely hope for a wartime affair (p. 171).

The attempt to rationalise (?) the aggression with lack of leave or the insufficient attractiveness of the Russians sounds absurd. It is difficult to find a greater accumulation of gender and national stereotypes. Equally disturbing is the sentence, which describes the Kielce pogrom, which is in fact a statement

[80] Besides, *Wielka trwoga* was criticised by the 'shadow cabinet', see, for instance, Piotr Gontarczyk, "Rytualny mord na Monte Cassino. O książce Marcina Zaremby," *Uważam Rze* 48 (2012).

[81] See Joanna Tokarska-Bakir, "Trwoga jako nawyk," *Kultura Liberalna* 38 (2012).

on the peremptoriness of murdering: "The belief in the myth, corroborated with reports on the purported massacre of children, gave rise to *an ontological compulsion* [my emphasis – B.K.], mobilising the people to killing" (p. 608).

Gross for the Third Time

2011 saw the publication of another book by Jan Tomasz Gross – *Złote żniwa* [English title: *Golden Harvest*], written in cooperation with his ex-wife, Irena Grudzińska-Gross.[82] The authors focus on the "looting of Jewish property" (p. 171) and its consequences. "The looting of Jewish property was an important element of the circulation of goods, an element of the social and economic life in those territories, and thus a social fact and not an aberrational behaviour of a group of demoralised individuals" (p. 52), the Grosses stress. But their approach to this topic is so broad that aside from their main interest in the 'diggers', that is, the individuals who after the war dug up the terrain of the death camps in search of valuables, the authors also discuss instances of murders of Jews committed by the local population, hunting for Jews, blackmail, sheltering Jews for money, and also looting in other parts of Europe (for instance, in Greece or France). There is also a chapter entitled "Where was the Catholic Church?" where the Grosses emphasise the Church's vital role in the "conspiracy of silence" (p. 183). All the above issues, put in the same category in this book, already have their own literature. For instance, Treblinka 'diggers' were discussed by Martyna Rusiniak in her relatively short yet important monograph.[83] Hence, the authors clearly decided to write a book for a broad audience rather than for historians (p. 15).

Golden Harvest's starting point and at the same time the "impulse to write this book" (p. 13) was the picture published in *Gazeta Wyborcza* on 8 January 2008.[84]

> The photograph depicts a group of Mazovian peasants by a heap of ashes of the 800,000 Jews gassed and cremated at Treblinka between July 1942 and October 1943. The Europeans in the picture were most probably digging up incinerated human remains in search of gold and valuables, which had been overlooked by the Nazi murderers,

write the authors (p. 18). The analysis of the photograph gave rise to serious questions of "how to process the episodic knowledge about only some events in order to comprehend what actually happened? How to translate information, about the fate of specific people, into knowledge about the epoch?" (p. 41).

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[82] Jan Tomasz Gross, Irena Grudzińska-Gross, *Golden Harvest: Events at the Periphery of the Holocaust* (Oxford University Press, 2012).

[83] See Martyna Rusiniak, *Obóz zagłady Treblinka II w pamięci społecznej (1943–1989)* (Warsaw: Neriton, 2008).

[84] See Piotr Głuchowski, Marcin Kowalski, "Gorączka złota w Treblince," *Gazeta Wyborcza*, supplement *Duży Format*, 8 January 2008.

A critical analysis of sources proves insufficient, as the Holocaust, by its nature, had an extreme and mass character, while the sources are fragmentary. The Grosses' solution is the anthropological method of 'thick description' (p. 42), which helps approach the reality of the Holocaust, applying the same principles as during examination of other, exotic cultures. "A 'thick description' of specific, precisely located events lets one acquire general knowledge about the behaviours and stances of the rural population," state the authors (p. 97), later adding that "the individual episodes and specific events (which, analysed separately, seem to be isolated excesses or an impossibility) fit in with one another, making up a coherent picture and a uniform whole" (p. 195).

It soon proved that the events were not "precisely localised' at all, for the topic of the photograph analysed is not as obvious as the Grosses wished and one cannot be entirely certain that "those local peasants were most probably caught red handed while digging in search of Jewish gold and valuables" (p. 27). As Marcin Kącki tried to prove in his journalistic investigation, the picture might as well have been taken somewhere else, in different circumstances.[85] But the objective here is not to question the Grosses' reliability and methodology, as their adversaries did. The events described by the authors remain unquestionable. The thing is that *Golden Harvest* is quite trivial, even if one assumes that one is involved with the essay convention.

The role of Clifford Geertz's thick description theory and its functionalisation in *Golden Harvest*'s narration also remains unclear. Methodologists are not unanimous in this respect. Anna Ziębińska-Witek stresses that:

> Thick description produces interpretation of isolated cases and it is not its objective to generalise or formulate general conclusions, which are of vital importance to Gross. Consequently, it seems that he chose a wrong method to achieve the objectives he had set himself. However, one encounters a different problem here. A reference to thick description is not enough to deem that this work is written in accordance with this method. The postulate does not match the research practice.[86]

Rafał Stobiecki is of an entirely different opinion: "the Grosses' study, in my opinion, abides by the principles of all three devices in Geertz's theory:"[87] a diagnosis (scholarly reasoning immersed in culture), thick description (which considers the context), and a case study (in order to come to general conclusions).

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[85] See Marcin Kącki, "Powiększenie. Nowe oblicze znanego zdjęcia," *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 13 March 2011.

[86] See Anna Ziębińska-Witek, "Czy Jan Tomasz Gross jest „wampirem historiografii"? ...," p. 159.

[87] See Rafał Stobiecki, "Poznawcze i metodologiczne oblicze „Złotych żniw". Głos w dyskusji," in *Zagłada Żydów na polskiej prowincji*, ed. Adam Sitarek, Michał Trębacz, and Ewa Wiatr (Łódź: IPN and Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, 2012), p. 502.

Similarly to *Neighbours* and *Fear*, *Golden Harvest* met with quite a response, though the 'debate' about the book proved a ritual confirmation of stances. As Antoni Sułek put it:

> *Golden Harvest* is similar to *Neighbours* and *Fear* in terms of the subject matter, purport, convention, and language. As similar things give similar results, the reaction to these books followed a certain pattern, as if it were a realisation of some social scenario. It is so predictable that one might even try to predict, for instance, who will voice the nation's righteous indignation and attack the author, and who will voice strong support, excusing every possible flaw in Gross' narration with the rightness of the cause.[88]

Consequently, it is no wonder that somebody painted "Zgrossa!"[89] on the gate of the Znak publishing house, that the right-wing milieus called for a boycott of the book,[90] that Piotr Gontarczyk accused Gross of "departing from the scholarly methodology" and downright "fraud,"[91] while Marek Chodakiewicz claimed that "it was a 'methodology' of postmodernism and deconstruction, a convenient instrument of literary fantasies, currently exceedingly fashionable in Western counterculture, but having nothing to do with traditional historic science."[92] By contrast, Michał Bilewicz wrote that the "voices of right-wing journalists and historians demanding sophisticated historical methodology from a Slavicist and a sociologist, testify to the polemicists' anti-Semitic disrelish or – which seems more probable – their hope to enshrine and promote their surnames on the occasion of the publication of the book by the American authors."[93] Joanna Tokarska-Bakir accused Paweł Machcewicz, whom she called "one of the accoucheurs of the light version of the Polish historical policy," of demanding in his review[94] that the picture produced be "heroic and thus real, and vice versa" and also devoid of assessment.[95] According to the author, such a stance clearly proves how "backward and truly 19th century discipline is the history practiced by Paweł Machcewicz." Tokarska-Bakir summed up her remarks with the following words:

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[88] See Antoni Sułek, "Po „Złotych żniwach"," *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 22–23 June 2011.

[89] Play on words: 'zgroza' means 'horror' in Polish (translator's footnote).

[90] I present these events after: Dominika Kozłowska, "Po co nam Gross?" *Znak* 3 (2011).

[91] See Piotr Gontarczyk, "Fachowcy od wszystkiego," *Rzeczpospolita*, 7 March 2001.

[92] See Marek Jan Chodakiewicz, "Refleksje: nowa praca, stare podejście," in *Złote serca czy złote żniwa? Studia nad wojennymi losami Polaków i Żydów*, ed. Marek Jan Chodakiewicz and Wojciech Jerzy Muszyński (Warsaw: The Facto, 2011), p. 31.

[93] See Michał Bilewicz, "Efekt wrażliwości. Rabunek i ludobójstwo," *Znak* 3 (2011).

[94] A reference to a critical review of *Golden Harvest*: Paweł Machcewicz, "Recenzja ostatecznej wersji „Złotych żniw": historia zaangażowana," *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 11 February 2011.

[95] See Joanna Tokarska-Bakir, "Historia jako księgowość kreatywna," *Literatura. Dwutygodnik* 51 (2011).

> There is no knowledge about the past without historians. But it is extremely important that apart from the 'historical technique' they also have a certain humanistic formation. They should read and learn from 'non-historians' – Stanisław Ossowski, Kazimierz Wyka, Jan Błoński, and Jan Tomasz Gross. To quote Maria Janion's question: "Will you know what you have experienced?"

Consensus seemed impossible on that level. Marek Czyżewski made an attempt at reconciliation; instead of the polarisation of stances, he offered the use of 'intermediary work' in the spirit of symbolic 'interactionism'. It was to be used by 'new historians' to more effectively "increase the level of historical knowledge and awareness in society, spread the scope of social imagination, and, first and foremost, make Polish society more sympathetic to the fate of the Jews during and after the war."[96] To achieve this, in Czyżewski's opinion, it is necessary to face not the suppressed memory of the older generation, characteristic of the period immediately after the war, but the deep ignorance of the present generations, that is, the lack of awareness caused by the social mechanisms.[97]

Another attempt at breaking the deadlock was the suggestion put forward by Jacek Leociak, to which I have a much more favourable attitude:

> In fact, everything was said and written much earlier. I am referring here not only to the historical sources: the documents produced by civilian and military bureaucrats or diplomats, messenger reports, the press, court files, testimonies of victims, witnesses, and executioners. I am also thinking about fiction, predominantly about it.[98]

Sławomir Buryła has recently made an almost identical comment. According to the scholar, from the very beginning, the 'unwanted truths' – the continuity of the Polish anti-Semitism, the instances of murders committed on Jews during the Warsaw Uprising (Jerzy Pytlakowski's 1946 report *Powstanie mokotowskie* [the uprising in Mokotów] predates Michał Cichy's famous article devoted to the 'dark pages of the uprising' by 48 years) or the myth of the 'Jewish gold' and the digging up of the former death camps in search for it – have found their ample reflection in the Polish prose (the Grosses unjustly write that "Bogdan Wojdowski was one of the few writers who depicted the digging for 'Jewish gold' in Polish literature;" they also mention only his book *Naga ziemia* [bare soil], p. 59).[99] It is enough to just give it a careful reading. As Buryła rightly remarks: "It

[96] See Marek Czyżewski, "Praca pośrednicząca w relacjach polsko-żydowskich. Doświadczenia biograficzne i dyskurs publiczny," in *Zagłada Żydów na polskiej prowincji*, p. 484.

[97] Ibidem, pp. 486–487.

[98] See Jacek Leociak, "Poeta pamięta," *Znak* 3 (2011).

[99] Cf. Sławomir Buryła, "Mit „żydowskiego złota"," in *Literatura polska wobec Zagłady (1939–1968)*, ed. Sławomir Buryła, Dorota Krawczyńska, and Jacek Leociak (Warsaw: ŻIH, 2013), pp. 442–449.

is not the first time that writers and poets were ahead of the scholarly diagnoses. And it was not the first time that their voice was ignored."[100]

The Birth of 'The Peasant Trend' in Writing About the Holocaust

I shall remain for a while on the topic of literature. One of the most special and pronounced conventions in the Polish post-war prose was the 'peasant trend'. The plot of the works produced within it was devoted to the culture and customs of Polish peasants, the civilisational changes occasioned by migrations to towns and cities, and the disintegration of the traditional communities and rural identity. The period of the peasant movement's most intensive development was in the 1960s, when Julian Kawalec wrote the novels *Ziemi przypisany* [Attached to the soil] (1962) and *Tańczący jastrząb* [Dancing hawk] (1964), and Wiesław Myśliwski *Nagi sad* [Bare orchard] (1967). The climax came with the publication of Edward Redliński's *Konopielka* (1973). The peasant prose gradually underwent conventionalisation,[101] though Wiesław Myśliwski continues to write superb novels within the framework of this trend (for instance, *Widnokrąg* [Horizon] or *A Treatise on Shelling Beans*).

The decade of my interest, 2003–2013, brought the birth of a sort of a historical 'peasant movement' within the framework of critical writing about the Holocaust. Unlike in the literary 'peasant movement', the authors came from towns and cities, but similarly to the prose of Kawalec and Myśliwski, the basic plot of those books was shifted to the countryside, with the Holocaust and the disintegration of the Polish-Jewish social ties as the main topics.

> The history of the German occupation in the countryside had long been the domain of the historiography of the people's movement. It presented a very optimistic vision of the Polish stances towards the Holocaust. It stressed the spontaneous, universal, disinterested, and solid help provided by the rural population to the persecuted Jews,

Krzysztof Persak remarks in the introduction to the volume *Zarys krajobrazu* [Landscape outline].[102] In this historiographic trend the earlier tendencies of regional writing about the Holocaust were fundamentally reformulated. In certain regards, the 'peasant movement' is heavily indebted to *Neighbours*.

As Andrzej Żbikowski stressed: "Gross's achievement is not only that he induced the masses to reflect on the most difficult issues in our history, but

[100] Ibidem, p. 449.

[101] See Przemysław Czapliński, Piotr Śliwiński, *Literatura polska 1976–1998. Przewodnik po prozie i poezji* (Cracow: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2002), p. 16.

[102] *Zarys krajobrazu. Wieś polska wobec zagłady Żydów 1942–1945*, ed. Barbara Engelking and Jan Grabowski (Warsaw: Stowarzyszenie Centrum Badań nad Zagładą Żydów, 2011), p. 11.

also that he in a way forced more extensive research on these issues."[103] Soon, however, it reached far beyond Gross's findings with regard to the scale of the research conducted and the importance of the conclusions. Moving slightly ahead of the subsequent analyses, I shall venture to formulate a judgement at this point. In my opinion, this is so far the most significant current in the Polish historiography of the Holocaust in the new millennium, one abundant in most interesting publications.

Neighbours quickly encountered retaliation in the form of Marek Wierzbicki's book *Polacy i Żydzi w zaborze sowieckim. Stosunki polsko-żydowskie na ziemiach północno-wschodnich II RP* [Poles and Jews in the Soviet partition. Polish-Jewish relations on the north-eastern territories of the Second Republic of Poland] (2001)[104] and the bizarre and somewhat halved monograph by Krzysztof Jasiewicz (2002),[105] which consists of a highly passionate foreword[106] followed

[103] Andrzej Żbikowski, "Wstęp," in idem, *U genezy Jedwabnego. Żydzi na Kresach Północno-Wschodnich II Rzeczpospolitej wrzesień 1939–lipiec 1941* (Warsaw: ŻIH, 2006), p. 10.

[104] See Marek Wierzbicki, *Polacy i Żydzi w zaborze sowieckim. Stosunki polsko-żydowskiej na ziemiach północno-wschodnich II RP* (Warsaw: Stowarzyszenie Kulturalne Fronda, 2001) (2nd revised and enlarged edition, 2007). It is difficult to resist the impression that this publication was intended as a quick response to *Neighbours*. The narration is subjected to the argumentation that the shameful behaviour of Jews under the Soviet occupation was the vital factor that affected the later stances of Poles. In this book we find numerous descriptions of murders committed on Poles by Bolshevised Jews on the northern-eastern territories of the Second Republic of Poland. The German inspiration is deemed the most important cause of the anti-Jewish pogroms.

[105] See Krzysztof Jasiewicz, *Pierwsi po diable. Elity sowieckie w okupowanej Polsce 1939–1941 (Białostocczyzna, Nowogródczyzna, Polesie, Wileńszczyzna)* (Warsaw: ISP PAN and Rytm, 2002). For many years, the author conducted research on the former Eastern Borderlands of Poland, listing representatives of the Soviet authorities who persecuted Polish landowners. Consequently, the essential part of his book is an alphabetic selective list of Soviet functionaries operating in West Belarus during 1939–1945. It has over nine hundred pages (!).

[106] A reference to the part constituting "a guide to the world of occupation-period notions and myths," where Jasiewicz criticised the previous historiography and treated the period from 1939 to 1941 as the moment of the crystallisation of the myth of the Jewish traitor and of the subsequent justification of popular Polish indifference towards the Holocaust. The author clearly states: "We must admit that pretending that we did not participate in the Holocaust contradicts the historical truth, and that this stance should be called the 'Jedwabne Denial', *per analogiam* to the Holocaust Denial" (p. 227). At the beginning of his narration, one reads: "It seems that scholarly writing, paradoxically, cannot be unemotional. For it is or should be a highly personal record, an account of our cognition. This is in a way similar to – taking into consideration the imperfection of cognition – writing a 'novel' with characters normalised by the sources or 'factual literature' with the use of scholarly methodology" (p. 29). Later, however, Professor Jasiewicz's views changed radically, which was diagnosed – in my opinion aptly – by Anna Bikont in her text "Metamorfozy profesora Jasiewicza," in *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 7 June 2013. The turning point proved the book *Rzeczywistość sowiecka 1939–1941 w świadectwach polskich Żydów* (Warsaw: ISP PAN and Rytm, 2009), with which – as Bikont put it – "he threw himself into the arms of anti-Semites." Jasiewicz reached his anti-Semitic climax in his famous,

by a dry list of the people 'first after the Devil' as the title says. Then came a breakthrough publication, which helped to shape the research on the Holocaust in the provinces – Andrzej Żbikowski's monograph *U genezy Jedwabnego* [The genesis of Jedwabne] (2006).[107] As the author writes in the introduction: "Today, when the shock caused by Gross's book has passed and the emotions have subsided, it is possible to examine the issue methodically, analysing critically all available testimonies, and to present it in a scholarly manner" (p. 10). This is evidence that Żbikowski specifies his objectives:

> the purpose was to present the social life of Jews under the Soviet occupation in as many dimensions as possible. I hoped to be able to characterise them correctly if I looked at the occupation from various perspectives, defined by the heroes of those events. I decided to combine these various points of view into three, in my opinion, main 'narration currents', which I called the Jewish and Polish discourses, with the 'objectivised' description of the social relations, based on the documents produced by the occupation structures. Only in this framework can I see a possibility of noticing the similarities between narrations, which differ completely in their details (p. 11).

The monograph is immensely detailed and uses a large number of sources and ample footnotes. But the issue of the provinces is mentioned somewhat in passing, because Żbikowski deals with "the poorly urbanised territories" (p. 17), but he is predominantly interested in "what changed in the life of the Jewish community on the Eastern Borderlands, how its individual sectors reacted to that change, and how those changes affected the relations between the ethnic groups and the later events" (p. 20). To this end, Żbikowski analyses the Jewish, Polish, Soviet, and German discourses, which is a great advantage of this narration. The author analyses the simplifications they used, what they passed over in silence, and who and why certain events were described at a particular moment. The monograph also discusses the events of July 1941 (in chapter five about Jewish

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widely commended interview "Żydzi byli sami sobie winni?" [do the Jews have themselves to blame?] which he gave to the *Focus Historia Ekstra* magazine (special issue, February 2013). A fragment of it reads: "That Jewish nonsense and the fabricated data about Jews murdered mainly by Polish peasants are precisely the projection intended at hiding the biggest Jewish secret. For the German crime was able to assume such a scale not due to 'what happened on the outskirts of the Holocaust', but only due to the active participation of Jews in the process of murdering their own nation." He also added that "a dialogue with Jews is a waste of time." Jasiewicz's immediate superior, the Director of the Institute of Political Studies of the Polish Academy of Sciences (*Instytut Studiów Politycznych PAN*), Professor Eugeniusz Cezary Król likened that interview to publications of the Nazi magazine *Stürmer* (see Wojciech Czuchnowski, "PAN wstrząśnięty antysemickim wywiadem," *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 5 April 2013, p. 5), and dismissed Jasiewicz from the position of the director of the Department of Analysis of Eastern Issues (*Zakład Analiz Problemów Wschodnich*).

[107] See Żbikowski, *U genezy Jedwabnego*...

pogroms in the Łomża region, in Podlasie, and on more remote territories of the North-Eastern Borderlands in the summer of 1941), so it does discuss the very sensitive issue of the pogroms of Jews, which Jan Tomasz Gross examined in *Neighbours*. Żbikowski counted "38 localities" (p. 213), where Jewish neighbours were probably "cruelly" killed, similarly as in Jedwabne. Those crimes were motivated predominantly by "envy of material goods" (p. 227) and facilitated by "the lack of strong administrative power" (p. 238).

Later, the same issues were discussed on a much larger scale (from the Baltic Sea to the Black Sea) by Witold Mędykowski in his book *W cieniu gigantów* [In the shadow of giants] (2012).[108] It was entirely devoted to the subject matter of anti-Jewish pogroms in the summer of 1944 "as a social conflict phenomenon" (p. 22). Yes, pogroms, and not "excesses" or "incidents" as others wish to see them (p. 29). Mędykowski adopts the perspective of the victims, rightly stressing that "a pogrom is not just a historical event *sensu stricto*. It is also an event, which brings traumatic events, wounds, suffering, or humiliation," consequently "calling for an interdisciplinary approach. This is why it seems inevitable to employ both the knowledge and the methods borrowed from history, political sciences, sociology, psychology, and even psychiatry" (p. 37). Mędykowski managed not only to adopt such a perspective, enriched with the theoretical background (see chapter 3 "Zarys teorii i interpretacja pogromów" [Theoretical outline and the interpretation of pogroms]), but also to broaden our knowledge on the topic of the behaviour of the local population during the "power void" and prove that the scale of the phenomenon was much larger than previously thought. Photographs also play an important role in this narration, as Mędykowski considers them "a 'live' record of human aggression and tragedy" (p. 38).[109]

The first monograph that may be regarded as an actual representative of the 'peasant movement' was the collective volume entitled *Prowincja noc* [The province of night] (2007),[110] which discussed "the events on the territories located away from the centre, and the ethical dimension of the reflections on the war-time destruction" (p. 8). The editors rightly emphasised that in "the

[108] See Witold Mędykowski, *W cieniu gigantów. Pogromy 1941 r. w byłej sowieckiej strefie okupacyjnej. Kontekst historyczny, społeczny i kulturowy* (Warsaw: ISP PAN, 2012).

[109] Thus, the author's views match those of Georges Didi-Huberman, for whom photography is an "outlet of a fraction of reality" (idem, *Obrazy mimo wszystko*, trans. Mai Kubiak Ho-Chi [Cracow: Universitas, 2008], p. 104). André Rouillé has a totally different attitude to photography. He stresses that "[t]ruth is by no means photography's second nature; it is only a result of the faith in the practice and forms based on a specific set of instruments" (idem, *Fotografia. Między dokumentem a sztuką współczesną*, trans. Oskar Hedemann [Cracow: Universitas, 2007], p. 90). According to Rouillé, the moment one records reality through photography a set of codes is introduced: optical (perspective), technical (inherent in the product and the camera), aesthetic (frame and framing, point of view, light), and ideological.

[110] See *Prowincja noc. Życie i zagłada Żydów w dystrykcie warszawskim*, ed. Barbara Engelking, Jacek Leociak, and Dariusz Libionka (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo IFiS PAN, 2007).

historiography of the Holocaust on the Polish territories one may notice that 'the provinces' are not treated on a par with 'the centre'. The extermination of Jews in large towns and cities is relatively thoroughly researched and described. The situation appears worse in the case of county towns, while rural areas are often *terra incognita*" (p. 12).

In *Prowincja noc* are all the characteristics of the emerging 'peasant current': the intended inter-disciplinary quality ("The authors of these studies use the historical-documentary and social-psychological research tools, being inspired by the anthropology of culture and discourse analysis," p. 15) and the discovery of the author-narrator figure, who becomes, on the same terms as the reader, an engaged element of the world described, which is halfway between the actual past and collective memory and in the sphere of ordinariness, everyday life of specific, previously unknown people rather than of famous heroes (ŻOB fighters or AK commanders). The final characteristic is the reaching for the "unwanted truths," reaching "the very bottom" (p. 347) – the instances of Jews being denounced by Poles and their handing over into the hands of the occupier, killings, and rapes (particularly the sketches *Uciekinierzy z gett po „stronie aryjskiej"* [escapees from ghettoes on the 'Aryan' side] by Małgorzata Melchior and *Wizerunek Polaków w zapisach Żydów z dystryktu warszawskiego* [the image of Poles in writings of Jews from the Warsaw District] by Jacek Leociak). It should also be emphasised that the authors have extraordinary literary skills, visible not only in the title that alludes to Czechowicz's poetry, but also in the sphere of the careful construction of the individual articles and the entire volume, which "has a well thought out structure, appropriate dramatic tension, and narrative logic" (p. 16). Alina Skibińska's text *Powroty ocalałych* [return of survivors] constitutes "a natural ending both in the chronological sense, and in the dramaturgic sense," as it is intended as "an *exodos*, that is, the exit song of the choir leaving the stage" (p. 18).

'The Peasant Current' in Writing About the Holocaust

The most important books about the Holocaust in the Polish countryside were published in 2011 and were the crowning achievements of the project "Rural Population of the General Government vis-à-vis the Holocaust and Hiding Jews, 1942–1945." They showed that the killings of Jews that took place in Poland immediately after the war, which Gross and Zaremba wrote about, were not a coincidence. As Krzysztof Persak wrote in the introduction to *Zarys krajobrazu*: "The difficulty with their explanation lay, for instance, in the fact that they were treated as a new phenomenon, with their genesis sought mostly in the post-war situation. But those murders can be seen as a continuation of the criminal deeds during the war."[111] Published almost at the same time, the first works were the monographs by Jan Grabowski and Barbara Engelking.

[111] See Krzysztof Persak, "Wstęp," in *Zarys krajobrazu…*, p. 28.

Jan Grabowski's *Judenjagd* is, as the subtitle informs, a "study of a certain county."[112] In fact, it contains standard elements of regional historiography. The author begins the description of the Dąbrowa Tarnowska county with a discussion of its geography and available sources, and then moves on to – following the diachronic narrative schemata – an overview of the Polish-Jewish relations on the eve of World War II, the first years of the occupation, the gradual intensification of terror, and the "increasing brutalisation of everyday life" (p. 37). The device, which Grabowski calls "the triangulation of memory" (p. 16) is no novelty either. It consists in basing "on three kinds of sources that shed light on those dramatic years from disparate perspectives" (p. 16), that is, the Jewish testimonies deposited at the Jewish Historical Institute and Yad Vashem, the records of the August proceedings, and German documents regarding interrogations of gendarmes and Gestapo functionaries. This device can be actually reduced to using the results of a possibly extensive search query, but it should be admitted that in *Judenjagd*'s case the query was extremely thorough. The actual narration begins when "the Germans commenced the final stage of the annihilation of the Dąbrowa Tarnowska Jews, known as *Judenjagd* – a hunt for Jews" (p. 51).Disproving the previous findings (for instance, those of amateur historian Kozaczek or the documentation of the Main Commission for the Investigation of the Nazi Crimes [*Główna Komisja Badania Zbrodni Hitlerowskich*]), Grabowski demonstrates that the Germans were blamed for Polish crimes against Jews "somewhat by default" (p. 56), while the Poles claimed credit for the Jews' survival (for instance, the fact that a Pole did not denounce a Jew became an act of rescue).

But first and foremost (particularly with regard to the singled out second stage of the hunt, that is, the period after the deportation campaign), Grabowski explicitly emphasises that "vast majority of the Jews in hiding were captured and killed as a result of denunciations" (p. 71). Almost everybody was involved in that immoral activity – village chairmen, the fire brigades, pre-war Polish policemen, the 'blue' police, the Construction Service (*Baudienst*), "vast majority of whom were mature, married men above the age of 30" (p. 93). By contrast, an act of rescue was a proof of rare heroism and not common practice. As Grabowski writes:

> most of the optimistic calculations indicating the mass scale of acts of rescue were made after 1968 as a result of party directives to refute the accusations of anti-Semitism brought in the West against the Polish authorities and Polish society. Aside from their clear objective they are

[112] See Jan Grabowski, *Judenjagd. Polowanie na Żydów 1942–1945. Studium dziejów pewnego powiatu* (Warsaw: Stowarzyszenie Centrum Badań nad Zagładą Żydów, 2011), English edition: *Hunt for the Jews: Betrayal and Murder in German-Occupied Poland* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013).

> also characterised by lack of any systematic documentation or basic scholarly rigour (p. 145).

Even though Grabowski does succumb to the (fallacious!) charm of the 'scientistic' discourse, statistics, and inclusion of numerous tables in the text,[113] the narration does not lack personal accents, for instance, when Grabowski speaks with an "elderly female inhabitant" from Gruszów Wielki, who confirms that a villager by the name of Pagos was not particularly liked by other inhabitants, because "the kikes whom he sheltered then bequeathed a field to him" (p. 168).

The basic virtue of *Judenjagd* stems from the carefully designated and intentionally small research area. All works whose authors use such a close-up – excellent examples of which are Andrzej Żbikowski's description of the Polish-Jewish relations in the village of Grądy Woniecko in Podlasie[114] and the history of the Varsovian family of Szyk told by Marcin Kula in *Autoportret rodziny X* [The X family's self-portrait][115] – force one to evaluate the stances and meet particular individuals and their micro world. One could even venture to say that they somehow place into the micro-history current, that is, texts which describe "minor events in everyday history, little worlds of 'other people', whom the scholar presents to show their distinctness."[116] They force the reader to ask himself how he would have behaved in the world described by the historian.

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[113] In the case of such tables, one is involved with a supra-individual perspective, which ignores the fate of individual people, thus losing the humanistic quality of the narration. I also discussed this in the book on camp testimonies. See Bartłomiej Krupa, *Wspomnienia obozowe jako specyficzna odmiana narracji historycznej* (Cracow: Universitas, 2006), pp. 24–27. Books on the regional history of the Holocaust include tables with the number of Jews murdered in the individual years, which has little to do with compassion for human suffering. In my opinion, perhaps the most disturbing and inexplicable example of such an impassive statistic of deaths can be found in Aneta Baranowska's book *Żydzi włocławscy*. The table presents the number of deaths among Jews during 1940–1942, with the author distinguishing between "natural causes" and "execution" (see eadem, *Żydzi włocławscy i ich zagłada 1939–1945* [Toruń: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Grado, 2005]).

[114] See Andrzej Żbikowski, "Krótka historia stosunków polsko-żydowskich we wsi Grądy Woniecko w roku 1942," in *Świat niepożegnany. Żydzi na danych ziemiach wschodnich Rzeczypospolitej w XVIII–XX wieku*, ed. Krzysztof Jasiewicz (Warsaw: ISP PAN and Rytm, 2004).

[115] This is how Marcin Kula began the introduction to this book: "Below, I present a study of a Varsovian Jewish family during the interwar period. They did not distinguish themselves in any particular way. The family is not in any case important *per se* even though while studying it I almost 'became friends' with its members *ex post*, identifying with its concerns. I also began to use diminutive forms of their names in my thoughts. I am interested in it as in one of many families. I have produced a classic case study, whose objective is to take a closer look at the everyday life of Jews during the times, which, at least in Poland, came to a tragic end" (idem, *Autoportret rodziny X. Fragment żydowskiej Warszawy lat międzywojennych* [Warsaw: WAiP, 2007], p. 7).

[116] Domańska, *Mikrohistorie…*, pp. 20–21.

I consider that an excellent summing up of *Judenjagd*'s purport is the opinion voiced by Henryk Grynberg in his message to the participants of the conference regarding the reckoning with the past and the Polish-Jewish relations in texts of the Culture of the 20th and 21st Centuries held in Słupsk during 15–16 April 2014:

According to the statistics that Professor Grabowski refers to, one-tenth of the Polish population of Jewish origin was fleeing or trying to hide, but only a maximum of twenty per cent of them managed to survive. Hence, we are short of about 200,000 people. What happened with them? According to Professor Grabowski's calculations, "the vast majority of the Jews in hiding were captured and killed as a result of denunciations" (p. 71). The scholar says that it was so difficult to help Jews in Poland because it "was regarded by many as a sin or worse – as a crime" (p. 170), not a crime against the occupier, but against fellow countrymen. Reading this, I am ashamed of my naiveté in *Żydowska wojna*, where I wrote: "The peasantry was ignorant and superstitious. 'It's a sin to refuse help,' they would say." This is what literary fiction leads to in this topic. I was repeatedly disappointed with it in other people's writings, and now I have also disappointed myself.

> Unfortunately, after Grabowski's study, I also need to revise the stubborn claims I made in essays and polemics that the Polish anti-Semitism was less deadly than the other ones. After Grabowski's study, the question of how often help was provided gives way to the issue of how often were the Jews killed or their killers were given a helping hand? The obstacle here is the constant unknown, for as the author himself warns, the scholars can use only the testimonies and accounts of the few who survived and not of the vast majority who died. When I published *Dziedzictwo* [Heritage] (Aneks 1993) 20 years ago, Adam Michnik told me: "Your book is terrifying! but I could not even imagine a book as terrifying as Grabowski's."[117]

The peak of the said process, not only within the framework of the 'peasant movement', but also with regard to all writing about the Holocaust came with Barbara Engelking's shocking book *„Jest taki piękny słoneczny dzień...". Losy Żydów szukających ratunku na wsi polskiej 1942–1945* ["It is such a beautiful sunny day…" The fate of the Jews who sought rescue in the Polish countryside, 1941–1945] (2011). The monograph's structure places the reader in the role of a game-book player. Based on the reader's imagination, a game-book entails reading descriptions and making choices, each of which refer the reader to a different paragraph in the book (hence the name). Though game-books are mostly popular in the science fiction and fantasy genres, they are also written on historical topics. For instance, 2011 saw the publication of Maciej Słomczyński and Beniamin Muszyński's gamebook *Janek. Historia małego powstańca*

[117] I had the pleasure of participating in that conference. I am deeply grateful to Professor Tadeusz Sucharski, the President of the Pomeranian Academy (*Akademia Pomorska*) in Słupsk, for making the text of Henryk Grynberg's *Posłanie* available to me.

[Janek. Story of a little insurgent], called an "interactive story" by its publisher (*Wydawnictwo Wielokrotnego Wyboru*).[118] This Polish game-book is set in Warsaw, when it is plunged into the hell of the uprising, and the hero is Janek Zawiszak, an insurgent messenger, whom the reader identifies with.

Engelking constructs her narration basing on very similar principles. She does not use a top-down perspective, but builds her narration somewhat from the bottom up, using five hundred testimonies and records of three hundred criminal cases, which she reads and quotes word for word. I think that the essence of the whole design is revealed in the introduction: "to try not to lose sight of the human dimension of existence and suffering or reduce the victims to figures, estimates, or data, and try to see a living, suffering man in every Jew appearing in this study and to remember him as such" (pp. 20–21). Engelking declares:

> In this book, I am interested predominantly, or actually exclusively, in the 'Jewish side of the coin'. I stress this in the title, which is a quotation of the final words of an anonymous Jew captured by peasants and escorted to death, begging in vain to be released and spared. I concentrate on the fate of Jews and their existential experience […]. I look at the countryside through the eyes of Jews […]. I try to recreate the emic categories, that is, ones where the Jews themselves present and interpret their own experiences (pp. 13–14).

Following this perspective, the scholar sets out with the victims across the "human desert," which is the crucial metaphor in this narration, and the readers accompany her. "It is not supposed to be an objective description; to the contrary, it is to be as subjective as possible, filtered through emotions and experiences" (p. 131). On the most macro level, it can be said that the reader feels a gradually intensifying dread.

The wandering begins at the moment of the expulsion, that is, the deportation to death camps. A Jew could surrender and voluntarily die with other Jews, manifesting (according to Levinas, p. 32) responsibility for the other man and accompanying him in suffering. A Jew could also choose to flee: from the train (as in Zofia Nałkowska's short story "By the Railway Track" from the *Medallions* collection), which meant "contacts with Poles, which could bring either danger or salvation" (p. 46), or later, from under corpses, having miraculously avoided death during a mass execution. Thus, purely accidentally, the Jews found themselves in the countryside, joining the locals and those deported earlier (pp. 50–51) and also the Jews who had chosen to be in hiding (p. 52). That was the beginning of the wandering and roaming on the "human desert" (p. 55), which constituted the reversed topos of *homo viator* – a journey as self-discovery –

[118] The book is available on the publisher's website: http://masz-wybor.com.pl/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/Janek-Histotria-Ma%C5%82ego-Powsta%C5%84ca.pdf, access 25 July 2014.

and it enabled one "to obtain knowledge about the neighbour which one later regretted" (p. 63). Sooner or later, a Jew was obliged to show his weakness and put himself in the role of a person "at the mercy of others" (p. 75).

Let us move on to the next chapter (paragraph) – "In hiding." Hiding could be stationary (often for money, within the framework of exchanging "a coat for life," p. 99) or dispersed (occasional), with the latter being much more commonplace. The Jews who used occasional hideouts had to cope with refusals of help, motivated by fear (p. 101), also fear of being denounced by one's neighbours (p. 107), or even with being thrown out after being robbed (pp. 108–109). The Jews' basic experience was human indifference (p. 137), later justified "in line with the principle of attributive egoism" (we are innocent and only the circumstances are to blame, while other's wrongdoing stems from their character and not their surroundings, p. 138). The second part of the narration ("Doom") "is devoted to lack of success in hiding" (p. 143). "Darkness thickens and dread intensifies on the human desert. The Jews, who are looking for rescue, are increasingly often directly wronged by the Poles" (p. 151). The wandering Jews fall victims to manhunts, are denounced by their landlords (p. 157–160), their neighbours (p. 160), people they know or strangers. Why? For fear that "somebody could die in consequence" (p. 174), because of greed or simple meanness (p. 179). Now we are just "Two steps away from death" (pp. 197–206). Begging for mercy did sometimes bring the desired effect (particularly in the case of captured children, p. 199), and so did bribery and, on rare occasions, also fighting. The "unsuccessfully" killed Jews, that is, those who had not been finished off or drowned to death, some of whom were still begging for life, were "A step away from death" (p. 207). "Begging for mercy is also usually, […] the last words of the dying that we can hear" (p. 212). Finally death comes (p. 217). "We could formulate a hypothesis that passions (greed, hatred) incited people to kill the Jews, while fear was more often the reason for refusing help or throwing the Jews out" (p. 220), claims Engelking. The peasants murdered Jews "with passion, hectically, frantically, and cruelly" (p. 250), using pegs (p. 252), clubs (p. 253), pitchforks (p. 254), or firearms (p. 255), or drowned then in wells or buried them alive. The Jews were also killed by 'blue' policemen, firefighters, "partisans from all possible political organisations" (p. 236).

> These examples regard only a tiny percentage of the murdered Jews. The remains of many other Jews, we shall never learn their surnames or the circumstances of their death, still lie buried under Polish fences and barns, in forests, fields, and meadows. Many of the denounced and murdered Jews remain anonymous. The anonymity of the victims guarantees safety to the denouncers and murderers (p. 255),

writes Engelking, making every step in the Polish countryside problematic.

I did that relatively extensive reconstruction of Engelking's narration to show what an extremely precise structure we are involved with here. The comparison

to a gamebook where one follows the choices made by the Jews might seem inappropriate, but I do not use it here to discredit this book. On the contrary, I regard is as a remarkable publication. The objective of its narrative structure is to immerse the reader of Engelking's book completely in the world of the "laboratory of human nature" (p. 189), from which he is protected by the safe research and linguistic distance created by the classic, modernist historiography. "We are trying to push the suffering away, stay clear of it, negate and suppress it, instead of trying to face it" (p. 8), writes Engelking, making the opposite gesture of internalisation of suffering. The degree of the closeness and identification with the fate of the victims is so high here, that Engelking's monograph does not let the reader remain indifferent, nor does it bring solace. To quote the author, after reading, we remain helpless "both regarding the mystery of doing evil and the mystery of experiencing suffering" (p. 260).

An interesting summa of the historiographic "peasant current" in writing about the Holocaust is the collective publication *Zarys krajobrazu. Wieś polska wobec Zagłady Żydów 1942–1945* [Outline of the landscape. The Polish countryside regarding the Holocaust, 1942–1945].[119] It contains eight sketches based on the sources also used by Grabowski and Engelking: the survivors' testimonies produced for the Central Jewish Historical Commission (*Centralna Żydowska Komisja Historyczna*) and Yad Vashem and the records of the 'August decree trials' with statements made by the witnesses and Polish murderers. In the introduction, Krzysztof Persak listed the motivations behind this project and stressed the innovativeness of the research and the significance of the analysed phenomenon:

> The research perspective was limited to the countryside because rural areas were still *terra incognito* in the aspect of our interest and because of their evident peculiarity, determined by the peasant mentality, the material living conditions, the settlement network and the network of the occupation authorities' institutions, topography, etc. The importance of examining the situation in the countryside for understanding what happened during the war between Poles and Jews stems not only from the said demographic considerations, but also from the role, which the rural environment played in the phenomenon of Jews in hiding. Warsaw, where perhaps as many as 20,000 Jews were hiding, at least until the Warsaw Uprising, was an exceptional place on the occupation-period map of Poland. Most Jews sought shelter in forests and on farms.[120]

The most distinguishing feature of this volume is its polyphony – it takes advantage of various research disciplines, with a wide spectrum of their representatives invited to partake: anthropology (Wojciech Burszta), literary studies (Jacek Leociak), statistics (Zuzanna Schnepf-Kołacz), sociological quali-

[119] See *Zarys krajobrazu…*

[120] See Persak, *Wstęp*, in ibidem, pp. 11–12.

tative research (Barbara Engelking, Alina Skibińska), history that deals with specific case studies (Jan Grabowski, Dagmara Swałtek) and, last but not least, history that considers various contexts of historical analysis (Dariusz Libionka). As Krzysztof Persak stressed: "The individual articles have a complementary character – they complement one another, enter into a dialogue with one another, and offer arguments and explanations, making up a coherent whole" (p. 15). The chief metaphor that sums up the editors' intentions is of a 'geological' character: "The studies are like an extensive probing, though it would perhaps be more appropriate to liken them to 'deep-sea boreholes'," wrote Persak (p. 15). The title is important too, as it indicates that one has to do with only "an outline of the landscape" of this subject matter – the publication is not a "complete guide to it" (p. 15).

Published a year later by the IPN and the University of Łódź, the collective work *Zagłada Żydów na polskiej prowincji* [The Holocaust in the Polish provinces],[121] has a slightly different character. It is the fruit of the conference about the Holocaust in the Polish provinces, Victims, perpetrators, and bystanders, which was held in Łódź during 27–28 October 2011. The papers presented were divided with the use of Hilberg's triad. Though many voices (for instance, those of Jan Grabowski or Barbara Engelking) repeated the theses included in other publications, there are also many interesting and original case studies (mostly from the Lublin region), reflections on sources (Jean-Yves Potel' interesting article about Klukowski's *Diary from the Years of Occupation 1939–44*) and the issue of the post-war commemoration of the Holocaust, and, finally, theoretical reflection (the supplement).

At the end, I should mention one more shocking book. *„Jakie to ma znaczenie, czy zrobili to z chciwości?" Zagłada domu Trynczerów* ["What difference does it make whether they did that from greed?" The fall of the house of Trynczer][122] is actually a primary source – Tadeusz Markiel's first-hand testimony, supplemented with Alina Skibińska's historical commentary. An abridged version of Markiel's testimony was first published in the *Znak* monthly in 2008.[123] It opened with the following appeal: "I have waited a few decades for the participants of those events to pass away. Now I can tell the tragic story of the Gniewczyna Jews and include their point of view – give people a mirror to see their own reflection in. I demand redress for the wrong done to those defenceless people!" The appeal met with little response. It was only two years later that Cezary Łazarewicz's report *Letnisko w domu śmierci* (2010) attracted more attention.[124] As a result

[121] See *Zagłada Żydów na polskiej prowincji*.

[122] Tadeusz Markiel, Alina Skibińska, *„Jakie to ma znaczenie, czy zrobili to z chciwości?". Zagłada domu Trynczerów* (Warsaw: Stowarzyszenie Centrum Badań nad Zagładą Żydów, 2011).

[123] See Tadeusz Markiel, "Zagłada domu Trinczerów," *Znak* 4 (2008).

[124] See Cezary Łazarewicz, "Letnisko w domu śmierci," *Polityka* 49 (2010).

of the report, the Rzeszów branch of the IPN launched an investigation on the massacre of Jews in Gniewczyna in 1942.

The purport of Markiel's testimony and Skibińska's findings leave no doubt that, together with members of the ZWZ-AK, the local elite, which Markiel calls the "local mob" (p. 72), hunted down and murdered Jews in hiding. In November 1942, Volunteer Fire Brigade Chief Józef Lasek, other members of the brigade, partisans, and village chairpersons of both parts of the village (Gniewczyna Łańcucka and Gniewczyna Tryniecka) organised a manhunt for the local Jewish families, capturing most of the adults and children, a total of eleven people.[125] They then loaded the Jews onto wagons, "like pigs and calves taken to a fair" (p. 70), and transported them to Lejb and Szangla Trynczer's house, which had been converted into a fireman's booth, located in the very centre of the village, opposite the church. There, the Poles tortured the Jews and raped the Jewish women, and then called German gendarmes, who executed the prisoners. All of the perpetrators evaded justice after the war.[126]

That text has the character of a moral treatise and simultaneously an uncompromising accusation against the 'Catholic neighbours', the Church, and the armed underground – all closely interconnected. Markiel's voice was given a title that alludes to Edgar Allan Poe's classic masterly horror story *The Fall of the House of Usher* (1839), but the testimony is a hundred times more terrifying than the original. The commentators are unanimous in this regard:

> for most readers, if not for everybody, reading this testimony is a unique, intimate, and often traumatic experience. For Markiel touches the most painful wounds and the most sensitive places, causing astonishment, shock, and horror. I think that his memoir should be compulsory reading for everyone who deals with and is interested in the fragments of our wartime history, which concern the Polish-Jewish relations and the Holocaust,

wrote Alina Skibińska,[127] while Dariusz Libionka opened his "reflections of a historian" with the following observation: "Tadeusz Markiel's testimony is one of the most moving autobiographic documents I have ever encountered while researching the Polish-Jewish relations in the Polish provinces during the German occupation."[128] The author did not live until the publication of his

[125] According to Markiel, the number was 18 (p. 83). The other number of victims – 11 – was established by Alina Skibińska on the basis of the report on the exhumation of the remains on 3 November 1947 (Markiel, Skibińska, *„Jakie to ma znaczenie, czy zrobili to z chciwości?". Zagłada…*, pp. 177–178).

[126] The proceedings continued the longest with regard to the case of Józef Lask, who was in hiding for several years. In the end, he was exculpated in 1954 by the District Court in Przeworsk. Cf. ibidem, pp. 220–235.

[127] Skibińska, *Wstęp*, in ibidem, p. 9.

[128] See Dariusz Libionka, "Zagłada domu Trinczerów – refleksje historyka," *Znak* 4 (2008): 146.

book. Prior to his death on 20 November 2010, he had often been harassed and ostracised by the local community.[129]

Rescuing, the Reverse of the Denunciations

On the other side of nearby Przeworsk, only 15 kilometres in a straight line from Gniewczyna, which we know from Markiel's testimony, lies Markowa. In late 1942, a local married couple, Józef and Wiktoria Ulm, provided shelter to eight Jews from the Szall and Goldman families, but the hideout was discovered after a denunciation made by a 'blue' policeman. On 24 March 1944, gendarmes from the station in Łańcut murdered the Ulms (Wiktoria was heavily pregnant) and their six children, the oldest of whom was eight years old and the youngest a year and a half. All of the Jews in hiding were killed too.

Looking at the Polish historiography of the Holocaust, one might have an impression that these two localities are situated on totally different latitudes. In the introduction, I wrote that in the new millennium one is involved with two cultures/paradigms of the Polish historiography of the Holocaust. On the one hand, there are publications, which uncompromisingly reveal the shameful stances of Poles, and on the other hand there are those which offer quite a different vision by way of the 'historiographic shadow cabinet'. Gniewczyna might be regarded as the symbol of the former and Markowa of the latter. Markowa even became the 'jewel in the crown' of the discourse on rescuing. The Ulms, the 'Polish saints', have become the subject of numerous publications and Rafał Wieczyński's documentary *Świat Józefa* (2009), with their fate being regarded as clear evidence of Poles' nobility, owed to a large extent to their Catholic faith.[130]

First of all, as Jacek Leociak very aptly expressed it,

> the Polish discourse on help is still threatened by three demons: the demon of competition (in martyrology, disinterestedness, and nobility), the demon of statistics (counting rescuers and those killed for rescuing in order to prove the thesis that "the more, the better"), the demon of

[129] For instance, he received phone calls with threats and somebody shot at his window with an air gun. Those events were mentioned by his daughter Markiela Anna (Magdalena Grochowska, "Naznaczony. Rozmowa z Anną Markiel," *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 11 February 2012, p. 34).

[130] I am referring to Mateusz Szpytma's book *Sprawiedliwi i ich świat. Markowa w fotografii Józefa Ulmy* (Warsaw–Cracow: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, 2007). It opens the IPN's series of publications devoted to the history of the individuals and institutions that were helping Jews during World War II. See also other publications written by this employee of the Cracow branch of the IPN: Mateusz Szpytma, Jarosław Szarek, *Ofiara Sprawiedliwych. Rodzina Ulmów – oddali życie za ratowanie Żydów* (Cracow, 2004) (and the later editions); Mateusz Szpytma, "Oddali życie za bliźnich. Bohaterska rodzina Ulmów zginęła za ukrywanie Żydów," *Nasz Dziennik*, 25–26 March 2006.

> trivialisation (the mass character of help questions the act's heroism, which is emphasised to all and sundry).[131]

Thus, the discourse on rescuing falls victim to a more widespread phenomenon – Polonocentrism combined with hero making. As Lucjan Dobroszycki phrased it, historical writing has "a tendency to obscure the differences between the situation of the Jewish and the Polish populations, sometimes in the form of trying to outdo each other at who suffered more, who sustained more losses, and which is also important too, in what order."[132] It seems that the current tendency to present Poles in an exceptionally favourable light, that is, exclusively as helpers, as described here and which is evident in the Polish historiography, is a part of the process, which Michael Steinlauf very aptly characterised in *Refleksje nad cieniem Holokaustu w Polsce powojennej* [reflections on the Holocaust's shadow in post-war Poland].[133] He discussed the surprising aversion to Jews in a nation that witnessed the Holocaust. At the same time, there are voices coming "from all sides of the political scene – from the government, the Church, and the opposition" (p. 88) – which deny these anti-Jewish sentiments. According to Steinlauf, the aversion most Poles had to Jews before the war, combined with the satisfaction from the post-war absence of Jews, coincided with the psychical and social discomfort caused by the appropriation of their property. Put together, all that led an extremely difficult psychological situation. "Disliking your neighbour, wishing for his disappearance, and then for years playing the role of the witness of his death only to finally inherit his property – it is difficult to imagine that such a sequence of events could have left no deep psychical wounds, and particularly a sense of guilt" (p. 92), he remarked. That feeling of guilt, which Poles could give no vent to, resulted in either acts of aggression against the Jews (vide the Kielce pogrom), or attempts at self-excuse. Leading the way in the latter, the Polish historiography "went so far in falsifying the act of witnessing the Holocaust that it became a psychological and moral trap, seemingly without a way out" (p. 92).

The crucial features of the discourse are best seen from the micro perspective – through minor events of little importance, which are trouble spots signalling the direction of the transformations. Such a glimpse of the discursive tension with which we have to do in the new millennium was the 2004 cancellation of the exhibition "Whoever saves one life…" in the museum in Tykocin announced

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[131] See Jacek Leociak, *Ratowanie. Opowieści Polaków i Żydów* (Cracow: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2010).

[132] See Lucjan Dobroszycki, "Polska historiografia na temat Zagłady," in *Holocaust z perspektywy półwiecza. Pięćdziesiąta rocznica powstania w getcie warszawskim*, materials from a conference organised by the ŻIH during 29–31 March 1993, ed. Daniel Grinberg and Paweł Szapiro (Warsaw: ŻIH, 1994), p. 181.

[133] See Michael C. Steinlauf, "Refleksje nad cieniem Holocaustu w Polsce powojennej," in *Holocaust z perspektywy półwiecza…*, pp. 85–99.

by the Białystok branch of the IPN.[134] In an attempt to mitigate the purport of the exhibition prepared by the IPN, Museum Director Ewa Wroczyńska took down the panel with 1941 photographs of Jews ordered by the Germans to dismantle the statues of Lenin and Stalin in front of the Branicki Palace in Białystok. Wroczyńska justified her decision with the specificity of the exhibition space (a former synagogue) and said: "The photo of the Jews removing the statue of Lenin might be regarded as their ridicule. And it might hurt some visitors to the synagogue." Hence, Wroczyńska took the victims' side, thinking that placing such photographs could be treated as irony and might be regarded as a presentation of the punishment meted out to the Jews for collaborating with the Soviets. In reply, Doctor Jan Jerzy Milewski, the head of the Public Education Office (*Biuro Edukacji Publicznej*) of the IPN branch in Białystok, cancelled the exhibition, commenting on his decision in the following way:

> I regret that the exhibition did not open, but it was not our fault. The exhibition was censored, perhaps due to noble causes, and we could not agree to that. We were surprised by the decision of Ms Wroczyńska, whose activity we hold in high regard. But in our opinion the most difficult truth is still the truth. One should not hide one's head in the sand or interpret these fragments of the exhibition in such a way. Without them the exhibition is incomplete. They depict the background of the events, which took place then, this is what happened and there were such stances. Indeed, in the context of the anti-Jewish incidents, the exhibition shows that the dedication of those who rescued Jews was even greater.[135]

These two statements constitute a sample of the language of the two antagonistic discursive formations. On the one hand is the voice that refers to the ethical and emphatic categories, similar to Gross's and Engelking's narrations, and on the other hand a voice, which uses the rhetoric of facts and the discourse on the rescuing of Jews by 'noble Poles'.

The said demons of the discourse on rescue assert their presence also in the individual historical narrations. I do not mean here only curious books, such as Ewa Kurek's *Poza granicą solidarności – stosunki polsko-żydowskie 1939–1945* [Beyond the solidarity border – Polish-Jewish relations 1939–1945][136] or her essay/report *Żydzi, Polacy, czy po prostu ludzie… 18 lat później* [Jews, Poles, or simply people… 18 years later],[137] where the author accuses Jews of ingratitude.

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[134] See *Kto ratuje jedno życie, ratuje cały świat… Pomoc ludności żydowskiej pod okupacją niemiecką w województwie białostockim. Informator wystawy*, ed. Cezary Kuklo, Anna Dyżewska, and Ewa Rogalewska (Białystok: IPN, 2003).

[135] Both remarks quoted after: Monika Żmijewska, "Ofiarność niepokazana," *Gazeta Wyborcza*, regional supplement *Gazeta Białystok*, 9 April 2004, p. 3.

[136] See Ewa Kurek, *Poza granicą solidarności – stosunki polsko-żydowskie 1939–1945* (Kielce: Wydawnictwo Wyższej Szkoły Umiejętności, 2006).

[137] Ewa Kurek, *Żydzi, Polacy, czy po prostu ludzie…18 lat później* (Lublin: Clio, 2010).

I am also referring to the 'serious' monographs published by public institutions. As Jan Grabowski rightly observed: "The topic of help is one of those under the most pressure exerted by the current policy, particularly the 'historical policy', promoted for years by the IPN."[138]

The Institute of National Remembrance has been implementing the research project "The index of Poles murdered or repressed for helping Jews during World War II" since 2006. Its effect was, for instance, Ewa Rączy's publication *Pomoc Polaków dla ludności żydowskiej na Rzeszowszczyźnie 1939–1945* [Polish help to Jews in the Rzeszów region 1939–1945],[139] the second volume of the series "Whoever saves one life…" The first part of the book presented numerous instances of help provided by Poles. The author took considered various forms of help: from showing the escape route to provision of food, 'Aryan' documents, and shelter in various hideouts. The monograph also contains documents and testimonies documenting various forms of help provided to Jews by the Rzeszów region inhabitants, and also an appendix with lists of names of the local Poles engaged in help efforts. Though relatively balanced in comparison to works as absurd as *Dam im imię na wieki (Iz 56,5). Polacy z okolic Treblinki ratujący Żydów* [I will give them an everlasting name (Isiah 56:5). Poles from the vicinity of Treblinka who rescued Jews] by Edward Kopówka and Father Paweł Rytel-Andrianik,[140] this book does exhibit all transgressions of this current. The hitch lies in the very idea of extracting and separating the issue of rescuing from the whole social context. Such an approach obscures the full picture where the Poles were as much a lifeline as a mortal danger to the fleeing Jews. Moreover, the individual instances of rescuing had various motivations, including strictly financial. The rescuers often became the executioners, for instance, Rączy lists Stanisław Puła as a person who sheltered Jews, but we know from elsewhere that it was probably Puła who later denounced them.[141]

A similar phenomenon occurs with regard to the figure of Jan Karski. Though highly complicated and full of contradictions, his person was reduced to the role of 'the man who wished to stop the Holocaust'[142] and it was appropriated

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[138] See Grabowski, *Judenjagd…*, p. 153.

[139] See Elżbieta Rączy, *Pomoc Polaków dla ludności żydowskiej na Rzeszowszczyźnie 1939–1945* (Rzeszów: IPN, 2008).

[140] See Edward Kopówka, Father Paweł Rytel-Andrianik, *Dam im imię na wieki (Iz 56,5). Polacy z okolic Treblinki ratujący Żydów* (Oxford–Treblinka: Wydawnictwo Sióstr Loretanek, 2011). This book, reviewed by Dariusz Libionka, was included in the Controversies section (*Zagłada Żydów. Studia i Materiały* 9 [2013]).

[141] Cf. Arnon Rubin, *Facts and Fictions about the Rescue of the Polish Jewry during the Holocaust* (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University Press, 2003), p. 216 and the appendix on p. 297; see also: Tomasz Frydel, "Konstrukcja pamięci o ratowaniu Żydów na polskiej wsi. Studium przypadku Radomyśla Wielkiego i powiatu mieleckiego," in *Zagłada Żydów na polskiej prowincji*, pp. 335–366.

[142] *Człowiek, który chciał zatrzymać Holocaust* – title of Jan Grzyb's 2005 documentary.

by the hero-making discourse, where it is used to boost 'national pride'. The culmination came in 2014, which on 6 December 2013 was declared the Year of Jan Karski by the Polish parliament. That year also saw the creation of the Garden of the Righteous in the Warsaw quarter of Muranów, where the stone and the tree commemorating Karski hold a prominent place. Karski Days were also organised in all parts of Poland, combined with the exhibition about Jan Karski, discussion panels, and film reviews.

But there is nothing clear or simple about Karski or, for instance, Irena Sendler or any other act of rescue. Jacek Leociak is undoubtedly right that "talking about help entails, no matter if we want it or not, talking about denunciations, blackmail, and manhunts – not only of Jews, but also of those who tried to rescue them. This paradox is unavoidable. The discourse on help has two sides: the bright one – a narration about heroism, devotion, and altruism; and the dark one – talking about the fear of being denounced by one's neighbours, blackmail, and meanness. These two sides, the bright and the dark ones, constitute an inseparable whole."[143] Failure to consider both of them deprives the rescuers' stance of actual heroism.

Evaluating publications using only the criterion of the publisher and whether they are devoted to rescuing might prove fallacious. An excellent example is Marta Cobel-Tokarska's superb work *Bezludna wyspa, nora, grób. Wojenne kryjówki Żydów w okupowanej Polsce* [An uninhabited island, a den, a grave. Wartime hideouts of Jews in occupied Poland], published by the IPN.[144] The strength of this book lies in the very idea for it. It so happened that no other Holocaust scholar had thought of describing Jewish hideouts as such. Until then they had fallen victim to the 'discourse on rescue' and were used to legitimise Polish the Righteous or became an element of narration devoted to other issues. *Bezludna wyspa, nora, grób* discusses a fundamental issue that appears in numerous sources and functions as something obvious among Holocaust scholars. This monograph problematises this obviousness, opening our eyes to the meanings, which have seemed unimportant. In a nutshell, the author constructs a 'phenomenology' of the Jewish hideout, which she puts in parenthesis and then examines from all possible sides. She looks at it from the outside, as an objective scholar, and also tries to comprehend the experience of that unusual space and read the meanings, which the survivors gave to their hideouts.

One might have minor reservations only regarding the method she adopted. Unfortunately, as every phenomenology this one also freezes the subject of the description and makes it static, but the author adopted this strategy intentionally. When Cobel-Tokarska discusses territoriality of the hideout, she

[143] See Leociak, *Ratowanie...*, p. 13.

[144] Marta Cobel-Tokarska, *Bezludna wyspa, nora, grób. Wojenne kryjówki Żydów w okupowanej Polsce* (Warsaw: IPN, 2012).

uses Sommer's definition, according to which it is a "geographical area secured from encroachment by personalisation (personal marking) and physical marking. Consequently, a territory is a constant space entirely independent of man, but not without an influence on his behaviour" (p. 119). But one may look at a hideout from a totally different perspective, for instance, when one uses the inspiration coming from Fredrik Barth's classic text *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries*[145] one has a dynamic border that does not mark out a 'constant space'. It defines the fluid, relational character between the inside and the outside, between those in hiding and the rescuers or witnesses who interacted with them in various ways.

Unknown Pages of the Holocaust in Warsaw

The extreme power of the 'peasant current' and Jan Tomasz Gross's books does not mean that during that time the historiography lost interest in large towns and cities and dealt exclusively with the Holocaust in the provinces. Concentrated on the main tendencies and selected works, I have not yet mentioned the books, which filled the acute gaps in the occupation-period history of Jews in Warsaw. Finally, I wish to discuss them briefly.

Six years before the publication of Jan Tomasz Gross's *Neighbours* we were involved with a discussion, which was very similar to that in 2000 and during the subsequent years. What I have in mind is the dispute over Michał Cichy's article "Polacy–Żydzi: Czarne karty powstania" [Poles-Jews: the dark pages of the Uprising] (1994)[146] published in *Gazeta Wyborcza*. Cichy established that the Warsaw insurgents killed approx. 60 Jews "in two mass murders". The main part of the text was devoted to one of them (the other one is the undocumented murder of 25 Jews on Długa Street, described in Bernard Mark's book)[147] – the execution of 14 or 15 Jews hiding in the ruins on Prosta Street conducted by members of 'Hal's' AK group on 11 September 1944. "Czarne karty powstania" hit the crux of the muddled Polish identity, for the author dared question one of the principal national myths[148] – the narration about the young, heroic, innocent, and pure insurgents, who fought against the great enemy (Germany) and were insidiously betrayed by the other one (Russians). The article caused fervent

[145] Fredrik Barth, "Grupy i granice etniczne," in *Badanie kultury. Elementy teorii antropologicznej. Kontynuacje*, selection and foreword by Marian Kempny, Ewa Nowicka (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 2004).

[146] Michał Cichy, "Polacy–Żydzi: Czarne karty powstania," *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 29 January 1994, p. 13.

[147] Bernard Mark, *Walka i zagłada warszawskiego getta* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo MON, 1959).

[148] I agree here with Michał Bilewicz, who wrote that that article hit the "*sanctum sanctorum* of the Polish national identity" (idem, "Wyjaśnianie Jedwabnego: antysemityzm i postrzeganie trudnej przeszłości," in *Antysemityzm w Polsce i na Ukrainie. Raport z badań*, ed. Ireneusz Krzemiński [Warsaw: Scholar, 2004], p. 251).

criticism,[149] and ten years later Cichy retracted his words and apologised to the Warsaw insurgents.[150] But Poles were for the first time forced to take a look at themselves in the new role. Most had an allergic reaction to that suggestion,[151] and from this point of view "Czarne karty powstania," in Joanna Tokarska-Bakir's opinion, were a 'premature' publication, which also revealed the conservative character of some of the Polish historians.[152] A return to those topics required some time.

That was done in 2009 by Barbara Engelking and Dariusz Libionka in their book *Żydzi w powstańczej Warszawie* [Jews in Warsaw during the Uprising].[153] Using all available sources, both Polish and Jewish ones (p. 15), and standing on "the ground of facts" (p. 98), the authors describe, somewhat *sine ira et studio*, various aspects of the Polish-Jewish relations during the Uprising, using the language of classic historiography. The publication is divided into five parts, which discuss: the situation of Jews in Warsaw after the liquidation of the ghetto,

[149] The AK veteran milieus protested the loudest. Similarly to the debate about *Neighbours*, an important role in the discussion was played by historians, by the way sometimes the same ones (for instance, Tomasz Strzembosz), and one could also hear clearly xenophobic and anti-Semitic voices, known from the later lucubration about Gross's findings. Cichy was criticised for writing to prove his thesis at any cost and lack of professionalism. See, for instance, Leszek Żebrowski, *Paszkwil Wyborczej. Michnik i Cichy o Powstaniu Warszawskim* (Warsaw: Burchard Edition, 1995). I write more on the debate about Cichy's article in "Die Intensivierung der Holocaust-Diskussion. Der Streit um „Die dunklen Seiten des Afstands" von Michał Cichy," in *Der Holocaust in der polnischen Erinnerungskultur*, ed. Anna Wolff-Pawęska, Piotr Forecki (Frankfurt am Main, Peter Lang, 2012).

[150] Cichy said: "I no longer think that focusing on the dark sides of life led to anything good, and neither did lulling with only the most beautiful aspects. Sins should not be passed in silence; they should be regretted but pointing them out should not be a source of satisfaction. This is why years later I apologise to all those whom I hurt. I wish to apologise to the participants of the Warsaw Uprising (idem, "Przepraszam powstańców," *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 23 December 2006, p. 16).

[151] In my opinion, this opposition was very aptly commented by Chichy himself, who juxtaposed the reactions to his article with the reactions to Gross's *Neighbours*: "I think that in the case of Jedwabne it was much easier, because we, Poles, are more inclined to accept that some people from a small town, totally unlike us, might have committed an atrocity – set their Jewish neighbours on fire in a barn. We can feel that we have nothing in common with them, think that they were totally unlike us, and it is easier for us to accept that than a vision that the heroic insurgents fighting with white-red armbands on their sleeves might have committed crimes and even murders" ("Z Michałem Cichym rozmawia Stanisław Tekieli," *Midrasz* 3 [2007]: 21).

[152] "A historian, the same as every other scholar, wishes more than anything else to be taken 'seriously'. In Poland, 'serious' means 'uncontroversial'. An uncontroversial Polish historian condescends to those who are in a hurry," wrote Tokarska-Bakir (eadem, *Rzeczy mgliste. Eseje i studia* [Sejny: Pogranicze, 2004], p. 14).

[153] Barbara Engelking, Dariusz Libionka, *Żydzi w powstańczej Warszawie* (Warsaw: Stowarzyszenie Centrum Badań nad Zagładą Żydów, 2009).

the issue of the military participation of Jews in the Warsaw Uprising, anti-Jewish incidents, the fate of the Jewish civilians, and the issue of 'Robinsons', that is, the Jews hiding in the ruins of Warsaw after the uprising.

Engelking and Libionka avoid definite judgements, stressing that, for instance, "the treatment of Jews volunteering to the detachments depended on many circumstances. They sometimes received a warm and open welcome, whereas at other times their appearance caused certain problems" (p. 82). The authors list the following negative stances of the insurgents towards the Jews: "regarding the Jews as potential spies and former collaborators, suspicion or even hostility towards the Jewish brothers-in-arms, acts of banditry, and murders" (p. 160). In their opinion, the largest number of such incidents took place in late September in the north-western part of the city centre (Śródmieście quarter) (p. 181). It was there on the night of 11–12 September at Prosta Street 4 and Twarda Street 30 (p. 182) that 'Hal's' soldiers murdered about a dozen Jews as described by Michał Cichy. Confirmed by numerous sources, that event undoubtedly did take place. "The motivation of the perpetrators of the massacres on Prosta and Twarda streets was undoubtedly predatory" (p. 188). But Engelking and Libionka question Bernard Mark's statement about the massacre on Długa Street. According to the authors, the said event would have taken place in the centre of the insurgent Warsaw, so it could not be kept a secret later. Besides, the above statement finds no confirmation in other sources (p. 191).

Dariusz Libionka is also the co-author of the book *Bohaterowie, hochsztaplerzy, opisywacze. Wokół Żydowskiego Związku Wojskowego* [Heroes, imposters, storytellers. The Jewish Military Union],[154] written in cooperation with Israeli scholar Laurence Weinbaum. In terms of the language used and the assumptions adopted, this publication is very similar to *Żydzi w powstańczej Warszawie*. The authors' main intention was to "make a critical analysis of the source material" (p. 17), establish the basic facts, and isolate them from the knowledge about the uprising in the ghetto, which "constitutes a medley of facts, fiction, and fantasy" (p. 10). That was not easy because most ŻZW fighters, including the entire command, perished during the uprising in the ghetto, while after the war the memory about the uprising was monopolised by the Jewish Fighting Organisation (*Żydowska Organizacja Bojowa*, ŻOB), while the activity of the Union was constantly ignored and their members were treated as 'fascists'. Consequently, it occurred that "there was no key to solve all the mysteries of the functioning of the revisionists' fighting organisation in the Warsaw ghetto" (p. 587). But what the authors undoubtedly succeeded in the "Deconstruction" part of their book was predominantly their refutation of commonplace opinions and outright lies in 'apocryphal texts', while in the second part (in line with its title), they

[154] Dariusz Libionka, Laurence Weinbaum, *Bohaterowie, hochsztaplerzy, opisywacze. Wokół Żydowskiego Związku Wojskowego* (Warsaw: Stowarzyszenie Centrum Badań nad Zagładą Żydów, 2011).

use that as a basis for reconstructing the "actual history of the revisionists' fighting organisation" (p. 19). Libionka and Weinbaum show that a large part of the history of the ŻZW was manipulated after the war, particularly by Henryk Iwański and Tadeusz Bednarczyk and their companions from the 'fellowship of the ring', who in that way wished to obtain numerous financial profits and gain prestige. They were the ones who invented the figure of Mieczysław Apfelbaum, who in 2004 became the patron of a Warsaw square. But the actual leaders of the ŻWZ were Leon Rodal and Paweł Frenkl. Using the available materials, also those previously unknown, the authors describe the activity of the revisionists in Vilna and then in Warsaw. They also use the broad context of the preparation of the uprising in the ghetto, the relations between the ŻOB and ŻZW, contacts with the Polish underground, incidents during the uprising, and the later fate of the organisation members. Consequently, the monograph is an example of a traditional, but very solid historical work, important both for the Polish discourse and the English and Hebrew ones (the book was published in the USA and the Israeli edition is forthcoming).

Bohaterowie, hochsztaplerzy, opisywacze can be read also as a treatise about the inevitable marriage of history and power, as exemplified by the activity of the former Israeli minister of defence and foreign affairs, Moshe Arens, who made the ŻZW history a weapon against the Left. This monograph shows "the dominance of the ideological and political themes in the treatment of the subject matter of the uprising and the ŻZW" (p. 586) and attempts to cast off that yoke, which obviously cannot be fully achieved, because – as Libionka and Weinbaum write – "[t]he politicisation of history is certainly a fact" (p. 13), as it is always at the service of the those in power (or the opposition).

I should also mention Agnieszka Haska's slightly earlier book *„Jestem Żydem, chcę wejść". Hotel Polski w Warszawie, 1943* ["I am a Jew, I want to enter." The Hotel Polski in Warsaw, 1943].[155] It discusses the episode after the liquidation of the Warsaw ghetto, called in literature 'the Hotel Polski Affair'. Only about 300 of the 2,500 people who went through the Hotel Polski survived. Before Haska's book, that history was presented predominantly as a trap set by the Germans. But the author shows that there are a lot more shades to that issue and that it is abundant in details, which have not been considered (foreign Jews were interned throughout the General Government, the Germans killed the Jews only after verifying their documents and after the prolonged lack of reaction on the part of the South American states, which purportedly had issued those documents), though it is undoubtedly an unprecedented instance of document trade on such a large scale.

None of these three books bring a revolution in the sphere of language, but they prove that a number of issues, even those regarding the capital city, are still

[155] See Agnieszka Haska, *„Jestem Żydem, chcę wejść". Hotel Polski w Warszawie, 1943* (Warsaw: Centrum Badań nad Zagładą Żydów and Wydawnictwo IFiS PAN, 2006).

waiting to be researched. The basic issues connected with the Łódź ghetto remain unclear, and so is the evaluation, if it is possible at all, of Chaim Rumkowski, whose figure is under pressure exerted by various discourses, analysed by, for instance, Monika Polit in her interdisciplinary and relatively controversial[156] work entitled *„Moja żydowska dusza nie obawia się dnia sądu". Mordechaj Chaim Rumkowski. Prawda i zmyślenie* ["My Jewish soul does not fear Judgement Day." Mordechaj Chaim Rumkowski. Truth and fiction].[157] Similarly controversial is the reaction of the underground and the Polish government in exile towards the Holocaust. It was described by Adam Puławski in his rather balanced, though very traditional and methodologically conservative, monograph *W obliczu Zagłady* [in the face of the Holocaust],[158] where the author tried to reconcile those who think that the government intentionally concealed the information about the extermination with those who are of an opinion that the Polish underground and the government "did everything that was possible" (p. 10). Thus, a lot remains to be done/written.

Instead of the Conclusion

Insufficient time has passed to assess the influence of the publications mentioned in this sketch on the Polish awareness. It also remains unknown to what extent they spread beyond the group of specialists on this topic and managed to become rooted in the society or what role they shall play in education. So instead of a summing up, I wish to end my reflections with a reference to one more, monumental work entitled *Następstwa zagłady Żydów. Polska 1944–2010* [Holocaust consequences. Poland 1944–2010].[159]

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[156] See, for instance, Andrea Löw and Agnieszka Żółkiewska's criticism of this book and the author's response in *Zagłada Żydów* 9 (2013).

[157] See Monika Polit, *„Moja żydowska dusza nie obawia się dnia sądu". Mordechaj Chaim Rumkowski. Prawda i zmyślenie* (Warsaw: Stowarzyszenie Centrum Badań nad Zagładą Żydów, 2012).

[158] See Adam Puławski, *W obliczu Zagłady. Rząd RP na uchodźstwie, Delegatura Rządu RP na Kraj, ZWZ-AK wobec deportacji Żydów do obozów zagłady (1941–1942)* (Lublin: IPN, 2009). In the introduction, the author stresses that his objective was to "establish those 'simple facts' of the time and manner in which the Union of Armed Combat-Home Army, the Office of the Delegate, and the Polish government obtained information about the massacres of the Jewish population" (pp. 11–12), and states, for instance, that "the periodisation of the Holocaust is commonly known" (p. 12), completely ignoring the theoretical reflection.

[159] *Następstwa zagłady Żydów. Polska 1944–2010*, ed. Feliks Tych and Monika Adamczyk-Garbowska (Lublin: ŻIH and Wydawnictwo UMCS, 2012). This volume, more than a thousand pages long, was also included in the Vad Vashem's publication agenda for the year 2014. The English language version shall bear the title *Jewish Presence in Absence. The Aftermath of the Holocaust in Poland, 1944–2010*. The information after the publishing house's catalogue, http://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/about/institute/pdf/publications2014.pdf, access 12 August 2014.

This book is an attempt to answer the question: How did the Holocaust affect "the condition of the handful […] of the Polish Jews who survived and the condition of the Polish-Jewish relations"? (p. 7). Nearly thirty specialists, scholars from various centers, representing a wide spectrum of disciplines, tackled the issue of the Holocaust consequences signalled in the title, initially during 2007–2009 at seminars at the Jewish Historical Institute and later in the privacy of their own studies. The second main objective of this publication is what the editors call "the necessity to broaden the narration about the Holocaust" (p. 10). So this volume constitutes an attempt to remove the impervious boundary of the end of the war or the Nuremberg Trials, which obstruct the issue. This is done, for instance, by stressing the long-term, unabated presence of the Holocaust and its continued non-prescription. This clearly proves that this publication is very important already on the level of its brave if not bravura concept.

The whole was divided into four parts. The first two, that is, 'Post-War Landscape' and 'Attempts to Rebuild the Jewish Life' have a historical character and describe the post-war remains of the Jewish world. The next two – 'Memory and Forgetting' and 'Here and Now' – take up complicated issues of the memory of Jews, both the collective one and that preserved in material artefacts, but the authors end their diagnosis of the Polish-Jewish relations on the threshold of the new millennium. The readers receive a valuable volume, which is an important and at the same time pioneering compendium on the topic of direct and far-reaching consequences of the Holocaust for the two communities – the Jewish and the Polish one. Though there are plenty of trouble spots, the individual authors have a serious and balanced-out approach to issues such as the role of Jews in the communist system, Polish instances of anti-Semitism and murders of Jews, the stance of the Catholic Church, or the issue of the appropriation of the Jewish property.

Without *Następstwa zagłady Żydów 1944–2010* and many other books mentioned in this sketch, it is impossible to understand the significance of the Holocaust, and also ourselves and the things that are happening around us, for instance, the recent dispute over Władysław Pasikowski's *Aftermath*, the discussion about the idea to erect the Monument of the Righteous near the POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews, or the popular 'ordinary' anti-Semitism on Polish Internet forums and in the public sphere. For historiography makes sense as long as it does not limit itself to its own reflections or antiquarianism. Instead, as Friedrich Nietzsche put it, it should play the role of "the services, which history can carry out for living, […], but always only for the purpose of living and, in addition, under the command and the highest guidance of this life."

Translated by *Anna Brzostowska*

Abstract
The author discusses the most important phenomena in Polish historiography and the selected publications about the Holocaust released during 2003–2013. Similarly to 'narrativists', Krupa is interested in the shape, the language, the storytelling manner, and the metaphors used.

Having indicated the most important scholarly centres and publications of sources, the author concentrates on the camp monographs, syntheses and regional studies produced during that period, and then concludes that most of them are written in a very traditional way.

The year 2000, when [the Polish edition] of Jan Tomasz Gross's book *Neighbours* was released, proved to be a breakthrough year for [Polish] historiography. Before analysing the far-reaching consequences of this publication, Krupa briefly discusses the polemics surrounding the other books by that author. On the one hand, they led to the birth of the historiographical 'shadow cabinet' – a mobilisation of the milieu concentrated mostly around the IPN and directed at disparaging the significance of Gross's publications. On the other hand, the most important consequence of Gross's critical thinking about the Polish stances was the birth of the 'peasant trend' in [Polish] historiography. The books by Andrzej Żbikowski, Barbara Engelking, Jan Grabowski, as well as the collective works such as *Prowincja noc* and *Zarys krajobrazu* described, in a committed and interdisciplinary way, the shameful stances of the rural community – the denunciations, rapes, and even murders of Jews, with Tadeusz Markiel's shocking testimony holding a special place among these publications. The works that acclaim the Polish stances and stress the Polish engagement in the rescuing of Jews (particularly those published within the framework of the IPN project „INDEX – In memory of Poles murdered or prosecuted by the Nazis because of their assistance to Jews") are to constitute a counteroffer to the critical "peasant trend" within the framework of the "shadow cabinet."

At the end of the article Krupa discusses the books that regard the unknown pages of the Holocaust history in Warsaw written by Agnieszka Haska, Barbara Engelking, Dariusz Libionka, or Libionka's collaboration with Laurence Weinbaum, which are not revolutionary in the sphere of language but nonetheless broaden the knowledge on the Holocaust. The author ends his discussion with a reference to the monumental work *Jewish Presence in Absence. The Aftermath of the Holocaust in Poland, 1944–2010*, without which, just as without reflecting on the consequences of the Holocaust in general, it is impossible to understand Poles and the situation in Poland.

Key words
Holocaust, Polish historiography, criticism, methodology of history, literature and history