

HAVI DREIFUSS

*CHANGING PERSPECTIVES ON POLISH-JEWISH RELATIONS
DURING THE HOLOCAUST*

Published in *Search and Research — Lectures and Papers*:

- Dan Bar-On and Julia Chaitin, *Parenthood and the Holocaust*
Anita Shapira, *Hannah Arendt and Haim Gouri — Two Perceptions of the Eichmann Trial* (Hebrew)
- Michael Wildt, *Generation of the Unbound — The Leadership Corps of the Reich Security Main Office*
- Nicolas Berg, *The Invention of “Functionalism” — Joseph Wulf, Martin Broszat, and the Institute for Contemporary History (Munich) in the 1960s*
- Amos Goldberg, *Holocaust Diaries As “Life Stories”*
- Michal Unger, *Reassessment of the Image of Mordechai Chaim Rumkowski*
- Guy Miron, Jacob Borut, Rivka Elkin, *Aspects of Jewish Welfare in Nazi Germany*
- Ilaria Pavan, *Persecution, Indifference, and Amnesia: The Restoration of Jewish Rights in Postwar Italy*
- Yvonne Kozlovsky Golan, *The Shaping of the Holocaust Visual Image by the Nuremberg Trials: The Impact of the Movie “Nazi Concentration Camps”*
- Julija Šukys, *“And I Burned with Shame:” The Testimony of Ona Šimaitė, Righteous Among the Nations*
- Dan Michman, *The Jewish Ghettos During the Shoah: How and Why Did They Emerge?* (Hebrew)
- Jeannine (Levana) Frenk, *Righteous Among the Nations in France and Belgium: A Silent Resistance*
- Jan Grabowski, *Rescue for Money: Paid Helpers in Poland, 1939–1945*
- Joanna Beata Michlic, *Jewish Children in Nazi-Occupied Poland: Survival and Polish-Jewish Relations During the Holocaust as Reflected in Early Postwar Recollections*
- Roni Stauber, *Laying the Foundations for Holocaust Research: The Impact of the Historian Philip Friedman*
- Ada Schein, *Health in Temporary Conditions: Health-care Services for Holocaust Survivors in Austria, 1945–1953*
- Sabine Horn, *“...A Justification to the World and Israel?”: Holocaust Discourses in German TV*

HAVI DREIFUSS

CHANGING PERSPECTIVES ON POLISH-JEWISH
RELATIONS DURING THE HOLOCAUST



Yad Vashem ★ Jerusalem 2012 ★

Editorial Board: Bella Gutterman
Dan Michman
Avner Shalev

Series Editor: Dan Michman
Managing Editor: Daniella Zaidman-Mauer
Cover Design: Deborah Weiss

This article is based on a lecture that was presented at the international conference **Holocaust and Justice—Post-War Trials and the Holocaust: Representation, Awareness and Historiography** that took place at Yad Vashem in December 2006

The publication and the conference on which it is based were made possible through the generous support of **The Gertner Center for International Conferences** endowed by the late **Danek D. and Jadzia B. Gernter** and **The Gutwirth Family Fund**

© Yad Vashem 2012
P.O.B. 3477 Jerusalem 91034
e-mail: publications.marketing@yadvashem.org.il

ISBN 978-965-308-422-3

Typesetting: Judith Sternberg

Printed in Israel 2012
by Printiv, Jerusalem

The Yad Vashem International Institute for Holocaust Research was established in 1993, as an autonomous academic unit to encourage and expand research in the various disciplines of Holocaust studies and to promote post-doctoral and advanced research projects. The Institute is active in developing and coordinating international research among individuals as well as among research institutions that are planning or undertaking scholarly projects aimed at a broad audience. Furthermore, it supports young researchers as well as established Holocaust scholars within Israel and abroad through fellowships, research prizes, and scholarly seminars; organizes study days and conferences; and publishes studies, conference proceedings, documentation and monographs. The activities of the Institute are directed by the Head of the Institute and the Chief Historian along with a board composed of scholars and public figures. The Institute is also advised by an Academic Committee composed of representatives from all Israeli universities and research institutes involved in the field of Holocaust research.

The **Search and Research** series was established in order to publish lectures, papers, research reports, and symposia of special interest as well as fresh and original approaches resulting from research carried out by scholars within the framework of the Institute. Through the publication of these research results in an easily accessible form, the Institute hopes to acquaint the public at large with the constant progress that is being made in the various aspects of Holocaust studies.

HAVI DREIFUSS is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Jewish History at Tel Aviv University (Israel) and the director of the Center for Research on the Holocaust in Poland at the International Institute for Holocaust Research at Yad Vashem. She received her Ph.D. from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem in 2005. Between 2006 and 2009, she was a Mandel Post-Doctoral Fellow at Scholion, The Center for Interdisciplinary Jewish Studies (Hebrew University of Jerusalem) and, during the summer of 2009, a Phyllis Greenberg and Richard D. Heideman Fellow at the Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. Dreifuss is currently working on a research project, *More Than Death and Battle: Daily Life in the Last Months of the Warsaw Ghetto*, which is supported by the Israel Science Foundation. In it she intends to depict the lives of the masses who continued to live for months in the Warsaw ghetto during and following the “Great Deportation” of 1942, and to address the different ways in which Jewish society as a group and the individuals within it reacted to the dramatic changes imposed upon them.

Dreifuss’s research interests include the history and culture of Polish Jewry in the twentieth century and Holocaust studies. Her research deals with various aspects of everyday life during the Holocaust, such as the relationship between Jews and Poles, religious life in light of the Holocaust, Jewish existence in the face of the extermination, and so on. In her book *“We Polish Jews”? The Relations Between Jews and Poles During the Holocaust — The Jewish Perspective* (Hebrew) (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2009), she portrays the complex and changing image that Polish Jews have of their Polish surroundings. Based on numerous wartime accounts, Dreifuss points out the major tendencies and changes in this image during the period of the Holocaust. Dreifuss has written a number of articles and reviews for various publications in Israel and abroad. Among them are: “‘Hell Has Come to Earth’: An Anonymous Woman’s Diary from the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising” (*Yad Vashem Studies*); “‘At the Present Time, Jewish Warsaw Is Like a Cemetery’: Life in the Warsaw Ghetto during the Great Deportation” (in *Three Generations of Historians*, 2006); “‘We Want to Believe in a Different Poland’: Polish-Jewish Relationship in the Jewish Underground Press in Warsaw” (*Zagłada Żydów*, 2005, Polish); “Orthodox Historiography and the Holocaust: Repercussions in the Academic World” (*Revue d’histoire de la Shoah*, 2008, French); “‘As a Sheep with No Shepherd’? The Leadership Role of the Rabbinate in Eastern Europe During the Holocaust” (*Zikaron Basefer*, 2008, Hebrew); “‘I Live in a Nightmare’: Nightmares and Dreams During the Holocaust” (2012, Hebrew).

CHANGING PERSPECTIVES ON
POLISH–JEWISH RELATIONS DURING THE HOLOCAUST

Table of Contents

Introduction	9
Part 1: Jewish–Polish Relations in the Historiography	11
The Onset of Research About the Rescue of and the Assault Against the Jews	11
Research in Poland and Elsewhere During the “Iron Curtain” Period	14
The Watershed Years and Current Historiography	19
Part 2: Some Remarks About Secret Cities	32
Numerical and Statistical Estimates	35
Use of Sources	55
Historical Reality	61
Part 3: Research on the Rescue of and Harm Inflicted on Jews During the Holocaust A	
Forward-Looking View	70
Even-handed Treatment of the “Help and Harm” Issue	72
Refraining from Antithetical Definitions	75
The Definition of Righteous Among the Nations and Its Limits in Historical Research	77
Examining Jewish–Polish Relations in Their Historical Context	82
Reflections on Future Research—Selected Case Studies	83
Irena Sendler, Righteous Among the Nations	89
Summary and Conclusion	95
Epilogue	98

Introduction¹

In recent years there has been a torrent of studies about Jewish–Polish relations during the Holocaust. These have emanated mainly from Poland, but have also included work done in Israel and the world over. Some are the products of comprehensive, thorough research; others suffer from sundry methodological problems; and still others are polemics per se. One focus of the research concentrates on the assistance extended to Jews during the war, while another is concerned primarily with attacks against Jews and the persecution of Jews by the Poles in their surroundings. Notwithstanding the many and diverse topics addressed in the research about Jewish–Polish relations in the Holocaust, quite a few studies attempt to estimate, directly or indirectly, the extent of aid that Poles offered to Jews and to draw inferences from this about the comportment of Polish society during the war.

The attention that the charged topic of Polish–Jewish relations during the Holocaust has attracted raises many important questions about Jewish society during the Holocaust and the actions of Jewish individuals and groups in the face of the extermination. The purpose of this publication is to expose educated readers who may not be well versed in the latest

1 Ephraim Eitam, Daphna Kanner-Cohen, Omer Lev, Dr. Joanna Michlic, Prof. Dan Michman, Dr. Iael Nidam-Orvieto, Dr. Anat Plocker, and Dr. David Silberklang helped me to construct this article, and I thank them all for their sound advice. My research assistant, Nir Itzik, assisted in the final stages of preparing this publication, and his devoted and precise work was most helpful. I am also indebted to the anonymous readers of the manuscript, who offered their comments and assistance. The final contents and presentation, however, reflect my own perceptions and views.

relevant literature to this central issue by presenting past and present research literature, highlighting several common limitations and failures exhibited in quantitative studies on the topic, and proposing new lines of inquiry into the question of Jewish–Polish relations during the Holocaust. In this way the reader can evaluate the importance of the existing studies and their contribution to the topical discussion of these pregnant and, at times, painful questions.

This publication is composed of three parts, each addressing a different aspect of research on Jewish–Polish relations during the Holocaust. Part 1 is a short historiographic review of this fascinating field and notes the many changes that have transpired within it over the years. Amidst the detailed presentation of studies written in Israel, Poland, and elsewhere, it attempts to identify the main trends that have surfaced in the past and present research literature.

Part 2 points out some dangers and blunders that exist in several innovative works that purport to estimate the extent of relief that Jews received from their Polish neighbors during the war. By means of a painstaking analysis of most questionable calculations that have appeared in print in recent years, several underlying principles of statistical processing in historical research generally and Holocaust research specifically are noted.

Part 3 attempts to set guidelines for future research in this important area of knowledge. I wish to challenge the acceptance of several main definitions and insights that have worked their way into the academic debate with regard to both the assistance and harm rendered to Jews on the part of Poles during the war. In so doing, I also try to revisit several important test cases.

It is my fervent hope that the historiographic review, methodological analysis, and discussion of concepts and definitions that follow will contribute to this lively debate on Jewish–Polish relations during the Holocaust.

Part 1

Jewish–Polish Relations in the Historiography²

The Onset of Research About the Rescue of and the Assault Against the Jews

In the second half of 1943, while still in hiding on the “Aryan” side of Warsaw, Emmanuel Ringelblum, the renowned public activist and historian, wrote his impressive work “Relations between Poles and Jews in the Second World War” (*Stosunki polsko-żydowskie w czasie drugiej wojny światowej*). He began his opus with the following remarks:

When a *Sofer*—[Jewish] scribe—sets out to copy the Torah (the Pentateuch), he must, according to religious law, take a ritual bath in order to purify himself of all uncleanness, and impurity. This scribe takes up his pen with a trembling heart, because the smallest mistake in transcription means the destruction of the whole work. It is with this feeling of fearfulness that I have begun this work on the above title...

I am a historian... It is my wish to write objectively *sine ira et studio* [without anger and without bias], on the problem of Polish–Jewish relations during the present war. In times so tragic for my people, however, it is no easy task to rise above passion and maintain cool objectivity...

I am writing this while this murderous era is still going on and the fate of the remaining European Jews is still unknown. The material on which this work is based is as

2 The historiographic review in this part is based, among other sources, on a lecture entitled “Rescue of Jews in Poland during the Holocaust: Old and New Historiographic Trends,” which I delivered at the international conference “Between Coexistence and Divorce: 25 Years of Research on the History and Culture of Polish Jewry and Polish–Jewish Relations,” held at The Hebrew University of Jerusalem in 2009.

yet too fresh, too unripe, to permit objective judgment by a historian. Much official information, press material and the like, which will be needed to supplement this work after the war is still lacking.³

Indeed, even during the war many Jews already asked themselves what the Polish population thought about their persecution;⁴ Ringelblum's writings merely mark the beginning of research attention to this complex issue. In his impressive composition—somewhere between a source and a research work—Ringelblum assessed the essence of relations between Jews and Poles during the Holocaust and surveyed the positive and negative reactions Jews received from their surroundings. He attempted to do more than merely describe the events—an important goal in itself; he aspired to get to the root of much of Polish society's indifference, as he regarded it, toward the torments of the Jews, and to probe real manifestations of help and harm to Jews. Ringelblum tried to parse the map of Polish society into social, economic, and political strata; went to lengths to note the ideological sources from which the social strata that did help the Jews drew; and even strove to identify the soil on which the rampant attacks on Jews had grown. The Polish intelligentsia, working class, and peasantry, he said, were among the strata that helped the beleaguered Jews, whereas most of the Right, the clergy, and the Polish government-in-exile were apathetic to their fate, or even participated in attacking them.⁵

The importance of Ringelblum's essay about relations between Jews and Poles during the Holocaust is unchallenged. It must be emphasized, however, that this is primary research only. Furthermore, the special circumstances under which it was

3 Emmanuel Ringelblum, *Polish-Jewish Relations during the Second World War* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1974), pp. 1–3.

4 For selected examples, see Havi Dreifuss (Ben Sasson), *“Are We Polish Jews?” Relations between Jews and Poles during the Holocaust from the Jewish Perspective* (Hebrew) (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2010).

5 Ringelblum, *Polish-Jewish Relations*. Remarks of this nature appear throughout the work, but stand out particularly on pp. 199–225.

written—by an author in hiding in the middle of the war—caused many methodological problems that underscore the limitations of this work in terms of its sources, its breadth, and the continuity of the events described. For example, Ringelblum, who spent various stints in the ghetto, in a camp, and in hiding, could not possibly gather sources systematically and, of course, could not even examine the historical veracity of such reports that came into his possession. Consequently, some of his conclusions about the parts of Polish society that were helping Jews apparently were based on his ideological positions and personal wartime experiences, as opposed to balanced historical analysis.

Subsequent research has shown that, while the Polish intelligentsia was relatively generous in helping the Jews, the notion that the Polish working population and the peasantry also sided with the Jews is historically unfounded.⁶ Furthermore, most of Ringelblum’s work dealt with Warsaw and did not relate in depth to other parts of occupied Poland. Beyond the many aspects of life in occupied Warsaw that have come to light since the war, today we realize the importance of the relations between Jews and Poles in the outlying areas as well, where most of Polish Jewry actually lived and died.⁷ In this context, too, it must be emphasized that Ringelblum’s research came to a premature end when he was murdered in March 1944. Obviously his writings could make no reference to the changes that took place in Jewish–Polish relations as the war wound down. For example, he could not have addressed himself to the effect that the tension between the Ukrainian and Polish populations in eastern Poland on the verge of the Soviet occupation would have on Jewish–Polish relations, or on the relations that evolved

6 Teresa Prekerowa, “Who Helped Jews during the Holocaust in Poland?” *Acta Poloniae Historica*, 76 (1997), pp. 153–170.

7 From the beginning of the war until the Germans murdered them, most Polish Jews lived outside the places that have received, and continue to receive, lavish attention from researchers and the public, e.g., the large cities of Warsaw, Łódź, Lwów, and Minsk. For the most part, they lived in small localities—towns, *shtetls*, and villages. While the number of Jews in each place might have been relatively few, the phenomenon in general is definitely of major importance.

among these groups in the course of the summer 1944 Polish Warsaw Uprising. Thus, despite Ringelblum's fundamental contribution to the discussion of Jewish–Polish relations during the Holocaust, his writings remain limited in many ways.

***Research in Poland and Elsewhere During
the “Iron Curtain” Period***

Ringelblum considered his research on Jewish–Polish relations during the Holocaust an initial work and even expressed hope and confidence that the matter would be given profound, thorough, and comprehensive treatment after the war.⁸ Indeed, his call for the study of this topic reverberated in the historical research that resumed in Poland even before the fighting subsided. For example, the Central Committee of Polish Jews, established in Lublin in late 1944, began its activities by issuing instructions for taking testimony from Jewish survivors, including several questions about relations with Poles during the war.⁹ It comes as no surprise, therefore, that the first small-scale publications of the Jewish Historical Committees—which were first established in order to gather evidence against German criminals and which led eventually to the renewal of research at the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw— included initial references to this matter.¹⁰

8 Ringelblum, *Polish-Jewish Relations*, pp. 1–9, 246.

9 Centralny Komitet Żydów Polskich, *Instrukcje dla zbierania materiałów historycznych z okresu okupacji niemieckiej* (Łódź: Centralny Komitet Żydów Polskich, 1945), pp. 13, 20–21.

10 Szymon Datner, *Walka i zagłada białostockiego getta* (Łódź: Centralny Komitet Żydów Polskich, 1946), pp. 13, 17, 22–23; Józef Kermisz, *Powstanie w getcie warszawskim (19 kwietnia–16 maja 1943)* (Łódź: Centralny Komitet Żydów Polskich, 1946), pp. 47–56. On the patterns of writing that emerged at this time and their connection with Jewish traditions regarding the documentation of disasters and devastations, see Laura Jockusch, “Chroniclers of Catastrophe: History Writing as a Jewish Response to Persecution Before and After the Holocaust,” in David Bankier and Dan Michman, eds., *Holocaust Historiography in Context: Emergence, Challenges, Polemics and Achievements* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2008), pp. 135–166. On the general activities of the Historical Committees, see Natalia Aleksiu, “The Central Jewish Historical Commissions in Poland, 1944–1947,” *Polin*, 20 (2008), pp. 74–97.

Although these works include accounts of Polish attacks on Jews along with descriptions of assistance, within a few years Polish researchers—Jewish and Catholic alike—devoted expanded attention to the role of Poles in rescuing Jews during the Holocaust. Most of those whose writings related to various aspects of such assistance had some personal connection to the topic: Many of the Polish Catholic writers had been active during the war in helping Jews and subsequently were even named Righteous Among the Nations. Many of their Jewish comrades in these endeavors were Polish Jews who had managed to elude the Nazi occupier—often due to help from Polish friends.

Naturally, however, these writers emphasize different aspects of the assistance that Polish society extended to Jews during the war, and their writings seem influenced mainly by their personal wartime experiences. For example, Władysław Bartoszewski, Righteous Among the Nations and later an important Polish diplomat, helped Jewish friends during the war and was a prominent activist in Żegota.¹¹ Bartoszewski published several collections of documents and testimonies about Poles who helped persecuted Jews in both private and organized capacities.¹² In contrast, Michał Borwicz, who had fled from the Janowska camp in Lwów with the assistance of Żegota, approached this topic differently. His three-volume survey of research, dedicated to

11 Żegota, as the Council for Assistance to Jews (Rada Pomocy Żydom) was known, was an underground organization that attempted to help Jews in occupied Poland from December 1942 onwards. Żegota, which supported thousands of Jews in hiding, was unique in that it featured Jewish–Polish collaboration and even received support from the Polish government-in-exile.

12 Władysław Bartoszewski and Zofia Lewinówna, *Ten jest z ojczyzny mojej: Polacy z pomocą Żydom, 1939–1945* (Kraków: Znak, 1966); Władysław Bartoszewski, *Righteous among Nations: How Poles Helped the Jews, 1939–1945* (London: Earls Court, 1969). Bartoszewski's writings are especially important because they were reprinted several times during Poland's communist years. Due to the political realities and the restrictions that had been imposed on historical writing, Polish writers had little to say about antisemitism and the Holocaust as a unique act of persecution by the Nazi occupier. As a result, Bartoszewski's writing, which dealt with the rescue of Jews by Poles during the Holocaust, became very prominent and did much to shape the public discourse on the topic.

the experience of Jews living under assumed names, addressed not only the assistance that he had received from Polish friends but also—and perhaps mainly—the challenges and dangers that Jews who fled from the Nazi occupier encountered in Polish society.¹³

The different emphases that typified the writings of Polish Jews and Polish Catholics about this charged topic indicate that two separate and parallel narratives had emerged within a few years of the end of the war: one in Poland; the other in Israel and the West. The matters that engaged the researchers in Poland resembled those that occupied Bartoszewski, as mentioned above. Thus, these scholars focused mainly on the study of the generous assistance that the Polish population had given the Jews during the Holocaust. Polish citizens who helped Jews—those subsequently termed Righteous Among the Nations,¹⁴ as well as *Żegota*—were praised in dozens of studies, monographs, and collections that commemorated their feats. The role of the Polish government-in-exile in promoting and funding assistance for Jews, as well as the actions of the Polish resistance on behalf of Jews, were described in lofty words and were presented as in no way different from what they had done for non-Jewish Poles. Even the role of the Polish priesthood and clergy—despite the ambivalence with which the Soviet authorities treated them—was not neglected.

This research bias was reflected in additional respects. Thus,

13 Michał Borwicz, *Arishe Papern* (Yiddish) (Buenos Aires: Tzentral Farband Fon Polische Yiden in Argentina, 1956).

14 The concept of Righteous Among the Nations as denoting rescuers of Jews during the Holocaust went through various metamorphoses since the idea of establishing Yad Vashem crystallized in the 1940s. The beginning of the institutional recognition, however, which led to the definition of the Righteous Among the Nations concept, took place only in 1962. Even though this title became accepted—from the late 1960s onwards—in the academic and public discourse, the phenomenon of the “Righteous” was addressed separately from it in the first years of the period of concern to us. I thank Prof. Michman for pointing this out to me. See also Kobi Kabalek, “The Commemoration before the Commemoration: Yad Vashem and the Righteous Among the Nations, 1945–1963,” *Yad Vashem Studies* 39:1 (2011), pp. 169–211.

it is important to emphasize that many works that dealt with Żegota's activities belittled and underemphasized the part of the Jewish individuals and organizations in its actions; as a result, Żegota's activity on behalf of Jews was portrayed as being purely Polish. At the same time, the Polish research tended to portray Polish suffering as equal to—if not more acute than that of the Jews, and the damage inflicted on Jews by Polish society never found its way into the Polish public or research agenda. Ultimately, the Polish research described the rescue of Jews in Poland during the Holocaust as a set of principled acts carried out by Polish society at large under guidelines issued by the Polish leadership—both the political and the religious—and not as individual and personal actions that often clashed with the accepted public norm.¹⁵

At the same time, the public discourse in Israel, like the research discourse in Israel and the West, addressed itself to totally different aspects of the issue and offered different emphases in its struggle with the question of the Jewish–Polish relations that had formed during the Holocaust. Holocaust survivors, Israeli politicians, and some historians considered it axiomatic that Poles had been complicit in the murder of Jews and treated assistance to Jews by Poles—if they mentioned it at all—as an exception that proved nothing about the Polish social rule. Furthermore, many argued that antisemitism, which had induced the Jewish tragedy during the Holocaust, was, and is, integral to the Polish essence; for this reason, some even held the Polish people responsible for the demise of Polish Jewry. Those who defied this trend by choosing to investigate the rescue of Jews in Poland during the Holocaust—mostly Holocaust survivors

15 Tatiana Berenstein and Adam Rutkowski, *Pomoc Żydom w Polsce, 1939–1945* (Warsaw: Polonia, 1963); Kazimierz Iranek-Osmecki, *Kto ratuje jedno życie... Polacy i Żydzi 1939–1945* (Warsaw: Orbis, 1968); Teresa Prekerowa, *Konspiracyjna Rada Pomocy Żydom w Warszawie, 1942–1945* (Warsaw: Państwowy Instytut Wydawn., 1982); Marek Arczyński and Wiesław Balcerak, *Kryptonim "Żegota": Z dziejów pomocy Żydom w Polsce 1939–1945* (Warsaw: Czytelnik, 1979); Michał Grynberg, *Księga sprawiedliwych* (Warsaw: Wydawn. Naukowe PWN, 1993).

themselves— actually emphasized the active role that Jews had played in rescuing themselves as well as in helping other Jews.¹⁶

These works—seminal and important despite their limitations— presented the centrality of the topic to researchers in Poland and elsewhere and exposed the fact that each group had chosen a different perspective regarding the complex relations that had existed between Jews and Poles during the Holocaust. Furthermore, these scholars apparently differed in more ways than the various pieces of the puzzle on which they focused: They based themselves on different sources, were influenced by different political and national realities, and responded mainly to internal parochial trends—not to each other.¹⁷

16 In addition to the remark of then-Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir in 1989, that the Poles “imbibe antisemitism with their mothers’ milk,” see also the following lectures given at the 1974 Yad Vashem international scholars’ conference on rescue attempts and, above all, the tumultuous debate that followed them: Joseph Kermish, “The Activities of the Council for Assistance to Jews (Żegota) in Occupied Poland,” in Yisrael Gutman and Efraim Zuroff, eds., *Rescue Attempts during the Holocaust: Proceedings of the Second Yad Vashem International Historical Conference* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1977), pp. 367–398; Yisrael Gutman, “The Attitude of the Poles to the Mass Deportations of Jews from the Warsaw Ghetto in the Summer of 1942,” *ibid.*, pp. 399–422; “Discussion,” *ibid.*, pp. 451–463; Shmuel Ettinger, *A History of the Jewish People* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1976), pp. 1023, 1029, and especially p. 1034; Jacob Robinson, “The Holocaust,” in Israel Gutman and Livia Rothkirchen, eds., *The Holocaust of European Jewry: The Catastrophe of European Jewry: Antecedents—History—Reflections* (Hebrew) (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1973), p. 196; Nechama Tec, *When Light Pierced the Darkness* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986); Reuben Ainsztein, *Jewish Resistance in Nazi-Occupied Europe with a Historical Survey of the Jews as Fighters and Soldiers in Diaspora* (London: Elek, 1974).

17 For example, studies about Righteous Among the Nations published in Poland tended to base themselves on Jewish survivors who remained in Poland, whereas those published in the free world were predicated on survivors who had migrated to those countries. In addition to the studies mentioned above, see and cf. Stefan Chaskielewicz, *Ukrywałem się w Warszawie, styczeń 1943–styczeń 1945* (Kraków: Znak, 1988); Nechama Tec, “Polish Anti-Semitism and the Rescuing of Jews,” *East European Quarterly*, 20, 3 (September 1986), pp. 299–315; Irene Tomaszewski and Tacia Werbowksi, *Żegota: The Rescue of Jews in Wartime Poland* (Montreal: Price-Patterson, 1994).

The Watershed Years and Current Historiography

Critical examination of the Polish narrative that credited assistance to Jews in the Holocaust to Polish society and the top leadership began only during the 1980s, with the advent of several trailblazing studies in Israel and the United States.

In their important book, *Unequal Victims, Poles and Jews during World War Two*, for example, Israel Gutman and Shmuel Krakowski argued that the Polish people had known about the extermination of European Jewry during the war and, despite Nazi Germany's brutally oppressive regime in Poland, could have helped the Jews more than they did. They also emphasized the existence of antisemitism at all levels of Polish society even in the midst of the war, including in the Polish government-in-exile and the officer corps of Anders' army (Armia Andersa—Polskie Siły Zbrojne w ZSRR), the special military unit established in the Soviet Union from among Polish refugees and loyal to the Polish government-in-exile.¹⁸

Concurrently, David Engel's studies on the attitude of the Polish government-in-exile toward the Jews identified the various elements that had formed those positions. Engel's works reveal the absolute distrust that had prevailed between the government-

18 One may also adduce the development of research in this matter from the growing attention to the topic in the many historical monographs produced in Israel. See, for example, Israel Gutman, *The Jews of Warsaw 1939–1943, Ghetto, Underground, Revolt* (Brighton, Sussex: Harvester Press, 1982), pp. 27–32, 55–58, 250–252; Yitzhak Arad, *Ghetto in Flames: The Struggle and Destruction of the Jews of Vilna in the Holocaust* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1980), pp. 42–51, 248–250; Eliyahu Yones, *Smoke in the Sand: The Jews of Lvov in the War Years 1939–1944* (Jerusalem: Gefen, 2004), pp. 79–81, 140–141; Yael Peled, *Jewish Kraków 1940–1944—Steadfastness, Resistance, Struggle* (Hebrew) (Lohamei Haghetat: Ghetto Fighters' House, 1993), pp. 140–144; Sara Bender, *Facing Death: The Jews of Bialystok, 1939–1943* (Hebrew) (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1997), pp. 106, 118, 146–147; Michal Unger, "Internal Life in the Łódź Ghetto" (Hebrew), Ph.D. dissertation, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1998, pp. 67–69; Tikva Fattal-Knaani, *Grodno Is Not the Same: The Community of Grodno and Its Vicinity in the War and the Holocaust, 1939–1943* (Hebrew) (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2001), pp. 61–66, 75–76, 119–120, 241–268; David Silberklang, "The Holocaust in the Lublin District" (Hebrew), Ph.D. dissertation, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2003, pp. 131, 157, 173, 216.

in-exile and its Jewish delegates, and each side's attempt to use the other to advance its own goals.¹⁹

Gutman, Krakowski, and Engel were the first to challenge the Polish account of the government-in-exile's sweeping support for the Jews of Poland and the depiction of Polish society—including its resistance movement and religious leaders—as loyal patrons of the persecuted Jews. However, a genuine turning point in the research of the Poles' role in rescuing Jews—and their involvement in harming them—began only with the onset of the political changes that swept Poland in the middle of the 1980s, and especially after Poland extricated itself from the Soviet bear hug.

In those years the research on the Holocaust and World War II in Europe generally expanded beyond a discussion of the Nazi regime and began to invest much more attention in local populations and their responses to the crimes being committed in their midst. These developments took on a special complexion in Poland,²⁰ ultimately inducing real change in the discourse about Jewish–Polish relations during the Holocaust and touching off for the first time a genuine, open, and worldwide debate.

19 David Engel, *In the Shadow of Auschwitz: The Polish Government-in-Exile and the Jews, 1939–1942* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1987), pp. 83–113, 203–213; *idem*, *Facing a Holocaust: The Polish Government-in-Exile and the Jews, 1943–1945* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993), pp. 168–178. On this issue, see also Dariusz Stola's subsequent study, which illustrates the distrust that existed between one of the two Jewish delegates to the government-in-exile, Ignacy Schwarzbart, and the entities with which he interacted: Dariusz Stola, *Nadzieja i Zagłada: Ignacy Schwarzbart—żydowski przedstawiciel w Radzie Narodowej RP (1940–1945)* (Warsaw: Oficyna Naukowa, 1995); and 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: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, 2009).

20 These changes were also associated with the European countries' evolving attempts to cope with their past. Pursuant to the many investigative committees that were set up in Europe in the 1990s, on questions relating to dispossession and restitution, local policies that denied entrance to refugees, and other matters, these research directions were pursued even more vigorously. Poland's aspiration to integrate into Europe, then just taking shape, also reinforced this trend. I thank Prof. Michman and Dr. Plocker for their remarks.

The first Polish researcher to ask pointed questions about the behavior of Polish society toward the Jews in the past generally and during the Holocaust in particular was, oddly enough, the literary researcher Jan Błoński. In his important and well-known work, *Biedni Polacy patrzą na getto* (“The Poor Poles Look at the Ghetto”), published in 1987—in the midst of a decade in which Poland’s political atmosphere underwent profound changes—Błoński called for a trenchant searching of the Polish soul. Aided by an analysis of famous works by the renowned Polish poet Czesław Miłosz—subsequently a Nobel Prize laureate in literature—“Biedny chrześcijanin patrzy na getto” (“A Poor Christian Contemplates the Ghetto”) and “Campo dei Fiori,” which juxtapose humdrum Polish life with the blazing Warsaw ghetto, Błoński posed difficult questions. He criticized the Poles’ indifference to the Jews’ suffering and challenged the Polish image of victim that had been conventional until his time. Błoński’s work sparked an important public debate in Poland and elsewhere²¹ and created the first opening for critical research on the topic.²²

Another important challenge to the mythical narrative of Poles-as-victims-only was presented about a decade-and-a-half later by Jan Tomasz Gross in his book *Neighbors*. In it he

21 Yad Vashem’s scientific journal responded to the debate by publishing several articles that were written as it took place: Jan Błoński, “The Poor Poles Look at the Ghetto,” *Yad Vashem Studies*, 19 (1988), pp. 341–355, and responses to it. See also Jan Błoński, *Biedni Polacy patrzą na getto* (Kraków: Wydawn. Literackie, 1994); Antony Polonsky, ed., *My Brother’s Keeper? Recent Polish Debates on the Holocaust* (Oxford: Routledge, 1990); Michał Głowiński, “Esej Błońskiego po latach,” *Zagłada Żydów*, 2 (2006), pp. 12–20.

22 On the historiographic changes that took place in Poland during this time, see also citations in the previous footnote as well as Antony B. Polonsky, “Polish–Jewish Relations and the Holocaust,” *Polin*, 4 (1989), pp. 226–242; Michael Steinlauf, *Bondage to the Dead: Poland and the Memory of the Holocaust* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse Univ. Press, 1997); Daniel Blatman, “Polish Antisemitism and ‘Judeo-Communism’: Historiography and Memory,” *East European Jewish Affairs*, 27, 1 (Summer 1997), pp. 23–43; Shmuel Krakowski, “Relations between Jews and Poles during the Holocaust: New and Old Approaches in Polish Historiography,” *Yad Vashem Studies*, 19 (1988), pp. 317–340.

described in minute detail the events that unfolded in the town of Jedwabne on July 10, 1941, several days after Nazi Germany occupied eastern Poland. In his book Gross laid out the significant role of Poles in the murder of Jews in this town and their involvement in the terrifying massacre of their Jewish neighbors. For the first time, Polish society—and the country’s research institutes along with it—had to contend with a study that clearly alleged that Poles as such had initiated the murder of Jews and had perpetrated sickening atrocities against their Jewish neighbors.²³

It is no wonder that, with the collapse of communism and the opening of the East European archives in the 1990s, and more so in the current century, many important studies began to appear in Poland dealing with both sides of the help-and-harm equation. Adam Hempel, for example, looked into the functioning of the Polish police and referred to their participation in the persecution of Jews;²⁴ Tomasz Szarota investigated the involvement of the local population in pogroms against Jews in various places in Europe, and described some Polish attacks on Jews;²⁵ and Barbara Engelking dealt with the phenomenon of Poles’ denunciations to the Gestapo about the violation of

- 23 Jan Tomasz Gross, *Neighbors: The Destruction of the Jewish Community in Jedwabne, Poland* (Princeton, NJ, and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2001). See also the debates triggered by the book and their outcomes with regard to research: various articles in *Yad Vashem Studies*, 29 (2001); *Polish Sociological Review*, 137 (2002), all of which was devoted to the issue; Joanna Beata Michlic, “Coming to Terms with the ‘Dark Past’: The Polish Debate about the Jedwabne Massacre,” *Acta: Analysis of Current Trends in Anti-Semitism*, 21 (2002). In the aftermath of the debate, the Institute of National Remembrance (Instytut Pamięci Narodowej) investigated the matter intensively and published two thick volumes: Paweł Machcewicz and Krzysztof Persak, *Wokół Jedwabnego*, vol. I (*Studies*), vol. II (*Documents*) (Warsaw: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, 2002).
- 24 Adam Hempel, *Pogrobowcy kłęski: Rzecz o policji “granatowej” w Generalnym Gubernatorstwie, 1939–1945* (Warsaw: Państwowe Wydawn. Naukowe, 1990), pp. 166–182.
- 25 Tomasz Szarota, *U progu Zagłady. Zajścia antyżydowskie i pogromy w okupowanej Europie: Warszawa, Paryż, Amsterdam, Antwerpia, Kowno* (Warsaw: Wydawn [Sic!], 2000), pp. 19–82.

German regulations, including, within the disclosures, reports about Jews who defied the restrictions imposed upon them.²⁶

In 2000, the Institute of National Remembrance (Instytut Pamięci Narodowej—IPN), headquartered in Warsaw, began to operate. The purview of this body, established by law, is the period between September 1939 and December 1989, with the focus on crimes committed by the Nazi and Soviet occupiers against the Polish people and on Polish soil.²⁷ It is not our concern here to deal with the documentation, research, education, and commemoration tendencies of this important institute.²⁸ However, along with collecting valuable documentation for research on Jewish–Polish relations during the Holocaust, its academic publications tend to focus on, and emphasize, relief operations that Polish society conducted for the beleaguered Jewish population; they do not concern themselves with other aspects of the complex reality of the Holocaust era, including attacks on Jews.²⁹

26 Barbara Engelking, “*Szanowny panie Gistapo*”: *Donosy do władz niemieckich w Warszawie i okolicach w latach 1940–1941* (Warsaw: Wydawn. IFiS PAN, 2003), pp. 44–51. See also the important studies of the Polish researchers Joanna Nalewajko-Kulikow and Małgorzata Melchior on various aspects of the lives of Jews who were hiding on the “Aryan” side, and also Vol. 4 of *Zagłada Żydów*, devoted to the topic of assistance to, and rescue of, Jews in the Holocaust: Joanna Nalewajko-Kulikow, *Strategie przetrwania. Żydzi po aryjskiej stronie Warszawy* (Warsaw: Wydawn. IFiS PAN, 2004); Małgorzata Melchior, *Zagłada a tożsamość. Polacy Żydzi ocaleni “na aryjskich papierach”* (Warsaw: Wydawn. IFiS PAN, 2004); *Zagłada Żydów: Studia i Materiały*, 4 (2008).

27 Quite a few historical research institutes that were set up in Eastern Europe after the war tend to focus concurrently on Nazi German and Communist Russian crimes.

28 For a critique of current research trends in Poland that are being led by the IPN, see Jan Grabowski, “Rewriting the History of Polish–Jewish Relations from a Nationalist Perspective,” *Yad Vashem Studies*, 36, 1 (2008), pp. 253–269.

29 It is true that several IPN studies address themselves to the Holocaust in Poland, e.g., Dariusz Libionka, ed., *Akcja Reinhardt. Zagłada Żydów w Generalnym Gubernatorstwie* (Warsaw: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, 2004); Andrzej Żbikowski, ed., *Jürgen Stroop, Żydowska dzielnica mieszkaniowa w Warszawie już nie istnieje!* (Warsaw: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, 2009). However, most IPN studies that deal with the Jews in the Holocaust (some of which have been translated into foreign languages) focus on assistance to Jews by the Polish population. See, for example, Paweł Knap, ed., “*Jak ci się uda uratować*,

The Center for Research on the Holocaust of Polish Jewry (Centrum Badań nad Zagładą Żydów), which is part of the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology of the Polish Academy of Sciences in Warsaw—the country’s principal research institute that devotes itself exclusively to Holocaust studies—operates differently.³⁰ The center, established on the initiative and under the management of Prof. Engelking, began operating in the summer of 2003. Its focus is interdisciplinary research of the period, and its staff is composed of young researchers, including historians, sociologists, psychologists, literary scholars, and

pamiętaj”. *Relacje “Sprawiedliwych” i o “Sprawiedliwych” z województwa zachodniopomorskiego* (Szczecin: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, 2010); Karol Madaj, Małgorzata Żuławnik, *Proboszcz getta* (Warsaw: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, 2010); Kazimierz Iranek-Osmecki, *Kto ratuje jedno życie... Polacy i Żydzi 1939–1945* (Warsaw: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, 2009); Aleksandra Namysło, ed., *“Kto w takich czasach Żydów przechowuje?...” Polacy niosący pomoc ludności żydowskiej w okresie okupacji niemieckiej* (Warsaw: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, 2009); Elżbieta Rączy, *Pomoc Polaków dla ludności żydowskiej na Rzeszowszczyźnie 1939–1945* (Rzeszów: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, 2008); Mateusz Szpytma, *Sprawiedliwi i ich świat. Markowa w fotografii Józefa Ulmy* (Warsaw–Kraków: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, 2007); Mateusz Szpytma, *The Risk of Survival. The Rescue of the Jews by the Poles and the Tragic Consequences for the Ulma Family from Markowa* (Warsaw: Institute of National Remembrance, 2009). Notably, the concept of “Righteous Among the Nations” was expropriated from the rescue of Jews in the Holocaust for also documenting the activities of Ukrainians who helped Poles in the eastern part of the country during the war: Romuald Niedzielko, ed., *Kresowa księga sprawiedliwych 1939–1945. O Ukraińcach ratujących Polaków poddanych eksterminacji przez OUN i UPA* (Warsaw: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, 2007). However, this is also the institute that researched and published two volumes about the murders in the Jedwabne area, and among its publications are collections of more balanced articles. Yet these account for a small minority of its *oeuvre*. See Andrzej Żbikowski, ed., *Polacy i Żydzi pod okupacją niemiecką 1939–1945. Studia i materiały* (Warsaw: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, 2006).

30 In recent years additional centers in this field have been established at several Polish universities, e.g., the Center for Holocaust Studies at the Jagiellonian University in Kraków (Centrum Badań Holocaustu Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego) and the Center for Jewish Studies at the University of Łódź (Uniwersytet Łódzki Centrum Badań Żydowskich), which also concerns itself with the Holocaust. Nevertheless, these are only initial steps in the field; their real contribution to the debate over Jewish–Polish relations in the Holocaust remains negligible.

others. Along with the editing of valuable documentation,³¹ many of the center’s publications deal with different aspects of Jewish–Polish relations as they formed during the Holocaust, including assistance to and attacks on Jews.³²

The IPN and the Center for Research on the Holocaust of Polish Jewry are the two main sources of copious and important work in recent years that probes Jewish–Polish relations during the Holocaust.³³ Despite the clashing trends of these centers and the scholars whom they employ, an internal Polish discourse has recently emerged that is inducing also the researchers at the Center for Research to place their academic studies within a Polish frame of reference, notwithstanding both its importance

- 31 Apart from publishing documents in the Center’s journal, *Zagłada Żydów*, and in separate publications, Monika Polit, Julian Baranowski, and Ewa Wiatr, eds., *Szumł Rozensztajn: Notatnik* (Warsaw: Stowarzyszenie Centrum Badań nad Zagładą Żydów, 2008); *ibid.*, eds., *Perec Opoczyński: Reportaże z warszawskiego getta* (Warsaw: Centrum Badań nad Zagładą Żydów, 2009). Also, the Center is in charge of the rich database on the Warsaw ghetto: Warsaw Ghetto Database, <http://warszawa.getto.pl/index.php?temp=temp&lang=en>. See also Natalia Aleksiu’s review of the Center’s journal: “Winds of Change in Poland,” *Yad Vashem Studies*, 37:1 (2009), pp. 193–199.
- 32 In addition to Engelking’s and Grabowski’s publications—those mentioned above and those cited below—see Agnieszka Haska, “*Jestem Żydem, chcę wejść*,” *Hotel Polski w Warszawie, 1943* (Warsaw: Wydawn. IFiS PAN, 2006); Barbara Engelking, Jacek Leociak, Darjusz Libionka, eds., *Prowincja Noc: Życie i zagłada Żydów w dystrykcie warszawskim* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Instytutu Filozofii i Socjologii Polskiej Akademii Nauk, 2007). The Center’s Polish-language edition of Paulsson’s book *The Secret City* and current trends are discussed separately below.
- 33 The establishment of Holocaust-related research centers in Eastern Europe is a far-reaching trend not limited to Poland. While these centers vary widely in their areas of interest and the academic quality of their publications, they share the characteristic of focusing attention on the fate of local populations during the war, these populations’ attitudes toward the persecuted Jewish minority, and their struggles against the Nazi (and also, often, the Soviet) occupier. They stand out for their extensive use of local archives, and some have managed to integrate their publications into current research trends in East European Holocaust studies and contribute to them by adding more details to the general description. However, many of these local centers investigate Nazi and Soviet crimes *en bloc*, much as the IPN in Poland does. Consequently, they do not necessarily give the Holocaust and its Jewish victims focal attention, and their political considerations, favoring the exposure of the crimes of communism, tend to digress from Holocaust research.

and its limitations. Consequently, their writings sometimes reflect the internal convergence of the Polish discourse—the public and the academic—and may not reflect the general global discussion of the topic.³⁴

When we review the research literature on Jewish–Polish relations in the Holocaust, however, we should emphasize that not only in Poland are innovative studies on attacks against and assistance to Jews during the war being published. Apart from the important works described in this article, other scholars have also turned their attention to these relations: The Canadian researcher Jan Grabowski, for example, contributed an important work that analyzes the phenomenon of extortion against Jews in Warsaw on the basis of the records of the German courts in the occupied Polish capital (Staatsanwaltsschaft bei dem Sondergericht Warschau);³⁵ several Israeli researchers investigated various aspects of the rescue of children in wartime Poland;³⁶ and, in 2004, Yad Vashem published two volumes of its encyclopedia of Righteous Among the Nations in Poland—part of a broader project involving the publication of these exploits—recounting the stories of thousands of Poles who had earned this exalted title.³⁷

34 See, for example, David Engel's critique of one of the Center's research publications and the debate in response in *Yad Vashem Studies*. These sources demonstrate how these serious Polish researchers have been dragged into responding to internal Polish trends, becoming in fact participants in the introspective Polish discourse: David Engel, "Scholarship on the Margins: a New Anthology about Jews in the Warsaw District under Nazi Occupation," *Yad Vashem Studies*, 37:1 (2009), pp. 179–192; Jacek Leociak, Barbara Engelking Andrzej Żbikowski, "A Response to David Engel," *Yad Vashem Studies*, 38:1 (2010), pp. 259–264; David Engel, "David Engel Replays," *ibid.*, pp. 265–267.

35 Jan Grabowski, "Ja tego Żyda znam!" *Szantażowanie Żydów w Warszawie, 1939–1943* (Warsaw: Wydawn. IFiS PAN, 2004).

36 Nahum Bogner, *At the Mercy of Strangers: The Rescue of Jewish Children with Assumed Identities in Poland* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2009); Emunah Nachmany Gafny, *Dividing Hearts, the Removal of Jewish Children from Gentile Families in Poland in the Immediate Post-Holocaust Years* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2009).

37 Israel Gutman and Sara Bender, eds., *The Encyclopedia of the Righteous among the Nations: Rescuers of Jews during the War. Poland*, Vols. I, II (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2004); Irit Czerniawski, *Polish Righteous Among the Nations*,

Even as research attention to Jewish–Polish relations in the Holocaust broadened at the turn of the new century, expanding our knowledge about the role played by Poles in the persecution of the Jews, studies that continued the trends in Poland in the 1970s and 1980s also appeared. These studies continued to claim that Poles had been unjustly accused of hostility toward—if not outright murder of—Jews, even though such cases, if they had occurred at all, by their authors’ account—were unrepresentative of the complex historical realities of occupied Poland. These studies even asserted that the Polish resistance had actually admitted Jews and had tried to help them to the best of its ability—while often blaming the Jews for the Communist takeover of Poland after the war.³⁸

It is important to note that works such as these, professing the false accusations against Poles of assaulting Jews, have also appeared in countries other than Poland. The American

Statistical Aspects (Hebrew), M.A. thesis, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1998; Neima Barzel, *About Choosing the Good: Acts of Rescue in Poland and the Netherlands in World War II* (Hebrew) (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 2004).

- 38 Cf., for example, *The Jews and the Poles in World War II* (New York: Hippocrene, 1989) by Stefan Korbonski, a leader of the Polish anti-Nazi resistance and Righteous Among the Nations, with the following studies: Tadeusz Piotrowski, *Poland’s Holocaust: Ethnic Strife, Collaboration with Occupying Forces and Genocide in the Second Republic, 1918–1947* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 1998); Peter D. Stachura, *Poland in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1999); Krzysztof Dunin-Wąsowicz, *Polski ruch socjalistyczny: 1939–1945* (Warsaw: Instytut Historii PAN, 1993), pp. 219–242; Richard C. Lukas, *Did the Children Cry? Hitler’s War against Jews and Polish Children, 1939–1945* (New York: Hippocrene, 1994), pp. 149–191. In regard to Lukas’s book, see David Engel’s biting critique, “Poles, Jews, and Historical Objectivity,” *Slavic Review*, 46, no. 3/4 (Autumn–Winter 1997), pp. 568–580. See also discussions of Bogdan Musiał’s book, which blames the Polish attacks on the Jews of eastern Poland in 1941 on the identification of the latter with the Soviet takeover of these areas at the beginning of the war: Bogdan Musiał, *Deutsche Zivilverwaltung und Judenverfolgung im Generalgouvernement: Eine Fallstudie zum Distrikt Lublin 1939–1944* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz Verlag, 1999), first and foremost the correspondence between Musiał and Peter Longerich in the *Frankfurter Rundschau* (Summer 2000), as quoted in David Silberklang’s critique: “No Anonymous Desk-Murderers,” *Yad Vashem Studies*, 29 (2001), pp. 405–421 (especially note 11).

researcher Marek Jan Chodakiewicz, for example, has claimed repeatedly in various publications that there was no real difference between the fate of the Polish Jews in the Holocaust and that of the Poles under Nazi occupation. In the course of the war, he says, both sides often subjected each other to racism and religious hatred. Thus, Chodakiewicz is strict to note cases in which the Jewish public—he says—collaborated with the Nazis and served the German apparatus. He blames the deterioration of Jewish–Polish relations during the Holocaust on the Germans’ actions, chiefly with regard to antisemitic propaganda and legislation, and to attacks by the Jews (!!) against the Polish population. Polish society, in contrast, he says, was untainted by antisemitism; the “few” cases in which Poles did murder Jews could be traced to self-defense against “Jewish bandits”—fringe incidents that tell us nothing about the general rule, or were acts of national defense against the Communist Jews.³⁹

It seems as if the intent of some of these studies is to assail what they consider a protracted attempt to defame Polish society, as manifested, in these authors’ opinions, in downplaying the extent of aid that Poles extended to Jews and hyperbolic exaggeration of the Poles’ role in persecuting Jews. As a result, these writers have reverted to describing Polish assistance to Jews during the Holocaust in legendary if not apologetic terms, basing themselves on unfounded numerical calculations and incomplete historical sources. Furthermore, in a departure from the past, these works are no longer limited to Poland; they are produced elsewhere as well.⁴⁰

* * *

39 Marek Jan Chodakiewicz, *Żydzi i Polacy, 1918–1955: Współistnienie – Zagłada – komunizm* (Warsaw: S.K. Fronda, 2000). See also Joanna Beata Michlic, “The Soviet Occupation of Poland, 1939–41, and the Stereotype of the Anti-Polish and Pro-Soviet Jew,” *Jewish Social Studies*, 13, 3 (Spring–Summer 2007), pp. 135–176.

40 See part 2 (p. 30) for a detailed case study.

The question of the relations that were formed between Jews and Poles during the Holocaust and, more specifically, the debate over the assistance that Poles extended—or did not extend—to their Jewish neighbors eventually escalated into a broad research and public debate. At first, it followed the traditional paths of narratives that were defined and limited in both geography and content. Today, however, the picture has totally changed. Polish, Israeli, American, and Canadian researchers, as well as scholars from other countries—although most still of Polish origin—are taking part, illuminating various aspects of this complex issue and subjecting them to both critical and evaluative attention.⁴¹

Consequently, unlike in the past, it is hard today to sketch a paradigm of parallel or clashing national narratives; instead, one has to identify research trends that span the globe. Along with enduring topics of concern in the research, such as the role of the Polish resistance and the Catholic Church in helping and harming Jews,⁴² and descriptions of the exploits of the Righteous Among

41 The following research collections, among others, take up these issues at length: Joshua A. Zimmerman, ed., *Contested Memories: Poles and Jews during the Holocaust and Its Aftermath* (New Brunswick, NJ, and London: Rutgers University Press, 2002); Robert Cherry, *Annamaria Orla-Bukowska (Red.), Polacy i Żydzi: kwestia otwarta* (Warsaw: Biblioteka “Więzi,” 2008); English version: Robert Cherry and Annamaria Orla-Bukowska, eds., *Rethinking Poles and Jews: Troubled Past, Brighter Future* (New York, Toronto, and Plymouth: Scarecrow Press, 2007); Jean-Charles Szurek et Annette Wieviorka, *Juifs et Polonais: 1939–2008* (Paris: Autrement, 2009). The articles in these collections offer different perspectives on diverse topics, but, for the purposes of our discussion, they illuminate the research trends around the world among Polish, Israeli, American, French, and other researchers who have probed various aspects of these phenomena.

42 In contrast to the trend in the early years, current research defines the stance of the Polish resistance and the Polish church toward the Jews as indifferent at best and exceedingly hostile as a rule. Cf. Izabella Borowicz, ed., *Polskie podziemie polityczne wobec zagłady Żydów w czasie okupacji niemieckiej* (Warsaw: GKBZHitler, 1988); Paweł Szapiro, *Wojna żydowsko-niemiecka: Polska prasa konspiracyjna 1943–1944 a powstanie w getcie Warszawy* (London: Aneks, 1992); Israel Gutman, “Stosunki polsko-żydowskie w świetle żydowskiej historiografii i literatury,” *Biuletyn Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego*, 193 (March 2000), pp. 3–11; Ewa Kurek-Lesik, *Gdy klasztor znaczył życie: Udział żeńskich zgromadzeń zakonnych w akcji ratowania dzieci żydowskich w Polsce w latach 1939–1945* (Kraków: Wydawn. Znak, 1992); Dariusz Libionka, “Kościoł

the Nations,⁴³ research today has branched out into new areas of interest. These include help and harm to Jews in outlying areas,⁴⁴ research on the indifference with which much of Polish society accepted the murder of the Jews,⁴⁵ and the attempt to produce a profile of Jewish–Polish relations at the end of World War II.⁴⁶

w Polsce wobec Zagłady w świetle polskiej publicystyki i historiografii,” *Biuletyn Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego*, 195 (September 2000), pp. 329–341; *idem*, “ZWZ-AK i delegatura rządu RP wobec eksterminacji Żydów polskich,” Andrzej Żbikowski, ed., *Polacy i Żydzi pod okupacją niemiecką, 1939–1945: studia i materiały* (Warsaw: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej—Komisja Ścigania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu, 2006), pp. 15–132; Klaus-Peter Friedrich, “The Murder of the Jews by the Nazis as Perceived in the Polish Press, 1942–1947,” *Yad Vashem Studies*, 34 (2006), pp. 125–176; Shmuel Krakowski, “The Polish Resistance in View of the Holocaust,” *Yalkut Moreshet* (Hebrew), 49 (1990), pp. 98–109.

- 43 Along with the aforementioned studies, see Andrzej Krzysztof Kunert, ed., “Żegota”—*Rada Pomocy Żydom, 1942–1945* (Warsaw: Rada Ochrony Pamięci Walk i Męczeństwa, 2002); Mateusz Szpytma and Jarosław Szarek, *Ofiara sprawiedliwych: Rodzina Ulmow—oddali życie za ratowanie Żydów* (Kraków: Rafael, 2004); Aleksandra Namysło, ed., “Kto w takich czasach Żydów przechowuje?...” *Polacy niosący pomoc ludności żydowskiej w okresie okupacji niemieckiej* (Warsaw: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, 2009).
- 44 Alina Skibińska and Jakub Petelewicz, “The Participation of Poles in Crimes Against Jews in the Świętokrzyskie Region,” *Yad Vashem Studies*, 35:1 (2007), pp. 5–48; Barbara Engelking, Jacek Leociak, and Dariusz Libionka, eds., *Prowincja noc: życie i zagłada Żydów w dystrykcie warszawskim* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Instytutu Filozofii i Socjologii Polskiej Akademii Nauk, 2007); Barbara Engelking, *Jest taki piękny słoneczny dzień Losy Żydów szukających ratunku na wsi polskiej 1942–1945* (Warsaw: Stowarzyszenie Centrum Badań nad Zagładą Żydów, 2011); Jan Grabowski, *Judenjagd. Polowanie na Żydów 1942–1945. Studium dziejów pewnego powiatu* (Warsaw: Stowarzyszenie Centrum Badań nad Zagładą Żydów, 2011).
- 45 See, for example, Feliks Tych, “Witnesses of Shoah: The Extermination of Jews in Polish Diaries, Memoirs and Reminiscences,” *Biuletyn Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego*, 192 (December 1999), pp. 3–18; Jan Tomasz Gross, “‘Ten jest z ojczyzny mojej’, ale go nie lubię,” *Upiorna dekada: Trzy eseje o stereotypach na temat Żydów, Polaków, Niemców i komunistów, 1939–1948* (Kraków: TAiWPN Universitas, 1998), pp. 25–60; Antonina Kłoskowska, “Polacy wobec zagłady Żydów polskich: Proba typologii postaw,” *Kultura i Społeczeństwo*, 32, 4 (1988), pp. 111–127; Sebastian Piątkowski, “Polacy wobec eksterminacji ludności żydowskiej (1939–1945): Próba określenia postaw i ich źródeł na przykładzie dystryktu radomskiego,” *Biuletyn Kwartalny Radomskiego Towarzystwa Naukowego*, 34, 1 (1999), pp. 127–140.
- 46 In addition to the publications cited above, see also conference of Polish researchers at Yad Vashem in October 2010: “Results and Implications of the Holocaust: Poland 1944–2010”; and the following books that deal with the

Some of these studies are the products of welcome collaboration among researchers from Poland and other countries—such as France, Canada, and Israel—whose different historical outlooks and areas of interest create especially fertile soil for a fascinating debate on the topic.

* * *

More than sixty-five years have passed since Ringelblum laid the foundations for thoroughgoing research on Jewish–Polish relations in the Holocaust. By probing the realities in which Jews and Poles lived under Nazi occupation, the researcher discovers the heights of sacrifice and high-mindedness, along with the depths of despair and despicableness, and raises difficult questions about human existence in the time of the Holocaust. As a result, the matter still seems far from exhausted, despite the impressive documentation and copious research that have been produced on the topic. Day in and day out, lively debates erupt about the extent of assistance given to the Jews by their Polish neighbors in the course of the Holocaust. Thus, the research discourse about the Poles’ role in the onslaught against the Jews is probably still in its infancy. Despite the proliferation of studies that concern themselves with Jewish–Polish relations in the Holocaust, a plethora of issues in this domain remained unanswered.

post-Holocaust era: Jan Tomasz Gross, *Fear: Anti-Semitism in Poland after Auschwitz* (New York: Penguin, 2005); *idem*, *A Golden Harvest: Events at the Periphery of the Holocaust* (New York: Oxford Press, 2012); Łukasz Kamiński and Jan Żaryn, eds., *Reflections on the Kielce Pogrom* (Warsaw: Institute of National Remembrance, 2006).

Part 2

Some Remarks About Secret Cities

The impressive harvest of research works on Jewish–Polish relations in the Holocaust includes some new publications that deal with the topic of this article in a general way and also address the specific question of how much assistance Jews received from their Polish neighbors. These studies, although ostensibly presenting solid evidence, are often based on calculations that, in most cases, suffer from fundamental methodological problems and tendentious if not manipulative writing. Even so, these works are often given a very appreciative reception. In my humble opinion, the reason for this is that even intelligent readers, including important researchers in this field, infer from the sheer volume of sources and calculations that the argumentation must be solid. However, close examination of the archival documentation on which the studies are based and the historical methods that guide them often lead to a different conclusion: The studies are fundamentally and materially flawed in terms of the basis of their documentation and calculations; the method of argumentation may even disclose the ideological outlooks of their authors. While the entire trend to its full extent cannot be tested in this setting, below I demonstrate the basic *problematique* by examining the Canadian researcher Gunnar Paulsson’s book *Secret City: The Hidden Jews of Warsaw, 1940–1945*.

Paulsson’s book was published in 2002, by the prestigious Yale University Press, and won several prizes very shortly after.⁴⁷ In 2007, it was translated into Polish by the Center for

47 Gunnar S. Paulsson, *Secret City: The Hidden Jews of Warsaw, 1940–1945* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2002). The manuscript was awarded the 1998 Fraenkel Prize in Contemporary History, and the book won the Polish Studies Association 2004 Orbis Book Prize, among others. In 2008, it captured the prestigious Mokrzycki Prize, awarded by the important liberal newspaper *Gazeta Wyborcza* for the best history book written in the award year. See http://wyborcza.pl/1,75478,6758952,Nagroda_im__Moczarskiego_dla_Paulssona.html. I thank Dr. Joanna Michlic for calling this to my attention.

Research on the Holocaust of Polish Jewry in Warsaw.⁴⁸ Thus, it received both additional recognition and extensive international exposure. Indeed, recently published studies, mainly in Poland, but elsewhere as well, tend to base themselves on Paulsson's assessments and arguments.⁴⁹ Therefore, despite the time that has elapsed since the study first appeared, the book and its contents require critical, thorough, and extensive attention.⁵⁰

48 Gunnar S. Paulsson, *Utajone miasto: Żydzi po 'aryjskiej' stronie Warszawy (1940–1945)* (Kraków: Znak, 2007). The book was published in conjunction with Znak, the publishing house of the Center for Research on the Holocaust of Polish Jewry, part of the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology of the Polish Academy of Sciences in Warsaw, headed by Prof. Barbara Engelking, one of the most important and prominent researchers of the Holocaust in Poland. Although the Polish edition retains several problematic locutions that appeared in the English version, obviously Paulsson's main arguments remain.

49 See, for example, Andrzej Żbikowski, "Antysemityzm, szmalcownictwo, współpraca z Niemcami a stosunki polsko-żydowskie pod okupacją niemiecką"; *idem*, ed., *Polacy i Żydzi pod okupacją niemiecką 1939–1945: studia i materiały* (Warsaw: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej—Komisja Ścigania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu, 2006), pp. 429–505 (especially pp. 468–472); Marcin Urynowicz, "Stosunki polsko-żydowskie w Warszawie w okresie okupacji hitlerowskiej," *ibid.*, pp. 537–626 (especially pp. 568–572); Peter D. Stachura, *Poland, 1918–1945: An Interpretive and Documentary History of the Second Republic* (London and New York: Routledge, 2004); Barbara Engelking and Dariusz Libionka, *Żydzi w powstańczej Warszawie* (Kraków: Stowarzyszenie Centrum Badań nad Zagładą Żydów, 2009), p. 50. This source was also used in writing the "Warsaw" entry on the website of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum: <http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10005069>. Additionally, it has been used in many articles in the online encyclopedia Wikipedia, including "Rescue of Jews by Poles during the Holocaust" (the section on Jews in Polish cities); "Żegota"; "The Holocaust in Poland"; "History of the Jews in Poland"; "Szmalcownik" (English and German); "Polish Righteous among the Nations"; "Warsaw Ghetto Uprising"; "History of Poland (1939–1945)"; and "Warschauer Ghetto" (German). I thank Mr. Rami Neudorfer for tracking down these online entries.

50 See, for example, my critique of this work in *Galed—On the History and Culture of Polish Jewry* (Hebrew), 22 (2010), pp. 191–201, and Paulsson's response and my reply in English, *ibid.*, 23 (2012), pp. 151–152. The following critical discussion of his book is a much expanded version of my first review. For further critiques, some sympathetic and others not so, see Shimon Redlich in *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 109, 2 (April 2004), pp. 643–644; Leo Cooper in *Slavic Review*, Vol. 63, No. 2 (Summer 2004), pp. 384–385; David Engel in *Patterns of Prejudice*, Vol. 38, No. 4 (2004), pp. 399–401; Samuel D. Kassow in *The Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 77, No. 2 (June 2005), pp. 500–503; Gabriel N. Finder in *East European Politics and Societies*, vol. 18

In his book Paulsson claims that a “secret city,” invisible even to its members, existed on the “Aryan” side of Warsaw during World War II.⁵¹ The inhabitants of this city, he says, had a common language as well as shared public institutions, cultural life, and judicial systems, among other things.⁵² Paulsson estimates the population of this city at around 100,000, including 28,000 Jews in hiding, 70,000–90,000 Polish rescuers, and 3,000 extortionists. This figure, according to Paulsson, illustrates the many possibilities of rescue that the Jews of Warsaw could pursue and in fact praises the Poles’ mobilization to help the embattled Jewish population. Moreover, Paulsson contends, the prospects of survival among Jews on the “Aryan” side of occupied Warsaw were especially good; he even implies that had more Jews tried to flee to that side of the city, they probably would have managed to find hideouts among their Polish neighbors.⁵³ According to Paulsson, the supply of hiding places on the “Aryan” side and the willingness of Poles to help Jews were never exhausted, due to the Jews’ unfounded fear of reliance on their Polish comrades. It was actually, he says, the Jews who were guilty of racism; thus, he implies, it is they, not the Poles, who bear responsibility for their death—or, at the very least, for their inability to escape from the Germans.⁵⁴

Paulsson bases these remarks on a sprawling documentary infrastructure and a set of complex calculations. He quotes

(2004), pp. 342–350; and Joanna Michlic in *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, 19, 3 (Winter 2005), pp. 538–540.

51 By using this expression, Paulsson alludes to a book by Jan Karski, a well-known Polish Righteous Among the Nations, about the political and social resistance that existed in occupied Poland in World War II: *The Story of a Secret State* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1944). Jan Tomasz Gross’s book about the *Generalgouvernement* under German occupation provides an impressive description of the Delegatura’s efforts to maintain the semblance of an underground Polish social and political array in the occupied country: Jan Tomasz Gross, *Polish Society under German Occupation: The Generalgouvernement, 1939–1944* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979).

52 Paulsson, *Secret City*, pp. 3–5.

53 *Ibid.*, pp. 96, 229–230.

54 *Ibid.*, pp. 35, 106, 140.

and references documents that are kept in archives around the world and appears to build a solid case. However, a critical, painstaking examination of Paulsson's research and, above all, the methods that he used to reach his far-reaching conclusions raise difficult questions about the validity of the book and, in my opinion, challenge the reliability of his arguments and conclusions. Here I present only selected examples of Paulsson's invalid calculations, his problematic use of sources, and his basic misunderstanding of how the Jews in Warsaw lived under Nazi German occupation.

*Numerical and Statistical Estimates*⁵⁵

Paulsson's book presents many innovative numerical estimates relating to Jewish life on the "Aryan" side of Warsaw during the occupation. He claims, for example, that welfare organizations supported nearly 9,000⁵⁶ of the 28,000 Jews who spent the war years hiding in the occupied city;⁵⁷ that some 20,000 Jews were in hiding immediately after the Warsaw ghetto uprising and that around 17,000 of them survived until the summer of 1944;⁵⁸ and that more than 70,000 Poles provided 35,000 hiding places on the "Aryan" side, where 7,000 Jewish children, among others, found refuge.⁵⁹ Importantly, as I will show, these figures far exceed the existing estimates of the number of Jews who managed to find shelter among the Polish population; they also surpass the estimated number of Righteous Among the Nations who helped them.⁶⁰

55 I thank Prof. Camil Fuchs of the Department of Statistics at Tel Aviv University for helping me to navigate the maze of the world of statistics. However, these remarks reflect my own understandings and conclusions.

56 Paulsson, *Secret City*, pp. 3–4, 20, 208.

57 *Ibid.*, p. 21.

58 *Ibid.*, p. 20.

59 *Ibid.*, pp. 125, 130.

60 Although my explicit reference to alternative estimates appears below, see also Israel Gutman, *The Jews in Poland after World War II* (Hebrew) (Jerusalem: Zalman Shazar Center, 1984), pp. 11–14; Bogner, *At the Mercy of Strangers*; Sara Bender and Shmuel Krakowski, eds., *The Encyclopedia of the Righteous*

Paulsson bases his estimates on what he calls a quantitative analysis and even defines this as the linchpin of his entire study. This, he says, is what allows him to develop innovative historical conclusions: “Quantitative analysis is the backbone of this study, or rather the skeleton, which though cold and hard and lifeless nonetheless serves to set proportions.”⁶¹

Most of Paulsson’s quantitative calculations pack the last chapter of the book. In this chapter, flush with data and statistical operations, Paulsson determines that since his sundry calculations yielded the same numerical estimates again and again, they must be reliable and accurate reflections of the historical reality in occupied Warsaw. However, those who investigate in depth the numbers and calculations in this chapter, or those strewn throughout the book, will, in the best case, discover questionable calculations that lead to the questionable historical conclusions, or, in the worst case, a tendentiousness

Among the Nations: Poland (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2004). True, it should not be argued that the number of Poles who helped Jews in the Holocaust is absolutely equal to the number of Righteous Among the Nations in Poland awarded by Yad Vashem. Hundreds of Poles paid with their lives for unsuccessful attempts to rescue Jews, and not all were privileged to receive posthumous recognition. Others were not recognized because the Jews whom they had tried to rescue died during or after the war. Finally, some Jews did not do what was necessary to reward their rescuers with this title. Just the same, as I argue below, the existing studies, notwithstanding their limitations, are more reliable than that of Paulsson in estimating the extent of the phenomenon.

61 Paulsson, *Secret City*, p. 19. The quotation continues:

“Putting flesh on the skeleton requires evidence of the more traditional, subjective kind, and this raises questions of selection, interpretation, balance and voice. Because I have counted on quantitative analysis to provide the proper proportions, I have felt fairly free to raise topics that seemed worth discussing, and to select appropriate illustrations of them, without worrying too much about whether they are representative. Thus selection and balance are only background concerns....

“This may strike some readers as willful: it looks on the face of it a good deal like what Jacques Barzun calls ‘source mining’, starting with preconceived notion and then finding the evidence that fits—the very sin against scholarship. There is a crucial distinction here, however: it is not a prior agenda, but the ‘weight of the evidence’, and above all the quantitative work, that has led me to believe some things and not others.”

By saying this, Paulsson emphasizes the importance of his arithmetic analyses in determining the facts; hence the need to examine them in depth.

that aims to present a positive image of Poles under ostensibly scientific camouflage.

Since, within the framework of this article, I cannot analyze all of Paulsson's calculations, I will illustrate his arithmetic and methodological blunders with examples from three important estimates that he presents in his book: (1) the number of Jews who survived on the "Aryan" side of Warsaw until the eve of the 1944 Polish Warsaw Uprising; (2) the total number of Jews who spent the war in hiding on the "Aryan" side and those among them who survived the Holocaust years; and (3) the (enormous!) number of Poles who acted to rescue Jews in occupied Warsaw.

*1. Paulsson: "About 17,000 Jews were in hiding [in Warsaw] on the eve of the [Polish] Warsaw Uprising [in the summer of 1944]."*⁶²

Paulsson claims that 17,000 Jews were still alive on the "Aryan" side of Warsaw on the eve of the summer 1944 Warsaw Uprising. This figure—a notably novel and especially high one—underlies his argument about the very auspicious chances for survival among hidden Jews in Polish society and emphasizes that the persecuted Jewish public should have seen crossing to the "Aryan" side as a self-evident action.

The figure of 17,000 Jews who survived until the summer of 1944 on the "Aryan" side of Warsaw is based, Paulsson says, on cross-referencing two lists of Jews: those who received support from various organizations, including Żegota, the Bund movement, and/or the Jewish National Committee (Żydowski Komitet Narodowy—ŻKN)—2,356 of the 9,000 Jews who, Paulsson says, received support; and those in hiding on the "Aryan" side, based on names mentioned indirectly in various testimonies—131 in number. Examining the intersection of the two lists and finding that fifteen to twenty-one names do overlap,

62 Ibid., p. 209. Paulsson's calculations that support this number appear in his book, as will be shown further in the article.

Paulsson assumes, on the basis of statistical calculation,⁶³ that 14,697–20,576 Jews were hiding on the “Aryan” side. Therefore, he used a median number of 17,000 to denote the Jewish survival on the “Aryan” side of the city up to the Polish Warsaw Uprising. Indeed, Paulsson wound up the numerical analysis by remarking: “QED.”⁶⁴

Examining Paulsson’s estimates, rationale, and reckonings on this issue raises several basic failures. For example, to be true to the principles that he himself enunciated, Paulsson should have taken into account in his estimation that the list of 2,356 names represents only around one-fourth of the 9,000 members of the population who received support. In other words, even if—hypothetically—all 131 names that Paulsson found in the memoirs belonged to people who had received support, statistically we would expect only one-fourth of them to appear on the list of 2,356, since this list, he says, contains around one-fourth of the 9,000 Jews who received support. To correct the statistical deviation in his calculations, Paulsson should have multiplied the number of names that he had found on the lists by 3.82 (2356/9000). Had he done so, he would have arrived at a much lower estimate than the one he presented: fewer than 5,000 people.⁶⁵

Furthermore, even if, for argument’s sake, we disregard the previous error, Paulsson’s math would have been reliable

63 Paulsson searched for the names of 131 Jews who were indirectly mentioned in survivors’ testimonies on the list of 2,356 (out of 9,000) Jews who had received support from various organizations. After finding fifteen to twenty-one names on both lists, Paulsson did the arithmetic and concluded that the number of Jews hiding on the “Aryan” side on the eve of the Polish uprising was somewhere between 20,576 ($2356 \times 131/14$) and 14,697 ($2356 \times 131/21$). To simplify things, he picked out a number between 14,500 and 20,500 and adduced that around 17,000 Jews survived on the “Aryan” side until the Polish uprising in Warsaw.

64 On page 221, Paulsson uses the term “QED,” the abbreviation of the Latin term *quod erat demonstrandum*, meaning, “which was to be demonstrated”; Paulsson, *Secret City*, p. 221.

65 In other words, the calculation should have replaced the numbers 15 and 21 with 57 and 79.8, respectively, bringing the total number of Jews in Warsaw to between 5414.6 ($2356 \times 131/57$) and 3867.6 ($2356 \times 131/79.8$).

and valid⁶⁶ only if three conditions of statistical methodology had been satisfied: the list of 131 people in hiding should be a representative sample of the local Jewish population in hiding in occupied Warsaw during the war; the 2,356 names of Jews who received support should be a representative sample of the total Jewish population that received support from relief organizations in occupied Warsaw; and the intersection of the lists is plausible only insofar as these representative samples relate to a stable, constant group that is not subject to change. If these three conditions are not present, the calculation as well as the conclusions derived from, it becomes, problematic.

To make matters simpler, one may liken Paulsson's methods to an attempt at estimating the number of fish in a pond (the total population of Jews hiding in Warsaw) on the basis of double-dip sampling. First, he removes 2,356 fish from the pond, marks them, and throws them back (identifying the names of people receiving support). Second, he waits for the marked fish to scatter across the pond and then catches 131 of them at random (the names of those in hiding) and counts how many of those caught the *second* time he had marked in the past (how many of the hiding Jews appeared on the list of persons receiving support). Assuming that not many fish permanently join or leave the population of fish in the pond, and assuming that the samples are independent of each other—i.e., that no fish has a better or worse chance of being in the sample the first time, the second time, or in both samples together—one may estimate the number of fish in the pond on the basis of the data obtained.

But did the conditions in the hypothetical fish pond exist in occupied Warsaw and in Paulsson's calculations? Absolutely not. Since we do not know how the list of 2,356 supported Jews was drawn up, it is hard to estimate whether each Jew who received support from some organization had the same chance of being

66 That is, expressing truthfully, accurately, and consistently the values that they purport to measure.

included in the sample.⁶⁷ This is not the case, however, with regard to the survivors' list. For example, did every concealed Jew in Warsaw have the same chance of being mentioned in other Jews' writings? And did every Jew in hiding in occupied Warsaw have the same chance of being mentioned in the very same memoirs that Paulsson examined? Certainly not. For example, Jews who lived under false identities in Nazi-occupied Warsaw distanced themselves from other Jews; some retained only negligible contact, if any, with other Jews. Therefore, their mention in other Jews' testimonies does not necessarily reflect their component in the population.⁶⁸ Furthermore, the testimonies that Paulsson uses to make his case are in Polish only, making Jews mentioned in Hebrew- or Yiddish-language testimonies less likely to appear on his lists. Ultimately, Paulsson's list of 131 Jews in hiding underrepresents Jews who were living under aliases, Jews from locations other than Warsaw (who were less familiar to those around them), people hiding in small groups or alone, young children who had been placed with others with the knowledge of only their parents or benefactors, and so on and

67 For example, did certain organizations have lists of people who had a better chance of inclusion on Paulsson's lists due to their accessibility to the researcher, legible handwriting, multiple code-names, etc.? How were the overlaps between the lists neutralized and how were code-names counted, such as Dr. M.'s children or a member of the Jewish Fighting Organization?

The omission of double names or of code-names damage the sample, since the chances that those cases appear in the sample does not reflect their true share in the overall population that received support. Thus, a random sample works only if there is an attempt to neutralize systematic mistakes to which every sample is exposed. This is not the case here. Moreover, unfortunately, Paulsson does not give his readers information regarding different aspects of those lists of supported Jews. For example, do they refer to all the years of the war or only to some parts of it? How did he refer to names that were added to the lists in later stages of the war, or to those names that were omitted? And are the 2,356 names a real sample or just part of the overall complete list?

68 These Jews also tended to use aliases, creating another obstacle in their actual inclusion in others' memoirs. A case in point is the "Aryan" name Danziger-Gdansk, which appears in the list of persons being supported as of May 1944: Ghetto Fighters House Archives (GFHA), Collections, 5901. Consequently, the proportion of Sample (P), relating to Jews living under false names and in hideouts, does not reflect the proportions present in Population (p).

so forth. Therefore, it cannot be a representative sample of the population of Jews hiding in occupied Warsaw.

No less important, the basic assumptions that must be satisfied in order to check the overlap of the lists are totally absent with regard to the Jews who hid in occupied Warsaw over the years. The size of the group was not fixed; Jews joined this population and, in greater part, left it constantly, as they were discovered by the Germans; and well-known fugitives had a better chance of both receiving support and being mentioned in others' memoirs. As a result, Paulsson's lists and his cross-referencing of them introduce a bias in favor of Jews who had specific characteristics, such as living in Warsaw, hiding in large groups, having connections, etc. In other words, Paulsson's lists are anything *but* a representative sample of the relevant population groups; in fact, he influences the outcome by the very fact of having created them. Consequently, his calculations tell us nothing about the total number of Jews hiding in Warsaw during the occupation, and any attempt to say otherwise is erroneous and misleading.⁶⁹

If so, the claim that 17,000 Jews were hiding on the "Aryan" side of Warsaw on the eve of the Polish uprising is utterly unreliable and invalid from the statistical perspective. Furthermore, its contribution to the debate over the number of Jews who were hiding there is valueless and even harmful, because it invokes a language of allegedly fixed data.⁷⁰

This refutation of Paulsson's overestimation of the population of fugitives brings us back to the traditional and much lower estimates, which Shmuel Krakowski explains aptly:

69 Nevertheless, it may be—I say this, too, with the appropriate disclaimers—that the share of adult Jews in Warsaw who hid in big groups was not large relative to the total population of persons supported by the aid associations. Is this indicative of tendencies among the support organizations in that they gave most of their aid to Jews living under false identities? Might it attest to a preference for young children? Or do these data suggest that Jews who went into hiding in large groups had more economic resources than those who hid alone? It is difficult to say, but these are definitely areas of research that should be examined in depth.

70 For additional problems with Paulsson's allegations, see my previously mentioned critique of his book in *Galed* (note 50).

It is impossible to determine the exact number of Jews who were in Warsaw on August 1, 1944, the day the Polish uprising broke out. Dr. Emmanuel Ringelblum [in his work, *Polish–Jewish Relations in World War II*] estimated the number of Jews hiding in the city, after the ghetto uprising was put down, at around 15,000. Adolf Abraham Berman, one of the most important activists on the Jewish National Committee, stated [in his book *In the Days of the Underground*] that the Committee had been looking after some 12,000 Jews who were hiding in and around Warsaw. Both calculations appear to be overstatements. According to a Jewish National Committee report written in May 1944, only 5,000 Jews were under the Committee’s patronage in Warsaw then. There were probably several thousand additional Jews in Warsaw who did not receive or did not need the Committee’s assistance; however, one doubts that the total number of Jews in Warsaw in summer 1944 came to 10,000.⁷¹

2. *Paulsson: Some 28,000 Jews were hiding on the “Aryan” side, and around 11,500 of them survived the Holocaust.*⁷²

According to Paulsson, 28,000 Jews hid on the “Aryan” side of Warsaw during the war, and 11,500 of them—41 percent—survived. Furthermore, he says, the two events that claimed large numbers of victims had nothing to do with Poles’ willingness to help Jews: the Hotel Polski;⁷³ and the Polish uprising in Warsaw

71 Shmuel Krakowski, *Jewish Warfare in Poland against the Nazis 1942–1944* (Hebrew) (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1977), p. 311. Interestingly, even though the Polish researchers Engelking and Libionka, in their new book on the Polish uprising, quote Paulsson’s problematic book extensively, ultimately they also assume that the number of Jews under the rebels’ control during the uprising did not exceed 7,000; see Barbara Engelking and Dariusz Libionka, *Żydzi w powstającej Warszawie* (Kraków: Stowarzyszenie Centrum Badań nad Zagładą Żydów, 2009), p. 324.

72 Paulsson, *Secret City*, pp. 221, 229.

73 A hotel in Warsaw that the Germans used to lure Jews on the “Aryan” side out of hiding and into their clutches. In the middle of 1943, the Germans announced, by means of Jewish Gestapo agents, among other methods, that Jews who held South American citizenship papers and were still in Poland would be exchanged

in 1944.⁷⁴ Absent these events, he states, and the survival rate of Jews in Warsaw would have been 61 percent, a very impressive number by all accounts.⁷⁵

Having arrived at a *soi-disant* accurate estimate, Paulsson decided to examine the circumstances of the death of 113 Jews who did not survive the war. An analysis of the patterns of their death shows that forty-seven of them perished under various circumstances on the “Aryan” side; four returned to the ghetto; twenty-four were captured by the Germans in the Hotel Polski deception; one died after leaving Warsaw; fifteen lost their lives during the Polish uprising; three died in the days following it; and nineteen died under unknown circumstances. Since 21.2 percent of Jews hiding on the “Aryan” side of Warsaw were murdered due to the Hotel Polski deceit, and since we know from other sources that the number of those captured by the Germans in this manner was 3,500, we may (being consistent with Paulsson’s

for German citizens who had been interned in those countries. Within a few weeks, thousands of Jews streamed into the hotel, feeling economically and psychologically unable to continue living under false identities and in hiding. Even though some of them had acquired bogus papers for exorbitant sums, most were ultimately sent to Auschwitz, where they were murdered. In 2006, an important study on the topic was published in Poland, although it, too, focuses mainly on events at the hotel itself and not on the Jews’ motives for going there. See Agnieszka Haska, “*Jestem Żydem, chcę wejść*”: *Hotel Polski w Warszawie, 1943* (Warsaw: Wydawn. IFiS PAN, 2006). See also Haska’s study on Adam Żurawin, which exposes various aspects of the Germans’ use of Jewish agents: Agnieszka Haska, “Adam Żurawin—bohater o tysiącu twarzy,” *Zagłada Żydów: Studia i Materiały*, 2 (2006), pp. 177–201.

- 74 The Polish Warsaw Uprising was a futile attempt by the Armia Krajowa, the Polish national underground, to liberate the capital from the Nazi occupier before the Red Army could arrive in order to influence the nature of the city’s postwar regime. Unfortunately, the uprising ended with the deaths of tens of thousands of fighters (from the AK and the AL), the murder of more than 150,000 civilians, and the destruction of the city. For Jews who were living there under false identities or in hiding, the uprising made continued survival nearly impossible. See detailed reference (below) to the effect of the uprising on Jews’ ability to hide. For a detailed description of the tragic fate of the Jews during the Polish uprising, see Barbara Engelking and Dariusz Libionka, *Żydzi w powstańczej Warszawie*.
- 75 Paulsson, *Secret City*, pp. 229–230. Paulsson even compares this estimation with the number of Dutch Jewish survivors. However, in this framework we will limit ourselves to his mistakes regarding Polish Jewry and will not relate to the fate of Dutch Jewry during the Holocaust.

methodology) apply this ratio to the other groups of non-survivors and assume that every “percent” of the 113 cases that he examined represents almost 146 Jews. As a result, he assumes that 6,800 of them (based on forty-seven cases, which represent 41.6 percent) died under various circumstances on the “Aryan” side; 600 (based on four cases, 3.5 percent) returned to the ghetto; 150 (one case, 0.9 percent) died after having left; 4,500 (fifteen cases, 13.3 percent) lost their lives during the Polish uprising; and 900 (three cases, 2.7 percent) died within a few days of the end of the uprising.⁷⁶

Having succeeded, he says, in working out these estimates about the causes of death among Jews who did not survive the war, Paulsson carried out two “simple calculations” on their basis:

- (1) *The number of survivors from the Warsaw ghetto* is the number of those who were hiding on the “Aryan” side on the eve of the Polish uprising, which he already estimated (see p. 35) at 17,000. From this total he subtracted those who had perished during and after the Polish uprising (4,500 and 900, respectively), bringing the number of Jews who survived the war to around 11,600.
- (2) *The number of Jews who attempted to hide in Warsaw* during the war is the number of those who survived there up to the eve of the Polish uprising (17,000—see previous paragraph)

76 Consider the following table, reproduced from p. 213 of Paulsson’s book:

Time and nature of death		N	Pct.	Projection
On the “Aryan” side	Unknown	30	26.5	
	Betrayal/murder	9	8	3600
	Captured without betrayal	6	5.3	2400
	Natural circumstances	2	1.8	800
<i>Subtotal</i>		<i>47</i>	<i>41.6</i>	<i>6800</i>
Returned to ghetto		4	3.5	600
Hotel Polski		24	21.2	3500
After leaving Warsaw		1	0.9	150
During Warsaw uprising		15	13.3	4500
After Warsaw uprising		3	2.7	900
Unknown		19	16.8	
Total		113	100.01	16450

plus the 11,050 who, according to the foregoing calculation, died before the Polish uprising.

I will ignore here a mathematical error that Paulsson made in his estimations⁷⁷ and focus on an erroneous statistical premise

77 Paulsson forgot(!?) to calculate at the end the proportion of those who died under unknown circumstances on the “Aryan” side or elsewhere. Admittedly, in a note to the table, he claims that the number of those who died under unknown circumstances on the “Aryan” side are divided among the circumstances of death that he found, and that the number of those who died under unknown circumstances was calculated, as a rule, as the share of those murdered during or after the Polish uprising. A study of the table, however, shows that these figures were simply “deleted.” Thus, if Paulsson were to remain consistent—if only according to the principles that he himself laid down—he would have to state that 2,770 should be added to these numbers (based on nineteen cases, 16.8 percent) who died on the “Aryan” side under unknown circumstances, plus another 4,375 (thirty, 26.5 percent) about whose circumstances of death there is no information whatsoever. This reckoning would place the number of those who died on the “Aryan” side at 11,175 and not 6,800, and the total number of Jews who tried to hide in Warsaw and did not survive would balloon to 23,500 (15,450 + 2,775 + 4,375).

Adjusted to these calculations, the number of survivors of the Warsaw ghetto would fall from 11,600 to 8,830, and the number of Jews who attempted to hide in Warsaw throughout the war would rise to more than 35,000 (35,145), if we take into account those whose fate is unknown and those who died before the uprising, or to more than 32,000 (32,245), if we assume that everyone whose fate is unknown perished during or after the Polish uprising.

Needless to say, such a calculation leads Paulsson to estimate the proportion of Jews who attempted to hide and survived not at 11,500 out of 28,000 (44 percent), and 61 percent net of the Polski Hotel affair and the Polish uprising, but rather between 25 percent (8,830 of 35,195) and 27 percent (8,830 of 32,245) who survived at all, and net of both tragic episodes still less than 40 percent—his minimum estimate.

See the following corrected table:

Time and nature of death		N	Pct.	Projection
On “Aryan” side	Unknown	30	26.5	4375
	Betrayal/murder	9	8.0	3600
	Captured without betrayal	6	5.3	2400
	Natural circumstances	2	1.8	800
<i>Subtotal</i>		<i>47</i>	<i>41.6</i>	11175
Returned to ghetto		4	3.5	600
Hotel Polski		24	21.2	3500
After leaving Warsaw		1	0.9	150
During Warsaw uprising		15	13.3	4500
After Warsaw uprising		3	2.7	900
Unknown		19	16.8	2770
Total		113	100.0	23500

in his presentation, which introduced a fundamental bias in his research. Paulsson assumes that in the memoirs that he examined, and which served as the basis on which he created the list of the Hotel Polski victims, all the causes of death are similarly represented. This is not so! As the latest research shows, the Hotel Polski affair was most famous; there were few Jews who were hiding in or around Warsaw who did not know someone who had gone there. Sometimes those who had been lured into the German snare even made contact with friends and relatives in hiding in an attempt to persuade them to join the ersatz safe haven, and many vacillated about whether to try out this possibility of “rescue.” For these reasons, many fugitives in hiding in occupied Warsaw knew people who had fallen into the trap.⁷⁸

In contrast, the other causes of death that Paulsson selected were less overt: betrayal and murder; capture in German manhunts; and natural circumstances. These were not extensively publicized. Similarly, Jews who were in hiding or living under false identities were not able to trace the fate of those who had returned to the ghetto or left Warsaw. The chaos that prevailed during and after the Polish uprising further impaired their ability to gather information about the demise of other Jews. For this reason, even though almost all Jews in hiding had heard about the Hotel Polski and its victims, one cannot assume that they had heard about the other circumstances of Jewish deaths to the same extent. Paulsson’s estimates of the proportions of the other victims underrepresent them considerably.

This is not the place to discuss additional methodological problems that underlie these calculations.⁷⁹ Here I merely state

78 See, for example, the last letter from Abraham Zajf, Konin, August 12, 1943, *Dappim le-heger ha-Shoah* (Hebrew), Collection A (January–April 1951), pp. 170–172; Arie Neuberger, *The Last Ones, at the End of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising* (Hebrew) (Merhavia: Sifriat HaPoalim, 1958), p. 143; Calel Perechodnik, *Am I A Murderer?: Testament Of A Ghetto Policeman* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1996), p. 216.

79 Much as in other cases, the disregard of sources collected in Yiddish or Hebrew may bias the outcomes in favor of those who were more involved in Polish

that Paulsson's estimates are underestimates that fail to represent even the points he wishes to make.

For this reason, again, we can only return to the accepted estimates in the research concerning both the number of Jews who hid in Warsaw during the war and the number who survived. Israel Gutman, the preeminent researcher on Warsaw Jewry during the Holocaust, claims that 15,000–20,000 Jews hid on the “Aryan” side of the occupied city throughout all the war years and that only a few thousand of them survived.⁸⁰

It is important to emphasize that the number of Jewish survivors in Warsaw was especially small not only because of the circumstances surrounding the relief and concealment available in the city, but mainly as a result of the tragic fate of the Polish capital.⁸¹ It should be borne in mind, however, that those tens

society and, therefore, had greater prospects of survival. Furthermore, neither German nor Polish sources were used to examine the phenomenon and its extent, nor its other aspects. Finally, according to Paulsson's calculations, and taking into account the heavy losses of the civilian population during the Warsaw Uprising, Jews living on the “Aryan” side had a better chance of surviving this uprising than the Poles did! (I thank Omer Lev for calling this to my attention.)

80 Israel Gutman, Abraham Wein, Shlomo Netzer, *History of the Jews of Warsaw, from Their Inception to the Present Day* (Hebrew) (Jerusalem: Keter, 1991), p. 255; Israel Gutman, “Warsaw,” in Abraham Wein, ed., *Encyclopedia of Jewish Communities, Poland (Volume IV). Warsaw and Its Region* (Hebrew) (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1989), p. 123; *idem*, ed., “Warsaw,” *Encyclopedia of the Holocaust*, vol. 2 (Hebrew) (Tel Aviv: Yad Vashem, 1990), p. 480; Israel Gutman and Shmuel Krakowski, *Unequal Victims, Poles and Jews during World War Two* (New York: Holocaust Library, 1986), p. 195.

81 The “Great Deportation,” in the summer of 1942, of hundreds of thousands of Jews to Treblinka—which was solely an extermination camp, as opposed to a labor and extermination center, such as Auschwitz and Majdanek—was but the first stage in the obliteration of Warsaw Jewry. Of almost a million Jews who were sent to Treblinka from all over Europe, including more than 300,000 from Warsaw, only around fifty remained alive at the end of the war. Most had participated in the camp uprising on August 3, 1943; only a handful of them were indeed from Warsaw.

The next event—the Warsaw ghetto uprising, in which the Germans torched the ghetto and blew up its remaining buildings with the inhabitants inside—claimed a dear price of Jewish blood in Warsaw. In addition to the tens of thousands who perished in the flames of the ghetto, in the bunkers that turned into tombs, and during the mass executions, those who were captured were

of thousands who attempted to hide on the “Aryan” side had to contend not only with the German enemy but also, as I show below, with the indifference, the disdain, and sometimes even the hostility of the local Polish population. Thus, one can only lament that the proportion of the Jews of Warsaw who survived

sent to Treblinka or to the camps in the Lublin area, primarily Majdanek. On November 3, 1943, the Germans launched “Operation *Erntefest*” (“Harvest Festival”). In its gruesome course, some 42,000 Jews were murdered in the camps in the Lublin District, including 18,000 in Majdanek. What this meant for the vestiges of Warsaw Jewry was that only those who had been transferred to some other camp—Auschwitz, Gross-Rosen, or the HASAG factories, for example—before the mass murder, managed to live out the murderous year of 1943. Those prisoners numbered some 15,000 in all, and not all of them were from Warsaw. Even these Jews had to endure relentless *Aktionen* in the camps to which they had been sent, ghastly material conditions, and the death marches as the war wound down. The fact that their numbers were so small is no cause for amazement.

Those who did flee to the “Aryan” side had to contend not only with the typical hardships of life in hiding or living under false identities, but also with the inferno of the Polish uprising. Apart from the atrocities that the Germans perpetrated against the civilian population of the city during the uprising, the Jews faced an especially dire situation. The Germans’ “punitive actions” against Poland, which had dared to rebel, included the expulsion of the entire civilian population from the city—women and children to Pruszków, and men to various camps, including Auschwitz—and the burning of the city. For those living under false identities, this meant having to retain or reassemble “Aryan” papers and trying to pass through the tight German filter among a population that often did not hesitate to denounce Jews in hiding. If this was no simple ordeal for women and girls, it was especially difficult for men. Being circumcised, they had little maneuvering room, and, indeed, many appear to have been singled out as Jews in the camps to which they had been sent. For the Jews who remained in hiding, the situation was even more complex. Many had gone into hiding because they had a “bad appearance,” i.e., they could not blend into the Polish surroundings due to their outer appearance, mentality, or knowledge (and accent) of languages. If they came out of hiding, they had no chance; if they stayed in hiding, many courted certain death. There were Jews—such as the pianist Władysław Szpilman—who managed to survive, but they were very few. They spent months living in the ruins without any source of food, amid hostile and trigger-happy German forces and a harsh winter at the gate. By January 17, 1945—when the Red Army liberated Warsaw—only a few hundred remained alive. Thus, the especially small number of survivors from the Warsaw ghetto is unsurprising and should be blamed primarily on the Germans’ murderous ways, which left Jews with no way to escape from the Warsaw ghetto, from the camps to which they were expelled, or to blend into the “Aryan” side.

among the Polish population on the “Aryan” side did not exceed several thousand—and not only because of the Germans.

3. Paulsson: “*The total number of helpers [to the Jews in occupied Warsaw stood] at between 70,000 and 90,000.*”⁸²

In order to estimate the number of Polish rescuers in Warsaw, Paulsson uses an especially problematic technique, which others have applied as well: multiplication.⁸³ Paulsson examined thirty places of hiding where, he says, 122 Jews concealed themselves and were assisted by sixty-eight non-Jews, most of them Poles. In every hiding place, he claims, an average of four Jews were concealed at any given time. This means that the 20,000 Jews in hiding needed 5,000 places of accommodation and aid from 11,500 Poles. He then took the figures, multiplied them by seven and a half—claiming this was the average number of hiding places Jews needed throughout the war—and came to 35,000 hiding places that ostensibly existed in occupied Warsaw and 80,500 rescuers who acted on the Jews’ behalf.

To deflect the argument that some Poles helped Jews without realizing that they were assisting a persecuted minority, Paulsson subtracted about one-fourth from the total of 80,000, thus reaching a number of 60,000 people involved in hiding Jews. However, he did not explain how he had concluded that one-fourth of the rescuers, and not some other fraction, did not know the identity of those they were helping. Then he added to the helpers one-sixth to one-half of the number (10,000–30,000)

82 Paulsson, *Secret City*, p. 131.

83 See, for example, Hans G. Furth, “One Million Polish Rescuers of Hunted Jews?” *Journal of Genocide Research*, 1, 2 (June 1999), pp. 227–232; Maciej Kozłowski, Andrzej Folwarczny, and Michał Bilewicz, eds., *Difficult Questions in Polish-Jewish Dialog* (Warsaw: Jacek Santorski and Co., 2006), pp. 66–74; Marcin Urynowicz, “Zorganizowana i indywidualna pomoc Polaków dla ludności żydowskiej eksterminowanej przez okupanta niemieckiego w okresie drugiej wojny światowej,” Andrzej Żbikowski, ed., *Polacy i Żydzi pod okupacją niemiecką, 1939–1945: studia i materiały* (Warsaw: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej—Komisja Ścigania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu, 2006), pp. 209–279.

that he had worked out (60,000)—again without explaining how he had arrived at this estimate. He defined them as “secondary helpers”—“background figures” involved in the rescue act but about whom Jews were often unaware, as they worked behind the scenes. Basing himself on these calculations, Paulsson set the number of rescuers of Jews at 70,000–90,000 in Warsaw alone.⁸⁴ In a city that had a population of less than one million inhabitants after the obliteration of the ghetto—including many Germans who served in the Nazi apparatus—this is an impressive figure and constitutes a sizable proportion of the population (about 10 percent).

Here, as in other cases, Paulsson does not refer the reader to his sources. We have no way of knowing the nature of these hideouts, the identity of the Jews and the non-Jews who helped them, and so on. Similarly, Paulsson does not explain how he reached the “conclusion” that every Jew needed 7.5 hiding places,⁸⁵ a figure not supported by the findings on rescue in other countries or in Poland. However, since many others tend to estimate the number of rescuers as a multiple of the number of survivors, one cannot excuse Paulsson by only raising those questions.

I do not wish to wonder in this framework how such a widescale rescue has eluded the searchlight of research until now and why we have not found a solid body of documentation attesting to this—either from the Jewish survivors, the German occupation authorities, the Polish government-in-exile, or Polish elements who, immediately after the war, searched for heroic feats such as these in order to glorify themselves.⁸⁶ Again, we cannot review all the methodological problems that arise when numerical estimates are worked out on the basis of tenuous multiplication, but we will note two basic problems with Paulsson’s estimates:

84 Paulsson, *Secret City*, pp. 129–131.

85 Paulsson switches back and forth between 7 and 7.5; cf., *Secret City*, pp. 127 and 130.

86 I previously described this trend; see “Research in Poland and Elsewhere During the ‘Iron Curtain’ Period” in Part 1, p. 12.

(1) A sample examination of the number of Jews who survived in proportion to the number of Poles involved in rescue activities, based on Yad Vashem's files of Polish Righteous Among the Nations, indicates the opposite phenomenon than what Paulsson claims. Each surviving Jew had not been aided by many Poles, but, in fact, by and large, each Pole who helped rescue Jews actually saved more than one. Thus, at first glance, it was not one Jew who availed him/herself of 7.5 Poles or ten Righteous Among the Nations, but, more likely, an average of two or three Jews who survived was due to the actions of one Polish Righteous Among the Nations.⁸⁷

How can we explain that, on the one hand, an individual Jew needed help from more than one person to survive the war, but, on the other hand, those who helped one Jew usually played a direct or indirect role in helping others? In the final analysis, we seem to be dealing with two small groups: several thousand Jews who did their utmost to locate those Polish circles and individuals who were willing to help Jews despite the attendant peril; and several thousand Poles whom the fugitives sought out and were called upon to expand their assistance endeavors to more and more Jews.⁸⁸ Thus, what we are dealing with is an amazing but

87 Irit Czerniawski *Polish Righteous Among the Nations, Statistical Aspects* (Hebrew), M.A. thesis, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1998. An examination of the data in Yad Vashem's *Encyclopedia of the Righteous Among the Nations* (see note 30) elicits much the same results.

88 There is much historical evidence that quite a number of Poles who helped Jews were involved in other acts of rescue and often saved more than one person. Sometimes these were the relatives of Jews who were already in hiding; they would sneak into the shelter and join their relatives, often despite the objections of the rescuers themselves. Sometimes these were Jews who heard about certain Poles' benevolence and simply knocked on their doors; and sometimes there were Polish rescuers who actively worked to enlarge the number of Jews they assisted. Thus, in many cases, we are actually looking at the "same Pole" who was involved in rescuing many Jews in various ways and at different times.

For some specific examples, see the testimony of Sara Bergazyn, Jewish Historical Institute Archives (JHIA), 301.5681; testimony of Eliaz Pietruszka, Righteous Among the Nations, JHIA, 301.5222; the story of the Righteous Among the Nations Leon Bukowinsk as told in YVA, O.3/2512; the description of the Righteous Among the Nations Beck in the diary of Clara Kramer (née

numerically small group of people who somehow managed to rescue a large number of Jews, and therefore the creation of a multiple makes no statistical or historical sense whatsoever.

(2) The puzzling attempt to estimate the number of Righteous Among the Nations by multiplying the number of Jewish survivors overlooks the fact that some Jews who survived did so with no help from Polish society.

As stated, Jews concealed themselves on the “Aryan” side of Warsaw in two main ways: under false identities or in hideouts. The latter, it is true, were totally dependent on assistance from their landlords for their most basic necessities—food, waste removal, etc. However, since the Nazi occupier decreed death on anyone who helped Jews, many rescuers kept their heroic actions secret—in some cases even from their own families—throughout the years of the war.⁸⁹ In contrast, those living under false identities concealed their Jewish origins from their surroundings because they could not know which neighbor would lament their persecution and which would attack them. Although these Jews did need bogus papers and social connections to allay suspicion, most assistance of this kind was small in scale. Thus, the rescue of Jews—in hiding and under false identities— entailed very different degrees of help from the surroundings and created

Schwarz), United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archive, Acc.1994.95. I thank Dr. Silberklang, who first brought this document to my attention.

89 See, for example, testimony of Stanislaw Chemielewski, Righteous Among the Nations, JHIA, 301.5815, p. 7. Chemielewski describes being wary of those in his surroundings as he went about his actions. See also testimonies of Elzbieta and Janina Szandrowska, Righteous Among the Nations, JHIA, 301.5729; and Maria and Adam Śniader, Righteous Among the Nations, JHIA, 301.4170. Eugenia Ida Rolnicka, JHIA, 301.5717, testified that her rescuer concealed his assistance even from his wife. Stanisław Sznepman, JHIA, 302.198, wrote that Poles who wished to help Jews did so secretly. Jakub Smakowski (“Black Julek”), JHIA, 302.145, who wrote his memoirs in Yiddish, also recalls those Righteous Among the Nations who concealed their actions from an extortionist daughter. Sadly, but importantly, some also masked their exalted actions for years after the end of the war due to fear of a hostile response from their neighbors and families. See anonymous, JHIA, 302.69, who opens her testimony by stating she can not identify, since she does not want to put n risk her rescuers.

totally different realities with regard to Jewish–Polish relations.⁹⁰ Multiplying the number of Jewish survivors in disregard of the complexity of Jewish life—and Polish life!—is pointless. This is true without even noting an important historical fact that, apart from the Polish Righteous Among the Nations, quite a few Jews living under false identities seem to have been active in trying to rescue other Jews as well.⁹¹

For these reasons one cannot use the number of Jews who survived in hiding as a basis for multiplication. This takes us back to the traditional—but well-grounded—estimates of some tens of thousands of Righteous Among the Nations in all of Poland.

It is true that, since the end of the war, Yad Vashem has recognized approximately 6,000 Poles as Righteous Among the Nations who helped Jews during the war in all parts of occupied Poland. This is an especially impressive number, even though it reflects not only the extent of aid provided to Jews in the Holocaust but also the size of the community that was exterminated. Indubitably, however, in Poland—as in other countries—many others helped Jews but never received the esteemed title. On the Yad Vashem website, it is stated: “It needs to be noted that the numbers of Righteous recognized do not reflect the full extent of help given by non-Jews to Jews during the Holocaust; they are rather based on the material and documentation that was made available to Yad Vashem”; and “For lack of information and evidence, not all... who risked their lives to help these Jews were honored.”⁹² Indeed, sometimes

90 On differences among these patterns of rescue, see my lecture, “Life in Hiding, under False Identity or in the Forests: Characteristics and Basic Problems,” given at Yad Vashem in December 2010, at the international conference on “Self-Concealment, Concealment, and Borrowed Identity as Ways to Survive the Holocaust.”

91 Below I refer explicitly to the importance of fitting the private and public rescue actions of Jews on behalf of other Jews into the historical debate. In addition to the testimonies cited above, see testimony of Irma Grunwald, JHIA, 301.5543, 301.4242; testimony of Dawid Zimler, JHIA, 301.470; Toussia Krapucka, YVA, O.3/1593.

92 <http://www1.yadvashem.org/yv/en/righteous/statistics.asp>.

Righteous Among the Nations were murdered together with the Jews whom they had tried to save—leaving no one behind to testify about their deeds;⁹³ and sometimes the survivors and their families did not do what was necessary in order to bestow this title on their benefactors.⁹⁴ Furthermore, diaries and testimonies about the Holocaust expose the reader to no shortage of names, dates, and events that attest to impressive cases of rescue actions, even though the names do not appear on Yad Vashem’s list of Righteous Among the Nations.⁹⁵

How many Righteous Among the Nations—recognized or not—were active in occupied Warsaw during the war? To date, hundreds of Poles who lived in Warsaw during the war have been recognized as Righteous Among the Nations. However, given the circumstances described above, the total number of people—Jews and non-Jews—who helped Jews in Warsaw during the Holocaust must have been larger. One may speak of several thousand courageous and high-minded individuals in Warsaw, yet no exact estimate can be offered.

Interim Tally

As we have seen, Paulsson exploits the psychological impression of absolute numbers to furnish a biased and misleading analysis of the reality in occupied Warsaw. However, his estimates of the number of Jews hiding on the “Aryan” side of the city, those who survived until or even after the Polish uprising in Warsaw, and Poles who helped Jews are all based on problematic samples, dubious representations, and puzzling feats of multiplication. Furthermore, a study of Paulsson’s remarks reveals a consistent tendency to overestimate the number of Jewish survivors and

93 Stanisław Kaniewski and Bożena Roguska-Gajewska, “Gdy stawką w walce o życie było inne życie,” *Biuletyn Głównej Komisji Badania Zbrodni Przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej*, 35 (1993), pp. 180–196.

94 Consider, for example, the story recounted in Menachem Daum’s documentary film *Hiding and Seeking: Faith and Tolerance After the Holocaust* (2004).

95 See, for example, Alfred Musikowski, whose name appears in the testimony of Sara Bergazyn, JHIA, 301.5681.

Poles who helped them and deliberately to understate the number of Jews harmed by Poles.⁹⁶ Is this just an innocent statistical misunderstanding, or is it a tendentious bias based on pseudo-statistical rationale?

The faulty arithmetic revealed above is invoked regularly by others who wish to inflate the role of the high-minded few who helped Jews during the Holocaust and provides grist for studies that tend to overstate the number of Jews who survived or of Poles who helped them. The extent of this phenomenon and its implications for the public sphere⁹⁷ show how important it is to expose the inherent basic problems that they embody. It must be noted, too, that the methodological failures that underlie Paulsson's calculations are but one characteristic of the problematic foundations of his study.

Use of Sources

Paulsson bases his study on more than a hundred archival documents and dozens of written and oral testimonies. At first glance, it is hard not to be impressed by the broad documentary sources cited in his book. A meticulous reading, however, shows that, unfortunately, Paulsson fails in regard to one of the most basic principles in writing reliable history: He used his sources selectively and cited in his book the excerpts that he thinks reinforce his numerical estimates, while disregarding all the rest. In this limited framework I cannot relate to other flaws in Paulsson's work, including disregard of Polish sources on the imminent danger that the Righteous Among the Nations faced

96 For example, unlike his expansionary estimates of the number of persons who helped Jews, Paulsson's estimate of the number of those who tried to do injury to the persecuted Jews is a mere 3,000–4,000; see Paulsson, *Secret City*, p. 149.

97 See, for example, the idea of establishing a monument in Warsaw for 10,000 Polish Righteous Among the Nations and the debate over this matter in the Polish press: Tomasz Urzykowski, "Ilu Polaków ratowało Żydów?" *Gazeta Wyborcza*, October 21, 2011. See also responses at http://forum.gazeta.pl/forum/w,904,129969945,Ilu_Polakow_ratowalo_Zydow_.html?v=2.

from their neighbors; the omission of German sources;⁹⁸ and the assertion that the most relevant sources for this issue were written in Polish—as an excuse for overlooking testimonies and documents in Yiddish or Hebrew.⁹⁹ I shall limit myself to but a few examples of sources that Paulsson quotes in a partial, biased, and misleading manner. Anyone who studies his book carefully will find many others.

Misrepresentation of Sources—Example 1

On page 93 of his book, Paulsson quotes the testimony of Janina Baran from the collection of testimonies in the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw. Paulsson uses this testimony to prove how easy it was for Jews to escape from some of the camps to which they had been sent after the liquidation of the Warsaw ghetto, and to emphasize the Jews’ “refusal” to take these measures to save their lives:

Escape from this camp [Poniatowa] presented almost no difficulty. And so many Jews did escape.... In the first days of May [1943], whole caravans of people went from there to Warsaw. Often Soviet partisans would come to the camp at night and try to talk the Jews into escaping, but unfortunately these people were so blinded or discouraged that no one wanted to make the move.... Why people didn’t escape...can only be explained by the fact that some had nowhere to go, others were discouraged—for them it was

98 See, for example, testimony of Józefa Krawczyk, JHIA, 301.4200; testimony of Janina Szandorowska, JHIA, 301.5729.

99 Along with the collection of diaries and testimonies at JHIA, Paulsson says he also relied on miscellaneous collections in the Yad Vashem Archives. However, in these archives, in the collections of diaries and testimonies alone (O.3, O.33), one may find many documents in Hebrew (nearly 1,500 testimonies concerning Warsaw) and Yiddish (more than 250 documents about Warsaw) that Paulsson did not examine. In addition, the Central Historical Committee in Munich amassed some 200 testimonies in its collections of documents (MIE) and historical questionnaires (MIQ), which include valuable information gathered at the end of the war, mostly in Yiddish. I thank Mr. Zvi Bernhardt of the Yad Vashem Archives for providing me with this important information.

all the same—and others no doubt believed Tobbens [Walter Casper Többens, the German in charge of the factory that was transferred from the Warsaw Ghetto to the camp in the Lublin district].

Although these words *do* appear in Ms. Baran’s testimony, she also made additional remarks relating directly to Paulsson’s research topic. Unfortunately, Paulsson chose not to include the following:

There were lots of children at this camp. There were parents who were willing to hand over their children very gladly [*chętnie*]*—*but there was no one to hand them to. Without money, handing over children and escaping were impossible. Escaping from the ghetto was no simple matter. There was nowhere—a gate or some other hole—where *Szmalcowniks* [denouncers/blackmailers] did not stand, [and they] kept an eye on every Jew until their sacrifice was complete. Poles who helped [Jews] for pay—since I did not know any others—were afraid of these *Szmalcowniks*. Today, we often run into the claim that every other Aryan concealed Jews; if this were so, where are all these Jews?¹⁰⁰

Why did Paulsson choose to “disregard” the continuation of Ms. Baran’s testimony? Why did he leave these morbid remarks out of his book? Why does he quote the witness to prove how easy it was to escape from the camp when she went on to say exactly the opposite? Only Paulsson knows. However, it is my understanding that this example shows that Paulsson selected relevant sources and excerpts from the archival documents in order to fit them into his unfounded theory.

100 Testimony of Janina Baran, JHIA, 5085.

Misrepresentation of Sources—Example 2

In another example, Paulsson recounts the willingness of the Catholic Church in Poland to help Jews by rescuing children and placing them in convents. Paulsson bases his remarks on Ringelblum's note, "Priests Wish to Save Jewish Children,"¹⁰¹ in which Ringelblum describes discussions in the "Jewish street" about the possibility of placing Jewish children in the custody of Catholic organizations. Ringelblum surveyed the range of views that were expressed on this option—from categorical opposition lest the children be converted out of the faith, to leaving the decision to each individual—as far as seizing any opportunity to save children. Ringelblum's remarks led Paulsson to the following conclusion: "Catholic organizations did help hundreds of Jewish children on an individual basis, once they had been sent out of the ghetto; whether they could have saved more [children] if this offer [of placing them in Catholic hands] had been taken up [by the Jewish public] must remain moot."¹⁰² With this argument, Paulsson actually faults the Jewish public for the children's death.

As emphasized above, Paulsson does not read Hebrew and overlooks Yiddish sources as well. However, he definitely reads Polish and certainly read Ringelblum's writings, which were produced and published in Polish and translated into English. Indeed, he used them throughout his book. Thus, there is no possible way of excusing his disregard of the additional account of this debate, which appears in Ringelblum's work on Polish–Jewish relations. In Chapter 8, Ringelblum briefly describes the plan to conceal hundreds of children in convents and again reviews the Jewish public's views on the matter. Ringelblum then concludes his discussion of the plan, along with the section that

101 Emanuel Ringelblum, *Diary and Notes from the Period of the War: The Warsaw Ghetto September 1939–December 1942* (Hebrew), Israel Gutman, Joseph Kermish and Israel Shacham, eds. (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1992), pp. 434–435. Since the English publication of Ringelblum's writings is very selective, I am referring to the full Hebrew edition.

102 Paulsson, *Secret City*, p. 88.

discusses Jewish children on the “Aryan” side, in the following words: “The project was not carried out because of a variety of difficulties, but mainly because the Polish clergy was not very interested in the question of saving Jewish children.”¹⁰³

Misrepresentation of Sources—Example 3

While maximizing his estimation of the efforts that Polish society in Warsaw—as a whole and as individuals—made on behalf of the Jews, Paulsson seems constantly and sweepingly to dismiss the role of Poles who harmed Jews. Thus, he states, “Occasionally, a neighbor might actually denounce the Jews, though this was uncommon,”¹⁰⁴ and “Very occasionally, we have reliable eyewitness testimony to an act of denunciation.”¹⁰⁵ Paulsson contends that even as tens of thousands of Poles (70,000–90,000) helped Jews in Warsaw, no more than 3,000–4,000 *Szmalcowniki* and extortionists operated alongside them.¹⁰⁶

This is not the place to list the many accessible sources that detail the proliferation of denunciations and betrayals of Jews in Warsaw; for the same reason, I will not present the range of sources in German, Yiddish, Hebrew, and Polish that the author overlooks.¹⁰⁷ However, I do wish to argue that even the sources that Paulsson uses throughout his book offer no shortage of testimonies about denunciations and betrayals, which Paulsson blatantly disregards. Szapsł Rotholc, a former Polish boxing champion whom Paulsson quotes several times, testified that his first attempt to get his cousin out of the ghetto failed due to

103 Ringelblum, *Polish-Jewish Relations*, p. 151. Paulsson cites from this chapter in his book on p. 133 (note 111); one can assume he has read the entire chapter and purposely ignored the continuation. See also the Polish version, *idem*, *Stosunki polsko-żydowskie w czasie drugiej wojny światowej* (Warszawa: Czytelnik, 1988).

104 Paulsson, *Secret City*, p. 123.

105 *Ibid.*, p. 143.

106 Compare his estimates on pp. 130–131, concerning assistance to Jews, with his estimate of the assaults against them on p. 149.

107 In addition to those cited in this chapter, see Karol Rotgeber, JHIA, 302.48, Notebook 12; Stanisław Sznapan, JHIA, 302.198.

a group of *Szmalcowniki* who ambushed them at the edge of the ghetto; he even described the extortionist methods that the Polish denouncers used.¹⁰⁸ Dawid Glat, whose story Paulsson quotes in detail, described seven cases of extortion, exploitation, and denunciation—five of which were committed by people whom he explicitly identified as Poles;¹⁰⁹ and Natan Gross also noted the abundance of cases of extortion and denunciation.¹¹⁰

These examples demonstrate more than just Paulsson's highly selective reading of the sources that he used; they also, and mainly, reveal the problematic standards that guided him in determining the value of the testimonies. It appears as if he deemed the excerpts from the testimonies that attested to aid by Poles to Jews as highly reliable, while classifying those that described harm inflicted on Jews as blatantly unreliable, and their incriminating contents was totally masked.

Interim Tally

The existing documentation about Jewish–Polish relations during the Holocaust numbers at least hundreds of millions of pages in various archives and in various languages. One cannot expect Holocaust researchers—however talented they may be—to have read all or even most of them in support of this or that argument or theory. However, one definitely may ask of them to express their arguments on the basis of the documentation and not to pick and choose among the sources on the basis of their

108 Testimony of Szapsł Rotholc, JHIA, 301.4235, pp. 15–16, 25. See also his detailed file from the Jewish community court, JHIA, 313.109.

109 Testimony of Dawid Glat, JHIA, 301.4631.

110 Testimony of Natan Gross, YVA, O.3/824. See also other sources that Paulsson used in his study: testimony of Stanisław Chmielewski, *Righteous Among the Nations*, JHIA, 301.5815, pp. 7, 17, and elsewhere; testimony of Dina Kagan, JHIA, 301.4629. Also cf. Paulsson's derisive comment that if every other Pole really were a denouncer, then Glat's rescue should be considered a miracle (p. 113) with testimony by Janina Stolarczyk, JHIA, 301.5583, who claims that, given the many cases of extortion that she had experienced in the streets of Warsaw, the very fact of her survival should be considered a miracle. Paulsson quotes her testimony in a different context.

own contentions. The disregard of contradictory information available in the sources and the application of differing principles to determine their reliability—on the basis of their contents as opposed to their credibility—raise difficult questions about the use, if not the abuse, of the archival documentation.

Historical Reality

Statistical processing and archive sources are the problematic foundations on which Paulsson bases historical claims that are intrinsically groundless. Unsurprisingly, his historical claims demonstrate, more than anything else, his total unfamiliarity with Jewish society, Polish society, and the reality of life in occupied Poland. In this case, too, for lack of space, I will present only a few examples that reflect how Paulsson's distortion of the historical reality holds the Jews at fault for their own extermination.

1. The Hotel Polski Affair as a Reflection of a Death Wish Among Jews on the "Aryan" Side—is this really so?

At the beginning of Chapter 4 (pp. 138–140), Paulsson recounts the tragic story of the Hotel Polski, mentioned previously. After recounting the affair briefly, he claims, "In short, given a choice between trusting Poles who had shown good faith or proven gang of [German] murderers, a good proportion of the Jews in hiding opted for the latter." Paulsson suggests that the Jews preferred to hand themselves over to the Germans instead of remaining among the beneficent Polish society due to a collective death wish:

Clearly it is an oversimplification to attribute the "psychosis" of the Hotel Polski to the difficulties of life on the Aryan side or the attractions of the scheme itself. No rational calculation could lead there. Adina Blady-Szwajger took her husband to the Hotel Polski, at his wish and against her better judgment; she believes his impulse was suicidal. And this may give us the necessary clue. A

woman with a long history of suicide attempts once told me that when she had up her mind to kill herself, she felt completely at peace. Perhaps the Nazis, who often showed astonishing insight into the psychology of their victims, understood this. They offered what the best *melina* could not: a few months of serenity and apparently normal life. Their victims swallowed the offer like a drug.¹¹¹

Let us ignore for a moment the simplistic and somewhat derisive explanation of the matter as based on the Jews' suicidal tendencies¹¹² and focus on the beginning of Paulsson's remarks. The question is whether, indeed, one cannot blame the fact that Jews streamed to the Hotel Polski on the reality of life on the "Aryan" side—as many researchers indeed claim. Even a sketchy perusal of the Jews' writings (including those in Polish, which were available to Paulsson) illuminates the ghastly reality that the Jews in hiding experienced—the intense fear, the constant suspense, and the never-ending struggle to survive each passing moment. In her contemporary memoirs, for example, Noemi Szac-Wajnkranc described the flow of despairing Jews who made their way to the Hotel Polski:

Jews gathered from all of Warsaw, the peripheral towns, everywhere. They had nowhere to live; they realized that as survivors of the ghettos, they would perish here. Their money wouldn't be enough to survive on and they could not afford failures. Perpetual fear, eyes relentlessly flitting in their sockets. Maybe he recognized me? Dependency on anyone who held your life in his hands. From a little boy on up, it sufficed for anyone to call out: it's a Jew! and it was all over. All the papers of whatever kind wouldn't help. Sometimes only a wallet flush with money [could

111 Paulsson, *Secret City*, p. 140.

112 Needless to say, such Jews who indeed had lost their will to live—there must have been some—could have found death easily without the Hotel Polski. Occupied Warsaw presented Jews with inexhaustible opportunities to die.

help]. But for how long would the money suffice? Apart from this, Jew, you can't always buy your life with money! Despairing people, really only half-people, were pleased to hear that a refuge had been found for them—that the perpetual fear, the continual humiliation, the eternal attacks, would be over, that the nightmarish life, or the ostensible life, would end. You could officially join the rest of our people. What a joy!¹¹³

This testimony shows that it was hopelessness and despair combined with fear and terror—all intrinsic to Jewish life in hiding and under false identities—that prompted Jews to stream to the Hotel Polski, and not some kind of death wish. It was the intimidating surroundings, the constant fear of informers, and the continuous blackmailing that drove the Jews from their risky shelters. The Germans set the trap by falsely promising dignity and security in a world of humiliation and anxiety, not a sleeping pill. The impossible reality of life for Jews on the “Aryan” side of Warsaw is also reflected in later testimonies.¹¹⁴

113 JHIA, 302.122, p. 163. This document was published both in Hebrew and in Polish; see Bella Gutterman, ed., *Gone with the Fire: Notes about the Warsaw Ghetto, Written in Hiding* by Noemi Szac-Wajnkranc (Hebrew) (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2003), p. 179; Noemi Szac-Wajnkranc, *Przeminęło z ogniem* (Warsaw-Łódź-Kraków: Centralna Żydowska Komisja Historyczna w Polsce, 1947), p. 162.

114 For example, testifying about her ordeal on the “Aryan” side of Warsaw, the Holocaust survivor Helene Goldberg reported having been extorted many times, both by strangers and by Poles who ostensibly offered her a place to hide. According to Goldberg, her brother-in-law vehemently opposed her decision to go to Hotel Polski, arguing that it was a German deception, “but I think the end is already coming. There’s already no place in the world for me.” At the Hotel Polski, she met a Mr. Rolnik, who was staying there with his nine-year-old son. The young father was also very concerned about rumors about the safety of the place and, above all, those relating to a transport of Jews that was supposed to depart from the hotel the next day. Although other Jews at the hotel attempted to soothe him, his concerns were not allayed, and he decided to leave the hotel along with Goldberg: “We left the hotel together. Perhaps we will manage to find a place to spend the night, if only one night. All we want is to survive the next day’s transport... In vain we go from house to house and ask for a place to hide. No one wants to let us in. We’re going back to the hotel.” Testimony of Helene Goldberg, YVA, O.3/1167.

Paulsson’s book does not reflect the despair that overtook the Jewish victims of Nazism in their endless struggle for existence. He seems to attempt to describe the Jews’ lives as something disconnected from the cruel reality of the life that overtook them.¹¹⁵

2. Paulsson: “*If they [the Jews of Warsaw] only racked their brains*”—*is this really so?*

On page 35, Paulsson makes the following claim:

It thus becomes clear that whatever it was that limited the number of *melinas* available to the Jews, it was not the lack of people—Poles, and Jews with connections—to whom they could potentially turn for help. All the Jews in Warsaw, if they racked their brains, could probably come up with some Polish acquaintance or associate with whom they had been on good terms before the war, or some relative who had such contacts.

Thus Paulsson—again!—faults the Jews for their own death: They did not bother to seek out their Polish comrades and that is why the hideouts on the “Aryan” side were never filled to capacity.¹¹⁶ Paulsson’s remarks are based on several misreadings

115 In this case, too, Paulsson could have made full use of information in the testimonies that he had read. For example, Szepsel Rutholc, whom he quotes in his book, speaks of Polish agents who had been sent out in pursuit of his hiding family; they decided to turn themselves in at the Hotel Polski; JHIA, 301.4659, p. 3. See also testimony of Josef Himmelblau, one of the cigarette vendors at Three Crosses Square, JHIA, 301.3615—his mother and brother surrendered to the deception after several cases of extortion and denunciation that had left them penniless.

116 Interestingly, the Żegota activists disagreed with Paulsson; they described the problem of housing on the “Aryan” side as the most difficult of all—unsolvable, in fact—due to extortion and overcharging of rent to Jews. See Żegota report to Delegatura (Polish government-in-exile delegation in Poland) on Żegota activities between December 1942 and October 1943, October 23, 1943, Part 6, GFHA, Collections, 5449. I take this opportunity to thank Mr. Yossi Shavit, former director of the Ghetto Fighters’ House Archives, for his continual assistance in the study of archival documents. Many of these documents have

of history. The most problematic is the assumption that any appeal to a Polish acquaintance whom a Jew had known from before the war would be required.¹¹⁷

It is true that some Jews availed themselves of people who had harbored antisemitic tendencies before the war¹¹⁸ and that some received impressive assistance from total strangers.¹¹⁹ Other Jews, however, turned to prewar friends and were given the cold shoulder.¹²⁰ Worse still was the plight of Jews who turned to friends for aid and discovered—sometimes belatedly—that they had literally set traps for them. The testimony of Diana Kagan—whom Paulsson quotes in a different context (on how easy it was to move to the Aryan side and hide there even

been scanned and are accessible to the public at <http://iis.infocenters.co.il/gfh/search.asp?lang=HEB&dlang=HEB&module=search&page=criteria&rsrv=1¶m=<uppernav>complex</>¶m2=&site=gfh>.

- 117 This article is not the place to relate to Paulsson's assumption (pp. 34–35) that every Jew from Warsaw had Polish acquaintances or relatives who had Polish acquaintances to whom s/he could turn, and to the very fact that not all Jews *in* Warsaw were *from* Warsaw.
- 118 The most famous case is that of Zofia Kossak-Szczucka, a Polish writer and a founding member of Żegota. See also Calem (Calek) Perechodnik, *Am I A Murderer?: Testament of a Ghetto Policeman* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1996), pp. 122–123; and the writings of Henryk Ryszewski, Righteous Among the Nations, who before the war had been a journalist with pronounced antisemitic leanings, JHIA, 302.212.
- 119 For example, Leon Bukowiński, Righteous Among the Nations, describes in his testimony having taken under his protection two children from the Borensztejn family, whom he had not known at all before the war, YVA, 0.3/2512.
- 120 Apart from the examples offered above and those that follow, see GHFA, memoirs of Stanisław Holckener, GFHA, Collections, 6086. Holckener hid on the “Aryan” side of Warsaw with seventeen other Jews and wrote his memoirs under these conditions in late 1943. In the aftermath of the January 1943 *Aktion*, he says, he decided to escape from the ghetto together with his wife. He turned to Stanisław Kamiński, a mechanic who worked at a movie theater that he had owned during the twelve years preceding the war and who had once promised to help them. Indeed, Kamiński kept his word and agreed to conceal the couple—for pay—promising them that “It’ll be as good for you with me as in the Garden of Eden.” He even offered to safeguard their belongings so that they could use them later. According to Holckener, however, once Kamiński took possession of the goods, he refused to hide the fugitives or return their belongings. Furthermore, Kamiński also tailed Holckener, discovered where his wife was hiding—in the company of thirteen other Jews—and disclosed this hideout as well.

without connections)¹²¹—states that she was afraid of staying in Warsaw *because* of her many acquaintances. Tamara Buchman, whose testimony Paulsson cites in the context of natural death, since her mother died of tuberculosis, recounted several cases of assaults by Polish acquaintances against her and members of her family, and she even sarcastically quoted in her testimony the Polish saying “*Przyjaciół poznajemy w biedzie*” (“Troubles put friends to the test”).¹²²

Thus, unfortunately and notwithstanding Paulsson’s remarks, it does not appear to have been enough for Jews to have “racked their brains.” Along with a healthy dose of resourcefulness, they also had to have the luck to encounter people of courage, integrity, and humaneness on the “Aryan” side—no small matter under the corrosive Nazi occupation.¹²³ By describing the Jews’ catastrophe as something akin to a form of Jewish passivism that failed to use existing connections with the Polish population, Paulsson attests mainly to his own unfamiliarity with the prewar Jewish world, the reality of Jewish–Polish relations as they had formed during the Holocaust, and Jewish life in occupied Warsaw.

3. Paulsson: “*If the Jews had only given it a go*”—is this really so?

Throughout his book, Paulsson tends to draw far-reaching conclusions on the basis of impressive—but unique—cases that he found in the archival documentation. A case in point is

121 Testimony of Diana Kagan, JHIA, 301.4629, p. 4. On p. 1, she even relates that her brother-in-law was identified by a friend from the university and was arrested. This, however, happened in Mińsk Mazowiecki and falls outside of our purview. For additional examples from testimonies that Paulsson cites, see testimony of Sara Bergazyn, JHIA, 301.5681.

122 Tamara Buchman, JHIA, 301.5509, p. 4. See also testimony of Alicia (Mirska) Haskelberg (nee Kronsilber), also cited by Paulsson; she comments on the need to return to a hideout that had already been “burned,” despite the danger, for lack of choice; JHIA, 301.5745.

123 On the corruption of Polish society induced by the Nazi occupation and its draconian measures against the Poles, see Gross, *Polish Society under German Occupation*, pp. 145–159.

the story of the rescue of Michał Lina, his daughter Mirka and his future wife, Eugenia (Maria) Szajn-Lewin, which Paulsson quotes at length. Paulsson describes the days of the Warsaw ghetto uprising and the sense of entrapment that gripped the remaining Jews still living there in April 1943. The Germans had promised that anyone who turned himself in would be sent to the Poniatów labor camp; the Linas were among those who did not believe this. Lacking any other possibility of rescue, the plucky Michał Lina approached the guard detail of German gendarmes and asked them to let his family cross to the “Aryan” side. When they gaped at him in amazement, he addressed them in German and barked, as if issuing a command, “*Retten Sie drei Seelen! Aber schnell!*” (“Save three souls! But fast!”). “The unbelievable happened,” Maria Szajn née Lina subsequently wrote. “We managed to get out of the inferno.”¹²⁴

On the basis of this account, Paulsson states, “The success of this audacious move... may lead to wonder... whether many lives might not have been saved if more people had been prepared to ‘give it a go’.”¹²⁵ Paulsson again blames the Jews for their disaster—had the Jews only “given it a go,” everything could have looked different. But with these judgmental assessments, Paulsson really has gone too far; there should be a limit even to the measure of leniency that is able to be invoked. I do not intend to cite the many attempts by Jews to save themselves and others, as recounted in sources that Paulsson himself cites. I do not intend to present even a partial list of the other documents—diaries, testimonies, memoirs, German and Polish documents—that attest like a thousand witnesses that the Jews of Warsaw cannot be accused of inaction. Neither do I intend to prove that the Jews—like anyone else—simply tried to live. They tried to escape, to remain, to flee, to elude, to lie, to tell the truth; they tried to act decisively, delicately, bravely, resourcefully; they

124 In Eugenia Szajn-Lewin, *In the Warsaw Ghetto: July 1942–April 1943* (Hebrew) (Tel Aviv: Hedkal, 1991), p. 98.

125 Paulsson, *Secret City*, p. 92.

tried to arouse mercy, pity, and even fear; they tried to arouse the human conscience that was such a rare commodity during the war. They tried, tried constantly, tried to the bitter end.

The sad truth is that during the Holocaust even the most daring attempts of the majority of the Jews did not succeed. True, indeed, there were Jews who stopped trying, who became petrified, who were exhausted and whose spirit was broken by the humiliation, terror, and violence. But they, too, had tried, and the fact that they gave up was the result of their failed attempts.

Implying that the Jews were to blame for their death and that of their children because of inaction is like the suggestion that they had been infected by a collective death wish. This may attest not only to a basic disrespect for the objects of the research and utter unfamiliarity with the human spirit—matters beyond our purview—but also to a grave lack of familiarity with the period and the range of sources available.

Final Tally

Paulsson's book is the paragon of a combination of blunders that appear in other writings about the Poles' role in saving Jews during the Holocaust. This is why I have devoted so much space to it. The attempts to carry out unfounded statistical and numerical calculations on the basis of incomplete data, disregard of fundamental sources in the research on the topic, and anachronistic writing that ignores the reality of life (both for locals and Jews) in the German-occupied territories recur in a more delicate—and sometimes a more sophisticated—manner in additional studies as well.¹²⁶

Furthermore, the detailed discussion above of numerical estimates based on statistical calculations reveals both the risks and the opportunities these tools present when used in historical research. Statistical estimations, like textual analysis of sources,

126 In addition to Chodakiewicz's study, mentioned in note 39, see also the studies cited in note 129.

carry the risk of methodological failures, and the researcher must take them into account. Ignoring them—knowingly, or inadvertently—may skew the findings significantly, at the expense of the credibility and validity of the entire study. This is not to say that scholars of the humanities should refrain from quantitative research. However, they must bear in mind that the use of statistical analysis to draw historical conclusions—however innovative and interesting they may be—must be cautious, credible, and responsible.¹²⁷

It is worth bearing in mind that the lively and active debate over Jewish life on the “Aryan” side and the relations that were formed between Jews and Poles has only begun, and Paulsson’s research is but one link in a lengthy chain of published works on the topic. For this very reason, a debate that is short on even-handedness is particularly dangerous. One can only hope that future studies on the lives of Jews on the “Aryan” side of occupied Warsaw will find the wisdom to put the sources, historical knowledge, and research tools to reliable and professional use. By so doing, the fate of the Jews will be examined in a well-founded and even-handed manner. Until then, we can only rely on studies and sources that produce a more balanced and credible picture than the one that arises from Paulsson’s book.

127 From this standpoint it is worth glancing at a recent example that addresses the question of rescue in Western Europe: Bob Moore’s book *Survivors*. In this book the author discusses Norway, Denmark, the Netherlands, Belgium, and France, totally avoids statistical estimates, and also demonstrates the active role that Jews played in self-rescue. Bob Moore, *Survivors. Jewish Self-Help and Rescue in Nazi Occupied Western Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

Part 3

Research on the Rescue of and Harm Inflicted on Jews During the Holocaust

A Forward-Looking View

When examining the extensive research literature that has been amassed since the end of the war, as well as critiques of controversial widely published studies, we find that, despite the immense progress that has been made in research on Jewish–Polish relations in occupied Poland at large, the main question remains unanswered: *How much assistance did Poles offer Jews during the Holocaust, and what was its nature?* To be more precise, several very fundamental and key questions are still open:

1. How many Poles were involved in rescuing Jews in occupied Poland during the war years?

The estimates that appear in various studies range from several tens of thousands to more than 100,000 and, in the most extreme version, even several million.¹²⁸

128 In addition to the studies mentioned previously, which offer diverse estimates of the number of Righteous Among the Nations and the number of Jews who survived due to acts of kindness, cf., for example, Israel Gutman, *The Jews in Poland after World War II* (Hebrew) (Jerusalem: Zalman Shazar Center, 1984), pp. 11–13; Hans G. Furth, “One Million Polish Rescuers of Hunted Jews?” *Journal of Genocide Research*, 1, 2 (June 1999), pp. 227–232; Maciej Kozłowski, Andrzej Folwarczny, and Michał Bilewicz, eds., *Difficult Questions in Polish-Jewish Dialog* (Warsaw: Jacek Santorski and Co., 2006), pp. 66–74; Marcin Urynowicz, “Zorganizowana i indywidualna pomoc Polaków dla ludności żydowskiej eksterminowanej przez okupanta niemieckiego w okresie drugiej wojny światowej,” in Andrzej Żbikowski, ed., *Polacy i Żydzi pod okupacją niemiecką, 1939–1945: Studia i materiały* (Warsaw: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej—Komisja Ścigania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu, 2006), p. 278; Richard C. Lukas, *Out of the Inferno: Poles Remember the Holocaust* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1989), p. 13. See also a description of the “Life for a Life” project, sponsored by the IPN to commemorate Poles who sacrificed their lives to save Jews: http://www.ipn.gov.pl/portal/en/2/285/The_life_for_a_life_project_remembrance_of_Poles_who_gave_their_lives_to_save_J.html.

2. How many Jews were saved due to assistance from the Polish population?

Here, too, the numbers cited by scholars cover a vast range, from 20,000–30,000 to more than 100,000 who survived by virtue of these high-minded actions.¹²⁹

3. How typical were these acts of assistance among Polish society at large?

That is, do they reflect the attitude of Polish society toward the persecuted Jews, or are they exceptions that do not prove the rule about relations between Polish society and the country's Jewish citizens?¹³⁰

These questions demand separate, thorough, and probing research. I do not purport to provide an answer in this narrow setting. However, I definitely wish to propose, on the basis of research in this important discipline thus far and against the background of the urgent questions that remain unanswered, several basic principles and limitations that should, in my opinion, be taken into account in future research on the topic.

129 Most of the studies mentioned in the previous note estimate not only the number of ostensible Righteous Among the Nations, but also the number of Jews who survived due to their actions.

130 The very term “Polish society at large” is, of course, a generalization if not an oversimplification of this complex issue. Thus, as I show below, the research should examine the differences that existed in various areas of the Polish state, which had diverse historical backgrounds and developed differently during the Nazi era as well. In this context, the following questions should be posed: What were the differences between the outlying areas and the Polish cities, and can one discern distinct characteristics within Polish society in its attitude toward the Jews? Depending on the findings, it should be possible to attempt to gauge the characteristics that influenced these trends. Recent research on attitudes of local societies to the Jews in western Europe (the Netherlands, Belgium, France), in which regional, local, social, political and organizational differences are emphasized instead of national generalizations, can serve as examples for a more kaleidoscopic research on Poland (and other countries) too. See for instance: Pim Griffioen and Ron Zeller, *Jodenvervolging in Nederland, Frankrijk en België 1940–1945. Overeenkomsten, verschillen, oorzaken* (Dutch with an English summary) (Amsterdam: Boom, 2011); Insa Meinen, *Die Shoa in Belgien* (Darmstadt: WBG, 2009). I thank Prof. Dan Michman for this remark.

Even-handed Treatment of the “Help and Harm” Issue

The way the three aforementioned questions were presented reflects the fact that most research efforts thus far have made progress in one aspect alone: the rescue of Jews. The intensive attention devoted to the Righteous Among the Nations in the postwar years led to the reexamination of this issue, an important development in itself; however, this also led to the neglect of the other side of the equation. The existing research has almost totally disregarded the fact that even today, more than sixty years after the end of World War II, we cannot estimate the nature and extent of the *harm* perpetrated by Polish civilians against Jews during the Holocaust. In order to arrive at a comprehensive assessment of the role of the local population in sealing the fate of Polish Jewry, it is not enough to count how many Poles helped Jews. We must also determine how many were involved in the persecution and killing of Jews in Poland and to what extent harming Jews was an accepted norm in Polish society—or in distinct parts of it—during the war.

Ascertaining the number of Jews who perished as a direct result of acts committed against them by Poles is undoubtedly a very difficult and complex matter, especially due to the German occupation that—and this should be noted again and again—was the main reason for the murderous reality against the Jews. However, since this issue of Polish direct and indirect participation in the murder of the Jews is so important to the comprehensive discussion of Jewish–Polish relations during the Holocaust, it cannot be overlooked.

Yet attempting to pick out the Jews who perished in the Holocaust due to Polish involvement of various kinds out of all the victims of the Holocaust in Poland—is a daunting challenge for any researcher. S/he must investigate diverse case studies, including: outright murder by Poles, denunciation to the Germans or to their collaborators, and extortion that resulted in the demise of beleaguered Jews. In addition to scrutinizing these concrete actions, it would be especially difficult to determine

the formation of a public norm and a palpable reality that denied Jews the possibility of eluding the German occupier. However, just as the various methods used in offering Jews relief and assistance have been described, the research must also find a way to illuminate the broad range of acts that caused them harm.

Estimating the proportion of Poles who were involved in harming Jews is difficult for another reason. Although there were cases in which Jews were assisted by anonymous people, or by those who cannot be identified due to the passage of time,¹³¹ usually the bonds that formed between a rescuer and a fugitive Jew led to a personal relationship. This made it possible to cite the former by name or other identifying particulars even years later. In contrast, when Jews were denounced or attacked, the perpetrators usually remained anonymous. Persecuted Jews usually could not ask for the name of the denouncer or the extortionist, and descriptions such as “a young man with a black jacket,” or “a boorish woman” cannot be cross-referenced with other testimonies.

One way to attempt to overcome these considerable difficulties in researching the Polish part in the persecution of Jews is to undertake an even-handed examination of “help and harm.” Under the circumstances, the rescue of Jews during the Holocaust was usually closely related to attacks on the lives and property of this fugitive population, and Jews were often assaulted during escape and rescue attempts. In other words, the focus of attention on helping or harming Jews should be replaced, according to my understanding, by an examination of a specific situation in reference to the various and diverse relations between Jews and Poles that existed within it.

Two important recent studies by leading scholars from the Center for Research on the Holocaust of Polish Jewry—Prof.

131 See, for example, Lucy Raveh, *I Might Not Have Returned* (Hebrew) (Tel Aviv: Ministry of Defense, 1992), pp. 59–62, the story of Bronja, an anonymous Righteous Among the Nations, and the monument to all anonymous rescuers at Yad Vashem: http://www1.yadvashem.org/yv/he/righteous/commemoration.asp#anonymous_rescuer.

Barbara Engelking and Prof. Jan Grabowski, both mentioned in this article, make a substantial contribution to the debate about Jewish–Polish relations from this parallel perspective of “help and harm.” These innovative studies focus on small localities in Poland and examine the fate of Jews who attempted to escape from the terror of the German occupation by hiding among the local population.¹³² By focusing on events at these locations, the studies juxtapose assistance to Jews with attacks perpetrated against them and create an impressive—albeit chilling and painful—picture of both the negative and positive responses to which Jews were subject by Polish society. Evidently, the comprehensive, in-depth examination of a given reality can illuminate even these complex aspects—hence its immense importance.

In my opinion, as a matter of methodology, it is also important to examine the aid that Jews received alongside the harm inflicted on them. Most testimonies that relate to the “help” side of the equation also include information about the “harm,” and vice versa. The many sources that deal with the persecution of Jews contain valuable information about betrayal, and archival sources from the impressive rescue organization Żegota include quite a bit of information about acts of extortion.¹³³

132 Barbara Engelking, *Jest taki piękny słoneczny dzień ... Losy Żydów szukających ratunku na wsi polskiej 1942–1945* (Warsaw: Stowarzyszenie Centrum Badań nad Zagładą Żydów, 2011); Jan Grabowski, *Judenjagd. Polowanie na Żydów 1942–1945. Studium dziejów pewnego powiatu* (Warsaw: Stowarzyszenie Centrum Badań nad Zagładą Żydów, 2011). See also Grzegorz Berendt, “Cena życia – ekonomiczne uwarunkowania egzystencji Żydów po ‘aryjskiej stronie’,” *Zagłada Żydów: Studia i Materiały*, 4 (2008), pp. 110–143. In this important study, Berendt examines the economic challenges of Jews and Poles throughout occupied Poland and exposes the way it shaped the attitude Jews received from their surroundings for better or for worse.

133 Testimony of Sylwia Rzczycka, Righteous Among the Nations, O.3/3011; testimony of David Pfefferman, YVA, O.3/2977; SL application for financial support, GFHA, Collections, 5781; Ruth Lewin’s requests for assistance, GFHA, Collections, 5731. As for the information that one can obtain from reports about denunciation and extortion, see, for example, letters quoted by Barbara Engelking in “*Szanowny panie Gistapo*”: *Donosy do władz niemieckich w Warszawie and okolicach w latach 1940–1941* (Warsaw: Wydawn. IFiS PAN,

Thus, a far-reaching examination of both the positive and negative aspects, in juxtaposition, of the relations between Jews and Poles during the Holocaust may encourage a future discovery of focal points—social, economic, or geographic—that typified either the harming or helping of Jews. Furthermore, these elements may help in trying to answer the general question about the factors of life under occupation in Poland that prompted and encouraged these phenomena. Painstaking primary research of this type may elicit a cautious but well-founded estimate of the proportion of Jews who attempted to elude their German persecutors, but perished due to a hostile local population. In addition, the role of Polish society and its members in the rescue of Jews during the Holocaust may also be elucidated.

Refraining from Antithetical Definitions

The importance of an even-handed (positive/negative) treatment of Jewish–Polish relations during the Holocaust also underscores the need to examine the gray areas that existed in the complex reality of wartime Poland. These were so convoluted that simplistic dichotomies of “help vs. harm” and “rescuers vs. denouncers” are blatantly inaccurate and overlook the myriad nuances of life at that time.

Both sides of the equation—helping and harming Jews—encompass a broad range of actions. An extortionist could not be equated with an actual murderer, just as providing a Jew with false papers could not be equated with sheltering him or her over a period of years. Moreover, and perhaps more important for our discussion is the amorphous nature of any description of acts of kindness or of betrayal and the inability to categorize them in a mono-dimensional manner. For example, the reality of the occupation led to innumerable cases in which Poles rescued Jews,

2003); letter about Bartoszewski’s assistance to Jews, addressed to the German security police, YVA, O.3/3163; and also the risks of denunciation described in the stories of the Righteous Among the Nations: Gutman and Bender, *The Encyclopedia of the Righteous Among the Nations: Poland*.

while at the same time those same Poles were extorting them and threatening to turn them in; one individual may have been a rescuer for one Jew while hounding another; and some also changed their behavior over time. Thus, one can find acts of rescue that devolved into the murder of the Jews in question, but there could have also been cases in which an encounter that began with harm of some sort ended with a rescue relationship.¹³⁴ Polish civilians, immersed in a reality of unprecedented oppression and cruelty directed at them, not to mention draconian punishment for a range of “offenses,” including the rescue of Jews, were frequently prone to vacillate between helping the fugitives, treating their suffering with indifference, or attacking them.

The reasons that prompted individual Poles to change their attitude toward the Jews were diverse. These included changes in the Nazi policy toward the Poles, their growing awareness of the persecution and murder of the Jews, and personal factors. For example, as the Germans stepped up their pressure on the population of the outlying Polish areas, Jews sometimes encountered greater hostility but, conversely, also greater assistance;¹³⁵ the changes in policy toward the Jews and, above all, the onset of the physical extermination of Polish Jewry created a different reality to which the Polish population had to respond;¹³⁶ and, finally, sometimes Jews were helped or harmed due to “micro” changes, such as an increase in the size

134 For selected examples, see the diary of Hinda and Chanina Malachi, October 5, 1943, YVA, O.33/1105; Jakub Smakowski (“Black Julek”), JHIA, 302.145; Karol Rotgeber, end of Notebook 12 and Notebook 14, JHIA, 302.48; and the story of the Obrębski family, who were concealed for many months on the “Aryan” side, but were murdered by their erstwhile “rescuers” as the war wound down, YVA, 0.33/6509.

135 Cf., for example, the responses of the Polish population in the *Generalgouvernement* hinterland at the beginning of the war with those of Poles in the Kresy area after the onset of the German occupation in 1941.

136 See, for example, “Protest” by Zofia Kossak-Szczucka, subsequently recognized as Righteous Among the Nations, published in the underground journal of the Polish Revival Front, August 1942. The piece was written and composed at the time of the “Great Deportation” from the Warsaw ghetto: Andrzej Krzysztof Kunert, *Poles–Jews: Selection of Documents* (Warsaw: Oficyna Wydawnicza RYTM, 2006), pp. 212–216.

of a specific family,¹³⁷ the murder of a beloved person by the Germans, and so on.

Accordingly, when we examine the historical reality of the relations that Jews and Poles formed and sustained during the Holocaust, we encounter another issue of principle: the amorphous nature of the definitions of “rescuers” and “denouncers.” Both the nature and the content of the sources suggest that the existing categories do not capture the historical complexity that existed. The dichotomous reference to “rescuers” and “denouncers” does not reflect the spectrum of human behavior that lies between the poles of the finest and the worst. The aim, then, should be to create complex definitions that oscillate between the extremes of rescue and murder.

The Definition of Righteous Among the Nations and Its Limits in Historical Research

Numerous voices in recent years have indeed sought to broaden Yad Vashem’s definition of Righteous Among the Nations. Some urge the recognition of Jews who saved other Jews;¹³⁸ some point to the phenomenon of paid rescuers;¹³⁹ some include among the Righteous those who were murdered due to draconian collective punishment, even though they had not been involved in actual rescue activity;¹⁴⁰ and some even prescribe the inclusion of those

137 For example, the birth of a child might have prompted someone to try to remove any potential danger to his home, including a suspected Jew; however, there were also opposite reactions of trying to offer assistance, however minimal, to Jewish parents in view of the tragedy that had befallen them.

138 Consider, for example, the activity in Israel of Haim Roth and his associates on the Committee for Recognition of Jews Who Saved Jews in the Holocaust.

139 Jan Grabowski, “Ratowanie Żydów za pieniądze; przemysł pomocy,” *Zagłada Żydów*, 4 (2008), pp. 81–109; *idem*, *Rescue for Money: Paid Helpers in Poland, 1939–1945* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2008).

140 Main Commission for the Investigation of Crimes against the Polish Nation, The Institute of National Memory and The Polish Society for the Righteous among the Nations; *Those Who Helped: Polish Rescuers of Jews during the Holocaust* (Warsaw: Main Commission for the Investigation of Crimes against the Polish Nation—The Institute of National Memory, 1996).

who helped Jews with kind words.¹⁴¹ The commonality among all these proposals is that they attack, directly or indirectly, the definition of Righteous Among the Nations that has become accepted and binding over the years in Yad Vashem's official procedures, as well as its broad influence on scholarship at large.

The Holocaust and Heroism Remembrance Law—Yad Vashem, 5713–1953, states that one of the responsibilities of this official institution is to act on behalf of Righteous Among the Nations “who risked their lives to save Jews” in the name of the Jewish people and the State of Israel.¹⁴² Since 1962, when Yad Vashem started official personal recognition of rescuers and formed a public commission under a Supreme Court justice for this purpose, more than 22,000 people have been recognized as Righteous Among the Nations. This esteemed title reflects the Jewish people's recognition and appreciation of those non-Jews who risked their lives to save Jews during the Holocaust.¹⁴³ Admittedly, in the first years that Yad Vashem's Department for Righteous Among the Nations began its work, an attempt was made to rank the rescue feats. Three categories were decided upon: the highest level, for which the recipient was given a medallion, a certificate, and the right to plant trees; the second level, for which the recipient was invited to plant a tree and also received a certificate; and the third level, the lowest, which conferred only a certificate upon the recipient. In its discussions in 1981, however, the commission decided to avoid such artificial rankings and to award the title with no

141 Paulsson, *Secret City*, p. 131.

142 Holocaust and Heroism Remembrance Law, Yad Vashem, 1953, Section 9.

143 Admittedly, the citation is also given to diplomats who did not necessarily risk their own lives, provided that they acted clearly and deliberately in contravention of their countries' official policies at the risk of their personal status and good name. For background on how the Righteous Among the Nations category came into being, see unpublished keynote lecture by Dan Michman, “Introduction: Beyond ‘Righteous Among the Nations’ and ‘Altruism,’” given at Yad Vashem in December 2010, at the international conference on “Self-Concealment, Concealment, and Borrowed Identity as Ways to Survive the Holocaust”; and also Kabalek “The Commemoration before the Commemoration.

internal categorization. In other words, the very act of rescue—whether it lasted several hours or many months, whether it led to the survival of one person or of many Jews, whether done independently or in conjunction with others—entitles the person to the exalted title due to the risk that he or she assumed by helping a Jew.¹⁴⁴ In this manner, Yad Vashem expresses the Jewish saying—engraved in the medallion and imprinted on the certificate—“Whosoever saves a single life, saves an entire universe.”¹⁴⁵

This moral stance, based on the awareness that it is beyond our ability to estimate and quantify the risk, the fear, the inner struggle, and the other grim feelings imposed on the rescuer by the act of rescue, is immensely important. Each occupied country obviously experienced a different reality, which might have varied over the years; each act of rescue was unique and different; and both the objective and subjective risks varied from case to case. Therefore, it is virtually impossible to rank the deeds in moral terms. How can one estimate the terror of parents and young children who concealed a Jewish girl in their home? How can one quantify the courage or nerve that was needed to feed ten or more Jews for months? Ranking these actions in terms of their morality is not only impossible, but also, and mainly, of no real use.

Historical research, however, deals not with moral assessments and estimates, but with a description and analysis of the past. Therefore, even if there is little or no moral meaning to the number of people who were saved, the nature of the rescue action, or the duration of the operation, in the historical sense they are definitely of consequence. The action of someone who provided Jews with papers (false or genuine) is not the same as

144 See minutes of Commission for Righteous Among the Nations, September 22, 1981. I thank Ms. Irena Steinfeld for this document and also for valuable information about the Righteous Among the Nations.

145 The exact quotation as it appears in the Mishna (Tractate Sanhedrin 4:5) is: “Whosoever saves a single life, he is deemed by Scripture as if he saves an entire universe.”

that of someone who concealed a Jewish boy or girl in a closet in his home for years, or supported fifteen Jews in hiding for many months. The very fact that Yad Vashem's definition of Righteous Among the Nations—essentially an ethical and moral one—has become the main underpinning for the historical debate has distorted the way we discuss both the rescue of Jews during the Holocaust and the harm inflicted upon them.

One may argue that Yad Vashem may—and even must—continue to bestow these exalted citations on behalf of the Jewish people and the State of Israel according to the moral criteria that were worked out years ago. In my opinion, however, a historian who deals with Jewish–Polish relations during the Holocaust—and, by extension, relations between Jews and their neighbors in any other country—should set aside the moral definition of Righteous Among the Nations and develop essentially new historical categories. Instead of assessing the actions taken by Poles during the Holocaust on values or on moral grounds, the historical inquiry should analyze how citizens of Poland—Jews and non-Jews alike—acted, for better or worse, in view of the persecution of the Jews.

Once historical research is liberated from the value-laden concept of “Righteous Among the Nations,” an even-handed analysis of the complex reality that prevailed during the war will become possible. For example, in contrast to the total disregard of actions taken by Jews on behalf of other Jews—a category not covered in awarding the “Righteous” citation—historical research should concern itself not only with help or harm to Jews by Poles, but also with both these types of actions by other Jews.¹⁴⁶

146 Importantly, one may find reference to historiographical questions about the role of Jews in their disaster, centered mainly on debates about the actions of the *Judenräte* (Jewish Councils). See, for example, Raul Hilberg, “The Judenrat: Conscious or Unconscious Tool,” in Israel Gutman, ed., *Patterns of Jewish Leadership in Nazi Europe, 1933–1945: Proceedings of the Third Yad Vashem International Historical Conference, Jerusalem, April 4–7, 1977* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1979), pp. 31–44; and Isaiah Trunk, *Judenrat. The Jewish Councils in Eastern Europe under Nazi Occupation* (New York: Stein & Day, 1977). See also the interesting and often-quoted discussion in Primo

The research should examine, for example, how widespread it was for Jews living under false identities to provide hiding places for Jews who looked more suspicious than they did; whether Jews who had found shelter made it their custom to gather in additional Jews—acquaintances and strangers; and whether a Jew living under a false identity who had managed to obtain bogus papers shared his or her experience with others or not. Conversely, we need to examine cases of extortion involving Jews and events in which one Jew caused another Jew’s death.¹⁴⁷

True, Jewish acts of kindness do not fit under the title of Righteous Among the Nations as it has been encoded over the years, and *a fortiori* harmful actions by Jews warrant no appreciation. In order to understand the historical reality of the war era, however, it is important to examine the role of Jews in assistance to and in the death of other Jews. Thus, disengaging the harm-and-help discussion from the moral definition of Righteous Among the Nations may contribute significantly to a more profound study of Jewish–Polish relations in the Holocaust.

Levi’s book about the “gray zone”: *The Drowned and the Saved* (New York: Vintage International, 1989), pp. 36–69.

- 147 For only a few examples, see testimony of Tadeusz Szymkiewicz, which contains information about Jews who extorted and abused other Jews, YVA, O.33/258. Marian Berland, YVA, O.33/1089, wrote about a Jew living under a false identity, Tanski, who helped many other Jews. Teresa Glejzer testified about a Jew named Wladek who helped bring her to Warsaw; he charged some of those whom he aided but rescued others gratis, YVA, O.3/2538. See also testimony of Edwarda Pacanowska, who claims to have rescued eleven additional Jews after fleeing from the Warsaw ghetto, YVA, O.3/1013; and testimony of Maria Kasmanowa, who mentions a Jewish engineer living under a false identity who concealed six additional Jews, JHIA, 301.3334.

***Examining Jewish–Polish Relations
in Their Historical Context***

Another principle that should guide researchers of Jewish–Polish relations during the war—in addition to the even-handed treatment of “help and harm,” the awareness of the complexity of these actions, and the reference to acts by Jews and non-Jews alike, as already discussed—is placing these actions in an appropriate historical context. Although this would seem to be a *sine qua non* in historical methodology, a review of the existing research shows that the heroism of rescue and the shamefulness of denunciation were often dissociated from the reality of the German occupation in which they took place.

Thus, the assistance extended to Jews by individuals and organizations should be tested within the general context of the full range of acts that they undertook during the period of occupation in Poland. Parallel to describing their righteous acts, one should also ask whether the individual or organization in question helped only Jews or also assisted Polish resistance fighters. Was the nature and scale of assistance similar in regard to Jews and non-Jews? Were there individuals or organizations that helped other victims of the German regime in Poland, but refrained—expressly or not—from helping Jews? For example, while it is very important to count how many Poles the Germans murdered because they helped Jews, the true extent of the phenomenon can be determined only by comparing this figure with the total number of Poles whom the Germans executed for various transgressions, including helping the resistance.¹⁴⁸

Similarly, harm to Jews should be tested against the background of other acts of collaboration with the Germans. The aim should be to create a survey—as comprehensive as possible—

148 The article mentioned in this note, for example, sets German punishment for helping Jews within the framework of punishment for black-marketeering and other related offenses: Jan Tomasz Gross, “Polish-Jewish Relations during the War: An Interpretation,” *Archives Européennes de Sociologie*, 27, 2 (November 1986), pp. 199–214.

of actions that impaired Jews' ability to elude the German occupier. In other words, one should examine whether and how a public atmosphere was formed, if only among certain elements of Polish society, which made it harder for Jews to survive under false identities or in hiding. One issue, for example, is whether those individuals or groups that pursued concealed Jews also acted against Polish resistance fighters. Was there a significant difference between what they did against Jews and what they did against other Polish citizens who disobeyed the edicts of the Nazi regime?

Examining the acts of Jewish and non-Jewish citizens of Poland—for better or for worse—in view of the murderous “Final Solution,” and placing them within their social context may be helpful in determining the public atmosphere in which these acts transpired. This would make it more possible to establish the extent to which these acts were supported—actively or tacitly—by both the Polish and Jewish surroundings, and whether it was the Righteous Among the Nations or the *Szmalcowniks* who acted in contradiction to local public opinion.

Reflections on Future Research—Selected Case Studies

In order not to remain purely theoretical, I propose applying the principles I have discussed here—even-handed examination of helping and harming Jews, analyzing the actions of Jews and non-Jews alike, and setting the events researched in an appropriate historical context—to two examples. I have chosen topics that have received in-depth attention in the research on Jewish-Polish relations: Żegota; and the activity of Irena Sendler, Righteous Among the Nations.

The Council for Assistance to Jews (Żegota)

Dozens of published works—books, articles, and so forth—have been written about this amazing group, which was engaged in saving Jews during the Holocaust.¹⁴⁹ They describe how the

149 In addition to the studies cited in notes 12, 14, and 35, see Joseph Kermish,

Council was organized in late 1942, in view of the tragic “Great Deportation” from the Warsaw ghetto; its estimable activity on behalf of Jews, chiefly in the Warsaw District; the impressive support that it received from the Polish government-in-exile and its representatives in occupied Poland (the Delegatura); and the rescue of thousands of Jews by its activists, who subsequently received the title of Righteous Among the Nations—and rightly so.

Research into the Council’s activity, however, still retains several important lacunae. For example, many personalities who were active in Żegota had been helping Jews since the beginning of the war. Zofia Kossak-Szczucka, Wanda Krahelska-Filipowicz, Władysław Bartoszewski, Irena Sendler, and others had been acting on behalf of Jewish comrades and strangers from the onset of the German occupation of Poland. The establishment of the Council did make their activities more efficient and provided them with an administrative system, as well as important economic and moral support, but they had begun much of what they did irrespective of Żegota per se. By citing them as Righteous Among the Nations for what they did in Żegota, the research has blurred not only their early activities, but also the important question of how an underground organization comes into being and how a group coalesces under extreme occupation conditions.¹⁵⁰

“The Activities of the Council for Assistance to Jews (Żegota) in Occupied Poland,” in Yisrael Gutman and Efraim Zuroff, eds., *Rescue Attempts during the Holocaust: Proceedings of the Second Yad Vashem International Historical Conference* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1997), pp. 367–398; Arnon Rubin, *Facts and Fiction about the Rescue of Polish Jewry during the Holocaust* (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University Press, 2004); Marek Gałęzowski, *Pułkownik “Żegota”. Życie and pisma pułkownika dypl. Tadeusza Münnicha* (Warsaw: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, 2009); Irene Tomaszewski, *Code Name Żegota: Rescuing Jews in Occupied Poland, 1942–1945* (Santa Barbara: Greenwood Pub. Group, 2010); Tatiana Berenstein, “Rada Pomocy Żydom w Polsce (Żegota),” *BŻIH*, 65–66 (1968), pp. 173–205; Marcin Urynowicz, “La délégation du gouvernement de la République Polonaise de Londres et le financement du Conseil d’aide aux Juifs (Żegota),” in Szurek and Wieviorka, *Juifs et Polonais*, pp. 79–93.

150 Similarly, alongside the impressive description of Żegota’s activities in Warsaw, there is very little reference in the existing scholarship to what it did

Perhaps even more important is the fact that one of the most unique aspects of Żegota was the impressive cooperation between Jews and Poles within its framework. Since this issue is usually viewed through the prism of the Righteous Among the Nations, however, the actions of Jews who participated in this organization at all levels have been marginalized, if not forgotten. Even when these Jews' names are mentioned, they never share the research spotlight with their Polish comrades, and the analysis overlooks their activities, challenges, successes, and failures. Adolf and Basha (Barbara) Berman, Leon Feiner, Joseph Ziemian, and Shoshana Kossower are only a few of the Jewish activists who hardly appear in the impressive portrait depicted of Żegota, even though they took part in its activities for years as leaders, liaisons, heads of cells, and so on. The focus on the Polish endeavor—however important—overshadows not only the Jews' role but also other important issues, such as the acute tensions that naturally existed between the heads of this organization and those in the field, as well as those among the Jews themselves.¹⁵¹

Furthermore, by concerning itself only with Żegota's activities

in the Kraków, Vilna, and Lwów districts, as well as to its attempts to help Jews in the camps. For selected sources on these matters, see the list of 153 Żegota beneficiaries in Kraków, GFHA, Collections, 5026; letter from Żegota in Warsaw to its branch in Kraków, GFHA, Collections, 5848; reports from Kraków Żegota branch, December 1943–December 1944, GFHA, Collections, 6159; Żegota proposals concerning activity in peripheral towns, GFHA, Collections, 6172; situation report by a Żegota activist in Kraków about Jews in Sosnowiec, GFHA, Collections, 6160; documents by Władysława Chomasowa, chair of the Żegota branch in the Lwów area, GFHA, Collections, 5652; three letters by an anonymous writer about the transfer of members of the resistance to a camp, GFHA, Collections, 5807; report by a Polish worker about Jews in the Skarżysko-Kamienna labor camp, GFHA, Collections, 6122; testimony of Stefan Sendlak, YVA, M49.E/3771; testimony of Maria Hochberg-Marianska (Miriam Peleg), YVA, O.3/2534; Miriam Peleg-Marianska and Mordecai Peleg, *Witnesses: Life in Occupied Kraków* (New York: Routledge, 1992).

151 See, for example, correspondence between Adolf Berman and David-Daniel Guzik in mid-1944, GFHA, Collections, 5696; and the heart-rending letter from Eva and Alicja, Żegota liaisons, about waiving financial support from Żegota due to the contemptuous treatment that they received, GFHA, Collections, 5682.

from the standpoint of relief and rescue, the research minimizes the severe problems that the organization's activists—Jewish and Polish alike—faced from denouncers and extortionists. Not only Jews in hiding who received aid from this illustrious organization had to cope with innumerable cases of extortion and denunciation,¹⁵² but Żegota members faced much the same phenomena. Władysław Bartoszewski, for example, testified that, despite his diverse resistance efforts in both the Armia Krajowa and the underground press, the only danger of denunciation that he had encountered took place with regard to his activities within Żegota, and Irena Sendler and her female comrades were arrested in late 1943, due to denunciation.¹⁵³

It is important to stress that if we examine the matter even-handedly—as we should—we will find that the acts of denunciation that menaced the Żegota members were not committed solely by Poles. There were also cases—few, admittedly—in which the offenders were Jewish. The most famous example was the arrest of Dr. Adolf Berman, a Żegota leader who was the organization's secretary-general and a member of the ŻKN presidium.¹⁵⁴ On January 4, 1944, Berman was arrested in central Warsaw by people who purported to be Gestapo agents. After negotiations,

152 See, for example, Joseph Ziemian, *The Cigarette Sellers of Three Crosses Square* (New York: Avon, 1977), pp. 43–45; Yonas Turkow, *Once There Was a Jewish Warsaw* (Hebrew) (Tel Aviv: Tarbut Vehinukh, 1969), pp. 258–268; requests for support from S.L. of Żegota, GFHA, Collections, 5781; letter from Tadeusz Aszermann to Żegota, GFHA, Collections, 5644; list of beneficiaries' names, GFHA, Collections, 6207.1. (Name 110 received 20,000 zloty due to an act of extortion.)

153 Lecture by Władysław Bartoszewski at Yad Vashem in late 1963; YVA, O.3/3162. See also Turkow's description in *Jewish Warsaw* of attacks on Righteous Among the Nations.

154 Żydowska Komitet Narodowy—the Jewish National Committee. This organization, which included most underground circles except the Bund, was established in the Warsaw Ghetto in October 1942, in order to present the Delegatura with one unified Jewish institute; alongside it, a Coordination Committee (Komitet Koordynacyjny) was established, which was designed to coordinate between the ŻKN and the Bund. Adolf Berman was the ŻKN representative to the civil institutions of the Polish underground; within a few months, the ŻKN became a central organization in the Jewish life on the Aryan side.

Berman managed to free himself, leaving behind 200,000 zloty. Subsequently, he and his wife had to change their address and had to operate only partially and under deep cover.¹⁵⁵ In Berman's estimation, the denunciation originated in a conspiracy among a group of Jews who had arrived from Radom and had sought assistance from Żegota; the Gestapo, he says, may have sent these Jews to expose the Council's activity.¹⁵⁶

To set Żegota's operations within a broader context, one should also reexamine the financial support that it received from Jewish and Polish organizations. Various studies cite diverse and impressive sums of money that this organization received over the years, more or less in the vicinity of 30 million zloty. However, Arnon Rubin, who probed the matter in depth, states, on the basis of many documents, that the actual remittances from the Polish government-in-exile were 21 million zloty (\$182,500) and that Jewish organizations handed over nearly 4 million zloty, bringing the total available to Żegota over a period of approximately two years to 25 million zloty.¹⁵⁷

These sums sound very respectable, and rightly so. However, the only way to assess the government-in-exile's activity on behalf of Żegota, as well as the extent of mobilization by Jewish

155 Interestingly, when Berman related to the matter in his later published writings, he did not suggest that the denunciation had anything to do with Jews. See, for example, Berman, *From the Days of the Resistance* (Hebrew) (Tel Aviv: Menora, 1971), pp. 142–143.

156 Report by Adolf Berman about his arrest in January 1944, GFHA, Collections, 6049.

157 Arnon Rubin, *Facts and Fiction about the Rescue of the Polish Jewry during the Holocaust, Vol. II: The Council for Aid to the Jews—Żegota* (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University Press, 2004), pp. 83–96.

It is important to note that the average support for Jews was 500 zloty per month. Thus, if we calculate this amount over a period of two years (from the end of 1942 until the end of 1944), and even if the entire sum was transferred to Jews (and not used to pay for false papers, extortion, etc.), Żegota could have supported only 2,000 Jews. While the exact calculation of the number of Jews who received support from this organization is not part of this discussion, it seems that over the years the numbers have grown from a few hundred to a few thousand. This issue, therefore, requires further research based on the Berman collection in GFHA, on Żegota documentation in YVA, and on many more archival sources (such as those of the Polish government-in-exile).

organizations for this purpose, is to view them in a wider context. The comparative factors must include the organization's needs, the extent of funding made available for other causes in occupied Poland, and the market value of the funds that Żegota received. Here, again, I do not intend to delve into the matter; I mention it solely as yet another issue that requires thorough research. I will note, however, that, according to David Engel, the Council requested an allocation of 80,000 pounds sterling for its budget in June 1944, and explained its calculations in relation to the needs of Jews in hiding. What it finally received was 12,500 pounds, even though the Ministry of Labor and Welfare (Ministerstwo Pracy i Opieki Społecznej) spent nearly 9.5 million pounds on relief for the needy Polish population that year.¹⁵⁸

Similarly, the response to Żegota's requests to the government-in-exile for action against extortionists and denouncers needs to be examined. Once again, when placing the actual deeds in the historical context, one discovers how limited the action was on the part of the official entities in occupied Poland. While there were relatively few rulings against attackers of Jews—several dozen at most—we find thousands of punitive actions against violators of other Polish national interests. Consequently, one should not highlight the number of rulings handed down by the Polish resistance against extortionists without comparing them to the severe punishments meted out for other acts of treachery.¹⁵⁹

158 For example, 878,470 pounds were forwarded for Polish refugees in Palestine that year. David Engel, *Facing a Holocaust: The Polish Government-in-Exile and the Jews, 1943–1945* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993), pp. 153, 280.

159 Consider the ŻKN's desperate requests to act against denouncers: GFHA, Collections, 6170. For example, in a letter on April 6, 1944, the ŻKN asked for the publication, at the very least, of fictitious notices about the punishment of denouncers to deter the public from taking action against the Jews. See also GFHA, Collections, 6501: list of denouncers and information about denunciations gathered by Adolf Berman and members of the ŻKN. In the Polish underground press, which regularly publicized actions against local traitors, six rulings carried out against ten people for harming Jews were advertised; Rubin, *Facts and Fiction*, pp. 223–335. Teresa Prekerowa, setting

Thus, by examining economic support for Żegota as well as actions against denouncers within a broad historical context, the acceptability of such actions among the Polish underground leadership and public appears to take on deeper significance. Similarly, by investigating the number of Poles who paid with their lives for rescuing Jews against the background of Poles who were executed for other resistance activity, we may find evidence of Polish society's willingness to help Jews—who, too, were Polish citizens. This can be contrasted to the willingness of Poles to risk themselves in other ways in the struggle against the German enemy. Answers to these questions would do more than help us to understand the attitude of Polish society toward Żegota; they would also illuminate unfamiliar aspects of Jewish–Polish relations.

None of the principles discussed above would diminish in any way the impressive exploits of Żegota or the tragedy that befell the Jews who needed its aid. However, it would definitely reveal to what extent the research has been captive to the definition of Righteous Among the Nations and the struggle for memory; it would also show how much work in this field still awaits tomorrow's scholars.

Irena Sendler, Righteous Among the Nations

Alongside the aforementioned obstacles that researchers must confront, sometimes it is actually the overwhelming appreciation of the feats of the Righteous Among the Nations that precludes dealing with these people critically. The impact of the heroism factor on research may be demonstrated by examining one aspect of Żegota's activity: the Child Relief Department, headed by Irena Sendler, Righteous Among the Nations.

the number of Poles who were punished for harming Jews at 150, says that in many cases the assaults against the Jews were not the definitive factor behind the punishment; Teresa Prekerowa, "The Relief Council for Jews in Poland, 1942–1945," in Chimen Abramsky, Maciej Jachimczyk, and Antony Polonsky, *The Jews in Poland* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986), pp. 174–175.

The heroism of Irena Sendler (or “Jolanta,” to use her underground alias) is undisputed, as is her role in rescuing Jewish children in the Holocaust. When the war broke out, Sendler (1910–2008), a social worker for the Warsaw municipal welfare department, used a permit given to her to deliver clothing, medicines, and money to the Jews in the Warsaw ghetto. When Żegota was established in late 1942,¹⁶⁰ she took up a role in its activities and was even appointed, in September 1943, as the head of its children’s department. Her duties included finding hideout apartments for Jewish children and sending funds to support them. Within a few weeks, on September 20, 1943, Sendler was arrested by the Gestapo, tortured cruelly, and ostensibly “executed,” while, in fact, her comrades smuggled her out of the place of execution at the last moment, without the Germans’ knowledge. Even in the Nazi prison and under Gestapo interrogations, Sendler had not denounced her wards and comrades in the underground organization. Furthermore, she even continued to pursue her perilous activities on behalf of Jewish children after her escape, persevering until the end of the war and even afterwards.

Sendler became a symbol of limitless self-sacrifice and the triumph of spirit and humanity over cruelty and oppression—for good reason. She received innumerable citations and decorations;¹⁶¹ various memorial projects were dedicated to her deeds;¹⁶² and an attempt to present her candidacy for a Nobel

160 The distinction should be made between the establishment of the Provisional Council for Assistance to Jews (*Tymczasowy Komitet Pomocy Żydom*) on September 27, 1942, and the establishment of Żegota, the Council for Aid to Jews (*Rada Pomocy Żydom*) in December of that year. See explicit reference to Żegota below.

161 These include the title of Righteous Among the Nations (1965), honorary Israeli citizenship (1991), the Order of the White Eagle decoration (the highest distinction for Polish civilians and soldiers) (2003), the Jan Karski Freedom Award (2003), and the Order of the Smile award for adults who devote their lives to children.

162 In 1999: “Life in a Jar”—Educational Enterprises; 2003: “Irena Sendler, In the Name of Their Mothers”—documentary film; 2009: “The Courageous Heart of Irena Sendler”—fiction film; and books such as Anna Mieszkowska, *Mother*

Prize was made in 2007. In the descriptions of her feats, several features recur: kind-heartedness and warmth toward the Jewish children whom she smuggled; her attempt to document the children's real names on lists that were interred in glass jars, but lost during the war; steadfastness during the Gestapo's horrific interrogations; and the rescue of 2,500 Jewish children during the Holocaust.

This figure—2,500 children rescued by Sendler and her comrades—has become iconic. When we examine it against the historical reality of occupied Warsaw, however, there are several reasons to question its accuracy. First, in October 1942, when Żegota was established, 498 children under the age of nine and 4,446 children aged ten to nineteen were counted in the remains of the Warsaw ghetto.¹⁶³ In other words, there were fewer than 5,000 children under the age of nineteen in the Warsaw ghetto when the Council first began operating. This raises the question as to whether, in the few months remaining until the ghetto was liquidated as part of the suppression of the Warsaw ghetto uprising, about half of them were removed to the “Aryan” side by non-Jewish rescuers.¹⁶⁴ Perhaps much more important in challenging the mythical number of 2,500 children whom Sendler and her associates saved are documents relating to the actions of the Council and, foremost, of the children's department. For example, in a report from Żegota to the Delegatura that specifies

of the Children of the Holocaust: The Story of Irena Sendler (Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger, 2007). The last was first published in Polish—*Matka dzieci Holocaustu: Historia Ireny Sendlerowej* (Warsaw: Warszawskie Wydawn. Literackie MUZA, 2005)—and was translated into Hebrew, too: *She Gave Them Life: Irena Sendler, “Mother” of the Children of the Warsaw Ghetto* (Hebrew) (Tel Aviv: Dvir, 2009). As for online commemoration, see, for example, <http://www.irenasendler.org/default.asp>.

163 Demographic Structure of the Remaining Jewish Population in Warsaw, December 15, 1942, YVA, M.10/AR.2–285.

164 Furthermore, despite the difficulties to determine an exact number, it seems as if, at the end of the war, there were only about 5,000 children among the Jewish survivors in Poland, a painfully small number that also raises questions about the extent of activity by Żegota's children's department. Bogner, *At the Mercy of Strangers*, pp. 15–16.

the Council's activities from December 1942 to October 1943, it states that when the department was set up, it was active on behalf of twenty to thirty children.¹⁶⁵

If so, where did the famous number of 2,500 children come from? As it turns out, it first appeared in written testimony that four Righteous Among the Nations who engaged in the rescue of children during the Holocaust gave the researcher Teresa Prekerowa in March 1979, for her study about Żegota.¹⁶⁶ In this document, the women stated that during the war they had worked for the welfare department and its branches and had been active in Żegota. They also confirmed Irena Sendler's reports about the number of children who had been spared from death: "We estimate this number at around 2,500 souls, although since the events happened so long ago, some forty years ago, it is very hard to be numerically precise." Then the women gave a breakdown: Around 500 children were accommodated in institutions run by nuns; 200 or so were concealed in Father Boduen's municipal shelter; approximately 500 were placed in institutions affiliated with the Polish welfare organization RGO;¹⁶⁷ around 100 young people were referred to partisan units in the forests; and roughly 1,300 children found refuge with foster families. In conclusion, the women wrote, "About one-fourth of the list of survivors—according to Irena Sendler's paper—was lost in August–December 1944. The liaisons who worked with

165 Report by Żegota to the Polish government-in-exile mission in Poland, itemizing the Council's activity between December 1942 and October 1943, GFHA, Collections, 5449.

166 The four were Irena Sendler, Jadwiga Piotrkowska, Izabela Kuczkowska, and Wanda Drozowska-Rogowicz. Interestingly, Irena Sendler Purcell had previously published excerpts of memoirs that offer no estimate of the number of children who were saved. In her testimony, Sendler tried to emphasize the personality and the impressive activity of Julian Grobelny; the rescue actions of the staff of the Warsaw municipal welfare department that had been carried out since the beginning of the occupation; the many difficulties in their work due to the Warsaw ghetto uprising; as well as anecdotes that reflect the terror of those days and the activists' courage. See Irena Sendlerowa ("Jolanta"), "Ci którzy pomagali Żydom," *BŻIH*, 45–46 (1963), pp. 234–247.

167 Rada Główna Opiekuńcza, Central Welfare Council.

her quickly filled in the gap. After the war, the list [which had been written in code] was deciphered and handed over in its entirety to Adolf Berman.”¹⁶⁸

This document brings several important points to light. First, the four Righteous Among the Nations related, in 1979, events that had occurred some forty years earlier, i.e., activities on behalf of Jewish children that preceded the establishment of Żegota. This topic, as stated, has not yet been researched at all.¹⁶⁹ Second, most lists of these children did survive the war, were ultimately given over to Adolf Berman, and are kept at the Ghetto Fighters’ House Archives. In those lists of children supported by the organization, one can find, for example, the names of approximately 160 children who received financial support from Żegota in the first half of 1944. Other lists that deal mainly with adults contain the names of several dozen additional children who were concealed together with members of their families.¹⁷⁰

Another important document supports the conclusion that it is unreasonable to put the number of the rescued Jewish children at 2,500. This was a summary of Żegota activities written immediately after the end of the war. According to this document, the children’s department reported, in late 1943, on some 600 children who had been placed in various institutions in and around Warsaw; these included fifty-three¹⁷¹ in municipal institutions, twenty-two in RGO institutions, and more than 500 in public institutions—Father Boduen’s and the like. The

168 Teresa Prekerowa, *Konspiracyjna Rada Pomocy Żydom w Warszawie, 1942–1945* (Warsaw: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1982), pp. 215–217.

169 Alongside the research about Żegota activists’ underground activities on behalf of Jews in the first year of the war, it is only appropriate that the deeds of Jewish and Polish activists in other branches of the resistance should have been researched as well.

170 Lists of children and itemized account of allocations that they received in January–May 1944, GFHA, Collections, 6207.2. See also names of children that appear, for example, on an alphabetized list of recipients of support, GFHA, Collections, 6212. Given the very nature of the lists, some of the names are duplicates.

171 The written text reports “\$4”; therefore, one cannot know if this is 53 or 43 (the dollar sign splits the dash with the digit 4).

document also notes that, in addition to these youngsters, “Many Jewish children were scattered around the country in sundry institutions.” In order to demonstrate how difficult it was for the children’s department to go about its activity, the report explains, “In September 1943, for example, the department settled the affairs of 36 children and ... 22 [other] cases were still being dealt with; thus, this month it dealt with the affairs of 58 children.” The report even emphasizes, “[Admittedly] these are not large numbers, but it should be borne in mind that after dealing with one group of children [the department had to] deal with the next group the next month.”¹⁷²

These data, culled from the contemporary documentation, demonstrate the lack of factual grounds for the notion that has worked its way into the public mind, as well as research publications, that 2,500 children survived thanks to Żegota’s activity in the Warsaw area. Thus, Nahum Bogner, who investigated the rescue of Jewish children in Poland, estimates the number of those saved in and around Warsaw with the help of Żegota at around 600.¹⁷³

Needless to say, the question of whether Irena Sendler engaged in the rescue of 2,500 children or 600 is morally meaningless and inconsequential in terms of the “whosoever saves a single life” principle. Presumably, too, the error originated from two factors: the many years that had passed since the end of the war (as the four Righteous Among the Nations even suggested in their testimony); and the inclusion of activities in the estimate that preceded the establishment of Żegota. In contrast to the moral question, however, there is an immense difference between the rescue of 2,500 children from the Nazi occupier’s talons and the rescue of 600 for a historian who attempts to describe, analyze, and understand the events of the time. For the critical researcher, this test case of Irena Sendler’s story may again reflect the necessity of basing oneself on documents and of being grounded

172 Żegota activity report to Delegatura, GFHA, Collections, 6039.

173 Bogner, *At the Mercy of Strangers*, pp. 131–132.

in historical reality in order to produce a credible account of the event.

Again, it goes without saying that the cautious estimate does nothing to belittle the vigor, self-sacrifice, courage, and resourcefulness of Irena Sendler and her comrades in Żegota. This number, however, and an all-encompassing analysis of the reality in which Sendler and others operated, may bear out the dangers that threatened those who attempted to help Jews in the Holocaust. In addition, they attest to the Germans' efficient murderousness, which ultimately managed to claim many victims despite the acts of the few who tried to help.

A focused look at the activities of groups and individuals in light of the foregoing principles reveals the enormous lacunae that still exist in the analysis of important phenomena about which much has already been written. These brief remarks, of course, do not constitute a comprehensive study of the research on these impressive actions; they do, however, indicate the immense research potential that still exists.

Summary and Conclusion

The three principles described above—even-handed investigation of help and harm to Jews, determining the role of Jews in rescue and persecution, and setting the events in a broad historical context—neither detract from the impressive exploits of the Righteous Among the Nations, nor diminish the tragedy that struck the beleaguered Jews. Some may even argue that by understanding the historical reality in which the Righteous operated, we are all the more appreciative of the noble-mindedness of what they did. For our purposes, however, these principles indicate the long road still needed to be traveled in order to arrive at a comprehensive and thorough research of even fundamental issues in the study of Jewish–Polish relations during the Holocaust.

If we return to the basic question with which we began Part 3, in which we asked according to what principles and limits

Jewish–Polish relations in the Holocaust should be examined from the historical standpoint, we may suggest abandoning moral definitions in the examination of various historical issues. This in no way impacts on retaining complete respect for the Righteous Among the Nations in every way. It seems, therefore, that the following principles should guide future historical research on Jewish–Polish relations in the Holocaust:

1. Even-handed analysis of “help and harm” to Jews, with similar criteria applied to the study of the positive and the negative in human behavior.
2. Relating to the nature of what was done—help or harm—irrespective of whether it was done by a Jew or a non-Jew.
3. Avoiding the use of dichotomous categories of “rescuers” and “denouncers” and aspiring to create complex historical categories that tackle the following questions, among others:
 - (a) Was the help or the harm non recurrent or ongoing?
 - (b) How many rescuers/assailants and how many survivors/fugitives were involved in what was done?
 - (c) Were those personal or organized acts supported and assisted by official entities of some kind?
 - (d) Was some reward—not necessarily financial—given for helping or harming Jews?¹⁷⁴

174 For initial studies that describe the dynamic relations between rescuer and survivor, see, in addition to Jan Grabowski’s work (note 107), Michlic’s research on the rescue of children in Poland. It is worth emphasizing Michlic’s claim that the child survivors are a unique group with characteristics of its own due to the ordeal that they experienced during the war and the complex relations that they developed with their rescuers in subsequent years. Joanna Beata Michlic, *Jewish Children in Nazi-Occupied Poland: Survival and Polish-Jewish Relations during the Holocaust as Reflected in Early Postwar Recollections* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2008).

4. Examining the various actions and events in an appropriate historical context, including comparisons to possible similar situations in other German-occupied countries.

Along with these principles, it should be emphasized that one should not overlook acts of treachery revealed by documents about assistance to Jews and that, similarly, an effort should be made to cull accounts of kindnesses from the persecution stories. Furthermore, in terms of methodology, we must bear in mind that estimates of the number of people who helped Jews, as well as those who harmed them, provide a rich culture for unfounded approximations and numerical manipulations. Therefore, numerical estimates should be based on archival documents and not on ex post estimates or mathematical acrobatics.

The examination of basic issues in Polish–Jewish relations during the Holocaust by means of the foregoing principles and limitations may do more than provide a much better understanding of the topic. The debate about these complex relations may also become relevant to those researchers and readers who do not necessarily deal with this period and turn it into a meaningful subject for many others.

Epilogue

Since the end of World War II and, more emphatically, since the 1990s, dozens of books and hundreds of articles have been published on the rescue of and assaults against Jews in Poland during the Holocaust. Some explore the matter in depth and broaden our understanding and knowledge of the relations between Jews and Poles at that time; others include various manipulations that do not necessarily add to our understanding of the historical reality at issue. The latter group of studies originated with the complex process of having to cope with the past as part of the collective memory of both Polish and Jewish society. Thus, no matter how much research has been carried out and how much time has passed since the end of the horrors of the Holocaust, there are still voids; important issues have not yet been discussed, and various topics, although researched, leave much work still to be done.

The extent of help and harm to Jews during the war by their Polish surroundings is often assessed on the basis of various numerical calculations. However, by testing one important study, based almost entirely on statistical estimates, we have revealed the limits of quantitative research on this topic and the inadequate familiarity with statistical research methods on the part of the historical community, which has resulted in insufficiently critical work and the acceptability of studies of dubious reliability.

Moreover, a glance at the existing research on the topic shows that research should also be freed of the moral and value guidelines that have shaped it for years. The debate over the relations that formed between Jews and Poles, for better or worse, from the standpoint of the commemorative category of “Righteous Among the Nations” and the awe in which they are held is impeding the development of new and promising directions in the research.

The Holocaust was an extreme historical event, and the discovery of its details in accurate form is a challenge that must

be met if we are to elucidate the ways in which human society functions. One can only hope that Holocaust scholars in Israel, Poland, and elsewhere will find the wisdom in the coming decades to apply innovative and reliable research methods to the existing documentation and manage to uncover important trends, exhume hidden phenomena, and generate new insights on Jewish–Polish relations during the Holocaust.

