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Poles as Pigs in MAUS

The Problems with Spiegelman's MAUS

Spiegelman's representation of Poles as pigs
is "a calculated insult" leveled against Poles.[1]

Maus made me feel that Poland was
somehow responsible for the Holocaust,
or at least that many Poles collaborated in it.[2]

1. Background

MAUS is a comic book – sometimes called a graphic novel – authored by American cartoonist Art Spiegelman. The core of the book is an extended interview by the author/narrator with his father, a Polish Jew named Vladek, focusing on his experiences as a Holocaust survivor. Although MAUS has been described as both a memoir and fiction, it is widely treated as non-fiction. *Time* placed it on their list of non-fiction books.

MAUS is considered to be a postmodern book. It is a story about storytelling that weaves several conflicting narratives (historical, psychological and autobiographical). The book employs various postmodern techniques as well as older literary devices. A prominent feature of the book is the author's depiction of

[1] *The Norton Anthology of American Literature,* 7th edition (New York: Norton, 2007), Volume E, p. 3091.

[2] Seth J. Frantzman, "Setting History Straight – Poland Resisted Nazis," *Jerusalem Post,* January 29, 2018.

national groups in the form of different kinds of animals: Jews are drawn as mice, Germans as cats, and (Christian) Poles as pigs.

MAUS has been taught widely in U.S. high schools, and even elementary schools, as part of the literature curriculum for many years. It has recently been introduced in some Canadian high school literature classes as a supplementary resource, principally because the book appears on the literature in translation list prescribed by the International Baccalaureate program. Although taught under the rubric of literature, MAUS has essentially acquired the status of non-fiction in schools.

Although MAUS has met with criticism on the part of the Polish community, there is a general lack of recognition as to why the book is objectionable. MAUS raises concerns on many levels, ethical, didactic, and historical, but these concerns are not explained by educators for the benefit of unwary students who are required to study MAUS. Moreover, students of Polish heritage have reported incidents of inappropriate remarks and taunts directed at them by other students as a direct result of the portrayal of Poles in MAUS.

Since MAUS has the appearance of a historical memoir, most readers wil assume that, like other memoirs, it is literally true. Few readers, especially elementary and high school students, have enough historical knowledge to see through its falsified depiction of Poles. This is one of many reasons why MAUS is not suitable for study at these levels.

Although taught in literature courses, MAUS is primarily about the Holocaust, a historical event, which is rightly considered to be an important topic for study. However, the Holocaust is also, in many respects, a very complex and controversial topic – one that often calls for an in-depth knowledge of various factors that could impact one’s understanding of a particular issue under examination.

Therefore, an appreciation of the historical context is critical to a proper understanding of the events portrayed in MAUS. The focus of inquiry cannot solely be the personal story and perspective of Vladek, the mouse protagonist of the

book. For the Holocaust to have educational value, the treatment of the historical context must strive for accuracy and objectivity. In particular, it is important to ensure that not only Jews but other groups who suffered under Nazi German oppression are presented in a fair manner.

The Jews in MAUS are, with few exceptions such as the Jewish Council and Jewish police, who assisted the Germans in the operation and liquidation of the ghetto in Sosnowiec, portrayed in a favourable and sympathetic light. As the primary victims of the Holocaust, this is appropriate. Apart from the cats (Germans), who understandably appear only in the role of Nazis in the context of wartime occupied Poland, the pigs are the most prominent characters and have the most interaction with the mice (Jews).

Unfortunately, as will be explained, the portrayal of the pig people is seriously flawed in several important respects. MAUS clearly cannot be treated as an accurate historical record, although it is passed off as such. The perspective of the protagonist is too narrow and flawed. The voice of the author and narrator, rather than exposing the protagonist's biases and misrepresentations of the historical record, reinforces them. MAUS does not teach students about the complexities of the Holocaust but rather oversimplifies such complexities. The reality is that the students' level of understanding of these issues is generally rather poor or almost non-existent. In addition, neither they nor the teachers possess the necessary tools to properly assess the flaws of this book.

In a nutshell, the case against MAUS is that, despite its veneer of sophistication, the book is a rather primitive expression of the author's prejudices in choosing to portray the Poles as a nation of swine. Furthermore, its portrayal of Poles contains serious misrepresentations regarding their alleged role in the Holocaust. This is contemptible, and unacceptable by any standards. The notion that teachers can and will expose the biases and misrepresentations regarding Poles found in this book is unlikely in the extreme.

School children of Polish background who are subjected to this book justifiably feel that their identity or cultural heritage has been diminished by the perspectives described in this book and are, understandably, humiliated by this experience. They are at a loss as to how to respond. Unfortunately, educators have not demonstrated sensitivity to such matters and have ignored the potential for cruel jokes and gibes.

2. Why is portraying Poles as pigs objectionable from an ethical perspective?

Portraying Poles as pigs is offensive. In fact, it has been acknowledged as such by literary critics. In the biographical introduction to the excerpt from MAUS that appears in *The Norton Anthology of American Literature,* 7th edition (New York: Norton, 2007), Volume E, p. 3091, editors Jerome Klinkowitz and Patricia B. Wallace describe Spiegelman's representation of Poles as pigs as "a *calculated insult*" leveled against Poles. A similar point was made by Harvey Pekar, a celebrated underground comic book write, who describes himself as a Jew with a background similar to Art Spiegelman's: "When he [Spiegelman] shows them [Poles] doing something admirable and still portrays them as pigs, he's sending a mixed message."[3] Characteristically, Spiegelman has dismissed Poles' concern about their depiction as pigs as "a squeal," the sound pigs make.[4]

The incessant depiction, in MAUS, of Poles as anti-Semitic "pigs" – with the highly derisive connotation that term carries – forms an image that cannot easily, if ever, be erased from the minds of young students whose knowledge of World War II history is minimal at best.

The mouse and cat metaphor is fairly obvious to most readers of MAUS. It is a well-known fact that cats chase mice, and that the Nazis targeted Jews for destruction. The cat imagery is generally explained by teachers and in accompanying reading materials provided to or accessible by students. The pig imagery or "metaphor," on

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[3] *The Comics Journal*, no. 113, December 1986.

[4] Joseph Witek, ed., *Art Spiegelman: Conversations* (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 2007), 193.

the other hand, is rarely, if ever, explained – whether in MAUS itself, or in available reading materials. One handout provided to students states that the animals have a "symbolic quality," without any further explanation of the role of the pigs.[5] This begs the question, what is their symbolic quality?

The use of pigs to depict Poles is something that cannot be missed, especially by impressionable young readers, as the very word "pig" is widely used as a term of derision. "You pig," is universally considered to be an insult. (Incomparably more so than "You cat" or "You mouse." Ask any child.) In popular culture, pigs have become synonymous with negative attributes, especially greed, gluttony, and uncleanliness. Pigs are generally viewed as disgusting, filthy animals. They are often considered to be vulgar and stupid. They can also turn into ruthless despots, as in George Orwell's allegorical novel *Animal Farm*. The implication, therefore, is that there is something rather unsavoury about the pig people in MAUS. This is one obvious negative connotation that would not be lost on students, especially since that image is reinforced by the negative stereotypes used to portray Poles. The pig people somehow even manage to remain fat when imprisoned in Auschwitz, while mice are thoroughly emaciated.

In some cultures pigs are "unclean" animals. This is true for Jews and Muslims. In Jewish culture, in particular, the pig has an intense and abominable connotation. Pigs and pork are considered to be *treyf* (non-kosher), or *unclean,* in a way that other non-kosher animals are not. This is very important contextual information of which the students are not made aware. According to the Chabad-Lubavitch Media Center,

> There is probably no animal as disgusting to Jewish sensitivities as the pig. It's not just because it may not be eaten: there are plenty of other animals that aren't kosher either, but none of them arouse as much disgust as the pig. Colloquially, the pig is the ultimate symbol of loathing; when you say that

[5] Ian Johnston, "On Spiegelman's *Maus I and II*", Internet: http://records.viu.ca/~johnstoi/introser/maus.htm.

someone "acted like a *chazir* [pig]," it suggests that he or she did something unusually abominable.[6]

An Israeli court found a Jewish woman guilty of racism for putting up posters depicting Islam's Prophet Mohammad as a pig. After a volatile demonstration against immigrants from Russia, heckled as "pork eaters," David Benziri, a leading Sephardi rabbi and brother of an Israeli cabinet minister, said: "There is nothing so anti-Jewish as pig."[7] The connection to Poles is not a difficult one to make. James E. Young remarked, "as pigs they come to symbolize what is *treif*, or non-kosher."[8] It is telling that Spiegelman chose this supremely un-kosher animal—the pig—to depict the Poles, rather than the Germans.

Unfortunately, the image of Poles as being "unclean" has a long and shameful tradition. In Poland, when a Jew wanted to insult a Pole, he called him a "Polish pig."[9] This went hand-in-hand with the image – popular among Jews – of Poles as "stupid *goys*". ("Goy," a derogatory term for Christians, was commonly used by Jews to refer to Poles.) Samuel Oliner, a respected Jewish scholar, recalled his

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[6] Internet: http://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/2376474/jewish/Pigs-Judaism.htm. Although there are many different *treyf* (non-kosher) foods in existence, the pig is especially repulsive to Jews. Talmudic scholar Adin Steinsaltz suggests some possible reasons for this: "The particular emotional attitude toward the eating of pig is noted in talmudic sources. The ban is no stricter than against the consumption of horse or camel flesh, yet the Talmud says: 'Cursed is he who grows pigs.' There was apparently some historical source for this particular interdict, which is not clear to us." See Adin Steinsaltz, *The Essential Talmud* (New York: Basic Books, 2006), 187. The foregoing has implications beyond the (dietary) Laws of Kashrus (Kashrut). The status of the pig, in Jewish ideation, is unambiguous. Ironically, pigs were once used as a vulgar anti-Semitic putdown of Jews: "Jewish prohibition of pork has traditionally been explained in anti-Semitic lore by identifying Jews, too, as pigs, who were reluctant to eat their own kin." See Deborah R. Geis, ed., *Considering Maus: Approaches to Art Spiegelman's "Survivor's Tale" of the Holocaust* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2003), 21. Thus, pigs are inescapably derogatory when said of Jews, but it is perfectly fine with Spiegelman to characterize Poles as pigs.

[7] Alan Philps, "Pork-eating Gentiles stir outrage in Israel," *National Post* (Toronto), November 24, 1999.

[8] James E. Young, *At Memory's Edge: After-Images of the Holocaust in Contemporary Art and Architecture* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2000), 33.

[9] Abraham W. Landau, *Branded on My Arm: A Holocaust Memoir* (New Bedford, Massachusetts: Spinner Publications with The Jewish Federation of Greater New Bedford, 2011), 24.

grandmother's lament, "Shmulek will grow up to be a stupid *goy*!" "The presence of a gentile defiled the home of a Jew," Oliner also recalled.[10] We can see an allusion to that type of thinking in Vladek's characterization of the Polish priest who comforted him in Auschwitz: "He wasn't Jewish – but very intelligent." Moreover, the similarities between the Nazi and traditional Jewish perception of Poles as stupid, disgusting animals are disturbing.

Polish inmates of Nazi camps were often called "Polish swine" by German officials and Kapos (i.e., prisoner functionaries who led work details or crews made up of of prisoners).[11] Poles are also referred to as "pigs" in Jewish memorial books.[12] MAUS employs the same imagery of the Poles as found in Nazi propaganda, where Poles were often referred to as "pigs." Art Spiegelman was, of course, aware of these problematic associations when he chose to portray Poles as pigs. Are the teachers aware of it? Are the students being informed? How else would they learn about it?

Spiegelman, in MAUS itself, shows how carefully he selects the animals to depict the various nationalities when he ponders how to draw his French wife. (There is more on this later.) The choice of pigs was quite deliberate and sends a clear message that anyone with an understanding of the cultures involved and the historical context would appreciate. The narrative then plays into the stereotype by its relentless focus on Poles who behave brutishly, venally, and badly. Although not all pigs are portrayed as uniformly bad, the overwhelming impression is negative as those cast in a more favourable light are few and far between. (While most of the pigs in MAUS are simply shown in the background as part of larger groups of pigs, and are "neutral" at best, their role in the narrative is virtually none.)

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[10] Samuel P. Oliner, *Restless Memories: Recollections of the Holocaust Years* (Berkeley, California: Judah L. Magnes Museum, 1986), 29, 54.

[11] Record of Witness Testimony No. 014, November 30, 1945, Voices from Ravensbrück, Polish Institute of Source Research, Lund, Sweden, Internet: http://www3.ub.lu.se/ravensbruck/interview14.

[12] For example, *Kosow Lacki* (San Francisco: Holocaust Center of Northern California, 1992), 49; and *The Cieszanow Memorial Book* (Mahwah, New Jersey: Jacob Solomon Berger, 2006), 40.

In the past, Art Spiegelman has not been forthright as to why he chose to draw Poles as pigs. Spiegelman would have us believe that it is innocuous to portray Poles as pigs because, after all, in MAUS, all the characters are animals. Alternatively, he has suggested that the Polish pigs were modeled after the endearing Disney cartoon character Porky Pig.[13] This line of argument is disingenuous to say the least. As we have seen, the status of the pig, in Jewish ideation, is unambiguous. There is no escaping the fact that cartoons promote stereotypes. Natasha Schmidt comments, "Almost by definition, cartooning tends to use stereotypes, you're dealing with a recognizable iconic picture."[14]

In *MetaMaus: A Look Inside a Modern Classic, Maus*, Spiegelman divulges his actual reasons for portraying Poles as pigs: it is to bash Poles. With reference to his father's attitude towards Poles, he quips, "So my metaphor [mice to be killed outright, and pigs to be exploited and eaten] was somehow able to hold that particular vantage point while still somehow acknowledging my father's dubious opinion of Poles as a group."[15] Elsehwere, Spiegelman is more forthcoming. He grew up in a home where dislike of Poles reigned: "As I was being raised in Rego Park, my parents regularly expressed negative feelings about Poles …"[16] Thus, the notion of bias functions on two levels in *Maus*: Vladek's and the author's.

Spiegelman's biases are based not only on the personal level, but extend also to the historical record. Despite the fact that Poland had for centuries given sanctuary to Jews persecuted throughout Europe, Spiegelman insists it was otherwise: "'And considering the bad relations between Poles and Jews for the last hundred years in Poland, it seemed right to use a non-Kosher animal.'"[17] Spiegelman is quoted as saying in another context, "The hostess bears an uncanny resemblance to Odilo

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[13] Witek, *Art Spiegelman: Conversations,* 232.

[14] Witek, *Art Spiegelman: Conversations,* 221.

[15] Arr Spiegelman, *MetaMaus: A Look Inside a Modern Classic, Maus* (New York: Pantheon, 2011), 122.

[16] Quoted by Lawrence Weschler in Witek, *Art Spiegelman: Conversations,* 231.

[17] Spiegelman, *MetaMaus,* 125.

Globocnik, head of the Polish SS."[18] Clearly, he associates the Nazi-imposed regime, which persecuted the Poles, with the Poles as alleged persecutors.

Unfortunately, Art Spiegelman's anti-Polish biases run deep. At an interactive meeting at Angelo State University in February 2011, Spiegelman dismissed as "silly" the notion that Poles and Polish Americans were offended by his pig depiction. He told the audience that he had read a book that supposedly proved that the Poles in Nazi-occupied Poland were in favour of the Holocaust. He alleged that Poles objected only to having to sit back and watch while the Nazis carried out mass murder, referring to a diary written by a Polish man that, Spiegelman claimed, showed that most Poles resented not being able to carry out the Holocaust themselves. Spiegelman then said he could not remember the author or the title of the book on which he based this slanderous claim, joking awkwardly that he has always accepted the fact that memory is imperfect.[19]

All of this supports what Erin Einhorn, a Jewish-American author, concludes as being the real inspiration for the pig metaphor:

> … people like my grandparents, the survivor generation, emerged from the war with a blazing hatred for the Poles … And they passed that hatred on to their children. It was why, I suspected, Art Spiegelman, the son of a survivor from Sosnowiec, the town next to the one where my mother was born, drew the Poles as pigs in his holocaust comic book, *Maus,* and the Germans as comparatively pleasant cats. The implication from our parents and grandparents was that the Germans, while evil and calculating in the war, were basically intelligent people who were swept catastrophically into nationalistic frenzy, while the Poles were anti-Semitic pigs. There was a reason – I had been told many times with a wink – that the Germans located the death camps in Poland, that the German people never would have stood for such horror on their own land. Poles, I was told, had welcomed the camps. They'd embraced the chance to see Jews die around them. Even my mother,

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[18] Quoted by Noemi Epel in Witek, *Art Spiegelman: Conversations,* 148.

[19] Internet: http://bieganski-the-blog.blogspot.ca/2012/10/protesting-maus-by-dr-linda-kornasky.html.

> who was saved by a Polish family, told me the family only did it for the money. The reasonable part of me didn't believe this. People don't risk their lives for money alone, and such horrible, sweeping statements couldn't possibly apply to an entire population without benefit of nuance or exception.[20]

That Spiegelman was under the influence of such biases is evident in MAUS itself. Nations or cultures he approves of are represented by noble or respectable animals, for example, Americans as dogs and Swedes as reindeer. However, cultures which he scorns are symbolized negatively. When discussing with his wife, who is French, how to draw Frenchmen, Spiegelman rejects her suggestion of bunny rabbits, as "too sweet and gentle" to apply to a nation [France] with a deep history of anti-Semitism and Nazi collaboration. Instead, he chose to draw Frenchmen as frogs, which could be seen as a slimy and lowly creature. However, since the French are peripheral to the MAUS story, their depiction as frogs plays no significant role in the book. One cannot say the same about the Poles, who appear front and centre and, for the most part, in a negative light. Their portrayal as pigs reinforces the notion that they were supposedly a nation of Nazi collaborators. Their portrayal at Auschwitz – overwhelmingly as brutal Kapos – is a striking and graphic illustration of that phenomenon.

The bigotry and historical distortions inherent in Vladek's perspective on Poles are validated by the author. Spiegelman's own presence within the narrative (e.g., during the discussion between himself and his French wife about how to depict French characters) would have allowed him, through the voice of his own mouse character, to call attention to those flaws within his father's views. Instead, he purposefully supports his father's bias against Poles. (In contrast, his own mouse

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[20] Erin Einhorn, *The Pages In Between: A Holocaust Legacy of Two Families, One Home* New York: Touchstone/Simon & Schuster, 2008), 48–49. These hateful views are by no means only of historic interest; they continue to plague some Jews up until today. On February 4, 2018, the following public post was posted on Facebook: "My father … from Sosnovice [sic] … said that the Poles were worse than the Germans … mean and cold blooded … they were informers and killers and for a piece of bread or a cigarette sold Jews to the slaughter … The tiger never changes his spots. Once a killer always a killer and once a Jew hater always a Jew hater – as my father said: It's in the blood, it's in the genes, it's inborn … nothing changes – in the end, the truth always reveals itself …"

character challenges Vladek's racism against African Americans near the end of the book.)

The claim that the use of animals to portray nations (anthropomorphism) simply reflects Nazi German ideology is not true. The Nazis did not portray Germans as cats, the French as frogs or Americans as dogs. The Nazis had no singular, fixed image for any particular group that they despised. They often portrayed Jews and Poles as vermin. Moreover, the vermin did not have to be mice, or even rodents at all. Vermin could also be insect pests. In the Nazi propaganda film *The Eternal Jew,* Jews are portrayed as filthy, disease-bearing rats that had to be exterminated, not as helpless, emaciated mice. Nazi Germans also portrayed Jews as toadstools or poisononius mushrooms, for example, in the infamous *Der Giftpilz*, which was widely used to instill anti-Semitism in German children in Nazi Germany.

Although the Nazis sometimes called Poles "swine," as a form of debasement based on the Germans' presumed racial superiority, this term was not directed solely at Poles. Jews, as well as others, were also often referred to as "swine."[21] According to extensive research, while the Germans often called Jews "rats" and insulted them with other animal names, their favourite epithets were "pigs," "Jew-pig," "swine," and *Saujuden* ("Jewish swine").[22] In fact, there was a long, centuries-old history of

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[21] For example, Jews seized in Kalisz by German soldiers in September 1939 were put on display in various German towns with a sign saying "*Das sind die jüdischen Schweine, welche auf deutsche Soldaten geschossen haben*"/"These are the Jewish pigs who shot at German soldiers." German soldiers affixed seals with the word "*Schweine*" on the forehead of Jewish workers and had them wear the seals for an entire week. See, for example, the wartime reports written by Jews reproduced in Magdalena Siek, ed., *Archiwum Ringelbluma: Konspiracyjne Archiwum Getta Warszawskiego,* vol. 9: *Tereny wcielone do Rzeszy: Kraj Warty* (Warsaw: Żydowski Instytut Historyczny im. Emanuela Ringelbluma, 2012), 175, 178, 198.

[22] Charles Patterson, *Eternal Treblinka: Our Treatment of Animals and the Holocaust* (New York: Lantern Books, 2002), 46–47. German Kapos were also known to call Jews "Jewish pigs" or "Jew-pigs." See, for example, Donald L. Niewyk, ed. *Fresh Wounds: Early Narratives of Holocaust Survival* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 212; Nikolaus Wachsmann, *KL: A History of the Nazi Concentration Camps* (London: Little, Brown, 2015), 238.

Jews being associated with pigs in German lands.[23] So depicting Jews as pigs, rather than mice, would have been an apt choice. (Germans could then have been drawn as wolves.) However, it would be unthinkable – for religious and other obvious reasons – to draw Jews as pigs. There were no such qualms for Spiegelman when it came to "Polack-*goys.*" Choosing to depict Poles, rather than Jews, as pigs was clearly intended to deprecate the Poles as a nation.

Moreover, the pig metaphor does not accurately reflect the Poles' actual place in the genocidal plans of Nazi Germany. While it is true that cats chase mice, pigs are not their natural enemies: cats do not eat pigs. There is no indication that Germany's intention was not simply to occupy Poland, but to destroy it forever, and to enslave, starve and slaughter the Poles, which they did by the millions. Portraying Poles as well-fed pigs (while drawing the mice as emaciated) serves to underscore their alleged role as dull stooges. The *leitmotif* of Poles as Nazi sympathizers and henchmen reinforces the false image of Poles as a nation of collaborators. In fact, the Poles were one of the primary victims of National Socialist racial policies. Poland was the only country occupied by Germany that did not produce a collaborating government. The Poles mounted the largest anti-German underground, the Home Army, and staged the largest armed insurrection, the Warsaw Uprising of August 1944.

Writing in the *Comics Journal* (no. 113, December 1986) from the perspective of "a first-generation American Jew," Harvey Pekar voiced his strong objection to Spiegelman's portrayal of Poles as pigs:

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[23] Writing about the images used for Jews in the graphic arts, historian Paul Johnson underscores the primacy of the sow:

> In Germany, towards the end of the medieval period, a new one began to emerge: the sow. … it became the commonest of all motifs for the Jew, and one of the most potent and enduring of abusive stereotypes. It assumed an infinite variety of repellent forms. Jews were portrayed venerating the sow, sucking its teats, embracing its hindquarters, devouring its excrement. … Indeed, it is clear that the gross indecency of the image was the prime reason for its popularity over 600 years. With the invention of printing, it proliferated rapidly and became ubiquitous in Germany. It appeared not only in books but in countless prints … The Jew's unnatural and inhuman relations with the *Judensau* drove it ever more firmly into the German popular mind.

See Paul Johnson, *A History of the Jews* (New York: Harper & Row, 1988), 232.

> It undermines his moral position. He negatively stereotypes Poles even though he portrays some hiding Jews from the Germans. ... I do not have general objections to anthropomorphism, but I do object to the way Spiegelman uses it. Art stereotypes nationalities, Orwell doesn't. Orwell's pigs do not represent a whole nation. They represent what comes to be the corrupt ruling class of a nation. Orwell didn't portray the leaders of the animal revolution as pigs just to praise their intellects: he wanted people to view them as coarse and greedy, which is what people usually mean when they call each other 'pig'.

No amount of literary "deconstruction" of the text will undo that harmful and indelible impression. So when students studying MAUS direct remarks like "Oink, oink, piggies" and "you Poles killed the Jews" at fellow students of Polish origin, as was reported in a Toronto high school in the fall of 2013, they are actually quite perceptive in picking up on the message – the biases and negative stereotypes – conveyed in MAUS. The fault lies not with the students, but with the book itself.

3. Why is the depiction of Poles in MAUS objectionable from a historical perspective?

MAUS promotes negative stereotypes in portraying Poles and contains serious historical misrepresentations regarding their role in the context of the Second World War. These two phenomena go hand in hand, one buttressing the other. They are ubiquitous. Among the many misrepresentations regarding Poles (which are addressed in more depth later) the following stand out:

- Ordinary Poles are portrayed as Nazi sympathizers.
- Poles are shown as occupying virtually all positions of brutal Kapos in Nazi German camps.
- There is no mention that Poles faced the death penalty for helping Jews in any way. Instead, Polish helpers are portrayed as greedy and deceitful.
- There is no mention that the Germans also relied on Jewish policemen and agents to hunt down Jews who escaped from the ghetto. That role is assigned exclusively to the Poles.

Anyone who has carried out any serious research on Auschwitz and the German occupation of this part of Poland, as Spiegelman purports to have done, could not have failed to come across the existence of many Jewish Kapos, the fact that there was a death penalty for aiding Jews, and the role of the Jewish police outside the ghettos. The treatment of these matters can be contrasted with Spiegelman's decision to challenge his father's recollection about far less significant matters such as the existence of a prisoner orchestra in Auschwitz. However, he does not challenge his father's recollection on the make-up of the Kapos and the risks Poles faced for helping Jews. The failure to include such important information is a deliberate narrative choice that seriously compromises the status of MAUS as non-fiction, which is how the book is essentially passed off and wherein lies its supposed didactic value for students.

MAUS relies on negative stereotypes to portray the Poles in an unfavourable light. Depicting Poles as disgusting and brutal animals is eerily reminiscent of the Nazi propaganda newspaper, *Der Stürmer.* Significantly, this point is usually omitted by reviewers of MAUS, even though the image of fat, fascist pigs permeates MAUS and is all too glaring to overlook. The fact that MAUS employs the same imagery of the Poles as found in Nazi propaganda, where Poles were often referred to as "pigs," could perhaps be explained, provided teachers and teaching materials addressed this matter squarely. The fact is they almost never do. (The handout, Ian Johnston's "On Spiegelman's *Maus I and II,*" provided students in a Toronto high school, does not mention this. Rather, it refers to the animals' unexplained "symbolic quality.") But even pointing out such facts would not expose the depth of prejudice and misinformation that the pig metaphor represents.

There is certainly nothing sympathetic or cute about the pigs in MAUS. The predominant portrayal of the Poles is undeniably negative. Except for the odd Pole who is shown in a light that is not entirely unfavourable, Spiegelman does not humanize the Polish "pigs." He humanizes only his Jewish mice characters, while depicting his Polish pigs essentially as racist stereotypes. By focusing on negative characters like the camp Kapos, Spiegelman implies that the Poles, who were also

victims of the Nazi regime, collaborated with their fascist enemies. Unfortunately, these crude stereotypes are, for the most part, simply perverse history and would be unacceptable in any other context.

Let us consider the frames showing Poles, drawn as fat pigs, who greet each other with a Nazi hand salute and the words "Heil Hitler". Polish pigs are also shown wearing uniforms with Nazi insignia, even though the Poles did not and could not join collaborationist formations like the SS. (This was unlike any other occupied European countries, which did in fact produce large, voluntary, national SS formations in the service of the Nazis).[24] As James Young points out, "it would have been almost impossible to find any Pole saluting Hitler to another Pole during the war or to find a Polish Nazi."[25] Yet, according to these pictures, Poles joined Nazi formations and ordinary Poles used Nazi salutes and greetings to convince one another that they were genuine Poles. Throughout, the pigs are also shown as fat, whereas the mice are emaciated, even though the Germans imposed near-starvation food rations on the Polish population. (In 1941, the food allotment for a Jew amounted to 253 calories, 669 calories for a Pole, and 2,613 for a German.) Quite simply, this is a perversion of the historical record. No amount of literary

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[11] Virtually every European national group – with the exception of the Poles – volunteered in large numbers to serve in the ranks of the SS. Members of the national SS formations included the following: Dutch – 50,000, Belgians – 40,000, Hungarians – 40,000, Croatians – 40,000, Ukrainians – 30,000, Cossacks – 30,000, Latvians – 30,000, French – 20,000, Albanians – 19,000, Russians – 18,000, Estonians – 15,000, Belorussians – 10,000, Italians – 10,000, Tatars – 10,000, Norwegians – 8,000, Danes – 6,000, Slovaks – 6,000, Czechs – 5,000, Romanians – 5,000, Finns – 4,000, Serbs – 4,000, Bulgarians – 3,000, Armenians – 3,000, Georgians – 3,000, Uzbeks – 2,000, Greeks – 1,000, Swiss – 1,000, Swedes – 300, English – 100. See George H. Stein, *The Waffen SS: Hitler's Elite Guard at War, 1939–1945* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1966); Kurt Georg Klietmann, *Die Waffen-SS: Eine Dokumentation* (Osnabrück: Der Freiwillige, 1965), 499–515.

[25] James E. Young, *At Memory's Edge: After-Images of the Holocaust in Contemporary Art and Architecture* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2000), 39. James Young makes the following comments: "What might appear as historical errors of fact in *Maus*, such as the pictures of Poles – one in a Nazi uniform (1:140) and others saying, "Heil Hitler" (1:149) – when it would it would have been almost impossible to find any Pole saluting Hitler to another Pole during the war or to find a Polish Nazi – are accurate representations of his father's possibly faulty memory. The truth of such memory is not that Poles actually gave the Nazi salute to each other but that Vladek remembered Poles to be Nazi-like in their hatred of Jews."

deconstruction of the animal metaphor will erase this falsified portrayal of the Poles as alleged sympathizers and beneficiaries of the Nazi regime.

The depiction of Poles in Auschwitz is overwhelmingly that of cruel, greedy and brutal Kapos. *All* of the Kapos in Auschwitz are drawn as pigs, from the moment Vladek arrives at Auschwitz. Polish Kapos are shown as "partners" in crime standing alongside the Germans at the entrance to Auschwitz. Polish Kapos are ubiquitous. They appear in frame after frame after frame – dozens of them spread over 40 pages of the book. There is a seemingly endless stream of pigs who are Kapos. There is even a brutal female pig Kapo in Birkenau, even though the prisoners in that camp were almost exclusively Jewish. There is just one exception to the Kapo profile in Auschwitz-Birkenau, namely, a female mouse Kapo in Birkenau. But she is actually kind to Vladek's wife, Anja. It is not surprising, therefore, that *GradeSaver*, a popular online student study guide provider, states a conclusion that becomes rather apparent from Spiegelman's portrayal of Poles: "A 'kapo' is a *Polish* supervisor at a concentration camp."[26] A Teacher's Guide *Maus: A Memoir of the Holocaust*, authored by Frieda Miller and published in 1998 by the Vancouver Holocaust Education Centre, perpetuates the book's pervasive and perverse myth of ubiquitous Polish Kapos persecuting Jews by not acknowledging the existence of Jewish Kapos (pp.13, 40).

The impression MAUS seeks to convey is rather clear: Poles helped to run Auschwitz for the Germans. They occupied strategic positions of power between the lowly Jews and the Nazi overlords, and collaborated with the Germans in oppressing the Jewish prisoners. This is patently false history. The Kapos did not run the camp, even on a day-to-day basis. They were prisoners of various nationalities who were appointed by the Germans who ran the camp to carry out supervisory tasks with

[26] Internet: http://www.gradesaver.com/maus/study-guide/character-list/.

respect to a group of fellow prisoners.[27] The first Kapos were German prisoners;

[27] Kapo is thought to be an abbreviation for *Kamaradschafts Polizei,* literally a "police force of peers." Kapos led work details or crews. Block seniors or elders, who are sometimes also referred to as Kapos, were in charge of barracks housing prisoners.

Incredibly, in a widely reported Associated Press story, Angela Charlton accused Polish prisoner functionaries of "helping run" Auschwitz-Birkenau – a charge that would never have been made in relation to the many Jewish functionaries at that camp.

> "In March 1944, the Gestapo arrested and deported Veil, her parents and all but one of her siblings. The 16-year-old Veil, her sister and her mother ended up at the death camps at Auschwitz-Birkenau. …
>
> Young and healthy when she entered Birkenau and with striking chestnut plaits, Veil caught the eye of a Polish woman who helped run the camp. The woman took her aside, telling her in broken French: "'You are too pretty to die here. I am going to find some way so you can survive,'" Veil told the AP.
>
> The woman sent Veil, her mother and sister to work at a Siemens factory outside the camp. Later, Veil was transferred to work in an SS kitchen, where she was able to pilfer bits of food for her mother."

See "Simone Veil, Iconic European Feminist Politician, Dies at 89," June 30, 2017, Internet: https://www.apnews.com/ea450b36951442679340da90a5ac55eb.

later Poles and Jews were appointed.[28] However, there was no shortage of "cat" officials to oversee the actual operation of the camp itself. Some 8,000 to 8,200 SS men and some 200 female guards – who were Germans and Austrians – served in the garrison during the camp's existence.[29]

MAUS's Polish Kapos excel at mistreating Jews. Otherwise, Polish prisoners (pigs) are almost invisible in MAUS, even though the Auschwitz concentration camp was originally built for Poles and held mostly Polish (Christian) prisoners until 1943. In total, some 150,000 Christian Poles were imprisoned in Auschwitz.[30] Although half of the Polish prisoners perished, mostly from malnutrition and disease, the Polish

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[28] Pincus Kolender, who was a prisoner in Auschwitz, recalled the German Kapos he encountered:

> "They were the informants, an overseer. What the Germans did [was] they released from the German jails the worst elements – homosexuals, rapists, murderers, crooks – and they brought them to Auschwitz, and they became our overseers. They were treated well. They gave them good food – better food, better clothes. Also, they had to have the same stripes. But good clothes, warmer clothes, and they gave them sweaters and heavy underwear for winter, which we wouldn't get. And they give them full authority. They didn't have to account for anything and they could maim and kill. For them, to kill every day was just a daily routine.
>
> For instance, we had reveille in the morning, five o'clock, and here were a barracks – six to seven hundred people in this small barracks, crowded. We had triple bunks, six in a line, and they used to come in five o'clock and beat sticks and bats and whips, and used to start screaming, "Raus! Everybody raus!" We had only one narrow door and naturally everybody ran to the door, and they [the kapos] stood right by the door, four of them with the sticks and bats, and everybody whipped, [quick laugh] they get whipped. People fall on top of each other – and you could see the fun they had, ach, you could see the joy. They could see us bleeding and bone crushed – and that was a daily routine. For them it was fun. They had fun.
>
> After that we had to go outside for count, you know, head count. … I remember one day, one fellow was missing, and they kept us for about two hours out there. We had to stay at attention. It was bitter cold. Finally they found that boy. He just happened to be in a different barrack, and they brought him and those four kapos ganged up on him and they beat him mercilessly. They killed him, literally beat him to death. The boy cried, and we just had to stay and watch it. Boy, that was painful. You have no idea. They just beat him, literally, to death. He never, never got up."

See Interview with Pincus Kolender, April 27, 1997, Jewish Heritage Collection, College of Charleston, Internet: http://fedora.library.cofc.edu:8080/fedora/objects/lcdl:11827/datastreams/PDF1/content.

[29] Internet: http://en.auschwitz.org/h/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=20&Itemid=17.

[30] See Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial and Museum, Internet: http://en.auschwitz.org/m/.

pigs in MAUS are drawn as fat as ever, while the mice are shown as emaciated. Dachau, the first Nazi concentration camp in Germany, was originally intended for political prisoners. Later it held "asocials" (Jehovah's Witnesses, homosexuals) and prisoners of various nationalities including Jews. In 1940, Dachau became filled with Polish prisoners, who constituted the majority of the prisoner population until the camp was liberated in 1945. Dachau was also the principal camp for imprisoned Christian clergy from all over Europe. Of a total of 2,720 clergy imprisoned at Dachau, the overwhelming majority, 95%, were Catholic and 65% were Poles. About 90% of the clergymen put to death in Dachau were Poles. A large number of Polish priests were chosen for Nazi medical experiments.
Against this background alone, the association of Poles with Kapos is a travesty. This is no mere coincidence or accident, because *all* of the Kapos in Gross-Rosen and Dachau are also drawn as pigs. Spiegelman carried out extensive research for MAUS, which he clearly makes known so as to enhance the authenticity of his account. Therefore, he could not have been unaware of the *hundreds* of Jewish testimonies that describe the activities of Jewish Kapos in Auschwitz-Birkenau and other camps. Thus, it is fair to conclude that there is a deliberate cover-up of the existence, and brutality, of Jewish Kapos at the expense of Poles. This is racist. As the historical record clearly shows, Kapos cannot be associated with any one nationality. Although there were *some* Polish Kapos in Auschwitz and other camps, the suggestion that the Kapo function was almost exclusively a Polish domain – repeatedly reinforced in MAUS – is simply untrue. There were also *many* Jewish Kapos, as well as German Kapos.

When Vladek arrived in Auschwitz in 1944, the vast majority of new arrivals were Jews from Hungary – more than 400,000. (MAUS alludes to this fact.) There was, therefore, little use for Polish Kapos as they would be unable to communicate with the Hungarian Jews. Most East European Jews, on the other hand, had a common language, Yiddish, so – as Jewish testimonies show – Jews became prominent and invaluable in the Kapo function. Interestingly, Marysia Winogron, a cousin of Vladek's wife, who was in Auschwitz-Birkenau at the same time as Vladek's wife,

recalls her physical tormentors as Czech Jews, both Kapos and block elders, and adds, "I never got beaten by the Germans."[31]

The compilation, in Appendix 1, of representative Jewish accounts fully substantiates these assertions. Numerous Jewish survivors attest to the cruelty of many of the Jewish Kapos they encountered in the camps featured in MAUS: Auschwitz, Birkenau and Gross-Rosen. One Jewish testimony compares a Polish Kapo favourably to a Jewish Kapo. Another accuses a Jewish Kapo of targeting Poles for abuse and sparing Jews. The accuracy of this historical analysis is beyond question. However, it is a complex reality that Spiegelman's MAUS deliberately eschews and that its student readers will never learn about. The book's malicious portrayal of Poles in Auschwitz is taken at face value by educators. There is no evidence that this aspect of the book has ever been challenged in the instructional materials or by any teacher in the classroom.

In this context, one must ask the question whether any school board would approve the use of a book, written from the perspective of a Polish prisoner of Auschwitz, that suggested that *all* of the Kapos were Jews, even if that was based on the prisoner's actual experiences. We believe that the answer to that question is apparent. Such a book would be discredited. Even if Spiegelman's father had claimed that *all* of the Kapos in Auschwitz were Poles, which we doubt (this was likely the author's own embellishment), he could have confronted his father on this point in MAUS, if he had wanted to, in order to set the record straight. Spiegelman chose to do just that with regard to the prisoner orchestra that played in Auschwitz. (Vladek was unaware of it, but Art had read about it in his research.) So Erin Einhorn, cited earlier, read Art Spiegelman quite accurately when she points out that his treatment of the Poles is from a skewed, ethno-nationalist perspective. Not only does MAUS fail to expose this bias, the author perpetuates it. Yet the book is touted by educators as breaking down stereotypes, thereby giving further legitimacy to those negative stereotypes.

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[31] Spiegelman, *MetaMaus,* 285.

Again, no amount of deconstruction of the text will expose, or erase from the students' minds, this inaccurate and defamatory portrayal of ordinary Poles as Nazi sympathizers or as Kapos in Auschwitz. Moreover, none of the study materials we have been directed to or have found address or correct these false impressions. None of the students we have spoken to recall their teachers dealing with the perverse portrayal of the Poles we have described. The limitations of literary analysis are all too apparent when one is faced with a text that plays fast and loose with the historical record. Those literary "tools" are no substitute for hard knowledge of the facts when one is dealing with a book that is treated as non-fiction.

The overwhelmingly negative portrayal of the Poles in Auschwitz pushed by MAUS is an affront to the memory of the camp's 150,000 Polish Christian prisoners. One such prisoner was Witold Pilecki, a member of the Polish underground, who volunteered for an operation to get imprisoned at Auschwitz in order to gather intelligence. Pilecki escaped from the camp in 1943, after nearly three years of imprisonment, and filed detailed reports about conditions in the camp. How many students have heard of Witold Pilecki? Pilecki's postwar fate is also worth noting. He was arrested by the Ministry of Public Security on May 8, 1947. His investigation was overseen by Colonel Roman Romkowski and his interrogation, during which he was repeatedly tortured, by Colonel Józef Różański, both of whom were of Jewish origin. After a show trial in March 1948, Pilecki was sentenced to death and executed at the notorious Mokotów Prison in May 25, 1948. During the years 1944–1954, 167 of the 450 top positions in the Ministry of Public Security, or 37.1 percent, were occupied by people of Jewish origin. (Ethnic Poles accounted for 49.1 percent, and the balance were filled for the most part by Soviet officers, who accounted for 10.2 percent of the cadre.) The overrepresentation of Jews, who constituted about one percent of the population, in the apparatus of terror was a primary reason for their precarious situation after the war. Jews accounted for no more than two percent of those killed during strife occasioned by the Soviet takeover of Poland. Unlike the vast majority of ethnic Poles, the Central Committee of Jews in Poland fully supported the Communist regime. Thus, the Polish and Jewish perspectives on this period, and the role of the Soviets as "liberators," differ.

Although MAUS shows Poles as hostile toward Jews after the war, it provides no context for this state of affairs.

Father Maximilian Kolbe, a Franciscan priest, performed the unheard of deed of offering his life up for a fellow prisoner, a Polish family man who was part of a group of prisoners that were to be executed after a prisoner escaped. (Father Kolbe died on August 14, 1941, long before Vladek Spiegelman arrived at Auschwitz, so the priest depicted in MAUS is not Father Kolbe.) Sigmund Gerson, then a 13-year-old Jewish boy, recollected that Father Kolbe was "like an angel to me. Like a mother hen, he took me in his arms. He used to wipe away my tears. ... he gave away so much of his meager rations that to me it was a miracle he could live." Another Jewish survivor, Eddie Gastfriend, recalled warmly the scores of Polish prisoner priests, who were subjected to particular forms of degradation in the camp: "They wore no collars, but you knew they were priests by their manner and their attitude, especially toward Jews. They were so gentle, so loving." Father Kolbe is rightly called the Saint of Auschwitz.[32]

We are not aware of any teaching materials or teachers that have directed students studying MAUS to books like Witold Pilecki's report, *The Auschwitz Volunteer: Beyond Bravery* (Los Angeles: Aquila Polonica, 2012) or Patricia Treece's moving biography *A Man for Others: Maximilian Kolbe, Saint of Auschwitz* (New York: Harper and Row, 1982). Moreover, students are rarely, if ever, directed to the website of the Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial and Museum (Internet: http://en.auschwitz.org/m/), which is the premier website and most authoritative source of information on Auschwitz. Thus, the chances of the students actually learning about the true narrative of the Poles in Auschwitz, other than their alleged prominent role as Kapos, is rather unlikely.

Furthermore, given the level of the audience (ages 12 to 17), it is even more unlikely that the teachers would be able to adequately explain all of these complex matters, or had the time to do so, even if they were aware of them. After all, MAUS

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[32] Patricia Treece, *A Man for Others: Maximilian Kolbe, Saint of Auschwitz* (New York: Harper and Row, 1982), 138, 152–53.

is not being taught, from a critical perspective, in history classes. It is highly unlikely that the vast majority of English teachers would themselves be aware of these facts, as they are not specialists in history and the instructional aides do not adequately address these matters.

There is no reason to believe that the students would come to appreciate that the Poles as pigs metaphor breaks down in any meaningful way. With few exceptions, the pig people are simply not sympathetic characters. They are greedy and brutal beasts. Literary analysis tools are of no assistance here. They would not expose the serious historical misrepresentations we have described, just as they would not expose the religious and cultural biases inherent in the pig metaphor. Dr. Linda Kornasky, a professor of literature at Angelo State University, makes this very point when she states:

> *Maus* does not actually achieve the deconstructive purposes that Spiegelman has claimed for it. In fact, Spiegelman's admissions, cited in petition, that he did actually intend to represent inaccurate and hateful stereotypes are entirely true. He then simply has employed the cloak of "postmodernism" to hide the true import of his destructive portrayal of Poles.

We will limit ourselves to two additional examples of Spiegelman's treatment of the historical record. As noted earlier, MAUS makes no mention that the German invaders imposed the death penalty on Poles for helping Jews in any way. German law also extended the threat of death to those who knew about a hidden Jew but did not report it to the authorities. This was not the case in most other occupied countries, and was unheard of in Western Europe or in Germany itself. In fact, sheltering Jews was not punishable by law in France, Italy, Denmark, Germany or Austria. Those caught helping Jews might face a fine or occasionally a short term of imprisonment, yet very few people came to the assistance of Jews. In the Netherlands, the maximum punishment was a three-months' prison term, but this was not usually imposed in the case of first-time "offenders."[33]

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[33] Bob Moore, *Survivors: Jewish Self-Help and Rescue in Nazi-Occupied Western Europe* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).

In occupied Poland, the death penalty for helping Jews was imposed mercilessly, and usually summarily. Often entire families including grandparents, teenagers (like the students), young children and infants in arms were killed for this "crime." More than 1,000 Christian Poles were executed when discovered sheltering or helping Jews. Poles – 7,112 as of January 1, 2020 – also constitute the largest group of rescuers of Jews recognized by Yad Vashem, The Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Authority in Jerusalem. Even trading with Jews was a capital offence in occupied Poland. Testifying at the Eichmann war crimes trial in 1961, Frieda Mazia described a public execution she witnesses in Sosnowiec in the early part of 1941:

> A Jewish mother had bought an egg from a Polish peasant so that her child would not die of hunger. Both mother and peasant were hanged: the bodies left hanging for two or three days, 'so one couldn't avoid seeing them – if we wanted to go out we had to pass them'.[34]

A selection of rescue stories describing the sacrifices and bravery of many Poles in the Sosnowiec area (where Vladek resided) is found in Appendix 2. Portraying these Poles as pigs is, by the standards of democratic values, simply unacceptable under any circumstances.

Most Polish helpers, however, have not been recognized by Yad Vashem. According to historian Gunnar Paulsson,

> The 27,000 Jews in hiding in Warsaw relied on about 50–60,000 people who provided hiding-places and another 20–30,000 who provided other forms of help … helpers outnumbered hunters by about 20 or 30 to one. The active helpers of Jews thus made up seven to nine per cent of the population of Warsaw …[35]

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[34] Martin Gilbert, *The Holocaust: The Jewish Tragedy* (Glasgow: William Collins, 1986), 146.

[35] Gunnar S. Paulsson, "The Rescue of Jews by Non-Jews in Nazi-Occupied Poland," *The Journal of Holocaust Education,* volume 7, nos. 1 & 2 (summer/autumn 1998): 19–44.

The Germans imposed near-starvation food rations on the Polish population, yet Spiegelman draws them as well-fed pigs. In 1941, the food allotment for a Jew amounted to 253 calories, 669 calories for a Pole, and 2,613 for a German. The typical Polish family occupied one or two rooms in a tenement house or cottage, without running water or a toilet. Thus, the vast majority of Poles were in no position to provide long-term shelter to anyone.

István Deák, a noted Columbia University historian, has eloquently made the following compelling argument:

> The penalty for assisting or even trading with a Jew in German-occupied Poland was death, a fact that makes all comparisons between wartime Polish-Jewish relations and, say, Danish-Jewish relations blatantly unfair. Yet such comparisons are made again and again in Western histories—and virtually always to the detriment of the Poles, with scarce notice taken of the 50,000 to 100,000 Jews said to have been saved by the efforts of Poles to hide or otherwise help them … one must not ignore the crucial differences between wartime conditions in Eastern and Western Europe.[36]

Instead of pointing out the lethal risks for Poles associated with the rescue of Jews, MAUS portrays Polish rescuers as greedy and deceitful. The truth is that they were poor and frightened. None of the three Poles (drawn as pigs) who assisted the Spiegelman family, namely, Mr. Łukowski, Mrs. Kawka, and Mrs. Motonowa (actually Mrs. Matoń) of Szopienice, betrayed them. They were just afraid to shelter them any longer.

Similarly, the claim that the Polish smugglers who agreed to take Vladek and Anja to Hungary were Nazi collaborators and simply betrayed them does not stand up to closer scrutiny, though this is nowhere disclosed in MAUS. (Although an ally, Hungary was not occupied by Germany at that time and was safer for Jews.) The Germans did not set up smuggling rings to lure Jews out of hiding; however, they

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[36] István Deák, "Memories of Hell," *The New York Review of Books,* June 26, 1997.

did use Jewish Gestapo agents to lure Jews out of hiding for this purpose.[37] Smuggling people out of Poland, especially Jews, was an extremely dangerous undertaking. It was usually carried out by professionals and required bribing various officials. Like most smugglers, including Jewish ones, they did this for payment. MAUS implies that the Polish smugglers simply worked together with the Germans, and ended up in Auschwitz when they were no longer useful. However, the historical record, which is well documented,[38] is quite different. One of the Polish smugglers, who had previously acted honestly and conscientiously, was caught by the Germans. In order to save himself, he agreed to cooperate thereby putting everyone at risk. Vladek exonerates his nephew, Abraham, who wrote a note with the message that he had been safely smuggled out of Poland, since he was forced to do so, and condemns the Polish smugglers as betrayers. Yet they were in no different position than Abraham, as they too were forced to cooperate with the Germans when the smuggling operation unravelled. While there was a remote possibility that cooperating with the Germans might have saved the smugglers, in Abraham's case, it was futile from the outset.

In his incisive critique of MAUS (*The Comics Journal,* no. 135, April 1990), Harvey Pekar exposes this problem by the providing following illustration:

> Fiore asks why, if Art meant to portray Poles negatively, he shows them aiding his parents to hide from the Germans. I answered that Art had to do this because it was an integral part of his father's story. So get this: Fiore asks why, if Art can distort the account of his relationship with his father, he can't ignore or distort the fact that some Poles risked their lives for Jews during the Second World War. Here's the answer: Art quotes his father as saying he'd met a Polish woman, Mrs. Motonowa, selling food in the black market. Vladek

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[37] One such Jewish Gestapo agent operating in Kraków was Salo Weininger. Not only did he hunt down many Jews personally, but also he was involved in a scam, orchestrated by the German authorities, in which some 80 Jews were lured out of hiding on false promises of passage to Hungary. These Jews were then taken to the former Jewish cemetery and shot in 1943. See Witold Mędykowski, "Przeciw swoim: Wzorce kolaboracji żydowskiej w Krakowie i okolicy," *Zagłada Żydów: Studia i materały,* no. 2 (2006): 207–208.

[38] Władysław Bartoszewski and Zofia Lewin, eds., *Righteous Among Nations: Righteous Among Nations: How Poles Helped the Jews, 1939–1945* (London: Earlscourt Publications, 1969), 153–58.

pays her for a loaf of bread. She tells him she doesn't have change. He says, "It's OK … keep it for your little boy." Art's implication is that Mrs. Motonowa lied here about not having change so she could keep it.

Then Mrs. Motonowa offers to let Vladek stay at her farmhouse. So Vladek and his wife move there. At this point Art interrupts his father's narrative to cynically remark, "You had to pay Mrs. Motonowa to keep you, right?" Vladek answers with some irritation, "Of course I paid … and well I paid … what do you think? Someone will risk their life for nothing … I also paid for the food what she gave to us from her smuggling business. But one time I missed a few coins to the bread." When Vladek does this Mrs. Motonowa comes back in the evening without bread. Vladek comments, "Always she got bread, so I didn't believe … But still, she was a good woman."

What's happening here is that Art is showing a poor Polish woman hiding his parents, but he's strongly implying that she's doing it for money alone, which is consistent with her pig image. To kill two birds with one stone, he pictures his father accepting her "mercenary" values. ("Of course I paid… Someone will risk their life for nothing?") Maybe Art expects Mrs. Motonowa to turn down Vladek's money, to support him and his wife for free, even though Vladek can pay for his expenses. Vladek justifies paying Mrs. Motonowa for risking her life to save his, but Art implies she's taking unreasonable advantage of his father. This may illustrate that Art is even cheaper and more selfish than Vladek, maybe almost as cheap as I am! [39]

Actually, there were Poles of high moral character who saved Jews without expecting to be paid for it. But Artie portrays all Poles as pigs.

Given the approach validated by the author, there is no room for students to become aware – and this is something that should be impressed on them, had MAUS not missed yet another opportunity to rise above its biases – that sacrificing one's life is not a simple act of kindness. No one has the right to demand of others

[39] There is also a suggestion, based on nothing more than speculation, that Mrs. Motonowa's husband was a Nazi collaborator, and that she was helping Jews simply as a cover-up to shield her husband from postwar retribution. In all likelihood, as a lowly farmer, he was simply conscripted into the German army as an ordinary soldier and returned home on periodic leaves. This ugly portrayal of Motonowa's motives is found in Mark Spiegelman's account, "Any you shall dream all the days of your life," in *The Words to Remember It: Memoirs of Child Holocaust Survivors* (Melbourne: Scribe, 2009), 56.

that they should help someone if it means laying down their lives. Many honest Jewish survivors who were rescued by Poles have stated that they do not know if they would have been able to rescue Poles under such circumstances. Some have said emphatically that they would not have undertaken such a risk.

> "I do not accuse anyone that did not hide or help a Jew. We cannot demand from others to sacrifice their lives. One has no right to demand such risks." [40]

> "Everyone who states the view that helping Jews was during those times a reality, a duty and nothing more should think long and hard how he himself would behave in that situation. I admit that I am not sure that I could summon up enough courage in the conditions of raging Nazi terror."[41]

> One Polish Jew who often asked this question of Jewish survivors recalled: "The answer was always the same and it is mine too. I do not know if I would have endangered my life to save a Christian."[42]

> "I am not at all sure that I would give a bowl of food to a Pole if it could mean death for me and my daughter," a Jewish woman admitted candidly.[43]

> "Today, with the perspective of time, I am full of admiration for the courage and dedication … of all those Poles who in those times, day in, day out, put their lives on the line. I do not know if we Jews, in the face of the tragedy of another nation, would be equally capable of this kind of sacrifice."[44]

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[40] Pola Stein cited in Nechama Tec, *When Light Pierced the Darkness: Christian Rescue of Jews in Nazi-Occupied Poland* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 29.

[41] Hanna Wehr, *Ze wspomnień* (Montreal: Polish-Jewish Heritage Foundation of Canada, 2001).

[42] Cited in Marc Hillel, *Le massacre des survivants: En Pologne après l'holocauste (1945–1947)* (Paris: Plon, 1985), 99.

[43] Cited in Małgorzata Niezabitowska, *Remnants: The Last Jews of Poland* (New York: Friendly Press, 1986), 249.

[44] Janka Altman, cited in Marek Arczyński and Wiesław Balcerak, *Kryptonim "Żegota": Z dziejów pomocy Żydom w Polsce 1939–1945,* 2nd edition (Warsaw: Czytelnik, 1983), 264.

"And what right did I have to condemn them? Why should they risk themselves and their families for a Jewish boy they didn't know? Would I have behaved any differently? I knew the answer to that, too. I wouldn't have lifted a finger. Everyone was equally intimidated."[45]

"I say this without needless comments, because I've been asked before: If I had a family I would not shelter a Jew during the occupation."[46]

"I'm not surprised people didn't want to hide Jews. Everyone was afraid, who would risk his family's lives? … But you absolutely can't blame an average Pole, I don't know if anyone would be more decent, if any Jew would be more decent."[47]

"When I later traveled in the world and Jews would talk to me about how badly Poles behaved with respect to Jews, that they didn't hide them, I always had this answer: 'All right, they could have done more. But I wonder how many could one find among you, the Jews, who would hide a Polish family knowing that not only you, but your children, your whole family, would get shot were you found out?' After that there was always silence and nobody said anything more."[48]

"To tell the truth, I don't know whether today … there are many Jews who would do the same for another nation. We were another nation …"[49]

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[45] Roman Frister, *The Cap, or the Price of a Life* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1999), 194.

[46] Testimony of Marek Oren (Orenstein), in Piotr Głuchowski and Marcin Kowalski, "Żyd miły z bliska," *Wyborcza–Duży Format,* September 11, 2007.

[47] Henryk Prajs, January 2005, Internet: http://www.centropa.org (Biographies).

[48] Ewa S. (Stapp), September 2005, Internet: http://www.centropa.org (Biographies).

[49] Testimony of Bencjon Drutin, in Marzena Baum-Gruszowska and Dominika Majuk, eds., *Światła w ciemności: Sprawiedliwi wśród narodów świata: Relacje historii mówionej w działaniach edukacyjnych* (Lublin: Ośrodek "Brama Grodzka–Teatr NN," 2009), 58.

"As for the Poles: I do not bear a grudge because many of them did not want to incur danger for us [Jews]; I do not know how we would have behaved [towards them]."[50]

"When we come to Poland with Israeli youth and I tell them about what happened during the war, I say to them: 'I know that if I had to risk my own life, and my family's, for a stranger, I probably wouldn't have the courage to do so.'"[51]

"One must pay tribute to those Poles who lost their lives rescuing Jews. Moreover, one cannot blame those who did not rescue Jews. We should not forget that one cannot demand heroism from ordinary, average people. True there are times and causes that demand heroism, but only certain individuals can aspire to that. One cannot harbour ill-feelings towards or have grounds for complaining about someone for not attaining that level."[52]

"I always protest when I hear that Poles did "too little." How can one judge people who found themselves in such a difficult situation? Human nature is such that one is concerned foremost about one's own life and the lives of close ones. It is their safety that is the most important thing. One has to have great courage to risk death – one's own and one's children – in order to rescue a stranger. To require this of ordinary people terrorized by the occupiers is to ask too much. The Jewish people themselves didn't pass that test either. Who knows how many heroes like the Polish Righteous would be found among the Jews."[53]

"Would Roman risk his own life now to save others? 'It's funny that you should ask that question,' he said, 'because when I teach the children, sixth

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50 Testimony of Emilka Rozencwajg (Shoshana Kossower Rosenzweig), a Home Army and Jewish underground liaison officer in Warsaw, interviewed by Anka Grupińska, "Ja myślałam, że wszyscy są razem," *Tygodnik Powszechny,* May 6, 2001.

51 Testimony of Ada Lubelczyk Willenberg, Interview with Samuel and Ada Willenberg, "To, o czym pisze Gross jest prawdą," Polskla Agencja Prasowa (PAP), January 10, 2011.

[52] Henryk Bryskier, *Żydzi pod swastyką czyli getto w Warszawie w XX wieku* (Warsaw: Aspra-Jr, 2006), 231.

[53] Szewach Weiss, "Polacy pozostali niezłomni," *Rzeczpospolita,* January 26, 2011.

> graders, and I tell them how Maria saved my life, I say to the children, 'How many of you would be willing to risk your life to save someone else, knowing that if you're caught you'll be put to death?' And, of course, after hearing my story, many of them say, 'Oh, we would, Mr. Frayman, we would.' But I say, 'Put your hands down. Let me tell you honestly, if someone asked me if I'd do it, my honest answer is, 'I don't know.' Would I be willing to sacrifice my children, my grandchildren, I don't know. You don't know that until you are in that circumstance. I don't know how gutsy I am."[54]

No moral or religious code, including Jewish, imposes such a demand or condemns those who are not willing to put their lives on the line for others. Otherwise, except for a handful of people, we would all fail this test. At a recent screening of *The Labyrinth: The Testimony of Marian Kolodziej*, an award-winning film by Ron Schmidt, SJ,[55] at Regis College, University of Toronto, Dr. David Novak of the Centre for Jewish Studies commented that sacrificing one's life is not even condoned in Jewish teaching. The Torah teaches that a person is obliged to help, and to share, but at a point when helping endangers one's own life nothing in the Torah permits that.[56] Students deserve a better grounding in fundamental ethics than MAUS.

Moreover, there was nothing morally reprehensible – despite Spiegelman's indignant assertion to the contrary – in rescuers asking their charges to contribute

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[54] Cited in Bill Tammeus and Jacques Cukierkorn, *They Were Just People: Stories of Rescue in Poland During the Holocaust* (Columbia, Missouri and London: University of Missouri Press, 2009), 69. Roman Frayman also admits: "But the thing I feel guilty about today is that we never maintained a relationship [with his rescuer, Maria Bałagowa], while she was living." Ibid., 70.

[55] *The Labyrinth* is widely regarded as one of the most compelling and evocative artistic portrayals of the fate of prisoners in Auschwitz and well worth viewing by students in a variety of courses including English, history and religion or ethics. Internet: http://www.thelabyrinthdocumentary.com.

[56] According to Jewish religious law, there is no duty to risk one's own life for the sake of saving another person's life. See Aaron Kirschenbaum, "The Bystander's Duty To Rescue In Jewish Law," *The Journal of Religious Ethics,* vol. 8 (1980): 204–26: "In Judaism, the bystander's duty to come to the rescue of his fellow man who is in peril is religious, ethical and legal. A citizen is expected to engage in the act of rescue both personally and with his financial resources. He is required, however, neither to give his life nor to place his life in substantial jeopardy to save his fellow." See also Yechiel Michael Barilan, *Jewish Bioethics: Rabbinic Law and Theology in Their Social and Historical Contexts* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 120.

to their own upkeep. The much praised Danish rescue operation required enormous monetary payments on the part of the rescued Jews themselves.[57] Nothing in MAUS addresses these important issues. What teacher's guides or student resource materials point any of these important matters out to the students, who cannot but be left with a negative impression of Polish rescuers?

The lack of fulsome disclosure in MAUS of the role of Jewish ghetto policemen and agents in this part of occupied Poland impacts adversely on the image of Poles, who are portrayed as the only denouncers of Jews outside the ghettos. This is a historical perversion. Many Jewish survivors describe the Jewish Council and Jewish police in a far darker light than MAUS does. As the Jewish testimonies in Appendix 3 show, the Germans also relied on the Jewish police from Sosnowiec to hunt down Jews who escaped from the ghetto and to help liquidate nearby ghettos. While the Germans used local police forces throughout occupied Europe to round up Jews, the Zagłębie Dąbrowskie (which was incorporated into the Reich as part of Eastern Upper Silesia), the part of occupied Poland shown in *Maus,* the Polish police force was disbanded. The Germans set up a Jewish police to maintain order and to perform other tasks, including the liquidation of ghettos and searches for escaped Jews. There was no shortage of volunteers to fill positions in the Jewish police force or the Jewish Council. Those positions came with benefits (extra food, better lodgings, bribes from corruption, protection), and, ultimately, such persons had a significantly better chance of survival than other Jews.

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[57] During the initial stages of the rescue operation, only well-to-do Danish Jews could afford the passage to Sweden. Private boatmen set their own price and the costs were prohibitive, ranging from 1,000 to 10,000 kroner per person ($160 to $1600 US in the currency of that period). Afterwards, when organized Danish rescue groups stepped in to coordinate the flight and to collect funds, the average price per person fell to 2,000 and then 500 kroner. Thus the average cost for the short boat trip to Sweden was US $400, or about a half a year's wage. The total cost of the rescue operation was about 12 million kroner, of which the Jews paid about 7 million kroner, including a 750,000 kroner loan which the Jews had to repay after the war. Because the operation took place with the connivance of the local German naval command, there were no casualties either among the Jews or the boatmen. See Leni Yahil, *The Rescue of Danish Jewry: Test of a Democracy* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1969), 261–65, 269. Conditions in affluent and relatively tranquil Denmark, Hitler's model protectorate, cannot be compared to those in occupied Poland, from which there were no safe escape routes. Even the residents of unoccupied London, which was bombed relentlessly by the Germans, experienced far more hardship than the Danes.

MAUS refers to an "anti-Jewish riot" in Bielsko-Biała that allegedly resulted in two Jewish deaths, with the police doing little to help. While there was a disturbance in that city, in fact there was no loss of life or injured Jews – only windows in some Jewish stores and homes were broken. The police intervened vigorously to contain the rioters. About 40 rioters were charged and brought to trial; a number of them were convicted and sentenced to prison terms of up to 18 months. Moreover, the riot followed on the heels of the murder with a firearm of a Polish labourer by a Jewish restaurateur on September 17, 1937. The Jewish assailant was also charged and convicted.[58] As Israeli historian Emanuel Melzer points out, the "anti-Jewish excesses" in the years 1935–1937 usually resulted from the killing of a Christian Pole by a Jew.[59] In total, 14 Jews were killed, as well as many more Poles. Polish rioters were often shot by police who intervened to restore order whenever such incidents occurred. Spiegelman is also quick to suggest that a robbery at Vladek's factory may have been motivated by anti-Semitism, a claim that Vladek appears to dismiss. Spiegelman's speculation lacks any solid grounding. In fact, there was a large Jewish criminal underworld in Poland at the time,[60] and striking at business competitors was a frequent occurrence.

4. Students' level of understanding is inadequate and some students are being subjected to psychological harm

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[58] Jolanta Żyndul, *Zajścia antyżydowskie w Polsce w latach 1935-1937* (Warsaw: Fundacja im. K. Kelles-Krauza, 1994), 48; *Pogromy Żydów na ziemiach polskich w XIX i XX wieku,* vol. 2: *Studia przypadków (do 1939 roku),* ed. by Kamil Kijek, Artur Markowski, Konrad Zieliński (Warsaw: Instytut Historii PAN, 2019), 429–47. Compare this to just one of many such cases in the U.S.A. The shooting of a 15-year-old Black girl Los Angeles in March 1991 by a Korean shop owner in an argument over a bottle or orange juice was one of the catalysts for week-long rioting by Blacks in April-May 1992 that resulted in more than 2,000 Korean-owned stores being looted or burned to the ground. Korean men sot at looters who came near their businesses. A total of 64 people were killed during the riots (2 Asian, 28 Black, 19 Latino, 15 White) and some 2,400 were reported injured.

[59] Emanuel Melzer, *No Way Out: The Politics of Polish Jewry, 1935–1939* (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1997), 53.

[60] See the research of historian Mordechai Zalkin of Ben-Gurion University of the Negev Kobi cited in Ben-Simhon, "World of our (god)fathers," *Haaretz,* October 21, 2004.

Art Spiegelman is a popular cartoonist at the *New Yorker* magazine and as such enjoys a celebrity status. He is immune to criticism because, as a cartoonist, he does, and should, enjoy freedom of expression. He also courts controversy. That is his right, but at the expense of vulnerable school children? This is an issue that must be addressed and discussed. The popularity of a cartoonist or a topic cannot be more important than the education of students, including the impact of emotional abuse on one segment of the student body.

The issue here is one of education, of influencing young minds, and of serious injury to a segment of the student population. It is difficult to understand why educators would choose material without considering the emotional damage to young people forced to sit through classes while they are humiliated, who find it difficult to find their voices, and who sit in silence wishing they were somewhere else, hoping nobody is looking at them. We know this, because they have spoken to us about it. It is a difficult thing for young people to speak out when they feel they are the object of ridicule and contempt.

We should also be aware that these are children whose grandparents may have been inmates of Nazi German concentration camps, whose family members may have been tortured and executed, forced to work as slave labourers, and subjected to medical experiments. Few people are aware that ninety percent of the Christian clergy murdered in Dachau were Poles, and that of all the Catholic clergy in occupied Europe only Polish priests were used for medical experimentation. Or that only Polish women were subjected to medical experiments in Ravensbrück. Portraying the Poles as a nation of pigs is offensive to all. It constitutes a most gratuitous injury to the memory of three million Polish Christians who were killed by Nazi Germany.

We are well aware that MAUS is a very popular book, but we submit that popularity is never a sound basis for critical judgment. Just because a book has won awards and praise from reviewers does not mean that it is suitable for use in schools. One of the inherent problems in studying history in an English class is that it is unlikely that the teachers will have sufficient historical knowledge about complex topics like

the Holocaust. Moreover, there is almost no likelihood that they would know or teach "the Polish story." This is especially so where teachers are ill equipped to deal with problematic aspects of the book, and the resource materials are silent on those matters. There are many literary books that deal with the Holocaust, though not in the same popular vein as MAUS. Since there is a choice of texts that may be used to teach the topic of the Holocaust, it would be prudent to choose a book which is respectful of *all* the victims of Nazi oppression.

MAUS does not convey respect for the Polish victims of Nazi German oppression. In fact, it does just the opposite, and that is reflected in the attitude displayed by some of the students toward the students of Polish background. Prior to the study of MAUS the students likely had no particular opinion about the Poles or their history. One cannot get away from the fact that when Poles are presented as pigs, and many of the characters are fascist pigs, it is difficult to feel any kind of respect for them.

One cannot assume that because the book is taught in senior high school grades, students are by definition capable of understanding the book and of dealing with the content studied. Such an assumption is false: even the best students (at any level) may have difficulties with the material, particularly if the material is controversial, offensive or divisive, when it relates to complex and contentious historical or social issues, and when such material is taught without proper critical tools. The fact that other (non-Polish) students did not find anything objectionable in the book only proves that they were not taught well enough.

In the case of one Toronto high school that has been examined very closely, the teaching of MAUS proved to be highly divisive. The parents of students of Polish background arrived at the sad and painful conclusion that even students in a grade 11 IB program were not mature enough to deal with the materials critically. The students did not have sufficient knowledge of the events in question and, therefore, the ability to make required judgments about the merits of the book. They simply assumed that MAUS is historically accurate. Some of the Polish students wanted to voice their opinions but feared being singled out either by their teacher or by their

non-Polish classmates. They wanted to do something but they did not know what to do. All of this caused them much distress. The study of MAUS divided the students in the class into opposing “sides.” The non-Polish students now believed that the Poles were responsible for killing the Jews (remarks like “you Poles killed the Jews” were made by some students). Some of non-Polish students taunted the Polish students with "Oink, oink, piggies," when passing them in the corridors. MAUS spoiled the friendly relationship the students previously enjoyed.

It is astounding that teachers cannot see the psychological injury that Spiegelman’s disgusting imagery can inflict, nor have any empathy for the young people in their care who are subjected to it. The concern about the mental and emotional health of part of the student body is very real. It cannot be stressed enough that this matter requires serious attention. The purpose of choosing a book about the Holocaust is to advance knowledge and understanding of an important topic, not to skew it or cause distress and division among the students.

5. Conclusion

It is our respectful opinion that MAUS is not suitable for use in high schools. It offends on so many levels. There is no book on the curriculum that targets another group for derision in this way. It would not be acceptable or tolerated. Put yourselves in the shoes of people of Polish heritage. Would you want your children to be compelled to study a book that treats their group or community in the manner that Poles are derided in MAUS?

Further Reading:

Study Guide – Poles as Pigs in Spiegelman's *Maus:* Distorting Holocaust History Internet:

http://www.kpk-toronto.org/obrona-dobrego-imienia/

Appendices:

1. Jewish testimonies regarding Jewish Kapos at Auschwitz-Birkenau, Gross-Rosen and Dachau
2. Selected accounts of Polish rescue efforts in Sosnowiec
3. Jewish accounts regarding the Jewish Council and Jewish police in Sosnowiec
4. Jews as pigs in the German historical record
5. Jews as pigs in Nazi German propaganda
6. Bolsheviks represented as pigs in George Orwell's *Animal Farm*
7. Is this the face of a pig?

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Appendix 1

Jewish testimonies regarding Jewish Kapos at Auschwitz-Birkenau, Gross-Rosen and Dachau

Kapos were prisoner functionaries appointed by the Germans to carry out supervisory tasks with respect to a group of fellow prisoners. They usually led work details or crews made up of prisoners. Block seniors or elders were in charge of barracks housing prisoners. Sometimes they too are referred to as Kapos.

Auschwitz-Birkenau

There are numerous Jewish testimonies describing the brutal treatment of prisoners by Jewish Kapos in the Auschwitz concentration camp and the adjacent death camp of Birkenau, which was principally a death camp for Jews. One prisoner in each work detail or prisoner block was appointed as a Kapo (variously translated as "head" or "overseer" or "supervisor" or "elder"). According to historical sources, the mass murder of Jews in Birkenau could not have been accomplished without the help of Jewish prisoners: on average four SS-men and 100 Jews from the Sonderkommando were needed to operate one crematorium.[61]

Konrad Charmatz, a native of Sosnowiec, describes the dreaded Jewish Kapos he encountered from the moment he arrived at Auschwitz-Birkenau:

> We were shoved into a large paddock area, where we were made to throw our belongings into a pile. … Around us we saw people with striped clothing. There were also a few civilians who spoke Yiddish …
>
> "Hand over your money and gold," they told us, "because you're going to the ovens anyway." Soon after that the head *Kapo*, the notorious "Pinkus," delivered a speech to us, each word striking us like a hammer blow. Pinkus was a Polish Jew who had lived in France. When he spotted Dr. [Avraham] Suchodolsky, he recognized him from the transfer camp for French Jews in Drancy … he scorned and insulted him, telling him that not only was he going up the chimney, but he was going to torture him slowly first. …
>
> Then we were assigned to blocks at Birkenau … He [another Jewish house elder] made sure the "animals are properly settled in their stalls." Those who did not please him or who complained about their crowded bunks, he pulled down on a long bench. There he beat and kicked them to death. Later his victims were tossed out of the barracks like old rags. In the morning a cart collected all the dead and took them to be incinerated. …
>
> I could not forget the crooked, ugly face of Pinkus, the elder of the "Zonder Block," who led the gang that received and sorted out the new arrivals. To this task brutes were assigned, men without feelings. Pinkus (if I am not mistaken, his last name was Chmelnitsky) was the most notorious of all the block elders. He had come to the camp with a French transport and was a true sadist who enjoyed brutalizing his victims and drawing their blood. … His helper, a certain Ziduna, a Jew from Lodz [Łódź], also excelled in cruelty. …
>
> The camp commander, an SS storm trooper named Schilinger, stood and watched how hard his Jewish servants were working. Pinkus strutted through the crowds of

[61] Laurence Rees, *Auschwitz: The Nazis & "The Final Solution",* BBC documentary (2005).

new arrivals, always looking for another victim to beat with his truncheon, all the while looking up at his patron to see if he was pleased.[62]

Three former prisoners of Auschwitz-Birkenau—Herman Przewoznik, Shlomo Fuchs and Chaim Schwarzwald—recalled:

> We worked in the Sauna – Birkenau disinfection chamber – from January 1943 to January 1945, i.e. until the evacuation …
>
> The Birkenau camp had 27 buildings, 12 of which were wooden (former horse stables) and 15 of which were made of stone. There were up to 1,000 prisoners in each wooden building, and up to 1,500 prisoners in each stone building. This was in the old men's camp, which was changed to the women's camp later in June, 1943. At the time, men were sent to Camp D, Bauabschnitt II (B II d). Until March 1943, the Blockälteste of block 15 was the Polish priest Vladyk. He was followed by the French Jew Leon Cimbler, nicknamed the boxer, who killed up to 50 Jews a day.
>
> The Blockälteste of block 5 was a German named Albert Hammerle, who tortured and killed many Jews every day. French Jew Schaffmann carried out acts of equal cruelty in block 27. The French Jew Pinkus was in block 22, striking them with a cane, hammer, and an iron strap. He tried to kill as many as he could and also took from them what money, gold, and valuables they had left. He greeted them with the words: "I'll make sure you'll live for only 1 or 2 hours, you Hurensöhne." The head of the sauna until March 43 was a Pole named Stefan, who was a dangerous sadist, especially towards the Jews. Other dangerous sadists were the Germans Alois and Martin, a certain Stefan – a Volksdeutscher from Poland – Schilfsmeer, the camp kapo Thin, the kapo Kleinmann from Plonsk [Płońsk], and head kapo Rudi (a German who was also an executioner) from the More commando.[63]

David Faber recalls a Jewish Kapo in Birkenau:

> A barrack leader, a *Kapo,* stamped in and stood just inside the door.
>
> "Listen!" he shouted. "My name is Potok, and I'll make you wish you'd never come here. You'll wish you'd never met me." …
>
> He walked along the bunks, grabbed the foot of a man on the middle row right under me, and yanked him onto the floor. No one spoke as the man lay sprawled on his stomach.
>
> The *Kapo* bent over, his face close to the prisoner's.
>
> "You look like you hid something," he said. "I'll bet you've got a fortune in your body. Give it to me!"
>
> The man rolled onto his back, his hands held out palms up.
>
> "No, sir." I could scarcely hear him. "I don't have anything, sir."
>
> "You don't?"
>
> The man spoke louder. "No. Nothing, sir! Nothing!"
>
> Potok smiled. "I'll find out."

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[62] Konrad Charmatz, *Nightmares: Memoirs of the Years of Horror under Nazi Rule in Europe, 1939–1945* (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 2003), 84–88. This probably refers to the notorious Kapo Pinkus Chmielnicki, who was arrested in France in 1945 and convicted of theft, assault, and the murder of prisoners under his authority in Auschwitz-Birkenau by a French military court in April 1950, and sentenced to death. See Laura Jockusch and Gabriel N. Finder, eds., *Jewish Honor Courts: Revenge, Retribution, and Reconciliation in Europe and Israel after the Holocaust* (Detroit: Wayne State University, 2015), 142.

[63] Testimony recorded in November 1945, Internet: https://early-testimony.ehri-project.eu/document/EHRI-ET-JMP010.

He took a long, thin knife from a scabbard on his belt. "Give it to me, or I'll cut you open."

"Please don't!" The man tried to get up, but Potok pushed him down with his foot.

"Turn over!" he yelled and kicked the man in the head.

Crying, the prisoner turned to lie face down on the floor. Potok cut open the man's pants, the jabbed the knife into his anus and cut away pieces of flesh.

Screams rang through my head, and I covered my ears.

The screams stopped, and the *Kapo* laughed. "You know," he said, "he didn't have anything."

He pulled other people from the bunks, made them lie on their backs, and crushed their windpipes with his heavy boot. Then he'd turn them over and butcher them the way he had the first man.

The rest of us lay in our bunks, some watching, some with eyes closed.[64]

Joe Rosenblum recalls a cruel German Jewish Kapo:

> We spotted Hans Eisenstein. Hans was a golden angel, a Jewish *Kapo*. …
>
> Aside from Mengele, the biggest threat to my personal safety was Hans, a German Jew. Hans was in charge of the 140 ramp workers on the night shift. … He liked beating us with the standard-issue cane, about an inch in diameter and three feet long. Hans enjoyed making people suffer and wanted to prove his loyalty to the Third Reich. By this time, Germany was so obviously losing the war most other *Kapos* had stopped beating us. Not Hans. … Sometimes, when we would return from work, Hans would make us run double-time. … But if Hans caught anybody, he would pound him repeatedly with his cane. He didn't need any excuses to beat us. He also ran through groups, assaulting whoever was in his way.
>
> What Hans and many of the other *Kapos* did to us was beneath human behavior, especially what they did to their own people. … They treated us all as if we were animals, they tried to turn us into animals, and they acted as if they were animals themselves.[65]

Peter Kleinmann, from Transcarpathia, recalls the Jewish Kapos he encountered in Auschwitz:

> When we entered the barrack a *Kapo*, an SS, and a *Wehrmacht* man stood at the entrance and counted us as we filed past. Neither the *Wehrmacht* not the SS entered the barracks but stood directly outside. We did not speak—we still believed that we would be going to work. The screeches of the *Kapos* penetrated every corner of the barrack. In my barrack there were mainly Hungarian Jews. Everybody understood the *Kapo*'s instructions, which were given in Yiddish.[66]

Avraham-Berl Sokol of Wysokie Mazowieckie, who arrived at Auschwitz on January 17, 1943, recalled:

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[64] David Faber, *Because of Romek: A Holocaust Survivor's Memoir* (El Cajon, California: Granite Hill Press, 1997), 130–31. When one of Potok's brothers was transferred to a satellite camp in Jawiszowice, he was quietly killed by the Jewish inmates who remembered him from Birkenau. Ibid., 149–50.

[65] Joe Rosenblum with David Kohn, *Defy the Darkness: A Tale of Courage in the Shadow of Mengele* (Westport, Connecticut; London: Praeger, 2001), 148, 224–25.

[66] Memoir of Peter (Dzeider) Kleinmann, Internet: http://www.museumoffamilyhistory.com/wims-kleinmann-05.htm, chapter 5.

> They brought us to Block 20, beating us continually. After some time they took our clothes and we were ordered to stay outside in the biting frost (January 18th, 1943) for several hours. Many froze to death in the deep cold. Then they brought us to the bathroom and tattooed a number on the left hand. My number was 88966. For them I was not a human being but a number. When they yelled at me to get beaten, they were not calling my name but my number. The Jewish "Capo"—Merva of Makov (?)—trying to please the Germans, ordered me to "bend down" and with a thick stick he beat me very hard. This is the way we lived—hunger, fear, cold and beatings were our daily treats. Many signed up to Block 7 at their will, the block of death. This was the block they used to take people to the gas chambers, this is how we were shaking (?) in the claws of death and we were hoping.[67]

Frank Stiffel, who was assigned to the prisoners' infirmary in Auschwitz, recalled:

> The formal punishment could be for a minor transgression such as smoking during the working hours. In such cases, the transgressor himself carried from the Bunker (this was the official name given to Block 11, the jailhouse of Auschwitz One) a slanted, narrow table called the *goat,* put it in the middle of the Raportplatz, bent over it, and received his twenty or thirty whips on the buttocks. This whipping was called the *payoff* and it usually took place on a Saturday evening. The man who administered it was Jacob, the gigantic Jew, the Kapo of the bunker. ... in addition to the payoff whippings, Jacob was the one who prepared the gallows and the rope for public hangings and who executed the hangings in the presence of the Auschwitz administration and in front of the Haftlinge [Häftlinge, i.e. prisoners] population. Just by looking at him there was no doubt that Jacob was able to kill. He was a primitive man, some three hundred and fifty pounds of muscle and no brain. The language he spoke was a strange combination of Yiddish and some animal-like sounds.
>
> Kapo Schultz was a bloodthirsty Jewish Kapo from the Unionwerke ammunitions factory. He was known for beating the male Jewish Haftlinge working for him and for sexually abusing the Jewish females. He was hated by everybody, and during the previous New Year's Eve, he had been beaten up severely by unknown persons and thrown on a heap of garbage in the middle of Auschwitz, to freeze to death. He had survived, but in spite of a broken arm and broken ribs, he had refused to go to the Krankenbau [infirmary], and now he was escaping the wrath of Auschwitz by going away with the Germans.
>
> The Hungarian Jews … saw around them Polish Jews, some of whom were functionaries, and most of whom had by now developed ways to outsmart the three-month survival theory and were doing comparatively well. The Hungarians compared their own lot with that of the Polish Jews, and they decided that it was not the SS but the Polish Jews who were responsible for their tragedy. They developed a hatred against the Polish Jews—a hatred that was to last long after the war was over, and that even today can still be detected lingering in the old survivors.[68]

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[67] Avraham-Berl Sokol, "What I Experienced at the Zambrow Concentration Camp and Other Concentration Camps," in I. Rubin, ed., *Wysokie Mazowieckie Memorial Book* (Tel Aviv: Wysokie-Mazowieckie Society, 1975), 174–83, Internet: http://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/Wysokie/wys164.html.

[68] Frank Stiffel, *The Tale of the Ring: A Kaddish: A Personal Memoir of the Holocaust* (Toronto and New York: Bantam Books, 1985), 251, 274, 293.

Rosa Katz describes her confrontation with Jewish Kapos arrival on her arrival at Auschwitz:

> Then we had to leave all our clothes in a big pile, and they gave us those horrible Auschwitz uniforms with the stripes. … We were pushed around again, marched off again to the barracks. … In the morning we were rushed out, the *Kapos* you know, they make horrible shriek voices, and those were Jewish people … And if somebody cried, they were hit, you know, the *Kapos* was hitting them, and not only the people who cried but the people next to them …[69]

Judith Strick Dribben describes the conduct of Jewish women Kapos when she was taken to a shower room in Auschwitz along with a group of Polish women:

> A plump girl entered. She wore good clothes, a sweater with a red yellow Star of David, and an armband embroidered "*Sauna Kapo.*"
>
> She demanded in German, "Who is ready for the next room?"
>
> The women started crowding around the door. Suddenly the girl produced a big belt. She began beating the naked bodies and heads, leaving red welts.
>
> "Keep in line," the girl yelled. …
>
> Not far from us stood a tall, white-haired Italian woman. For some reason, she had attracted the attention of the *Sauna Kapo,* who hit her with the belt on the face, neck, and breasts. The woman became furious.
>
> "*Disgraziata putana* ('disgraceful whore')," she shouted.
>
> Before we could grasp what had happened, the *kapo*, helped by two other well-dressed girls, dragged her down and kicked her until she lay bloody and silent on the floor.[70]

Irene Shapiro recollects her experiences with Jewish Kapos at Auschwitz:

> We promptly line up in front of two barracks overlooking the railway ramp where we left our train just a while ago. We are about to get the first taste of crazy Sally, our *Block Aelteste* (barrack elder), and her adjutant, the *Stubendienst* (barrack orderly) Mela.
>
> Sally is a toothless Polish-Jewish blonde who screams at us in garbled German and who kicks and hits us more often than she screams. With each reprimand, she points to the distant smokestacks and foretells that we will all go there if we don't change the nonchalant way in which we obey the rules of the camp. …
>
> Cruelty of punishment is in evidence everywhere and at all times. … Every *Capo* (Camp Policewoman) feels free to kick and punch her subservients, and so does every *block*-Elder or other camp official in a striped uniform. Since many of these officials in the women's camp happen to be Hungarian [Jews], we soon learn some of the Hungarian orders that are barked at us, such as "*Nem lekhet* (it isn't allowed),' "*Kifele* (get out)" and "*Diorshan* (hurry up)." All these Hungarian phrases will remain with us for a long time.[71]

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[69] Rosa Katz, Oral History Transcript, October 28–29, 1980, Internet: http://www.wisconsinhistory.org/holocaustsurvivors/pdfs/Katz.pdf, 63–64.

[70] Judith Strick Dribben, *A Girl Called Judith Strick* (New York: Cowles, 1970), 181.

[71] Irene Shapiro, *Revisiting the Shadows: Memoirs from War-torn Poland to the Statue of Liberty* (Elk River, Minnesota: DeForest Press, 2004), 231–32, 236.

Regina Szenberg (Kupiec), a block elder in Birkenau between the years 1943–1944, was found guilty by a Jewish honour court in Munich in April 1948. She was declared guilty of sadistic treatment of Jewish women and children, and selling food which she stole from their rations. She immigrated to the United States in December 1948.[72]

Sara Plager Zyskind attests to the cruelty of Jewish Kapos in Auschwitz, especially one from Slovakia:

> After a large group of girls had been gathered together, our *Kapo* began arranging us into rows of five abreast. She was now joined by several other guards, stout like herself, their hair short and stubbed as if it, too, had been cropped not long ago. These women's dresses were so short that they barely covered their hefty thighs. …
>
> … All three *Kapos* ran wildly about, wielding their truncheons and striking blows on the heads of anyone near them. The red-head flailed her victims with almost ecstatic fury. …
>
> During the day, I had heard it whispered that these women were Jews … This made their cruelty all the worse. …
>
> "If you're Jewish, why do you help the Germans torture us? Why do you beat your own sisters? Haven't you any feeling of pity? …"
>
> The *Kapo* didn't move. Leaning on her truncheon, she seemed to be listening patiently to every word I said. When I stopped talking, she said in heavily accented Polish, "Finished?"
>
> "Yes, I replied.
>
> "Turn around," she commanded. I did and immediately found myself in a pitch black world with stars twirling about my head. … Suddenly I felt water on my face. I opened my eye and realized that I was lying on the floor, with the enormous *Kapo* standing over me and dousing me with a strong jet of water from a hose. …
>
> "Get up!" she commanded. I got to my feet wearily. … "Climb onto the oven and get down on your knees!"
>
> The *Kapo* took four large bricks, placed two in each of my hands, and ordered me to raise the bricks above my head. I couldn't do it—they were too heavy. Blows fell on my back until, with a stupendous effort, I managed to raise my arms. I felt as if every bone in my body was broken. I don't know how long I was kept there holding the bricks above my head. …
>
> I dragged myself back and either passed out or fell into a deep sleep. …
>
> Like a pack of hounds after their game, a large number of *Kapos* stormed into our midst, stepped all over us, and brought down their cubs with full force upon our heads. …
>
> It was a horrible spectacle watched with demonic glee by the German officers, while the *Kapos,* who seemed to have been waiting for this opportunity, assaulted us again furiously under the pretext of restoring order.[73]

Ester Löwi describes the cruel treatment meted out to Hungarian Jews by Jewish Kapos from Slovakia: "From 2 o'clock in the morning there was a roll call. It lasted until 7 o'clock. They

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[72] Laura Jockusch and Gabriel N. Finder, eds., *Jewish Honor Courts: Revenge, Retribution, and Reconciliation in Europe and Israel after the Holocaust* (Detroit: Wayne State University, 2015), 72–73.

[73] Sara Zyskind, *Stolen Years* (Minneapolis: Lerner, 1981; reprinted by Signet, New York, 1983), 153, 156–59, 161.

would have to stand for 5 hours. Jewish women from Slovakia, block elders, oversaw this, and would beat people."[74] A Polish Jew also speaks scathingly of block elders from Slovakia:

> The most terrible and most eager executioners of German orders, often in most extreme form, were block- /dormitory leaders from Slovakia. Forgetting that they could share the lot of humiliated comrades, they motivated Lagerälteste to punishments. They were merciless at the line-ups where weak women fainted from the exhaustion in the hot sunshine. It happened to me several times. I fell down at the line-up – block leader revived me by beating and forced me then to stand up.[75]

Sabina Mirowska, a Jew from Kraków, stated that when she arrived in Birkenau in October 1944, the entire personel was made up of Slovak, Hungarian and Czech Jews, whom she recalled as being "sadistic."[76] Orna Birnbach (Blauner), from Slovakia, recalls Kapos who were Polish Jews: "We walked to (what I now know was) block 4 in Birkenau. A Jewish Polish capo girl came over. These girls were queens. They hated the Hungarians, they told us we were still dancing while they had already built the camp."[77]

On arrival in Auschwitz, Irving (Yitzhak) Eisner, a Jew from Transcarpathia, was pummelled repeatedly with a cane by a Jewish Kapo from Poland named Chaim who demanded, in Yiddish, that Eisner give him his father's watch which he had brought with him. Chaim told Eisner that he would have no use for it because he would soon be gassed and cremated.[78]

Mala Liss Brandsdorfer describes her experiences with Jewish Kapo helpers in Birkenau:

> My first work group was called the 105th Kommando. We were about 150 women divided into three groups of 50. Each group had a Vorarbeiter, or Kapo. They were our work leaders. Many of the Kapos were criminals. They were known by the black triangles on their clothing. Ours was a German prostitute. She was in charge of our work details. A lot of the Kapos were street women from Germany.
>
> Each Kapo had one or two Jewish helpers, and over each Kapo was an SS man. When we were working the SS man usually stayed in a hut nearby. We were watched over by the Kapos and their helpers. …
>
> The Kapos would often leave us in the care of their helpers. A few of the helpers were no better than the Kapos, but most of them would help us if they could. Most of the Kapo's helpers were Jewish girls, and they would help by watching for the Kapos and the SS.
>
> We stayed in Ravensbruck [Ravensbrück] for about 2 weeks. … I ran into a girl named Hadasa. Even though she was Jewish she had had a privileged position in Auschwitz. She was an assistant to a Kapo from the 103rd Kommando. But here in Ravensbruck she was in the same position as the rest of us.

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[74] Testimony of Ester Löwi, Jewish Historical Institute (Warsaw) archive, record group 301, number 113.

[75] Record of Witness Testimony No. 277, April 25, 1946, Voices from Ravensbrück, Polish Institute of Source Research, Lund, Sweden, Internet: http://www3.ub.lu.se/ravensbruck/interview277.pdf.

[76] Testimony of Sabina Mirowska, Jewish Historical Institute (Warsaw) archive, record group 301, number 4693.

[77] Interview with Orna Birnbach (Blauner), Internet: http://leschroniquespurple.com/post/44656510490.

[78] Testimony of Irving Eisner, USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archve, interview code 11089.

In Auschwitz I had received many beatings from Hadasa. Not just me but all of us in the kommando. Once she caught me in the toilet. She beat me until I was black and blue. It was because she had seen me switch groups during work so I could do some trading.[79]

Many other Jewish prisoners also recall brutal Jewish Kapos and block elders in Auschwitz-Birkenau:

The commander of our barracks was a Jewish woman from Czechoslovakia; she wasn't much older than I—in her early twenties, I would guess—but she was hardened and cruel, and it pleased her to demean us. *Radomske [radomska] kurwa* —Radomer whore—she called each of us. That's the greeting she used the very first time she came into our barracks, and she called us whores routinely afterward. … When winter came and the cold tore at us, digging its fingers deep into our chests, when we were maybe just a little slow to get outside to stand for our endless appels, she would come into our barracks and beat us with her stick, curse us as whores, and make us move faster.

Such gratuitous cruelty. And from a Jew. … She was cruel in an almost casual way, as if her malice were a habit and not something that arose only in outbursts, in sudden response to some infraction, real or perceived. Her viciousness was her essence. …

One might think that women guards would be kinder than men, gentler in their treatment of other human beings. But in my experience, this wasn't true. The women guards, Jews as well as the SS. Were no less sadistic.[80]

The saddest part of all this, and something I can never forget, is the way the *Blockälteste* [block elder] and her helpers treated us. Though they were Jewish women, they acted more like wild beasts from the forests, beating us and kicking us all the time, and showing us no pity at all. They, themselves, lacked nothing, though. They were mostly veteran inmates …[81]

I was brought with the group into Birkenau … This is how we were processed: I was pushed in front of a table. I had to stretch my arm out and have a camp number tattoed on it. A *Kapo,* a French Jew, stood on the table and made sure everyone kept order. When the needle was stuck in, I jumped from pain, and the *Kapo* kicked me right in the mouth so hard, a tooth flew out and blood ran all over my chin. And the *Kapo* screamed with laughter like an animal at the way I doubled over.

Birkenau was like hell. … Every *Älteste* [elder] beat us. We were whipped for the smallest "sin." They beat me day and night. Our lives became cheap—which was what the killers wanted.[82]

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[79] Louis Brandsdorfer, *The Bleeding Sky; My Mother's Journey Through the Fire* (CreateSpace, 2012), chapters 8 and 9.

[80] Millie Werber and Eve Keller, *Two Rings: A Story of Love and War* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2012), 165–66.

[81] Isaiah Trunk, *Judenrat: The Jewish Councils in Eastern Europe under Nazi Occupation* (New York: Macmillan, 1972; Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1996), 109.

[82] Isaiah Trunk, *Jewish Responses to Nazi Persecution: Collective and Individual Behavior in Extremis* (New York: Stein and Day, 1979), 189.

A teenaged prisoner who was in Auschwitz together with is father, a former Jewish ghetto policeman in Sosnowiec, recalled the punishment meted out to his father by a French Kapo:

> One day when we were hiding in the latrine, we returned late to our *Appelplatz* and the kapo noticed us. He got very angry with my father and me, but he punished only my father. The barracks had brick heating ovens at each end, which were never used for heating but as a punishment rack. My father was ordered to put his hands and upper torso into the oven, which exposed his backside. The kapo grabbed a shovel and used it to hit my father over his backside. I was ordered to watch. I cried and tried to stop him by grabbing his hands. He pushed me off. Someone held me back while the kapo gave my father ten hits. My father yelled out but did not move. He realized that if he moved he would be hit on some of his internal organs and that would be his death. His bottom was black and blue and he could not sit for days.[83]

A Jewish survivor who lived through Birkenau recalls her first block elder, a 15-year-old Jewish girl named Cilli, known as the "Little Devil". Cilli was too weak to beat the prisoners, but she slapped their faces left and right.[84] On her arrival in Auschwitz, Lucille Eichengreen was met by a male Jewish Kapo. The Kapo in her barracks "was a young woman, Jewish, I don't know whether she was from Hungary or from Poland. She yelled a great deal and she ran around with a reed or stick, and anything in her way she would beat. … And at night she had a little cubicle at the end of the barracks. And there was a rumor that one of the SS came at night and spent the night with her, every night. But it was a rumor, because the barracks were dark at night, we did not know. In 1946 the rumor turned out to be true, she was in New York with that man."[85]

One of Udel S.'s most vivid memories of Birkenau was the Jewish squads who stole from the newly arrived Jewish prisoners and serviced the crematoria. On arrival at the camp, the Canada squad—composed of seasoned Jewish prisoners from France, Belgium and Poland—emptied the railroad cars and took food for themselves, "so they had food without limit."[86] Regarding the cruelty of the Jewish Kapos:

> *And who were the capos?*
> Jews, Frenchmen, Germans. They were Jews …
> *French Jews?*
> Yes. They were worse, these French Jews, than the Germans … Because he [the capo] was getting an additional ration of bread and an additional dinner, so he was ready to beat the life out of a person, and he indeed was beating people that way.[87]

A group of Jews from Płońsk was charged with the job of bringing the clothes of prisoners put to death in Birkenau for disinfection at the sauna. This allowed them to obtain money

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[83] Nate Leipciger, *The Weight of Freedom* (Toronto: Azrieli Foundation, 2015), 79. On p. 75, the Kapo was identified as a French Jew.

[84] Stanisława Gogołowska, *W Brzezince nie umierało się samotnie* (Warsaw: Książka i Wiedza, 1973), 22–23.

[85] Lucille Eichengreen Interview, Holocaust Oral History Project, Internet: http://remember.org/witness/wit.sur.luc.html.

[86] Donald L. Niewyk, ed., *Fresh Wounds: Early Narratives of Holocaust Survival* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 53.

[87] Ibid., 52.

and valuables, which they then used to buy food in the camp as well as to help other members in their block. In 1943, the group decided to stage a revolt and take revenge on the kapo who abused the Jews. Moshe Aharon Pszewoznik deposed:

> At the end of 1943, a Jew from Lodz [Łódź] (known as Moshele Hassid) ordered me, my brother, Elazar Miller, Mendel Frankenstein and Shimon Pas (the latter being the one whose wife and five children were cremated, and whose valuables he recognized among the objects the victims left behind) to go and kill the murderous "Romanian" Unterscharfuehrer. We were about to carry out the order when a Jewish kapo … told the Germans that a revolt had been planned. As a result, 900 Jews were killed. About six months later, the revolt took place.[88]

Some of the Kapos had already acquired a history of abusing their fellow Jews before arriving at Auschwitz, and they continued in this path after being transferred to other camps afterwards. Henoch (Henryk, Chaim) Klajman (Klajnman) was one of more than 40 Jews who served in the Jewish police force in the ghetto of his home town of Płońsk. Believed to be a German confidant, Klajman not only mistreated Jews, but also divulged their hiding places and appropriated his victims' goods and money. The Płońsk ghetto police were notorious for their abuse of power and brutality, and even killed fellow Jews. From 1942 to 1945, Klajman was a Kapo in Auschwitz and then Stutthof, where he mistreated his fellow prisoners by beating them. He was so brutal to his fellow inmates in Auschwitz that he had earned the nickname "Chamek kapo."[89]

Historian N. Glicksman writes: "In Auschwitz the kapo of the night shift in the 'Union' factory, the Czech Jew Weiss, treated his group very brutally. … The kapo B.A., on his way to the United States, confessed his sinister deeds in Birkenau. A Hungarian woman, the daughter of a rabbi, was notorious for her disgraceful attitude towards the Jewish women under her command."[90] Another female Jewish Kapo at Auschwitz would beat women prisoners mercilessly with a whip until a German doctor ordered her to stop this cruel form of punishment. This Kapo, however, continued to wake all of the prisoners in the barracks in the middle of the night and forced them to stand for hours.[91]

Stanisław Taubenschlag (Townsend) faced the unwanted sexual attention of a Jewish Kapo in Auschwitz who was a homosexual. Later, towards the end of the war, when Taubenschlag was in the process of being transported to Nordhausen, he had to deal with Siegfried, a vile Jewish Kapo who had deduced Taubenschlag's Jewish origin (Taubenschlag was posing as a

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[88] Testimony of Moshe Aharon Pszewoznik, dated January 25, 1948, Yad Vashem Archives, M1-M1E/ 1744 (historical questionnaire, the Central Historical Committee, Munich).

[89] Martin Dean, ed., *Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos, 1933–1945* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, in association with the United States Memorial Museum, 2012), vol. II: *Ghettos in German-Occupied Eastern Europe*, Part A, 25–26; Gabriel N. Finder and Alexander V. Prusin, "Jewish Collaborators on Trial in Poland, 1944–1956," in *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry*, vol. 20 (2008): 139–41.

[90] N. Glicksman, "Social Stratification in the German Concentration Camps," in Michael Robert Marrus (ed.), *The Nazi Holocaust, Part 6: The Victims of the Holocaust,* vol. 2 (Westport, CT: Meckler, 1989), 947. For another of a cruel Hungarian-Jewish block elder named Magda see Milton J. Nieuwsma, ed., *Surviving Auschwitz: Children of the Shoah* (New York: iboooks, 1998), 81.

[91] Testimony of Renia Lipska-Micznik, USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archve, interview code 13697.

Christian Pole) and persecuted him.[92] Jewish women in Auschwitz were exploited by privileged Jews from the *Sonderdienst* (i.e., Special Services), who offered them a scrap of food for sexual favours.[93]

Sometimes the victims of choice of Jewish Kapos and block elders were Christian Poles. Avraham Harshalom (Friedberg) recalled:

> The head of the interrogation block [Block 11] was the Jewish prisoner Jakob Kozolczik [Jakub Kozalczyk]—a mountain of a man, all muscle. Before the war, Kozolczik had made a name for himself as 'Schimschon Eisen' ('Samson the Mighty'), displaying his feats of strength the length and breadth of Poland. … he endeavored to be lenient towards Jews, while tightening the screw principally upon the Poles, whom he heartily detested …[94]

Polish inmates of Auschwitz also recall the cruelty and corruption of many of the Jewish functionaries and ordinary prisoners. Konstanty Piekarski recalls a Jewish prisoner, a strongman by the name of Schmelling:

> … who succeeded in impressing the Germans with his tremendous physical strength. Some kapos had tried to match their strength with his, but were no competition for the big man. Consequently, Schmelling became a privileged prisoner within the penal block. As a Jew he could not leave the block, but he received as much food as he could eat. In return the SS men required demonstrations of his muscular power—in particular, to prove that he could kill a man with one blow. Other Jewish prisoners were supplied as the subjects, and the SS men eagerly bet on either Schmelling or his victims.[95]

Other Polish prisoners recalled:

> After two days journey, late evening we arrived to Auschwitz. We stopped at the side track, seeing surrounding us wires (*fences.*) Approached directly by Jews (*probably members of "Sonderkommando"*), ordering men to line-up separately from women. They warned us, to get rid of money—gold and foreign exchange. The latter to be punished by death. We were then led by Jews and SS-men to the camp. On the way there I saw a huge ditch on fire, and Jews started shouting that Germans prepared it for us. I could see on a distance group of people surrounding the fire, I heard terrible screams and I think I have seen a SS-man pushing people into that fire. Behind the wires stand our men, seasoned Häftlings (*prisoners*) who reassured us, that the fire was not for us—they were burning Jews.
>
> We were led to a barn at the Brzezinka [Birkenau]. … Morning time, we were ordered into a column of rows of 5, and to the bath. … We were led to bath, started registration, and we had to leave our jewellery, cash, and our belongings. We could

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[92] Stanisław Taubenschlag (Stanley Townsend), *To Be a Jew in Occupied Poland: Cracow, Auschwitz, Buchenwald* (Oświęcim: Frap Books, 1998), 90–91, 113–15.

[93] Testimony of Józefina Schepper-Modzowiecka, Jewish Historical Institute (Warsaw) archive, record group 301, number 1254.

[94] Avraham Harshalom (Friedberg), "Jakob the Kapo," *Alive from the Ashes* (Tel Aviv: Milo, 1990), Internet: http://www.purs.org/yzkor_pruzhany/alive_jacob.htm.

[95] Kon (Konstanty R.) Piekarski, *Escaping Hell: The Story of a Polish Underground Officer in Auschwitz and Buchenwald* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1989), 35–36. Schmelling reportedly survived about a year in Auschwitz.

keep part of our food supplies, groats, sugar, butter. We, my 11-years old sister me and our mother, hold together. Jews at the bath were worst in tormenting us; they pushed us, grasped our belongings taking just anything they liked. From me, for example, they took a pretty painted wrap (*handkerchief*) and just on my eyes one Jewish (*woman*) wrapped it into her pocket. We got other, civilian cloths with a "Streifen" (Vertical, red strap, painted on with oil paint over shoulders of a dress), dirty and with lice. We got no shoes. Later on, gathered behind the bath in column of rows in 5 and then our Aufseher approached. When she left us soon after, just to fetch list of our names, the seasoned Polish prisoners neared us. Men gave us their bread, coffee, especially for mothers with children and for small children. Women enquired on their relatives, friends, sometime recognising between us their sisters or some more removed relatives. Crying was heard all over, tears and welcome. The Aufseher returned shouting on us as we were scattered all over—some women were slapped in faces, which gave me a shocking impression. We were led then by Aufsehers and SS-man to camp "B". There we were spread to different blocks, me with my mother and sister to block 26.[96]

During arrival of the Jewish transports "Lagersperr" (camp barrier) was established. Huge ditches covered with spruce padding were already prepared. Young Jewish were separated for labour, older send to gas chambers while children thrown directly into fire. It took place just 2–3 km from the camp. Children were just thrown into those ditches and burned. Once a Polish transport arrived—80 persons—Jewish guard (capo) wanted to send all those to the gas chamber as well, but SS-man showed up and took the whole group to the camp, and threw the Jew into fire.[97]

In our station (*Revir of the sick-bay*), we were constantly submitted selections. I was selected (*to extermination?*) three times, but bribed myself through block guard, Jewish-Slovak, with my rations. She wrote in other numbers on the list of selected From our block of 300 persons, half of us were sorted out (*for extermination*). Selections were carried on 2 to 3 times a week.[98]

Shavti Perelmuter contrasts a Polish block elder favourably with the Jewish Kapos he encountered at Auschwitz:

I became sick with typhus and I lay in a terrible condition … it is only thanks to my block commander, the Pole, Ludwig [Ludwik], that I was able to stay alive. … he had been thrown into Auschwitz as a political prisoner. I have no idea what it was that I did, or for what reason he showed me so much sympathy …

My medical crisis lasted for 12 days, there was one occasion when Ludwig didn't allow me to go to work, but he hid me under some straw in the barracks so that I wouldn't be discovered in an inspection. …

In Auschwitz camp I had the opportunity to be exposed to see and to really hear and know the behavior of the block commanders and their helpers. The commander of Block 27 was a certain Greenboim, and he was from Warsaw. He distinguished

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[96] Record of Witness Testimony No. 421, July 26, 1946, Voices from Ravensbrück, Polish Institute of Source Research, Lund, Sweden, Internet: http://www3.ub.lu.se/ravensbruck/interview421.pdf.

[97] Record of Witness Testimony No. 47, December 12, 1945, Voices from Ravensbrück, Polish Institute of Source Research, Lund, Sweden, Internet: http://www3.ub.lu.se/ravensbruck/interview47.pdf.

[98] Record of Witness Testimony No. 8, November 28, 1945, Voices from Ravensbrück, Polish Institute of Source Research, Lund, Sweden, Internet: http://www3.ub.lu.se/ravensbruck/interview8.pdf.

himself with his brutality towards Jews. There was another one from Warsaw, Yosela and Laibeshel from Radom.[99]

The Kapo from Warsaw identified above as Greenboim is likely Eliezer (Nonek) Grünbaum (Grinbaum, Grynbaum, Grinboim), a Communist activist, who is mentioned by other Jewish prisoners. There are many damning testimonies regarding his beating, clubbing and kicking fellow prisoners. He was known to call Jewish prisoners "*parszywy Żyd"* ("filthy Jew"). Although turned over to the French police in Paris, where he was spotted by some survivors after the war, Grünbaum was released and fled to Palestine, thus avoiding punishment.[100]

Leon Głogowski, a doctor who worked in the hospital barrack in Birkenau, recalled the sadistic exploits of a Kapo named Izaak (with an exaggerated count of his victims):

> That was the athlete Izaak. Already in the *"Stammlager,"* in the punitive company he was ill-famed for his powerful blow. Here in Birkenau he carried neither a stick nor a mace. He arranged the prisoners as he wanted them to stand and then hit them with the edge of his hand in the neck. One blow sufficed and the prisoner had to be delivered to the morgue. Izaak would have been ashamed if he had to hit twice. He made no differentiation as regards nationalities. He boasted that he had already finished off close to two thousand Jews.[101]

Josef Sackar and Eliezer Eisenschmidt described various Kapos they encountered in Birkenau:

> The Kapo and the foreman were our supervisors. If they didn't like our work, they beat us. The Kapo and the foreman hit people who didn't work the way they liked. Both of them were Jewish. I received beatings from two foremen: L. P. and B. M.
>
> Our next Kapo was a Jew from Ciechanow [Ciechanów]. At first, we were bunkmates. Later on, when he was made Kapo, he treated me very badly. [A French Kapo named Daniel intervened to protect Eisenschmidt from this Jewish Kapo.]
>
> … we had two non-Jewish Polish Kapos, Wacek and Juzek.
> *How did the Polish Kapos treat the Jewish prisoners?*

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[99] Shavti Perelmuter, "Jewish Resistance in the Ghetto and the Camp," in *Deblin-Modzjitz Book,* Internet: http://www.jewishgen.org/Yizkor/Deblin.html, translation of D. Shtokfish, ed., *Sefer Deblin-Modjitz [Dęblin-Modrzyc]* (Tel Aviv: Association of Former Residents of Demblin-Modzjitz, 1969), 501ff.

Moshe and Elie Garbarz, *A Survivor* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1992), 83; Moshe Prywes as told to Haim Chertok, *Prisoners of Hope* (Hanover and London: Brandeis University Press, 1996), 60; Stefan Grajek, *Po wojnie i co dalej: Żydzi w Polsce w latach 1945–1949* (Warsaw: Żydowski Instytut Historyczny, 2003), 65–66; [100] Laura Jockusch and Gabriel N. Finder, eds., *Jewish Honor Courts: Revenge, Retribution, and Reconciliation in Europe and Israel after the Holocaust* (Detroit: Wayne State University, 2015), 143. After immigrating to Israel, he was known as Eliezer Gruenbaum. He became Israel's first minister of the interior and died mysteriously during the 1948 Arab-Israeli war. See also Tuvia Friling, *A Jewish Kapo in Auschwtiz: History, Memory, and the Politics of Survival* (Waltham, Massachusetts: Brandeis University Press, 2014), 100–101, 111, 139–40, 162.

[101] Leon Glogowski, "From 'Guinea Pig' in Auschwitz to the Post of Head of the Hospital in Birkenau," in International Auschwitz Committee, ed., *Nazi Medicine: Doctors, Victims, and Medicine in Auschwitz,* Part II (New York: Howard Fertig, 1986), 187.

They were usually quite correct. There was only one incident with the foreman.[102]

Thomas Buergenthal, who survived Auschwitz-Birkenau as a child, vividly recalled the Jewish Kapos he encountered there.

> After we had been tattooed, we were assigned to our barracks. Ours was a wooden structure like all the others in the Gypsy camp, with a mud floor that divided two long rows of wide, three-level wooden bunks. Once in the barrack, we were greeted by a burly prisoner with a cane. This, I was to learn right away, was the *Blockältester,* or barrack boss. He kept pointing to the bunks and yelling in Polish and Yiddish, "Ten men to each level!" Whoever did not move fast enough for him was hit or kicked. My father and I found a bunk, picked the middle level and were soon joined by eight other inmates. Then we were ordered to lie on our stomachs with our heads pointing towards the middle of the barrack. I can't tell whether we were given blankets, but I am sure that we had no mattresses.
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> Although we were not given anything to eat that evening, the very thought of food was forced out of my mind by what happened that night. Into the barrack strutted two or three well-fed inmates with canes and clubs. They wore armbands that identified them as *Kapo*. Kapos were inmates who, together with the barrack bosses, ran the camp for the SS and terrorized their fellow inmates, day in and day out. Right after the Kapos had greeted our barrack boss, one of them yelled in German, "Spiegel, you son of a bitch. Get down. We want to talk to you!" As soon as Spiegel stood before them, the men surrounded him and started to hit him with their fists and clubs: on his face, his head, his legs, his arms. The more Spiegel begged for mercy and screamed, the more the Kapos beat him. From what I could make out as the Kapos yelled while beating him, Spiegel had apparently denounced one of them to the Gestapo in Kielce, with the result that the denounced man had been sent to Auschwitz some two years earlier.
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> Spiegel was soon on his knees and then flat on the ground, begging to be allowed to die. He was covered with blood and no longer really trying to protect himself against the blows that continued to rain down on him. The Kapos then picked up Spiegel and began to push and pull him out of the barrack. We did not see what happened next. Later we heard that the Kapos had dragged Spiegel to the fence and that he died on the fence. Our camp, like the others in Birkenau, was enclosed by a highly electrified fence that emitted a perennial buzz. … Spiegel must have died by being thrown against the fence or by crawling into it. Gradually, I came to realize that it was not uncommon for inmates to commit suicide by what was known as "walking into the fence."
>
> It is difficult not to wonder whether it ever occurred to these Kapos that they were no different from Spiegel. He denounced fellow Jews to the Gestapo because he believed that he was thereby prolonging his own life, whereas the Kapos allowed themselves to become the surrogates of the SS by beating their fellow inmates, forcing them to work to total exhaustion, and depriving them of their rations, knowing full well that by these actions they hastened the deaths of the prisoners. And all that in order to improve the Kapos' own chances of survival. Thus, besides testing the morality of those who became neither informers nor Kapos, the concentration camps were laboratories for the survival of the brutish. Both Spiegel and the Kapo he had denounced had been friends of my parents. Both had been with us in Katowice. At that time they had been my "uncles." I seem to recall that the Kapo whom Spiegel had denounced had been a dental technician or a dentist in his

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[102] Gideon Greif, *We Wept Without Tears: Testimonies of the Jewish Sonderkommando from Auschwitz* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 107 (Sackar), 239, 241.

prior life; I never knew what Spiegel's profession had been. Had they not ended up in the camps, they probably would have remained decent human beings. What is it in the human character that gives some individuals the moral strength not to sacrifice their decency and dignity, regardless of the costs to themselves, whereas others become murderously ruthless in the hope of ensuring their own survival?

… In those early days, I was also introduced to the Auschwitz feeding system. We would be awakened early in the morning and made to line up in front of a big kettle from which an inmate with a ladle would pour out a liquid that looked like black coffee. Next to him stood the barrack boss, cutting slices of black bread. The bread was frequently moldy and the slices rather small. I soon noticed that not everyone got the same amount of bread. Those the barrack boss did not like would get a smaller piece or no bread at all, while his friends and he himself would keep whole loaves. Complaints would invite a beating. In the evening, we would be served the day's only other meal. It consisted, as a rule, of some tasteless, watery turnip soup. Since we got no bread in the evening, I would try to save a little piece of my morning bread for later in the day, hiding it very carefully so that it would not be stolen.

That, more or less, was all we had to eat. On such a diet, some people gradually became *Muselmans,* the name given to inmates who had become totally emaciated, walked around in a stupor, stopped eating altogether, and in no time died quietly. I soon learned that if somebody became a *Muselman,* he would not live very long.[103]

After the war Sala Lewkowicz, also known as Sura Rajczyk, a barrack leader, was investigated for persecution of fellow prisoners of Jewish origin. Her denunciations resulted in their being frequently sent to their deaths. Marian Dobrzyński, also known as Moishe Chusid, a foreman of prisoners who supervised the baths in Auschwitz-Birkenau, was accused of beating and murdering his fellow prisoners.[104]

Joshua Sternberg, an assistant to the infamous Dr. Joseph Mengele, was one of two Jewish physicans to face charges in Israel's Kapo trials.[105] In addition to Germans, Poles and Jews, Romas also served as Kapos. In his autobiographical novel *Night,* Elie Wiesel describes a sadistic Roma Kapo who struck his father so hard that he fell to the ground. Jupiter Marko, another inmate of Auschwitz, mentioned a Roma Kapo who distinguished himself by his brutality.[106]

There are a number of Jewish testimonies that recall Polish Kapos and block supervisors at Auschwitz in favourable light:

- Anna Kovitzka (Kaletska) credits her block elder, a Polish political prisoner, with saving her life when she fell gravely ill. This Polish woman tried to protect other Jewish prisoners from being sent to the ovens and helped other prisoners. See Donald L. Niewyk, ed., *Fresh Wounds: Early Narratives of Holocaust Survival* (Chapel Hill: The

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[103] Thomas Buergenthal, *A Lucky Child: A Memoir of Surviving Auschwitz As a Young Boy* (New York: Little, Brown, 2009), 68–70.

[104] Records of Investigation and Documentation of the Main Commission to Investigate Nazi Crimes in Poland, Internet: https://collections.ushmm.org/findingaids/RG-15.155M_01_fnd_en.pdf.

[105] Dan Porat, *Bitter Reckoning: Israel Tries Holocaust Survivors as Nazi Collaborators* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2019), 100.

[106] Testimony of Jupiter Marko, Jewish Historical Institute (Warsaw) archive, record group 301, number 95.

University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 15, 205, 210; account of Anna Kaletska, posted online at: http://voices.iit.edu/interview?doc=kaletskaA&display=kaletskaA_en.

- A Jewish prisoner recalls how a Polish Kapo protected a well-respected rabbi from his hometown: "As it turned out, the father had been the rebbe in the Galician shtetl where the *Kapo* had lived. He had been greatly respected by the entire population, even by the Christians. He had been called 'the Holy Father,' and many Poles had gone to him when they needed advice. … The *Kapo* had recognized him and his son in Block 16, the death block … and brought them directly over to his *Kommando.* … The *Kapo* supplied the rebbe and his son with food so that they would not have to eat the blood sausage and the nonkosher soup from the pot." See Konrad Charmatz, *Nightmares: Memoirs of the Years of Horror under Nazi Rule in Europe, 1939–1945* (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 2003), 101–102.
- Another Jewish inmate mentions a Polish Kapo who allowed Jewish inmates to hold a religious service and guarded the entrance to the barracks to watch out for the SS. See Judy Weissenberg Cohen, "'The Kol Nidre I always remember,'" *The Canadian Jewish News,* September 24, 1998.
- Walter Plywaski, formerly Władysław Pływacki, who was transferred with his twin brother from the Łódź ghetto to Birkenau in the summer of 1944, recalled: "I remember being overly clever with my brother in going to a barracks where we heard that there were double or triple food rations to all underage twins. We lied that we were fraternal twins. The barracks was, of course, a holding pen for Dr. Mengele's so-called medical experiments. One of the Polish Gentile Kapos in that barracks took me aside and told me what my brother and I were facing there. He told me that he would try to get us out as soon as he can manage, and he did just that probably on the third day there. He was a total stranger to me. He smuggled us out and we rejoined our father and the men's camp barracks." See Walter Plywaski, "I Remember," *Jewish Magazine,* September-October 2007.

There are many Jewish testimonies that describe other Polish prisoners of Auschwitz in a very favourable light. However, the vast majority of such cases would never have been recorded. These are just a few examples of the ones that were recorded:

- Sigmund Gorson (Zygmunt Gruszkowski), then a 13-year-old Jewish boy, recalled that Father Maximilian Kolbe was "like an angel to me. Like a mother hen, he took me in his arms. He used to wipe away my tears. ... he gave away so much of his meager rations that to me it was a miracle he could live." Another Jewish survivor, Eddie Gastfriend, recalled warmly the scores of Polish prisoner priests who were subjected to particular forms of degradation in the camp: "They wore no collars, but you knew they were priests by their manner and their attitude, especially toward Jews. They were so gentle, so loving." See Patricia Treece, *A Man for Others: Maximilian Kolbe, Saint of Auschwitz* (New York: Harper and Row, 1982), 138, 152–53.
- Sigmund Gorson also reported that Polish doctors imprisoned in Auschwitz stole medication from the infirmary to treat his gangrene-infected leg and to help other Jews. See Janina Hera, *Polacy ratujący Żydów: Słownik* (Warsaw: Neriton, 2014), 375. One such doctor was Janusz Makowski. See Janusz Roszkowski, ed., *Żydzi w walce 1939–1945: Opór i walka z faszyzmem w latach 1939–1945* (Warsaw: Żydowski Instytut Historyczny in. E. Ringelbluma and Stowarzyszenie Żydów Kombatantów i Poszkodowanych w II Wojnie Światowej, 2011), vol. 3, 90.
- Halina Nelken, a Jewish woman from Kraków, writes of the solidarity of Polish and Jewish prisoners in the Płaszów concentration camps, and the assistance shown by Polish inmates of Auschwitz, the camp's first inmates, to later transports of prisoners including Jews. These anonymous benefactors, who may well not have been the "norm," were known by the name of "*kochany*" ("darling"). While they did not have much to offer—perhaps some scraps of food or clothing—their attitude had a great impact on the new

arrivals. Nelken relates similar displays of solidarity shown to her by Polish women inmates at Ravensbrück. See Halina Nelken, *And Yet, I Am Here!* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1999), 232, 248, 272.

- Dr. Peta Welian, who was deported from the Białystok ghetto in September 1943, first to Stutthof then to Auschwitz, recalled that she and the Jewish prisoners who arrived with her were helped by Polish political prisoners: "they had big hearts, they helped us as much as they could and risked a lot." See the testimony of Peta Welian, Jewish Historical Institute (Warsaw) archive, record group 301, number 1856.
- Mieczysław Maślanko and Wolf Glicksman, Jewish inmates of Auschwitz, attest to the help provided to Jews by the following Polish Christian prisoners: Józef Cyrankiewicz, Jan Mosdorf, and Adam Kuryłowicz. See Philip Friedman, *Their Brothers' Keepers* (New York: Crown Publishers, 1957), 114; Władysław Bartoszewski and Zofia Lewin, eds., *Righteous Among Nations: Righteous Among Nations: How Poles Helped the Jews, 1939–1945* (London: Earlscourt Publications, 1969), 10–11, 16; Władysław Bartoszewski and Zofia Lewinówna, *Ten jest z ojczyzny mojej: Polacy z pomocą Żydom 1939–1945,* Second expanded edirion (Kraków: Znak, 1969), 91, 668–70.
- Jerzy Bielecki, one of the first prisoners of Auschwitz, met and befriended Tzila Cybulska, a young Jewish woman prisoner. They used to meet in secret, despite the fact that it was forbidden to do so, and grew fond of each other. Bielecki arranged their escape in July 1944 and, with assistance of various Poles, took Tzila to the home of his relatives in the village of Muniakowice. She was later transferred to a neighboriuing village, where she was cared for by the Czerniks devotedly until the liberation. See Israel Gutman and Sara Bender, eds., *The Encyclopedia of the Righteous Among the Nations: Rescuers of Jews during the Holocaust* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2004), volume 4: *Poland,* Part 1, 90.
- In a letter published in the *New York Times* on December 27, 1998, Marianne Sann wrote: "I want to, and must attest, to the fact that I was saved by Catholic fellow prisoners, at their great personal risk, in Auschwitz and again in Mauthausen." [107]
- Berek Latarus from Łódź recalled: "One time I stole a bread and they took me to shoot me, but a non-Jewish guy from Cracow, he was my friend, and he ran and took me away from the Germans! This non-Jew was on good terms with the S.S., he used to smuggle them cigarettes, and we called him the 'Jewish father' because he was sticking up for us all the time." See Rhoda G. Lewin, ed., *Witnesses to the Holocaust: An Oral History* (Boston: Twayne, 1990), 60.
- Ada Omieljanczuk, a Jewish woman, attributes her survival to Polish fellow prisoners of Auschwitz who shared their food parcels with her. See Tadeusz Andrzejewski, "Wileńscy strażnicy oświęcimskiej pamięci," *Tygodnik Wileńszczyzny* (Vilnius), February 3–9, 2005.
- Two Jewish survivors from Ciechanów recalled that Polish prisoners in Auschwitz who received food parcels from home gave their camp-issued portions away to Jews and other prisoners. See Noach Zabludowicz, "My Experiences in World War II," and Moshe Kolko, "Ciechanow Jews in the Uprising in Auschwitz," in A.W. Yassini, ed., *Memorial Book for the Community of Ciechanow,* Internet: http://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/ciechanow/Ciechanow.html, translation of *Yisker-bukh fun der Tshekhanover yidisher kehile* (Tel Aviv: Former Residents of Ciechanow in Israel and in the Diaspora, 1962), 337, 382.
- Two Jewish sisters who were imprisoned in Auschwitz recalled with gratitude the extra bread they received from a Polish prisoner. See Rena Kornreich Gelissen with Heather

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[107] This was part of a longer letter which read: "As a Jewish woman and a survivor of Auschwitz, I am deeply disturbed by the feud over the crosses there. ... Because the Nazis preferred to incinerate more Jews than Roman Catholic Poles does not mean that Polish non-Jewish victims do not deserve a cross of remembrance and place of honor among their fellow Jewish victims. The Polish inmates felt the icy winds of doom just as acutely as I did. I want to, and must attest to the fact that I was saved by Catholic fellow prisoners, at their great personal risk, in Auschwitz and again in Mauthausen, Austria. I hope the Polish government will not be pressured to remove these symbols of respect. ..."

Dune Macadam, *Rena's Promise: A Story of Sisters in Auschwitz,* Expanded Edition (Boston, Massachusetts: Beacon Press, 2015), 67.

- Historian Yisrael Gutman credits a Polish prisoner, who hid him and fed him without expecting any reward, with saving his life when he was imprisoned in Auschwitz for several months. See Piotr Zychowicz, in conversation with Israel Gutman, "To nie Polacy założyli obozy, tylko Niemcy," *Rzeczpospolita*, May 30, 2012.
- Szymon Laks, an acclaimed composer and musician, identifies three Poles who helped him: Tadeusz Jawor, Ludwik Żuk-Skarszewski, who used his connections to pull Laks out of a work crew, and Jan Stojakowski, a supervisor in the food warehouse who provided Laks with extra food. See Szymon Laks, *Music of Anoether World* (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1989), 40–41, 104–5, 107.
- Moishe Kantorowitz credited the Polish prisoner Leon Kulowski with saving his life by arranging his transfer, with the agreement of a Polish Kapo, from a hard labour task whose only exit was death, to an inside mechanic shop job and by giving some of his food to Kantorowicz. See Moishe Kantorowitz, *My Mother's Bequest: From Shershev to Auschwitz to Newfoundland* (Canada: n.p., 2004), Book 4.
- Walentyna Konopska and Wanda Marossanyi conspired to change the ethnic identity of Maria Kozakiewicz, a Jewish prisoner, from Jewish to Polish, and have her sent to a different camp (Flossenbürg), thereby saving her life. See Ulrich Herbert, Karin Orth, and Christoph Dieckmann, eds., *Die nationalsozialistischen Konzentrationslager: Entwicklung und Struktur,* vol. 1 (Göttingen: Wallstein, 1998), 966.
- Max Eisen was only 15 years of age when he was deported to Auschwitz-Birkenau from Czechoslovakia in the spring of 1944. He was immediately assigned to a work detail draining swamps in the vicinity of the camp. One day, Eisen received a terrible blow from an SS guard and was knocked unconscious. Severely injured, he was left at the camp infirmary. Tadeusz Orzeszko, the Polish doctor in charge of the clinic, took pity on Max and saved him from certain death. Patients who could not return to work were being taken to the gas chamber. Dr. Orzeszko operated on Max, nursed him back to health, and engaged him as his assistant. What Max did not know, was that Dr. Orzeszko was also a member of the Polish resistance, carrying on activities even in the heart of this notorious death camp. See Max Eisen, *By Chance Alone: A Remarkable True Story of Courage and Survival at Auschwitz* (Toronto: HarperCollins, 2016); "Canadian Max Eisen's stories of surviving Holocaust," CBC, Internet: <https://www.cbc.ca/news/technology/holocaust-survivor-hologram-1.5436430?__vfz=medium%3Dsharebar>. See also the story of Dr. Tadeusz Orzesko, Polish Righteous, Internet: <https://sprawiedliwi.org.pl/en/stories-of-rescue/story-rescue-orzeszko-tadeusz>.
- Dr. E. Szor, an inmate of Auschwitz, confirmed the helpfulness of fellow prisoner, Jan Kledzik, who was a hospital attendant at the camp: "He displayed a father's devotion to his fellow sufferers, irrespective of race and nationality." Jan Kledzik, in turn, acknowledged the helpfulness of other Poles who collaborated with him: "As a former inmate of the Auschwitz-Birkenau camp, I wish to state how Poles saved and helped the Jews in the camp. Jews were hidden in hospitals; food that other prisoners received in parcels were shared with them. This was how the people working with me in the hospital gave help. They were: Andrzej Białecki, Stach Bukowski, Tadeusz Radomski, Marian Czerwiński, Bogdan Kolasiński. And in this way, thanks to our help, the following people regained their liberty: Doctors Knocht, Szor, Gabej, August, Dizerej, and [Ludwik] Fastman, the pharmacist Gotlieb, Zukier, Zieliński. The last two had already been selected for the gas chamber and, thanks, to Zygmunt, the *Schreiber* [clerk], they were taken from the hospital to the workers' camp. They all survived. When I was in the workers' *lager* before I started to work in the hospital, Father [Wawrzyniec] Wnuk from Gniezno and I saved Jews, who were so exhausted during roll call, that they collapsed and lay in the mud. Their co-religionists could not save them since they were afraid of the Nazis, but we Poles carried them on our shoulders to the block. There the Poles washed and fed them." See Władysław Bartoszewski and Zofia Lewin, eds., *Righteous*

Among Nations: Righteous Among Nations: How Poles Helped the Jews, 1939–1945 (London: Earlscourt Publications, 1969), 478–79.

- Zofia Hauswirt, another Jewish inmate of Auschwitz, where she worked with imprisoned medical staff, recalled the helpfulness to Jews of a number of Polish inmates: Dr. Alina Tetmajer, Dr. Stefania Perzanowska, Dr. Katarzyna Łaniewska, Dr. Rudolf Diem, Dr. Stanisław Kłodziński, Dr. Jan Nowak Dr. Mieczysław Kościelniak, Dr. Stefan Stolarzewicz, Janina Palmowska, Wiktoria Klimaszewska, Teodozja Piątkowska, Ludwik Wrona, Jadwiga Dąbrowska, Maria Zielińska, Adam Kopyciński, Zygmunt Rzążewski, and others. See Władysław Bartoszewski and Zofia Lewinówna, *Ten jest z ojczyzny mojej: Polacy z pomocą Żydom 1939–1945,* Second expanded edirion (Kraków: Znak, 1969), 670–71.
- Dr. Ludwik Fleck credits Dr. Włodzimierz Ławkowicz with saving his live when he fell ill by sharing his food. See the testimony of Ludwik Fleck, Jewish Historical Institute (Warsaw) archive, record group 301, number 1175.
- Other Polish doctors and medical staff who helped Jews were identified by Frank Stiffel, who was assigned to work in the infirmary for prisoners in Auschwitz I: Adam Kuryłowicz, Władysław Fejkiel, Jan Grabczyśnki. See Frank Stiffel, *The Tale of the Ring: A Kaddish: A Personal Memoir of the Holocaust* (Toronto and New York: Bantam Books, 1985), chapter 10. Stiffel also reported that a Pole protected a Jewish barber from Marseilles from being sent to the Birkenau death camp. Ibid., 289.
- Benjamin P. credits Bronisław Staszak, the orchestra conductor, with saving his life by providing him with extra food. See Donald L. Niewyk, ed., *Fresh Wounds: Early Narratives of Holocaust Survival* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 131–32.
- Czech prisoner Valter Hoffman describes how Polish prisoner Antonina Piątkowska used her position to help Jewish prisoners to avoid selections for the crematoria and medical experiments, and provided them with food. Hoffman also mentions the assistance provided to Jewish prisoners by Polish prisoners Zofia Barto and Franciszek Buczyński. See the testimony of Valter Hoffman, Jewish Historical Institute (Warsaw) archive, record group 301, number 6306.
- Szaja Gertner describes how a Polish prisoner who was a military officer trained a group of Jews from Birkenau on the tactics of how to escape from the camp. The Jewish prisoners staged a breakout in January 1944. See Janusz Roszkowski, ed., *Żydzi w walce 1939–1945: Opór i walka z faszyzmem w latach 1939–1945* (Warsaw: Żydowski Instytut Historyczny in. E. Ringelbluma and Stowarzyszenie Żydów Kombatantów i Poszkodowanych w II Wojnie Światowej, 2011), vol. 3, 94–95.
- Assistance given to Jewish prisoners by Polish prisoners of Auschwitz has been documented by the Yad Vashem Institute in Jerusalem. The following Polish Christian prisoners, who were recognized as "Righteous," helped Jewish prisoners: Jerzy Bielecki, Romualda Ciesielska, Maria Kotarba, Jerzy Pozimski, Jerzy Radwanek, Stanisława Sierzputowska-Grodzicka, and Marianna Sowiar-Chodnikiewicz. See Israel Gutman and Sara Bender, eds., *The Encyclopedia of the Righteous Among the Nations: Rescuers of Jews during the Holocaust* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2004), volumes 4 and 5: *Poland,* Part 1, 90, 148, 256; Part 2, 638, 658, 742; Israel Gutman, ed., *The Encyclopedia of the Righteous Among the Nations: Rescuers of Jews During the Holocaust: Supplementary Volumes (2000–2005),* volume II (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2010), 577–78.
- Maria Kotarba, who was part of the Polish resistance movement at Auschwitz, used her position to help several Jewish female prisoners who were passing as Poles with the connivance of Polish prisoners.
- Jerzy Pozimski used his position at Auschwitz to help many prisoners, among them Jews.
- Jerzy Radwanek, a member of the Polish underground at Auschwitz, used his position as camp electrician to provide widespread assistance to Jewish prisoners. He came to be known by them as the "Jewish uncle" of Auschwitz. See the profile of Jerzy Radwanek under "Poland" in the web site of The Jewish Foundation for the Righteous, Internet: http://www.jfr.org.

- Stanisława Sierzputowska-Grodzicka used her position at Auschwirz to save at least three Jewish female prisoners.
- Marianna Sowiar-Chodnikiewicz helped to conceal the identiy of a Jewish woman who was passing as a Pole, and threatened to report any snitch to the Polish underground in the camp.
- Polish workers and nearby residents were also known to have helped Jewish prisoners by providing them with food and assisting in their escape. See Henryk Świebocki, ed., *Ludzie dobrej woli: Księga pamięci mieszkańców Ziemi Oświęcimskiej niosących pomoc więźniom KL Auschwitz* (Oświęcim: Państwowe Muzeum Auschwitz-Birkenau and Towarzystwo Opieki nad Oświęcimem, 2005), 66–67, 70, 78, 351, 501–2 (Merka Szewach), 506–7 (Jenny Spritzer), 513–14 (Kurt Julius Goldstein), 516–17 (Géza Schein Kozma).
- Józef Wrona, a civilian employee in the Buna chemical plant of the I.G. Farben Industry Concern, which was in Monowice (Auschwitz III), orchestrated the escape of two Jewish prisoners whom he hid in his home in the village of Nowa Wieś near Kęty. See Israel Gutman and Sara Bender, eds., *The Encyclopedia of the Righteous Among the Nations: Rescuers of Jews during the Holocaust* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2004), volume 5: *Poland,* Part 2, 904.

In an inhumane and poisonous environment like Auschwitz, one should not take these acts of kindness for granted. Israel Lior, a Polish Jew, recalled: "I saw people stealing the last possessions of people who were dying … I was ashamed of what one Jew did to another; that he would report on or try to steal from his comrades."[108]

A Hungarian survivor, a rabbi, recalled:

> The Polish Jews discriminated terribly. They blamed us that we had the privilege of living such a good life in our own homes while they were taken into Auschwitz two years earlier than us. "Now we should suffer!" they said. "We should work and they shouldn't have to work." And they kept constantly picking on us, for no reason. We are Jews too; we didn't send them to Auschwitz.[109]

Helen Lewis, a Czech Jew who was an inmate of Birkenau, the camp which held primarily Jews, did not have fond memories of the Jewish prisoners from Poland, "some of whom had become completely brutalized with the years they had been there, and who were more frightening and dangerous than the SS."[110]

It was not necessarily the case that Jews were below non-Jews in Nazi camps. Moreover, some Polish Kapos quit their positions rather than taking part in the abuse of their fellow prisoners. In her diary, released soon after the war, Seweryna Szmaglewska, who testified at the Nuremberg trials, wrote about her experiences in Auschwitz:

> They [the Russians] are the dirtiest because they cannot afford to buy anything, and their dirty appearance in turn prevents them from getting better work. Besides, better jobs are not open to them, because, as a rule, they do not speak German,

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[108] Lauren Lior-Lichtenstein and Philippe Lichtenstein, *Remember Never to Forget: The Story of Israel Lior* (Bloomington, Indiana: Xlibris, 2010, 101–2.

[109] William B. Helmreich, *Against All Odds: Holocaust Survivors and the Successful Lives They Made in America* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1992), 176–77.

[110] Anton Gill, *The Journey Back From Hell: Conversations with Concentration Camp Survivors* (London: Grafton Books, 1988), 411.

whereas the Jewish women can manage the language and are able to come to an understanding with the Germans. The Russian women, just as is the case with most of the Poles and Yugoslavs, must go to work in the fields.[111]

In one of the two groups two Polish women were evacuated who, as functionaries, had opposed themselves to Hitler's volition that a slave should raise the whip against another slave: Felicja Iwanowska, ex-Capo of the Unterkunft, and Mrs. Wanda, ex-Capo of Rajsko.[112]

[111] Seweryna Szmaglewska, *Smoke Over Birkenau* (New York: Henry Holt, 1947), 247.

[112] Seweryna Szmaglewska, *Smoke Over Birkenau* (New York: Henry Holt, 1947), 319.

Gross-Rosen

According to a scholarly study by Bella Gutterman, the Jewish Kapos in Gross-Rosen were noted for their unusual cruelty.[113] Henry Freier, who worked in the kitchen under a Jewish Kapo, stated: "I was beaten up by this man every day."[114] Peter Kleinmann, from Transcarpathia, recalled: "My Kapo was a Polish Jew and was merciless."[115] Harry Jubas remembers how prisoners, who froze for hours on endless *Appels*, were hit by Jewish Kapos.[116] Dr. Mojżesz Zabramny, a Jew, was prosecuted in 1946 for mistreating prisoners in the Gross-Rosen concentration camp.[117]

Former Jewish prisoners of the labour camp at Görlitz, an affiliate of Gross-Rosen, accused a number of Jewish functionaries—among them, Abram Kon, Zygmunt Widawski, Mieczysław Jakobson, and Marian Borenstein—of mistreating fellow prisoners, by beating them, sometimes savagely, and stealing their food rations.[118]

Regarding the labour camp of Markstadt, another affiliate of Gross-Rosen, prisoner Mendel Dombrowicz recalled:

> Daily we were sent to hard work, [such as] erecting ammunition factories, where a few deaths [would] occur every day. In this camp, Jews were made as overseers for other Jews. The "Judenälster" ["Jewish Ältester"] was Brukmajster; his perfunctory servants were Herzel, Mojszel, and Basok. They were the beaters, and would daily beat their own brethren with deadly blows, murdering hundreds of Jews.[119]

Abraham K.'s testimony about the merciless Kapos ("pushers") at Markstadt, all of them Jews, is even more damning. Even some of the German officials were taken aback by their brutality. Abraham K. also describes acts of revenge by the Jewish prisoners on Jewish ghetto policemen who were brought to the camp.

> And the capo hit him real hard. That was a Jewish capo. … And then a German policeman, one of those who had brought us to Markstadt, stepped forward and told the pusher, "I brought these people up here, and I didn't have any trouble with

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113 Bella Gutterman, *A Narrow Bridge to Life: Jewish Slave Labor and Survival in the Gross-Rosen Camp System, 1940–1945* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2008), 60–61, 138.

114 Rhoda G. Lewin, ed., *Witnesses to the Holocaust: An Oral History* (Boston: Twayne, 1990), 30.

115 Memoir of Peter (Dzeider) Kleinmann, Internet: http://www.museumoffamilyhistory.com/wims-kleinmann-06.htm, chapter 5. See also Internet: http://www.museumoffamilyhistory.com/wims-kleinmann-08.htm ("My *Kapo* was a Polish Jew with a brother in the camp. He was a cruel and sadistic man.")

116 Testimony of Harry Jubas, September 4, 2008, Holocaust Memorial Center, Farmington Hills, Michigan, Internet: http://www.holocaustcenter.org/page.aspx?pid=595.

117 Roma Ligocka, *Tylko ja sama* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2004), 324.

118 Gabriel N. Finder and Alexander V. Prusin, "Jewish Collaborators on Trial in Poland, 1944–1956," in *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry*, vol. 20 (2008): 142–44.

119 Mendel Dombrowicz, "MY Survival under the Nazi Regime," in *Sefer Kehilat Yehudei Dabrowa Gornicza* (Tel Aviv: Organization of Dabrowa Gornicza Emigres in Israel, 1971), 340, translated as *Book of the Jewish Community of Dabrowa Gornicza and Its Destruction,* Internet: http://www.jewishgen.org/Yizkor/dabrowa/Dabrowa.html#TOC-des.

them. They have only been here a few minutes, and already you have beaten them." It was sad to see a German put himself in our place and have more understanding for us than a so-called brother.

The camp of which I am talking was exclusively Jewish. When we marched across the camp, here and there one would get beaten, according to custom. In general, whenever a new transport arrived, I found out later, it was customary to beat them, and they were told all kinds of things so that they would be seized by terror. When we arrived in the washroom, two barbers were ready with their machines. And a man came in with a whip in his hand, beautiful boots, a good jacket, dressed warm and beautiful.

Was this a German?

No, a Jew.

…

In our place there were no capos, only pushers. Then there were also group leaders … [who] were subordinated to the pushers. … When the pushers came with is man [who had missed the roll call], [the camp senior] asked him in the vilest language, in Yiddish …

He spoke Yiddish?

Yes, all of them spoke Yiddish. The inner management of the camp was all Jewish.

There wasn't much of a debate. A stool was brought. They made him take off his pants. Two men held him, and then another *kat* [i.e., executioner]—this one's name was Moshe Nachtinger, another false name—had the honor to flog this man. The first time in my life I had seen such a beating. A whip with twisted steel wire about half a meter long so that when one would beat with it on the back it would wind itself down around the stomach, where it made large cuts.

During the day there would come various officers to check on the guard, and at the same time they would also check up on us; and when they disliked somebody or in general to instill fear, they would write down their names and a note would go to the camp and punishment would be meted out by the Jewish executioners in the presence of the camp commandant.

Most harmful were those *kats*. Every night they would go through all the rooms and would look for some dust and would look under the bed if there wasn't some straw … In each room a trusty was responsible for the room; if things were not just so, he would be the first one to be punished. … They immediately beat up the room trusty [so badly] that he had to be taken to the sick ward, and every one of us got twenty-five [blows].

The Germans didn't have to bother with the whole camp population at all; just appoint one Jew, and then he would arrange everything in the best order to their satisfaction and very often, much beyond their demands.

Although I had seen the Jewish militia at home, I never could imagine that one Jew could do such things to another Jew. If I should imagine what I would have done in their place, I am by no means sure today [that I can say] "no, I would not have accepted such a position." On was only under Jews, and still one Jew was ready to kill the other for a little bread, just out of irritation; the other fellow was not considered a human being …

Meanwhile, … a transport of fifty [Jewish] militiamen [from Dąbrowa Górnicza] arrived in Markstadt. Many people took their revenge. Although many of them [the prisoners] lived under bad conditions and themselves were oppressed, they still did

> what they wanted, that is, they would beat up the [former] militia people because they knew well what they had done to their families at home.[120]

A prisoner who was transferred from Auschwitz to Gross-Rosen, and then to Flossenbürg, recalled:

> The former Gross-Rosen kapos tried to get a privileged status in Flossenbürg but this camp had no connection with Gross-Rosen and the Flossenbürg kapos did not want to share their authority with any new arrivals. Flossenbürg kapos, having heard of the brutality perpetrated by the kapos in Gross-Rosen, isolated them and beat them up with the help of the mistreated Gross-Rosen prisoners; some of the most brutal kapos were so badly beaten that they eventually died.[121]

Dachau

Meir Shvimer, a Jew from Gorlice, Poland, who was imprisoned in Allach, a subcamp of Dachau located about ten miles from the main camp, recalled, "Before we arrived, Hungarian Jews were already there. The Hungarian Kapos distinguished themselves by their cruelty to us."[122]

While serving as a block clerk at Mühldorf, a satellite camp of Dachau, Majer Mittelman beat the brother of Benjamin Krieger to death in April 1945. Chaim Aleksandrowicz, a block elder and Kapo at the Dachau-Kaufering concentration camp, committed violent and sadistic acts against Jews. Szmuel Zbik, another block elder and Kapo at that camp, beat Jewish fellow prisoners with cruelty.[123]

David Jacobs, another inmate of Dachau-Kaufering, describes a sadistic Jewish Kapo he encountered at that camp:

> My own survival became precarious for two reasons, each independent of the other, each making my life more miserable and despairing. The first turn for the worse came when I was shifted to a block where a prisoner named Zsulty, a Jew originally from Poland, was the *Blockältest*er. This beast was a former *Blockältester* in Auschwitz. He had left his home as a youth to seek his fortune in Paris, where he was arrested and deported to Germany, winding up in Auschwitz. He was street smart even in his youth and frequently boasted about his wily exploits. Zsulty had managed to survive all the camps, including Auschwitz and Birkenau. In Kaufering, his credentials afforded him a prompt promotion.

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[120] Donald L. Niewyk, ed., *Fresh Wounds: Early Narratives of Holocaust Survival* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 32–36, 38, 39–40, 40–41.

[121] Nate Leipciger, *The Weight of Freedom* (Toronto: Azrieli Foundation, 2015), 119.

[122] Testimony of Meir Shvimer in *Gorlice Book: The Building and Destruction of the Community,* Internet: http://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/gorlice/gorlice.html, translated of M.Y. Bar-On, ed., *Sefer Gorlice; ha-kehila be-vinyana u-ve*-hurbana (Israel: Association of Former Residents of Gorlice and Vicinity in Israel, 1962), 250.

[123] Laura Jockusch and Gabriel N. Finder, eds., *Jewish Honor Courts: Revenge, Retribution, and Reconciliation in Europe and Israel after the Holocaust* (Detroit: Wayne State University, 2015), 43, 65, 66. On Mittelman see also Michael J. Bazyler and Frank M. Tuerkheimer, *Forgotten Trials of the Holocaust* (New York and London: New York University Press, 2014), 218–23.

> He was tall and muscular, sadistic to the extreme, but smart. His everyday ritual consisted of standing at the narrow entrance, hitting every man returning from work with a rubber hose. And he beat us frequently at whim, urging his helpers to follow suit. While making sure everybody got a bowl of soup – from the watery part of the top of the barrel he also made sure that plenty of thick soup from the bottom was left for himself, his helpers, and his friends from other blocks. Even our bread portions seemed smaller. I had to find a way to escape this torture. …
>
> As for Mr. Zsulty, so many former inmates registered complaints and testified to his cruelty, mainly while in Auschwitz, that he was sentenced to seven years in prison. He probably served much less time. Wherever he is now, I am sure he is doing fine, since he was not one of those who gets lost easily under any circumstances. He certainly deserved a much stiffer punishment for having saved his own neck at the high cost of his fellow inmates' lives.[124]

A 56-year-old German Jewish tourist, Luba Gritzmacher, was put on trial in Israel in March 1972 as a Nazi collaborator for allegedly mistreating women inmates of the Landsberg concentration camp, a subcamp of Dachau, where she was a Kapo. Aryeh Segalson, an Israeli lawyer who was incarcerated in Landsberg's men's section, testified that Gritzmacher performed cruelly and inhumanly against the women inmates. She whipped, cursed, hit, kicked and broke the fingers of some of them, he said, and lived "like a queen" while other prisoners died of hunger because she and other "officers" appropriated their food for use in orgies. Gritzmacher ordered inmates to sing and dance at those orgies, Segalson testified. One of the women prisoners, he said, was the defendant's mother, who distributed bread to those more needy–including some in the men's section. The defendant was arrested after two ex-inmates recognized her as she strolled through Israel as a tourist.[125]

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[124] David Jacobs, *Remember Your Heritage* (Montreal: Concordia University Chair in Canadian Jewish Studies, 2001), chapter 9.

[125] Jewish Telegraphic Agency, "Woman Charged with Being a Kapo Goes on Trial," March 24, 1972, Internet: http://www.jta.org/1972/03/24/archive/woman-charged-with-being-a-kapo-goes-on-trial.

Appendix 2

Selected accounts of Polish rescue efforts in Sosnowiec

Below are stories from the Sosnowiec area describing rescue of Jews by Poles who have been recognized by Yad Vashem, The Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Authority in Jerusalem, as "Righteous Gentiles." There are many more Polish rescuers who have not received recognition, and some of those accounts are also included.

Testifying at the Eichmann war crimes trial in 1961, Frieda Mazia described a public execution she witnesses in Sosnowiec in the early part of 1941:
"A Jewish mother had bought an egg from **a Polish peasant** so that her child would not die of hunger. Both mother and peasant were hanged: the bodies left hanging for two or three days, 'so one couldn't avoid seeing them – if we wanted to go out we had to pass them'."
[Martin Gilbert, *The Holocaust: The Jewish Tragedy* (Glasgow: William Collins, 1986), 146]

Recognized as "Righteous" by Yad Vashem:

- **Stanisława Cicha**

Stanisława Cicha, who was recognized by Yad Vashem in 2005, provided shelter to sixteen Jews in a bunker under her home on Dziewicza Street Sosnowiec. Her charges included Regina Biesam, Sara Wachsman (née Silberberg), Rose Silberberg, Malusha Silberberg, Srulek Silberberg, Mojżesz Silberberg, Mare Kornwaser, Jakub Klein, Szmul Kleipold, Saul Wasser, Josek Fedor, and Henry Mandelbaum. Regina Biesam recalled her experience while hiding with her Polish benefactor:
"Stanisława Cicha … put her own life in jeopardy in order to give shelter to 16 Jews in her own flat. I was one of them. That was in 1943. The general deportation of Jews was in progress. My husband had already been taken. I survived by a miracle and was given shelter by Stanisława Cicha. When I came to her I realized that I was not the only one this generous woman had rescued.
"Whoever came at night to the window of her flat found asylum with her. Some of the Jews were already rebelling, arguing that too many people had been assembled and there was the danger of exposure. Mrs Cicha replied that everyone wants to live. She was secretly buying additional ration cards for bread. She was doing everything in her power to protect us from hunger.
"Mrs. Cicha was extremely good to me, but she devoted herself to everybody. Once I became seriously ill, following an accident, and contracted an infection. She took me to a trustworthy doctor at night; he examined me and sent me immediately to a hospital for an operation. Every hour was of great value. Mrs. Cicha secured 'Aryan' documents for me. When I was in the hospital she exposed herself to danger by visiting me and bringing food so as to enable me to recover as quickly as possible. This went on for about two months for there were complications after the operation."
The Gestapo learned of the hideout and raided her home. They arrested Mrs. Cicha and seven of her Jewish charges. The other Jews hid in the next room under the floor. They survived the raid and the German occupation. Mrs. Cicha was sent to the Ravensbrück concentration camp. Although her health was broken, she managed to survive the ordeal.
[Władysław Bartoszewski and Zofia Lewin, eds., *Righteous Among Nations: Righteous Among Nations: How Poles Helped the Jews, 1939–1945* (London: Earlscourt Publications, 1969), 440–41]

Recognized as "Righteous" by Yad Vashem:

- **Jan Rogoziński**
- **Salomea Rogozińska**
- **Wiktor Rogoziński**

- **Adam Rogoziński**
- **Alfred Rogoziński**
- **Pelagia Huczak-Szpringer**

The Rogoziński family lived in Sosnowiec before the World War II, at the corner of Harcerska and Szpitalna Streets. Pelagia Huczak – the adopted daughter of Salomea and Jan Rogoziński, worked in a Jewish shoe-maker's workshop belonging to the company Lajzerowicz – Szpringer. After the "Aryanization" of the company by the Germans, she was appointed the new manager of the workshop.
In 1942 the Germans established a ghetto in Sosnowiec. Pelagia helped the family of her former employers, the Szpringers. Szlomo, Pinchas, and their brother-in-law, Majer Borenstein found shelter in the house of the Rogoziński family. "My sister brought them in, our parents agreed to let them stay," says Pelagia's brother Wiktor in an interview given to the Museum of the History of Polish Jews.
Then he says: "As we lived near military warehouses, patrols of Germans went to-and-fro all the time so we could not keep them for a long time. They were afraid to stay anyway. Pinchas and Borenstein stayed only several weeks, then my sister found another place for them, somewhere in the country. It was all done in secret. It was better not to know too much: in case of a snag, you didn't know anything. And they went away after two or three weeks."
Until the liberation in January 1945 Szlomo stayed in the attic in Szpitalna Street. Rogoziński recalls: "There was a wooden partition which looked like a wall, the boards were covered with some cement. You could move the boards and get in there. [The room] was 1.5 meters wide and 2-3 meters long. It could not be too big so as not to arouse suspicion. … [Szlomo] from time to time got out at night, but he usually stayed in his room. He could not walk around too freely because if Germans happened to come in it would be the end, we could all go under the wall."
Szlomo Szpringer's wife and his 5-year-old son Wolf remained in the ghetto. Pelagia managed to take out the child in August 1943. He stayed with the Rogoziński family for some time. Then Pelagia found another shelter for him with a family which was paid for taking care of the boy till the end of the occupation. She paid with her own savings and with the money she got from selling the Szpringers' jewels.
Szlomo, Pinchas, Majer and Wolf survived the war. In 1947 Pelagia Huczak and Szlomo Szpringer got married, and in 1950 they went to Israel together. Majer Borenstein also emigrated to Israel, and it was he who applied to the Yad Vashem Institute to grant the Rogoziński family the medal of the Righteous Among the Nations: Jan Rogoziński (father), Salomea Rogozińska (mother), Wiktor Rogoziński (son), Adam Rogoziński (son), Alfred Rogoziński (son), Pelagia Huczak-Szpringer (daughter).
[The Polish Righteous, Internet: http://www.sprawiedliwi.org.pl/en/family/279,the-rogozinski-family/]

Recognized as "Righteous" by Yad Vashem:

- **Janina Kierocińska**

Janina Kierocińska – Mother Teresa of St. Joseph – was born in 1885 in Wieluń. Together with the Carmelite Fr. Anzelm Gądek she founded the Congregation of Carmelite Nuns of the Child Jesus in Sosnowiec. She was its first Mother Superior and held this function until her death on July 12th, 1946. During the Second World War she organized clandestine classes, helped the homeless, took care of children and ran a free kitchen. She was called the "Mother of Zagłębie". During the Nazi occupation she risked her life, helping and giving shelter to the Home Army partisans from the 23rd division of the infantry of the Śląskie district, commanded by Stanisław Wencel. She also helped Auschwitz prisoners by sending food parcels and clothes to the camp. She took in girls who were in danger of being sent to forced labour in Germany – some of them later joined the Congregation. The orphanage run by the nuns gave shelter to children from concentration camps, among them the camp in

Radosze in Sosnowiec. They also helped orphans who lost their parents during the war. The orphanage was closed down by the communist authorities in 1962.
During the Nazi occupation Mother Teresa also hid Jews in the Sosnowiec convent. In 1943, a stranger brought a little girl several months old – the nuns called her Tela. Soon, they gave shelter to another girl. Adults of Jewish descent were also hidden in the convent. In 1983 the beatification process of Mother Teresa was launched. On May 11th, 1993 Teresa Janina Kierocińska was posthumously honored with the title of "Righteous Among the Nations."
[The Polish Righteous, Internet: http://www.sprawiedliwi.org.pl/en/cms/news-archive/334,book-about-the-righteous-teresa-janina-kierocinska/]
Mother Teresa-Janina Kierocińska was mother superior of the … Carmelite Sisters Convent in the town of Sosnowiec. On her orders and instructions, some local Jews were hidden in the convent. Among them were a Jewish woman, Pinkus, and her granddaughter, who was "christened" Marysia Wilczyńska. They stayed at the convent until the area was liberated in January 1945. Teresa Jabłońska, a Jewish girl who escaped the liquidation of the Sosnowiec ghetto, stayed with the nuns until after the war, when her mother came to reclaim her. In 1943, a Jewish baby was brought to the convent from the town of Szydłowiec. On Kierocińska's express orders, the nuns took care of the little baby, passing him off as a Polish orphan called Józef Bombecki. It was only after the war that the child discovered his Jewish origins. Mother Teresa-Janina also sheltered Andrzej Siemiątkowski, whose mother, a convert to Christianity, had perished in Auschwitz. The survivors of the Sosnowiec convent later remembered Mother Teresa-Janina as someone of exceptional humanity whose love of mankind was rooted in deep religious faith.
[Israel Gutman and Sara Bender, eds., *The Encyclopedia of the Righteous Among the Nations: Rescuers of Jews during the Holocaust*, volume 4: *Poland* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2004), Part 1, 346–47]

Recognized as "Righteous" by Yad Vashem:

- **Piotr Kobylec**
- **Karolina Kobylec**
- **Mieczysław Kobylec**
- **Klara Banasik-Kobylec**
- **Wiktor Kobylec**

In 1943, Meir and Nechama Szulman were smuggled out of the Bedzin [Będzin] ghetto by the pioneer movement underground operating in the Bedzin and Sosnowiec ghettos and sent to the town of Michalkowice [Michałkowice] near Katowice. Their assignment was to contact Mieczyslaw [Mieczysław] Kobylec, who was to hand them Aryan papers for use by members of the Jewish underground. Mieczysław's father, Piotr, who was a poor coal miner, and his mother, Karolina, agreed unconditionally to help the Szulmans. They dug a bunker in their courtyard which, until mid-1944, served as a transit point and provisional hiding place for members of the Jewish underground en route to Slovakia and Hungary. They also let their home be used as a base and headquarters for the Jewish underground and as an arms cache and liaison point with the Warsaw Jewish underground. The Kobyleces' married daughter, Klara Banasik, also participated in their clandestine activity. In a tragic accident, Klara's husband was shot before her eyes by a stray bullet from a gun in the refugees' possession. Despite the calamity, neither the Kobyleces nor Klara harbored any bad feelings toward their Jewish charges. Wiktor, their youngest son, also helped, by traveling to outlying villages to purchase food, so as not to arouse the neighbors' suspicions. Countless Jews passed through the Kobyleces' hiding place and were helped by them. As Polish patriots, the Kobyleces considered their activity a contribution to the struggle against a common enemy. Eventually, the authorities, alerted by informers, arrested the Kobyleces, tortured them, and sent them to Auschwitz, where they survived. The Kobyleces were recognized as Righteous Gentiles in 1964 and 1992.

[Israel Gutman and Sara Bender, eds., *The Encyclopedia of the Righteous Among the Nations: Rescuers of Jews during the Holocaust*, volume 4: *Poland* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2004), Part 1, 357-58]

From Władysław Bartoszewski and Zofia Lewin, eds., *Righteous Among Nations: Righteous Among Nations: How Poles Helped the Jews, 1939–1945* (London: Earlscourt Publications, 1969), 153–58, here at 155–58, describing the fate of Polish smugglers:

Those who were hiding in the Kobylec bunker were provided with such [identity] documents and went to Wilkowice, rented rooms with local farmers and acted like tourists. After a fortnight the alleged tourists returned to the bunker and another group went 'on leave'. This arrangement helped to relive the cramped bunker and to restore some strength to the emaciated people.

But new escapees kept arriving from the ghetto. Liaison agents brought them there. **Roman Kołodziej** played a great part in rescuing people this way. He was [Mieczysław] Kobylec's friend, also from Michałkowice. The Germans had taken him to the army, but he had escaped. In the summer of 1943, when the Germans exterminated the Sosnowiec Ghetto in Środula, Roman Kołodziej was entrusted with the task of getting out of the Ghetto the well-known Dr [Henryk] Liberman. The Ghetto area was encircled by [German] gendarmes and police. One of the gendarmes noticed the escapes and opened fire on them. **Kołodziej was killed on the spot**. The torturers caught Liberman and murdered him. [Dr. Henryk (Hersz) Liberman perished in the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp on May 10, 1945.]

'Meanwhile, our organization's activity to help the Jews was spreading and we had to arrange for further hiding places. Besides our bunker, there was still another asylum at the Zawiszowski's house (also at Michałkowice), at Zofia Klemens' in Katowice, in Myszków and Czechowice. Majer [Meir Szulman] was in charge of the whole operation. However, this very gifted and courageous man never left the bunker – his appearance was extremely Semitic, which meant the death penalty to him. He instructed me to establish contact at Wilkowice-Bystra with people who were smuggling goods across the frontier of the Bohemia Protectorate, and enquire if someone could be found who would take our charges there. Majer was in touch with a Jewish organization abroad which was supposed to send the escapees through Hungary, where extermination had not yet started, to Turkey.

'A few days later I found a certain Roman Brzuchański who undertook the task of smuggling our people. We discussed all the details of this expedition with Majer. The first group consisted of only five persons as we were afraid to risk more. I waited for the group at Bielsko and from there we went to Żywiec. Here Brzuchański took over and smuggled the group to the Bohemian area. A message arrived shortly that the operation had been successful.

'Gradually we gained experience. If I am not mistaken, I personally took nine groups across the frontier, each composed of eight to ten persons, before I was arrested. Many of them survived, are at present in Poland or abroad and are still in touch with me.

'It was during the smuggling of one of the groups that I was arrested. It was on 9 January, 1944. Suddenly a whole detachment of [German] military police invaded the carriage between Bielsko and Żywiec. I realized at once that they were after us and that there had been a betrayal. But who had betrayed us? I learned about this two days later when we were taken from the police station in Żywiec to the Gestapo in Bielsko.'

'How much I suffered, how scared I was,' says Karolina Kobylec. 'The bunker had been here for two years. I cooked and washed for all of them. I had to be on the look-out for strangers. The feeding of the people was a great problem. We could not buy a large amount of food at once. This would be suspicious. The food supply was taken over by my youngest sons, Alojzy and Wiktor. Although they were still little more than children, they could be trusted. The boys went on bicycles to Katowice and brought back everything that was needed. The Gestapo often paid me visits, they were still looking for my [son] Mietek [Mieczysław]. As time went on I got used to living in a permanent state of fear. I believed that everything would have a happy ending. But suddenly a tragedy descended upon us.

'It was on Friday, two days after the last transport had left. Only Majer remained in the bunker. A stranger arrived, saying that he had come from Vienna. He was a delegate of their organization and had our address. Majer had been informed about this and expected him. I noticed that the newcomer was very nervous. He had realized at the last moment that he was being followed. I looked out of the window and saw that the whole house was surrounded. Gestapomen rushed into the flat. I was scared stiff, could not say a word. I was alone at home, my husband and the two younger boys were working in the mine. The Gestapo started to search. And what a search! They tore out the floor, wrecked the furniture, destroyed everything. They beat me terribly, shouting that I must tell where I had hidden the remaining Jews. They scared my by saying that all my sons were already arrested and even that my husband had been shot.'
'Such were their tactics,' adds Wiktor Kobylec, 'We were told the same story. They took me and my brother Alojzy directly from work – we worked together on the same wall of the mine. When we were informed that we must leave immediately, we realized that something had happened. At the same time, father was also taken from the mine, but we did not know anything about each other. Only two days later did we meet in a van when they transported us from Michałkowice to the Gestapo in Katowice.'
'Roman Brzuchański broke down,' says Mieczysław Kobylec. 'During the whole time he acted honestly and gained our confidence. He was caught with one of the last transports. For the price of his life he agreed to collaborate with the Gestapo. Apart from us, he destroyed one more group – ten Jews whom he was supposed to take across the frontier. They were not from our bunker; they had been hiding in Zofia Klemens' flat in Katowice.'
A fortnight later Mieczysław Kobylec met his father in the death block of the Auschwitz extermination camp.
'We owe our lives only to a very happy coincidence,' he finishes his tale. 'A few of my friends were also saved.' He looks through letters received from some of them, reads bits of moving correspondence from persons who owe everything to a Michałkowice miner's family.'

Recognized as "Righteous" by Yad Vashem:

- **Aleksander Kossewski**

During a roundup of the civilian population conducted by the Germans in the streets of the resort town of Zakopane, in the Krakow [Kraków] district, Aleksander Kossewski was arrested and sent to Krakow. When, during the interrogation, the Germans discovered that he was a carpenter, they decided to employ him in the local Gestapo office. Kossewski exploited his position there to obtain official documents and ration cards, which he smuggled into the Krakow and Sosnowiec ghettos and local labor camps. Later, Kossewski helped Jews escape to Hungary, after providing them with "Aryan" documents, at his own expense. In risking his life to save Jewish refugees, Kossewski was guided by humanitarian motives, which overrode considerations of personal safety or economic hardship. On one occasion, he even carried an old woman on his back over the border. The woman, a member of the Rubin family of Mielec, lived to report the event.
[Israel Gutman and Sara Bender, eds., *The Encyclopedia of the Righteous Among the Nations: Rescuers of Jews during the Holocaust*, volume 4: *Poland* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2004), Part 1, 380]

Recognized as "Righteous" by Yad Vashem:

- **Zofia Klemens**

In August 1943, after the liquidation of the ghettos in Upper Silesia, members of the Jewish underground who survived tried to find ways of smuggling Jewish survivors over the border into Slovakia and thence to Budapest in Hungary. However, it was extremely difficult to find Polish border runners who were prepared to take the Jewish fugitives over the border. … However, the members of the Jewish underground were lucky to come across the Kobylec family and Zofia Klemens, who agreed to undertake this dangerous mission. Although she found trustworthy border runners, Klemens herself used to accompany the fugitives to the

border. Among the Jews who owed her their lives were Aron Brandes, Adela Grosman, and Shmuel Ron, who later testified to her wisdom and courage, Klemens devoted herself wholeheartedly to the rescue operation she had so willingly undertaken and put up fugitives who were waiting to cross over into Slovakia. Klemens' activities came to a sudden end when the Gestapo arrested her for hiding and helping Jews. Klemens was interrogated and sent to a concentration camp, but was released after she managed to persuade her jailers that she had no idea that her "tenants" were Jewish. … Although the people whose lives she saved wished to reimburse her after the liberation, she refused to accept payment.
[Israel Gutman and Sara Bender, eds., *The Encyclopedia of the Righteous Among the Nations: Rescuers of Jews during the Holocaust*, volume 4: *Poland* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2004), Part 1, 349-50]

Recognized as "Righteous" by Yad Vashem:

- **Jan Chawiński**
- **Bogumiła Chawińska**

During the German occupation, Bogumiła and Jan Chawiński, who lived in the town of Sosnowiec, were friendly with the Szwarcbaums, who were interned in the ghetto. Doba Szwarcbaum gave birth to a daughter, Lucyna. Fearing for her daughter's life, Doba asked the Chawińskis, a childless couple, to take her in. They worked out a plan whereby Szwarcbaum would abandon the baby in front of the hospital outside the ghetto, to be subsequently adopted by the Chawińskis. The plan succeeded. The foundling was taken to a local orphanage and the Chawińskis, who were the only ones who knew of her origins, adopted her. The Chawińskis brought up Lucyna as their own daughter and kept her true identity from her. In 1943, during the final liquidation of the Sosnowiec ghetto, Doba Szwarcbaum, Lucyna's mother, managed to escape and found her way to the home of friends in the *Generalgouvernement*, where she remained until the area was liberated. In 1945, Szwarcbaum returned to Sosnowiec to reclaim her daughter. The separation was painful both for Lucyna and the Chawińskis, who took a long time recovering from the loss of their adopted daughter. In risking their lives for Lucyna's sake, the Chawińskis were guided by humanitarian principles and never asked for anything in return. After the war, Szwarcbaum and Lucyna emigrated to Australia, where they kept up ties with the Chawińskis. They were recognized by Yad Vashem in 1985.
[Israel Gutman and Sara Bender, eds., *The Encyclopedia of the Righteous Among the Nations: Rescuers of Jews during the Holocaust*, volume 4: *Poland* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2004), Part 1, 135-36]

Recognized as "Righteous" by Yad Vashem:

- **Maria Sitko**
- **Wanda Gelbhart-Sitko**

During the occupation, Maria Sitko lived with her daughter, Wanda, in Sosnowiec (Upper Silesia). Starting in 1943, after the ghetto in the Środula neighborhood was liquidated, the Sitkos' apartment – living room, kitchen, and half-room, with neither running water nor indoor conveniences – served as provisional shelter for five Jewish refugees. Three of them – Leon Wajntraub, Jerzy Feder, and Nechamia Mandelbaum – had escaped from the ghetto; the other two, Frymeta Feder and Felicia Kac, had slipped out of the Auschwitz prisoners' death march in January 1945. Several fugitives were housed in the half-room; the others were placed in a hideout specially prepared for them under the kitchen floor. Sitko and her daughter were prompted to aid the Jewish refugees by profound altruism stemming from their religious faith. After a priest gave their rescue operation his blessing after they disclosed it to him in confession, the Sitkos offered the fugitives even greater assistance and never sought recompense. In one case, when the Gestapo searched their house for hidden Jews, the Sitkos resourcefully concealed their wards, thereby saving their lives. The Sitkos gave the five Jewish refugees devoted and sympathetic care until the liberation in late

January 1945. On November 6, 1986, Yad Vashem recognized Maria Sitko and her daughter, Wanda Gelbhart-Sitko, as Righteous Among the Nations.
[Israel Gutman and Sara Bender, eds., *The Encyclopedia of the Righteous Among the Nations: Rescuers of Jews during the Holocaust*, volume 5: *Poland* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2004), Part 2, 711-12]

Recognized as "Righteous" by Yad Vashem:

- **Józef Myrta**
- **Katarzyna Myrta**

Before the war, Józef and Katarzyna Myrta worked for the Zynger family, wealthy Jews who lived in Sosnowiec in Upper Silesia. After the Germans overran the city and imposed restrictions on the local Jews, the Myrtas came to the assistance of their former employers. Even after October 1942, when the Jews of Sosnowiec were imprisoned in the ghetto, the Myrtas continued to extend assistance to the Zynger family and risking their lives stole into the ghetto to provide them with food and medicine. In May 1943, during the liquidation of the ghetto, the Myrtas offered to take the Zyngers in and hide them in their apartment. Henryk Zynger, his brother, Richard, his nieces, Lusia, Gustawa, and Basia, and a relative, Ida Leslau, all entered the hiding place Józef prepared for them. One day in 1944, the Myrtas' only child, a one-year-old boy, fell ill with dysentery. According to law, the doctor would be required to inform the health authorities of the case of dysentery so that the apartment could be disinfected. Knowing that a visit by the Germans could mean disaster for the Jews hiding in their apartment, the Myrtas refrained from calling a doctor and sacrificed their only child, who died in order to save the lives of the Jews they were hiding. The six Jewish fugitives remained in the home of the Myrtas until the liberation in January 1945. After the war, the Myrtas returned the objects of value the parents of those they hid had deposited with them and refused to accept any payment for the help they had given them. Everything Józef and Katarzyna did for the Jews was motivated by their loyalty to their former employers and altruism. After the war, the survivors immigrated to Israel. On November 30, 1966, Yad Vashem recognized Katarzyna Myrta and her husband, Józef Myrta, as Righteous Gentiles. While in hiding at the Myrtas, a Polish engineer whom the Jews knew would bring them food and information. Ida Leslau's former employee told Mrs. Myrta that she was aware they were sheltering Jews, and other acquaintances of the Myrtas questioned why they were purchasing so much food.
[Israel Gutman and Sara Bender, eds., *The Encyclopedia of the Righteous Among the Nations: Rescuers of Jews during the Holocaust*, volume 4: *Poland* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2004), Part 1, 535; Testimony of Ida Leslau, Jewish Historical Institute (Warsaw) archive, record group 301, number 707]

Recognized as "Righteous" by Yad Vashem:

- **Wacława Latos**
- **Józef Latos**

Wacława Latos worked in a factory owned by the Jewish industrialist Mamlok in Sosnowiec. She began work in 1926, when she was 14 years old. Prior to World War II she assumed a high foreman position there. During all those years, she stayed in touch with the industrialist's family, and especially with his daughters Adela and Zofia. When the war broke out, most of the Mamlok family ended up in the Sosnowiec ghetto, located in the Środula district. Wacława and her husband Józef Latos helped the Mamlok family by bringing them food and medicine.
The liquidation of the ghetto in Sosnowiec took place in August 1943. Mrs. Mamlok, who was seriously ill and who wanted to die with honor, committed suicide. Adela, together with her husband Adolf Laneman and her other sister Janina, ended up in a transport heading to Auschwitz. En route to the train, when they were crossing under the train bridge, Adolf pushed Adela out of the column. He saved her, but was unable to escape himself. Adolf and Janina both died from typhus in Auschwitz.

Adela recounts: "Immediately after that I ran into a side street, ripped off the yellow star with the sign "Jew," and went straight to Wiejska Street, to the house of Wacława and Józef Latos. I did not know anyone else, whom I could approach in this situation."
The Latoses took Adela in despite their destitute living situation (small kitchen and one room) and terrible sanitary conditions (lack of a sewage system and running water). They made their decision instantly: "She came, so she will stay." When guests appeared at the house, Adela hid in the closet, where a pillow and cough syrup were already prepared for her. Particular danger was posed by the fact that many people in Sosnowiec knew Adela and knew about her origin.
Also, the 12-year-old son of the Latoses, Janusz, lived in the apartment. Adela emphasizes that despite his young age, the boy understood the situation well. He knew how to behave in order not to reveal Adela's presence: "When someone knocked on the door, Janusz kept him at the door for as long as he could to give me time to hide in the closet."
The Latoses cared for Adela for eight months, until April 1944. In the fall, they placed her for a few weeks in Śląsk, in Jeleśń and in Przyborów village. They visited her every week. In spring 1944, the Latoses and Adela decided to arrange for Adela's exit abroad. Józef made efforts to send off Adela to Austria as a forced laborer. He managed to bribe a clerk from the labor office (Arbeitsamt), arrange for "Aryan papers" for Adela in the name Cesarz, and receive approval for her departure to Villach (near Linz in Austria). At that time, Adela's sister, Zofia stayed there with her husband and son.
The Latoses also provided help to Zofia's family. Her husband, Feliks Lissak, had served as the manager of the factory in which Wacława worked. Feliks had assumed that position before the war, after the death of Zofia's, Adela's, and Janina's father. Zofia met Feliks at university and married him despite the protests of her extended family, who did not accept marriages with non-Jews. In 1940, the Lissaks and their son Andrzej were deported to the camp in Frysztat (Freistadt – today in the Czech Republic). The Germans did not discover the fact that Zofia was of Jewish origin, thanks to which she avoided being sent to Auschwitz.
Wacława witnessed the Lissaks' departure. At the train station, Zofia told Wacława about the gold hidden in their house and asked for bringing it to her. Wacława retrieved the gold from the sealed apartment. […]Wacława later went to Frysztat and brought the Lissaks the valuables and food.
Andrzej, the Lissaks' son, remembered Wacława's visit: "I was eight years old at the time. […] I vividly remember how one day I saw Mrs. Latos walking through an open field. […] she gave me a food package. […] It is hard to describe what we had felt then. The food we received was wonderful." Soon after, the Lissaks were transferred to a camp in Raciborz, where Wacława had visited them a few times. From there, they were moved to Villach. Wacława continued to support them by sending them food packages.
During the occupation, the Latoses also provided help to the Mamloks' acquaintance, a Czech ophthalmologist, Dr. Maksymilian Dreifus. Wacława helped him find shelter in Sosnowiec and establish contact with his sister. They also helped the Mamloks' cousin, Stella Kipmann and her husband.
After the war, the Latoses moved to Katowice. Józef Latos died in 1967 and Wacława in 1991. Adela, who lived in Great Britain after the war, had visited Wacława a few times – in 1966, 1980, and 1985. The two women documented their conversation about the war time on tape. In 1984, Wacława and Józef Latos received the Righteous Among the Nations award. Wacława, together with her son Janusz and his family, visited Adela in Great Britain numerous times. Until her death in 1997, Adela remained a close friend, practically an informal family member of the Latoses, a beloved "distant" grandmother and great-grandmother. In Great Britain, she helped the needy, worked on a volunteer basis, and did much good for many people.
[The Polish Righteous, Internet: http://www.sprawiedliwi.org.pl/en/family/658,the-latos-family/]

Recognized as "Righteous" by Yad Vashem:

- **Wincenty Jabłoński**
- **Krystyna Jabłońska**
- **Zdzisław Jabłoński**
- **Zofia Jabłońska**
- **Janina Chromczak-Jabłońska**
- **Stanisław Jabłoński**

Before the war, Wincenty Jabłoński, from the village of Niwka in Upper Silesia, was on good terms with the Zylbermans, who lived in the town of Sosnowiec. In 1942, when the Jews of the Sosnowiec-Środula ghetto were taken to Auschwitz, Jabłoński sent his 15-year-old son, Stanisław, into the ghetto to smuggle out Sara Zylberman and her six-year-old daughter, Pola, and Toczka Cukierman and her five-year-old daughter, Lilka. All four of the hid in his parents' home until the area was liberated in January 1945. Despite the enormous danger, the Jabłońskis looked after all four Jewish refugees, saw to their upkeep, and kept them informed of how the war was progressing. Fearing for Pola and Lilka's health, the Jabłońskis sent their own children to accompany Pola and Lilka out of doors for a breath of fresh air. Although the Jabłońskis were a poor family of coal miners, they never expected any reward for what they were doing but were guided by humanitarian principles that overrode considerations of personal safety and a sense of loyalty that triumphed over adversity. After the war, Zylberman and Cukierman immigrated to Israel, where until the deaths of their rescuers they kept up a correspondence with them.
[Israel Gutman and Sara Bender, eds., *The Encyclopedia of the Righteous Among the Nations: Rescuers of Jews during the Holocaust*, volume 4: *Poland* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2004), Part 1, 290]

Recognized as "Righteous" by Yad Vashem:

- **Józef Matlak**
- **Józefa Matlak**
- **Magdalena Matlak**
- **Ludwika Molenda (née Matlak)**

"In June 1943 Hania Gross was taken out of the Sosnowiec ghetto by my mom, Ludwika, and my grandfather's sister," recollects Ludwika's daughter. First they were supposed to transport Hania and then come back for her parents. They did not make it. The Grosses were taken to Auschwitz. Hania was 9; she was placed at my grandmother Józefa's house in Przeciszów near Oświęcim, supposedly the child of some relatives, coming in for the summer holidays."
"Mom said the most scary part was crossing the border between the Reich and the General Government – since late 1939 Sosnowiec was part of the Reich."
Hania was living a normal life, playing with other children, attending church – not in hiding at all. It was decided she would move to a different place after the holidays. The hideout was to be prepared by Magda, an acquaintance of the Grosses. This plan, however, did not work out. When the holidays were over and Hania did not leave, the neighbors started to show unusual interest. "Mother said there was a Volksdeutsch in the village. They were afraid they might get denounced. Fortunately, no one did."
After the liberation, in late January 1945, grandmother Józefa died of tuberculosis – there was no penicillin. Hania was taken to a Jewish orphanage by Magda. Leter we received a letter from Hania's mother, from Sweden. She had survived. She was taken from Auschwitz to Ravensbrück, and then to Sweden for treatment. Hania's father had been killed. One other distant relative also managed to survive.
"Hania is living in Sweden and we're in close contact with her entire family."
[The Polish Righteous Database, Internet: http://www.sprawiedliwi.org.pl/en/family/286,the-matlak-family/]

Recognized as "Righteous" by Yad Vashem:

- **Maria Kałuża (née Kansy)**
- **Agnieszka Kaniut (née Kansy)**

Before World War II, Abram and Lea Spiegel lived in Chorzów with their two daughters. Forced to leave their home once the Germans occupied Poland, the family went to Abram's relatives in Wolbrom. Later, they moved to Sosnowiec, where they ended up in the ghetto located in the suburbs of the city, in the Środula district. In 1943, faced with liquidation actions inside the ghetto, the Spiegels decided to hide their daughters on the Aryan side. They asked their Polish acquaintance, Agnieszka Kaniut, for help. Estera and little Cipora were spirited away in garbage bins and taken to a factory outside the ghetto where Lea worked. From there Mrs. Kaniut took the girls to her house in Chorzów. In the beginning, Estera and Cipora were hidden in the coal cellar, and later, due to their deteriorating health, the girls were moved into the house. Such solution, however, carried a greater risk of disclosure. Therefore, Mrs. Kaniut decided to give Estera away to her brother, Augustyn Kansy. Augustyn's daughter, Maria, assumed care over the child. Estera recalls: "[Maria] looked after me (…), cared for me in sickness and in the hardest moments." However, the caretaker had to give up the child soon afterwards. She married a Wehrmacht soldier and worried that Estera's identity would be revealed. She took the girl to a village and placed her with a peasant. She often visited Estera there. Upon realizing that the peasant treated the child badly, Maria took the girl back, and, with the help of her family, hid Estera until the end of the war. At the same time, Maria's younger sister also risked exposure. Therefore, Agnieszka Kaniut transferred the child to a wealthy Volksdeutsch family from Cieszyn. The family was unaware of the girl's Jewish origin. Lea Spiegel survived the war and found her daughters. In 1947, the three of them immigrated to Israel. They stayed in contact with Agnieszka Kaniut and Maria Kałuża for many years.
[The Polish Righteous, Internet: http://www.sprawiedliwi.org.pl/en/family/663,agnieszka-kaniut-and-maria-kaluza/]

Recognized as "Righteous" by Yad Vashem:

- **Wiktoria Sołek**

The Jerusalem Institute of Remembrance – Yad Vashem posthumously conferred the title of "Righteous Among the Nations" on Wiktoria Sołek. During the Second World War, Ms. Solek hid and cared for some Jewish children for a period of two years. Wiktoria Solek was distinguished for her aid and support of two Jewish siblings: Zofia and Józef Zaks. In September 1939, the Germans entered Sosnowiec, where Wiktoria lived. Zofia was 14, her younger brother 11. Repressions against Jewish citizens soon began. Four years later, the Germans began liquidating the ghetto in Sosnowiec and transporting its inhabitants to concentration camps. The children were saved from a tragic death by their former nanny, who had looked after them since they were born. In the beginning of 1943, she contacted their parents and asked them to give their children into her care. Over the next two years, Sołek hid them in a coal room, where she had prepared a special hideout. After Sosnowiec was liberated, the children were taken by their uncle, who told them that their parents had been killed in the concentration camp. After the war, Zofia emigrated to Belgium and Józef to Israel. There in 2006, he turned to Yad Vashem Institute with a petition to give Wiktoria Sołek the "Righteous Among the Nations" title. Wiktoria Solek died in 1982.
[Internet: http://test-naukawpolsce.pap.pl/en/news/news,72675,righteous-among-the-nations.html]

Recognized as "Righteous" by Yad Vashem:

- **Tadeusz Retka**
- **Magdalena Retka**

In the autumn of 1943, after the liquidation of the Srodula [Środula] ghetto, near Sosnowiec, the Germans left a group of Jews behind to clean up the ghetto, and collect and sort Jewish property that had been left behind. Among them was Jakub Mangel, who in early January 1944, escaped to the Aryan side of the city and, at dead of night, reached the

home of Tadeusz and Magda Retka, former acquaintances of his. When the Retkas led Jakub down to the cellar, where they stored potatoes, he was surprised to see his uncle, Piniek Mangel there, as well as a woman called Szajneman and her daughter, Genia. Despite the danger, the Retkas looked after the four Jewish refugees to the best of their ability, without expecting anything in return. At first, the refugees shared in the cost of their upkeep, but when their money ran out, the Retkas, guided by humanitarian considerations only, continued to shelter them and, despite their straitened circumstances, shared with them their meager fare. The four refugees stayed with the Retkas until January 1945, when the area was liberated. In due course, Jakub Mangel immigrated to Sweden, Piniek Mangel to France, and Szajneman to Canada. The survivors kept up a correspondence with their saviors, until their death.
[Yad Vashem Righteous Database, Internet: http://db.yadvashem.org/righteous/family.html?language=en&itemId=4035235]

Recognized as "Righteous" by Yad Vashem:

- **Józefa Maj**
- **Wilhelm Maj**

Ida Paluch was born in 1939 in Sosnowiec. When she and her twin brother Adam were four months old, Germany attacked Poland and their father, Chaim Leizer, was drafted to the Polish army. He disappeared in the east, and the family assumed that he was killed. This left his widow, Esther Paluch, alone with three children: the infant twins and their older sister, Genia (b. 1931).
The persecution of the Jews began immediately after the German occupation of Sosnowiec. The Jews were concentrated in a ghetto, and their lives became more and more difficult. In August 1942, Esther, driven by terrible desolation and hopelessness, committed suicide by jumping out of a window. Her sister Róża took the orphaned children into her home. Before the war, Róża had owned a shop, and bought coal from a Pole by the name of Wilhelm Maj. Wishing to help his former client, Maj came to the ghetto fence and when he saw Ida, he proposed to take the child to his home in Czestochowa [Częstochowa]. Róża handed the little girl over to him through the barbed wire fence, and Maj brought her home. Although his wife, Józefa, was pregnant, she did not hesitate to warmly welcome Ida into her home. They renamed her Irena, and baptized her so as to eliminate any hint of her Jewish identity. In 1943 Wilhelm Maj, who belonged to the Polish underground, was caught and executed. Józefa moved with Ida-Irena and her own baby daughter Wilusia to her in-laws' home. Unable to deal with the loss of his son, Władysław Maj took to drinking excessively, and life at the house became unbearable. Consequently, the young widow was forced to leave, and wandered with the two children from one place to another. She spent the rest of the war homeless, barely making ends meet by selling cigarettes and alcohol. Despite their desperate situation, however, Józefa continued to care for her Ida-Irena with love and warmth.
After the area was liberated in January 1945, Ida-Irena's father, who had miraculously survived in the Soviet Union, returned and was able to trace his daughter. Learning about the fate of the Jews of Sosnowiec, he was convinced that his wife and his two other children had been killed and gave up searching for them. He remarried, but his new wife, also a survivor, did not get along with his daughter, and Ida was placed in a Jewish orphanage. When Chaim Leizer and his wife moved to Wrocław, he took Ida back, and the three immigrated to Israel in 1957. All through her childhood Ida suffered from her stepmother's negative attitude towards her, and after she married she emigrated from Israel to the United States.
On March 22, 2011, Yad Vashem recognized Józefa and Wilhelm Maj as Righteous Among the Nations.
[Yad Vashem Righteous Database, Internet: http://db.yadvashem.org/righteous/family.html?language=en&itemId=6744065]

Recognized as "Righteous" by Yad Vashem:

- **Pelagia Jasińska**

In the spring of 1943, when the Germans began to liquidate the Sosnowiec ghetto (Kielce District) that had been established in the Srodula [Środula] quarter of that city, only Helena Kanarek and her daughter, two-year-old Margalit, remained from her family. Before fleeing from the ghetto she first sought a hiding place for her daughter. She contacted her good non-Jewish friend, Pelagia Jasińska, from the nearby village of Dąbrowa Górnicza and asked her to take the child. On May 1943, Pelagia entered the ghetto, secretly took out the child and brought her to her parents, the Bielas, who lived on the edge of the city. The Bielas were a poor, working-class family. The father, Antoni Biela, was a guard at the mines and scarcely managed to support his family, Nonetheless, they agreed to take in the Jewish child, who grew up with them together with the small son of their daughter Pelagia. They treated Margalit as another grand-daughter in every way, keeping her until the loberation. Pelagia's economic situation was wretched. Her husband was incarcerated as a political prisoner at Auschwitz, and she eked out a living selling cigarettes and alcohol. In September 1943, the child's mother, Helena Kanarek, also came to the Biela home where they hid for over a year, until shortly before the liberation in January 1945.
[Israel Gutman, ed., *The Encyclopedia of the Righteous Among the Nations: Rescuers of Jews During the Holocaust: Supplementary Volumes (2000–2005),* volume II (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2010), 565]

Recognized as "Righteous" by Yad Vashem:

- **Franciszek Kożuchowski**
- **Marianna Kożuchowska**

Before the war, Franciszek and Marianna Kożuchowski, who lived in the town of Dąbrowa Górnicza in Upper Silesia, had many Jewish acquaintances, including Henryk and Ala Storozum, who lived in the nearby town of Sosnowiec. In 1942, when the Jews of Sosnowiec were interned in the ghetto, Henryk Starozum and his wife, together with Henryk's mother and brother-in-law, four members of the Mąka family, and two members of the Studencki family, made their way to the Kożuchowskis' apartment. The Kożuchowskis, motivated by the love of their fellow man and their Christian faith, took in all ten refugees, and looked after them to the best of their ability, without expecting anything in return. Although Kożuchowski received some financial assistance from the Polish underground, it was not enough to cover the cost of the refugees' upkeep. The Kożuchowskis did not hesitate to sell their furniture, including personal items, to bring in extra income. All the refugees hiding in the Kożuchowskis' apartment survived and were liberated by the Red Army. After the war, most of them left Poland, after first providing written testimony of how the Kożuchowskis had saved their lives. On January 18, 1983, Yad Vashem recognized Marianna and Franciszek Kożuchowski as Righteous Among the Nations. [Yad Vashem Righteous Database, Internet: http://db.yadvashem.org/righteous/family.html?language=en&itemId=4034974; Israel Gutman and Sara Bender, eds., *The Encyclopedia of the Righteous Among the Nations: Rescuers of Jews during the Holocaust*, volume 4: *Poland* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2004), Part 1, 396–97]

Recognized as "Righteous" by Yad Vashem:

- **Franciszek Dziurowicz**
- **Maria Dziurowicz**
- **Roman Dziurowicz**

Before the war, Franciszek and Maria Dziurowicz, and their son, Roman, lived in Sosnowiec, in Upper Silesia, where they sold fish, inter alia, to Jews in nearby Katowice. In July 1943, a short while before the liquidation of the Sosnowiec ghetto, Hadasa Thaler and Pinkus Wasserberger managed to establish contact with Maria Dziurowicz who, with her husband and son's consent, agreed to shelter them. A few days later, Thaler and Wasserberger fled to the Aryan side of the city and, under cover of darkness, knocked on the Dziurowiczs'

door. The Dziurowiczes welcomed the refugees and hid them in a hiding place specially prepared for them in their cellar. In risking their lives to save Thaler and Wasserberger, the Dziurowiczes were guided by humanitarian motives, which overrode considerations of personal safety or economic hardship. Thaler and Wasserberger stayed with the Dziurowiczes until January 1945, when the area was liberated by the Red Army, and after the war immigrated to Israel. On July 7, 1980, Yad Vashem recognized Maria Dziurowicz as Righteous Among the Nations. On September 8, 1999, Yad Vashem recognized Franciszek and Roman Dziurowicz as Righteous Among the Nations.
[Yad Vashem Righteous Database, Internet: http://db.yadvashem.org/righteous/family.html?language=en&itemId=4039659; Israel Gutman and Sara Bender, eds., *The Encyclopedia of the Righteous Among the Nations: Rescuers of Jews during the Holocaust*, volume 4: *Poland* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2004), Part 1, 204]

Recognized as "Righteous" by Yad Vashem:

- **Róża Malejka-Szweicer**
- **Karol Malejka**
- **Maria Malejka**
- **Edyta Malejka-Kotyczka**
- **Helena Malejka-Czerny**

In September 1943, after the liquidation of the ghetto in Sosnowiec (Kielce District), the five members of the Birman family managed to escape from the ghetto area to the "Aryan" side of the city, seeking to survive. Mania and her two sons, 14-year-old Mirek and 8-year-old Henrik, managed to find temporary refuge, while her husband and her eldest daughter were both captured by the Germans. At this point, Mania Birman's brother, a convert to Christianity, asked his secretary, later to be his wife, Róża Malejka, to do something to try to help his sister and her children. Róża, although of German-ethnic (*Folksdeutsche* [*Volksdeutsche*]) extraction – she spoke German fluently and worked as a senior employee in the office of one of the German authorities – saw herself as a Polish patriot. She thus made use of her position and skills to establish contact with the Polish underground Home Army (AK). When Mania's brother came to her for help, she took it upon herself to assist in the rescue of the Jewish family. Róża arrived at the cramped hiding place in which Mania and her two children had taken refuge and moved them to the village of Chorzów (Katowice County, Eastern Upper Silesia District). There they hid in the home of Róża's parents, Karol and Maria, as well as on the homes of her married sisters, Edyta Kotyczka and Helena Czerny. She furnished the fugitives with appropriate "Aryan" documents and after some time found work for Mania and for Mirek with some German farmers in Lower Silesia. Unfortunately, both were arrested, seemingly as a result of denunciation, and sent to Auschwitz. Mirek did not return from there, but Mania survived. Meanwhile, Henryk's stay with the Malejka family in Chorzów became dangerous, and an alternative hiding place had to be found for him urgently. In late 1943, with the help of her relatives, Róża took Henryk far from Chorzów to the village of Słowik near Kielce, to the home of the two daughters of his converted uncle, and he stayed there until the end of the war.
[Israel Gutman, ed., *The Encyclopedia of the Righteous Among the Nations: Rescuers of Jews During the Holocaust: Supplementary Volumes (2000–2005),* volume II (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2010), 591–92]

Recognized as "Righteous" by Yad Vashem:

- **Leokadia Pessel-Statnik**

Felicja (Fela) Kokotek was born in 1935 to Brandzela (née Abramowicz) and Moshe-Naftali Kokotek in the city of Sosnowiec, Poland. Her older brother Laizer was born in 1930. Her family lived in a rented apartment at 35 Modrzejowska Street. ...
"In August 1943 the Germans began to liquidate the ghetto. Some Jews, who prepared bunkers in advance, now hid in them. Father and I hid in an attic with about 50 other people. ...

"Father found in another building a bunker that was hidden behind scattered planks of plywood and a pile of cooking pots. We hid there with another woman and her young son. At night Father crawled outside and searched for food in abandoned houses. We fried the food he found in a saucepan over a candle flame. The Germans searched the whole building and reached our bunker. When they began to move the pots outside, my heart beat wildly and a large lump blocked my breathing so that I almost suffocated. But the Germans did not discover us and eventually went away.
"At night, Father used to meet other Jews who survived in the empty ghetto. They made contact with a German soldier and bribed him into smuggling us out of the ghetto. We joined a group of about 20 other refugees. We were afraid that the German would betray us, but he fulfilled his part of the agreement. Thus, we successfully escaped through the fields to the neighboring city Będzin.
"The following morning, a kind Polish woman hid us and gave us food. She did not ask any questions. Afterwards I hid in dozens of other places. Every few days I moved to a new hiding place.
"On 16th January 1944, I was 8 years old and Father hid me at the Pessel family home in the town Ochojec, about 7 kilometers away from Katowice. ... Mrs. Leokadia Pessel [later Statnik] was a widow, and had two small children. She shared her house with her mother, old grandmother Mrs. Velarus [Walarus], her sister and her brother. They did not know I was Jewish. [As the account shows, that was most unlikely, as the Pessels even taught her Christian prayers.] As we walked to their house, father told me a few times 'From now on your name is Helena Biatzka [Biernacka], your mother died in the war and beyond that you don't know a thing.'
"The Pessel family members treated me kindly. I wore clean clothes and ate like everyone else at the kitchen table.
"During daytime I helped Mrs. Pessel care for the small children; I fed them and played with them. The house members never allowed me to go outside and told me to stay away from the windows so that I would not be seen from the outside. Father sneaked into the house once a week. Our meetings were brief; a hug, a kiss, and a few words. Every time Father showed up he gave Mrs. Pessel food vouchers or cash money. With time I learned all the Christian prayers, I made the Sign of the Cross and prayed to the Christian Jesus. But one day Leokadia Pessel asked me if I was Jewish. Did she know, or merely suspected it?
"In April 1944 Father disappeared. He came and went and I never saw him again. Once again I felt that same feeling of a suffocating lump in my throat. That fear.
"Leokadia Pessel told me to pray to the Virgin Mary and to Jesus for my father to return. But no miracle happened. Father did not return and I never saw him again. I remained alone in the whole world and I had no more tears left.
"On 26th January 1945 the Germans began to flee Ochojec. On the following morning, the Russian soldiers arrived. I was 10 years old at the time of the liberation."
[Internet: http://www.sztetl.org.pl/pl/article/sosnowiec/16,relacje-wspomnienia/15982,/ See also Olga Orzeł, ed., Dzieci żydowskie w czasach Zagłady: Wczesne świadectwa 1944–1948: Relacje dziecięce ze zbiorów Centralnej Żydowskiej Komisji Historycznej (Warsaw: Żydowski Instytut Historyczny im. Emanuela Ringelbluma, 2014), 151–54]

Recognized as "Righteous" by Yad Vashem:

- **Armela Maria Piecuch**

In the summer of 1943, during the liquidation of the Sosnowiec Środula ghetto in Silesia, Henryk Zięba rescued Janina Grünbaum, the six-year-old daughter of a friend, after her father was deported to Auschwitz, never to return. At first, Zięba hid the girl in his mother's apartment, but when it became clear that the mother was unable to keep the girl for long, he appealed to Armela Maria Piecuch, a friend, for help. Piecuch, who did not know the girl and had not had any contact with her family, found herself in impoverished circumstances With her two young children after her husband had been arrested and imprisoned by the Germans. However, her conscience would not allow her to refuse Zięba's request and she

set about doing what she could to save the Jewish child, in the hope that other good people would help her in her rescue efforts. Piecuch obtained a birth certificate for the girl in her maiden name and introduced her to neighbors as her illegitimate daughter. Piecuch left young Janina with acquaintances who did not know that she was Jewish and they agreed to take care of the girl in their desire to help Piecuch, who they believed had found herself in family difficulties. In this way, Piecuch managed to safeguard the Jewish child until the end of the war. Everything she did was motivated by pure altruism, without asking for or receiving anything in return. After the war, Janina Grünbaum's aunt came to claim her and Piecuch handed the child over safe and sound. On August 1, 1995, Yad Vashem recognized Armela Maria Piecuch as Righteous Among the Nations.
[Yad Vashem Righteous Database, Internet: http://db.yadvashem.org/righteous/family.html?language=en&itemId=4016893; Israel Gutman and Sara Bender, eds., *The Encyclopedia of the Righteous Among the Nations: Rescuers of Jews during the Holocaust*, volume 5: *Poland* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2004), Part 2, 601-602]

Recognized as "Righteous" by Yad Vashem:

- **Rozalia Porębska (née Hankus)**
- **Edward Porębski**
- **Władysław Porębski,**
- **Johann (Jan) Bryś**
- **Józefa Hankus**
- **Krystyna Wawak**
- **Igancy Wawak**

In 1941, Zawadzka Adela (primo voto: Grunfeld/Grünfeld; née: Jurkowska) and her family were deported from the town of Oświęcim, to the Sosnowiec ghetto. In July 1943, Zawadzka, her five-year-old son, Zawadzki Leon (known then as Grunfeld / Grünfeld) and her sister, Jurkowska Rózia, fled from the ghetto. After arriving in the village of Bujaków, in the nearby county of Bielsko-Biała, they made their way to the home of Hankus Józefa, an acquaintance of Zawadzka's. Despite the danger, Hankus offered them shelter, without asking for anything in return. When their hiding place became dangerous, the three fugitives moved to the neighboring village where they obtained forged documents. When later Jurkowska discovered that Eliasz Jakubowicz, her fiancé, was interned in the nearby Blechhammer concentration camp, she managed to persuade Johan Bryś, a railway worker from the town of Tarnowskie Góry, to bring Jakubowicz civilian clothes and help him escape from the camp. After Jakubowicz escaped, Bryś sheltered him in his home for a few weeks. Meanwhile, Zawadzka and her son returned to Bujaków, where they hid with Rozalia Porębska, Hankus' sister, who lived with her elderly mother, her married sister, Krystyna Wawak, and Krystyna's husband, Ignacy. Porębska, with the family's consent – with the exception of her elderly mother, who was not let into the secret – hid Zawadzka and Jurkowska, and their brother Marian, (who had meanwhile fled from the Sosnowiec ghetto), Zawadzka's son, Leon, and later Jakubowicz, in a well-camouflaged bunker which the men dug in the yard. The bunker also served as a shelter for other fugitives from the Sosnowiec ghetto, including Mojżesz and Rózia Gutman; as well as Pola Siedlecka (known then by her forged name "Zosia") from the city of Dąbrowa Górnicza. Despite the danger inherent in hiding such a large number of refugees, Porębska and her sister (Józefa Hankus) welcomed them and offered a help to the best of their ability. Rózia Jurkowska and Bryś, who continued helping the Blechhammer/Blechownia inmates, were arrested in Tarnowskie Góry and sent to Gestapo Headquarters located in the city of Bytom. Afterwards they were sent to Auschwitz, where Bryś probably perished; Jurkowska managed to survive the end of the war by escaping from a transport to Berlin. Zawadzka later left her hiding place and, with Porębska's help, moved into an apartment in the village. Zawadzka began cooperating with members of the People's Army (Armia Ludowa or AL), serving as a courier between People's Army and Dawid Paul, an ethnic German from Silesia and sworn anti-Nazi. After the war, almost all the survivors (except form the Zawadzki family) emigrated from Poland to Israel,

Australia, United States, and England. On the 26th of October 1982, Yad Vashem recognized Johan Bryś, Rozalia Porębska (née Hankus), her sons, Edward and Władysław, as well as her sisters, Józefa Hankus and Krystyna Wawak, and Krystyna's husband Ignacy Wawak, as Righteous Among the Nations.
[Yad Vashem Righteous Database, Internet: http://db.yadvashem.org/righteous/family.html?language=en&itemId=4044955]
After escaping from the Sosnowiec ghetto, Adela Grünfeld and her son Leon took up residence in Bujaków near Bielsko-Biała, in the Beskid Mountains. She was recognized by Bolesław Blachura, a friend from before the war and underground member hiding in the same village with the Wawak and Porębski families. Adela Grünfeld brought many other Jews to the village, including her sister and brother-in-law. They stayed in the barn or in the attic, and only the boy Leon lived openly in the house. When asked about the danger of being denounced because of this large movement of people, Władysław Porębski answers: "I was only afraid of [being denounced by] Germans, not Poles, because one of them [i.e., the Poles] was in Auschwitz, another in forced labour, transported to Germany, another one was a partisan, yet another left in 1939 and never came back … These things united people."
[*Poles Who Rescued Jews During the Holocaust: Recalling Forgotten History* (Warsaw: Chancellery of the President of the Republic of Poland and Museum of the History of Polish Jews, August 2009), 115]

Recognized as "Righteous" by Yad Vashem:

- **Józef Skowroń**
- **Anna Skowroń**

The Better family originated from Paweł Mała, a village [near Żywiec] in southwest Poland. In the mid-1930s, the family moved to Cieszyn, near the border with then-Czechoslovakia. In 1939, after Nazi Germany invaded Poland, Moritz Better fled eastwards. According to the family's plans, his wife Rozia and their three children – Erna, Lola and Herman – were to follow, but by the time they attempted to leave, it was too late and they found themselves incarcerated in the Cieszyn ghetto.
In 1942, the Jews in Cieszyn were transferred to the Sosnowiec ghetto. Rozia, who was forced to work, would leave her children every morning locked in the apartment. Aware of the rising danger, however, she decided to contact an acquaintance, Józef Skowroń, and pleaded with him to take her children. She managed to smuggle Herman out of the ghetto and hand him over to Skowroń, who was waiting for him with a horse and buggy and took him to his home in the village of Milowa [Miłówka near Żywiec]. A week later, Herman was joined by his cousin. The girl, however, was very sick and died soon after. Skowroń took her corpse and secretly buried it in the middle of the night in the Jewish cemetery. Another Jewish refugee also stayed with Skowroń under a false identity.
Józef and Anna Skoeroń took loving care of eight-year-old Herman, and treated him like their own son. Their neighbors were told that he was a relative, and that he was mentally retarded. Nevertheless, they kept him out of sight, and he spent most of his time in the attic or the cellar, and sometimes had to hide in a closet. To keep him company, the Skowroń's two daughters, Cecylia and Zdzisława, would play with him. At one time he had a very bad nose bleed, and the fightened Skowrońs decided to call a doctor, despite the danger this involved. The Skowrońs were devout Catholics and went to church every Sunday. For his own safety they took Herman with them, but during the entire time he stayed with them, they never tried to convert him.
Herman stayed with his rescuers for almost three years, until liberation. When no one came to collect him, Józef Skowroń brought Herman to the Jewish committee in Kraków, where the few Jewish survivors had gathered. Herman was placed in an orphanage, where he learned of the fate of his family: his mother and younger sister Lola had been murdered in Auschwitz, but his older sister Erna had survived the camps and had been brought to Sweden. When Erna found out that her brother had survive, she arranged for him to join

her. In 1946, the two siblings immigrated to Australia. Herman changed his first name to Harry, and remain in close contact with his rescuers and their family.
In 1985, Harry's son Nathan visted Poland and went to see the Skowrońs. Ten years later, Harry returned to Poland for a visit. Józef and Anna Skowroń had already passed awat, but he was reunited with their daughters.
On September 20, 2011, Yad Vashem recognized Józef and Anna Skowroń as Righteous Among the Nations.
[Yad Vashem Righteous Database, Internet: http://db.yadvashem.org/righteous/family.html?language=en&itemId=9525461]

Recognized as "Righteous" by Yad Vashem (2018):

- **Franciszek Nowak**
- **Florentyna Nowak**

Rescued persons:
Zygmunt Zorski
Tadeusz (Tobias) Zorski
Lucia (lusia, Lucille) Zloto Zorski
[Yad Vashem Righteous Database, Internet: http://db.yadvashem.org/righteous/righteousName.html?language=en&itemId=13228188]
THE STORY OF THE ZORSKI FAMILY AS TOLD BY JÓZEF ZORSKI
Before World War II, my grandfather, Jakub Zorski, ran a well-known photography shop, established around 1900, at 11 Modrzejowska Street in Sosnowiec. Grandma Róża was the daughter of a well-to-do merchant, Abram Jasny. He employed domestic help – a woman from a nearby village, Florentyna Nowak (nee Kasprzycka). When, on 28th February 1915, my father Zygmunt was born, Florentyna became his nanny. After Abram's death, she went to work at the Zorski home. For this young family, she became much more than just domestic help.
The Germans occupied Sosnowiec in September 1939. After the ghetto was established in 1942, in the northern district of Środula, my family organised a hiding place for themselves in the photography shop. Florentyna and her husband Franciszek arranged another hiding place, exaggeratedly called a "bunker", at their home on Dekerta Street. It was located beneath the floor of the basement and its dimensions were such that only a few people could lie under the floorboards – able to lift themselves onto their elbows, but unable to sit up.
My father's family remained in the ghetto for almost a year under very bad conditions. Constant deportations, hiding from the next "action", bad living conditions, a lack of food and hygiene - all this hastened their decision to escape from the ghetto.
In the spring of 1943, when the deportations intensified, my father planned the escape. He knew that only he and two of his siblings, but not his parents, would be able to leave the ghetto (his other sister, Mietka, perished in unexplained circumstances). There was no room for them in the "bunker". My father never spoke of the decision he made at that time. He escaped from column marching to work outisde of the ghetto. He did that first and the, after a few days, his sister and brother did the same. They all met up in the Nowak home.
The Zorski siblings – Zygmunt, Tadeusz and Lusia – hid beneath Florentyna and Franciszek Nowak's floor for close to eighteen months. Throughout that time, they had to be extremely careful so as not to arouse suspicion amongst the neighbours. They spent time in a corner behind curtains, where they could only squat, or in the hiding place beneath the floor, where they could only lie. Often they would remain there the whole day, afraid that someone may discover their presence. They were hungry the whole time. Most often, they would eat boiled potato peels, bread less frequently. Buying bread in a quantity exceeding what was on a ration card was difficult and risky. Florentyna said that people noticed when someone bought more bread, suspecting them of hiding Jews.

The Zorski siblings had a little money from the sale of their mother's rings. A jeweller, who bought a ring, probably suspected that the Nowaks were hiding Jews, but he never betrayed them. For the last ring with a diamond, Franciszek could barely buy four loaves of bread. One day, their host brought home a bucket full of lime. Together with my father, he planned the killing of any possible intruder who might discover those in hiding. Fortunately, it never came to such a maccabre situation, even though, as my father recalled, it was very possible.
At the end of January 1945, the surrounding area became quiet. The Germans had fled from the town. Shortly afterwards, the Red Army entered. For another few days, my father and his siblings lacked the courage to leave the Nowaks' basement. When they finally went out onto ulica Dekerta, the light of the sun so irritated them that they could not see clearly and they could walk only with difficulty. My grandparents and the other members of the family perished in Auschwitz. My mother, Helena Zorska (nee Schächter), also lost her parents in the Holocaust.
After the War, my parents took over Jakub Zorski's photography shop. When I was born in 1947, my parents raised me together with Florentyna, whom my sister Irena and I called "Florcia". As a result of the antisemitic campaign of March 1968, we emigrated to Sweden in October 1969 with enormous sorrow for having to part with Florcia. She was like an adoptive grandmother. She had taken the place of our grandparents. But what was most important, she had saved three human beings from certain death.
[Polish Righteous, Internet:
https://sprawiedliwi.org.pl/en/stories-of-rescue/your-stories/story-zorski-family]

The following Polish rescuers from the Sosnowiec area – among *many* others – have not received recognition from Yad Vashem. Three Poles are identified in *Maus* as helping and sheltering Vladek and Anja Spiegelman, namely, **Mr. Łukowski**, **Mrs. Kawka**, and Mrs. Motonowa (actually **Mrs. Matoń**). Mrs. Matoń of Szopienice later sheltered Vladek's cousin Miloch Spiegelman (Majloch Szpigelman), his wife, Gustawa, and their young son, Mark, all of whom survived the war.

The **Śmiałowski** family of Krywałd near Żywiec sheltered the Ehrenfried family, who owned a winery in Sosnowiec. [Aleksandra Namysło, "Postawy mieszkańców rejencji katowickiej wobec ludności żydowskiej," 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), 790]

After escaping from the Sosnowiec ghetto, Fajgla Wajnstajn received food and shelter from a number of Poles in and near Siewierz. She was arrested by the Germans in May 1944 together with **Wiktor Pierzchała**, one of the benefactors she betrayed during interrogation. They were handed over to the Gestapo, but their fate is not clear. [Aleksandra Namysło, "Postawy mieszkańców rejencji katowickiej wobec ludności żydowskiej," 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), 790, 807]

The following three Poles from Sosnowiec were arrested for helping Jews and imprisoned in the Auschwitz concentration camp: **Genowefa Frączek**, **Henryk Roman**, and **Henryka Wrońska**. The last of these persons perished in Auschwitz.
[Aleksandra Namysło and Grzegorz Berendt, eds., *Rejestr faktów represji na obywatelach polskich za pomoc ludności żydowskiej w okresie II wojny światowej* (Warsaw: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej–Komisja Ścigania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu, 2014), 223, 269, 294]

Rivka (Rebekka)-Halina Landau, later Goshen, was born in Sosnowiec (a city in Zagłębie district) on July 15, 1934. Her parents were Hilary and Sala (Szandla) Landau. ...
Until August 1943 the family managed to evade the deportations. In early August 1943, when it became clear that the ghetto was soon to be liquidated, Hilary and Sala Landau decide to try and save their daughter Rivka-Halina who was at the time 9 years old. She was smuggled from the ghetto, hidden in a farm cart that carried sacks of flour out of the ghetto.
Halina was taken to a Polish family where she was hidden by a woman named **Bronisława (Bronia) Maladyn and her family** in their house in Sosnowiec for 4-5 months. Bronia Maladyn lived with her parents and her daughter Gabrysia. Bronia's father was a coal miner and Halina spent the time with the Bronia's mother. She kept busy reading the many books which her mother managed to give her. She also learned all the Christian prayers thoroughly. Halina's parents remained in the ghetto. During that period Halina met her mother once more when Sala somehow managed to smuggle out of the ghetto and come to visit her for one night. That was the last time Halina saw her mother. After a while Bronia Maladyn and her family, who treated Halina very well, could no longer keep her, probably because rumors spread that they were hiding a Jewish child.
Halina was moved temporarily to Bytom (a city in southern Poland, in Upper Silesia). She stayed there in a hostel which was run by an anti-Nazi German woman named **Mrs. Dylla**, who hid 13 Jews in that hostel during the war. All these movements were arranged by Halina's uncles Israel and Pinek. Halina stayed in Bytom only a few weeks and then she was taken to Żarki (a village in Myszków County, Silesia Voivodeship), south-west of Częstochowa. In Żarki, Halina was hosted by **Genowefa (Genia) Zapiór** who was the sister of Bronia Maladyn. Genia, who was a widow, lived at edge of the village with her son who was about 15 years old. Prior to the war, she had started to build a new house but this project was stuck due to the war so they all lived in the barn. When Halina reached Genia's house (early 1944), she found out that her cousins, Maryla (14 years old) and her brother Rysiek (9 years old) were hiding there too. Maryla and Rysiek were the children of Israel and Frania Landau. During the day both Genia and her son were out of the house and Maryla who was the eldest of the three took care of them. Genia Zapiór concealed all three of them until the Red Army liberated the area in January 1945. During the time she hosted them, Genia treated them well.
[Internet: http://www.sztetl.org.pl/pl/article/sosnowiec/16,relacje-wspomnienia/11075,rivka-goshen-nee-landau-born-in-1934-about-herself-an-her-family/?action=viewtable]

After their escape from the ghetto in Sosnowiec in August 1943, Bronisława Eisner, born in 1932, together with her mother were sheltered and assisted by a number of families – the **Twardzik**s, the **Syndutka**s, Mrs. **Dębińska**, Mrs. **Szwestkowa**, Mrs. **Kaźmierczak**, Mr. **Sitek**, Mrs. **Świtał**, Mrs. **Ronczoszkowa**, and the **Czapla**s – both in Sosnowiec and in her native Katowice. Bronia Eisner stayed the longest, until liberation, with the Czaplas, Polish-speaking Silesians whom she remembers fondly as "good people." Among those who helped her and her mother was a Catholic priest, **Rev. Józef Szubert**.
[Account of Bronisława Szwajca, née Eisner, "Among the Silesians," in Jakub Gutenbaum and Agnieszka Latała, eds., *The Last Eyewitnesses: Children of the Holocaust Speak,* volume 2 (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 2005), 293–95]

Naomi Goldfrei, then Zofia or Zosia Goldman, was born in Sosnowiec in 1939. Months later her father, Henryk Goldman, left to join the army. In the early autumn of 1943, three-year-old Naomi and her grandmother were evicted from their home and incarcerated in the Środula ghetto. Within hours, one of "the champions of her childhood" appeared – her beloved ***niania*, her mother's old nanny** – who claimed the child as her own and spirited her away to a farm belonging to an acquaintance of Naomi's uncle Lutek. Naomi quickly and enthusiastically adjusted to life on the farm in Konarzewo, in the Poznań area. Naomi's host,

Maria Suszczewicz, renamed her Lusia Trembacz, taught her Christian prayers and rituals so that she would not stand out from the people around her. She was also given a new name and told never to reveal her real name to anyone. Later, German police came to their house looking for a fugitive, Naomi was not discovered, but fearing what might happen in the future, Naomi was relocated to Marysia's aunt in Koronowo near Bydgoszcz. After the area was liberated, Naomi's father returned to reclaim her. Eventually, Naomi's mother returned home after incarceration in a concentration camp.
[Naomi Goldrei, *The Champions of My Childhood* (Melbourne: Makor Jewish Community Library, 2003); Naomi Goldrei, "Mummy Will Be Back Soon," in *The Words to Remember It: Memoirs of Child Holocaust Survivors* (Melbourne: Scribe, 2009), 176–84; Israel Gutman and Sara Bender, eds., *The Encyclopedia of the Righteous Among the Nations: Rescuers of Jews during the Holocaust*, volume 5: *Poland* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2004), Part 2, 766–77]

Miriam Monczyk-Laczkowska Ferber was born in 1942, in Sosnowiec, Poland. In 1942, Miriam and her family were moved to the Środula ghetto on the outskirts of Sosnowiec. The Nazis murdered Miriam's father in the ghetto. Miriam's mother asked the Laczkowska [Łączkowski] family [**Stanisława and Józef Łączkowski**], prior neighbor and Polish family to take the infant Miriam in until her mother could return and reunite with her. The Laczkowska's smuggled Miriam out of the ghetto, however, Miriam's mother and brother were deported to a death camp and likely, were murdered upon arrival. Miriam spent the remainder of the war in the care of the Laczkowskas. She was portrayed by the family as the illegtimate daughter of the oldest Laczkowska child and raised as a Polish Catholic. Near the end of the war, Mr. Laczkowska was deported to Gusen, a sub-camp of Mauthausen, where he died of typhus. Following the end of the war, Miriam continued her life as a Polish Catholic. While still a teenager, Miriam found out about her Jewish background.
Miriam Monczyk-Laczkowska Ferber:
"This neighbor, a very lovely couple by the name of Stanisława and Joseph Łączkowska befriended my mother and my father and my brother. They were friends. … Mr. Łączkowski was the one who befriended my father, Shlomo Monczyk. … There were rumors that Jewish people will have to move out of their homes and … go to a ghetto, you know, in Srodula, which was in the suburbs of Sosnowiec. My mother approached the family, Łączkowskis, and asked them if they could … take one child for a few months. Maybe she will come back … She was sure, actually, that she will come back and she will fetch me back. And the family, not realizing what was in stake for them and you know, in 1942 people did not understand yet … they didn't know too much about concentration camps. They only knew they had to go into the ghettos and that they had to be gathered there. And they didn't know what the future would bring. … Now, the Polish couple had two children. They had a son who was, in 1942, sixteen years old and they had a daughter who was seventeen years old. And at one point, … Mr. and Mrs. Łączkowski and their son went to the Środula [ghetto] … they put on the Jewish star on their arms and they walked in as Jews into the ghetto, without a child. And they came out with a buggy and a seven-month-old Miriam, which was myself. … Once they left the ghetto they took off their Jewish stars and they went out as Gentiles. And ever since that day, I stayed with them. About three weeks later, my mother came out of the ghetto. … she visited the Łączkowskis and she held me for, you know, twenty minutes, whatever, half an hour, and she cuddled with me. And then she left. And it was very close to the curfew hour. So, Mrs. Łączkowska was a little bit concerned and she was hoping that my mother gets in time into the ghetto. … And even though she didn't know whether she will come back or not, she was at peace with herself knowing that the child was left in the right place. She was not that close to Mrs. Łączkowska, she was only her neighbor. But now seeing the accommodations, which were actually very poor, but seeing the love and the fact that Mrs. Łączkowska cared, she was a caring person, my mother was at peace. … And ever since then, she never came back. She was sent to Auschwitz with her [5-year-old] son … And my father supposedly was shot right in the Środula ghetto. And ever since 1942, that

was December when the Gentile righteous people took me out of the ghetto … so I was seven months old. That's why the Gentile woman who became my mother, and she was the only mother that I knew, counted backwards. If I was seven months old in December, she counted that maybe I was born in May or April. But we didn't know for sure."
[Interview with Miriam Monczyk-Laczkowska Ferber, December 7, 1999, Voice/Vision Holocaust Survivors Oral History Archive, Internet: http://holocaust.umd.umich.edu/ferberm/]

Videotape testimony of Leon G., who was born in Dąbrowa Górnicza, Poland in 1925, the eldest of three children. He recounts … his father's service in the Polish military; German invasion; his father's return three weeks later; confiscation of his company; a public hanging of randomly selected men (Poles and Jews); ghettoization; forced relocation to the Sosnowiec ghetto; **non-Jews helping them hide in a bunker**; discovery; separation from his father and youngest sister; transfer to Sosnowiec concentration camp; his other sister's deportation; separation from his mother; deportation to Auschwitz; slave labor in a Siemens factory; frequent public hangings; transfer in open coal cars to a Siemens factory near Berlin in January 1945; a death march to Buchenwald; liberation from a death march by United States troops; assistance from the Red Cross and transfer by them to Malmö, Sweden; hospitalization; learning through the Red Cross that his family were all killed; living in Lund; marriage to another survivor; and emigration to Argentina.
[Leon G. Holocaust Testimony (HVT-4142), Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies, Yale University Library]

Videotape testimony of Michael S., who was born in Sosnowiec, Poland in 1934, one of two children. He recalls vacations in Zakopane; German invasion; fleeing to Kielce; returning home; public hangings of Jews; escaping deportation through a friend of the head of the Judenrat; ghettoization; hiding during round-ups; fearing separation from his parents; his mother hiding him in her workplace during the day; **his mother approaching a Polish prostitute and asking her to find them a hiding place**; hearing she had found them a place; escaping with his parents and sister with assistance from a German officer (they never learned his name); **hiding with a Polish family in a dovecote in Dąbrowa Górnicza**; paying them with jewelry and gold; suffering from cold and hunger; liberation by Soviet troops eighteen months later; returning to their home in Sosnowiec; attending school; their emigration to Israel in 1950, then later to the United States; and becoming a professor of economics. Mr. S. notes the importance of his mother's ingenuity and aggression to their survival, and continuing to assist their rescuers after the war. He shows photographs.
[Michael S. Holocaust Testimony (HVT-4415), Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies, Yale University Library]

Franciszka Wójcicka and her son **Mieczysław Wójciki** gave shelter during the Holocaust to a Jewish mother and her daughter in Klimontów near Sosnowiec, Poland. The Polish family doesn't remember the names of the Jewish women, but has photos of the two. The women had dyed their hair blond so that they would look Polish. Like most Poles who assisted Jews during the war, they have not stayed in contact with their beneficiaries and have never received recognition for their altruistic and perilous deeds.
[Yad Vashem, Internet: http://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/righteous/help/wojcicka.asp]

Bronisława Sztylman and her three children were taken from Dąbrowa Górnicza to the Środula ghetto in Sosnowiec by Jewish policemen in the summer of 1943. Initially, she and her youngest son, Hirsz, managed to avoid being rounded up by hiding in a bunker, while her two older children were caught by Jewish policemen and deported to Auschwitz. However, Jewish policemen eventually found Mrs. Sztylman and her son Hirsz. Their first

hideout was betrayed by a Jewish policeman. Their second hideout was discovered by Jewish policemen. One of the two policemen who apprehended them was Chaskiel Szpigelman (or Haskel Spiegelman, as his name appears in *Maus*), that is, Vladek's cousin. After roughing her up and delivering them to the collection point, Mrs. Szyfman was able to secure their release by bribing another Jewish policeman, also named Szpigelman, with some gold. Mrs. Sztylman and her son found a temporary hiding place in the ghetto. They then managed to escape from Sosnowiec and fled to the home of her former housekeeper **Mrs. Juraszek**, near Dąbrowa Górnicza. Mrs. Juraszek sheltered them intermittently, while Mrs. Sztylman wandered from village to village posing as a Polish woman and taking various jobs.
[Testimony of Bronisława Sztylman and Hirsz Sztylman, Jewish Historical Institute (Warsaw) archive, record group 301, numbers 2233 and 2283]

After her mother was arrested and sent to a camp, Ewa Leibler Stelmaszczyk was taken in as a young child and raised by **Olimpia Stelmaszczyk**, a close friend of her mother's in Sosnowiec.
[Testimony of Ewa Stelmaszczyk, Jewish Historical Institute (Warsaw) archive, record group 301, number 5603]

The Stauber family was forced to leave their home in Katowice when the war broke out and relocated to Sosnowiec. After the father's arrest by the German police, Roza Stauber took her two sons, Lutek and Mytek, out of the Środula ghetto and left them with a Polish woman. The next day another Polish acquaintance took the boys to the home of a Polish woman in Kozy, a village near Bielsko-Biała. Half a year later, the older brother, Lutek (born in 1936), was taken by the woman's son to Frania, a friend of hers who lived in Skoczów. He remained there for two years. Afterwards, Lutek stayed briefly with the woman's mother in Katowice. Lutek was then taken by his mother to **Mrs. Szepsowa** in the village of Ligota, whereas his brother stayed with **Mrs. Neblowa** in Katowice. The two boys were reunited with their mother after the war.
[Olga Orzeł, ed., *Dzieci żydowskie w czasach Zagłady: Wczesne świadectwa 1944–1948: Relacje dziecięce ze zbiorów Centralnej Żydowskiej Komisji Historycznej* (Warsaw: Żydowski Instytut Historyczny im. Emanuela Ringelbluma, 2014), 236–38]

Tamara Jarnicka (born in 1934), a young girl who was expelled from Warsaw after the failed Warsaw Uprising of August 1944, found herself at a train station near Sosnowiec along with other refugees. She was taken in by **Leon and Felicja Szustak**, who kept her until the end of the war even after they learned that she was Jewish.

[Joanna Beata Michlic, "The Aftermath and After: Memories of Child Survivors of the Holocaust," in Sara R. Horowitz, ed., *Lessons and Legacies X: Back to the Sources: Reexamining Perpetrators, Victims, and Bystanders* (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 2012), 141–89, here at 167–71]

Most rescue stories will never be known, or not fully known. During the liquidation of the ghetto in Sosnowiec, a Jewish family with two young children was given temporary shelter in the home of **Paweł and Zofia Nestrypke**, where Zofia's mother, Maria Biesiadowska, and their housekeeper, Jadwiga Kubasik also lived. The Germans went door-to-door searching for escaped Jews but, fortunately, moved on without inspecting the premises. The Jewish family was given different clothes and transferred to a safe house outside the city.
[Jan Żaryn and Tomasz Sudoł, eds., *Polacy ratujący Żydow: Historie niezwykłe* (Warsaw: Neriton, 2014), 388–89]

Appendix 3

Jewish accounts regarding the Jewish Council and Jewish police in Sosnowiec

The various phases of the liquidation of some 40,000 Jews – who lived in or were brought to Sosnowiec, and afterwards to the smaller ghetto in the Środula suburb (from which Poles were expelled from their homes) in the fall of 1942 – were carried out for the most part by the Jewish Council (Judenrat), headed by Moshe Merin, and by the Jewish police force consisting of several hundred policemen, without any Polish participation. There was no Polish police force in this part of occupied Poland (called Zagłębie Dąbrowskie, later Eastern Upper Silesia), which was incorporated directly into the German Reich.

According to a Jewish resident, "The poor people were crowded in terrible conditions, whereas the wealthier ones and Judenrat officials had comfortable homes and did not go to work. They lived in very good conditions, while the poor people were starving."[126] The son of a ghetto policeman stated: "The Jewish police had to enforce the Judenrat orders and some went beyond the call of duty and were brutal in carrying the out. Others abused their power by accepting bribes or intimidating women to provide sexual favours. Most people did not trust the police and considered them collaborators."[127]

According to Dawid Zycher, "In Sosnowiec it was a widely fact that members of the Jewish ghetto police [Odnungsdienst; OD] were treating the Jewish population very badly; in particular they used to beat Jewish men and rape Jewish women." Zycher recounted a story that two women from Sosnowiec told him about Chaskiel Szpigelman (or Haskel Spiegelman, as his name appears in *Maus*): "They were saying that they gave Szpigelman dollars, gold, and themselves, and he in return was going to try to send them to Hungary." In Fela Zycher's opinion it was her refusal "to give herself" to Szpigelman that made him select her child for the death camp."[128]

From October 1940 to August 1942, there were periodic round-ups of Jews who were sent to labour camps. Between August 1942 and March 1943, there were three major round-ups of Jews who were sent to Auschwitz. The ghetto, which still held about 20,000 people, was sealed on May 1, 1943. The final liquidation of the Sosnowiec ghetto began on August 1, 1943, and lasted until August 15. Various German police forces were brought in for that final operation. Afterwards, only about 1,500 Jews remained in the ghetto. The Germans also employed a network of Jewish agents and informers, both inside and outside the ghetto, to report on subversive elements and to track down Jews in hiding and those who tried to escape.

According to Konrad Charmatz, a native of Sosnowiec:

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[126] Testimony of Dawid Fischer, Jewish Historical Institute (Warsaw) archive, record group 301, number 1335. This testimony paints a scathing portrait of Moshe Merin, the head of the Jewish council in Sosnowiec.

[127] Nate Leipciger, *The Weight of Freedom* (Toronto: Azrieli Foundation, 2015), 50.

[128] Laura Jockusch and Gabriel N. Finder, eds., *Jewish Honor Courts: Revenge, Retribution, and Reconciliation in Europe and Israel after the Holocaust* (Detroit: Wayne State University, 2015), 260–61.

The Nazis could not have succeeded without the cooperation of some Jews, and some Jews did indeed allow themselves to get drawn into the net. **The Nazis established the Judenrat and a Jewish militia, both of which would help them carry out their plans for the liquidation**.

First, they demanded that contingents of young people be turned over to them for the slave labor camps. … Later the Nazis ordered the older people to give themselves up, and to bring with them the children and the sick. … Still later, the Nazis liquidated everyone else. Throughout all this, they were aided by the Judenrat and the Jewish militia. …

For the Judenrat Merin chose people who were ready to do whatever he directed. He preferred intelligent people with a good reputation in the community. He also enlisted a number of informers who knew the city well—that is, who knew which people had hidden away money and other valuables. Other informers had connections with various streets and provided him with intelligence about underground movements and various other events. A young man from Bedzin [Będzin], a handsome and popular fellow, had found a good position with Merin: "officer of the women." For the "king of the Jews" he recruited the most beautiful women. … If a husband was in the way, he could be quickly dispatched with the next group to forced labor.

Strange as it sounds, there was a Jewish café in the Sosnowiec ghetto, on Mandzever [Modrzejowska] Street. It belonged to two partners, Yechiel Landau and the wife of the *kommandant* of the Jewish police, Kleiner, who were good friends of Merin. People outside were starving for a crust of bread, yet in the café one could get coffee, tea, and freshly baked bread. This was the meeting place for the ghetto's informers, for its smugglers, for the high functionaries of the Judenrat, for anyone with influence. All kinds of shady deals took place there. Valuables were bought and sold, foreign currencies were exchanged, work cards were traded. The German police rarely appeared there, nor did the SS troops. It was a thieves' den, and anyone who habituated it had to be up to no good. Simply to be sitting there during work hours eating unrationed food was *treif* (nonkosher). Obviously the Judenrat was protecting this café, and this had to with the Gestapo's permission. The system required a meeting place where illegal transactions could be carried out.

By doing everything they demanded, Merin had forged links with the Gestapo, with the leaders of the slave labor camps, and with SS men … From time to time he saved a few Jews by delaying their deportation. For allowing this the SS received large bribes in the form of money and valuables. … The Germans had made a good deal with Merin. Why should they have to do all the work when there were Jews willing to do it for them?

… With the help of the Judenrat and the Jewish militia, the Nazis stole from us everything we possessed. Had the Germans themselves done the thieving, they would not have gotten even half, because Jews would have burnt, buried, or destroyed what they owned to avoid handing it over to the bloody enemy. Merin persuaded the Jews that if they handed over their possessions voluntarily they would not be harmed but would be allowed to live in peace. …

The Judenrat had as many as fifteen hundred people on its payroll. This included a great many guards, as well as spies whose job it was to ensure that no underground revolt broke out. There were also women on the payroll who were simply concubines of Judenrat officials.

… The Judenrat was constantly perfecting its apparatus, always giving the Germans exact information about the Jewish population. In return for this, it received a food ration from the German authorities. … The Jewish militia was well organized and was fully backed by the KRIPO (Kriminal Polizei Amt) and the Gestapo as it carried out their orders conscientiously, so the Judenrat could do with the Jews whatever it wanted. …

There were actually Jewish boys and girls working in the *Dienststelle* [placement office for the selection for forced labour camps]; the Judenrat had supplied them! When the *Dienststelle* gave an order to the Judenrat to supply a few thousand slave laborers, it immediately prepared a list of names and ordered those listed to join the slave labor force. Those who did not present themselves, the Jewish militia sought out and forcefully brought to the transport. No resistance was allowed to take root, no underground organizations were ever allowed to stir people to revolt. The Judenrat left little for the Germans to do. …

The Hebrew high school at Skladowa [Składowa] Street 5 was used as the Dulag (transport assembly point). … For a huge bribe, some were able to rescue themselves. … Here at the high school were also kept all those suspected of underground activities. From there they were sent away with the next transport. …

In March 1942, exactly at Purim, Jews were forced to witness the hanging of Marek Lieberman and Mangel in a garden on Mandzever 32. They had been accused of falsifying documents. On the same spot a few days later, another four Jews were hanged for illegal trading: Nachum Lon and his son, Yehudah Vorman and Feffer. The Judenrat prepared the gallows. …

This same night [May 10, 1942] the Gestapo, aided by the Jewish militia and the Judenrat, led by Merin himself, invaded the heavily populated buildings at Mandzever 32, Dekerta 14, and Targowa 2 and 11, from which they took away all the Jewish residents, men, women, and children. … While I was at work around eleven the next morning, I saw the Jewish militia, accompanied by the Gestapo and police dogs, running through the street. They surrounded the same houses again and dragged out all the people they found … All were packed into wagons and taken to the transport. Approximately 1500 people were sent to Auschwitz that day with the transport. …

In the second half of June 1942, the second large transfer of the Jews from Sosnowiec took place. At night the Gestapo, with the help of the militia, encircled Panska [Pańska] and Ostroguska Streets and dragged out nearly all the inhabitants. In this district there lived mainly poor, hard-working folk who had struggled all their lives. …

That same night, the Jewish hospital was encircled and all the sick were taken away. The sick who could walk tried to flee over the fences. They were caught like mice by the SS and their Jewish helpers. … The sick were thrown onto the platform like sacks, the next atop the last. Those who could not move were tossed onto the train cars like garbage. To our great disgrace, even this work was done by Merin's militia. …

In Landau's café the "prominent" Jews were still sipping their coffee and eating their pastries. … The Judenrat officials and the privileged Jews began behaving as if the end was in sight. They sold everything they had, bought themselves liquor and lost their inhibitions. Morality vanished. They gathered in private homes and staged orgies. The women shed all their shame and began cavorting like prostitutes, surrendering to every man before every other man's eyes. …

The 12th of August 1942 will go down as the most diabolic of all the days in the destruction of the Jews of Zaglebie. … Merin had decided to hand over all Jews to the Nazi devil for the sake of saving his own life and the lives of all his relatives, and everyone knew it, so no one believed him any more. … So he decided that the Judenrat would organize clarification meetings. … One of the rebbes who was present spoke in support of this, declaring that Merin was "our savior, our leader."

… In Sosnowiec alone around twenty-six thousand Jews assembled voluntarily. Only a very few stayed away. People came in their holiday clothes, as if to a festival. …

Only in the afternoon did SS officers appear, along with leaders of the *Arbeitseinsatz* [forced labor unit], accompanied by leaders of the Judenrat. Tables were set up and document inspection began. The commission that examined the documents divided the Jews into four categories. … All of this lasted until August 18, when approximately eight thousand Jews were loaded onto train cars and carried to the Auschwitz gas chambers. …

In January 1943 the Nazis decreed that all remaining Jews in the ghetto of Sosnowiec must leave the city for a smaller ghetto in the suburb of Szradula [Środula] … The Judenrat and the Jewish militia were also installed in Szradula. The crowding was horrible. … Merin's last act was to collect all the remaining gold and silver from those who still had any. …

Merin and his servants had done all that had been demanded of them. But once they had nothing more to offer, they were useless to the Germans, and potentially disruptive, so they were liquidated. … Then [they] immediately appointed a replacement. …

On August 1, 1943, the last phase of the liquidation of the Zaglebie Jews took place. In the middle of the night the ghettoes [sic] of Sosnowiec and Bedzin were encircled. SS and Gestapo storm troops entered, and they and Ukrainian bands of murderers started shooting left and right. Many Jews had hidden in underground shelters … The Gestapo called forward the new "kings" of the Jews and warned them that any Jews found hiding in bunkers would be shot on the spot. The rest would be transferred, with their belongings, to Birkenau, where they would be able to work unhindered. …

[Konrad Charmatz, *Nightmares: Memoirs of the Years of Horror under Nazi Rule in Europe, 1939–1945* (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 2003), 18, 22, 26–32, 35–36, 38–39, 41–44, 46, 50–53]

Six members of Meryn family from Będzin were forced into the Środula ghetto in Sosnowiec in May 1943. They constructed a hiding place (bunker), and thereby avoided deportation. From hiding place they saw the assistance provided to the Germans by the Jewish police. In September 1943, they made their way back to Będzin where they survived the war with the assistance of friendly Poles.

What he observed was two Germans standing, not entering the apartment of Feldgajer since they were afraid. They shot unceasingly and shouted "Jude heraus", but Feldgajer didn't emerge. Then one of them went to the Jewish police and returned with several of them. These entered and found Feldgajer and led him out.

The Germans began to beat and kick him in a most horrible manner. One even beat him with a board, continually asking "Wo sind die Anderen Juden?" They assumed that there were more Jews hidden because they had noticed our large pot of potatoes intended for 11 persons for a whole day. However, the courageous Feldgajer only replied: "Ich weisse nicht". They still searched because, after all, at Feldgajer's the stove was cold and from somewhere smoke had emerged. Joskowicz's apartment was adjacent to his apartment and Joskowicz, had in the meanwhile escaped to her own well-prepared bunker. Since in her apartment the stove still burnt and on the stove stood a pot with potatoes, it was proof for them that there was some one still hidden. The Jewish police were forced by the Germans to continually pound on the walls and floor until they detected the hiding place of the Joskowicz woman. They led her out, together with her three children. They also questioned her as to whether there were Jews still hidden, but she answered that there were none else. The police took them all away. …

Across from the cask stood a policeman. He heard the rustle and investigated our side of the cask. We didn't try to escape, but only went farther to the side of the cask. He wanted to mislead us and began to pretend that he hadn't seen us. He

turned round with crossed hands on his back. Likely he wanted to observe to where we returned with the water, to which bunker. We reached the cask silently, filled our containers and noticed another exit. We turned aside and escaped by using various streets which we could manage because it wasn't very dark. We went to Feldgajer's apartment where brothers Izrael and Mojzesz Meryn fried potatoes.

We told to them all that had happened. Our brothers calmed us, saying that perhaps the German hadn't seen us, but we were convinced that he saw us, so we decided to escape from here. Simultaneously we heard in our yard a German voice, calling to a Jewish policeman. Several policemen responded and looked in every cranny of the apartments. They passed near our apartment and left. After this search, we decided to escape from here in groups because we ascertained that it was dangerous to remain here.

[Meryn Family of Bedzin, Holocaust Testimonies, The Polish Jews Home Page, Internet: <http://polishjews.org/shoahtts/005one.htm>]

Jewish informers and Gestapo agents were particularly effective in eliminating fledgling underground organizations inside the ghettos. Often this was spearheaded by the Jewish Council. Chava Kwinta describes conditions in Sosnowiec as follows:

Under the leadership of Zvi Dunsky, Lippa Mintz, Heller Schnitzer, and Joseph Kosak, the Sosnowiec [underground] group aimed at a genuine resistance, maintaining communications with Warsaw. They printed circulars … and posted on walls, manifestos against the regime and the Judenrat. They even plotted to kill [its president] Moshe Merin. Merin was busy too. He set up a network of spies, who infiltrated the organization and reported back to him.[129] As soon as he had enough names, he made his move. He rounded up all the resistance people and had them transferred to camps in Germany. Thus our first attempt to organize an uprising locally was shattered in its inception. Now the Jews were too numb to care.

[Chava Kwinta, *I'm Still Living* (Toronto: Simon & Pierre Publishing Company, 1974), 136]

According to a Jewish scholarly source,

At the end of 1942 a sharp dispute broke out between the "*Judenrat*" and 10 underground activists of "*Hashomer Hatzair*" and their 21 year old leader Cwi Dunski. People in the underground were subject to shadowing by the Jewish police and one of them, Romek Szlezinger, even passed on information to the police about the underground organization. … In January 1943 the Jewish police arrested Dunski and Lipek Minc, who was also from "*Hashomer Hatzair*". They were released after an interrogation of several weeks.

Meryn [Moshe Merin], who saw the existence of the underground as a danger to all the Jews, wanted to return and arrests its members, but they hid out and hence he placed pressure on family members so that they would turn themselves in. … Members of "*Hashomer Hatzair*" decided to smuggle Dunski out of the city and hide him in a nearby village, but a night before he was to leave the Jewish police arrested all the members of "*Hashomer Hatzair*" including Lipek Minc, Ina Gelbard and Fela Katz. Chaim Meryn [Moshe's brother] and Police Commander Goldminc himself, interrogated Chana Wirnik but she did not reveal the hideout. However, the police managed to track down Dunski and brought him to the police headquarters dripping

[129] According to a member of the Sosnowiec Jewish underground, one of the Jewish Kripo agents who infiltrated the underground was Tadek Hilewicz. See the testimony of Fela Katz (Kac), Jewish Historical Institute (Warsaw) archive, record group 301, numbers 1559 and 6419.

blood and chained up as a criminal. Dunski and Minc were interned in the detention center in the orphanage in Bedzin [Będzin]. Later they were turned over to the Germans, interned in a jail in Myslowice [Mysłowice] and in the spring of 1943 they were sent to Auschwitz and murdered there by hanging. Meryn turned in a further underground group to the Germans that was suspected of communist activities, and 8 of its members were executed in April 1943.
["Sosnowiec," *Encyclopedia of Jewish Communities in Poland,* vol. 7, Internet: http://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/pinkas_poland/pol7_00327.html, a translation of *Pinkas ha-kehilot: Polin,* vol. 7 (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1999), 327–38]

A Jewish eyewitness from Sosnowiec describes the participation of Jewish policemen in pursuing Jews who tried to escape from the ghetto:

SS-men, Gestapo, and the few remaining Jewish orderlies combed the Gentile neighborhoods to hunt down Jewish runaways. I was eventually arrested. … A Jewish militiaman from Sosnowiec recognized me, grabbed me by my hair and pulled it, and cursed at me in Polish and German. I insisted that I was not Jewish. The chief of the militia, Mr. Langer, a big and fat man, had me taken to the Jewish police station inside of what was left of the Środula ghetto. I kept protesting, 'You made a mistake! I am not Jewish!' But Mr. Langer … was unimpressed. He and his companions forced me on a table, held my arms and legs, and pulled down my pants. They laughed and spit on my privacy, hollering: 'Hey, you are not Jewish? Who chopped off your wee-wee?' They saw that I was circumcised and ridiculed me in foul language. Then Mr. Langer became serious and slapped my face with his large, powerful hands. 'Either you agree to go on a transport to a labor camp,' he shouted, 'or I will turn you over to the Gestapo.' I continued to claim that I was not Jewish. … He walked over to me and looked at me without uttering a word, when suddenly I felt a punch in my stomach that knocked me down. The few men from the Jewish militia were ordered to do some of the dirty work for the Gestapo. The ghetto was already liquidated, but they were still flushing out Jews hidden in bunkers. … they also found Jews in other hiding places.
[Edward Gastfriend, *My Father's Testament: Memoir of a Jewish Teenager, 1938–1945* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2000), 87–88]

The Jewish police from the Sosnowiec and Będzin ghettos were dispatched to other ghettos in Eastern Upper Silesia to help carry out "resettlement" operations. One such operation took place in Olkusz, in July 1942. According to a Jewish witness, the treatment of fellow Jews by the Jewish police was more brutal than the Gestapo's. The Jewish police ferreted out scores of Jews in well-concealed hideouts that the Germans had failed to detect and brought them to assembly points from whence they were deported to Auschwitz. [Isaiah Trunk, *Judenrat: The Jewish Councils in Eastern Europe under Nazi Occupation* (New York: Macmillan, 1972; Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1996), 514; Account of Marian Auerhahn (Głuszecki) in Krzysztof Kocjan, *Zagłada Żydów olkuskich* (Olkusz: Olkuskie Stowarzyszenie Kulturalne "Brama", 2002)]

Eli (Emil) Grünbaum recalled how the Jewish police from Sosnowiec helped liquidate the ghetto in Jaworzno:

Heinrich Lindner, the assistant to Himmler's Special Emissary, together with German and Jewish Police made night-time raids to take young Jewish persons for Arbeitseinsatz (slave labor), though I don't remember the exact dates. …

On orders from Moses Merin, the Jewish police were provided an Arbeitseinsatz order and list for young women to be workers. The police went with these lists to the homes of the girls. Their mothers didn't want to give up their girls, but the Jewish

police used force, throwing some of those selected out through windows of their homes. The police threatened the families with deportation to Auschwitz, in order to force the families to give them the girls on the list. The police offered the ruse that the girls would gone for only one week.

After a period of calm, the police came at night and took some 500 girls for slave labor in Germany.

In May 1942, there occurred the first deportation. SS men in trucks with sirens arrived about 10 o'clock in the morning and surrounded the town. They wore helmets and carried rifles with fixed bayonets. They went into apartments and within minutes ejected Jewish families, giving them no time to take any food or belongings. The Jewish citizens were all forced to the market square and there formed into rows.

Some children escaped on roofs. SS shot at them and climbed on the roofs with drawn revolvers. Polish people looked on these scenes of horror with sorrow. A group of hospital attendants witnessed the scene and was permitted to give water to the displaced persons.

At noon, Monic Merin and his secretary Franya Czarna segregated Jews for deportation. Münz and Wulkan (from the Sosnowiec Centrale Judenrat) and members of the Arbeitsamt helped him. SS men looked on.

The people were selected into three groups: for deportation to the gas chambers; to the slave labor camps; or to remain in Jaworzno. People were segregated according to their work cards, by their appearance, or according to their connection to Czarna and/or Merin. Members of the Jewish Community (Judenrat) of Jaworzno remained. In addition to work cards, the selection was also decided by one's number of children. If there were more than two children, then the family was subject to deportation. All other children, together those from the orphanage, were deported.

People selected for transport were quartered in Jaworzno's synagogue in horrible conditions. There were initially about 1,000 persons held there. Later a part of the prisoners was taken to a school building where they were held several days. Food was received from the kitchen of Jewish Community. After being held for several days, SS men arrived and began the Aktion. Everything was directed by the Chief of the Gestapo in Sosnowiec, Hans Dreier. Horse-drawn wagons were brought from Chrzanów. Some of the elderly and sick persons were taken by wagon, the rest had to walk on foot the 15 kilometers to Chrzanów. German and Jewish police escorted the wagons. In Chrzanów there had taken place an Aktion simultaneously with Jaworzno. All victims from both towns were loaded on a train and taken to Birkenau. [Eli (Emil) Grünbaum, Holocaust Testimonies, The Polish Jews Home Page, Internet: <http://polishjews.org/shoahtts/004.htm>]

The following is a description of the involvement of the Jewish police from Sosnowiec in liquidation of the ghetto in Chrzanów:

The last member of the Judenrat in Chrzanow [Chrzanów], whom the Germans left behind to carry out the "technical" liquidation of the Judenrat after all the Jews of Chrzanow had been taken away to the gas chambers—this person, who watched his brothers and sisters being led away to the slaughter, followed the Germans' command two days after the final "transfer" and demanded that the few Jews who were still hiding in attics and basements come out of their hiding places and report voluntarily to the police. He himself personally went through all the empty Jewish houses, shouting that the Jews should come out of their bunkers, that nothing would be done to them. And the few Jews who still believed him this time fell into the bestial hands of the Germans. …

[Major] Lindner and his Jewish helper Moniek Merin understood this, and therefore recruited the Jewish militia to help carry out the last labor action. They didn't even rely solely on the local Jewish militia from Chrzanow, instead bringing along some

Jewish police from Sosnowiec for the purpose. In November 1941 a detachment from Sosnowiec arrived, and with true devotion to the German hangmen, they carried out their vile task. Although officially only those girls who had been assigned by the Judenrat to be taken to the labor camp were to be seized, the roundup by the Sosnowiec police turned into a general hunt for young women. The Sosnowiec militia, or "Merin's Bodyguards" as they were called, were the equal of their German supervisors in many respects. Without second thoughts, with cynical cruelty, nearly all of them burst into Jewish homes, searching for terrified Jewish girls, dragging them out of their hiding places, and taking them to Sosnowiec and thence to the local transit camp. Afterward the young women, along with similar victims from other towns, were transported to various labor camps.
[Mordechai Bochner, ed., *Sefer Chrzanow: Lebn un umkum fun a yidish shtetl* (Roslyn Harbor, New York: Solomon Gross, 1989), 80ff., 99ff, translated (by Jonathan Boyarin) as *Chrzanow: The Life and Destruction of a Jewish Shtetl,* Internet: http://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/Chrazanow/Chrzanow.html]

Samuel Reifer describes conditions in Chrzanów as he witnessed them:

A member of the Judenrat, Weber by name – a hooligan, betrayed Jews to the Gestapo. Weber beat his victims, tormented them and accepted bribes. He had (the deaths of) many Jewish people on his conscience. Later, the Germans themselves removed him, likely murdering him. …

In Chrzanow, there was an active Jew from Katowice, a Mr. Lederer who worked at the orders of the Gestapo. He worked in the "Devisenstelle" (currency office) as "Zollinspektor". In his identity card, on the column "occupation" was noted: "Zur Verfügung der Gegeimstaastpolizei in Kattowitz" (acting at the furtherance of the Kattowitz Gestapo) and further on his identity card was written: "Nutzlicher Jude" (a useful Jew). He himself wasn't as harmful as his Jewish mistress from Chrzanow.

After a few days urns with the ashes, and telegrams with information about the deaths of the Chrzanow Jews, arrived. The families of the victims had to pay 1.20 Reich Marks for the upkeep for each day the Jewish victims were confined in prison before being sent to their deaths.

This Aktion was directed by the Gestapo office in Katowice by persons named Dreier, Kronau, Kaims, Freytag, Peikert.

About this time, the Jewish "Arbeitsamt" (Labor Office) was ordered to deliver 300 girls aged 18 to 25 years to the "Dulag" in Sosnowiec for Arbeitseinsatz. Because only part of them reported after being summoned, it was announced that if they didn't appear at the appointed time, hostages would be taken from among their families.

The Germans forced many old women to work at clearing streets from snow. During the work people were beaten. Daily, dead victims of such mistreatment lay on the snow. Many daughters reported to the Dulag to save their parents, but my mother advised my sister that she (sister) should not report there. Jewish "Ordners" (police) arrested all my family: grandfather, grandmother and uncles and held them as hostages. Finally my sister, after 12 days of hiding, reported to the Dulag and was taken to Sosnowiec. She was held in the Dulag for one week and then deported to ZAL Schomber in Silesia.

In April 1942, German police went with a list of Jews suspected of various offenses. If someone had paid a fine for not correctly crossing a street, or for not properly managing the blackout, they were reported to police, taken to the police station where they were held for six days. There arrived from Katowice the Chief of Jewish Affairs of the Gestapo, Hans Dreier together with the commanding officer of the German police, Schindler. The two went to the square at Swietokrzyska 36 and observed the large trees there. The visit created a panic in the town. The following

day, the Judenrat received the order to furnish Jewish workers who were to level the site and build a gallows.

Jews in Chrzanow consoled themselves with the thought that this act was merely to strike terror. But two days later, the Jewish "Ordners" entered Jewish apartments and confiscated all "Kennkarte" (identity cards) from the residents. On the following day the residents were required to appear on Swietokrzyski square (Henkerplatz/ Gallows Square).

On that day, Germans in autos cruised the Jewish district and announced through megaphones that today there will take place the public execution of 7 Jews in the presence of the entire Polish and Jewish population. Everyone had to be present, particularly Jews.

Representatives of the German authorities with their wives and friends assembled at the execution site. They were laughing while the persons condemned to death were the object of ridicule. The victims were brought by autos in handcuffs. From the assembled Germans were heard shouts, "Die Banditen sind schon da" (The criminals are finally here).

The condemned persons had been beaten and tortured so that they scarcely looked human. They were carried out from the cars, because they weren't able to walk on their own. With shout: "Szma Israel!" on their lips, they were hanged on the gallows. One person from Olkusz shouted: "Jews, avenge my death!" One of the convicted persons was a 70-year old Jew, Gerstner by name, a baker, who was hanged together with his 30-year old son.

Taube Spangelet hid with her children so as not to witness the execution. In the evening she went to the square and among the hanged persons she recognized her husband. It wasn't permitted to bury the victims in a cemetery. The corpses of the hanged persons remained on the gallows until sunset and then were sent to Oswiecim (Auschwitz). …

On the morning of May 30, 1942 German police surrounded the town. Jews, including members of the Judenrat, were driven to Swietokrzyski square. …

This Aktion had been stage-managed by Merin. Later, he himself sent the victims away for deportation to death. …

It was on June 4, 1942 – according to the Jewish calendar: 20 Siwan – a day well known in the history of Jewish suffering. Because people intended for the transport escaped en masse from the school with assistance from the Jewish Ordnungsdienst (police) to whom they paid bribes, the Jewish police went from house to house taking people from bunkers as well as sick persons to fill the quota to be sent to Birkenau.

The most zealous hunter of victims was Weber – the Jewish commanding officer of Jewish Constabulary. He ordered an elderly Jew be brought on a bed and sent with the transport. The man – a religious writer – Leibisz Reichman, was very ill and had not been taken by the Germans during a previous roundup.

Before the departure of the transport, Merin calmed the condemned persons by showing "letters" from persons previously displaced from Sosnowiec. We deluded ourselves that the "letters" were real. Everyone on the transport disappeared without trace.

On July 8, 1942, it was announced in Chrzanow that all Jews must appear at the courtyard of Swietokrzyska Street number 27 in order to have their "Meldkart" (registration card) checked and for the purpose of determining the number of Jews remaining after the last deportation. Whoever wouldn't appear, would lose the right to remain in Chrzanow. The announcement was signed by the Chief Mayor, Dr. Grundler. As a result everyone appeared as ordered.

Punctually at 9 o'clock, the square was surrounded by police. There arrived the Gestapo from Katowice. There was a selection. …

Fortunately I succeeded, together with my parents, to pass the selection. After returning home, we didn't see my brother. He returned at 7 PM. He told us that at the Swietokrzyski square nr 27, he had detached a board and hidden in a potato pile. There, he had been found by Oberwachmeister Lenz who gave him to the Gestapo man, Freitag, who led victims to a school building where victims were driven who were destined for transport to Birkenau.

He had been able to escape, but was caught by a Jewish constable and returned. He was beaten so badly that he had a livid back and was stained with blood. In the school, he implored Chief of Gestapo Dreier to let him go because parents had violet stamps and they worked in the tailoring workshop.

Before Dreier decided on this matter, Merin had put our brother again among the condemned persons. However, because those who were working in tailor's workshop were to be released, my brother mixed with this group and thereby escaped. …

With this transport went 1,200 Jews, 800 from Chrzanow and 400 from Jaworzno. In this transport were taken two venerable persons from Chrzanow, namely: Lieber Jeret and Natan Goldberg. From Jaworzno, young people escaped to Sosnowiec and Chrzanow. There were pursued by the Jewish Constabulary which acted in a manner beneath contempt. …

On November 15, 1942, the "Kripo" sent to Oswiecim (Auschwitz) 300 Jews. Commanding officer of the Jewish police Weber now fell from favor. The Germans could have sent him with this transport, but he went separately for deportation in handcuffs. Still another Jewish policeman was deported at this time. We lived in terrible fear. We always slept in a bunker and were afraid to walk on the street because from the street also they called sometimes someone who was not okay for them and they took such person to the police.

Among those in this deportation were my uncles Hirsch Reifer, Salomon Wolf and others. Gestapo did a search of chief of police Weber’s residence and found there a store of furs and valuables stolen from fellow Jews. If the quota to be sent to death wasn’t filled, the Jewish police helped in finding additional victims. They usually took helpless children.

It happened once that the Jewish police took a child hidden by a Polish person. The child’s parents had been taken in an earlier transport. The Polish woman implored the police, with tears, not to take from her the child. They took the child. …

The Jewish policeman Staner, together with a German policeman, went looking for a certain Jewish man named Gutter who was on a list of hidden persons. Staner assured the German that he would find Gutter even if he were buried under ground. Of this, a Gestapo man said: "Wenn er Gluck hat, soll er leben". (If he (Gutter) has luck (in not being found) then he shall live).But Staner didn't give up and looked for Gutter until he found him in a bunker. …

We decided to go to Sosnowiec. … The ghetto of Sosnowiec was created in Srodula (a village between Bedzin and Sosnowiec). It was a very crowded place, difficult in which to live. In one room lived 25 persons; people were gathered in the streets and yards. Outside was furniture, people cooked in the fields. Out of wardrobes and beds covered by much bedclothes, shelters were made. There were very high prices and indescribable hunger.

There, the Jewish police ruled. There were roundups for the camps day and night. Every day, lists of people destined for "Dulag" were displayed on the outside of the Judenrat building. If someone didn't report as ordered, his entire family was taken hostage. There were accidents in which children who had reported appeared too late learned that the older persons from their family had been already sent to Oswiecim (Auschwitz).

People were taken from hideouts by the Jewish policemen. I could bear no longer this Hell on Earth and volunteered to go to Arbeitseinsatz to SS Bau-truppe Nord in

> Klobuck. We worked there reconstructing old Polish farms into German farms where Germans from Bukowina were to be resettled.
> [Samuel Reifer, Holocaust Testimonies, The Polish Jews Home Page, Internet: <http://polishjews.org/shoahtts/026one.htm>]

After the war, as a result of denuciations by Jews, the Polish authorities started investigations against a number of Jewish collaborators from Sosnowiec like Romek Meryn and the policeman Mittleman, who dragged Jews out of their homes only to be dispatched to their deaths in Auschwitz. Alter Chil Lenczner was accused of denouncing Jews, who were then sent to concentration camps.[130]

[130] Records of Investigation and Documentation of the Main Commission to Investigate Nazi Crimes in Poland, Internet: https://collections.ushmm.org/findingaids/RG-15.155M_01_fnd_en.pdf.

Appendix 4

Jews as pigs in the German historical record

Jan Peczkis

JUDENSAU and MAUS: The Double Standard. It is Terrible to Call Jews Pigs, But Fine to Call Poles Pigs.

Laughter in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Times, by Albrecht Classen and Marilyn Sandidge (eds.) 2010. De Gruyter, Berlin, New York

JUDENSAU MAUS. The Inherently Derogatory Image of the Pig

My review is limited to the article of Birgit Wiedl (pp. 325-364) on the JUDENSAU, an artistic product of many centuries of German antisemitism. I compare it to the modern usage of pigs to represent Poles in the classroom-used MAUS.

The sullied image of the pig, as a pejorative representation of some peoples, is long-standing. Wiedl concludes that, "…probably the most successful anti-Jewish image in the German speaking realm: the Jew per se is equal to a sow…" (p. 325).

JUDENSAU MAUS. SIGNIFICANCE OF REPEATED EXPOSURE TO IMAGES OF THE PIG

Wiedl comments, "…in the German-speaking area, the image prevailed in print, literature, and everyday language, the term JUDENSAU developing into one of the most common verbal insults toward Jews." (p. 349).

What does this tell us of the prevalence of the pig, as a stand-in for Poles, in MAUS? This is especially significant in view of the countless millions of children, and low-information adults, that have been exposed to it.

THE EQUATION OF JEWS WITH PIGS (JUDENSAU) AND POLES WITH PIGS (MAUS) IS SELF-EVIDENTLY NEGATIVE

Art Spiegelman would have us believe that equating Poles with pigs is innocent, and, in his MAUS, no different from equating Jews with mice and Germans with cats. The reality is very different. While the images of other animals have sometimes been used for derogatory purposes, nothing compares to the pig in this regard!

Wiedl thus elucidates the obvious, "Yet the pig as a symbol for filth and dirt was to a great extent self-explanatory: it was visible and smell-able for the majority of people on a daily basis." (p. 338). She adds that, "…the uneducated spectators…would understand the very mundane association of Jews with filth, stench, and uncleanness." (p. 337). And now, thanks to Art Spiegelman, the Poles are enlisted in this role.

DOUBLE STANDARDS GOVERN JEWS AND POLES TODAY

The JUDENSAU is not just of historical interest. Wiedl writes, "It is a sad fact that up until today, the equation of Jews with swine is a common means of anti-Semitic propaganda launched by right-wing circles, the example of a pig with a painted-on Star of David and the name of Ignatz Bubis on its back that was herded across Alexanderplatz, Berlin, in 1998 by

a group of neo-Nazis (*Berliner Zeitung*, 9 November, 1998), may serve as one among, unfortunately, all too many examples." (p. 349).

So why is the image of the pig so horrible when applied to Jews, but perfectly fine when applied to Poles? Does the pig magically change its characteristics when applied to Poles, as opposed to being applied to Jews?

Internet:

https://www.jewsandpolesdatabase.org/2021/10/19/judensau-maus-the-double-standard-it-is-terrible-to-call-jews-pigs-but-fine-to-call-poles-pigs-classen-and-sandidge/

Appendix 5

Jews as pigs in Nazi German propaganda

Shortly after the German annexation of Austria, Nazi Storm Troopers stand guard outside a Jewish-owned business. Graffiti painted on the window states: "You Jewish pig may your hands rot off!" Vienna, Austria, March 1938.

— US Holocaust Memorial Museum

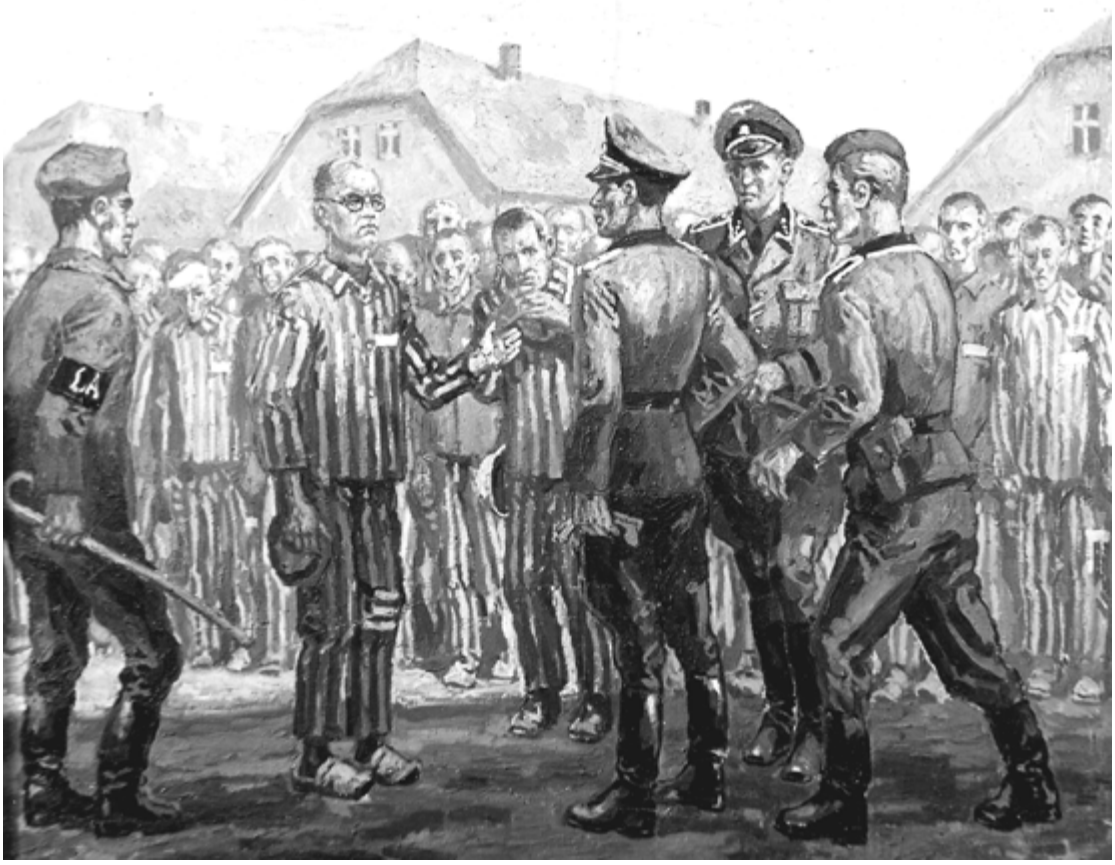
Appendix 6

Bolsheviks represented as pigs in George Orwell's *Animal Farm*

ANIMAL FARM

Appendix 7a

Is this the face of a pig?



Saint Maximilian Maria Kolbe, O.F.M. Conv., was a Polish Conventual Franciscan friar, who volunteered to die in place of a stranger at the Nazi German concentration camp of Auschwitz.

Appendix 7b

Is this the face of a pig?

In September 1940 the 39-year-old Polish cavalry officer **Witold Pilecki** deliberately walked into a German roundup in Warsaw, and was sent by train to the new German camp. His astounding choice was made within, and for, Poland's anti-Nazi underground.

Auschwitz was set up to render Polish opposition to German rule impossible, and the first transport from Warsaw, in August 1940, had included two of Pilecki's comrades. He went to Auschwitz to discover what had become of them, and what the camp meant for Poland and the world. This he learned and conveyed.

Pilecki's report on Auschwitz, unpublishable for decades in Communist Poland and now translated into English under the title "The Auschwitz Volunteer," is a historical document of the greatest importance: *The Auschwitz Volunteer: Beyond Bravery* (Los Angeles: Aquila Polonica, 2012).

Timothy Snyder, professor of history at Yale University and author of "Bloodlands: Europe Between Hitler and Stalin" in the *New York Times Sunday Book Review* – June 22, 2012. See also Jack Fairweather, *The Volunteer: One Man, an Underground Army, and the Secret Mission to Destroy Auschwitz* (New York: Custom House, 2019).

The New York Times – Sunday Review

February 1, 2015

Heroes and Bystanders

Nicholas Kristof

One of the great heroes of the 20th century was Auschwitz prisoner No. 4859, who volunteered to be there.

Witold Pilecki, an officer in the Polish resistance to the Nazi regime, deliberately let himself be captured by the Germans in 1940 so that he could gather information about Hitler's concentration camps. Inside Auschwitz, he set up resistance cells — even as he almost died of starvation, torture and disease.

Then Pilecki helped build a radio transmitter, and, in 1942, he broadcast to the outside world accounts of atrocities inside Auschwitz — as the Nazis frantically searched the camp looking for the transmitter. He worked to expose the Nazi gas chambers, brutal sexual experiments and savage camp punishments, in hopes that the world would act.

Finally, in April 1943, he escaped from Auschwitz, bullets flying after him, and wrote an eyewitness report laying out the horror of the extermination camps. He then campaigned unsuccessfully for an attack on Auschwitz.

Eventually, he was brutally tortured and executed — not by the Nazis, but after the war, in 1947, by the Communists. They then suppressed the story of Pilecki's heroism for decades (a book about his work, "The Auschwitz Volunteer," was published in 2012).

I was thinking of Pilecki last week on the 70th anniversary of the liberation of the Auschwitz-Birkenau death camps. I had relatives killed in Auschwitz (they were Poles spying on the Nazis for the resistance), and these camps are emblems of the Holocaust and symbols of the human capacity for evil.

Appendix 7c

Or are the Polish pigs in Maus …

more like Porky Pig and Miss Piggy?