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NEIGHBOURS

On the Eve of the Holocaust

**Polish-Jewish Relations
in Soviet-Occupied Eastern Poland,
1939–1941**

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*On the sixtieth anniversary
of the mass deportation
of hundreds of thousands
of Polish citizens to the Gulag*

*To the memory of countless victims
of Communist oppression
perpetrated by the organs
of the Soviet Union
and their local collaborators*

M. T. poświęcam (2000)

Foreword

On August 23, 1939, Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union entered into a Non-Aggression Pact (the so-called Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact) which paved the way for the imminent invasion of Poland. A Secret Protocol to that Pact provided for the partition of Poland, as well as for Soviet domination of the Baltic States and Bessarabia.¹ Germany attacked Poland on September 1st, while the Soviet strike was delayed until September 17th.² Polish forces continued to fight pitched battles with the Germans until early October 1939 (the last large battle was fought at Kock on October 5th), after which the struggle went underground. After overrunning Poland, the Nazis and Soviets agreed, under the terms of a Secret Supplementary Protocol to the German-Soviet Boundary and Friendship Treaty of September 28, 1939, to a redrawn common border. Each side seized roughly half of Poland, thus ensuring that the country would be once again wiped off the face of Europe. They also undertook a common struggle against Polish resistance—to suppress “all beginnings” of “Polish agitation” and to keep each other informed of their progress. In fact, this ushered in a period of close cooperation between the NKVD and the Gestapo, the secret police of the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany. Lists of Poles slated for execution were carefully compiled, traded and expanded.³

This partnership did not remain a secret for long. Already on September 19, 1939, *Pravda* published a Soviet-German communiqué confirming the joint role of Hitler’s and Stalin’s armies in the invasion of Poland. On September 30, 1939, *Pravda* proudly announced to millions of its readers that “German-Soviet friendship is now established forever.” In a speech delivered before the Supreme Soviet on October 31, 1939, Vyacheslav Molotov, Chairman of the Council of People’s Commissars, openly applauded the destruction of Poland:

A short blow at Poland from the German Army, followed by one from the Red Army was enough to reduce to nothing this monster child of the Treaty of Versailles. ... One may like or dislike Hitlerism, but every sane person will understand that that ideology cannot be destroyed by force. It is, therefore, not only nonsensical but also criminal to pursue a war “for the destruction of Hitlerism.”

Contacts between the NKVD and Gestapo intensified and meetings were called to discuss how best to combat Polish resistance and eradicate Polish national existence. A joint instructional centre for officers of the NKVD and the Gestapo was opened at Zakopane in December 1939. The decision to massacre Polish officers at Katyn (transliterated as Katyń in Polish) was taken concurrently with a conference of high officials of the Gestapo and NKVD convened in Zakopane on February 20, 1940. While the Soviets

¹ In actual fact, the United States government (and probably the British and French ambassadors) gained a general idea of the contents of the secret protocol from a “leak” at the German embassy in Moscow (the diplomat Hans von Herwarth), but did not make them public. See Anna Cienciala, *The Rise and Fall of Communist Nations, 1917–1994* (Lawrence, Kansas, 1999), chapter 4, V, posted on the Internet at: <<http://www.ku.edu/~ibetext/texts/cienciala/>>.

² The reason for the delay was likely on account of the war the Soviet Union was waging with Japan along the Manchurian (Manchukuo) border at the time. It was not until September 16, 1939 that a cease-fire between the two sides came into effect. See Hatano Sumio, “Japanese-Soviet campaigns and relations, 1939–1945,” in I. C. B. Dear, ed., *The Oxford Companion to World War II* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 634–36; Norman Davies, *Europe: A History* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 998. On September 17th, as the Polish armies were regrouping in the southeast, the Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister Vladimir P. Potemkin, handed a note to the Polish ambassador in Moscow, Waclaw Grzybowski, claiming that Warsaw no longer existed as the capital of Poland, and that the Polish government had collapsed (neither was true). See Cienciala, *The Rise and Fall of Communist Nations, 1917–1994*, chapter 4, V.

³ Tadeusz Piotrowski, *Poland’s Holocaust: Ethnic Strife, Collaboration with Occupying Forces, and Genocide in the Second Republic, 1918–1947* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland, 1998), 57. This was not a new phenomenon. Mussolini had been a Communist as recently as 1921. There was a time when Marx and Engel had been sympathetic to extreme German nationalism, and, in addition, had exterminatory attitudes towards partitioned Poland. In May 1851, Engels wrote in a letter to Marx: “Wrest from the Poles in the West what one can; ... send them to the fire, eat their land bare ...!” See Ernst Nolte, *Three Faces of Fascism: Action Française, Italian Fascism, National Socialism* (New York and Chicago: Holt Rinehart and Winston, 1963), 154, 541.

undertook the extermination of captured Polish officers, the Germans carried out, from March 31, 1940, a parallel “Operation AB” aimed at destroying Poland’s elites.⁴

The Nazi-Soviet alliance lasted for over a year and a half, until shortly before Germany turned on its erstwhile ally on June 22, 1941. During this time the Soviet Union was the principal supplier of much needed raw materials for the German war machine which, in the meantime, occupied Denmark, Norway, the Netherlands, Belgium, much of France, and smashed the Western Forces. Communism and Fascism, both of which are based on radical socialism, made natural bed companions.⁵ The Soviet invaders struck a major blow not only to Polish statehood, but also to Polish institutions, cultural and religious life, state officials and military officers, as well as the civilian population. As the evidence gathered here shows, in addition to a “class” component which struck at the “enemies” of the people (i.e., the Soviet state), the assault also had a marked anti-Polish dimension. It was exacerbated by a calculated fueling of ethnic tensions which pitted Ukrainians, Belorussians, and Jews against ethnic Poles. According to historian Anna Cienciala,

As in German-occupied Poland, Soviet policy was to liquidate the educated Poles. At first, Soviet authorities called on the peasants, who were predominantly Ukrainian or Belorussian, to “settle accounts” with Polish landlords and take what they wanted. This led to a short but brutal period of murder and robbery perpetrated by the worst elements. At the same time, Soviet NKVD (security) officers shot many Polish landowners, officers, teachers, priests, judges, administrators, policemen, border guards, etc., out of hand, according to lists prepared beforehand. ...

While most of the Jewish population of eastern Poland was politically passive, some Jews, especially young men and women with Communist sympathies, cooperated with the Soviets. They became prominent in the new local militia and helped Soviet authorities in hunting down Polish political leaders and administrators. Although these pro-Communist Jews made up a very small minority of the total Jewish population, they were highly visible in oppressing the Poles.⁶

Historian Peter Stachura offers the following perspective on these events:

Polish attitudes towards the Jews [under the German occupation], however, may well have been negatively shaped, in the first instance, by irrefutable evidence that comparatively large numbers of them in Eastern Poland not only rejoiced in 1939 at the fall of the Second Republic but also welcomed with enthusiasm the invading Red Army. Jews of this type willingly became officials of the Soviet regime there, becoming involved in the widespread reprisals and atrocities that were committed against ethnic Poles, especially those of the educated and propertied classes. As Soviet Bolshevik commissars, believing that the day of their national and class liberation had arrived, these Jews often proved to be the most fanatical, intent on the effective de-polonisation of the Eastern Provinces.⁷

The downfall of the Polish state was not only a time for rejoicing for many, but also appeared to provide a free licence to attack Poles indiscriminately. Inherent to these actions is the prevalent notion of getting rid of the Poles as representatives of the old order for the sake of the new Soviet-imposed order. The assault triggers resembled each other schematically, suggesting that a shared behaviour taken from simplified stereotypical patterns determined the dynamics of the attacks on Poles. These outbursts of violence carried

⁴ Andrzej Leszek Szcześniak, “Katyńska zbrodnia,” in *Encyklopedia “Białych Plam”* (Radom: Polskie Wydawnictwo Encyklopedyczne, 2002), vol. 9, 169–170; Sergo Beria, *Beria, My Father: Inside Stalin’s Kremlin* (London: Duckworth, 2001), 319 n.39 and n.43.

⁵ See, for example: Norman Davies, “Nazi-Soviet Pact,” in Dear, *The Oxford Companion to World War II* 780–82; “German-Soviet Nonaggression Pact,” in *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 15th edition, *Micropaedia*, vol. 5: 212; Alexandra Viatteau with Stanisław Maria Jankowski and Youri Zoria, *Staline assassine la Pologne, 1939–1947* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1999), 94.

⁶ Cienciala, *The Rise and Fall of Communist Nations, 1917–1994*, chapter 4, V.

⁷ Peter D. Stachura, “Polish-Jewish Relations in the Aftermath of the Holocaust: Reflections and Perspectives,” in Peter D. Stachura, ed., *Perspectives on Polish History* (Stirling, Scotland: The Centre for Research in Polish History, University of Stirling, 2001), 87. See also Peter D. Stachura, *Poland in the Twentieth Century* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire and London: Macmillan Press, 1999; and New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1999), 102–103.

a deeply symbolic meaning: The Polish victims were not attacked because of actual misdeeds of individual persons. None of them harmed the Jews or other minorities. The Polish victims were attacked because of what they symbolized. What is more, with few exceptions these vile deeds did not elicit protests on the part of the non-Polish population. They were, by and large, tolerated by them.⁸

⁸ This paragraph paraphrases arguments that are commonly directed at Poles. See Eva Reder, “Polish Pogroms 1918–1920 and 1945/46: Theoretical Approaches, Triggers, Points of Reference,” in Marija Wakounig, ed., *From Collective Memories to Intellectual Exchanges* (Vienna and Berlin: Lit Verlag, 2012), 202, 205–6. An example of the type of tone and argumentation that have become acceptable in describing Poles’ behaviour in the context of Polish-Jewish relations, but seldom, if ever, seen in describing the behaviour of others who committed far larger or even mass murders, is the following, courtesy of William Hagen. Describing a pogrom that occurred in Chrzanów on November 5 and 6, 1918, in which two Jews were killed, Hagen writes: “It was riot of plunder and destruction, beggaring many Jews and cutting others down so that Poles could rise above them. It was both ruthless collection of payback for what pogromists saw as Jewish war profiteering and invasion of Jewish space imagined to glitter with ill-gotten wealth. It was, as Jewish reporters believed, a carnivalesque event, a witches’ sabbath of sorts, with participants showering themselves with luxurious food and drink while upgrading wardrobes. Some took pleasure in murder and battery and many others in witnessing physical violence, humiliation, and degradation. It was an assertion of Polish domination, at Poland’s freedom dawn. It was revolution against ‘the Jews.’” See William W. Hagen, *Anti-Jewish Violence in Poland, 1914–1920* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 129.

In the bloody month of September 1939 alone, thousands of Poles, for the most part civilians and soldiers, perished not at the hands of the Soviet invaders, but at the hands of their fellow citizens.⁹ A particularly heinous crime occurred in Brzostowica Mała near Grodno, where neighbour-on-neighbour violence, which would escalate dramatically during the war, was pioneered. About a score of Poles, and possibly more, were tortured and butchered in a paroxysm of violence by a Jewish-led band of local pro-Communist Jews and Belorussians *before* the arrival of the Red Army. Subsequently, the Soviet authorities

⁹ The English-language literature on inter-ethnic relations in Poland's Eastern Borderlands (*Kresy Wschodnie*) at the time of the Soviet invasion in September 1939 is rather sparse. The events are little known except for some fairly general references and a handful of articles. Some recent examples of the cursory treatment of this topic, some of which do not mention Jews specifically, follow. Richard J. Evans, *The Third Reich at War, 1939–1945* (London: Allen Lane/Penguin Books, 2008), 45: "Their extermination [i.e., Polish officers and officials] was part of a much larger campaign by the Soviets to eradicate Polish national culture. It was accompanied by massive intercommunal violence in which many thousands of Poles were slaughtered by paramilitaries from Ukrainian and Belarusian national minorities in the Polish east, encouraged by the Soviet occupiers." See Timothy Snyder, *Bloodlands: Europe Between Hitler and Stalin* (New York: Basic Books, 2010), 125–26: "Soviet occupying forces in eastern Poland placed the lower orders of society in the vacated heights. Prisons were emptied, and political prisoners, usually communists, were put in charge of local government. Soviet agitators urged peasants to take revenge on landlords. Though most people resisted the call to criminality, chaos reigned as thousands did not. Mass murders with axes were suddenly frequent. One man was tied to a stake, then had some of his skin peeled off and his wound salted before being forced to watch the execution of his family. Usually the Red Army behaved well, though sometimes soldiers joined in the violence, as when a pair killed a local official and then took his gold teeth." István Deák, *Europe on Trial: The Story of Collaboration, Resistance, and Retribution During World War II* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 2015), 39: "In what used to be eastern Poland, the Polish population was lorded over by local Ukrainians, Belarusians, and Jews." Lithuanian historian Šarūnas Liekis relativizes, and in effect denies, the murder of several thousand Poles by their non-Polish neighbours. He describes what happened as simply an inter-ethnic struggle, in which all groups were equally targeted, and credits the fortuitous Soviet advance with putting a stop to it. "Polish citizens of all backgrounds—Poles, Ukrainians, Belarusians, Jews—fought against each other in the last hours of the Second Polish Republic. These encounters, which were often bloody, contributed to the atmosphere of chaos and lawlessness. Only the Soviet advance averted full-scale civil war. The average citizen most probably preferred foreign occupation to battles, robbery, and the settling of local scores ..." According to that author, it was the Poles who initiated attacks on the minorities, seemingly for no apparent reason: "the Polish army, joined by Polish civilians, turned against unsympathetic locals on numerous occasions." He gives no credence to reports of Jews attacking, denouncing or even harassing Poles; rather it was the Poles who attacked the Jews, their traditional "scapegoats." Liekis reproaches Polish scholarship for shifting blame for the collapse of the Polish state onto the minorities, but cites no historian who supposedly has advanced this preposterous theory. He also suggests that a better focus for academic inquiry would be "the [Polish] army's so-called 'betrayal' of its fellow citizens or the inadequacy and disarray of the Polish state apparatus." See Sarunas Liekis, "Jewish-Polish Relations and the Lithuanian Authorities in Vilna," in *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry*, vol. 19: *Polish-Jewish Relations in North America* (Oxford and Portland, Oregon: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2007), 521–36, here at 523–24. Mark Mazower downplays the events of September 1939. He acknowledges that "many left-wing Polish Jews" greeted the Red Army with enthusiasm, as did some Ukrainians and Belorussians, and writes that some peasants massacred well-off Polish families and took over their property. See Mark Mazower, *Hitler's Empire: How the Nazis Rules Europe* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2008), 98–99. A more recent example is Alexander V. Prusin, *The Lands Between: Conflict in the East European Borderlands, 1870–1992* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 128–48, which is rather selective in its treatment of the Jewish dimension. Prusin says virtually nothing about the conduct of the Jews, but writes about Polish "reprisals" without providing any background to the events in question. "The reprisals acquired a definite ethnic connotation and were based on the actual behaviour of the culprits as much as on anticipation of their disloyalty. In Volkovyska (Wołkowyska) [sic] in the Hrodna [Grodno] district the troops killed six Jews for their alleged hostile behaviour toward Poles." (P. 128.) In fact, an armed group of diversionaries, for the most part Jews (and some Belorussians), attacked the Polish army barracks in Wołkowysk, burned part of them down, and looted their contents. They seized rifles and distributed them among local pro-Communist elements who formed a militia and took control the town. Understandably, Polish forces retaliated. See Marek Wierzbicki, *Polacy i Białorusini w zaborze sowieckim: Stosunki polsko-białoruskie na ziemiach północno-wschodnich II Rzeczypospolitej pod okupacją sowiecką 1939–1941* (Warsaw: Volumen, 2000), 148; Marek Wierzbicki, *Polacy i Żydzi w zaborze sowieckim: Stosunki polsko-żydowskie na ziemiach północno-wschodnich II RP pod okupacją sowiecką (1939–1941)* (Warsaw: Fronda, 2001), 80. For additional confirmation see Eliyahu Rutchik, "The Russian Occupation at the Beginning of the War," in Katriel Lashowitz, ed., *Volkovysk: The Story of a Jewish-Zionist Community* (Tel-Aviv, 1988), 119–20, Part III of *The Volkovysk Memorial Book* (Mahwah, New Jersey: Jacob Solomon Berger, 2002). Prusin alleges that the Polish population "overwhelmingly waited for the time of 'bloody reckoning'" with the Jews. (P. 140.) We know with certainty, however, that overwhelmingly the Polish population did no such thing. Relatively few retaliations occurred upon the entry of the Germans in the summer of 1941, and they were the work of a tiny minority of the population. Citing Prusin, American historian R. M. Douglas writes: "Similar, though generally smaller-scale [than the attacks on Germans], excesses occurred elsewhere, directed against other minorities, like Ukrainians, Byelorussians and Jews,

legalized the excesses committed against Poles in September and October 1939. In March the following year, the Council of People's Commissars pronounced that Soviet law was in force (in so-called Western Belorussia) only from November 2, 1939, that is, from the moment of the formal incorporation of the seized Polish territory into the Soviet Union. Only crimes committed against the "working people" before that date were punishable. At the same time, it was forbidden to impose criminal sanctions on the "working people" for deeds "provoked by their exploiters and committed in the course of class struggle." The roles of the victims and culprits were reversed.¹⁰ Mass murders of Poles continued to be carried out locally throughout the Soviet occupation, for the most part by the NKVD, as evidenced by the discovery in 2013 in Włodzimierz Wołyński of several graves each containing hundreds of Polish victims, mostly state officials.

It is widely recognized by historians that the portrait of Polish-Jewish relations presented in Holocaust

¹⁰ Marek Wierzbicki, "Białorusini wobec władz sowieckich i Polaków w latach 1939–1941," in Jan Jerzy Milewski and Anna Pyżewska, eds., *Początek wojny niemiecko-sowieckiej i losy ludności cywilnej* (Warsaw: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej–Komisja Ścigania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu, 2003), 26.

historiography is seriously flawed.¹¹ Writing in the *New York Review of Books*, Columbia University historian István Deák stated authoritatively: “No issue in Holocaust literature is more burdened by misunderstanding, mendacity, and sheer racial prejudice than that of Polish-Jewish relations during World

¹¹ British historian Norman Davies, probably the foremost authority on Polish history in the West, had this to say about the state of historical writings on the subject in his seminal work *God's Playground: A History of Poland* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), vol. 2, 264–65:

One of the meanest of modern historical controversies surrounds the conduct of the non-Jewish population towards the Nazis' Final Solution. Some Jewish writers, whether scholars or novelists such as Leon Uris, have spread the view that the Poles actually rejoiced at the fate of the Jews or at best were indifferent 'bystanders'. ... Both sides in the controversy overlook the realities of life under the Nazi Terror, which was so much fiercer and more protracted in Poland than anywhere in Europe. To ask why the Poles did so little to help Jews is rather like asking why the Jews did nothing to assist the Poles. ... stories of individual gallantry, though real enough, vastly exaggerated the opportunities for chivalry which actually existed. In a world where immediate death awaited anyone who contravened Nazi regulations, the Nazis could always exact a measure of co-operation from the terrified populace. ... Both Poles and Jews were victims to the Terror, and were conditioned by it. ... It is also true that the Home Army failed to oppose the construction of the Ghettos in 1939–40 or the mass deportations of 1941–3. Yet to turn such facts into evidence of wilful neglect would seem to perpetrate a libel as vicious as any which has been levelled against the Jews themselves. In the nature of things, the Underground was notoriously suspicious about all refugees, outsiders, and strangers, not only about Jews, and protected just as many as they turned away. The Polish Underground failed to oppose not only the actions against the Jews, but equally, until 1943, all the executions and mass deportations of Polish civilians. In the earlier years of the war, it was simply too weak and too disorganized to attempt anything other than local diversions. With the one exception of the Ghetto in Łódź, which survived till August 1944, the Final Solution was all but complete by the time the Underground was strong enough to take action. In the meantime, the Council of Help for the Jews (RPŻ), organized by the Government-in-Exile's Delegate, arranged for tens of thousands of Jews to be hidden and cared for. The survivors were all too few, but in the circumstances, it is hard to see how it could have been otherwise.

American historian Richard C. Lukas has made the following pointed observations about the widespread “demonization” of Poles in his pioneering study, *The Forgotten Holocaust: The Poles Under German Occupation, 1939–1944* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1986), at 220–21:

Because of a lack of understanding of the Holocaust in its broadest terms, writers have perpetuated the stereotypical view of the anti-Semitic Pole as the primary or even the sole explanation for Polish attitudes and behavior toward the Jews during World War II. ...

Television has reinforced the negative image of the Poles too. In one installment of the television version of Herman Wouk's *Winds of War*, Heinrich Himmler informs Adolf Hitler that 3,000 men and officers of the *Einsatzgruppen* are ready to kill the Jews in Russia. They will be the organizers, says Himmler, but the local population will execute the job, and there are “plenty of volunteers” in Poland. The same impression was left with the NBC adaptation of Gerald Green's *Holocaust*, which focused almost exclusively on the Jewish tragedy and ignored the plight of Poles, who, when depicted, were seen essentially in a negative light. [Another example is William Styron's *Sophie's Choice*, which falsely claims that a Polish scholar pioneered the idea of murdering Jews in gas chambers long before the Nazis came to power in Germany.—M.P.]

If novelists and publicists perpetuate distortions of the Poles and their history, one would at least hope for better in the writings of historians. Unfortunately, it is disquieting to read most writings on the Holocaust, because the subject of Polish-Jewish relations is treated so polemically. Preoccupied with the overwhelming tragedy of the Jews, Jewish historians, who are the major writers on the subject, rarely if ever attempt to qualify their condemnations of the Poles and their defense of the Jews. The result is tendentious writing that is often more reminiscent of propaganda than of history. Despite the scholarly pretensions of many of these works—and there is genuine scholarship in some of these books—they have contributed little to a better understanding of the complexity and paradox of Polish-Jewish wartime relations.

Another prime example is the literary hoax *Painted Bird*, passed off as an autobiographical account of the wartime experiences of its author, Jerzy Kosinski. The carefully cultivated deception surrounding the reception of this novel was exposed by James Park Sloan in his *Jerzy Kosinski: A Biography* (New York: Dutton/Penguin, 1996, which essentially accepted the accuracy of an earlier Polish exposé by Joanna Siedlecka, titled *Czarny ptasiór* (Gdańsk: Marabut; Warsaw: CIS, 1994). Siedlecka was also featured in a subsequent British Broadcasting Corporation documentary, *Sex, Lies and Jerzy Kosinski*.

Speaking of this controversial topic, British historian Norman Davies remarked in his foreword to the revised edition of Richard Lukas's *The Forgotten Holocaust* (New York: Hippocrene, 1997), one of the most balanced accounts of Polish-Jewish relations in the war period, “it effectively puts to rest those most harmful stereotypes about ‘Nazi murderers,’ ‘Jewish victims’ and ‘Polish bystanders.’ In reality, the murderers were not just the Nazis; the victims were

War II.”¹² Moreover, anyone who disagrees with authors of that ilk, who themselves tolerate no discussion, or even dares to cite testimonies to the contrary, is branded a denier, nationalist, or anti-Semite. This is doubly compounded in the case of the eastern half of Poland, which was occupied by the Soviet Union in 1939–1941 and where the tone of Jewish-Polish relations was set by the Jews. For fifty years it was impossible in Communist Poland to write objectively about the Soviet invasion, and silence surrounded the fate of the Polish population under Soviet rule. Abroad, Polish political émigrés were consumed with more pressing matters and focused on the deeds of the principal perpetrators of Poland’s wartime tragedy—the Germans and Soviets. Except for memoirs and archival records, most of which were unpublished, the deeds of local collaborators were rarely mentioned. Even with the political changes that took place in Poland in 1989 no concerted effort was made to collect and publish such materials.

This state of affairs played into the hands of Holocaust historians who, preoccupied with Jewish victimization under the Nazi regime, ignored, glossed over or simply denied the fact of Jewish collaboration with the Soviet invaders of Poland both in 1939–1941, and again from 1944 onward. Indeed, in recent years we have witnessed a concerted effort to relegate Jewish misconduct to the realm of unfounded perception on the part of the Poles that has little or no basis in fact. Thus a serious void or, worse still, denial about these “thorny” issues permeates Western scholarship; at most we find apologetics. In a dramatic reversal from his earlier scholarship, Jan T. Gross has now discounted the notion of Jewish collaboration under the Soviet occupation regime, advocating instead collective guilt on the part of the Poles, who allegedly “broadly collaborated with the Germans, up to and including participation in the exterminatory war against the Jews.”¹³ Other Jewish historians, such as Omer Bartov, are even more strident in their denials: “As a myth, the tale of Jewish collaboration with the Communists is as fascinating as the older and still potent canard of the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. As history, it is simply false.”¹⁴ The most disturbing trend in that scholarship has been to focus on the German invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941 and play down to the point of dismissing or obscuring the brutal Soviet occupation that preceded that event.

Even clear reports of Jewish collaboration found in key documents from that period are ignored or discounted out of hand, such as the charge levelled by the legendary Polish courier, Jan Karski, who was made an Honorary Citizen of Israel for his role in warning the West about the Holocaust and cannot be

¹² “Memories of Hell,” *New York Review of Books*, June 26, 1997.

¹³ Jan T. Gross, *Neighbors: The Destruction of the Jewish Community in Jedwabne, Poland* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2001), 135. The Polish version of this study appeared earlier as Jan Tomasz Gross, *Sąsiedzi: Historia zagłady żydowskiego miasteczka* (Sejny: Fundacja “Pogranicze,” 2000).

¹⁴ Omer Bartov, *Erased: Vanishing Traces of Jewish Galicia in Present-Day Ukraine* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2007), 40.

accused of harbouring hostility toward the Jews.¹⁵ Writing in early 1940, at a time when the mass deportations of Poles were not yet underway, Karski reported:

The Jews have taken over the majority of the political and administrative positions. But what is worse, they are denouncing Poles, especially students and politicians (to the secret police), are directing the work of the (communist) militia from behind the scenes, are unjustly denigrating conditions in Poland before the war.

¹⁵ Among the many offenders are internationally known historians Jan Tomasz Gross, Antony Polonsky, Paul Zawadzki, Peter Hayes, and even István Deák, an otherwise balanced historian. The first two historians, among others, are known to label Polish historians with whom they disagree as “nationalists”: yet the omission from their publications of Karski’s charges of Jewish collaboration with the Soviets is a tell-tale sign of their own bias or ethno-nationalism. See, for example, Jan T. Gross’s essay, “A Tangled Web: Confronting Stereotypes Concerning Relations between Poles, Germans, Jews, and Communists,” in István Deák, Jan T. Gross, and Tony Judt, eds., *The Politics of Retribution in Europe: World War II and Its Aftermath* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2000), 74–129; Antony Polonsky’s “Introduction,” in *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry*, vol. 13: *Focusing on the Holocaust and its Aftermath* (London and Portland, Oregon: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2000), 3–33; Paul Zawadzki’s article “Poles and Jews in World War II,” and Antony Polonsky’s article, “Polish Jewry,” in Walter Laqueur, ed., *The Holocaust Encyclopedia* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2001), 476–82, 486–93; Peter Hayes, *Why?: Explaining the Holocaust* (New York and London: Norton, 2017), 250; Deák, *Europe on Trial*, 39, 151. Moreover, they ignore what Karski reported in January 1943, namely, that the prevailing attitude of Polish society in response to German atrocities against the Jews was one of outrage and horror. See 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), 156. Andrzej Żbikowski, a historian associated with the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw, and Allan Levine, a minor Canadian freelance historian, both purge key passages from Karski’s report attesting to the extent of actual Jewish collaboration with the Soviets, as does American historian Joshua Zimmerman and German historian Kai Struve, while highlighting Karski’s speculation on possible future Polish retribution. See Andrzej Żbikowski’s “Jewish Reaction to the Soviet Arrival in the Kresy in September 1939,” in *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry*, vol. 13 (2000): 62–72; and Allan Levine’s *Fugitives of the Forest: The Heroic Story of Jewish Resistance and Survival during the Second World War* (Toronto: Stoddart, 1998), 14–15 (Levine’s book was published with assistance from the Canada Council for the Arts and the Ontario Arts Council); Joshua D. Zimmerman, *The Polish Underground and the Jews, 1939–1945* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 74; Kai Struve, *Deutsche Herrschaft, ukrainischer Nationalismus, antijüdische Gewalt: Der Sommer 1941 in der Westukraine* (Berlin: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2015), 148. Martin Winstone also cites Karski’s report selectively, avoiding any reference to Karski’s condemnation of Jewish behaviour, and writes about the “supposed welcome” given to the Red Army by Jews as a widespread but false “perception.” See Martin Winstone, *The Dark Heart of Hitler’s Europe: Nazi Rule in Poland under the General Government* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2015), 103, 184. Martin Dean, a scholar at the Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C., ignores the important report altogether in his *Collaboration in the Holocaust: Crimes of the Local Police in Belorussia and Ukraine, 1941–44* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire and London: Macmillan, 2000), 1–16. Alexander Prusin’s treatment of relations between Poles and other minorities, especially Jews, under Soviet occupation is also rather uneven. He fails to acknowledge that Jewish collaboration was directed at Poles, something which Karski describes in his report of February 1940, and instead focuses on that portion of the report where Karski speculates that the Polish population allegedly “overwhelmingly waited for the time of ‘bloody reckoning’,” which never materialized in Lwów (something which Prusin denies). See Prusin, *The Lands Between*, 140, 158. Moreover, Prusin is not familiar with important Polish scholarship. He is unaware of the true extent of the atrocities committed by Ukrainians and Belorussians against the Polish military and civilian population in September 1939, most of which occurred before the arrival of the Red Army. He accuses the Polish army of striking randomly at the minorities living in that area. He avoids mentioning the involvement of Jews in activities directed against Poles, such as killings of civilians (e.g., Brzostowica Mała), arrests, and looting, and downplays their widespread, genuine support for the new Soviet regime. He relies solely on non-Polish sources for his description of the events in Wołkowysk, Wilejka and Trościaniec, where the Polish military responded to attacks by Jews, Belorussians and Ukrainians (Polish civilians including refugees were murdered in Trościaniec). *Ibid.*, 128–29. For Polish accounts see Marek Wierzbicki, *Polacy i Żydzi w zaborze sowieckim: Stosunki polsko-żydowskie na ziemiach północno-wschodnich II RP pod okupacją sowiecką (1939–1941)* (Warsaw: Fronda, 2001), 69 (Wilejka), 80 (Wołkowysk); Marek Wierzbicki, *Polacy i Białorusini w zaborze sowieckim: Stosunki polsko-białoruskie na ziemiach północno-wschodnich II Rzeczypospolitej pod okupacją sowiecką 1939–1941* (Warsaw: Volumen, 2000), 148 (Wołkowysk); Władysław Siemaszko and Ewa Siemaszko, *Ludobójstwo dokonane przez nacjonalistów ukraińskich na ludności polskiej Wołynia, 1939–1945* (Warsaw: von borowiecky, 2000), vol. 1, 655 (Trościaniec); *Na Rubieży*, no. 16 (1996): 27; no. 56 (2001): 39 (Trościaniec); Kulińska and Roliński, *Antypolska akcja nacjonalistów ukraińskich w Małopolsce Wschodniej w świetle dokumentów Rady Głównej Opiekuńczej 1943–1944*, 7–8 (Trościaniec). In addition to concealing what Karski reported about Jewish collaboration with the Soviet invaders in 1939, Peter Hayes states that 66 “nearly simultaneous attacks” like Jedwabne occurred in the Suwałki area and some 200 “similar incidents” in the Soviet-annexed eastern provinces, without mentioning that the attacks were quite disparate, especially in scope, and that many of them were not carried out by ethnic Poles. See Hayes, *Why?*, 249–50.

Unfortunately, one must say that these incidents are very frequent, and more common than incidents which demonstrate loyalty toward Poles or sentiment toward Poland.

In the face of many such unassailable contemporary testimonies, it is impossible to dispute the reality of autonomous dynamics in the relationships between Poles and Jews, albeit within the constraints imposed by the occupiers. As a Jewish woman from Wilno remarked during the war,

Under Bolshevik rule anti-Jewish sentiments grew significantly. In large measure the Jews themselves were responsible for this ... Jews often denounced Poles ... and as a result Poles were put in prison and sent to Siberia. At every turn they mocked Poles, yelled out that their Poland was no more ... Jewish Communists mocked Poles' patriotism, denounced their illegal conversations, pointed out Polish officers and former high officials, co-operated with the NKVD of their own volition, and took part in arrests. ... The Bolsheviks on the whole treated Jews favourably, had complete faith in them and were confident of their devoted sympathy and trust. For that reason they put Jews in all of the leading and influential positions which they would not entrust to Poles who formerly occupied them.

It must be remembered that, by and large, the perpetrators were ordinary Jews and those they targeted were not guilty of any specific wrongdoing. Soon thereafter Jewish collaborators, in their positions as local officials, militia and agents of the NKVD (National Commissariat for Internal Affairs, i.e., the Soviet state security organ and predecessor of the KGB), played a key role in populating the Gulag with their Polish neighbours. They identified them and put them on lists of "class enemies"; they arrested them and evicted them from their homes; finally, they helped to dispatch them by boxcar to the far reaches of the Soviet Union. There was no sense of solidarity with Poles among the majority of the Jewish population. As Timothy Snyder points out, once Poland was destroyed, "many Jews ... saw no reason for it to be restored."¹⁶ While certainly not universal, this was by no means a marginal phenomenon, and, given the lack of condemnation of such activities by Jewish leaders, Poles were entitled to assume that it constituted a widespread attitude.

Had Poles been guilty of the type of conduct that some Jews displayed toward Poles, there would doubtless have emerged an extensive literature in the West, along with an obsessive media awareness, charging the Poles collectively with perpetrating a Holocaust under Soviet rule concurrent with that undertaken by the Nazis. Polish attempts to discount or diminish its extent would have been dismissed, derided and attributed to anti-Semitism. On the other hand, any reference to Jewish collaboration is dismissed out of hand as untrue, grossly exaggerated, or an attempt to assign collective blame to the Jews. While Poles are routinely expected to account for the actions of a tiny minority among them, they are reminded that no such responsibility for the actions of individual Jews can be ascribed to Jews. Clearly, different measures apply.

This book argues that the role of Soviet collaborators was analogous to that played by the German Fifth Column. Indeed, as we shall see, the similarities are many and striking. The role of Jews as collaborators and, more frequently, as bystanders to the tragedy of Poles under Soviet rule, however, was never mentioned in Western literature. It was viewed as incompatible with the entrenched and comforting notion that Jews, the ultimate victims of the war, could only be victims. The fact that the deeds of the Soviets were overshadowed by the incomparable Holocaust perpetrated by the Nazi regime, about which there is an enormous and growing awareness, also played a large role in shaping our view of what is a "politically correct" historical record.

Another factor that came into play was that in the West, for a variety of reasons, the crimes of Communism were downplayed or shrugged off as less important than those of the Nazi German regime. There was nothing remotely similar to the vast array of historical works, memoirs, popular literature, journalistic writings, documentaries, popular films, educational programs, and even institutions that deal with the Holocaust. A fuller appreciation of the enormity of communist crimes is just beginning to make inroads into the consciousness of the West with the publication of books such as *The Black Book of*

¹⁶ Timothy Snyder, "The Life and Death of Western Volhynian Jewry, 1921–1945," in Ray Brandon and Wendy Lower, eds., *The Shoah in Ukraine: History, Testimony, Memorialization* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2008), 77–113, here at 85.

Communism.¹⁷ And, as in the case of Nazi German crimes, Soviet crimes could not have taken place without large numbers of collaborators coming forward in the conquered nations.

The present work draws on, but is not restricted to, the efforts of Polish and non-Polish scholars who have treated the topic of Jewish-Polish relations under the Soviet occupation. These include Norman Davies, Ben-Cion Pinchuk, Dov Levin, Keith Sword, Ryszard Szawłowski, Tadeusz Piotrowski, Bogdan Musiał, Marek Wierzbicki,¹⁸ Tomasz Strzembosz, Jerzy Robert Nowak,¹⁹ Krzysztof Jasiewicz, Jan Tomasz Gross, and Andrzej Żbikowski.²⁰ Altogether, more than 700 accounts—a significant number of them Jewish—have been culled to illustrate and support the often startling conclusions contained in this study. These accounts, which are merely the tip of the iceberg, are representative of what occurred in hundreds of cities and towns in Eastern Poland.²¹ Their unfolding yields wider truths about Jewish-Polish relations, the Holocaust, and human responses to occupation and totalitarianism. It is also a story of surprises.

While the gathering of accounts is still in its infancy, like many aspects of wartime Polish-Jewish relations, a fairly clear outline emerges of some sordid and shameful aspects of the conduct of Jews vis-à-vis their Polish neighbours under Soviet rule. It is an immensely important story that has never before been told and one that redefines the history of wartime Polish-Jewish relations. There is overwhelming evidence that Jews played an important, at times pivotal role, in arresting hundreds of Polish officers and officials in the aftermath of the September 1939 campaign and in deporting thousands of Poles to the Gulag. Collaboration in the destruction of the Polish state, and in the killing of its officials and military, constituted *de facto* collaboration with Nazi Germany, with which the Soviet Union shared a common, criminal purpose and agenda in 1939–1941.²² As such, it is an integral and important aspect of the study of wartime collaboration and one of the most important studies of Polish-Jewish relations to be published in decades. With the publication of *Neighbours on the Eve of the Holocaust*, the history of Polish-Jewish relations during the Second World War can never again revert to the simplistic patterns of the past, which focused exclusively on Polish conduct in general and on the victimization of the Jews.

¹⁷ Stéphane Courtois, Nicolas Werth, Jean-Louis Panné, Andrzej Paczkowski, Karel Bartošek, and Jean-Louis Margolin, *The Black Book of Communism: Crimes, Terror, Repression* (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London: Harvard University Press, 1999), translated from the French.

¹⁸ Marek Wierzbicki, *Polacy i Żydzi w zaborze sowieckim: Stosunki polsko-żydowskie na ziemiach północno-wschodnich II RP pod okupacją sowiecką (1939–1941)* (Warsaw: Fronda, 2001). See also Marek Wierzbicki, “Polish-Jewish Relations in the City of Vilna and the Region of Western Vilna under Soviet Occupation, 1939–1941,” in *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry*, vol. 19: *Polish-Jewish Relations in North America* (Oxford and Portland, Oregon: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2007), 487–516; and Marek Wierzbicki, “Western Belarus in September 1939: Revisiting Polish-Jewish Relations,” in Elazar Barkan, Elizabeth A. Cole, and Kai Struve, eds., *Shared History, Divided Memory: Jews and Others in Soviet-Occupied Poland, 1939–1941* (Leipzig: Leipziger Universitätsverlag, 2007), 135–46.

¹⁹ The most comprehensive treatment of this topic is found in Jerzy Robert Nowak, *Przemilczane zbrodnie: Żydzi i Polacy na Kresach w latach 1939–1941* (Warsaw: von borowiecky, 1999). Nowak’s research is summarized in his article, “Antypolskie wystąpienia na Kresach Wschodnich (1939–41): Wystąpienia żydowskie (1939–41),” in *Encyklopedia “Białych Płam”* (Radom: Polskie Wydawnictwo Encyklopedyczne, 2000), vol. 1, 169–76.

²⁰ Particularly the accounts compiled in Andrzej Żbikowski, ed., *Archiwum Ringelbluma: Konspiracyjne Archiwum Getta Warszawy*, vol. 3: *Relacje z Kresów* (Warsaw: Żydowski Instytut Historyczny IN-B, 2000).

²¹ There are thousands of accounts written during the war by Poles and Jews that are found in the largely untapped Archives of the Polish Ministry of Information and Documentation at the Hoover Institution on War, Revolution and Peace in Stanford, California, and in the Underground Archive of the Warsaw Ghetto (the so-called Ringelblum Archive), at the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw. Only a small number of these accounts have been cited in this book.

²² Previous versions of this publication inadvertently referred to the time frame as 1939–1945, which was an editorial slip that bears no relation to the content of the publication.

In some respects, Jewish conduct under the Soviet regime mirrored and at times foreshadowed and even provoked similar conduct toward Jews on the part of some Poles vis-à-vis the Jews under German rule—a point that is repeatedly stressed throughout this publication. *It is important, however, to bear in mind that such collaboration, although a force to be reckoned with, was marginal and unrepresentative of the overall behaviour of both communities. It was the work of a small minority, but one cannot for that reason turn a blind eye to this phenomenon.* Apart from collaborators drawn largely from the margins of society, there were also Jews who assisted Poles (many examples of such help are also cited), and, far more often, those who stood by for various reasons (fear, helplessness, indifference, etc.)—the so-called “bystanders.” Neither the Poles nor the Jews as a collective can be charged with complicity in the atrocities designed and carried out by the Nazi and Soviet regimes.

It is hoped that *Neighbours on the Eve of the Holocaust* will help to reinforce the gradual and painstaking evolution that has been taking place among some probing scholars in recent years in assessing wartime Polish-Jewish relations in a much more balanced way. As noted by István Deák,

The Polish Jews were killed by the Germans and not by the Poles, and several million Poles were also killed, in their case by both Germany and the Soviet Union. It is true that some Poles made life very difficult for Jews in the interwar era, and that some Polish people helped the German Nazis to hunt down Jews or hunted them down on their own. But it is also true that, between 1939 and 1941 in Soviet-occupied eastern Poland as well as after 1944 in all of Poland, some Jews in Soviet or Polish communist police uniform hunted down Christian Poles. Poles accused and often still accuse the Jews of being Communists at the service of a monstrous foreign power; Jews accused and often still accuse the Poles of being anti-Semites and fascists. Yet the criminals in both camps were only a minority; most people were victims.

It is wrong to strictly separate the two groups and view them as opposed to each other when thousands of Jews served in the Polish army, and when many Jews considered themselves both good Poles and good Jews.
...²³

It is safe to say that there will be no improvement in Polish-Jewish relations until such time as the events that occurred in Eastern Poland in 1939–1941, during the occupation by the Soviet Union, Hitler’s erstwhile ally, are acknowledged and condemned openly by Jews themselves. A proper understanding of those times will continue to elude the North American public until the events in question become part of mainstream Holocaust literature and the school curriculum.

Earlier versions of this much expanded work can be found in the following publications: “Polish-Jewish Relations in Soviet-Occupied Eastern Poland, 1939–1941,” in *Kielce—July 4, 1946: Background, Context and Events* (Toronto and Chicago: The Polish Educational Foundation in North America, 1996), 127–36; and “Jewish-Polish Relations in Soviet-Occupied Eastern Poland, 1939–1941,” in *The Story of Two Shtetls, Brańsk and Ejszyski: An Overview of Polish-Jewish Relations in Northeastern Poland during World War II*, Part Two (Toronto and Chicago: The Polish Educational Foundation in North America, 1998), 173–230. The publisher would be grateful for additional accounts, and corrections, which should be forwarded to: CPC/Toronto (Obrona), 206 Beverley Street, Toronto, Ontario M5T 1Z3 (Canada).

²³ “‘Memories of Hell’: An Exchange,” *The New York Review of Books*, September 25, 1997.

CHAPTER ONE

Arrests, Executions and Deportations

Almost 13.5 million people resided in the eastern half of Poland seized by the Soviet Union in September 1939.²⁴ Of this number, approximately 4.5 million were ethnic Poles, roughly one third of the entire population. There were also over 5 million Ukrainians, perhaps 2 million Belorussians, about 1.4 million Jews (not including at least 200,000–300,000 Jewish refugees from the German zone²⁵), and much smaller groups of Russians, Germans, Lithuanians, and Czechs.²⁶ But the terror and repressions that ensued did not strike at these various groups in equal measure. Moreover, collaborators from among the national minorities, very often Jews, played a prominent role in the assault on the Poles, the first and primary victims of the Soviet invaders, who were targeted for arrest, execution or deportation to the Gulag.

As American historian Timothy Snyder has pointed out, it was the Soviet Union—and not Nazi Germany—that undertook the first shooting campaigns of internal enemies in the 1930s, and it was the Poles who were the first mass victims of the national operations of Stalin's Great Terror:

In the five years between the signing of the German-Polish declaration [of non-aggression] in January 1934 and the clear break in German-Polish relations that would come in January 1939, Poles in the Soviet Union were subjected to a campaign of ethnic cleansing. The first wave of deportations of Soviet Poles from border regions of the Soviet Ukraine and Soviet Belarus began a few weeks after the German-Polish declaration was signed and continued until 1936. The Polish communists in the Soviet Union were depicted as participants in a vast Polish conspiracy to undo the Soviet order. Their interrogation led to the "discovery" of this "plot,"

²⁴ The Soviet share of partitioned Poland amounted to 202,000 km², or about 51.5 percent of Poland's prewar territory. The best overview of the Soviet occupation of Eastern Poland and relations between its various ethnic groups is found in Tadeusz Piotrowski, *Poland's Holocaust: Ethnic Strife, Collaboration with Occupying Forces, and Genocide in the Second Republic, 1918–1947* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland, 1998), 7–21, 48–58, 77–82, 144–48, 160–63, 198–204.

²⁵ Estimates of the number of Jewish refugees vary widely, with one leading historian accepting the most reasonable number to be 300,000. See Dov Levin, *The Lesser of Two Evils: Eastern European Jewry Under Soviet Rule, 1939–1941* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1995), 18–21, 180. Soviet statistics give a figure of 72,896 refugees in Belorussia at the beginning of 1940, among them 65,796 Jews. However, in a report from the spring of 1940, a figure of 110,000 refugees is given. See Daniel Boćkowski, "Łosy Żydów uchodźców z centralnej i zachodniej Polski (bieżeńców) przebywających na terenie obwodu białostockiego w latach 1939–1941," *Studia Podlaskie*, vol. 16 (2006): 85–126, here at 120.

²⁶ The ethnic breakdown for this region is a matter of dispute. The best gauge is the 1931 census statistics based on religious affiliation: Latin-rite Roman Catholics being by and large Poles, Eastern-rite Roman Catholics being by and large Ukrainians, and Eastern Orthodox being either Belorussians or Ukrainians. The number (and proportion) of adherents of the various denominations is as follows: Wilno province—1,276,000, of whom 797,500 (62.5%) were Latin-rite Roman Catholics, 324,700 (25.4%) Eastern Orthodox, and 110,800 (8.7%) Jews; Nowogródek province—1,057,200, of whom 424,600 (40.2%) were Latin-rite Roman Catholics, 542,300 (51.3%) Eastern Orthodox, and 82,900 (7.8%) Jews; Białystok province—1,263,300, of whom 779,400 (61.7%) were Latin-rite Roman Catholics, 304,200 (24.1%) Eastern Orthodox, and 155,400 (12.3%) Jews; Polesie (Polesia) province—1,132,200, of whom 125,200 (11.1%) were Latin-rite Roman Catholics, 875,800 (77.4%) Eastern Orthodox, and 114,000 (10.1%) Jews; Wołyń (Volhynia) province—2,085,600, of whom 327,900 (15.7%) were Latin-rite Roman Catholics, 1,455,900 (69.8%) Eastern Orthodox, and 207,800 (10%) Jews; Tarnopol province—1,600,400, of whom 586,600 (36.7%) were Latin-rite Roman Catholics, 872,000 (54.5%) Eastern-rite Roman Catholics (Uniates), and 134,100 (8.4%) Jews; Lwów province—3,126,300, of whom 1,447,700 (46.3%) were Latin-rite Roman Catholics, 1,305,300 (41.8%) Eastern-rite Roman Catholics (Uniates), and 342,400 (11%) Jews; and Stanisławów province—1,480,300, of whom 246,000 (16.6%) were Latin-rite Roman Catholics, 1,079,000 (72.9%) Eastern-rite Roman Catholics (Uniates), and 139,700 (8.7%) Jews. Jews tended to be concentrated in towns and large cities. In Lwów, they accounted for 31.9 % of the population (about 100,000), while Latin-rite Roman Catholics comprised 50.4%, and Uniates 16%; in Wilno, Jews accounted for 28.2 % of the population (about 55,000), while Latin-rite Roman Catholics comprised 64.6%, and Eastern Orthodox 4.8%. Other large cities with sizeable Jewish populations were Białystok (43 percent), Baranowicze (42 percent), Równe (56 percent), Pińsk (63 percent), Kowel (46 percent), Grodno (43 percent), Brześć (44 percent), Łuck (49 percent), Tarnopol (40 percent), and Stanisławów (34 percent).

which then became the justification for the Polish Operation of 1937 and 1938—the largest and bloodiest of the Soviet ethnic actions during the Great Terror of those years. More than a hundred thousand Soviet citizens were shot as ostensible Polish spies. This was the largest peacetime ethnic shooting campaign in history.²⁷

In 1937 and 1938, a quarter of a million Soviet citizens were shot on essentially ethnic grounds. ... the Soviet Union in the late 1930s was a land of unequalled national persecutions. Even as the Popular Front [of the Comintern or Communist International] presented the Soviet Union as the homeland of toleration, Stalin ordered the mass killings of several Soviet nationalities. The most persecuted European national minority in the second half of the 1930s was not the four hundred thousand or so German Jews (the number declining because of emigration) but the six hundred thousand or so Soviet Poles (the number declining because of executions).

Stalin was a pioneer of national mass murder, and the Poles were the preeminent victim among the Soviet nationalities. The Polish national minority, like the kulaks, had to take the blame for the failures of collectivization. The rationale was invented during the famine itself in 1933, and then applied during the Great Terror in 1937 and 1938.

The Polish operation was in some respects the bloodiest chapter of the Great Terror in the Soviet Union. ... Of the 143,810 people arrested under the [false] accusation of espionage for Poland, 111,091 were executed. Not all of these were Poles, but most of them were. Poles were also targeted disproportionately in the kulak action, especially in Soviet Ukraine. Taking into account the number of deaths, the percentage of death sentences to arrests, and the risk of arrest, ethnic Poles suffered more than any other group within the Soviet Union during the Great Terror. By a conservative estimate, some eighty-five thousand Poles were executed in 1937 and 1938, which means that one-eighth of the 681,692 mortal victims of the Great Terror were Polish. This is a staggeringly high percentage, given that Poles were a tiny minority in the Soviet Union, constituting

²⁷ Timothy Snyder, *Black Earth: The Holocaust as History and Warning* (New York: Tim Duggan Books, 2015), 57.

fewer than 0.4 percent of the general population. Soviet Poles were about forty times more likely to die during the Great Terror than Soviet citizens generally.²⁸

Throughout the territory of Soviet Ukraine, which bordered Poland, Polish men were shot in large numbers in September 1938. In the city of Voroshilovgrad (today Luhansk), Soviet authorities considered 1,226 cases in the Polish Operation during the Czechoslovak crisis and ordered 1,226 executions. In September 1938, in the regions of Soviet Ukraine adjacent to the Polish border, Soviet units went from village to village as death

²⁸ Timothy Snyder, *Bloodlands: Europe Between Hitler and Stalin* (New York: Basic Books, 2010), 89, 103–4. By way of comparison, in a series of attacks on Jews throughout Nazi Germany and Austria on November 9–10, 1938, the so-called *Kristallnacht*, Jewish homes were ransacked, as were shops, towns and villages, as SA stormtroopers and civilians destroyed buildings with sledgehammers, leaving the streets covered in pieces of smashed windows—the origin of the name “Night of Broken Glass.” Ninety-one Jews were killed, and 30,000 Jewish men were taken to concentration camps where many were tortured before their release several months later, with over 1,000 of them dying. Some 1,668 synagogues were ransacked, and 267 set on fire. In Vienna alone 95 synagogues or houses of prayer were destroyed. See Martin Gilbert, *Kristallnacht: Prelude to Destruction* (New York: HarperCollins, 2006), 13–14, 30–33. According to Timothy Snyder’s *Bloodlands*:

In 1938, German oppression of Jews was much more visible than the national operations in the USSR, though its scale was much smaller. ... Between the ninth and eleventh of November 1938 [i.e., *Kristallnacht*], a few hundred Jews were killed (the official count was ninety-one), and thousands of shops and hundreds of synagogues destroyed. This was generally regarded in Europe, except by those who supported the Nazis, as a sign of barbarism.

The Soviet Union benefited from the public violence in Nazi Germany. ... Yet the Soviet Union had just engaged in a campaign of ethnic murder on a far larger scale. A week after *Kristallnacht*, the Great Terror was brought to an end, after some 247,157 Soviet citizens had been shot in the national operations. As of the end of 1938, the USSR had killed about a thousand times more people on ethnic grounds than had Nazi Germany. The Soviets had, for that matter, killed far more Jews to that point than had the Nazis. The Jews were targeted in no national action, but they still died in the thousands in the Great Terror—and for that matter during the famine in Soviet Ukraine. They died not because they were Jews, but simply because they were citizens of the most murderous regime of the day.

In the Great Terror, the Soviet leadership killed twice as many Soviet citizens as there were Jews living in Germany; but no one beyond the Soviet Union, not even Hitler, seemed yet to have grasped that mass shootings of this kind were possible. Certainly nothing of the kind was carried out in Germany before the war. After *Kristallnacht*, Jews entered the German concentration camp system in large numbers, for the first time. Hitler wished at this point to intimidate German Jews so that they would leave the country; the vast majority of the twenty-six thousand Jews who entered the concentration camps at this time left them again soon thereafter. More than one hundred thousand Jews left Germany in late 1938 or 1939. (Pp. 110–11.)

The Nazi repression of ... undesirable social groups required the creation of a network of German concentration camps. ... By comparison with the Gulag, these five camps were rather modest. While more than a million Soviet citizens toiled in the Soviet concentration camps and special settlements in late 1938, the number of German citizens in the German concentration camps was about twenty thousand. ...

Soviet terror, at this point, was not only on a far greater scale; it was incomparably more lethal. Nothing in Hitler’s Germany remotely resembled the execution of nearly four hundred thousand people in eighteen months, as under Order 00447 in the Soviet Union. [i.e., the so-called kulak operation]. In the years 1937 and 1938, 267 people were sentenced to death in Nazi Germany, as compared to 378,326 death sentences within the kulak operation alone in the Soviet Union. ... But even as the Soviet Union was killing class enemies, it was also killing ethnic enemies.

By the late 1930s, Hitler’s National Socialist regime was well known for its racism and anti-Semitism. But it was Stalin’s Soviet Union that undertook the first shooting campaigns of internal national enemies. (Pp. 86–87.)

Piłsudski’s heirs ... followed Piłsudski’s line: a policy of equal distance between Berlin and Moscow, with nonaggression pacts with both Nazi and the Soviet Union, but no alliance with either. On 26 January 1939 in Warsaw, the Poles turned down the German foreign minister, Joachim von Ribbentrop, one last time. In five years of trying, the Germans had failed to convince the Poles that it was in Poland’s interests to fight a war of aggression for Soviet territory—while granting Germany Polish territory and becoming a German satellite. This meant a German war not with Poland but against Poland—and against Poland’s Jews. (p. 113.)

In August 1939, Hitler responded to Stalin’s opening. Hitler wanted his war that year; he was far more flexible about the possible allies than about the issue of timing. If the Poles would not join in a war against the Soviet Union, then perhaps the Soviets would join in a war against Poland. ...

The two regimes immediately found common ground in their mutual aspiration to destroy Poland. Once

squads. Polish men were shot, Polish women and children were sent to the Gulag, and reports were filed afterward. In the Zhytomyr region, which bordered Poland, Soviet authorities sentenced 100 people to death on September 22, 138 more on September 23, and 408 more on September 28.²⁹

According to Soviet estimates, the “Polish Operation” of 1937–1938 cost the lives of 111,091 Poles. However, Tomasz Sommer shows that, according to the actual NKVD records, between 135,000 and 140,000 Poles perished. When actual population figures are compared with each other, the death toll reaches 200,000.³⁰ None of this would have been possible without Stalin’s willing executioners. In its epicentre in Soviet Ukraine, the Polish Operation was directed by NKVD chief Izrail Leplevskii and involved the participation of fellow Chekists like Lev Raikhman and Boris Berman.³¹

With the Soviet takeover of Eastern Poland, widespread arrests of Polish officials, political and community leaders, and police and military personnel followed. Special NKVD operational groups arrived with lists containing the names of at least 12,000 people slated for arrest as an anti-Soviet and counterrevolutionary element. Within the first few months of the occupation, by the end of 1939, almost 20,000 people, mostly Poles, were arrested.³² Several thousand Poles, mostly soldiers captured in September campaign, were simply murdered.³³ Some 250,000 Polish soldiers were taken as prisoners of war. As of December 1939, about 40,000 Polish military personnel remained in camps under the watchful eye of the NKVD, the security police.³⁴

Between September 1939 and March 1941, according to Soviet sources, 92,500 Polish citizens were arrested in Polish territories incorporated into the Ukrainian and Belorussian republics. The largest group by far were ethnic Poles, who accounted for almost 45 percent of all those arrested. Jews made up almost

²⁹ Snyder, *Black Earth*, 91–92.

³⁰ Tomasz Sommer, *Operacja Antypolska Akcja NKWD 1937–1938* (Warsaw: 3S Media, 2014), 347, 363.

³¹ Snyder, *Bloodlands*, 108.

³² Ciesielski, Hryciuk, and Srebrakowski, *Masowe deportacje ludności w Związku Radzieckim*, 208.

³³ Numerous examples are detailed in Ryszard Szawłowski [Karol Liszewski], *Wojna polsko-sowiecka 1939: Tło polityczne, prawnomiedzynarodowe i psychologiczne; Agresja sowiecka i polska obrona; Sowietkie zbrodnie wojenne i przeciw ludzkości oraz zbrodnie ukraińskie i białoruskie*, Second and third revised and expanded editions (Warsaw: Neriton, 1995; Warsaw: Antyk–Marcin Dybowski, 1997), vol. 1, 351–416.

³⁴ Aleksander Gurjanow, “Sowieckie represje wobec Polaków i obywateli polskich w latach 1936–1956 w świetle danych sowieckich,” in Krzysztof Jasiewicz, ed., *Europa nieprovincjonalna: Przemiany na ziemiach wschodnich dawnej Rzeczypospolitej (Białoruś, Litwa, Łotwa, Ukraina, wschodnie pogranicze III Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej) w latach 1772–1999* (Warsaw and London: Instytut Studiów Politycznych PAN, Rytm, and Polonia Aid Foundation Trust, 1999), 977. Some 22,500 Polish prisoners of war were shipped off to penal camps in the Soviet interior. Almost 15,000 Polish officers and officials were interned in Kozelsk, Ostashkov and Starobelsk. See Sławomir Kalbarczyk, “Zbrodnie sowieckie na obywatelach polskich w okresie wrzesień 1939–sierpień 1941: Próba oceny skali zjawiska oraz szacunku strat ludzkich,” *Pamięć i sprawiedliwość: Biuletyn Głównej Komisji Badania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu–Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej*, no. 39 (1996): 16–21, and 267–68 (English summary); Piotr Żaroń, *Obozy jeńców polskich w ZSRR w latach 1939–1941* (Warsaw and London: Unicorn, 1994), *passim*. According to a Jewish source, Jewish prisoners of war were told to go home, and the Poles were kept longer. See Rhoda G. Lewin, ed., *Witnesses to the Holocaust: An Oral History* (Boston: Twayne, 1990), 113.

25 percent, Ukrainians almost 23 percent, and Belorussians a little over eight percent.³⁵ At least 12,000 persons, mostly Poles, were arrested in September 1939 alone, based on lists of “anti-Soviet” and “counterevolutionary elements” drawn up in advance. In addition more than 250 Poles were arrested (out of a total of 348 arrested) in the Wilno area between September 19 and October 10 of that year, when the territory was ceded to Lithuania. By the end of 1939, the number of persons arrested had grown to 18,260. By June 1941, 108,000 persons had been arrested on Polish territories incorporated into the Belorussian and Ukrainian SSR—42,000 and 66,000 respectively. The largest group, by far, were ethnic Poles, who accounted for more than forty percent of all those arrested. Ukrainians accounted for 22.5 percent, Jews 22 percent, and Belorussians 7.5 percent of prisoners. (A further indication of who was being targeted in Soviet-occupied Eastern Poland is the ethnic breakdown for prisoners of war from the Polish army interned in a labour camp in Równe, Volhynia. In April 1940, of the 12,707 internees, 78.7 percent were Poles, 17.4 percent Belorussians, 2.1 percent Ukrainians, and 1.1 percent Jews.³⁶) Arrests continued throughout the month of June 1941, and Polish citizens were also arrested on Polish territories awarded to Lithuania. In total, as many 120,000 Polish citizens were arrested between September 1939 and June 1941.³⁷ These figures do not include prisoners-of-war (POWs) and civilians deported in 1940 and 1941.

Some 14,600 Polish officers and officials, who had been seized in September and October 1939 and held as prisoners-of-war in Kozelsk, Starobelsk, and Ostashkov (transliterated in Polish as Kozielsk, Starobielsk and Ostaszkow), were murdered in mass executions in Katyn, Kharkhov, and Kalinin (now Tver),

³⁵ See Agnieszka Knyt, et al., eds., *Aresztowani w rejonie Lwowa i Drohobycza: Alfabetyczny wykaz 5822 obywateli polskich aresztowanych przez NKWD w rejonie Lwowa i Drohobycza w latach 1939–1941* (Warsaw: Państwowe Archiwum Służby Bezpieczeństwa Ukrainy, Centralne Archiwum Ministerstwa Spraw Wewnętrznych i Administracji, and Ośrodek Karta, 1998), 10; Aleksander Gurjanow, “Sowieckie represje wobec Polaków i obywateli polskich w latach 1936–1956 w świetle danych sowieckich,” in Jasiewicz, *Europa nieprovincjonalna*, 977. See Józef Lewandowski, “Rosjanie o Europie Wschodniej i Polsce,” *Zeszyty Historyczne* (Paris), no. 126 (1998): 182. When it came to executions, however, Poles appeared to predominate. According to a report Beria prepared for Stalin on December 12, 1940, the number of persons arrested from September 1939 until December 1, 1940 totalled 407,000. See Adam D. Rotfeld and Anatolij W. Torkunow, *Białe plany, czarne plamy: Sprawy trudne w relacjach polsko-rosyjskich (1918–1920)* (Warsaw: Polski Instytut Spraw Międzynarodowych, 2008), 292.

³⁶ See Albin Głowacki, “Z archiwów postradzieckich: Jeńcy polscy w rówieńskim i lwowskim obozie pracy NKWD (wrzesień 1939 r.–kwiecień 1941 r.),” *Pamięć i sprawiedliwość: Biuletyn Głównej Komisji Badania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu–Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej*, no. 38 (1995): 226. (The figure for Belorussians in the predominantly Ukrainian region of Volhynia seems high.)

³⁷ According to incomplete research conducted by Russian historians at the Memorial Institute in Moscow, the number of persons arrested amounted to 66,500 in “Western Ukraine” and 42,700 in “Western Belorussia.” Poles accounted for more than 40 percent of those arrested, Jews 22 percent, Ukrainians 22.5 percent, and Belorussians 7.5 percent. (In March 1940, Poles accounted for more than 57% of all prisoners, but that proportion later dropped.) See Stanisław Ciesielski, ed., *Przesiedlenie ludności polskiej z Kresów Wschodnich do Polski 1944–1947* (Warsaw: Neriton and Instytut Historii PAN, 1999), 11; Stanisław Ciesielski, ed., *Przemiany narodowościowe na Kresach Wschodnich II Rzeczypospolitej 1931–1948* (Toruń: Adam Marszałek, 2003), 157, 165, 263–64; Ciesielski, Hryciuk, and Srebrakowski, *Masowe deportacje ludności w Związku Radzieckim*, 208, 321. These figures are based on the pioneering study of O.A. Gorlanov and A.B. Roginskii, “Ob arestakh v zapadnykh oblastiakh Belorussii i Ukrainy v 1939–1941 gg.,” in Aleksandr E. Gurianov, comp., *Repressii protiv poliakov i polskikh grazhdan* (Moscow: Zvenia, 1997), 77–113. See also Gurianov’s more recent publications: Aleksander Gurjanow, “Sowieckie represje wobec Polaków i obywateli polskich w latach 1936–1956 w świetle danych sowieckich,” in Jasiewicz, *Europa nieprovincjonalna*, 973; Aleksander Gurjanow, “Sowieckie represje polityczne na ziemiach wschodnich II Rzeczypospolitej w latach 1939–1941,” in Marcin Zwolski, ed., *Exodus: Deportacje i migracje (wątek wschodni). Stan i perspektywy badań* (Warsaw and Białystok: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej–Komisja Ścigania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu, 2008), 21–30.

respectively, in April and May of 1940.³⁸ With the release of Soviet documents to the Polish government in October 1992, it is now known that on March 5, 1940, the Politburo of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party, with Stalin's blessing, also ordered the execution of some 11,000 Poles (mostly prewar officials and functionaries) held in prisons in Polish territories incorporated into Soviet Ukraine and Belorussia. The Soviets managed to execute 21,900 of the approximately 25,000 persons condemned to death. Non-Poles were only exceptionally affected by this measure.

That Poles were the primary targets of Soviet repression, at least in the initial stages, is undeniable: Soviet documents indicate that over 97 percent of the prisoners slated for execution in Eastern Poland in the early part of 1940 were ethnic Poles.³⁹ Independent studies by the Katyn Family, an organization of family members of the victims, concluded that 98.1 percent of the prisoners of war interned in Kozelsk, Starobelsk, and Ostashkov as of February 28, 1940 were ethnic Poles.⁴⁰ Top secret NKVD reports confirm that ethnic Poles constituted about 97.4 percent of the prisoners Starobelsk and Kozelsk.⁴¹

Between October 1939 and June 1941 the Soviets exiled hundreds of thousands of civilians from Eastern Poland to the interior of the Soviet Union (mainly to Siberia, Kazakhstan and Arkhangelsk), where they ended up in penal- or forced-labour camps or were dumped into remote settlements and (less frequently) kolkhozes. Based on the NKVD's own figures, a total of between 330,000 and 340,000 civilians were deported in four large waves of deportations in 1940–1941. If other round-ups and categories of people are counted, the total number of those deported and arrested rises, by the most conservative of estimates, to between 400,000 and 500,000.⁴²

³⁸ There is an extensive bibliography about Katyn. See especially: J. [Janusz] K. Zawodny, *Death in the Forest: The Story of the Katyn Forest Massacre* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1962); Allen Paul, *Katyn: The Untold Story of Stalin's Polish Massacre* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1991); Allen Paul, *Katyn: Stalin's Massacre and the Seeds of Polish Resurrection* (Annapolis, Maryland: Naval Institute Press, 1996); Wojciech Materski, ed., *Katyn: Documents of Genocide* (Warsaw: Institute of Political Studies, Polish Academy of Sciences, 1993). Russian sources include Vladimir Abarinov, *The Murderers of Katyn* (New York: Hippocrene, 1993); and Nataliia Lebedeva, *Katyn: Prestuplenie protiv chelovechestva* (Moscow: Progress-Kultura, 1994).

³⁹ Louisa Vinton, "The Katyn Documents: Politics and History," *RFE/RL Research Report* 2, no. 4 (January 22, 1993): 19–31; David R. Shearer and Vladimir Khaustov, eds., *Stalin and the Lubianka: A Documentary History of the Political Police and Security Organs in the Soviet Union, 1922–1953* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2015), 248 (Document 142: Report of L.P. Beria to I.V. Stalin on imprisoned Polish military and police personnel, dated March 5, 1940). For confirmation of these statistics, see also Paczkowski, "Poland, the 'Enemy Nation,'" in Courtois, *The Black Book of Communism*, 369.

⁴⁰ See Czesław Partacz, *Kwestia ukraińska w polityce Polskiego Rządu na Uchodźstwie i jego ekspozytur w Kraju 1939–1945* (Koszalin: Wydawnictwo Uczelniane Politechniki Koszalińskiej, 2001), 194–95; Czesław Partacz and Krzysztof Łada, *Polska wobec ukraińskich dążeń niepodległościowych w czasie II wojny światowej* (Toruń: Centrum Edukacji Europejskiej, 2003), 170. According to this source, Jews made up 1.1 of the inmates of these three prisons: 71 Jews were held in Starobelsk, 89 in Kozelsk, and none in Ostashkov. In addition, these prisons held 51 Belorussians, 33 Ukrainians, and 16 Germans. Jewish sources, on the other hand, claim that as many as 700 Jews (i.e., almost five percent of the total number of victims) perished in these massacres. See Simon Schochet, "Polish Jewish Officers Who Were Killed in Katyn: An Ongoing Investigation in Light of Documents Recently Released by the USSR," in Lucjan Dobroszycki and Jeffrey S. Gurock, eds., *The Holocaust in the Soviet Union: Studies and Sources on the Destruction of the Jews in the Nazi-Occupied Territories of the USSR, 1941–1945* (Armonk, New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1993), 237–47; Simon Schochet, "Reflections on Soviet Documents Relating to Polish Prisoners of War Taken in September 1939," in *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry*, vol. 13 (2000): 73–77. One Polish survey estimates Jewish losses at between 500 and 600. See Sławomir Kalbarczyk, "Żydzi wśród ofiar zbrodni sowieckich w latach 1939–1941: Zarys problematyki," *Pamięć i sprawiedliwość: Biuletyn Głównej Komisji Badania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu–Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej*, no. 40 (1997–1998): 176, 194.

⁴¹ Anna M. Cienciala, Natalia S. Lebedeva, and Wojciech Masterski, eds., *Katyn: A Crime Without Punishment* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2007), 112–13.

⁴² Paczkowski, "Poland, the 'Enemy Nation,'" in Courtois, *The Black Book of Communism*, 372.

According to Soviet sources, the breakdown for the three massive waves of deportations carried out in the first half of 1940 is as follows: at least 140,000 persons were deported on February 10 (of whom almost 82 percent were ethnic Poles, with Ukrainians and Belorussians each accounting for around 8 percent), 60,000 on April 13 (again mostly Poles), and 80,000 on June 29 of that year (mostly Jews). The first wave comprised above all interwar settlers, both military and civilian, and foresters and their families; the second wave targeted the families of those who had been arrested and deported earlier, such as soldiers, policemen and “counter-revolutionaries”; the third wave consisted of refugees, mostly Jews, from German-occupied Poland. Final large-scale deportations of civilians took place on May 21 (from “Western Ukraine”), June 14 (from the Baltic States), and June 19, 1941 (from “Western Belorussia”), but the last of these was cut short by the unexpected German invasion on June 22, 1941. At least 40,000 people were affected, including almost 4,000 Poles deported from Polish territories incorporated into Lithuania.⁴³

(The statistics for civilian deportees cited above are based on Soviet records released after the collapse of the Soviet Union and may understate their number. They should be treated as the *minimum* number of

⁴³ “Sprawozdanie z dyskusji dotyczącej liczby obywateli polskich wywiezionych do Związku Sowieckiego w latach 1939–1941,” *Studia z dziejów Rosji i Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej*, vol. 31 (1996): 117–48; Daniel Boćkowski, *Czas nadziei: Obywatele Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej w ZSRR i opieka nad nimi placówek polskich w latach 1940–1943* (Warsaw: Neriton and Instytut Historii PAN, 1999), 51–92; Aleksander Gurjanow, “Sowieckie represje wobec Polaków i obywateli polskich w latach 1936–1956 w świetle danych sowieckich,” in Jasiewicz, *Europa nieprovincjonalna*, 978–79; N.S. Lebedeva, “The Deportation of the Polish Population to the USSR, 1939–41,” *The Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics*, vol. 16, nos. 1/2 (March/June 2000): 28–45; Ciesielski, Hryciuk, and Srebrakowski, *Masowe deportacje ludności w Związku Radzieckim*, 206–261, 333; Grzegorz Hryciuk, “Victims 1939–1941: The Soviet Repressions in Eastern Poland,” in Barkan, Cole, and Struve, *Shared History, Divided Memory*, 173–200; N.L. Pobol and Pavel M. Polian, eds., *Stalinskie deportatsii: 1928–1953* (Moscow: Mezhdunarodnii fond “Demokratiia,” 2005), 106. Józef Lewandowski summarizes the research conducted by Russian historians as follows: “There were four [civilian] deportations: February 10, April 13 and June 29, 1940, and in May and June of 1941. In total, 270,000 people were expelled, of whom 60 percent were residents of the occupied territories (in turn, 82–83 percent of these were Poles), and 40 percent were refugees [from Western and Central Poland]. Jews constituted 82–84 percent of the latter category [i.e., refugees]. Then there was a further deportation just before the outbreak of the German-Soviet war ... comprising between 34,000 and 44,000 Polish citizens. Altogether 314,000–325,000 people were deported. ... As of August 1, 1941, there were 381,000 Polish prisoners and deportees in the Soviet Union, of whom 335,000 were deportees and their families.” See Józef Lewandowski, “Rosjanie o Europie Wschodniej i Polsce,” *Zeszyty Historyczne*, no. 126 (1998): 182–83. In addition to these deportees, there were also (former) Polish citizens who had escaped to the Soviet Union (mostly Jews) or who had been conscripted into the Soviet army, and those who had been taken or volunteered for work in the Soviet interior. Rafał Wnuk provides the following summary: “According to official, but probably incomplete Soviet data, during the Soviet occupation of 1939–41, the secret police deported about 315,000 Polish citizens into the Soviet interior, mainly to Siberia and Kazakhstan. Among them were 181,200 (57.5 percent), 69,000 Jews (21.9 percent), 32,900 Ukrainians (10.4 percent), and 24,000 Belarussians (7.6 percent). About 100,000 Polish citizens, some 60 percent of whom were ethnic Poles, were detained in prison. The chances of arrest or deportation were quite high, especially for Poles. Jews were more likely even than Poles to be arrested and deported, although the vast majority of Jewish victims were not locals, but rather those who had fled the German occupation.” See Rafał Wnuk, “The Polish Underground under Soviet Occupation, 1939–1941,” in Snyder, Timothy, and Ray Brandon, eds. *Stalin and Europe: Imitation and Domination, 1928–1953* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 108.

documented casualties.⁴⁴ Polish wartime estimates ran significantly higher and counted a million or more civilian deportees: 220,000 in February, 320,000 in April, and 240,000 in June 1940, and between 200,000 and 300,000 in May–June 1941.)

Various other deportations, smaller in scale, resulted in the expulsion of an additional 50,000 civilians. Nor do these statistics include some 22,500 deported prisoners of war or the 80,000–90,000 people arrested for political reasons and detained in prisons in Eastern Poland, about half of whom were eventually deported to forced labour camps.⁴⁵ While it is impossible to compute with certainty the number of Polish citizens who suffered deportation and other forms of repression, after an extensive analysis of all available sources, historian Daniel Boćkowski estimates that approximately 750,000–780,000 Polish citizens found themselves in the Soviet interior.⁴⁶ Russian historian Aleksandr Gurianov gives the following breakdown of persons repressed between 1939–1941⁴⁷:

Category	Number of persons: Repressed	Killed	Died
Prisoners-of-war	45,000	14,600	2,300
Arrested	108 – 112,000	18,500	7,100 ?
Deported (February 1940)	141,000		12,200
Deported (April 1940)	61,000		1,500 ?

⁴⁴ For challenges to the Soviet figures, see “Sprawozdanie z dyskusji dotyczącej liczby obywateli polskich wywiezionych do Związku Sowieckiego w latach 1939–1941,” *Studia z dziejów Rosji i Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej*, vol. 31 (1996): 117–48; Małgorzata Giżejewska, “Deportacje obywateli polskich z ziem północno-wschodnich II Rzeczypospolitej w latach 1939–1941,” in Tomasz Strzembosz, ed., *Studia z dziejów okupacji sowieckiej (1939–1941): Obywatele polscy na Kresach Północno-Wschodnich II Rzeczypospolitej pod okupacją sowiecką w latach 1939–1941* (Warsaw: Instytut Studiów Politycznych PAN), 87–88; Marek Jan Chodakiewicz, “Losy Sybiraków: Rozważania o metodologii badań nad czystkami etnicznymi na okupowanych przez Związek Sowiecki ziemiach polskich, 1939–1947,” *Glaukopis: Pismo społeczno-historyczne*, no. 4 (2006): 74–96. Even though they are widely accepted as generally reliable, it should be noted that there are significant discrepancies between the various statistics found in the Soviet archives. According to NKVD operational reports, 80,653 persons were deported in June 1940 (57,774 from Western Ukraine and 22,879 from Western Belorussia), whereas the NKVD Convoy Armies’ figures are lower: 76,246 (52,617 from Western Ukraine and 23,629 from Western Belorussia). However, these figures pertain to families and individual deportees are listed separately and totalled 16,617 (9,275 from Western Ukraine and 7,342 from Western Belorussia). Thus, the total number of deportees amounted to either 97,270 (NKVD operational reports) or 92,863 (NKVD Convoy Armies’ figures). See Daniel Boćkowski, “Losy Żydów uchodźców z centralnej i zachodniej Polski (bieżeńców) przebywających na terenie obwodu białostockiego w latach 1939–1941,” *Studia Podlaskie*, vol. 16 (2006): 85–126, here at 121–22. For additional discrepancies (underreporting), see Omer Bartov, *Anatomy of a Genocide: The Life and Death of a Town Called Buczacz* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2018), 341.

⁴⁵ Kalbarczyk, “Zbrodnie sowieckie na obywatelach polskich w okresie wrzesień 1939–sierpień 1941: Próba oceny skali zjawiska oraz szacunku strat ludzkich,” *Pamięć i sprawiedliwość*, no. 39 (1996): 33, 267.

⁴⁶ Boćkowski, *Czas nadziei*, 92, 377, 474. A recent source provides the following breakdown:

The impact of the forced migrations conducted between 1939 and 1941 on the territories occupied by the Soviets was gruesome: 309,000–327,000 people were deported eastwards in four consecutive waves. One third of the approximately 110,000 Polish citizens arrested in this period were taken to gulags, deep inside the USSR. Some 45,000 soldiers, officers and policemen, captured by the Red Army in September 1939, found themselves in prisoner-of-war camps. It is estimated that during the years 1939–41 around 100,000 Polish citizens were drafted into the Soviet Army and about 50,000 were sent to forced labour camps, chiefly in the Donbas mines. Considerable numbers of Polish citizens were also relocated to Soviet republics neighbouring Poland. Overall, the various forms of forced migrations in the territories conquered by the Soviets between 1939 and 1941 affected a total of some 700,000 people.

See Pertti Ahonen, Gustavo Corni, Jerzy Kochanowski, Rainer Schulze, Tamás Stark, and Barbara Stelzl-Marx, *People on the Move: Forced Population Movements in Europe in the Second World War and Its Aftermath* (Oxford and New York: Berg, 2008), 26.

⁴⁷ Aleksander Gurjanow, “Sowieckie represje polityczne na ziemiach wschodnich II Rzeczypospolitej w latach 1939–1941,” in Zwolski, ed., *Exodus*, 23.

Deported (June 1940)	76 – 79,000		2,200
Deported (May – June 1941)	31 – 52,000		?
Total	462 – 490,000	33,100	25,300+?

Gurianov's statistics only cover deaths that occurred prior to the amnesty of Polish deportees at the end of August 1941. Deaths among the deportees who were released by the Soviets subsequently increased because of the spread of diseases. However, regional studies from the Białystok region show that the death rate among deportees from individual localities examined was closer to 20 percent.⁴⁸

The harshest deportation by far was the one carried out in the winter of 1940 when temperatures fell to minus 40°C. Entire families were rounded up and driven to nearby train stations. People, especially children, froze in the unheated cattle cars onto which they were loaded and many died from diseases. After arriving at the places of their forced resettlement in the dead of winter, in one settlement half of the deportees fell sick and ten percent of the population died in the space of one month.⁴⁹

Jan Tomasz Gross describes the harsh conditions in which the deportations took place.

The population of Soviet-occupied Poland was unprepared for the cruelty of the deportations. People were usually awakened in the early morning hours by squads of soldiers and local militiamen, given little time to pack, and quickly driven to the nearest railway station. There, freight trains awaited them. They froze in unheated cattle cars in February [1940] and suffocated in the June heat four months later. They were locked in for weeks with only meager rations of food and water, with a hole in the car's floor for all facilities. Men, women and children of all ages were mixed together. Because even the sick and aged, as well as newborn infants, were put on the trains—there were no exemptions from the deportation order—many died, and corpses traveled with the living before being discarded at some railway stop ...

But the horrors of the journey were only a prelude to the misery of everyday life that awaited the deportees at their destination—filth and overcrowded living quarters, hunger, cold, disease, and slave labor.⁵⁰

The February 1940 deportees also experienced the worst conditions in their forced exile, as they were slated chiefly for forestry and mining in the far north, western Siberia and the Krasnoyarsk and Altai territories. "Those designated for work in the forests were usually placed in so called 'special settlements', rigorously overseen by the NKVD. These deportees dwelled in primitive barracks, with more than ten families in each."⁵¹

⁴⁸ Jan Jerzy Milewski, "Deportacje z Białostockiego w latach okupacji sowieckiej (1939–1941)," in Zwolski, ed., *Exodus*, 39.

⁴⁹ Jan Tomasz Gross and Irena Grudzińska-Gross, *W czterdziestym nas Matko na Sybir zesłali...: Polska a Rosja 1939–42* (London: Aneks, 1983), 66.

⁵⁰ Irena Grudzińska-Gross and Jan Tomasz Gross, eds. and comp., *War Through Children's Eyes: The Soviet Occupation of Poland and the Deportations, 1939–1941* (Stanford, California: Hoover Institution Press, 1981), xxiii.

⁵¹ Ahonen, et al., *People on the Move*, 125.

Many of the civilian deportees, especially children—perhaps as many as one quarter of the total number—perished as a result of harsh conditions en route and in exile in the Gulag.⁵² Russian historian Nataliia Lebedeva writes:

People were transported in temperatures of 25–30 degrees of frost in badly heated railway carriages and with little to eat. In its summary report, the Main Administration of the Escort Troops described how a hundred trains of colonists with armed convoys were transported:

The work of the units in carrying out their tasks proceeded in extremely complex and therefore difficult conditions: severe winter weather prevailed; contingents of deportees were settled in small groups in various regions; orders were received to load and dispatch all the trains in one day; railway cars had to be shifted from narrow to broad gauge; there was an absence of service facilities and the convoy troops were obliged to feed themselves by forced requisitions at the railway station canteens; food supplies were irregular, and so forth.

People already began to die en route.

The commissariat made virtually no preparations for receiving deportees. Frequently, on arrival people found no shelter and were not provided with any food, all of which also contributed to the high death rate. But even where housing was made available, two or three families lived in one room, or 15 to 20 families lived in a barracks without partitions. According [First Lieutenant of Security] Konradov, the average living space did not exceed one or two square metres per person ...

Out of a total of 139,000 deportees there were only 33,000 men above 18 years of age; the rest were women and children. Among the men there were many who were old and sick. ... Out of 139,000 deportees transported in February 1940, 6,432 were dead by the end of the year—that is 4.6 per cent; by August 1941, only 131,938 were still alive.⁵³

The deportations were based in large measure on lists compiled with the assistance of collaborators from among the local population, principally Ukrainians, Belorussians and Jews. These minorities, in their role as militia and in other official capacities, also helped to identify, track down and apprehend their neighbours who were slated for deportation. Nataliia Lebedeva explains the elaborate planning, mechanisms and massive personnel in place to effect this enormous operation:

⁵² According to another, more modest estimate, the overall losses were closer to ten percent. See Kalbarczyk, “Zbrodnie sowieckie na obywatelach polskich w okresie wrzesień 1939–sierpień 1941: Próba oceny skali zjawiska oraz szacunku strat ludzkich,” *Pamięć i sprawiedliwość*, no. 39 (1996): 24. See also Boćkowski, *Czas nadziei*, 154–63. Statistics on the death rate of deportees, both during their voyage and in exile in the Soviet interior, are understandably very imprecise. For attempts to quantify certain aspects of this matter see Ciesielski, Hryciuk, and Srebrakowski, *Masowe deportacje ludności w Związku Radzieckim*, 222, 237, 245, 250. Another source provides the following summary:

Hunger and general hardship caused many losses during the first months of the deportations, particularly among children and the elderly. Vitamin deficiency and dystrophy were the most frequent causes of death. The precise number of fatalities among the deportees is still unknown, but it was considerably lower than the estimates of 300,000 to 900,000 that still circulate in Poland. According to official data, the deportees of February 1940 suffered 10,864 fatalities, i.e., 7.7 per cent. Of those deported in June, some 1,900 died, i.e., 2.4 per cent. In the deportations of April 1940 the death rate was probably no higher than 2.5 per cent. Hence, one can assume that up to mid-1941 the number of the deceased was approximately 15,000. Somewhat paradoxically, the death rate rose sharply after August 1941, when the deportees were released because of the so-called ‘amnesty’ ... This was caused by a general deterioration of living conditions in the USSR following the German invasion.

See Pertti Ahonen, et al., *People on the Move*, 126.

⁵³ N.S. Lebedeva, “The Deportation of the Polish Population to the USSR, 1939–41,” *The Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics*, vol. 16, nos. 1/2 (March/June 2000): 34–35. NKVD reports state that from the time of their arrival in the remote settlements until January 1941, 6,432 people died, or 4.6% of the deportees, and that by July 1941, the death toll climbed by 4,125 to 10,557, that is to 7.6%. However, other sources point to a higher mortality rate. Based on the information gathered in the compilation Teresa Jeśmanowa, ed., *Stalin’s Ethnic in Eastern Poland: Tales of the Deported, 1940–1946* (London: Association of the Families of the Borderland Settlers, 2000; London: Veritas Foundation, 2008), 20–21, dealing with a total of 657 people from military settlers families, it is estimated that between 1940 and the final months of the war, 114 people died, that is 17.4% or on average 4% per year. Since almost all of these families left the Soviet Union in 1942, whereupon their material condition improved significantly, the mortality rate during the time of exile in the Soviet interior was in excess of 5% per year.

The deportations were carried out in a single day by lists prepared in advance by the NKVD. The operations were led by three-men teams each in charge of an operational group. Advanced planning designated the routes to the designated reception points. The operational groups assembled on the eve of the deportations and no one was permitted to leave the headquarters even for a minute. The leader of the operational group studied the make-up of each of the two or three families entrusted to him, the approaches to the house and the intelligence reports on military colonists. The operation was to begin at dawn in order to avoid ‘unnecessary clamour and panic’, and the stations were to be surrounded by the escort troops.⁵⁴

Although the later waves of deportations (from June 1940 on) included many Jews (around 70,000) and smaller numbers of Ukrainians (around 25,000), Belorussians (around 20,000), and Lithuanians, an absolute majority—in fact, more than 70 percent—of those exiled to the Gulag—some 250,000 of the approximately 350,000 civilian deportees accounted for in Soviet sources—were ethnic Poles. (As noted earlier, however, Poles constituted an overall minority in Eastern Poland, roughly one third of the total population.) The claim that proportionally more Jews were deported than Poles is therefore not borne out by Soviet statistics. (Jews accounted for roughly twenty percent of the deportees, whereas their share of the population was slightly in excess of ten percent.)

The vast majority of Jews deported to the Soviet interior were not targeted because of any political activities or their ethnic or religious status. The largest group was, in fact, refugees from the German-occupied areas of Poland. They accounted for approximately 62 percent of Jewish civilian deportees. Thus only a small portion of the estimated 200,000–300,000 Jewish refugees from the German zone fell victim to Soviet repressions. (According to a Jewish refugee, initially, Jewish refugees were treated better than Polish ones.⁵⁵) By decree of November 29, 1939, Soviet citizenship was “granted” automatically to the residents of Poland’s annexed Eastern *Bordelands*; however, refugees from central and western Poland had to apply for Soviet citizenship. Rather than doing this, tens of thousands of Jewish refugees registered for “repatriation” to the German zone at the German offices set up for this purpose in the early part of 1940, in accordance with the terms of the German-Soviet Boundary and Friendship Treaty. By that time, many Jewish refugees had become disillusioned with conditions in the Soviet zone and were no longer terrified at the prospect of living under German rule. Returning to their homes meant reuniting with their families and safeguarding their economic interests, which at that time was uppermost in their minds. (The alternative of taking out Soviet citizenship, it was believed, would result in losing the property left behind in the German zone.) Some 1,600 Jews were allowed to return to the German sector before the Germans abruptly put a stop to this charade.⁵⁶

Quite unexpectedly, those who had lined up in droves to register later faced deportation to the Soviet interior since the Soviets had taken careful note of them. It should be stressed that the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany were firm allies at that time and that the Jews who expressed their readiness to return to the German zone had no reason to believe that they were doing anything that would cause them to become

⁵⁴ N.S. Lebedeva, “The Deportation of the Polish Population to the USSR, 1939–41,” *The Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics*, vol. 16, nos. 1/2 (March/June 2000): 34.

⁵⁵ Piotr Szubarczyk, “Historia życia Michała Zammela,” *Biuletyn Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej*, no. 11 (November 2005): 76–85, here at 79.

⁵⁶ Paczkowski, “Poland, the ‘Enemy Nation,’” in Courtois, *The Black Book of Communism*, 372; Ciesielski, *Przemiany narodowościowe na Kresach Wschodnich II Rzeczypospolitej 1931–1948*, 153–54; Ciesielski, Hryciuk, and Srebrakowski, *Masowe deportacje ludności w Związku Radzieckim*, 229–31; Grzegorz Hryciuk, “Przemiany demograficzne w Galicji Wschodniej w latach 1939–1941,” in Piotr Chmielowiec, ed., *Okupacja sowiecka ziem polskich (1939–1941)* (Rzeszów and Warsaw: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej—Komisja Ścigania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu, 2005), 117; Grzegorz Hryciuk, *Przemiany narodowościowe i ludnościowe w Galicji Wschodniej i na Wołyniu w latach 1931–1948* (Toruń: Adam Marszałek, 2005), 173–74. According to German sources 164,000 persons had registered for repatriation: 93,000 in Przemyśl and Lwów, 30,000 in Włodzimierz Wołyński and Kowel, and 41,000 in Brześć. According to partial Soviet figures, of the almost 39,000 persons who registered in Lwów by the end of March 1940, 26,068 were Jews and 12,348 were Poles. More than eighty percent of the refugees (95% among Poles) opted to return to their homes in the German zone. By the end of May 1940, more than 54,000 persons had registered in Lwów, of whom 45,200 wished to return to the German zone, and 8,925 wanted to remain in the Soviet Union. In total 66,000 people (approximately 90% of them Poles) were eventually allowed to leave, among them 1,600 Jews. Some 100,000 were refused admission by Germany, but not all of these persons were deported to the Soviet interior in June 1940.

politically suspect. Having “self-identified” as it were, Soviet authorities had ready and accurate lists to strike and moved quickly. Some 43,000 Jewish refugees were rounded up in June 1940 and shipped to the Gulag, accounting for approximately 62 percent of all Jewish civilian deportees.⁵⁷ Thus only a small portion of the estimated 200,000–300,000 Jewish refugees from the German zone fell victim to Soviet repressions. Ironically, since the vast majority of Jews deported to the Soviet interior survived the war and this proved to be their salvation from the Holocaust, pro-Soviet propaganda turned this unanticipated and unintended consequence into a “rescue” operation on behalf of endangered Jews.⁵⁸

Most of the Jews imprisoned by the Soviets were arrested for crossing the German-Soviet border illegally, in both directions,⁵⁹ or for engaging in illicit trade (smuggling), speculation and other shady economic activities, which assumed enormous proportions in the Soviet zone, and suffered deportation on

⁵⁷ Kalbarczyk, “Żydzi wśród ofiar zbrodni sowieckich w latach 1939–1941,” *Pamięć i sprawiedliwość*, no. 40 (1997–1998): 189.

⁵⁸ The precise number of Jews from interwar Poland who found refuge in the Soviet interior during the Second World War is not known. Estimates vary from about 157,000 to 385,000, with a probable minimum of 220,000. According to a recent study:

Of the formerly Polish Jews, some 68,000–71,000 were deported before 22 June 1941 and another 23,600 arrested; perhaps 10,000–21,000 were drafted into the Red Army. To these altogether 101,600–115,600 who had been coercively removed from the path of the Wehrmacht, we need to add 40,000–53,000 who volunteered to work in the Soviet hinterland before the Nazi storm broke over Soviet lands. At a minimum, then, 141,600 and maybe as many as 168,600 were thus saved from the German Einsatzgruppen. In addition, perhaps 210,000 Jews evacuated or fled east once the Germans attacked. These figures mean that, at the very least, 146,100 and as many as 384,600 were saved from the Holocaust by the often harsh haven of the Soviet Union. This range is consistent with the figure of 200,000–230,000 used by many recent historians. As [Mark] Edele and [Wanda] Warlik show in their analysis of these numbers, the lower of the two series is clearly too low.

The most conservative estimate, then, would be for, at the very least, 157,000 Jews from Poland who would not have survived the Nazi genocide had it not been for the existence of Stalin’s state: 6,000 escaped via the transit route to Vladivostok or to Odessa; 6,000–7,000 left with the Anders army in 1942 via Iran; and between 145,000 and 163,000 repatriated after the war. Including those who remained in the Soviet Union and taking into account higher estimates, their maximum number might have been as high as 375,000, but was more likely somewhere in between these two signposts. Defying critics of such “category creep,” we could call these 157,000–375,000 “Holocaust survivors.”

See Mark Edele, Sheila Fitzpatrick, and Atina Grossmann, eds., *Shelter from the Holocaust: Rethinking Jewish Survival in the Soviet Union* (Detroit: Wayne State University, 2017), 15, 123.

⁵⁹ Ciesielski, *Przemiany narodowościowe na Kresach Wschodnich II Rzeczypospolitej 1931–1948*, 161; Krzysztof Jasiewicz, *Rzeczywistość sowiecka 1939–1941 w świadectwach polskich Żydów* (Warsaw: Instytut Studiów Politycznych PAN and Rytm, 2009), 76–78. Crossing the border illegally both into and out of the Soviet Union occurred on a massive scale. It became an organized activity that flourished in some border villages, employing Polish agents and carriers. See Michael Krupa, *Shallow Graves in Siberia* (London: Minerva Press, 1995), 40. One Jew who fled from central Poland to the Soviet zone recalled how a Soviet-Jewish official led him and his colleagues to believe that they would be allowed to remain and then had them deported to the German zone. After a later, successful, escape to the Soviet zone, this individual, along with some colleagues, again crossed the Bug River (the Soviet-German demarcation line) at great risk to return to his home in the German zone. See Stanisław Szmażnierz, *Inferno em Sobibor: A trágica de um adolescente judeu* (Rio de Janeiro: Edições Bloch, 1968), 33, 38–39.

those accounts.⁶⁰ According to some sources, the extent of these activities caused the Soviets to view all of

⁶⁰ The legendary Polish courier Jan Karski takes note of this widespread phenomenon in his famous report about conditions in the Soviet zone, cited later on in the text, in which he wrote: "The Jews ... are playing an important role ... above all in commerce, both legal and illegal, loansharking and profiteering, illegal trade, contraband, foreign currency exchange, liquor, immoral pursuits, pimping and procurement." Israeli historian Dov Levin also writes about this widespread phenomenon: "Some of the [Jewish] refugees ... began to slip into the German occupation zone, returning with various commodities that Soviet clerks and soldiers would snap up at any price. Some local residents began to resent and envy the refugees for their speculative commerce and excessive purchases of staples, which caused prices to skyrocket. Similarly, refugees were increasingly resentful of the local Jewish population treating them 'like bums.'" Levin continues, "many Jews became victims of the new regime's struggle against the perpetrators of 'black market' dealings and other economic offenses. ... Often those who accepted salaried jobs ... were inclined to dip into government property and trade in it. This further widened the circle of black marketeers. Another factor in the persecution of economic offenders was personal revenge. For example, a Jewish shoemaker in Nezhvish [Nieśwież] informed on a Jewish competitor ...; the latter was sentenced to a year in prison." See Levin, *The Lesser of Two Evils*, 185, 271–72. According to a report prepared by a special Soviet commission, "Tens of thousands of refugees passed through Białystok. Since November 22, 1939, 56,687 people registered with the Refugee Affairs Committee of the Municipal Executive Committee ... 4,324 people claimed membership in the Communist Party of Poland, the Communist Party of Western Belorussia and the komsomol. ... Most of the refugees belonged to the unemployed element, or were profiteers, black-marketeers trafficking in foreign currencies, and ordinary spies." See Daniel Boćkowski, "Masowe deportacje ludności polskiej z tak zwanej Zachodniej Białorusi jesienią 1939 roku," in Jasiewicz, *Europa nieprowincjonalna*, 987. Confirmation of the vast extent of speculative market activities in Białystok can be found in Jewish wartime accounts. See Żbikowski, *Archiwum Rigelbluma*, vol. 3, 69–106, 309, also cited in Andrzej Żbikowski, *U genezy Jedwabnego: Żydzi na Kresach Północno-Wschodnich II Rzeczypospolitej. Wrzesień 1939–lipiec 1941* (Warsaw: Żydowski Instytut Historyczny, 2006), 37–38. Historian Evgenii S. Rozenblat quotes a Soviet document on the conduct of Jewish refugees in Slonim: "In the majority of recorded cases, when [Jewish] refugees leave town, they hang about on the roads the entire day, catch peasants taking their products—butter, eggs, fruits, etc.—to market in town, buy up [the products] at a more reasonable price, and then carry them off to market and sell them at prices that are 2–3 times more expensive. As a consequence, products at the market have risen in price. For example, eggs from 3 rub. 50 kop./10 to 8–9 rub., meat from 6 rub. to 10–12 rub./kg, etc." See Barkan, Cole, and Struve, *Shared History, Divided Memory*, 217. Tellingly, all of the offenders referred to in the reports about illegal black market activities in the Lwów communist newspaper *Czerwony Sztandar* in November 1939 were Jews. See Nowak, *Przemilczane zbrodnie*, 227. The activities of Jewish black-market currency dealers in Lwów were so notorious that they received special mention in a British diplomatic report filed in February 1940. See Bogusław Gogol and Jacek Trebinka, "Wizyta brytyjskich dyplomatów we Lwowie na początku 1940 r.," *Dzieje Najnowsze*, no. 4 (2001): 150. Blatant examples of black marketeering and transborder smuggling can be found in numerous memoirs and testimonies: Sam Halpern, *Darkness and Hope* (New York: Shengold Publishers, 1996), 41–46; Ronald J. Berger, *Constructing a Collective Memory of the Holocaust: A Life History of Two Brothers' Survival* (Niwot: University Press of Colorado, 1995), 29–30; Maciej Siekierski and Feliks Tych, eds., *Widziałem anioła śmierci: Losy deportowanych Żydów polskich w ZSRR w latach II wojny światowej: Świadectwa zebrane przez Ministerstwo Informacji i Dokumentacji Rządu Polskiego na Uchodźstwie w latach 1942–1943* (Warsaw: Rosner i Wspólnicy and Żydowski Instytut Historyczny; Stanford: Hoover Institution on War, Revolution and Peace, 2006), 289. News of this behaviour soon reached Warsaw. Jewish chronicler Chaim Kaplan devotes considerable attention to this matter in his wartime diary. Under the date November 27, 1939, he records: "In tens of thousands our youths flee to this 'Russia' ... At first they were well received. As a persecuted group they were considered excellent material for Bolshevism. But the stream was endless, and in the swelling stream, elements not at all desirable for Bolshevism entered. Finally the Soviet government noticed them. True Bolshevism cannot live side by side with financiers, middlemen, black marketeers, exploiters, and extortionists. ... And the effects are already noticeable. The border has been closed. Along the border, barbed-wire fences are being erected, and border smugglers are being shot. Speculators are under surveillance and can look forward to severe punishment. I do not feel for them in their 'troubles,' God forbid, but my heart aches to see that thousands of other Jewish refugees must be punished, not for their own crimes but for the sins of their evil brethren." Under the date December 23, 1939, Kaplan writes: "The Soviet commission to arrange for Slavic migration has begun to function. Long, snake-like lines stand before its door and wait to enter. But most of those waiting in line are Jews. Slavs do not come in large numbers. Whether there is a formal prohibition excluding Jews from this organized migration I don't know, but there is a grudge in the Soviet heart against Jewish emigrants who are Polish-born, of that there is no doubt. To my great sorrow, I must admit that 'we have truly sinned.' The bad behavior of some of our people in the border towns which were annexed to Russia has made us all hated and unwanted even in the eyes of the Russian government, which does not discriminate against peoples and whose basic attitudes are generally humane [sic] toward

the refugees with suspicion.⁶¹ A much smaller number of Jews, the well-to-do capitalists and some prewar political activists, were labelled “class enemies” and deported for that reason. As Yehuda Bauer notes,

Only a relatively small proportion of local Jews were deported—prominent prewar local politicians and intellectuals and wealthy individuals. Even most of those managed to stay by taking advantage of the corrupt nature of the regime.⁶²

Occasionally, Jewish Communists who fled to the Soviet zone found that their love for the Soviet Union was unrequited and faced deportation to the Soviet interior, despite their anti-Polish leanings.

My uncle, Stanislaw [Stanisław] Lubelski, was a teacher, a great communist. He took his son Tadzio and his nephew, the son of my other aunt Rosalia (Rozia [Rózia]), and he stayed in Lwow [Lwów]. He studied Russian. He was going to be the number one citizen of Russia. The Russians came in the night and sent him to Siberia ... Just like that—a communist! ...

My uncle Lubelski was not only in the Party. He was active, a big communist, and he would do anything possible against the Polish government. He was really something. He turned all the students into communists.⁶³

⁶¹ In Grodno, for example, where it is estimated that about half of the 4,000 refugees from the German zone were exiled to the Soviet interior, “Many of the refugees ... tried to make a living from illegal commerce, including smuggling. As a result, the authorities began to view the refugees as hostile elements. Moreover, their interest in the German-occupied area and their attempts to make contact with relatives who remained there aroused the suspicions of the Soviet security authorities. In the spring of 1940, the Soviet began issuing identity cards. The refusal of more than half the refugees to become citizens, in the hope that they would eventually be able to return to their homes in German-occupied Poland, further rankled the authorities, and they classified these refugees as ‘unreliable elements.’ To ensure beyond a doubt their loyalty to the regime, they were summoned to militia stations and were ordered to choose between Soviet citizenship or returning to German-occupied Poland. The majority, other than those who had a job and young students, opted to return. ... Probably more than 50 percent of the [approximately, 4,000] refugees wanted to return to Poland, and nearly all of them were deported.” See Shmuel Spector, ed., *Lost Jewish Worlds: The Communities of Grodno, Lida, Olkieniki, Vishay* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1996), 106.

⁶² Yehuda Bauer, *The Death of the Shtetl* (New Haven, Connecticut and London: Yale University Press, 2009), 55.

⁶³ Zosia Goldberg, as told to Hilton Obenzinger, *Running Through Fire: How I Survived the Holocaust* (San Francisco: Mercury House, 2004), 16–17.

Jews who actually engaged in underground political activities or religious-based protests directed against the Soviet state were a rarity.⁶⁴ Indeed, Jewish memoirs referring to that period stress that virtually all political activity ceased. As Daniel Blatman points out, “The Soviet authorities, wishing to earn the sympathies of members of Zionist youth movements that were to some extent pro-Soviet, treated them gently at the beginning of the occupation.”⁶⁵ The Soviets even allowed some 6,500 Jews to emigrate from

⁶⁴ An NKVD report from July 27, 1940, concerning the liquidation of “counter-revolutionary” underground organizations in the western part of the Belorussian Soviet Socialist Republic (i.e., prewar Polish territories) listed 3,231 activists who were arrested since October 1939; among them were 2,904 Poles (i.e., almost 90 percent of all political detainees), 184 Belorussians, 8 Jews, 37 Lithuanians, and 98 of other nationalities. In other words, Jews constituted just 0.0025 percent of all active political opponents, and there was one anti-Soviet Jewish activist for every 363 Polish activists. See Aleksander Chackiewicz, “Aresztowania i deportacje społeczeństwa zachodnich obwodów Białorusi (1939–1941),” in Małgorzata Giżewska and Tomasz Strzembosz, eds., *Spółeczeństwo białoruskie, litewskie i polskie na ziemiach północno-wschodnich II Rzeczypospolitej (Białoruś Zachodnia i Litwa Wschodnia) w latach 1939–1941* (Warsaw: Instytut Studiów Politycznych PAN, 1995), 134; Michał Gnatowski, *W radzieckich okowach: Studium o agresji 17 września 1939 r. i o radzieckiej polityce w regionie łomżyńskim w latach 1939–1941* (Łomża: Łomżyńskie Towarzystwo Naukowe im. Wagów, 1997), 120; Michał Gnatowski, “Problemy SZP-ZWZ w regionie białostockim w latach 1939–1941 w świetle dokumentów NKWD (NKGB),” *Studia Podlaskie*, vol. 8 (1998): 229–31. According to another source, only one percent of those arrested for anti-Soviet conspiratorial activities in “Western Belorussia” were Jews, even though Jews formed at least ten percent of the total population. See Kalbarczyk, *Żydzi wśród ofiar zbrodni sowieckich w latach 1939–1941*,” *Pamięć i sprawiedliwość*, no. 40 (1997–1998): 190. For information concerning religion-based protests and anti-Soviet activities by Polish Catholics see Albin Głowacki, *Sowieci wobec Polaków na ziemiach wschodnich II Rzeczypospolitej 1939–1941* (Łódź: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, 1997), 604, 610; there is scant evidence of comparable Jewish activities. While historian Dov Levin writes extensively about Zionist underground activity, and points out that a number of Zionists were arrested, he concedes that their activity was not of a military nature nor was it opposed to Soviet rule in principle: “These movements did not regard themselves as enemies of the regime, instead hoping that over time the regime would change its policies regarding Judaism and Zionism. ... even though the Zionist youth movements were hounded by the security services throughout this period, none of them (not even Betar) professed hostile trends or thoughts, and all were careful to avoid any manifestation of anti-Sovietism.” Consequently, he questions whether it was an underground at all and poses the question: “did these activities and undertakings conform to the conventional model of a ‘classic’ underground, or were they no more than a string of illegal activities?” See Levin, *The Lesser of Two Evils*, 235–56, especially 255–56. As a result, the reaction of the authorities to Jewish underground activities was muted: “While the authorities cracked down on non-Jewish underground activity, they usually countered such operations by Jewish groups (almost all of which were Zionist youth movements) with propaganda only. Arrests, trials, and deportations were ordinarily invoked only when centers of activity were exposed by chance or by informers.” *Ibid.*, 296. Yitzhak Zuckerman, a Jewish activist, concurs in this assessment: “In 1939, for about half a year, I worked in the underground in Lwów under the Soviet authorities ... My underground wasn’t anti-Soviet. I was a member of the Zionist underground ...” See Yitzhak Zuckerman (“Antek”), *A Surplus of Memory: Chronicle of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising* (Berkeley, London and Oxford: University of California Press, 1993), 581. Attempts by the Polish conspiratorial organization in Wilno (*Związek Walki Zbrojnej*—Union for Armed Struggle) in the second half of 1940 to reach a cooperative agreement with Jewish underground groups were fruitless because of the latter’s lack of interest in anti-Soviet agitation. See Rafał Wnuk, “The Polish Underground under Soviet Occupation, 1939–1941,” in Timothy Snyder and Ray Brandon, eds., *Stalin and Europe: Imitation and Domination, 1928–1953* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 105. For an optimistic view of Jewish resistance see Bogdan Musiał, “Jewish Resistance in Poland’s Eastern Borderlands during the Second World War, 1939–41,” *Patterns of Prejudice*, vol. 38, no. 4 (December 2004): 371–82. In most cases, except briefly in Lithuanian-occupied Wilno, the Jews refused to cooperate with the Polish underground as they claimed that they were not interested in the restoration of the Polish state but in establishing the state of Israel. See Piotr Gontarczyk, ed., “Komunistyczny antysemityzm kontra żydowski antykomunizm, 1939–1941,” *Glaukopis*, vol. 2/3 (2004–2005): 330–42.

⁶⁵ Daniel Blatman, *For Our Freedom and Yours: The Jewish Labour Bund in Poland, 1939–1949* (London and Portland, Oregon: Vallentine Mitchell, 2003), 19. The author points out, however, that, unlike during the Bolshevik invasion of Poland in 1921, when the Bund collaborated with the Bolsheviks, the Bund was now regarded as “a reactionary and anti-Bolshevist force”; the Bund thus became the most persecuted Jewish political organization during that brief period. *Ibid.*, 17–19. Interestingly, the Soviets did not put obstacles in the way of Bundists and other Jewish political activists who applied for permission to leave the Soviet Union after the Red Army entered Lithuania in June 1940: “the Soviets refrained from harassing Jewish political activists and even allowed many of them to leave.” Several thousand Jews managed to leave the Soviet Union legally, depleting the Jewish community of its leadership cadres. *Ibid.*, 26–30.

the Wilno area to Palestine and the West up until May 1941.⁶⁶ Such gestures with respect to other national groups, except for Germans who were allowed to leave for the Reich, then a staunch ally of the Soviet Union, were unthinkable.

Wartime estimates of Jews constituting thirty percent or more of the deportees appear to be exaggerated.⁶⁷ On the whole, Jewish deportees, especially in the first two waves of deportations, comprised only a tiny fraction of Polish ones. Moreover, only a small number of the Jewish deportees were prewar residents of the former Eastern Polish territories; the majority were refugees from central Poland.⁶⁸ In the town of Kałusz near Stanisławów, for example, reportedly only two indigenous Jews, out of a population of 6,000, were exiled.⁶⁹ Local Jews were more likely to have made their way to the Soviet interior because of the military draft or as volunteers for industrial labour. The latter category also included many refugees from

⁶⁶ Maciej Szczurowski, "Konwergencja czy koegzystencja? Relacje społeczne na Wileńszczyźnie w okresie II wojny światowej," in Michał Gnatowski and Daniel Boćkowski, eds., *Polacy–Żydzi–Białorusini–Litwini na północno-wschodnich ziemiach Polski a władza radziecka (1939–1945): W kręgu mitów i stereotypów* (Białystok: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu w Białymstoku, 2005), 211–36, here at 226.

⁶⁷ Zbigniew Siemaszko, for example, estimates that Jews constituted about 20 percent of all deported Polish citizens. See Zbigniew S. Siemaszko, *W sowieckim osaczeniu 1939–1943* (London: Polish Cultural Foundation, 1991), 265. According to a recent survey, approximately 70,000 Jews were deported to the Soviet interior during this period, or almost 22 percent of the approximately 325,000 civilian deportees; of these, it is thought that some 1,500–2,000 may have perished. See Kalbarczyk, "Żydzi wśród ofiar zbrodni sowieckich w latach 1939–1941," *Pamięć i sprawiedliwość*, no. 40 (1997–1998): 194. (The number of Ukrainian and Belorussian deportees is estimated to be 25,000 and 20,000, respectively.) The much larger numbers of Jews "repatriating" to Poland from the Soviet Union right after the war (approximately 200,000), as well as those prewar Jewish citizens of Poland who still remained in the Soviet Union (perhaps as many as 100,000) or were evacuated with General Władysław Anders' Free Polish Army in the summer of 1942 (5,000–7,000), are difficult to reconcile with the number of Jewish deportees recorded in official Soviet documents. Either the overall statistics for all deportees are too low, or huge numbers of Jews were able to make their way to the Soviet interior in other ways, for example, as military conscripts, migrants (generally voluntary) for labour, or evacuees with the retreating Soviet army. Dov Levin estimates that some 70,000 Jews escaped from the former Polish areas with the retreating Soviet Army in June 1941. See Dov Levin, "The Fateful Decision: The Flight of the Jews into the Soviet Interior in the Summer of 1941," *Yad Vashem Studies*, vol. 20 (1990): 140–41. For some additional statistics, see Jerzy Tomaszewski, ed., *Najnowsze dzieje Żydów w Polsce w zarysie (do 1950 roku)* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 1993), 388–91, 397; Richard C. Lukas, *The Forgotten Holocaust: The Poles Under German Occupation, 1939–1944* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1986), 133. For a more recent discussion of the ethnic structure of Polish citizens deported or repressed under Soviet rule, see Boćkowski, *Czas nadziei*, 89–92.

⁶⁸ Peter Meyer, Bernard D. Weinryb, Eugene Duschinsky, and Nicolas Sylvain, *The Jews in the Soviet Satellites* (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 1953), 348.

⁶⁹ Shabtai Unger, ed., *Sefer Kalush-Kalusher Yizker Bukh* (Tel Aviv: Irgun yots'e Kalush be-Yisrael, 1980), 565. Israeli historian Shmuel Spector estimates that some 500 Jews were deported from Volhynia in the action directed against the bourgeois and political elements; the vast majority of the deportees were refugees from the German zone. See his "Żydzi wołyńscy w Polsce międzywojennej i w okresie II wojny światowej (1920–1944)," in Jasiewicz, *Europa nieprawdopodobna*, 574.

central Poland.⁷⁰ Since the vast majority of Jews exiled to the Soviet interior were young men and women, and since they were not deported in the depth of winter as entire Polish families were, their mortality rate appears to have been considerably lower than that of the Poles.⁷¹ Moreover, the Jewish “refugees” were not categorized as “enemies” of the state, as were the Polish “settlers” deported in February 1940, so they enjoyed more favourable material conditions in exile.⁷²

What is abundantly clear from Soviet sources is that the deportations of civilians could not have been carried out without the cooperation of tens of thousands of local collaborators. Village councils, composed of Ukrainians and Belorussians, compiled lists of deportees, and militiamen (“people’s guards”), composed of Jews, Ukrainians, and Belorussians, as well as local Communist officials and activists, among whom Jews were prominent, formed part of the squads that carried out the round-ups. In cities and towns, as we shall see from numerous accounts, these functions tended to be filled by Jews. It was only after the first, and largest, deportation of the civilian population in February 1940, which encompassed mostly ethnic Poles, that the local militiamen began to be replaced with “Easterners,” i.e., people sent from the Soviet hinterland. The scale of local collaboration was massive. The deportation of 32,000 people, almost all of them Poles, from the Tarnopol oblast in February 1940 required 2,333 NKVD functionaries, 2,617 NKVD soldiers, 1,336 party activists armed with rifles, and 9,593 members of local village activists, comprising 2,129 operational groups.⁷³

⁷⁰ It is estimated that perhaps more than 40,000 people, mostly Jews, volunteered to work in the Soviet Union. See Boćkowski, *Czas nadziei*, 31. An Israeli historian writes: “Between November 1939, and February 1940 ... the Soviet authorities propagandized vigorously among the refugees in an effort to recruit them for volunteer labor in various localities in the Soviet Union proper. Consequently, thousands of Jewish refugees in the annexed territories did make their way into the Soviet hinterland.” Mordechai Altshuler, “Escape and Evacuation of Soviet Jews at the Time of the Nazi Invasion: Policies and Realities,” in Dobroszycki, ed., *The Holocaust in the Soviet Union*, 86. The situation in Grodno was described as follows: “However, as little work was available locally, the Soviets began sending refugees to the Russian interior, where workers were desperately needed. Many of them, particularly young people, but also professionals, shopkeepers and even *yeshiva* students, willingly accepted the offer to work in Russia. The *Bialystoker Shtetn* reported the departure of 1,500 refugees from Bialystok [Białystok], Grodno, and Wolkowysk [Wołkowysk] to work in Russian coal mines.” See Spector, *Lost Jewish Worlds*, 105. For example, Gabriel Temkin, a refugee in Białystok (in his home town of Łódź, he had been a member of the illegal Communist Youth League comprised mostly of young Jews), was able to secure employment in a coal mine in the Urals. See Gabriel Temkin, *My Just War: The Memoir of a Jewish Red Army Soldier in World War II* (Novato, California: Presidio, 1998), 14.

⁷¹ According to one study, out of approximately 70,000 Jews who were deported to the Soviet interior, it is estimated that 1,500–2,000 may have perished. See Kalbarczyk, “Żydzi wśród ofiar zbrodni sowieckich w latach 1939–1941,” *Pamięć i sprawiedliwość*, no. 40 (1997–1998): 194. For a comparison of the mortality rate of Jewish “refugees” and Polish “settlers” (the rate for latter was more than three times as high as the former), see Ciesielski, Hryciuk, and Srebrakowski, *Masowe deportacje ludności w Związku Radzieckim*, 237. Jewish refugees from Lithuania remarked on the resiliency of the Jewish deportees from Poland: “Among the deportees in Yakutsk were approximately one thousand Polish Jews. ... During their years in Yakutsk, many of the Poles had proved extremely adaptable and had been able to ‘save’ considerable sums of money. I do not know how they managed to do it, but I have the feeling that it was not always done in an entirely legal manner. Many of them wanted to spend their money on purchasing valuables before returning to Poland, where their rubles would have absolutely no value. ... We realized that the time had now come to part with a valuable ring that we had managed to keep, despite the many raids we had been subjected to. It was a diamond ring with a large 2.75-carat stone of very fine quality. ... the ring was sold to one of the Polish deportees for forty-two thousand rubles.” See Rachel and Israel Rachlin, *Sixteen Years in Siberia: Memoirs of Rachel and Israel Rachlin* (Tuscaloosa and London: The University of Alabama Press, 1988), 108–110.

⁷² Ciesielski, Hryciuk, and Srebrakowski, *Masowe deportacje ludności w Związku Radzieckim*, 228 n.82.

⁷³ Ciesielski, Hryciuk, and Srebrakowski, *Masowe deportacje ludności w Związku Radzieckim*, 213–16, 265.

Political prisoners filled to overflowing the jails of Eastern Poland, which held some 110,000 prisoners at various times; tens of thousands of these prisoners perished.⁷⁴ Soviet documents, made available to researchers after the collapse of the Soviet Union, confirm that at the end of June and beginning of July 1941, at the time of the German invasion (believed by Russian historian Viktor Suvorov to have been a pre-emptive strike against the Soviet Union⁷⁵), at least 10,000 political prisoners were massacred in local jails in Eastern Poland (more than 9,000 of them were killed in “Western Ukraine”), often with unspeakable cruelty.⁷⁶ Thousands more prisoners (30,000–40,000 by one count⁷⁷), many of whom were later executed, were evacuated with the retreating Soviet army.

Understandably, Polish public opinion did not differentiate between cooperation with the Nazi and Soviet invaders: both of them worked hand-in-hand in the destruction of the Polish state and its people, and both were regarded as equally reprehensible. Although many Jews apparently saw the Soviet Union as the lesser of two evils, this was by no means a universal sentiment, as some apologists would have it. Many Jews did not know what to expect either from the Germans or the Soviets when they opted for one over the other, and those who openly cheered for the Soviets did more than opt, they welcomed the invaders of their country. As a resident of Łosice recalled,

There was lots of confusion as to who was really going to occupy our town. At first we were occupied by the

⁷⁴ Boćkowski, *Czas nadziei*, 42–43; Stanisław Ciesielski, Wojciech Materski, and Andrzej Paczkowski, *Represje sowieckie wobec Polaków i obywateli polskich* (Warsaw: Karta, 2000), 11–12, 26; Krzysztof Jasiewicz, “Aresztowania na Kresach Wschodnich w latach 1939–1945,” in Wojciech Materski and Tomasz Szarota, eds., *Polska 1939–1945: Straty osobowe i ofiary represji pod dwiema okupacjami* (Warsaw: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej–Komisja Ścigania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu, 2009), 234.

⁷⁵ Norman Davies, *Europe, 1000*; Piotrowski, *Poland's Holocaust*, 298–99 n.73—based on Viktor Suvorov, *Icebreaker: Who Started the Second World War?* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1990). See also Władimir Niewieżyn [Vladimir Nevezhin], “Zamierzenie strategiczne Stalina przed 22 czerwca 1941 r.: ‘Nie zaplanowana dyskusja’ rosyjskich historyków,” *Dzieje Najnowsze* 30, no. 1 (1998): 15–27.

⁷⁶ Janina Mikoda, ed., *Zbrodnicza ewakuacja więzień i aresztów NKWD na Kresach Wschodnich II Rzeczypospolitej w czerwcu–lipcu 1941 roku: Materiały z sesji naukowej w 55. rocznicę ewakuacji więźniów NKWD w głąb ZSRR (Łódź, 10 czerwca 1996 r.)* (Warsaw: Główna Komisja Badania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu–Instytut Pamięci Narodowej and Okręgowa Komisja Badania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu w Łodzi, 1997), especially 10–11; Kalbarczyk, “Zbrodnie sowieckie na obywatelach polskich w okresie wrzesień 1939–sierpień 1941: Próba oceny skali zjawiska oraz szacunku strat ludzkich,” *Pamięć i sprawiedliwość*, no. 39 (1996): 28, 34, 268; Aleksander Gurjanow, “Sowieckie represje wobec Polaków i obywateli polskich w latach 1936–1956 w świetle danych sowieckich,” in Jasiewicz, *Europa nieprovincjonalna*, 978; Kostiatyn Kondratiuk, “Straty ludności na Ukrainie Zachodniej w latach 1939–1941,” in *Polska–Ukraina: Trudne pytania*, vol. 5 (Warsaw: Światowy Związek Żołnierzy Armii Krajowej, Związek Ukraińców w Polsce, and Karta, 1999), 171; Ciesielski, *Przemiany narodowościowe na Kresach Wschodnich II Rzeczypospolitej 1931–1948*, 161–62, 167, 265. In Lwów and Złoczów, 2,464 out of 5,019 prisoners were executed; in Sambor and Stryj, of the more than 2,200 prisoners, 1,101 were executed. More than 1,000 prisoners were executed in Stanisławów, 560 in Tarnopol, and 2,000 in Łuck. See Ciesielski, *Przemiany narodowościowe na Kresach Wschodnich II Rzeczypospolitej 1931–1948*, 161–62, 167; Krzysztof Popiński, Aleksandr Kokurin, and Aleksander Gurjanow, *Drogi śmierci: Ewakuacja więzień sowieckich z Kresów Wschodnich II Rzeczypospolitej w czerwcu i lipcu 1941* (Warsaw: Karta, 1995), 98–104. The latter source puts the toll of those who died in prisons and in the course of the evacuations at between 20,000 and 30,000, mostly Poles and Ukrainians, but also smaller numbers of Jews. Ibid., 7. According to Bogdan Musiał, the number of people massacred in Soviet jails may have been as high as 30,000, because Soviet reports account for only about half of the known jails. See Jan Skórzyński, “Z jednej okupacji pod drugą: Kresy przed i po 22 czerwca 1941 roku—Dyskusja historyków,” *Rzeczpospolita*, June 23, 2001. The overall Jewish component of the political prisoners executed during the period 1939–1941 is rather small, perhaps several hundred in total. See Kalbarczyk, “Żydzi wśród ofiar zbrodni sowieckich w latach 1939–1941,” *Pamięć i sprawiedliwość*, no. 40 (1997–1998): 194. The official Soviet statistics do not, however, account for all victims. In Lwów, for example, records have not been found for the Brygidki prison where large-scale executions took place on the eve of the Soviet evacuation, nor are there records for several thousand Poles and Ukrainians arrested on June 24, 1941. See Edward Jaworski, *Lwów: Losy mieszkańców i żołnierzy Armii Krajowej w latach 1939–1941* (Pruszków: Ajaks, 1999), 70–74.

⁷⁷ Boćkowski, *Czas nadziei*, 42–43.

Germans, then the Soviet army arrived, and red flags were flying all over. Finally, the Germans came back and stayed. During those few weeks of uncertainty, people, especially Jews, were going back and forth across the Bug River, not far to the east. They couldn't decide which side was the lesser evil. Most Jews, however, including my immediately family, stayed on the German side.⁷⁸

It must be borne in mind that it was not until after Hitler's attack on the Soviet Union in June 1941 that Nazi Germany actually implemented the "Final Solution." In the meantime, the Soviets had also struck a devastating blow to Jewish communal life and organizations in Eastern Poland, and tens of thousands of Jews found themselves deported to the Gulag.

Many Jews who had come under Soviet rule, even those who were severe critics of prewar Poland and openly welcomed their country's downfall, sooner or later came to the belated realization, in the words of one survivor, that "it was still better to be a Jew in democratic Poland than to live under the Soviets in equal fear with everyone else."⁷⁹ Leon Feiner, who had spent some time in a prewar Polish prison for subversive activities, was imprisoned by the Soviets when he fled for "safety" from the Germans to the Soviet zone of occupation. His friend Bernard Goldstein, a Bundist activist, barely recognized Feiner after his release and return to German-occupied Warsaw:

I could hardly believe my eyes. I remembered Feiner as a tall aristocratic man, whose graying hair was the only hint of his fifty-eight years. Though he was a busy, prosperous lawyer, he had always managed to find time for skiing and mountain climbing to keep him in the best physical condition. The man with sunken cheeks who stood before me was old and starved. What had happened to his healthy elegance?

He smiled wryly at me. "I have 'recovered' during the last few weeks on the Aryan side. You should have seen me when I arrived from the Soviet zone."

In his quiet, deliberate way he told me the story of his experiences during the long months in the Soviet prison at Lida.

"I was in the Polish Punishment Camp of Kartuz Berezka [Bereza Kartuska] a long time, but that cannot even be compared to what I lived through under our 'comrades.' They cross-examined me for nights on end. They

⁷⁸ Renée Glassner, "Life, Death, and Angels," in Martin Ira Glassner and Robert Krell, eds., *And Life Is Changed Forever: Holocaust Childhoods Remembered* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2006), 165.

⁷⁹ Samuel Drix, *Witness to Annihilation: Surviving the Holocaust: A Memoir* (Washington, D.C.: Brassey's, 1994), 11. Dr. Drix, a native of Lwów, recalled (at pp. 6, 9):

When the Russians arrived in Poland they were amazed at the level of life they saw, and they bought everything they could; stores throughout Lwów were emptied within a few weeks. Some time later, at work, I overheard Russian patients talking with each other, unaware of my presence. They were sharing their surprise at what they had seen in Poland, and their realization that they had been lied to by their government all these years. They had been led to believe, by Soviet propaganda, that the masses of Poles were impoverished and oppressed by the bourgeois; they had even been told that the farmers in Poland had to plow their fields with their hands while a boss urged them on with a whip!

Even in the Soviet occupation, we all got a sample of the nature of Soviet propaganda. The store windows on Lwów's main streets displayed lovely posters of the workers' paradise in Donbas, a Soviet mining and industrial region. Photographs showed beautiful living quarters and excellent working conditions. Many workers, eager for jobs, stood in line from dawn to apply for work in Donbas. After a few weeks, people started coming back, some so anxious to leave they had traveled the great distance on foot! They were also risking getting into trouble, but this was early on, and the Soviets had not yet instituted the worker's book in Lwów, so it was possible to avoid punishment for leaving the job.

It took me some time to realize the extent to which our freedom had disappeared. One day I was in a movie theater seeing a historical film about the Russian revolution. When Stalin's image appeared, everyone applauded immediately. I didn't. My friend next to me gave me a sudden jab in the ribs, saying, "Applaud! Are you crazy, do you want to go to Siberia?" Eventually, I came to see that one was always being watched, always in danger of being denounced to the authorities. ...

The threat of punishment for even the smallest political incorrectness was so real that it was a tool to force compliance in even trivial matters.

In some cases the evolution came like a bolt of lightning. After a Jewish woman, whose daughters had joined Communist organizations, had her restaurant seized by the Soviets, she turned to her Polish neighbour bemoaning the loss of "our cherished Poland." See Janina Ziemiańska, "Z Kresów do Nowego Jorku (1)," *Nasz Głos* (Brooklyn, New York), June 10, 1999.

insulted me as a ‘spy.’ I told them I was a lawyer and had a long record of defending Communists in Polish courts. They laughed and called me a counterrevolutionary and a fascist.

“We received hardly any food. Often in our hunger we sucked our fingers. We got thin as sticks, dirty, and lousy. It is hard for me to say it, but what saved us is that the Nazis drew close to Lida. The Soviet guards did not even do us the kindness of unlocking the cell doors before they ran away. We had to break out ourselves, before the Nazis took the town. It took weeks for Fishgrund and me to reach Warsaw on foot. We arrived in terrible shape, barefoot, bloody, looking too far gone even to pass as beggars.”⁸⁰

However, these were certainly not universally shared sentiments. Many Jews continued to paint a rosy picture of life under the Soviets in later years—something that undermines the simplistic alibi of the Jewish community having simply responded to “the lesser of two evils.” For example, an account in the memorial book of Holszany, a town located near the Polish-Soviet border, states:

On the 15th [sic] day of the German attack, the Red Army marched into Olshan [Holszany], without incident. The mood in the town calmed down. Everyone talked about Molotov’s speech on the radio, stating that the Polish government had collapsed, leaving chaotic conditions. The Germans were taking over all of Poland, and in order to save the people from the White Russians and east Ukrainians, the Red Army was liberating these areas.

For now, the entry of the Red Army had ended the war for the Jews of Olshan, Jewish life had been saved, Jews were relieved and breathed more freely. The Soviet regime had radically changed the town’s organization. The young and middle-aged adjusted well to the new order. Feeling themselves fairly treated, the older generation, willing or not, accustomed themselves gradually to the new system. Professionals returned to their offices. The richer farmers had lost their possessions, but their lives were safe and they started to look for employment. The civil authority was augmented from the general population. The head of office was a 20 year old Jewish boy, Misha Koslovski, an active Communist. Landless peasants, Christians and Jews were given land and were satisfied. The peasants who were dissatisfied had to submit.⁸¹

Jews also came forward in droves to join General Władysław Anders’ Free Polish Army in the Soviet interior and to be “repatriated” to Soviet-dominated Poland in 1944–1948, rather than remain under direct Soviet rule. In both cases, however, the element of self-interest cannot be overlooked. Joining the Polish army or “repatriating” to Poland was, in most cases, seen as an interim solution: it was a way out of the Gulag—a stepping stone to Palestine or the West—rather than a desire to fight for Poland. The vast majority of the almost 4,300 Jews who joined Anders’ Army promptly deserted when that army arrived in

⁸⁰ Bernard Goldstein, *The Stars Bear Witness* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1950), 99.

⁸¹ Shepsl Kaplan, “The Outbreak of World War II,” in *Lebn um umkum fun Olshan* (Tel Aviv: Former Residents of Olshan in Israel, 1965), 169ff., translated as *The Life and Destruction of Olshan*, Internet: <<https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/golshany/golshany.html#TOC169>>.

Palestine.⁸² Moreover, the “transformation” was by no means universal and many Jews, as we have seen, continued to applaud the alleged benefits of Soviet rule.⁸³

But that ultimate awareness (for many, but certainly not for all) is one that skips very important steps in the evolution of Jewish attitudes and in the analysis of what transpired in Eastern Poland in 1939–1941. A significant portion of the Jewish population, with the passive acquiescence of the vast majority, had by that time openly embraced Soviet rule, and thus declared themselves to be enemies of Poland. News of this reached the rest of Poland and made a strong impression there. Moreover, opting for Poland over the Soviet Union was, for many Jews, a choice that did not signify coming to terms with Poland; it was often a stepping stone on the way to Palestine or the West. Jews deserted from the Polish army en masse once it reached Palestine and left Poland soon after their arrival, never having had any intention of remaining in Poland.

In an exchange with Jewish-American publicist Abraham Brumberg in the *New York Review of Books*,⁸⁴ British historian Norman Davies was one of the first Western historians to deal with, among other topics, the Soviet invasion of Eastern Poland. Davies begins his discourse with rather obvious statements of principle:

On Polish-Jewish questions, my position is straightforward. I think that they can best be understood by taking a critical stance toward the claims of both interested parties, and by treating the problems of prewar Poland’s divided society in terms of the mutual experiences and mutual antagonisms of both sides. I see no virtue in limiting oneself to the recriminations of one side against the other. ... there were, and are, two sides to Polish-Jewish antipathies. Also, one must try to relate the political currents of Polish Jewry to the general trends of the day, and not to pretend that the Jews were somehow exempt from the full range of political attitudes and opinions which affected all other groups.

Professor Davies continues:

What I wrote, and can confirm, amounts to this: firstly, that among the collaborators who came forward to assist the Soviet security forces in dispatching huge numbers of innocent men, women, and children to distant exile and probable death, there was a disproportionate number of Jews; and secondly, that news of the circumstances surrounding the deportations helped to sour Polish-Jewish relations in other parts of occupied Poland.

I might have added, for Mr. Brumberg’s comfort, that the majority of Polish Jews (like the great majority of Poles, Byelorussians, Ukrainians and Lithuanians) did *not* sympathize with Russian communism, did *not* welcome the Soviet invasion, and did *not* collaborate with the deportations. ... None of which alters the original contention. Among those persons, who to their discredit *did* collaborate, there were “many Jews.” ...

⁸² Some 3,000 of the almost 4,300 Jews who were accepted into the ranks of the Polish army formed in the Soviet Union under the command of General Władysław Anders deserted when that army reached Palestine in the summer of 1942. Many of these Jews fought against local Arabs for the establishment of a Jewish state. See Gąsowski, *Pod sztandarami Orła Białego*, 169–70 (2,972 Jews deserted, whereas only 1,328 remained in the Polish army). See also Halik Kochanski, *The Eagle Unbowed: Poland and the Poles in the Second World War* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2012), 197–98; Lukas, *The Forgotten Holocaust*, 133. Unlike ethnic Poles, who faced severe obstacles and restrictions in leaving prewar Polish territories incorporated into the Soviet Union, Jews, it seems, did not encounter problems in “repatriating” to Poland. Perhaps this was because of the influence of well-placed Jews in the Soviet Union and Soviet-dominated Poland. On the other hand, the majority of Poles who registered for “repatriation” in Soviet Lithuania and Soviet Belorussia were not permitted to resettle in Poland. Ciesielski, *Przesiedlenie ludności polskiej z Kresów Wschodnich do Polski 1944–1947*, 24, 30, 48–49.

⁸³ Eugene Feldman from the village of Glinka near Stolin, in Polesia, recalled Soviet rule with fondness: “I liked it, as much as I knew about it, and I’m sure my parents did because they never criticized it. They liked it. We had no use for the Polish. We had no use, no Jew had any use for the Pollocks.” See the testimony of Eugene Feldman, July 15, 1991, Voice/Vision Holocaust survivor Oral history Archive, University of Michigan at Dearborn, Internet: <<http://holocaust.umd.umich.edu/feldmane/>>. One Jew stated that “the Jewish population was happy under the 21 months of Soviet rule. They felt themselves to be free and equal citizens.” See Ben-Cion Pinchuk, *Shtetl Jews under Soviet Rule: Eastern Poland on the Eve of the Holocaust* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1991), 77, where one can find a number of similar testimonies.

⁸⁴ “Poles and Jews: An Exchange,” *The New York Review of Books*, April 9, 1987, reprinted with permission from *The New York Review of Books*. Copyright © 1987 Nyrev, Inc.

As an eyewitness to the events in eastern Poland in 1939–1941, [Brumberg] has reported that the charge of Jewish collaboration is “particularly obnoxious” and that the collaborators only included “small groups of procommunist sympathizers.” Regrettably, without disparaging either his memory or his eyesight, one has to report that almost all other witnesses disagree with him. Thousands of survivors now in the West, and scores of published memoirs tell a different story. Among the informers and collaborators, as in the personnel of the Soviet security police at the time, the high percentage of Jews was striking. One could check the following accounts: Jan and Irena Gross (1983), Anatol Krakowiecki (1950),⁸⁵ Aleksander Blum (1980),⁸⁶ Aleksander Wat (1977),⁸⁷ Klara Mirska (1980),⁸⁸ Ola Watowa (1984),⁸⁹ Marek Celt (1986),⁹⁰ or the collective work, *Moje zderzenie z bolszewikami we wrześniu 1939 roku* (“My Clash with the Bolsheviks in September 1939”),⁹¹ and very many more.

These reports about the conduct of Jews do not necessarily make pleasant reading, especially when one reflects on the appalling fate of those same Jewish communities following the Nazi invasion of the Soviet-occupied zone in June 1941. But one should not for that reason discount them, or try to read history backward.

Mr. Brumberg is fond of quoting a Home Army Report of September 1941, signed by the commanding office of the AK, General [Stefan] Grot-Rowecki, and containing the famous sentence, “Please accept it as an established fact that the overwhelming majority of people in the country are anti-Semitically

⁸⁵ Anatol Krakowiecki, *Książka o Kołymie* (London: Veritas, 1950). This book was reprinted in 1987.

⁸⁶ Aleksander Blum, “*O broń i orły narodowe*”... (*Z Wilna przez Francję i Szwajcarię do Włoch*): *Wspomnienia, fotografie i dokumenty* (London: Nakładem Kolegów b. Żołnierzy, ich Rodzin, Przyjaciół i Subskrybentów, 1980). A second expanded edition was published in 1985.

⁸⁷ Aleksander Wat, *Mój wiek: Pamiętnik mówiony*, Two Parts (London: Polonia Book Fund, 1977; Second revised edition—1981).

⁸⁸ Klara Mirska, *W cieniu wiecznego strachu: Wspomnienia* (Paris: n.p., 1980), 342–62.

⁸⁹ Ola Watowa, *Wszystko co najważniejsze....: Rozmowy z Jackiem Trznadłem* (London: Puls, 1984).

⁹⁰ Tadeusz Chciuk—the author’s real name—was one of the legendary couriers who maintained contact between the Polish government-in-exile in London and occupied Poland. His memoirs, *Biali kurierzy* (Munich: Kontrast, 1986), especially pages 61, 74, 88–90, 208–209, 225, 256, 298–99, convey the mood of fear that gripped ordinary Poles on account of the many local Jews who became champions of the Soviet regime. An expanded version of this book was published in 1989 in Munich and in 1992 by Ośrodek Karta in Warsaw.

⁹¹ Krzysztof Rowiński, ed., *Moje zderzenie z bolszewikami we wrześniu 1939 roku* (London: Polish Cultural Foundation, 1986), cited *infra*.

disposed” (*Przygniatająca większość kraju jest nastawiona antysemicko*). Mistranslated by Mr. Brumberg,⁹² the quotation takes on a new slant, and might seem to imply either that Polish attitudes were based on fixed prejudice, or even that the Poles approved of the Nazis’ genocidal policies. Significantly, and very conveniently, Mr. Brumberg keeps quiet about the second half of the quotation. The original text of the report, in describing the factors influencing Polish opinion at the time, goes on to say three things: firstly, that virtually nobody approved of German actions; secondly, that Nazi persecution of the Jews was causing a backlash of sympathy; and thirdly, that pro-Jewish sympathies were inhibited by knowledge of Jewish activities in the Soviet zone.⁹³ ...

One might equally recall the report written [transmitted] in February 1940 by Jan Karski—one of those fearless Polish couriers who kept London in touch with occupied Poland, and who was subsequently decorated in Israel for his attempts to warn the West about the realities of the Holocaust. [The portions in square brackets were omitted in the English translation relied on by Davies.—*M.P.*]

“*The Situation of the Jews on Territories Occupied by the USSR*”

The Jews here feel at home, not just because they are not humiliated or persecuted, but because their smartness and adaptability has won them a certain measure of political and economic advantage.

The Jews are entering the political cells. They have taken over the majority of political and administrative positions, and are playing an important role in the labor unions, in the schools, and above all in commerce, both legal and illegal [loansharking and profiteering, illegal trade, contraband, foreign currency exchange, liquor, immoral pursuits, pimping and procurement] ...

Polish opinion considers that Jewish attitudes to the Bolsheviks are favourable. It is universally believed that the Jews betrayed Poland and the Poles, that they are all communists at heart, and that they went over to

⁹² Professor Davies explains the mistranslation:

Mr. Brumberg’s mistranslation reads, “The overwhelming majority of the country is anti-Semitic,” wrongly implying that anti-Semitism was a fixed attribute of the Polish population. Grot-Rowecki, however, used the phrase “*nastawiona antysemicko*,” which is rather different, implying a *nastawienie*, an “attitude,” “adjustment,” “disposition,” or “inclination” that can change according to circumstances.

The text of the radio telegram containing Rowecki’s report, dated September 25, 1941, is reproduced in Andrzej Krzysztof Kunert, ed. *Polacy–Żydzi, Polen–Juden, Poles–Jews, 1939–1945: Wybór Źródeł, Quellenauswahl, Selection of Documents* (Warsaw: Rada Ochrony Pamięci Walk i Męczeństwa, Instytut Dziedzictwa Narodowego, and Rytm, 2001), 197, and in Krzysztof Jasiewicz, *Pierwsi po diable: Elity sowieckie w okupowanej Polsce 1939–1941 (Białostocka, Nowogródzka, Polesie, Wileńszczyzna)* (Warsaw: Instytut Studiów Politycznych PAN and Rytm, 2001), 41–42, with one variation in wording that in no way undermines Norman Davies’ perceptive analysis:

Melduję, że wszystkie posunięcia i oświadczenia Rządu i członków Rady Narodowej, dotyczące Żydów w Polsce wywołują w kraju jak najgorsze wrażenie i znakomicie ułatwiają propagandę Rządowi nieprzychylną lub wrogą. ... Proszę przyjąć jako fakt zupełnie realny, że przygniatająca większość kraju jest *nastrojona* [as opposed to “*nastawiona*”] antysemicko. Nawet socjaliści nie są tu wyjątkiem. Różnice dotyczą tylko taktyki postępowania. Zalecających naśladowanie metod niemieckich prawie nie ma. Metody te wywołały odruchy współczucia, ale zmalało ono po zlanu się obu okupacji i zaznajomieniu się przez ogół z zachowaniem się Żydów na wschodzie. ... [emphasis added]

Like “*nastawiona*”, “*nastrojona*” connotes a “mood” or “disposition” that can change according to circumstances. (One might look for an analogy here to the mood of the American public toward Muslims in the wake of 9/11.) It is important to bear in mind that General Grot-Rowecki’s report was written *before* the Holocaust got underway and that news of the widespread murder of Jews in formerly Soviet-occupied Eastern Poland in the summer of 1941 had not reached central Poland by the time this report was prepared. This fact eludes historians who continue to cite Grot-Rowecki along Abraham Brumberg’s lines. For example, Alexander Prusin writes, “a report sent to London in September 1941 by the AK commander Stefan Rowecki, who explicitly stated that any positive efforts of the Polish government in regard to the Jewish question ‘cause the worst impressions, [for] the country is overwhelming anti-Semitic. ...’” See Prusin, *The Lands Between*, 173.

⁹³ According to historian Bogdan Musiał, Nazi propaganda had a hand in fostering animosity toward Jews by extensively publicizing information about Soviet atrocities in the Eastern Borderlands and by portraying Jews as partners and participants in these crimes. See his article, “Stosunki polsko-żydowskie na Kresach Wschodnich R.P. pod okupacją sowiecką (1939–1941),” *Biuletyn Kwartalny Radomskiego Towarzystwa Naukowego*, vol. 34, no. 1 (1999): 125.

the Bolsheviks with flags waving. Indeed, in most towns, the Jews did welcome the Bolsheviks with bouquets, with speeches and with declarations of allegiance and so on.

One should make certain distinctions, however. Obviously the Jewish communists have reacted enthusiastically to the Bolsheviks. ... The Jewish proletariat, petty traders and artisans, whose position has seen a structural improvement, and who formerly had to bear the indifference or the excesses of the Polish element, have reacted positively, too. That is hardly surprising.

But what is worse, Jews are denouncing Poles [especially students and politicians] (to the secret police), are directing the work of the (communist) militia from behind the scenes, are unjustly denigrating conditions in Poland before the war. Unfortunately, one must say that these incidents are very frequent, [and more common than incidents which demonstrate loyalty toward Poles or sentiment toward Poland].⁹⁴

The *Yad Vashem* archive in Israel, too, provides detailed substantiation of the same picture. "The Jews welcomed the Red Army with joy. The young people spent all their days and evenings with the soldiers." In Grodno, "all sorts of appointments were filled predominantly with Jews, and the Soviet authorities entrusted them, too, with the top positions." [In Żółkiew, "The Russians rely primarily on Jews in filling positions ..."] In Lwów, "I must admit that the majority of positions in the Soviet agencies have been taken by Jews." A Jewish observer to the pro-Soviet demonstrations in Lwów related, "Whenever a political march, or protest meeting, or some other sort of joyful event took place, the visual effect was unambiguous—Jews." In Wielkie Oczy, the Jewish doctor recalled how local Jewish youths having formed themselves into a "*komsomol*" toured the countryside smashing Catholic shrines. The references can be found in a recent study of the Soviet deportations from eastern Poland by J. T. Gross and I. Gross, *W czterdziestym nas Matko na Sybir zesłali...: Polska a Rosja 1939–42*.⁹⁵

In Pińsk, where the population was over 90 percent Jewish, young Jews built an "*Arc de Triomphe*."⁹⁶

The purpose here, of course, is not to demonstrate what one hopes would be taken for granted, namely, that Jews given the chance will behave as well or as badly as anyone else. The purpose is simply to show that the marked increase in anti-Semitism in occupied Poland in 1939–1941 was linked to Jewish conduct. To put the perspective of many Poles emotively, Jews were seen to be dancing on Poland's grave.

Naturally, there is more to the story than that. Objectively speaking, there was no reason for Polish Jews as a whole to react to Poland's defeat in the way that most Poles did, nor for them to share Polish feeling that collaborating with the invaders was in itself an act of disloyalty. Nor should one forget that the prevalence of Jews in the Soviet organs of oppression did not stop the Soviets, once established, from devastating Jewish life in the Soviet zone. The Jewish communes, which had flourished under Polish rule, were peremptorily abolished. The Jewish middle class was reduced to penury. Hebrew schools, Zionist clubs, all independent Jewish organizations were closed down overnight.⁹⁷ Conditions were so good that thousands of Jewish refugees swarmed westward toward the Nazi zone, passing swarms of other refugees fleeing in the opposite direction. Gross even reports one incident, where a visiting Nazi commission was greeted by crowds of Jews chanting "*Heil Hitler*" in the hope of getting permission to cross the frontier. And on the frontier bridge over the River Bug, they were met by a Nazi officer shouting, "Jews, where on earth are you going? We are going to kill you."

All Polish citizens shared in the confusion. Many fled from west to east to escape the Nazis. Many fled from east to west to escape the Soviets. Many, quite literally, went around in circles. ...

⁹⁴ Karski's full report, in its two versions, can be found in Norman Davies and Antony Polonsky, eds., *Jews in Eastern Poland and the USSR, 1939–46* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991), 260–71.

⁹⁵ Gross and Grudzińska-Gross, *W czterdziestym nas Matko na Sybir zesłali...*, 28–33. A significantly abridged English version of this book (referred to earlier) was published in the United States as *War Through Children's Eyes*; however, it does not contain these citations, nor other accounts attesting to Jewish misconduct reproduced later on in the text.

⁹⁶ See also Ryszard Szawłowski (Karol Liszewski), *Wojna polsko-sowiecka 1939* (Warsaw: Neriton, 1995; Warsaw: Antyk–Marcin Dybowski, 1997), vol. 1, 178. These are much expanded editions of Karol Liszewski, *Wojna polsko-sowiecka 1939 r.* (London: Polish Cultural Foundation, 1986), first published in the West under a pseudonym at a time when the topic was taboo in Communist Poland.

⁹⁷ On this phenomenon, Yehuda Bauer observes: "What is to some degree surprising is the ease with which traditions and institutions that had roots going back for centuries collapsed like houses of cards. There were attempts. Here and there, ... to form small underground groups that tried to maintain a Zionist presence. But these were very few, and did not have much support from the local Jews, who just tried to make ends meet and survive in the new regime." See Yehuda Bauer, "Sarny and Rokitno in the Holocaust: A Case Study of Two Townships in Wolyn (Volhynia)," in Steven T. Katz, ed., *The Shtetl: New Evaluations* (New York and London: New York University Press, 2007), 261.

The hopeless predicament of such people, trapped between Hitler and Stalin, eloquently illustrates the predicament of Eastern Europe as a whole. Poles, Jews, Ukrainians, and all other peoples of the region were caught in the same double bind, overtaken not just by one occupation, but by two. Eastern Europe lay astride the battleground of the two greatest tyrannies the world has yet seen; and the full horror of its fate can never be comprehended unless events on either side of the dividing line are related to each other.

Some Jewish observers also noted that the attitude of Poles toward Jews, which was rather favourable in the early months of the war, changed dramatically as reports about the behaviour of the Jews in the eastern part of Poland occupied by the Soviets reached the German occupation zone. While overlooking the much larger pro-Soviet elements among the Jews, Isaiah Trunk leveled harsh criticism against the Jewish Communists.

At the time of the of the Soviet annexation, some Jewish Communists had behaved in a tactless and even treacherous manner, indulging in triumphant greetings, infiltration into the Soviet occupation apparatus, and informing to the NKVD on regional Polish and Jewish bourgeois and Socialist leaders. In addition, the Jewish population generally welcomed the Soviet occupation ... These facts were portrayed to the Polish population by returning refugees ...⁹⁸

Polish historians were slow to amass the extensive documentation—spread over countless sources, published and unpublished—which supported Norman Davies’ views, and this further played into the syndrome of denial on the part of Holocaust historians. For those familiar with those materials, however, there could be no doubt that his assessment was accurate, penetrating and balanced. The hundreds of testimonies gathered in this study amply attest to that. By and large, Davies’ penetrating observations are ignored by historians writing about this topic in the West. Rather than to turn to authoritative primary sources of Polish, Soviet, and even those of Jewish provenance, they choose instead to rely on secondary literature which is largely dated and often skewed, and compound matters by using the evidence very selectively.⁹⁹

⁹⁸ Isaiah Trunk, *Jewish Responses to Nazi Persecution: Collective and Individual Behavior in Extremis* (New York: Stein and Day, 1979), 44.

⁹⁹ Among the historians who have written in this vein in recent years are the following: Benjamin Lieberman, *Terrible Fate: Ethnic Cleansing in the Making of Modern Europe* (Chicago: Ivan Doe, 2006), 179–81, 203–204; Niall Ferguson, *The War of the World: Twentieth-Century Conflict and the Descent of the West* (New York: Penguin, 2006), 418–23; Robert Gellately, *Lenin, Stalin, and Hitler: The Age of Social Catastrophe* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2007), 385–91.

CHAPTER TWO

Jews Greet Soviet Invaders En Masse

The purpose of this compilation is not simply to marshal evidence of the widespread phenomenon of throngs of Jews, often dressed in their best attire for the occasion and including Orthodox Jews and rabbis in their ranks, avidly greeting the Soviet invaders of Poland in September 1939. Although Jewish survivors tend to gloss over the Soviet period in their testimonies, accounts describing such the entry of the Red Army are legion, as are Polish accounts. Many of them attest to the boundless and uncritical outbursts of enthusiasm for the new regime that consumed large segments of the Jewish population. That, after all, is not the crux of the Polish case. What is disconcerting about these manifestations is that they were generally accompanied by declarations of loyalty to the Soviet Union and open and flagrant displays of anti-Polish sentiments and behaviour.

In *Wilno*,

The Red Army entered ... early on the morning of Tuesday, 19 September 1939, to an enthusiastic welcome by Vilna's [Wilno's] Jewish residents, in sharp contrast to the Polish population's reserve and even hostility. Particular ardour was displayed by leftist groups and their youthful members, who converged on the Red Army tank columns bearing sincere greetings and flowers.¹⁰⁰

...[Jewish] youths laughed and jeered at groups of Poles who were rushed to their deportation and took an active part in round-ups and arrests [of Poles]. ... The militiamen were recruited mostly, if not exclusively, from the Jewish youth.¹⁰¹

According to Jewish eyewitnesses from Wilno,

It is hard to describe the emotion that swept me as I saw in the street, across from our gate, a Russian tank bearing grinning young men with a blazing red star on their berets. As the machines came to a halt, the people crowded around. Somebody shouted, "Long live the Soviet government!" and everyone cheered. ... You could hardly find a Gentile in that crowd. ... Many people did not stop and consider what this regime would bring in its wake. ... everyone greeted the Russians unanimously, as they would the Messiah.¹⁰²

on the 19th of September, Soviet tank crews with smiles on their faces and flowers in their hands drove into our city ... How much joy and happiness the people had! All of Jewish Vilna [Wilno] celebrated the presence of the victorious, undefeatable Red Army. ... Besides the fact that the Red Army came into our town as the Messiah-Angel, every single one of their soldiers blessed by God, was a pleasant and cultured person. ... I have to throw away my heavy thoughts and say "Long live the great transformer of the people, Stalin, who managed to change a simple individual into a person of the highest quality, if not more".¹⁰³

Miron [Lewinson] did not report for mobilization. He thought there was no point in fighting for a bourgeois Poland. ...

Toward morning Miron ran in. We had not seen him for many days. He cried out joyfully from the threshold:

"Soviet troops are in the city!" ...

¹⁰⁰ Dov Levin, "The Jews of Vilna under Soviet Rule, 19 September–28 October 1939," in *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry*, vol. 9, *Poles, Jews, Socialists: The Failure of an Ideal* (London: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 1996), 111.

¹⁰¹ Władysław Zarzycki, *Z Wilna do Workuty: Wspomnienia Komendanta Garnizonu Okręgu Wileńskiego AK* (Warsaw: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej–Komisja Ścigania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu, 2011), 27.

¹⁰² Account of Gershon Adiv (Adelson), (diary, September 18, 1939), in Levin, *The Lesser of Two Evils*, 33.

¹⁰³ Letter from Wilno dated November 2, 1939, published in the American Yiddish newspaper, *Morgen Stern*. Cited in Šarūnas Liekis, *1939: The Year That Changed Everything in Lithuania's History* (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2010), 152.

Crowds of people were on the streets ... Oh, what might, what an army, what a powerful force! I could not believe my own eyes. My heart was breaking with joy—here it was, the army of the working class, of the country of triumphant socialism.¹⁰⁴

...the young Jewish communists ... ostentatiously paraded on the main streets of Wilno in company of the Soviet soldiers seemingly oblivious to the hardships experienced in those days by the rest of the population, both Jewish and Polish.¹⁰⁵

A Polish eyewitness observed the following on September 19, 1939:

On Wielka Street we noticed a group of several hundred men. They waved red flags and were shouting something. Some of them were armed with rifles. As we approached we realized that they were Jews. Almost all of them wore red armbands. Red flags were hung from the windows of Jewish residences. We came across the first Soviet tanks in front of Ostra Brama. ...

Bolshevik offices were teaming with local Jews. The “people’s militia” was recruited from their numbers. They also provided the NKVD with information about “Polish elements hostile to the Soviet Union.” They considered the Soviet authority as theirs and openly enjoyed our [i.e., Poland’s] defeat. They often directed all sorts of threats at us and mocked our national and spiritual values. At every turn they declared that “our rule” had come to an end. Small Jewish children called me and my friends “hideous Polish mugs.”¹⁰⁶

The following account, by another Polish eyewitness, is illustrative of the divergence between the mood of many Jews and the Polish population at that time.

Amidst the crowd, I made it to Wielka Street, where the Red Army was being welcomed with a big display next to the town hall. I pinched myself from time to time to make sure I was really awake. I kept suspecting it was a nightmare. I had never anywhere heard so many joyful shouts, so many cries of ‘Long live’ Stalin, Voroshilov, Molotov, and the Red Army. Although I didn’t exactly know who the members of the various leftist Polish organizations were, I can say with confidence that I didn’t see any of them there, either. ... the Jews were the ones who had displayed all the spontaneous enthusiasm. All the Jewish organizations probably had their representatives welcoming [them]. There was no end to the shouts and cries of ‘Long live’. The Jewish women couldn’t be beaten. Their ideas of who should ‘live’ were really astounding. Their slogans, not even just for a Pole, but for the average honest person, made one sick to the stomach.¹⁰⁷

The Jewish supporters of the Soviet invaders was by no means limited to leftist circles or the proletariat. As Polish historian Marek Wierzbicki noted,

It was not only the communist Jews and their sympathizers who greeted the Red Army enthusiastically, but also members of Jewish organizations without any communist connections, as well as Jews not associated with any organization at all. The open expression of joy at the arrival of the Soviets on the part of these Jews contrasted with the reserve or even animosity exhibited by the Poles. What for Jews was salvation, or at least the lesser evil, was for Poles a national tragedy. The arrival of the Red Army divided Vilna’s Jews and Poles

¹⁰⁴ Rachel Margolis, *A Partisan from Vilna* (Brighton, Massachusetts: Academic Studies Press, 2010), 218–20. The return of the Soviets the following summer was an equally joyous occasion: “Youngsters scrambled on the tanks and yelled triumphantly.” Ibid., 232. When the Germans invaded in June 1941, Soviet authority simply collapsed without a fight: “the Russians were fleeing. How could this be true? After all, we had sung, ‘We won’t give up an inch of our own soil’ and other equally buoyant, supremely self-confident song. ... all the party workers had left the city. Had they run away? That could not be true! And without transmitting any instructions?” Ibid., 242.

¹⁰⁵ Abraham Melezin, *My Memoirs*, Memo 20, Papers of Abraham Melezin, 2008, Box 6, YIVO Archives, RG 1872.

¹⁰⁶ Henryk Sobolewski, *Z ziemi wileńskiej przez świat GULagu*, Second expanded edition (Gdańsk: n.p., 1999), 9. After the Soviets handed over the Wilno area to Lithuania on October 28, 1939, the Jews who had previously donned red armbands now hung Lithuanian banners above Jewish shops. Ibid., 17.

¹⁰⁷ Cited in Marek Wierzbicki, “Polish-Jewish Relations in Vilna and the Region of Western Vilna under Soviet Occupation, 1939–1941,” in *Polin*, vol. 19 (2007): 490.

and built a wall of animosity between them. The solidarity that the two ethnic groups had demonstrated in the face of German aggression quickly dissipated.¹⁰⁸

A Polish eyewitness recalled the welcome given to the Red Army by a wealthy Jew, one of the largest fruit wholesalers in Wilno, who enthusiastically threw flowers from his window as the Soviet troops approached.¹⁰⁹

Israeli historian Dov Levin records that this joyous reception of the Soviets by Jews was nearly universal in towns throughout Eastern Poland (the names of towns have been emphasized):

Various accounts attest to the joyous welcome that the Red Army received almost everywhere. When the Jews of **Kowel** (in Wolhynia [sic]) were informed that the Red Army was approaching the town, they “celebrated all night.” When the Red Army actually entered Kowel, “the Jews greeted [it] with indescribable enthusiasm.”¹¹⁰ ...

In **Baranowicze**, “People kissed the soldiers’ dusty boots. ... Children ran to the parks, picked the autumn flowers, and showered the soldiers with them. ... Red flags were found in the blink of an eye, and the entire city was bedecked in red.”¹¹¹

20th of September, in the morning—a Russian tank entered Kobrin [**Kobryń**, in Polesia] ... The tank was followed by more tanks and soldiers. People were ecstatic. The fascistic Polish kingdom has crumbled. We sat at night and read the pamphlets the Russians passed around. We were full of hope for a better future.¹¹²

¹⁰⁸ Marek Wierzbicki, “Polish-Jewish Relations in Vilna and the Region of Western Vilna under Soviet Occupation, 1939–1941,” in *Polin*, vol. 19 (2007): 489–90.

¹⁰⁹ Marek Wierzbicki, “Polish-Jewish Relations in Vilna and the Region of Western Vilna under Soviet Occupation, 1939–1941,” in *Polin*, vol. 19 (2007): 490.

¹¹⁰ Levin, *The Lesser of Two Evils*, 33, based on the testimony of Monia Galperin, who wrote:

At four in the afternoon we received a notice that we’ve nothing to fear because the Soviet tanks will arrive to the city’s gates within a few hours. There was no end to our joy. Many of the city’s youth left for Hulova to welcome the Soviet Army. The first tanks, on which our youth sat and sang with joy, arrived to the city at five in the afternoon.

The Russians came from the direction of Lutsk [Luck]. Trucks, full of Russian soldiers, traveled on both sides of the road from the viaduct on Lutska [Lucka] Street to Brisk [Brzeska] Street. The city’s Jews welcomed the soldiers of the Red Army with enthusiasm that is hard to describe in words. The city rejoiced all night.

See Monia Gelperin, “Under Soviet Rule, in Captivity and Return to Kovel,” in Eliezer Leoni-Zopperfin, ed., *Kowel: Sefer edut ve-zikaron le-kehilatenu she-ala aleha ha-koret* (Tel Aviv: Former Residents of Kovel in Israel, 1957), 391; translated as *Kowel: Testimony and Memorial Book of Our Destroyed Community*, Internet: <<https://www.jewishgen.org/Yizkor/kovel1/Kovel1.html#TOC373>>. According to another eyewitness:

During the Soviet rule in the city, the Jewish youth was filled with faith in the lofty ideals of Communism. They dreamed of pursuing further education in the universities of Kiev and Kharkiv, and believed, wholeheartedly, in the omnipotent power of the Soviet Union. No one imagined that the Soviet troops would leave the city for a long time, too long for the children of Kovel and her Jews... They were proud of the rights that the Soviet regime had given to them after they have been abused by Polish rioters.

See Leuba Galman-Goldberg, “The Crumbling of the Economic and Cultural Systems”, in *ibid.*, 401.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 34.

¹¹² David Ashkenazi, “War ...,” in Betzalel Schwartz, and Israel Chaim Bil(e)tzki, eds., *The Book of Kobrin: The Scroll of Life and Destruction* (San Francisco: Holocaust Center of Northern California, 1992), 379.

The town of Kobryn [*Kobryń*] was awash in red flags, which local Communists had prepared by removing the white stripe from the two-color Polish flag. The cheering crowd scattered leaflets castigating the fascist [sic] Polish regime and lauding the Red Army and its augury of liberation. In Ciechanowice [*Ciechanowiec*], a band of Jewish Communists erected an “arch of triumph” bedecked with posters bearing general greetings and messages such as “Long Live the Soviet Regime.” The Jews of Rozhinoy (Rozana or Ruzhany) [*Różana*, in Polesia] treated the day of the Soviet occupation as a religious festival, greeting each other with *mazel tov*.¹¹³

...the sight of the Jews of Janow [*Janów Poleski*], greeting the Red Army in their prayer shawls, was something that had [sic] many of the Jewish-born Soviet troops had certainly never before beheld.¹¹⁴

In the largely Jewish small town of *Wiszniw*,

the entire town came to greet [the Soviet army] with flowers in their hands and everyone was very excited. At the center of the market, a stage was built and the representative of the Jews, Yakov Hirsch Alishkevitch, along with a few local Christians, made excited speeches. At the end of Yakov’s speech, he said, “Long live the Soviet Union!”¹¹⁵

A frenzy broke out in *Nowogródek* that could have had fatal consequences had the person fingered as an enemy of the new order in fact been a Pole:

The city’s Jews, especially the youths and children, swarmed through the streets, admiring the Red Army troops, their weapons, tanks and armoured vehicles. ...

... on the afternoon of the 17th [of September 1939] we heard the roar of the Soviet tanks coming from the Karelitzer Street. Some Jews cried with joy. They ran towards the tanks with flowers in their hands, blocking the way and waiting to kiss the soldiers of the Red Army. ... there they noticed in the middle of the market square a tall man with a new long overcoat walking towards Mickiewicz Street. It took only one person to shout, ‘There goes the judge who used to send us for years to terrible jails’, for hundreds of people to start running towards him and then to rain him with blows. Red Army soldiers, seeing a riot, ran to the scene and saved the poor man. They asked him who he was, to which he replied that he was Refoel the poor cobbler who had gone home to put on his Sabbath overcoat. He was no judge but had come to welcome the Red Army.¹¹⁶

A Polish eyewitness confirms that it was the Jewish population of Nowogródek who greeted the Soviets:

... the Christian population did not take any part in meeting the Soviet army entering the city. The Jewish population, however, especially the youth, ostentatiously met the motorized units with flowers.¹¹⁷

The situation in *Slonim* was described by Jewish eyewitnesses as follows:

The Jews of Slonim welcomed the Red Army with joy and relief, as if they sensed an end to Polish anti-

¹¹³ Levin, *The Lesser of Two Evils*, 34.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 219.

¹¹⁵ Cheina Rabinovich, “Vishnevo during the Second World War,” in Hayyim Abramson, ed., *Vishneva, ke-fi she-hayetah ve-enenah od: Sefer zikaron* (Tel Aviv: Wiszniew Society in Israel, 1972), 107 ff.; English translation: *Wiszniw, As It Was and Is No More: Memorial Book*, posted on the Internet at: <<http://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/vishnevo/vishnevo.html>>.

¹¹⁶ Jack Kagan and Dov Cohen, *Surviving the Holocaust with the Russian Jewish Partisans* (London and Portland, Oregon: Vallentine Mitchell, 1998), 34, 135.

¹¹⁷ Andrzej Suchcitz, “Żydzi wobec upadku Rzeczypospolitej w relacjach polskich z Kresów Wschodnich 1939–1941,” in Krzysztof Jasiewicz, ed., *Świat niepożegnany: Żydzi na dawnych ziemiach wschodnich Rzeczypospolitej w XVIII–XX wieku* (Warsaw and London: Instytut Studiów Politycznych PAN, Rytm, and Polonia Aid Foundation Trust, 2004), 261.

Semitism. No more discrimination and demeaning of Jews. ...

The Soviet tanks and motorized troops sparked in the sunshine that lit up the triumphant liberation-march of the Red Army. The Jews of Slonim greeted the Soviet tanks with flowers. In those happy moments we dreamed and hoped that the "Stalin sun" would forever warm and illuminate the life of the poor working people and lead them out on the bright highway of true national and social justice¹¹⁸

... the Jewish population received the Soviet Army on its entry into the city with bread and wine, with a shower of flowers that were thrown at the soldiers, with drums and dances. ... The Slonim Jews threw themselves into the arms of the Soviet soldiers, embraced them and kissed them. The festivities continued three days. Liquor flowed like water and speeches were made in the spirit of Communism. Many believed that our salvation had come and the Soviet Russians were our messiah. The gentiles whispered and said: "Now the Jewish government has come."¹¹⁹

In **Brasław**,

The Jews welcomed the Red Army with great joy, with flowers, bread and salt. ... the draper Aharon Zeif brought out and distributed rolls of red cloth among all who wanted to make red flags.¹²⁰

With flowers and kisses and shows of happiness, we willingly received the Red Army.¹²¹

These Jewish accounts from Brasław are consistent with Polish accounts, but less forthcoming:

[A] mass of Jews ... came out on the streets. Crowds of Jewish teenagers cheered the Red Army and smeared Poland at every opportunity. Not infrequently Poles whom they encountered were told to get off the sidewalk and they had to listen to insulting remarks about the end of their rule. "Your governments are over! Our governments are here!" ... Long lines for bread were formed each day in front of bakeries and some stores. ... Jews with red armbands and armed with rifles maintained order. Polish war posters and all sorts of notices and signs were torn off walls. ... we were warned to keep our mouths shut.¹²²

In **Ostrówek**, a village near Iwacewicz, in Polesia,

¹¹⁸ Nachum Alpert, *The Destruction of Slonim Jewry: The Story of the Jews of Slonim During the Holocaust* (New York: Holocaust Library, 1989), 9–10.

¹¹⁹ Shalom Cholawsky, *The Jews of Bielorussia during World War II* (Amsterdam: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1998), 3.

¹²⁰ Ariel Machnes and Rina Klinov, eds., *Darkness and Desolation: In Memory of the Communities of Brasław, Dubene, Jaisi, Jod, Kisłowszcizna, Okmienic, Opsa, Plusy, Rimszan, Slobodka, Zamosz, Zaracz* (Tel Aviv: Association of Brasław and Surroundings in Israel and America and Ghetto Fighters' House and Hakibbutz Hameuchad Publishing House, 1986), 612.

¹²¹ Machnes, *Darkness and Desolation*, 289.

¹²² Aleksander Szemiel, *Wspomnienia kresowiaka a lat wojny* (Warsaw: ŁośGraf, 2004).

Large numbers greeted the Red Army with flowers (I don't think there were any Poles there). ... All the flowers from our gardens were ripped out...to meet the Russians. A well-known peddler cut off the white part of the Polish flag and the red part attached to the roof of our home.¹²³

In *Białystok*,

Towards evening [of September 22] the Red Army marches into a city decorated with red flags. Communal delegations greet them with flowers and speeches of welcome. Thousands of elated Bialystoker throng the streets. Jewish youths embrace Russian soldiers with great enthusiasm. On this, the holiest of nights, the culmination of the Days of Awe, orthodox Jews pack the synagogues and pray with renewed fervour.¹²⁴

Another Jewish account from Białystok states:

People in the streets greeted the Red Army with great warmth. The professional associations and political organizations in the city filled the streets with red flags and flowers. The encounter was enthusiastic and friendly. Jewish youth, at that time already alienated from traditional Judaism, embraced the Russian soldiers.¹²⁵

Further west, in *Węgrów*, Rev. Kazimierz Czarkowski witnessed the enthusiastic welcome given by Jews to the Red Army in that town.¹²⁶ Historian Jan Grabowski cast aspersions on the veracity of that account, claiming not to have found any other account confirming the Soviet entry.¹²⁷ However, on the contrary, there are several testimonies including Jewish ones that bear out Rev. Czarkowski's account.¹²⁸

In *Horochów*, in Volhynia,

¹²³ Zofia Niebuda, *My Guardian Angel* (Toronto: Easy Printing, 1996), 25. The author continues her description of the Jewish peddler as follows: "Before the war, the Peddler somehow always knew when parents were not at home, for he always came around on such days. For some insignificant hair pin or a shiny glass ring, children would give him a chicken, goose, sack of flour, or a sack of oats for his horse. At one time for his second offense, my nine year old brother was belted for trading a pig for a worthless pocket knife." Ibid. The author describes, at 30–38, the deportation, on February 10, 1940, of her family and many Poles to their unknown destination near the Arctic Circle, carried out with the assistance of local collaborators. She recalled her release from bondage in August 1941, after the Soviet Union had become an "ally" of the West: "The commandant, with a charming smile on his face and his arms stretched out as though he wished to embrace us all, started with 'Tavarishchy!' (friends). ... Only a few days ago he had called us 'Polish dogs,' ..." Ibid., 118–19. However, this newly found friendship proved to be superficial at best. When they reached Kirov, "In front of every bakery stood long lines of fat Russian women. Under no circumstance would a Pole be able to purchase even a slice of bread without NKVD permission, and the NKVD had been under order not to supply such privileges. The Russians were determined to finish off all of the Polish people deported into Russia, but it had to appear as though the deaths were of natural causes. However, in actuality, Poles—slowly and purposely—were being starved to death." Ibid., 152.

¹²⁴ Arnold Zable, *Jewels and Ashes* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1991), 111.

¹²⁵ I. Shmulewitz et al., eds., *The Bialystoker Memorial Book* (New York: The Bialystoker Center, 1982), 51.

¹²⁶ Elżbieta Kozłowska, ed., *Ksiądz kanonik Kazimierz Czarkowski—życie i działalność: Wspomnienia i dokumenty* (Warsaw: Ośrodek Edukacji Ekologicznej i Artystycznej im. księdza Kazimierza Czarkowskiego przy gospodarstwie ogrodnictym Waldemara Kozłowskiego, 2007).

¹²⁷ Barbara Engelking and Jan Grabowski, eds., *Dalej jest noc: Losy Żydów w wybranych powiatach okupowanej Polski* (Warsaw: Stowarzyszenie Centrum Badań nad Zagładą Żydów, 2018), vol. 1, 396–97.

¹²⁸ See, for example, Henryk Grynberg, *Children of Zion* (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1997), 42.

The Jews were overjoyed. ... The balconies and house fronts had been decorated with carpets and pictures of Communist leaders. A deputation of workers with radiant faces awaited their guests—their life's dream had come true.¹²⁹

A Jew from Warsaw, who found himself in **Luck**, reported with a foresight that seems to have been rather rare in those times:

The majority of the youth expressed great enthusiasm. They kissed the soldiers, climbed the tanks, they gave an ovation. Even earlier, before the Red Army had entered the town, a part of Jewish youth organized meetings and demonstrations. For us Jews it was politically very unwise that a part of the Jewish community had a very bad attitude towards Polish society and the Polish army.¹³⁰

But it was not just the impressionable youth who were enthusiastic about the prospect of Soviet rule. In **Olizarka** near Rafałówka,

The town's youth was happy. They have dreamt about this regime. The elderly shook their heads and said, almost in a whisper, "the barefooted have arrived." However, both groups derived pleasure from it.¹³¹

A Polish eyewitness recorded the following scene in **Dubno**:

A Soviet soldier came in to the little Jewish cafe where we were sitting over a cup of tea. ... He was surrounded by a group of people. The local Jews in particular looked on him with great satisfaction and caught his words greedily, translating them aloud into Polish at one. The soldier declared, of course, that the Red Army was on the march to Germany. The most interesting part of his discourse was however his accounts of the Soviet regime and of life in Russia, which we found afterwards he must have learnt by heart, since they were word for word the same as those given by every new-comer from Russia, were he soldier or civilian. Russia, according to him, was a perfect paradise on earth, where everyone was prosperous and enjoyed great freedom.

'Comrade, what would I be able to do there?' one of his hearers asked him.

'It depends on what you know, comrade, and whether you're a specialist.'

'I'm a shopkeeper.'

'Then in that case you'll at once become a commissar of a large co-operative, comrade.'

'And I? I am a workman in a bacon-factory,' another wanted to know.

'What is a bacon-factory?'

'A meat-cannery.'

'Why, as you've been a workman, comrade, you can now be commissar of a factory, or a section-superintendent.'

At each answer given by the Red Army man the questioners rubbed their hands delightedly, as though they had already received their new appointments.¹³²

¹²⁹ Miriam Berger, "The War," in Yosef Kariv, ed., *Horchiv Memorial Book* (Tel Aviv: Horchiv Committee in Israel, 1966), 39.

¹³⁰ As cited in Andrzej Żbikowski, "Jewish Reaction to the Soviet Arrival in the Kresy in September 1939," in *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry*, vol. 13 (2000): 67.

¹³¹ Sara Rozenfeld, "My Town Olizarka," in Pinhas and Malkah Hagin, eds., *Sefer zikaron le-'ayarot Rafalovka ha-yeshenah, Rafalovka he-hadashah, Olizarka, Zoludzk veva-sevivah* (Tel Aviv: n.p., 1996), 280, translated as *Memorial Book for the Towns of Old Rafalovka, New Rafalovka, Olizarka, Zoludzk and Vicinity*, Internet: <<http://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/rafalovka/rafalovka.html>>.

¹³² Waclaw Sledzinski, *Governor Frank's Dark Harvest* (Newtown, Montgomeryshire, Mid-Wales: Montgomerys, 1946), 10. This book is translated from the Polish: Waclaw Śledziński, *Swastyka nad Warszawą: Dwa i pół roku pod okupacją niemiecką w Polsce* (Edinburgh: Składnica Księgarska, 1944).

In **Równe**, young Jews marched “in the streets, holding high the red flag ... and singing the Communist songs.”¹³³ A Polish soldier who observed a pro-Communist parade led by a group of Jews in honour of the Red Army, estimated that about ninety percent of 300 people who took part were cheering Jews.¹³⁴

In what can be described as a comedy of errors, a Franciscan priest dressed in a long cassock was mistaken for a Soviet commissar by Jews in **Ostróg**, who set out to greet the Red Army. They bowed low before him. Local Jews with red armbands were soon swarming the streets acting as the militia.¹³⁵

In **Busk**, northeast of Lwów, on September 18, the day before the arrival of the Red Army and while Polish officials were still in the town, Jews started hanging up red flags and banners greeting “the liberators from lord and Polish bondage” (*wyzwoliciele z pańskiej i polskiej niewoli*). When the Red Army entered the town the following day in the early afternoon, they were greeted joyfully by the Jewish population. The Ukrainian population showed more restraint, even though flyers were disbursed calling on the population to murder “Polish lords, their lackeys and landlords.” Public meetings maligning Poland were frequent occurrences.¹³⁶

In **Lwów**, pro-Soviet “enthusiasts” consisting mostly of Jews and some Ukrainians greeted the Red Army as it marched into the city on September 22. Groups of young men met the Soviets on the outskirts of the city and “welcomed them with red banners, revolutionary songs and music.”¹³⁷ Red flags, made by ripping the white portion off the red and white Polish banner, draped windows and balconies and adorned buildings and gateways.¹³⁸ In front of the Grand Theatre, an impassioned address to a Soviet tank division leader was delivered by a rabbi, who reportedly expressed the Jewish community’s gratitude for the long-awaited demise of the Polish state.¹³⁹ These anti-Polish rituals, in which tens of thousands of Jews took part, occurred in town after town.

¹³³ Genie Golembiowski, *In Search for Survival* (Miami: n.p., 1985), 7.

¹³⁴ Account no. 8359 in Piotr Żaroń, *Agresja Związku Radzieckiego na Polskę 17 września 1939: Los jeńców polskich* (Toruń: Adam Marszałek, 1998), 126. This soldier was taken into captivity in Równe.

¹³⁵ (Fr.) Remigiusz Kranc, *W drodze z Ostroga na Kołymę* (Kraków: Ośrodek “Wołanie z Wołynia,” 1998), 20–21.

¹³⁶ Antoni Adamiuk, “Wspomnienia,” *Forum Duszpasterskie: Biuletyn Pastoralny*, vol. 6, no. 23 (1996): 4–18; Internet: <<http://www.busk.pl/BuskTomkiewicz/rozdzial3.html>>. After several months, when the hardships imposed by the Soviet occupation became more apparent, some of the Jews, especially the older ones, became friendlier toward the Poles. Rev. Antoni Adamiuk, a vicar at the time and future auxiliary bishop of Opole, describes how he and the pastor, Rev. Wojciech Stuglik, were evicted from their homes, exorbitant taxes were imposed on the parish as well as on the priests personally (amounting to 30,000 roubles in 1941, when the monthly wage of a teacher was around 200 roubles), and the priests were subjected to frequent interrogations by the NKVD. The Ukrainian Greek Catholic pastor, Rev. Sylvestr Kalynevych, was afraid to provide religious instruction because he was married and had a family, so at the request of Ukrainian parents and with his permission Ukrainian children prepared for and made their First Holy Communion in the Latin-rite Catholic church. (Later, under the German occupation, Rev. Kalynevych used the same excuse not to visit sick Soviet prisoners of war who were hospitalized during an epidemic. Under the Soviet occupation, a Ukrainian catechist, Rev. Dygdala, became a teacher and ardent promoter of atheism.) When the Soviets fled before the German invaders in June 1941, the bodies of 35 people—Poles and Ukrainians, but no Jews—who had been arrested were found in the cellar of the abandoned NKVD premises. The Ukrainian priests fled from Busk with the advance of the Soviet front, so Ukrainians attended mass at the Polish church. A local leader of the Ukrainian underground (UPA) even called on Rev. Adamiuk to confess his dying mother and perform her funeral mass in the village of Kupcze. Afterwards, Rev. Adamiuk received a warning that the UPA were planning to kill him, so he left Busk in June 1944.

¹³⁷ Account of Hans L. in Joachim Schoenfeld, *Holocaust Memoirs: Jews in the Lwów Ghetto, the Janowski Concentration Camp, and as Deportees in Siberia* (Hoboken, New Jersey: Ktav Publishing House, 1985), 324.

¹³⁸ Grzegorz Hryciuk, *Polacy we Lwowie 1939–1944: Życie codzienne* (Warsaw: Książka i Wiedza, 2000), 17.

¹³⁹ Witold Lach, “Kto powinien pamiętać, a kto przepraszać,” letter, *Ojczyzna*, no. 15–16 (120–121) (August 1–15, 1996): 11, as cited in Stanisław Wysocki, *Żydz w Trzeciej Rzeczypospolitej* (Warsaw: Ojczyzna, 1997), 9.

Hugo Steinhaus, a renowned mathematician of Jewish origin, recalled with shame the servility of “an enormous mass” of Jews from Lwów who “had turned out to greet the Bolsheviks adorned in red bows and stars, so much so that it aroused laughter among the Russian officers. Others disarmed Polish officers in the streets, kissed Russian tanks and stroked their artillery.”¹⁴⁰ Kazimierz Kalwiński, who was decorated by Yad Vashem for his family’s rescue of 24 Jews in a bunker on the outskirts of Lwów, recalled:

On the day they [i.e., the Soviets] entered Lwow [Lwów] I went to the center of the city to deliver milk to a physician, a longstanding customer. I witnessed a horrible sight. On the street were piles a mound of rifles and the Russians were leading Polish soldiers-prisoners into captivity. On the main street I saw a hearse pulled by black horses, on which lay an unusually large coffin draped with a Polish military flag. On both sides of the hearse young Jewish boys repeatedly yelled loudly in Polish: “We are going to bury rotten Poland.” These were the poorest who believed the lies spread by Communists promising them a better life. How could they know what would happen to them two more years? I stood with other people on the sidewalk and screamed something at them (I no longer remember what). Immediately, a young Jew brandishing a gun and a red band (he was no more than 15) came over to me and said, “You don’t like something?” Some old man pulled my hand saying, “Go! Go!”

This is how they thanked Poland for accepting their ancestors centuries before. The richer, more intelligent middle class Jews condemned their behavior, but they could do little. Young Communists denounced them and reported them to the Soviets, as they did other Poles, and rich Jews.¹⁴¹

The conduct of these young Jews was by no means a reaction to the German invasion of Poland. It was an open manifestation of support, one of very many, for the Soviet regime.

According to Julius Margolin, in *Śniatyn*,

The townspeople organized a welcoming program in honor of the Red Army and decked the town out with bunting; seven hundred citizens marched past the Soviet headquarters, carrying red flags and crying hail and hurrah. Most of the paraders were Jews, some were Ukrainians; but there were no Poles.¹⁴²

The revolutionary committee was organized by Józef Kohn, whose son, riding a white horse, greeted the Soviet invaders under the triumphal arch erected by local Jews and communists. His wife Klara, also an ardent Communist, who ran a kindergarten before the war, led her prepped-up young students to the spectacle.¹⁴³

Y.M. Zeifert described what transpired in *Turka*, which had been briefly occupied by the Germans. Jewish shopkeepers profited from the arrival of Soviet soldiers, who eagerly bought up their goods at the prices set by the shopkeepers.

Jewish Communists again raised their heads and prepared to greet the Red Army. Since I was a graphic artist, they would come to me with red canvasses, upon which I would hastily write slogans in various languages with gold letters. “Long Live the Red Army,” “Long Live the Soviet Union, the liberator, the redeemer,” etc. These slogans were then posted on specially erected towers on the main streets. ... I was indeed happy, as were all the Jews in town.

The great joy with which the first vehicle with soldiers of the Red Army was greeted is indescribable! Their outward appearance was pathetic. It seems that they were trained agitators. As soon as they jumped off the vehicles, they gathered small groups around them and explained what was happening and what will be: we

¹⁴⁰ Hugo Steinhaus, *Wspomnienia i zapiski* (London: Aneks, 1992), 169. One Jewish author has remarked that kissing Soviet tanks appears to have been a particular predilection of the Jews. See Jan T. Gross, *Revolution from Abroad: The Soviet Conquest of Poland’s Western Ukraine and Western Belorussia* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1988), 29.

¹⁴¹ Edmund Kessler, *The Wartime Diary of Edmund Kessler: Lwow, Poland, 1942–1944* (Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2010), 106–7; translated from the Polish: Edmund Kessler, *Przeżyć holokaust we Lwowie* (Warsaw: Żydowski Instytut Historyczny, 2007), 95–96.

¹⁴² Julius Margolin, “When the Red Army Liberated Pinsk,” *Commentary*, vol. 14, no. 2, (December 1952): 520.

¹⁴³ Marek Jan Chodakiewicz, “Taki polski Kowalski: Wspomnienie o Tadeuszu Ungarze,” *Glaukopis* (Warsaw), no. 4 (2006): 238.

will simply be in a Garden of Eden. Within a few days, rallies were already taking place, and propaganda films of the new powers were shown. The town was boiling like a kettle. Many former Communists had now become militiamen with weapons that they had been apportioned. Others obtained higher leadership roles.

The shopkeepers began to take in a great deal of money. The purchasers were primarily Russian soldiers. For them, there was no such thing as bad merchandise... They also did not quibble over the price... It was not long until the shelves of the shops were empty...¹⁴⁴

In anticipation of the Soviet arrival, local Jews adorned a square in **Boryslaw** with huge portraits of Lenin, Stalin, Marx and Engels. They brought out a table which they covered with a red cloth and erected a triumphal arch which bore pro-Soviet slogans.¹⁴⁵ Cheering throngs of Jews and Ukrainians greeted the Red army as liberators of “Western Ukraine.”¹⁴⁶

In **Drohobycz**, the difference in attitude between the Polish and Jewish population was striking:

The Jewish crowd cheered the Bolsheviks. A huge red flag was hoisted on the Town Hall and floodlit with a searchlight. The Jews put on red armbands and tried to form a kind of militia to take control of the town. ...

The delight of the Jews was indescribable. Some of them started making communist speeches and greeted others with uplifted fists. The Polish population, on the other hand, kept very quiet and stayed at home.¹⁴⁷

A similar situation prevailed in **Brzeżany**:

Froyko Schmidt ... remembered the arrival of the Red Army as an utterly joyful event. “I felt good, ver good.” He recalled that those who greeted the Soviet tanks in Brzezany [Brzeżany] were mostly Jews. ... Tolek [Witold] Rapf remembered how “crowds of young Jews with red armbands and flowers in their hands greeted a Soviet tank ... There were also a few Ukrainians among them, but no Poles, absolutely none.”¹⁴⁸

The prevailing mood was captured in a Jewish diary: “I am going from place to place, from one shtetl to another and am amazed to find true enthusiasm for the Soviet régime.” Some went even further. That same diarist encountered an old Jew in a shtetl who observed, “These are Messiah’s times and Stalin is the Messiah himself.”¹⁴⁹

There are many accounts which attest to the fact that elderly Jews could also fall into pro-Soviet bliss. A grey-haired Jew from **Boremel**, in Volhynia, by the name of Lerner, who had the appearance of a patriarch, when asked by a Soviet soldier how old he was, replied: “I am four-days old.” “How can you be four days old?” inquired the puzzled soldier. “I was born when the Red Army arrived.”¹⁵⁰ A Jewish eyewitness recalls

¹⁴⁴ Y.M. Zeifert, “Stories of the Great Misfortune,” in J. Siegelman, ed., *Sefer zikaron le-kehilat Turka al nehar Stry ve-ha-seviva* (Haifa: Former Residents of Turka (Stryj) in Israel, 1966), 227–28; translated as *Memorial Book of the Community of Turka on the Stryj and Vicinity*, Internet: <<https://www.jewishgen.org/Yizkor/turka/Turka.html#TOC221>>.

¹⁴⁵ Alfred Jasiński, “Borysławska apokalipsa,” *Karta* (Warsaw), no. 4 (April 1991): 104.

¹⁴⁶ Wiesław Budzyński, *Miasto Schulza* (Warsaw: Pruszyński i S-ka, 2005), 124.

¹⁴⁷ Dominik Wegierski [Karol Estreicher], *September 1939* (London: Minerva, 1940), 152.

¹⁴⁸ See Shimon Redlich, *Together and Apart in Brzezany: Poles, Jews, and Ukrainians, 1919–1945* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2002), 88, 90.

¹⁴⁹ Diary of Fryda Zerubavel, *Ne Venad: Fartseykhenungen fun a pleyte* (Buenos Aires: Tsentral-farband fun Poylishe Yidn in Argentine, 1957), 75, 87, as quoted in Davies and Polonsky, *Jews in Eastern Poland and the USSR, 1939–46*, 16.

¹⁵⁰ Wadiusz Kiesz, *Od Boremla do Chicago: Opowiadania* (Starachowice: Radostowa, 1999), 33.

how a Jewish doctor in the town of **Bursztyn**, in Eastern Galicia, raised his fist clenched in the Communist-style to salute his Soviet comrades.¹⁵¹

The theme of Stalin being a Messiah for the Jews was widespread. A high school student from **Lwów** wrote:

I must admit that if ever anyone actually knew complete happiness, that was the day the Red Army entered. That's the way I imagined the Jews awaiting the Messiah will feel, when he finally comes. It is hard to find words to describe the feeling—this waiting and this happiness. And at last we had lived to see it: they arrived in Lwów. The first tanks rolled in and we wondered how to express ourselves—to throw flowers? to sing? To organize a demonstration? How to show our great joy?¹⁵²

A Jewish account from **Dereczyn** states:

It is difficult to describe our sense of elation. At the time, I thought I was living the happiest day of my life. The entire Jewish population, and also many of the [Belorussian] Christians from Dereczin [Dereczyn] and its environs, went forth to greet the Soviet military forces. ... Our joy knew no bounds. It seemed as if the Messiah had come ...

To the celebration gatherings, tens of thousands of people from the entire area came together. Dereczin was literally too small to absorb them all. The masses found many ways to express their enthusiasm and inspiration for the liberating Red military forces, and its shining leader, Stalin.¹⁵³

These sycophantic displays enjoyed particular longevity in small towns such as **Wolożyn** and **Dereczyn**, where Jewish witnesses recalled the pervasive pro-Soviet mood of the Jewish population.

Changes that could be seen as both comic and tragic occurred in the Wolozhyn [Wolożyn] Jews' style of dressing. The treasured fashion trend of the Soviets was high boots. It was distressing yet amusing for us to see distinguished *balabatim* such as Reb Isaak Shapiro, Reb Hirsh Malkin, Reb Yakov Veissbord, Reb Avrom Shuker, Reb Mordechay Shishko, Reb Namiot der Sheliver (name of his natal shtetl), Sholom Leyb Rubinstein and others walking in high boots. Most people wanted to please the new rulers. They threw away the elegant tied shirts that symbolized the Polish bourgeoisies [sic] and "decorated" themselves with the Soviet khaki *guimnastiorka*.¹⁵⁴

Young people [in Dereczyn] no longer show themselves in the *Bet HaMidsrash*. One can do anything one desires, and it has become the vogue to speak in Russian, and to assimilate oneself into the new Russian environment.¹⁵⁵

Polish accounts from **Lwów** are also informative:

Meanwhile the town suddenly changed its character. Jews poured onto the streets and, by all external appearances, Lwów was a Jewish town, especially when one considers the masses of Jewish refugees who

¹⁵¹ Ilana Maschler, *Moskiewski czas* (Warsaw: Krupski i S-ka, 1994), as cited in Tomasz Gąsowski, *Pod sztandarami Orła Białego: Kwestia żydowska w Polskich Siłach Zbrojnych w czasie II wojny światowej* (Kraków: Księgarnia Akademicka, 2002), 27.

¹⁵² Testimony of Celina Konińska, as quoted in Gross, "The Jewish Community in the Soviet-Annexed Territories on the Eve of the Holocaust: A Social Scientist's View," in Dobroszycki, *The Holocaust in the Soviet Union*, 168 n.9, and in his *Upiorna dekada: Trzy eseje o stereotypach na temat Żydów, Polaków, Niemców i komunistów, 1939–1948* (Kraków: TA i WPN Universitas, 1998), 68.

¹⁵³ Masha and Abraham-Hirsch Kulakowski, "This Is How the Jewish Community of Dereczin Was Destroyed," in *Dereczin* (Mahwah, New Jersey: Jacob Solomon Berger, 2000), 196.

¹⁵⁴ Rachel and Reuven Rogovin, "Under the Soviet Regime, in E. Leoni, ed., *Wolozyn: Sefer shel ha-ir ve-shel yeshivat "Ets Hayim"* (Tel Aviv: Former Residents of Wolozin in Israel and the USA, 1970), 529; English translation posted on the Internet at <<http://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/wolozhin/wolozhin.html>>.

¹⁵⁵ Meir Bakalchuk, "Uproted with the Maelstrom," in *Dereczin*, 324.

had come from the West. These throngs manifested an intense sympathy for the Soviet army units and tanks that rolled by. Every Jew felt it his duty to wear a red ribbon on his lapel or, if possible, some Soviet emblem.

On Sunday, September 24th, workers' demonstrations filled the streets. Of course, they were almost exclusively Jewish and expressed their joy at being "liberated." Poles and ... Ukrainians were not seen often on the streets, and their faces were visibly dejected.¹⁵⁶

The next days the walls of buildings and houses were colored with different posters. But they all had the same substance. "The rule of the Polish masters has ended, the Red Army has liberated Poland." One poster particularly struck me because it hurt me, a Polish eagle was shown wearing a four-cornered Polish soldier's cap all stained with blood and a Soviet soldier stood over it sticking it with a bayonet.¹⁵⁷

The Communists continuously organized meetings and rallies in the town square. The crowds were drawn by members of the NKVD, who had them sing [revolutionary songs in Ukrainian]... There were hardly any Poles in that throng. There were a few Ukrainian Communists, but most of all there were Jews who didn't even know Ukrainian well, but each of them shouted for three...¹⁵⁸

I was travelling from Boryslaw to Drohobycz [in October 1939] in one compartment with a young Jewish girl who, as if intoxicated, spoke about the Red Army and the Soviets with whole-hearted adulation. ... My co-traveller finished her praises with this remark:

"How refined they are, what culture they possess. Every soldier has three watches on his wrist, and good Swiss ones. I'm familiar with these matters because my father is a watchmaker."

She said this entirely seriously. The first thing that Soviet soldiers had stolen in our region was precisely watches, and the most widely known Russian saying was "*davai chasy*" ("Hand over your watch").¹⁵⁹

The situation in a small village outside **Równe**, in predominantly Ukrainian Volhynia, a region far removed from the German front and close to the Soviet border, was described by a Polish eyewitness with all its striking and symbolic juxtapositions.

[At the train station] we found hundreds of [Polish] military men and staff workers gathered into little groups. We joined one of the gatherings, exchanging small talk.

As we talked, our attention was suddenly drawn to a group of young people across the street. Slightly more than a dozen young men and women, who appeared to be Jewish, wearing red arm bands were gathered about a pretty girl with long black curls protruding from under a red calico kerchief. In her hands, she cradled a tray, on which were a bottle of wine and a loaf of bread. Some of us discussed this, and one of us recalled that the wine and the bread might symbolize the Jewish ritual of welcoming home Jews who had been victorious in battle.

Despite their sudden appearance across from the station, they remained inactive and strangely silent. They appeared to be waiting for something: a middle aged man, who appeared to be one of them, joined them, and looking over to our wondering gaze, broke into a wide grin. "They are coming," he exclaimed.

This caused his group to break into an excited chatter, and then they all turned to look eastward along the road. Their eyes appeared glazed, either with excitement or hope, we knew not which. Perhaps, I thought, they expect the Messiah. We looked eastward also, to see what could be coming. And then we saw what it was.

Far down the muddy road could be seen a column of armed soldiers, marching maybe six abreast, in a close formation. ...

"We are *Evrei*! I heard the Jews shout out. They broke into a run, the girl with her tray in their midst, toward the soldiers. I recognized the word as one meaning that they were Jewish. ... But, for the first time, I began to realize who these soldiers might be. *Evrei* is a Russian word.

By now, the group had reached the soldiers, and they were embracing them. I remained almost hypnotized, watching the scene. Now the girl was moving about the soldiers with her tray, laughing, and offering wine and bread, which they ignored, as they continued marching toward us, their faces stern and set. Even when the girl kissed a couple of the soldiers, they never broke stride and continued to march on without expression.

¹⁵⁶ Leon Kozłowski, "Więzienie sowieckie (1): Pamiętnik," *Kultura* (Paris), no. 10 (October 1957): 89.

¹⁵⁷ Account of Zygmunt B. in Grudzińska-Gross and Gross, *War Through Children's Eyes*, 71.

¹⁵⁸ Celt, *Biali kurierzy*, 256.

¹⁵⁹ Anna Rudzińska, "Wspomnienia lwowskie 1939–1940," *Zeszyty Historyczne* (Paris), vol. 137 (2001): 144.

Ignoring our people at the station, they marched right by. One onlooker cried, "What is it, an invasion?" "Who can they be?" a woman wondered aloud. Then, as we saw at close hand the peaked caps emblazoned with a red calico star, the truth burst upon all of us at once: "Bolsheviks!" ...

A Polish officer standing nearby nervously lit a cigarette, and shaking his head sadly, murmured, "We don't yet know the nature of this... They haven't declared war. What can they be doing here?"

... Two small tanks emblazoned with red stars, and obviously Russian, rolled by.

By now, the column had reached a cluster of small houses near the station, where the road ran between them. The soldiers stopped. I saw a large delegation of Jewish elders standing across the road. Some sort of ceremony appeared to be taking place. Obviously, they were welcoming the Red Army—and it appeared to be rearranged. Suddenly, I saw the soldiers break ranks abruptly and move in with bayonets fixed upon those Polish officers and cadets gathered loosely about the station building. Moving very swiftly, they disarmed the Polish Army men and took them into custody. I watched them rip the insignia and medals from the uniforms of the Polish troops. Even as they did this, they pushed and jabbed their victims toward the train station and then into the station. ...

When they had done this, two Red soldiers slammed shut the big wide archway doors of the station. The scene was horrifying. ... Sickened by the brutality, we stood there silent, helpless, unable to move, staring at the doors with their ornate carvings.

The silence was interrupted by a man who slipped around behind the station and came back. "They have loaded our officers into the train," he said in a hushed voice. ...

We started to walk away and were stopped by a soldier who waved his bayoneted rifle at us. "Get back there, you," he shouted in broken Polish.

An officer, who spoke more clearly, came up to our group of staff workers huddled near the building. He appeared to be of high rank. Like a chant, he intoned in brusk Russian why the Red Army had come.

We could not understand him, but a villager who knew Russian translated the rambling speech. The Bolshevik was bragging of how the glorious and unconquered Red Army had come to save and liberate the Russian and Ukrainian brethren from the oppressive yoke of the landed gentry.

"The Red Army has come as your brothers to redeem the Polish citizens from the Polish government," the translator said. The officer continued. He told us that the Soviets now considered the Polish State nonexistent. It would be the role of the glorious, liberating Red Army to protect us, he said. The chant went on. Even the translation sounded like a chant.

"We will give you happiness. Long live the rising sun Stalin!"

"Long live the Soviet Socialist Union!"

"Glory to the heroic Red Army!"

Only the *Steg Heils* were missing, I thought. After this shameless speech, made while the "liberators" were herding our valiant officers into the train, we were ordered to go to the nearby homes. Pushed by soldiers carrying their guns at the ready, our group moved obediently into the houses. We found that the residents had set out tables for the investigation of our papers. ...

Down the street, the soldiers stood at the ready in a grotesque pageant of olive green, their bayonets still fixed. A guard unit had been spread around the station, and nobody knew what could be happening inside. The train engine belched smoke but remained motionless. A few civilians walked dazedly from the scene.¹⁶⁰

The significance of what was happening was not lost on some Jews, mostly from the educated and culturally assimilated spheres, such as the following witness to events in *Zbaraż*, a town north of Tarnopol.

Later that day we saw many Soviet tanks, all coming from the direction of the Soviet border, just a few kilometers away. Later still, we were shocked to see Polish prisoners of war led by Soviet soldiers. Seeing Polish soldiers stripped of their weapons and rank was terribly depressing: the beginning of a new era. During the next few days printed propaganda posters appeared on the walls. They were very offensive and criticized the Polish government and "oppressive bourgeoisie class". They contained messages about freeing the Western Ukraine from Polish oppression.¹⁶¹

When this Jewish youth returned to his home town of *Lwów* the same atmosphere prevailed there:

Criticism of the Polish government, the Polish army, Polish pre-war politics and particularly Polish [sic] hostility toward the Soviet Union, was very sharp and could be felt everywhere. Political posters on the

¹⁶⁰ Wanda E. Pomykalski, *The Horror Trains: A Polish Woman Veteran's Memoir of World War II* (Pasadena, Maryland: The Minerva Center, 1999), 54–57.

¹⁶¹ Dov Weissberg, *I Remember...* (London and Tel Aviv: Freund Publishing House, 1998), 52–53.

streets were full of propaganda, such as [Marshal] Piłsudski [Piłsudski] having been the greatest enemy of the people.¹⁶²

A Jewish woman in her twenties acknowledged that she had read and heard stories about how in the Soviet Union everyone was equal, so she felt it was the type of government she would like to live under.¹⁶³ This was in all likelihood not an isolated case.

In the face of these abundant testimonies, both Jewish and Polish, it is amazing to read Jan T. Gross's recent assessment of what transpired. "We have no clear evidence to judge the size of the welcoming groups," he writes. "Undoubtedly only a small fraction of the local population showed up on these occasions." As to why the youth predominated among them, Gross observes glibly: "Not surprisingly, for one should hardly expect local youth, in some godforsaken backwater, to quietly sit at home when an army goes by their hamlet and does not kill or rob anybody!"¹⁶⁴ Moreover, he states that "the local non-Jewish population projected its own attitude toward the Germans in 1941 ... onto an entrenched narrative about how the Jews allegedly behaved vis-à-vis the Soviets in 1939."¹⁶⁵ (This is another bizarre claim. As is manifest, there was no ideological support for the German invaders on the part of the Poles either in September 1939 or in the summer of 1941. Poles did not prefer German rule to Polish rule; those who greeted the Germans in the summer of 1941 did so simply out of relief from mass arrests, executions and deportation to the Gulag, hoping for more favourable treatment under their new oppressors.)

Alexander Brakel, a young German historian, goes even further in his attempt to discount Jewish participation in these pro-Soviet manifestations by providing a dubious profiling of the crowds who assembled to greet the Soviets—contrary to Jewish accounts from places like Baranowicze and Nowogródek—and exonerate them from responsibility for their actions:

Not excluding the possibility that some Jews (and probably non-Jews as well) just greeted the Soviet soldiers for quite opportunistic reasons, it is probable that most of them shared left-wing political views. And as this was only a minority among the Jewish population, it is safe to assume that only a minority of all Jews of the Baranowicze region took part in the public welcoming of the occupiers.

One might argue that ... there was no reason at all for Jews not to welcome the Red Army as liberators and to voluntarily cooperate with the Bolsheviks. There was no need for them to show loyalty towards the Polish state that had treated them so badly.¹⁶⁶

It escapes Brakel that there would be no need to concoct the latter excuse if there was no truth to the claim that Jews greeted the Soviets *en masse*. Besides the argument is simply spurious. It could be used justify disloyalty by an aggrieved group in any international conflict and, more importantly, could later be turned against the Jews themselves: why were Jews deserving of Polish loyalty under German occupation, especially since the stakes for Poles who helped Jews were much higher than for Jews who remained loyal to Poland under Soviet rule?

Yet such arguments are lost on many Holocaust historians. Yehuda Bauer also *justifies* displays of disloyalty by Jews on the grounds that they had been mistreated in interwar Poland and therefore owed no loyalty to the Polish state. In the process he takes a swipe at Polish "nationalists" who noted the widespread, though not universal, behaviour of the country's minorities toward the Soviet invaders:

¹⁶² Ibid., 54.

¹⁶³ Testimony of Lucyna Berkowicz, Shoah Foundation Institute Visual History Archive, University of Southern California, Interview code 22640. Later on Berkowicz came to regard Soviet control in a less positive light than what they initially anticipated.

¹⁶⁴ Gross, "A Tangled Web: Confronting Stereotypes Concerning Relations between Poles, Germans, Jews, and Communists," in Deák, *The Politics of Retribution in Europe*, 93.

¹⁶⁵ Gross, *Neighbors*, 155.

¹⁶⁶ Alexander Brakel, "Was There a 'Jewish collaboration' under Soviet Occupation?: A Case Study from the Baranowicze Region," in Barkan, Cole, and Struve, *Shared History, Divided Memory*, 228–9, 227.

Polish politicians and ideologues later accused the Jews of the kresy—and, by association, all Jews—of betraying Poland in its hour of need, of identifying with the Soviet oppressors. This became the main ideological line of Polish nationalists toward the Jews during World War II both in Poland itself and in the Polish government-in-exile in London; it is repeated in Polish historiography, journalism, and literature to this day. The problem with this argument is that from the perspective of most Jews, interwar Poland was an oppressive regime and could hardly demand loyalty from its badly treated Jewish population.¹⁶⁷

The views of Israeli historian Robert S. Wistrich are even more strident. According to Wistrich, not only is the enthusiastic welcome by Jews of the invading Red Army a myth, but it is also a manifestation of a crude strain of antisemitism common among Poles. The latter, rather ugly, charge is undoubtedly calculated to stifle debate on this topic. Wistrich writes:

According to this theory—still very popular in Poland—when the Red Army entered the eastern half of the country in mid-September 1939, it had been enthusiastically welcomed by the Jewish population. Not only Catholic nationalists, ultra-rightists and open antisemites espouse this myth but also prominent historians such as Professor Tomasz Strzembosc [sic—Strzembosz], of the Catholic University of Lublin.¹⁶⁸

Historian Roger Moorhouse has also espoused the notion that only “a few” local townspeople, among them some Jews, greeted the Soviets in September 1939 (citing the one case of Jedwabne), and that such events were “comparatively rare.”¹⁶⁹ Historian Tarik Cyril Amar tries to dispel what many Jews themselves witnessed by resorting to the following sophism:

Soviet propagandists depicted enthusiastic crowds greeting their soldiers, but it is unclear who exactly was cheering ... But it bears emphasis that contemporaries could not actually *know* anything about who greeted the Soviets the most. Instead, in an ethnically fissiparous city [i.e., Lwów] in a state of emergency, fragmented impressions and rumors combined with prior stereotypes. Jews were condemned for both obsequiousness and alleged assistance to the invaders ...¹⁷⁰

In an American historical book, Matthew Brzezinski has gone so far as to call photos and clips of Jews greeting Soviet troops with flowers as “blatantly phony” and “ludicrous.”¹⁷¹ Without offering any proof, historian David Cesarani has claimed that “whether calculated in either absolute or proportional terms, more Poles [than Jews] ... had rallied to the Soviet regime.”¹⁷²

¹⁶⁷ Bauer, *The Death of the Shtetl*, 37.

¹⁶⁸ Robert S. Wistrich, “The Jedwabne Affair,” in *Antisemitism Worldwide 2001/2* (Tel Aviv: The Stephen Roth Institute, Tel Aviv University, 2003), posted on the Internet at: <<http://www.tau.ac.il/Anti-Semitism/annual-report.html>>. Robert S. Wistrich is professor of European history at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and chairman of the Vidal Sassoon International Center for the Study of Antisemitism.

¹⁶⁹ Roger Moorhouse, *The Devils’ Alliance: Hitler’s Pact with Stalin, 1939-1941* (New York: Basic Books, 2014), 37. Moorhouse does not mention any assaults on or arrests of Poles by local Soviet collaborators in 1939, but he does mention pogroms directed against Jews in the summer of 1941, which he attributed to “a minority” among the local populations. (p. 273).

¹⁷⁰ Tarik Cyril Amar, *The Paradox of Ukrainian Lviv: A Borderland City between Stalinists, Nazis, and Nationalists* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2015), 44–46.

¹⁷¹ Matthew Brzezinski, *Isaac’s Army: A Story of Courage and Survival in Nazi-Occupied Poland* (New York: Random House, 2012), 48: “Though they were blatantly phony, they found a receptive audience among certain segments of Polish society, as did similarly ludicrous newsreels ... of Jews greeting Soviet troops with flowers, cheering as Polish soldiers were led away to Siberian camps.”

¹⁷² David Cesarani, *Final Solution: The Fate of the Jews 1933–1949* (London: Macmillan, 2016), 362.

Jews who lived through those times, such as Michel (Mendel) Mielnicki, have a very different recollection of conditions in their small towns, in his case *Wasilków* just outside Białystok. Outside the large centres, the tumultuous crowds were dominated by the local population. Furthermore, they knew who was there, why they were there, and whom and what they were cheering for. These are not fraudulent, mistaken or imagined recollections imbued with anti-Semitic animus, but rather a reality that is uncomfortable for current-day apologists.

But, as *The Wasilkower Memorial Book* records, everyone in the Jewish community was in such a holiday mood on the evening of 18 September [1939] as they awaited the arrival of the Red Army that they didn't want to go to bed lest they miss any part of this historic occasion. Certainly, this is the way I remember things.

I also can confirm that everyone cheered when our neighbour from across the street, Mordechaj Yurowietzki, the tinsmith's son, raised a red flag on top of the fire station tower. And cheered again when a Soviet aircraft buzzed the crowd ... to drop leaflets welcoming us as "Brothers and Sisters of West Byelorussia." And when the Soviet soldiers finally did march in the next morning, ... they did so singing "Katiusha," with all the little Jewish and White Russian kids parading along beside them, joining in their song. This was a scene worthy of a Sigmund Romberg operetta. ...

And contrary to Western propaganda, being part of the Soviet Union gave the overwhelming majority of those in our community the security of belonging to a civil society, or at least one that was a hell of a lot more civil than anything we'd experienced before. ... Even my rebbe was a relatively happy man under the atheistic Communists. ... When a plebiscite was held in October and November 1939 on whether we actually wanted to be part of West Byelorussia, the majority of people ... (my mother and father included) voted "Yes".¹⁷³

Michael (Moshe) Maik, a native of the nearby small town of *Sokoły*, wrote in his wartime diary:

The next day, soldiers of the Red Army entered the town. The people of Sokoly, from the biggest to the smallest, from the youngest to the oldest, men, women and children, all went out to the streets to greet the liberating soldiers. The Jews received the "Reds" with shouts of joy and enthusiasm. In comparison, the Poles stood disappointed.¹⁷⁴

The authors of the memorial book of *Dawidgródek*, a small town in Polesia, are even more explicit about their new loyalties and their condemnation of the vanquished Polish state:

Without question September 19, 1939 was the happiest day in the lives of David-Horodoker [Dawidgródek] Jews in the course of the previous dozen years. After the shooting between the Poles and the Red Army detachments had ended, the entire Jewish population ... came out in the streets with happy smiling faces, and received the Red Army detachments ... Young and old, small and large, man and wife—all stood on the sidewalk of the main street through which the army troops passed. With smiling faces and waving hands, they greeted the Red Army men. ... That day everyone was simply intoxicated with joy and happiness.

In the afternoon a meeting was held under the free sky, and representatives of the Red Army made speeches in which they pledged a free and blissful life for the inhabitants of the freed regions of West White Russia and Western Ukraine. "Oppression, people-hatred and poverty will no longer be the destiny of the freed brotherly people of Western Ukraine and West White Russia. From henceforth you will enjoy a favored status, freedom, brotherhood, love and you will work under the rays of the sun of the great folk-leader Comrade Stalin." That was the sum and substance of the speeches which were held at the meeting.

Understandably the chief celebrants, who acted as if they were the hosts, were the few Jewish communists in town. They were joined by several town citizens of David-Horodok. All day until late in the night,

¹⁷³ John Munro (as told to), *Białystok to Birkenau: The Holocaust Journey of Michel Mielnicki* (Vancouver: Ronsdale Press and Vancouver Holocaust Education Centre, 2000), 76–77, 78–79.

¹⁷⁴ Michael Maik, *Deliverance: The Diary of Michael Maik: A True Story* (Kedumim, Israel: Keterpress Enterprises, 2004), 10. Maik is silent about conditions for the town's Polish residents, in particular the prewar authorities. He does acknowledge that the new "municipal functionaries were mostly Jews" and that a number of Jews were denounced for a variety of reasons, but neglects to point out that they were denounced by fellow Jews. Maik even rationalizes their good fortune: "Later, under the evil Nazi regime, all the Jews envied those who had been imprisoned and exiled to the Soviet Union." Maik maintains that "the economic situation of the middle-class and small merchants during the Soviet occupation was better than it had been during the Polish regime before the war"; that "unofficial trading flourished and there was plenty of income"; and that "the Jewish merchants felt freer under the Soviet occupation, even though they were legally subject to heavy punishment." Ibid., 14–17.

everyone stayed in the streets conversing with the Red Army men about how the Poles had suppressed the national minorities and the Jews. ... On the night of September 19, 1939 the Jews of David-Horodok slept peacefully and blissfully, and were full of hope for a bright future.¹⁷⁵

In *Zabludów* near Białystok, Irena Świerżbińska came upon a crowd of young Jews with red armbands and carrying a sign with Cyrillic letters. They were led by Icek Łopata, her grandparents' neighbour. Irena's mother asked him, "Icek, where are you leading your people?" He answered, "We're going to greet our own ... our comrades." Jerzy Kudelski, another eyewitness, observed how Jews with red armbands flocked to Red Army men as they drove through the market square. All the while they would yell out, "Yours has passed, ours is now!" They escorted a Soviet officer to the post office where he smashed the portraits of Marshal Śmigły-Rydz and President Mościcki with the butt of his rifle to the applause of the Jewish onlookers. Among the first to be arrested was Józef Manteuffel, a social activist, who was later executed in Ostashkov.¹⁷⁶

As the following accounts from *Krynki* near Białystok show, jubilation often overflowed into active support for the new regime.

Kushnir Eliahu and Friede Zalkin:

The Jewish population of Krinki [Krynki] awaited the arrival of the Red Army, and as soon as our workers heard that the Soviet military had crossed the border, they did not wait long before taking over the government in the shtetl. Before the Polish police managed to leave Krinki, there was already a red flag flying from City Hall.

Jews welcome the Soviets with an outbreak of joy and enthusiasm. Communists jumped up onto the tanks and kissed the soldiers. The people were just plain happy.¹⁷⁷

Abraham Soyfer:

There was great joy in Krinki. People hugged each other with tears streaming down their cheeks, tears of joy and luck.¹⁷⁸

Beyl'ke Shuster-Greenstein:

The shtetl was truly dancing in the streets. Everyone was beaming as they met their friends and chatted and talked politics. Everyone was in a holiday mood.

People took flowers and called out to welcome the Red Army.¹⁷⁹

Jan T. Gross, who exonerates Jewish behaviour by resorting to "the lesser of two evils" theory, also claims—but provides no evidence—that "in many instances ... the welcoming ceremonies were organized

¹⁷⁵ Yosef Lipshitz, "Years of Turbulence and Death," in Helman, *Memorial Book of David-Horodok*, 54–55.

¹⁷⁶ Antoni Łukasz Leończuk, *Wspomnienia budzą mnie po nocach...: Okupacja sowiecka w Rejonie Zabłudowskim w latach 1939–1941 w relacjach i wspomnieniach* (Białystok: Książnica Podlaska im. Łukasza Górnickiego, 2010), 40–42.

¹⁷⁷ D. [Dov] Rabin, ed., *Memorial Book of Krynki*, Internet: <<http://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/Krynki/Krynki.html>>, translation of *Pinkas Krynki* (Tel Aviv: Former Residents of Krynki in Israel and the Diaspora, 1970), 231. This account goes on to say: "Shortly the enthusiasm on the part of the followers of the Soviet regime began to cool. ... But to them, after the Polish regime, they wanted to try communism. ... Generally, the Jews were happy." Ibid., 231–32. The residents of Krynki had no particular cause to complain about the Polish administration. According to testimonies in that town's memorial book, "the relationship of the Jews and Christians, among them the Poles who were now the ruling and privileged state-forming ethnic group, was usually fair until the Nazi period, and it was not affected by the open and even official anti-Semitic agitation, which intensified during the 1930s." The Polish mayor, Paweł Carewicz, was "a very friendly man, spoke Yiddish well and had a good relationship with the Jews." In 1927 the town council decided that all official announcements would be published in Yiddish as well as in Polish and that Yiddish could be spoken at meetings of the council. Ibid., 147, 177, 223.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., 233.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., 233.

on explicit instructions, and people were forced to attend”; elsewhere, he claims that the triumphal arches “were erected most often out of fear.” He assures us that “the majority of the residents were fearful” of the Red Army and “only a small fraction of the local population showed up on these occasions.” The conspicuously large crowds of Jews “milling” in the streets of large cities such as Lwów, Wilno and Białystok can be explained simply by the fact that the Jewish population had allegedly doubled in size because of the influx of refugees from the German zone, which created a severe housing shortage.¹⁸⁰ However, these rather fanciful claims find little support in Jewish testimonies or in Soviet population statistics, nor do they explain the effusive reception given to the Red Army by Jews in small towns where refugees were rather scarce.¹⁸¹ Moreover, such obfuscations have been rejected by other historians of Jewish origin who have acknowledged that the reality was much more complex. Mark Mazower, citing Ben-Cion Pinchuk, writes: “many left-wing Jews, especially the younger ones, greeted the Red Army with enthusiasm. ... they welcomed the promise of civic equality. That Soviet rule spelled doom for the traditional institutions of *shtetl* life (not to mention other political parties) bothered their elders but not them.”¹⁸²

A common occurrence was creating an ersatz Soviet flag by cutting off the white upper portion of Polish flags. Such detail gave more colour to the accompanying pro-Soviet chanting. Before it can be seriously suggested that all this was merely a display of gratitude for saving Jews from an unknown fate at the hands of the Germans and did not cast legitimate aspersions on the loyalty or neutrality of the large masses of jubilant participants, one has to consider how Jews in Western Poland viewed pro-Nazi outbursts on the part of the ethnic German population there. A young German-speaking Jewish woman from the heavily German city of Bielsko, in Polish Silesia, recorded her sense of shock and indignation at her German neighbours’ behaviour in the early days of September 1939:

I looked out again. A swastika was flying from the house across the street. My God! They seemed prepared. All but us, they knew.

A big truck filled with German soldiers was parked across the street. Our neighbors were serving them wine and cakes, and screaming as though drunk with joy. “Heil Hitler! Long live the Führer! We thank thee for our liberation!”

I couldn’t understand it. I didn’t seem to be able to grasp the reality of what had happened. What are those people doing? The same people I had known all my life. They have betrayed us. ...

I looked out the window and there was Trude, a girl I had known since childhood. She and her grandmother lived rent-free in a two-room apartment in our basement in return for laundry service. Now I saw her carrying flowers from our garden, white roses of which she had been so proud because they bloomed out of season. She handed them to a soldier, breaking her tongue with the unfamiliar German, “Heil Hitler!” The soldier reached for the flowers, but somebody offered him some schnapps. ... I started sobbing, crying, releasing all my emotions and anxieties in that outburst. ...

Early in the afternoon the drunken, jubilant mob was still celebrating its “liberation” and hoarsely shouting “Heil Hitler”. ... I realized that we were outsiders, strangers in our own home, at the mercy of those who until then had been our friends. Although I was only fifteen I had a strong feeling, more instinct than reason, that our lives were no longer our own, but lay in the hands of a deadly enemy. ...

The next morning, I was in the kitchen with Mama when Mrs. Rösche, one of the neighbors, came in with another woman and asked for our Polish flag.

“The flag?” Mama asked. “What for?”

“To make a German one, of course. It’s really simple. You leave the red stripe as it is, cut a circle out of the white, and you put a black swastika on it.” ...

¹⁸⁰ Gross, *Upiorna dekada*, 66–67; Gross, “A Tangled Web: Confronting Stereotypes Concerning Relations between Poles, Germans, Jews, and Communists,” in Deák, *The Politics of Retribution in Europe*, 93–94.

¹⁸¹ According to Soviet statistics, there were 39,000 refugees in Lwów in March 1940, of whom 26,000 were Jews. The number of refugees increased to 54,000 in May of that year, with Jews likely accounting for about two thirds. Since the city counted some 100,000 Jews in 1931, the Jewish population grew only by about 20 to 30 percent. See Hryciuk, *Polacy we Lwowie 1939–1944*, 88. There is more validity to the claim that, in those towns that fell immediately to the German army, it was out of fear (and possibly to ingratiate themselves) that Jews built triumphal arches and dispatched delegations to greet the German invaders.

¹⁸² Mark Mazower, *Hitler’s Empire: How the Nazis Ruled Europe* (New York: Penguin, 2008), 98–99.

Those two neighbors spent all morning sewing a Nazi flag to hang from our house. ... Mrs. Rösche and the other woman struggled to fasten the flag through the little hole on the roof. I couldn't bring myself to look out of the window for days, but when I did, there was the blood-red symbol of the tragedy that had engulfed us.¹⁸³

According to German reports, Jews also attacked German civilians who were taken hostage by the Polish army or authorities during the early stages of the German invasion. On the march through Kutno, a group of ethnic Germans were set upon by

a crazed mob (mostly Jews) and badly beaten. ... they set about the seriously ill and half dead comrades lying on carts at the back of each column with clubs and iron bars.¹⁸⁴

Even in the Eastern Borderlands, Jews looked with trepidation as the German minority began to show its true colours even before the arrival of either the Germans or Soviets, as described by a Jewish resident of **Włodzimierz Wołyński**, in Volhynia:

On the afternoon of September 12, members of the Fifth Column, Polish citizens of German ancestry who secretly collaborated with the Nazis, donned German uniforms and strolled back and forth down Farna Street. I recognized the Schoen brothers, Bubi and Rudi, friends of youth and sons of the local pastor. They didn't look at me as we passed, and I ran back home. Our close friendship, which had begun in grade school, had cooled over the years as they spent their summer vacations in Germany. In one of our last conversations, nearly two years before, Bubi told me I should leave Poland with my family because bad things were going to happen to Jews.¹⁸⁵

Outbursts of pro-Soviet solidarity were not restricted to the Eastern Borderlands. The Germans and Soviets had originally agreed to a partition line running significantly to the west of the Bug River and, for a brief period, the Soviets occupied a large portion of central Poland, namely Lublin province (in addition to the Łomża region from which they did not withdraw). There too, as in **Siedlce**, the Jewish population erected triumphal arches and greeted the Soviet invaders enthusiastically with red armbands and ribbons.¹⁸⁶ The Soviets "posted armed civilians sporting red ribbons on their arms to guard government buildings," and the prewar "diehard Communists rose in status."¹⁸⁷

In some towns near the Soviet border, Poles and even Polish officials were initially among the throngs greeting the Soviet army. (Polish soldiers were often given orders by their commanders not to fire at the Soviet army.) Duped by Soviet propaganda, these Poles were under the mistaken impression that the

¹⁸³ Gerda Weissmann Klein, *All But My Life*, Second revised and expanded edition (New York: Hill and Wang, 1995), 8–10.

¹⁸⁴ Michael Burleigh, *Germany Turns Eastwards: A Study of Ostforschung in the Third Reich* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 183–84.

¹⁸⁵ Janusz Bardach and Kathleen Gleeson, *Man Is Wolf to Man: Surviving the Holocaust* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1998), 14–15.

¹⁸⁶ Paweł Szapiro, ed., *Wojna żydowsko-niemiecka: Polska prasa konspiracyjna 1943–1944 o powstaniu w getcie Warszawy* (London: Aneks, 1992), 117; Mariusz Bechta, *Rewolucja, mit, bandytyzm: Komuniści na Podlasiu 1939–1944* (Warsaw: Rachocki, and Biała Podlaska: Rekonkwista, 2000), 40. The *arch-de-triomphe* in Siedlce bore the sign "Welcome liberators from the Land of the Soviets" and built near the statue of Our Lady of Kodeń by local Jews.

¹⁸⁷ Gitel Donath, *My Bones Don't Rest in Auschwitz: A Lonely Battle to Survive German Tyranny* (Montreal: Kaplan Publishing, 1999), 12–13.

Soviets had come to help them fight the Germans, and not to subjugate their country.¹⁸⁸ The Soviet tanks that rolled into *Kopyczyńce*, for example, were adorned with Polish flags and slogans of Soviet help in the fight against the common Nazi enemy.¹⁸⁹ The Poles were soon disabused of their short-lived illusions. As the confusion gave way to the certainty that Soviets did not come as defenders of Poland, dejected, they abandoned the cheering throngs. Many Jews, Belorussians and Ukrainians, on the other hand, openly welcomed the prospect of Soviet rule instead of Polish rule.

Why did the Jews in particular greet the invading Soviet army en masse? Jewish apologists offer the following explanation, as if *all* Jews shared the exact same motivation: the Jews simply preferred the Soviets to the murderous Germans, who were intent on annihilating them. Mortal fear of the Nazis is a common retroactive exculpation for the 1939 Jewish-Soviet collaboration. Interestingly, diary-author Josef Zelkowicz not only adds his voice to other Jews who stated that there was no great Jewish fear of the Nazis at the time, but also adds to other testimonies signifying the fact that even the news of Nazi anti-Semitic acts in prewar Germany was not believed. He quips, “Therefore, even in our times, we shrugged off and expressed doubt when various newspapers told us what was being done to Jews in Berlin and other cities. Each of us chuckled skeptically, ‘So, our writers are amply endowed with the spice of imagination.’”¹⁹⁰ Of course, no one knew about the Holocaust in 1939 and few Jews in Eastern Poland had witnessed the Germans in action. As these accounts show, the motivation of the Jewish population varied: some did indeed fear the Germans, while others were happy to see the demise of the Polish state; some were pro-Soviet, while others were prepared to curry favour with the new rulers. In September 1939, relatively few Jews displayed any misgivings about the new state of affairs. Their attitude was thus markedly different from that of the Poles who regarded the invasion as an unmitigated tragedy.

The reality of collaboration ran much deeper than warmly greeting the invading Soviet forces, however, and its consequences had a devastating impact on the Polish population and on Polish-Jewish relations. As we shall see, Jewish collaboration with the Soviet invaders was responsible, directly or indirectly, for the loss of many thousands of Polish lives.

¹⁸⁸ As pointed out by Jan Tomasz Gross, the confusion was orchestrated by the Soviets themselves, who “dropped leaflets explaining that the Soviet army was assisting Poland against Germany, a statement repeated by many Soviet soldiers in conversations with the local population while they marched through hamlets and villages.” See Grudzińska-Gross and Gross, *War Through Children's Eyes*, 6 (some examples are cited by the author). In Nieśwież, for example, “the streets ... were overrun with crowds. ... the people stood on the pavement viewing the Red Army in full mass. People began to applaud and throw flowers to the soldiers. Standing in the crowd were *ossadniks* [*osadniks*] (‘colonists’), including demobilized officers who had come to settle the lands along the eastern frontier to create a Polish buffer zone. They had always regarded the Russians as ‘those damned Muscovites.’ But now they, too, threw flowers to the marching columns. Someone cheered: ‘They are going to help the Poles beat the bloody *Schwab* [German].’” See Shalom Cholawski, *Soldiers from the Ghetto* (San Diego: A.S. Barnes & Company, 1980), 14. In Plebanówka, near Trembowla, the leery Polish inhabitants emerged only after a Soviet officer assured them “Don’t be afraid, we’re coming to help Poland, so that together we can fight the Germans.” See Kazimierz Turzański, *Krwawe noce pod Trembowlą* (Wrocław: Stowarzyszenie Upamiętnienia Ofiar Zbrodni Ukraińskich Nacjonalistów, 1998), 29–31. In Ostróg, Volhynia, Polish policemen were among those who welcomed the Soviet army. They were immediately arrested by the Soviets. See Siekierski and Tych, *Widziałem anioła śmierci*, 449–50. In Zdołbunów, even the voivode (i.e., provincial governor) and the *starosta* (county supervisor) reportedly came out to greet the Soviet army the morning of September 18th, believing they were coming to fight the Germans. See Żaroń, *Agresja Związku Radzieckiego na Polskę 17 września 1939*, 121. For other examples, see Jan T. Gross’s essay, “The Jewish Community in the Soviet-Annexed Territories on the Eve of the Holocaust: A Social Scientist’s View,” in Dobroszycki, *The Holocaust in the Soviet Union*, 167 n.3; Gross’s essay, “A Tangled Web: Confronting Stereotypes Concerning Relations between Poles, Germans, Jews, and Communists,” in Deák, *The Politics of Retribution in Europe*, 122; Hania and Gaither Warfield, *Call Us to Witness: A Polish Chronicle* (New York and Chicago: Ziff-Davis Publishing Company, 1945), 51.

¹⁸⁹ Jerzy Julian Szewczyński, *Nasze Kopyczyńce* (Malbork: Heldruk, 1995), 20. In response, a city official reportedly spoke from the town hall balcony: “Gentlemen, Poles, soldiers, we will beat the Germans now that the Bolsheviks are going to help us,” while Red Army commanders embraced the Polish officers whom they soon turned on. See Gross, “A Tangled Web: Confronting Stereotypes Concerning Relations between Poles, Germans, Jews, and Communists,” in Deák, *The Politics of Retribution in Europe*, 122.

¹⁹⁰ Josef Zelkowicz, *In Those Terrible Days: Writings from the Lodz Ghetto* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2002), 355.

CHAPTER THREE

*"Did Jews under the Soviet occupation actually
kill or murder any Polish soldiers or civilians?
I know of no single documented case of any
Jews executing Poles under Soviet rule."¹⁹¹*
Robert S. Wistrich

Fifth Columnists and Armed Rebellions

While throngs of Jews came out to greet the Soviet invaders in the towns and villages of Eastern Poland, the country continued to fight for its very existence. The most reprehensible actions were the armed rebellions, such as the well-known ones in Grodno and Skidel, staged by local fifth columnists in anticipation of the Soviet takeover. They surely rank among the most despicable chapters of early wartime collaboration. Recent research has identified many more cases of Polish citizens, mostly of Jewish origin, taking up arms against Polish soldiers: Jeziory, Wiercielszki, Wielka Brzostowica, Dubno, Wołpa, Indura, Sopoćkinie, Zelwa, Wołkowysk, Ostrya, Zdzięcioł, Janów Poleski, Horodec, Antopol, Drohiczyn Poleski, Motol, as well as in Lunna, Dereczyn, Byeń, and Lunin.¹⁹² These anti-state revolts occurred in places where no German forces had yet set foot and often before the arrival of the Soviet invaders. They were clearly directed against Polish rule and had nothing to do with anti-Nazi sentiments. In all likelihood, they would have occurred even if the Soviet Union had invaded Poland alone, and not in concert with Nazi Germany. As Tomasz Strzembosz has pointed, more Jews took up arms against the Poles in September 1939 than against the Germans during the Warsaw ghetto uprising. There are also numerous recorded cases of Jewish saboteurs shooting at or ambushing Polish troops¹⁹³—the only army which was fighting the Nazis at the time. Jews also acted as guides for the Soviets and spontaneously pointed out the location of remnants of the Polish army. Having armed themselves and formed self-styled militias, workers' guards, and revolutionary committees in many localities, Jews also played a significant role in the apprehension, round-up, mistreatment and even murder of Polish officers, soldiers, police and officials.¹⁹⁴

According to historian Marek Wierzbicki,

Yet even before the arrival of the Soviet forces, a number of rebellions took place and self-proclaimed structures were formed. These were so-called revolutionary committees that took power in given areas, appointed administrative authorities in skeletal form, and armed fighting squads, termed "militia," "self-defense groups," or partisan detachments for fighting larger detachments of the Polish Army. At the same time these revolutionary committees liquidated the remnants of the Polish administration, set up kangaroo

¹⁹¹ Robert S. Wistrich, "The Jedwabne Affair," in *Antisemitism Worldwide 2001/2* (Tel Aviv: The Stephen Roth Institute, Tel Aviv University, 2003).

¹⁹² Marek Wierzbicki, "Western Belarus in September 1939: Revisiting Polish-Jewish Relations," in Barkan, Cole, and Struve, *Shared History, Divided Memory*, 135–46, here at 140. These armed revolts are detailed in Marek Wierzbicki, *Polacy i Białorusini w zaborze sowieckim: Stosunki polsko-białoruskie na ziemiach północno-wschodnich II Rzeczypospolitej pod okupacją sowiecką 1939–1941* (Warsaw: Volumen, 2000).

¹⁹³ See, for example, the following sources: Jarosław Wołkonowski, *Okręg Wileński Związku Walki Zbrojnej Armii Krajowej w latach 1939–1945* (Warsaw: Adiutor, 1996), 12 (Wilno); Ryszard Głuski, "Obrona Grodna we wspomnieniach: Żołnierskie relacje," *Biuletyn Wojewódzkiego Domu Kultury w Białymstoku*, no. 3/4 (1989): 23 (along the Lida-Grodno highway); Czesław K. Grzelak, ed. and comp., *Wrzesień 1939 na Kresach w relacjach* (Warsaw: Neriton, 1999), 90 (in the Lida-Grodno corridor), 130 (Wilno); Szawłowski, *Wojna polsko-sowiecka 1939* (1995, 1997), vol. 1, 195 (Polesia), 199 (Kołki); Zenobiusz Janicki, *W obronie Przebraża i w drodze do Berlina* (Lublin: Ardałju, 1997), 11 (Sarny), 12 (Kołki); K. Kowalewski, letter, *Głos Polski* (Toronto), November 2–8, 1999 (General Franciszek Kleeberg's army in the Brześć area). As is the common practice in wartime, saboteurs and fifth columnists apprehended with arms in hand, regardless of nationality, were generally executed by the Polish army.

¹⁹⁴ Głowacki, *Sowieci wobec Polaków na ziemiach wschodnich II Rzeczypospolitej 1939–1941*, 269–70.

courts to try people closely associated with the Polish state, and occupied objects of strategies significance, among other actions. The subversive forces throughout this area were drawn predominantly from two national minorities: Belarusians and Jews. They were most frequently members of the Communist Party of western Belarus and their sympathizers who came from the poorest strata of society. That is why the anti-state incidents occurred in those areas that were dominated by the Belarusian (or Orthodox) population, and the Jews: Polesie, and the Grodno and Wołkowysk regions. Some of the revolts were so threatening that strong army detachments had to be sent out to quell them. For example, rebels took hold of Skidel in the Grodno district for two days. The Skidel rebellion was only suppressed by a punitive expedition sent out from Grodno, which on 19 September 1939, fought a pitched battle for this small town.

As later emerged from Polish, Jewish and Soviet sources, this type of anti-state revolt occurred in many other small towns and settlements ... Near the town of Telechany in the Pinsk [Pińsk] district, there were bloody encounters between saboteur-subversive groupings (which called themselves “self-defense”) and Polish police and army detachments. The partisans helped the Soviet forces take Pinsk and then “cleanse” it of Polish soldiers, officers and policemen, to the accompaniment of arrests, searches and sometimes the execution of suspects. Pro-Soviet diversionary groups also took hold of several railway stations along the Brest-Litovsk-Pinsk [Brześć Litewski-Pińsk] line, including Antopol, Horodec, Drohiczyn Poleski, and Janów Poleski, engaging Polish detachments in combat in the process.

In Białystok, Brest-Litovsk, Wilno, Wilejka, Berdówka near Lida, Nowogródek, Słonim, Nieśwież, Siniawka near Nieśwież, Kleck, Trzcianne, Prużany [Prużana], Kozłowszczyzna, Baranowicze, Widze (Brasław district), Michałów (Białystok district), Druskienniki [Druskieniki], Kleszczele, Radziłów and Wizna (Łomża district), the “red militia,” armed with weapons taken from the police and Polish soldiers and recruited mostly from amongst communists and poorer Jews, Belarusians, ‘Poleszuks’ and Poles, emerged spontaneously, either immediately before the entry of the Soviet forces or in the first hours of the occupation. One of the more important tasks of this formation was disarming the detachments of the Citizens’ Guards (a paramilitary formation called into being in September 1939 by the Polish authorities to help the army and police maintain law and order), as well as carrying out arrests and searches, occasionally setting up kangaroo courts, and robbing people considered to be enemies of communism, mainly Poles.¹⁹⁵

No mention of any of this is made in most of the historiography on the Holocaust. A typical example of this cover-up is Jeffrey Kopstein and Jason Wittenberg’s 2018 monograph *Intimate Violence: Anti-Jewish Pogroms on the Eve of the Holocaust*, whose author’s cite the above publication, do not refer to its content

¹⁹⁵ Marek Wierzbicki, “Western Belarus in September 1939: Revisiting Polish-Jewish Relations,” in Barkan, Cole, and Struve, *Shared History, Divided Memory*, 135–46, here at 139–41.

and then simply dismiss Marek Wierzbicki as a “nationalist” historian.¹⁹⁶ Why this egregious omission? Do the authors disbelieve these facts? Do they believe that the conduct of the Jews was justified, as do other historians? As mentioned earlier, Yehuda Bauer argues that “from the perspective of most Jews, interwar Poland was an oppressive regime and could hardly demand loyalty from its badly treated Jewish population.”¹⁹⁷

In *Grodno*, which had formed a poorly organized local defence after the departure of the Polish army, the atmosphere had already become charged on September 17th, when sporadic shooting erupted in that city. Armed Jews held clandestine meetings in various places in town. Jadwiga Dąbrowska saw her neighbour’s

¹⁹⁶ Jeffrey S. Kopstein and Jason Wittenberg, *Intimate Violence: Anti-Jewish Pogroms on the Eve of the Holocaust* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2018), 100. Relying on the lack of widespread Jewish support for the Communist Party in interwar elections, the authors disingenuously dismiss Marek Wierzbicki’s arguments, which are based on a broad-based study of what actually transpired during the Soviet occupation (as opposed to selectively choosing supportive testimonies) and the absence of pogroms under similar circumstances in September 1939. Further displaying their partisan approach, the authors ignore an important monograph by Wierzbicki (consistently misspelling his name as “Wierzbicki”), *Polacy i Żydzi w zaborze sowieckim*, yet rely uncritically on a highly criticized book by Mirosław Tryczyk, an amateur historian. As for their methodology, the authors present no hard evidence as to how voting patterns from the 1920s, a tenuous connection at best, actually impacted Polish-Jewish relations in the interwar period. The Łomża area was an Endek stronghold and in all likelihood few, if any, Poles would have been unaware, in 1941 or earlier, of historic Jewish voting patterns. While claiming that Jews suffered disproportionately under Soviet rule, the authors maintain—contrary to the evidence—that Poles did not. While noting, in passing, that the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists “killed thousands of Poles” in 1939 (at p. 106) and that there was a “modicum of violence” by Belorussians against Poles during the Soviet takeover in 1939 (at p. 112), the authors attach no particular significance to the dramatic escalation and dynamics of ethnic violence in this region that accompanied the destruction of the Polish state. In actual fact, at least 1,000 Poles were killed by Belorussians in less than two weeks in September 1939, as chronicled in Wierzbicki’s *Polacy i Białorusini w zaborze sowieckim*, which the authors cite in their bibliography. Moreover, the failure to mention Jewish violence directed against Poles in this context is indicative of an ethno-nationalist bias. Although six pages are devoted to Szczuczyn, there is not a peep about the role of collaborators—local Communists and their supporters, mostly Jews—who drew up lists of Poles and, afterwards, Jews for arrest and deportation to the Gulag. The notion that the Poles, rather than the Germans, were in control of the area at the time of the pogroms is not borne out by the evidence. The Germans established gendarmerie posts throughout and, as Radosław Ignatiew, the prosecutor in charge of the investigation of the Jedwabne pogrom, pointed out: “It is obvious that Poles could not simply do what they wanted in the territories occupied by the Germans. They could not therefore have organized pogroms. They were organized by the Germans.” The authors also conflate the two distinct phases of what occurred in Jedwabne and other localities upon the Soviet withdrawal in June 1941. First there were spontaneous lynchings and denunciations of Soviet collaborators, both Poles and Jews, then a lull, followed by pogroms orchestrated or inspired by the Germans. Nor are the authors aware that the Institute of National Remembrance unearthed German archival records attesting to the recruitment of paid Polish agents in the Łomża area who were employed to collect intelligence, recruit persons whose relatives had been denounced by Jews under the Soviet occupation, and incite and help organize pogroms. The authors make no mention of the documented case of the German agent Mieczysław Kosmowski and his role in the pogrom. See “Szczuczyn: History,” Virtual Shtetl, Museum of the History of Polish Jews POLIN, Internet: <<https://sztetl.org.pl/en/towns/s/1066-szczuczyn/99-history/138115-history-of-community>>. The authors maintain that Poles as well as Ukrainians share the blame for the Lwów and Borysław pogroms of July 1941 (at pp. 148 n.3, 139 n.18), a claim pushed by Ukrainian historians (see, for example, Ksenya Kiebusinski and Alexander Motyl, eds., *The Great West Ukrainian Prison Massacre of 1941: A Sourcebook* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2017), where the editors ignore Karski’s report about Jewish collaboration and the involvement of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists in the murder of thousands of Poles in September 1939). However, the vast majority of Jewish testimonies from those cities mention only Ukrainians, some Jewish testimonies state that Poles did not take part in the Boeysław pogrom, some Jewish testimonies state that Poles tried to protect Jews, and Jewish testimonies from almost all other towns mention only Ukrainians, thus underscoring the marginal or non-involvement of Poles. See, for example, Vladimir Melamed, “Organized and Unsolicited Collaboration in the Holocaust: The Multifaceted Ukrainian Context,” *East European Jewish Affairs*, vol. 37, no. 2 (August 2007): 217–48. (According to Helen Mahut, a Jewish eyewitness, both Poles and Jews hid in basements in fear of violent Ukrainian bands. See Myrna Goldenberg, ed., *Before All Memory Is Lost: Women’s Voices from the Holocaust* [Toronto: Azrieli Foundation, 2017], 139.) The authors endorse the baseless claim that 800 pogroms occurred in “the Polish lands” in 1918–1920, with at least 50,000 deaths (at p. 130). Contrary to what the authors allege, the rescue of 16 Jews in the predominantly Polish village of Draganówka is unrelated to the 1941 pogrom in Tarnopol (at p. 109). The authors also advance the unfounded claim that historian Bogdan Musiał “dismissed the [Jedwabne] pogrom as justified given the Jews’ ‘anti-Polish’ activities” (at p. 129). The book contains numerous other factual errors.

¹⁹⁷ Bauer, *The Death of the Shtetl*, 37.

son, a Polish soldier, being ambushed and shot dead by a young Jew who emerged from such a meeting in a nearby home.¹⁹⁸ Young Jews sitting on the roof of a house shot and injured Franciszek Zalewski, who was leading a police unit to dig anti-tank defence trenches.¹⁹⁹

Preparations were also underway in the countryside, as one Jewish source notes: “With the publication of the news on the radio that the Russians crossed the Polish border, the communists of Grodno and its surroundings began to confiscate the weapons from the retreated Polish soldiers. The Poles looked at this behavior with a lot of anger and hate.” Perversely, that source then blames this state of events on the Poles. “No wonder the Jews welcomed the Russians as their redeemers and saviors.”²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁸ Adam Dobroński, “Obrona Grodna we wspomnieniach: Dyskusja,” *Biuletyn Wojewódzkiego Domu Kultury w Białymstoku*, no. 3/4 (1989): 17.

¹⁹⁹ Testimony of Helena Platt (Franciszek Zalewski’s daughter), cited in Rafał Pasztelański, “Sowieci przywiązywali dzieci do czołgów,” TVP, September 17, 2009. Helena Platt noted her father was treated by a Jewish doctor when taken to the hospital.

²⁰⁰ Alexander Manor (Menschinsky), ed., *Sopotkin: In Memory of the Jewish Community*, posted on the Internet at www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/spotskin/; translation of *Korot ayara ahat: Megilat ha-shigshug ve-ha-hurban shel kehilat Sopotkin* (Tel Aviv: Sopotkin Society, 1960), Chapter 6: “Under the Russian Boot.”

On September 19th, the evening before the Soviets entered Grodno, local Communist supporters, consisting almost entirely of Jews, staged an armed rebellion against Polish rule.²⁰¹ One eyewitness described the activities of the city's fifth column as follows: "Suddenly some shots rang out on Brygidzka Street. We observe that on the balconies Jews with red armbands are shooting at people in the street."²⁰² Another eyewitness noted that the Jews had mounted a light machine gun on the roof of a house on Dominikańska Street and threw hand grenades out of windows.²⁰³ Similar reports came from Orzeszkowa Street.²⁰⁴ Naturally, the Polish civil authorities, police and remnants of the military had to respond to this unfolding rebellion.

When the Soviet tanks rolled into Grodno early on September 20th, they brought with them as guides Jewish Communists from that town, among them Lew Aleksandrowicz, Margolis, Lifszyc, and Abraszkin,

²⁰¹ Among the many Polish accounts, see, for example, Wierzbicki, *Polacy i Żydzi w zaborze sowieckim*, 62–65; Jan Siemiński, *Grodno walczące: Wspomnienia harcerza*, Second edition (Białystok: Towarzystwo Literackie im. Adama Mickiewicza, Oddział Białostocki, 1992), 51; Szawłowski, *Wojna polsko-sowiecka 1939* (1995, 1997), vol. 2, 52–75; Tomasz Strzembosz, *Rzeczpospolita podziemna: Społeczeństwo polskie a państwo podziemne 1939–1945* (Warsaw: Krupski i S-ka, 2000), 97–98. (Grażyna Lipińska's account about Grodno, found in Szawłowski's opus at pp. 66–75, forms part of her memoir *Jeśli zapomnę o nich* [Warsaw: Spotkania, 1990]; however, the editors, Piotr Jegliński and Jacek Bierezin, carefully excised the unfavourable references to Jews, which Szawłowski has highlighted.) As pointed out in Liszewski, *Wojna polsko-sowiecka 1939 r.*, 74, 198; Szawłowski, *Wojna polsko-sowiecka 1939* (1995, 1997), vol. 1, 148, and vol. 2, 68, Soviet propaganda turned the Polish defence of the city into a "pogrom." The Jewish apologist version, which conceals the genesis and true purpose of the rebellion and is short on plausibility in other respects, also portrays the events in Grodno as a vicious and unprovoked "pogrom" directed at the completely innocent and defenceless Jewish population, who were merely laying low, fearful of a German invasion. All the blame is laid on Polish "thugs," who were actually the remnants of the lawful civil and military authorities and were attempting to maintain order in Grodno in the face of communist paramilitary groups springing up to seize power in preparation for the Soviet entry. The participation of Belorussians, which was minimal and restricted to pro-Communist elements, is also played up. According to the Jewish version, "The Poles took advantage of the few days between September 18 and 20, 1939, after the Polish forces had left Grodno but before the entry of the Russians, to perpetrate a large-scale pogrom in the city. However, a few prescient Jews had organized paramilitary units in order to maintain security and order and prevent vandalism and looting. Thus, in the residential suburb at the city's entrance a group of young Jews and Belorussians (co-workers in a glass factory) banded together to disarm a gang of thugs from the Polish army. Another gang, which had organized when Grodno workers had freed political prisoners, decided to 'impose order' in the city. [Since *all* of the prisoners were released by the "workers", including local Communists, and they engaged looting and other criminal activities, the remnants of the Polish authorities had to respond. *M.P.*] Their leader, a member of the Polish judiciary named Mikulsky [Mikulski], gathered a lawless rabble around him, including policemen and members of the nationalistic organization OZN [*Obóz Zjednoczenia Narodowego*—Camp of National Unity, a pro-government party] armed with rifles and pistols. They wandered through the city, stealing, looting, brutalizing, and killing the defenseless population [i.e., members of armed communist groups]. Their pogrom claimed twenty-five fatalities. The arrival of the Red Army on September 22, 1939, put an end [sic] to the anarchy, uncertainty, and lawless violence. The terrified Jews greeted the Russian forces joyfully, viewing them as their saviors." Typically, one Jew from Grodno went so far as to claim: "If the entry of the Red Army into Grodno had been delayed by even one day more, not a Jew would have been left alive. ... the Soviet regime seemed to its new Jewish subjects to be enlightened and fair ... little was then known about the Nazis' atrocities in Germany and elsewhere." (According to the 1931 census, Jews—21,159 of them—constituted 42.6 percent of the city's total population.) See Spector, *Lost Jewish Worlds*, 88–89. As we shall see, bent on revenge, the Jews wasted no time in rounding up and fingering the "pogromists." What is difficult to reconcile with this story of a "pogrom" is the fact that some Jews fought on the side of the Poles and assisted them in other ways. For example, Chaim Margolis, the teenaged son of the director of the State Tobacco Plant, perished heroically in the struggle against the Soviets and a Jewish doctor cared attentively for wounded Polish soldiers. See Liszewski, *Wojna polsko-sowiecka 1939 r.*, 202–203; Szawłowski, *Wojna polsko-sowiecka 1939* (1995, 1997), vol. 1, 122–23, and vol. 2, 72.

²⁰² Account of Halina Araszkiewicz (Rozmarynowska) in Liszewski, *Wojna polsko-sowiecka 1939 r.*, 206; Szawłowski, *Wojna polsko-sowiecka 1939* (1995, 1997), vol. 2, 191.

²⁰³ Account of Narcyz Łopianowski in Szawłowski, *Wojna polsko-sowiecka 1939* (1995, 1997), vol. 2, 80.

²⁰⁴ Account of Tadeusz Borkowski in Grzelak, *Wrzesień 1939 na Kresach w relacjach*, 175.

who had fled to the Soviet Union before the war.²⁰⁵ Local Jews flocked to the ranks of the Soviet militia and NKVD and, along with many Jewish civilian supporters, took part in the fighting that again ensued. Grenades and machine gun-fire from Jewish homes were aimed at soldiers who were fighting for Poland's freedom.²⁰⁶ Polish children, among them 13-year-old Tadeusz Jasiński, were tied to the front of Soviet tanks who used them as live targets.²⁰⁷

Jews also took part in the subsequent round-up of Polish soldiers, policemen, activists, and even high school students and scouts, who had rallied to the defence of the city. Hysterical bands of roving Jews preyed on fleeing Poles. Jews fingered Poles to Soviet soldiers, apprehended them and even attacked them physically.²⁰⁸ There were scores of executions throughout Grodno; the bodies of Polish victims, often disfigured, littered the streets.²⁰⁹ Some 130 Polish students and officers cadets were executed on Psia Góra (Dog Mountain) and in Sekret forest. Rampages were the order of the day as brutal repressions ensued.

After the Polish defence had broken down Soviet troops took over all of the important points in the town such as the administration buildings, police stations and jails, etc. Fully armed execution squads descended on the town. In the first days after the town was occupied those who were arrested were not sent to places of detention, jails or prisoner of war camps, but were shot on the spot.

One of these Soviet detachments, led to our home by a Jewish co-inhabitant wearing a red arm band, arrested my father. My father, Jan Kurczyk, was a 45-year-old school teacher. After being taken out of the home he was shot dead. ... My father had not taken part in the defence of Grodno, but it was enough that someone had fingered him because he was a Pole and educated in order to murder him without a trial in the Nazi fashion.²¹⁰

A cruel fate awaited Polish soldiers and hundreds of residents of Grodno who were taken prisoner after being fingered by Jewish and Belorussian fighting squads. The men were cruelly disfigured: their noses, limbs, and ears were cut off, their eyes were gouged out. Groups of fifteen were then tied together by barbed wire. They were fastened to tanks and dragged for several hundred metres over stony roads. The bodies were then thrown into roadside ditches and bomb craters. The moans and cries of the murdered could be heard over a distance of a few kilometres. The grimness of the situation was intensified by the fires. Polish homes were set

²⁰⁵ Liszewski, *Wojna polsko-sowiecka 1939 r.*, 63; Szawłowski, *Wojna polsko-sowiecka* (1995, 1997), vol. 1, 110; Siemiński, *Grodno walczące*, 51; Jan Siemiński, *Przyszliśmy, żeby was wyzwolić: Wspomnienia z Grodna i Stanisławowa (1939–1944)* (Białystok: Muzeum Wojska, 1992), 9. Another account from Grodno refers to someone, recognized as a Jew, who had fled to the Soviet Union years earlier, shooting at civilians from a Soviet tank. Even though this Jew had just killed three civilians, once himself wounded, the life of this Soviet soldier was spared by the Poles. See the account of Mieczysław Wołodźko in Grzelak, *Wrzesień 1939 na Kresach w relacjach*, 183.

²⁰⁶ Account of Władysław Adam Ejmont in Grzelak, *Wrzesień 1939 na Kresach w relacjach*, 177; account of Stanisław Góra in *ibid.*, 195.

²⁰⁷ Testimony of Helena Platt (Franciszek Zalewski's daughter), cited in Rafał Pasztelański, "Sowieci przywiązywali dzieci do czołgów," TVP, September 17, 2009. Helena Platt noted her father was treated by a Jewish doctor when taken to hospital, so her account cannot be regarded as biased.

²⁰⁸ Liszewski, *Wojna polsko-sowiecka 1939 r.*, 203; Szawłowski, *Wojna polsko-sowiecka 1939* (1995, 1997), vol. 2, 73; Ryszard Szawłowski, "Grodno," in *Encyklopedia "Białych Plam"* (Radom: Polskie Wydawnictwo Encyklopedyczne, 2002), vol. 7, 142; Strzembosz, *Rzeczpospolita podziemna*, 96–97.

²⁰⁹ Andrzej Guryn, "Zbrodnie sowieckie wobec ludności cywilnej w Grodnie," *Gazeta* (Toronto), October 23–25, 1992. (Guryn's article is based on material deposited in the Hoover Institution in Stanford, California.) See also Tomasz Strzembosz, "Rewolucja na postronku (2)," *Tygodnik Solidarność* (Warsaw), no. 9, 1998; Mariusz Filipowicz and Edyta Sawicka, "Zbrodnie sowieckie na obrońcach Grodna 1939r.," *Biuletyn Historii Pogranicza* (Białystok), no. 6 (2005): 11–27.

²¹⁰ Account of Mirosław Kurczyk in Szawłowski, *Wojna polsko-sowiecka 1939* (1995, 1997), vol. 1, 364.

ablaze after being ravaged by Jewish youths wearing red bandannas and bows.²¹¹

What most sticks in my mind were the terrifying scenes which took place at that time on the streets and outskirts of Grodno. For example, at the corner of Orzeszkowa and Dominikańska Streets, when a vehicle carrying two [Polish] officers and a driver came to a momentary stop, a group of armed Jews ran out of some nearby houses, pulled out the soldiers and assaulted them. They then hacked their bodies up with axes and piled them up on the road.²¹²

Once the townspeople were subdued, Jews from Grodno forayed into the countryside as scouts to identify villagers who had taken part in defending the city during the Soviet onslaught. They appeared as militiamen and members of the NKVD and accosted young Polish men they encountered with threats of reprisals: “You went to fight for the *Pans*. I’ll give you your Poland, you mother-fucker.”²¹³ (*Pan*, in this context, alludes to the pre-Partition Poland of the landed gentry; it was used pejoratively by Communists to refer to the “bourgeois” Poles of the interwar years.) Polish soldiers in the vicinity were also savagely attacked.²¹⁴

Soviet propaganda labelled this, and other such occurrences, as “pogroms.” However, among the alleged pogromists were not only ethnic Poles, but also Polish citizens of other nationalities, including Byelorussians and Jews.²¹⁵ The following year, after the Soviet regime was firmly installed, show trials of “reactionary” Poles were conducted at which Jewish witnesses came forward in abundance to level charges against Poles accused of taking part in the fighting. A number of Poles were sentenced and some executed

²¹¹ Account of Wiktoria Duda, quoted in Nowak, *Przemilczane zbrodnie*, 17.

²¹² Account of Wiktoria Duda in *ibid.*, 54.

²¹³ Account of “Grodniak” in Szawłowski, *Wojna polsko-sowiecka 1939* (1995, 1997), vol. 2, 66.

²¹⁴ For an eyewitness report from the Grodno region attesting to atrocities committed against Polish soldiers by local collaborators, see Głuski, “Obrona Grodna we wspomnieniach: Żołnierskie relacje,” *Biuletyn Wojewódzkiego Domu Kultury w Białymstoku*, no. 3/4 (1989): 23.

²¹⁵ Two of the Jews fighting on the side of the Poles were Chaim Margolis and Oszer Szereszewski. See Ryszard Szawłowski, “Grodno,” in *Encyklopedia “Białych Plam”*, vol. 7, 139–40. Another (Boruch Kierszenbejm), mentioned in the following footnote, was put on trial by the Soviets.

for opposing the Communist rebellion in Grodno.²¹⁶ On the other hand, the much more numerous excesses committed against Poles went unpunished.

A similar scene was witnessed in *Skidel*, a small town near Grodno. On September 17th, Jewish and (some) Belorussian Communists, strengthened by local Jews and (a few) Belorussians, set up a revolutionary committee which seized power in the town, arrested members of the Polish administration, and took the Polish garrison. They captured a large group of Polish officers from the Regional Reinforcement Command in Białystok, whom they subjected to show trials and beatings, killing at least one of the officers. Understandably, this state of affairs prompted Polish retaliation the following day and some of the Communist rebels were killed.²¹⁷

²¹⁶ According to one Jewish report, “In June 1940, the thirteen Grodno pogromists [sic]—among them Polish army officers, policemen, and members of anti-revolutionary organizations—were tried in a Soviet court. ... Four of the defendants were sentenced to death; seven received prison terms of six to eight years; and two were released.” See Spector, *Lost Jewish Worlds*, 89. According to Evgenii S. Rozenblat, four of the accused were sentenced to death by firing squad, three to 10 years’ imprisonment, three to 8 years’ imprisonment, and one to 6 years’ imprisonment. See Evgenii S. Rozenblat, “‘Contact Zones’ in Interethnic Relations—The Case of Western Belarus,” in Barkan, Cole, and Struve, *Shared History, Divided Memory*, 206. These sources conveniently neglect to mention that among those put on trial was a Byelorussian (Jemielian Gryko), a German, and a Jew (Boruch Kerszenbejm), thus undermining the notion that this was a “pogrom”. One of the Poles sentenced to death (Franciszek Witul), accused by a Jewish woman, was spared and later acquitted. Virtually all the witnesses called at the trials were Jews. See also Tomasz Strzembosz, ed., *Okupacja sowiecka (1939–1941) w świetle tajnych dokumentów: Obywatele polscy na Kresach Północno-Wschodnich II Rzeczypospolitej pod okupacją sowiecką w latach 1939–1941* (Warsaw: Instytut Studiów Politycznych PAN, 1996), 144 n.7; Wierzbicki, *Polacy i Żydzi w zaborze sowieckim*, 64; Jan Jerzy Milewski, “Okupacja sowiecka w Białostockiem (1939–1941): Próba charakterystyki,” in Chmielowiec, *Okupacja sowiecka ziem polskich (1939–1941)*, 202; Mariusz Filipowicz and Edyta Sawicka, “Zbrodnie sowieckie na obrońcach Grodna 1939r.,” *Biuletyn Historii Pogranicza* (Białystok), no. 6 (2005): 19–21. On the other hand, Belorussian peasants charged with murdering a former village administrator and police chief in Małoryta on September 26, 1939, were acquitted because they had committed the murder “out of a desire for class revenge” directed at their “Polish oppressors.” See Evgenii S. Rozenblat, “‘Contact Zones’ in Interethnic Relations—The Case of Western Belarus,” in Barkan, Cole, and Struve, *Shared History, Divided Memory*, 206. Even Rozenblat, who views the events in Grodno as a “pogrom,” which it was not, admits that the outcome was a travesty:

The population of Western Belarus, which closely followed the outcome of judicial proceedings concerning cases of murder stemming from September 1939, received an unambiguous signal from the authorities that a norm of dual standards had been introduced. Assuming from a legal point of view that the murder of Jews and Poles is equally criminal, the court ruling in the case of the Małoryta [Małoryta] peasants was judicial nonsense. Soviet legal proceedings failed to see a criminal offence in the murder of Polish “oppressors” and acquitted the murderers, but sentenced to death by firing squad those who participated in pogroms against Jews.

As Rozenblat points out, there were “clear contradictions between the new regime’s propaganda and its actions: on the one hand, the Soviet authorities proclaimed class and national equality of rights, and on the other hand portrayed the enemy of the (Soviet) people as having Polish features.” *Ibid.*, 207.

²¹⁷ Liszewski, *Wojna polsko-sowiecka 1939 r.*, 60; Szawłowski, *Wojna polsko-sowiecka 1939* (1995, 1997), vol. 1, 107, 129–31, 368–69; Strzembosz, “Rewolucja na postronku (2),” *Tygodnik Solidarność*, no. 9, 1998; Nowak, *Przemilczane zbrodnie*, 22–23; account of Janusz Korczyński in Grzelak, *Wrzesień 1939 na Kresach w relacjach*, 214; account of Alfred Olszyna-Wilczyński in *ibid.*, 382; Evgenii Rozenblat, “Evrei v sisteme mezhnatsionalnykh otnoshenii v zapadnykh oblastiakh Belarusi, 1939–1941 gg.,” *Białoruskie Zeszyty Historyczne* (Białystok: Białoruskie Towarzystwo Historyczne), no. 13 (2000): 93; Strzembosz, *Rzeczpospolita podziemna*, 98. The rebellion in Skidel resulted in two Polish expeditions: the first (on September 18), by Polish police dispatched from Grodno, to free the captured Polish officers and officials; the second (on September 20), by a military squadron, to quell a renewed rebellion. After an ultimatum was rejected by the fifth columnists, Skidel was attacked and many of the armed collaborators perished. The Soviets created a legend about a “popular” uprising in Skidel, whereas the Jews labelled it a “pogrom” in which innocent Jews were slaughtered. After the Soviets entered Skidel on September 20, they apprehended and executed six Polish officers. Numerous Jews and a few Belorussians came forward to testify in show trials brought against local Poles, Tartars and even a Russian loyal to the Polish State. Some of the charges levelled against the fifteen accused Polish citizens included fighting in the Polish-Soviet War of 1919–1920, membership in Polish patriotic organizations, and concealing a Polish flag. It is believed that some of these Poles were executed the following year. See Strzembosz, *Okupacja sowiecka (1939–1941) w świetle tajnych dokumentów*, 131–44.

A revolutionary committee composed of Jews and Belorussians seized control of the town of *Lunna* as well as a strategic bridge on the Niemen, which they held until the arrival of the Red Army on September 21st, thus blocking the road to Grodno.²¹⁸ On September 18, 1939, after most of the Polish military forces had left *Wolkowysk*, an armed group of diversionaries, for the most part Jews, vandalized public buildings and Polish state insignia. They proceeded to attack the army barracks, where a small contingent of Polish troops remained, burned down part of the barracks, and looted the contents. Captured rifles were distributed among local pro-Communist elements who formed a militia and took control of the city. In the course of disarming Polish military men, one of the soldiers stabbed a Jewish assailant with his dagger. Polish forces returned to restore order and, understandably, retaliated against the insurgents.²¹⁹ Typically, the editor of the *Wolkowysk* memorial book (1949) does not refer to the assault on the Polish army barracks at all and alleges that local Poles staged a pre-planned, unprovoked “pogrom” against “unarmed” Jews with the

²¹⁸ Wierzbicki, *Polacy i Białorusini w zaborze sowieckim*, 137; Wierzbicki, *Polacy i Żydzi w zaborze sowieckim*, 68. Wierzbicki's information is confirmed in Soviet sources cited by the author. Typically, Jewish authors such as Ruth Marcus put a nationalist spin on these events. She claims that in “several towns and cities, including Grodno and Skidel, Poles conducted pogroms against the Jews. In Lunna [Lunna]-Wola a group of 30–40 Jewish youths organized to defend the Jewish population. These youths picked up weapons that were left behind by retreating Polish policemen and soldiers and put red ribbons on their arms, implying that they were part of a military organization.” However, she adds: “To this day, certain Poles perversely subscribe to the libel that the Jews’ actions in defending themselves are evidence that the Jews were traitors to Poland.” At the same time, she acknowledges that “Many Jews greeted the Russian forces joyfully since they hoped that the Soviet rule would put an end to the economic repression and anti-Semitism of the Polish nationalist government instigated over the previous decades. Aron Welbel, a former Lunna resident, says: ‘Some Jews saw the Russians as the Messiah riding on a red horse.’ One elderly pro-Soviet Christian resident of Lunna, who is Belorussian, stated that some Lunna Jews gathered in the town square and chanted pro-Soviet slogans, such as ‘Lenin hurrah, Stalin hurrah!’” Even though the Soviets destroyed Jewish communal life and shut down all Jewish institutions, Ruth Marcus writes: “During the Soviet rule from 1939 to 1941, despite the restrictions, Jewish life was able to continue, more or less, in tolerable fashion.” Yet she alleges that it was exactly the opposite in interwar Poland: “the Jews of Poland ... expected that they would be allowed to practice their religion freely, attend Jewish schools, and form and join social organizations if their choosing. These expectations were dashed.” She then goes on to accuse the Polish government of depriving Jews of many of their civil rights, subjecting Jews to a wide variety of discriminatory measures such as an economic boycott on Jewish businesses, and encouraging acts of hostility and violence against Jews, “including the incitement of anti-Jewish riots and pogroms.” See “Lunna-Wola during the Second World War and the Holocaust: Events during the Outbreak of the Second World War; Life under Soviet Rule (September 1939–June 1941,” Internet: <<http://www.shtetlinks.jewishgen.org/Lunna/index.html>>.

²¹⁹ Wierzbicki, *Polacy i Białorusini w zaborze sowieckim*, 148; Wierzbicki, *Polacy i Żydzi w zaborze sowieckim*, 80; *Nikołaj Bychowcew, “Pierwsi Sowietci,” Ziemia Wolkowyska*, vol. 5 (Łębork, 2011): 121–37, here at 125, 126, 130–31.

assistance of “a troop of calvary who made common cause with the pogromchiks,” killing several Jews.²²⁰ In another memorial book (1946), Eliyahu Kovensky states:

I was a member of the fire fighters, and on the last day of the Polish regime, we, the fire fighters, with [Melekh] Khantov as our head, received control of the city; the Polish Army did not stop retreating. The last to leave were a cavalry detachment, who burst into city at night, with sabers drawn, and for the entire night, “retreated” from the city, amidst plunder and abuse, killing seven Jews.²²¹

A second-hand Jewish account in a more recent memorial book (1988) is somewhat more informative, clearly dispelling the contention that the Jews were “unarmed”:

I was told that several members of *HaShomer HaTza'ir*, among them my brother Berel, began to organize a self-defense force, in order to anticipate the imminent trouble, and when our friend Mandelbaum reached us by indirect means (he was from Sokolka [Sokółka] ...), he also joined this self-defense force. When they found out that in the station there was a train car at the unloading dock, full of abandoned (?) military armaments, they did not lose the opportunity to arm themselves. Among those who carried out this step were: my brother, the son of the smith, Munya Lapidus, and several other young men. Even the workers in the brick factory, most of whom were communists, took weapons from the same place. The defense group that was organized did not get involved in any major actions, because the Polish brigade that was stationed in the city, scattered in the meantime, and the Red Army entered the city. They turned over their weapons to the new regime.

... the Jewish communists that were underground emerged from hiding, received appointments, and became ‘close to the regime.’ In order to help with maintaining order and policing, communist party operatives

²²⁰ The Wołkowysk memorial book from 1949 alleges that “the Polish anti-Semites of Wolkovysk [Wołkowysk] organized a committee headed by the apothecary Timinsky [Tymiński] who compiled a list of Jews destined for slaughter. The property of the Jews was to be confiscated. The anti-Semites merely bided their time when their work could be carried out with impunity.” Allegedly, they held off until the “Polish army and local police withdrew altogether leaving the town defenceless and in a state of anarchy. This gave the organized anti-Semites their long-sought opportunity. The pogrom upon the unarmed Jews began at once.” The memorial book goes on to state that the “pogromchiks” murdered several Jews. “The last of the [Polish] military forces to leave Wolkovysk was a troop of cavalry who made common cause with the pogromchiks. They invaded the Jewish section, robbing houses and committing many acts of violence the news of the approach of Soviet forces put a sudden end to the pogrom.” (These claims have to be read in tandem with other patently fantastic claims: “long before the outbreak of the war, the Poles were following the German line towards the Jews, sending innocent Jews to jail and concentration camps and robbing them of their valuables”; “Poland undertook to raise an internal war loan and heavy quotas were levied upon the communities within her borders. Every householder, merchant, professional person and artisan was compelled to purchase bonds, or become subject to extremely heavy penalties, such as confinement in a concentration camp.”) That source also describes the revenge that the local Jews later wreaked under the watchful eye of the Soviet invaders: “Early that morning old Menaker the cobbler borrowed a gun from the Russians and sought out the pogromchik apothecary Timinski. Menaker discovered Timinski [Hugon Tyminiński] in hiding, and at the point of his gun marched him to Soviet headquarters and delivered him over to the commander. Timinski was executed the following day. The letter carrier Satchevski fled to the city of Lida, was later recognized by Chasya Kaplan on the streets and reported to the commander in that city. Satchevski was immediately arrested, tried, found guilty and imprisoned. In such manner did the Russians restore order.” See Moses Einhorn, “Destruction of Wolkovysk,” in Moses Einhorn, ed., *Volkovisker Yiskor-bukh (Wolkovisker Yizkor Book)*, vol. 2 (New York: n.p., 1949), 944–46, English translation posted on the Internet: <<http://www.jewish.gen.org/yizkor/volkovysk/Volkovysk.html>>; Moses Einhorn, “On the Threshold of the Second World War” and “The Outbreak of the German Polish War” in Moses Einhorn, ed., *Wolkovisker Yizkor Book* (New York, 1949), 328, 329, Part I of *The Volkovysk Memorial Book* (Mahwah, New Jersey: Jacob Solomon Berger, 2002). The memorial book narrative is accepted without question in Levin, *The Lesser of Two Evils*, 62. For a contextual analysis of these events see Wierzbicki, *Polacy i Żydzi w zaborze sowieckim*, 79–81. See also Gross, *Revolution from Abroad*, 19–20, for a superficial account.

²²¹ “The Tribulations and Heroic Deeds of ‘The Hero of the Soviet Union’: The Partisan, Eliyahu Kovensky,” in Katriel Lashowitz, ed., *Destruction of Volkovysk* (Tel-Aviv: The Committee of Émigrés of Volkovysk in the Land of Israel, 1988), 47, Part II of *The Volkovysk Memorial Book* (Mahwah, New Jersey: Jacob Solomon Berger, 2002). Kovensky’s account goes on to state: “The following morning, there wasn’t a trace of them left. The tanks of the Red Army began to roll into the city. ... Menaker the Shoemaker (the head of the communists) climbed up on one of them, and rode through the city like a ‘conqueror.’ On that same day, this seventy year old Jew, with a rifle on his shoulder, went to the notorious anti-Semite—Timinsky—who had organized the pogrom, arrested him, and turned him over to the Soviet regime.”

arrived from Minsk, among them many Jews. The communists were especially active in the police force, and in setting up the cooperatives.²²²

In **Berdówka** near Lida, a Red militia consisting of Jews and Belorussians set upon and murdered a group of officers and soldiers of the Frontier Defence Corps (Korpus Ochrony Pogranicza–KOP) who were preparing their defence against the Soviet invaders.²²³ Local Communists consisting of Jews and Belorussians also attempted to disarm the legal civil defence in **Baranowicze** on September 17th, before the arrival of the Soviet forces.²²⁴

In **Wolożyn**, an armed group of Belorussians and Jews with red armbands seized control of the town before the arrival of the Soviets. They confiscated weapons from policemen, robbed stores and property of those they considered hostile toward the Soviet Union, and terrorized the inhabitants.²²⁵ When the Soviets arrived, Belorussian and Jewish saboteurs took up arms against the Polish defenders. Afterwards, they formed a militia that took part in repressions against the Polish defenders of the city.²²⁶

In **Nowogródek**, some Jews took up arms in support of Soviet invaders and one of the fifth columnists—an alleged “victim” of the Poles—lost his life in the fighting.

At 7 o'clock in the evening [of September 17] a loud noise was heard and the first powerful Russian tanks appeared in Korelicze street. They were met by the Jewish population with jubilation and flowers. ... People in the streets were in a festive mood. There were Jewish soldiers in the Soviet army who made themselves known to the local community. At 10 o'clock in the evening the loudspeakers announced that the town was governed by a military administration. ... At 1 o'clock in the morning sounds of intensive shooting were heard. Everyone endeavoured to take cover. No one knew what caused the shooting. A rumour spread next morning that some bullets broke window panes. Some soldiers told us that they were fighting the Poles, who were shooting from cover. The strong fire was concentrated in Kowalski Street, where the Catholic Church was. The resistance was suppressed by the morning. During that night the first Jewish victim fell—the older son of Aba Zamkowy was shot by the Poles.²²⁷

In **Byteń**, a small town south of Słonim, Jewish Communists seized control of the town and organized a warm reception for the Soviet army. Guns were seized from the Polish police and delivered to the newly-formed Red militia. A Polish officer, who passed through the area on September 17th fleeing bombardment by German forces, encountered a barricade set up by local Communists who opened fire, seriously wounding him. As could be expected, the Polish authorities in the county seat of Słonim dispatched forces to break up the Soviet collaborators. According to a Jewish account,

Moshe Witkow of our town received confirming word from a local White Russian, a Communist of the underground, that the Russians were indeed approaching.

²²² Eliyahu Rutchik, “The Russian Occupation at the Beginning of the War,” in Katriel Lashowitz, ed., *Volkovysk: The Story of a Jewish-Zionist Community* (Tel-Aviv, 1988), 119–20, Part III of *The Volkovysk Memorial Book* (Mahwah, New Jersey: Jacob Solomon Berger, 2002).

²²³ Kazimierz Krajewski, *Na Ziemi Nowogródzkiej: “Nów”—Nowogródzki Okręg Armii Krajowej* (Warsaw: Pax, 1997), 6.

²²⁴ Ibid.

²²⁵ Wierzbicki, *Polacy i Białorusini w zaborze sowiecki*, 160.

²²⁶ Kazimierz Krajewski, *Na straconych posterunkach: Armia Krajowa na Kresach Wschodnich II Rzeczypospolitej* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2015), 25.

²²⁷ Eliyahu Berkovitz, “A Sea of Troubles,” *Navaredok Memorial Book*, Internet: <<http://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/Novogrudok/Novogrudok.html>>, translation of E. Yerushalmi et al., eds., *Pinkas Navaredok* (Tel Aviv: Alexander Harkavy Navaredker Relief Committee in the USA and Israel, 1963), 237 ff.

The next day, three members of the local Communist underground approached Dodl Abramowicz, a drygoods storekeeper. They wanted red cloth from his store to make flags. They were forming committees to greet the Russian army, which was resting on the other side of the Szczara River. Three young local Communists and a small group of followers started to demonstrate in the streets. Gathering momentum as they reached the fire department barracks, they improvised a platform and began to elaborate on the historic moment we were about to witness. They said that they were now free citizens, no longer under the yoke of Polish feudalists: "We will bury the Polish Fascism which brutally subjugated our brothers."

A member of the local Communist Party assumed control of the town government ... Guns were taken from the Polish police and given to the local Communists, who were to guide and watch over the town and the area around it.

Sunday afternoon, September 17, our town was startled by bursts of machinegun fire. ... a high-ranking Polish officer had left a Polish troop-train which was proceeding to Baranowicze. Trying to escape the German bombardment, he and his chauffeur passed Byten on their way to Slonim [Slonim], only to encounter a barricade set up by local Communists. The officer was wounded critically, but the chauffeur managed to make his way to the town of Zyrowice [Żyrowice], near Slonim. When he told Polish police about the shooting, he described it as an uprising in Byten. The Polish civil government was still functioning in Slonim, and within a few hours they sent a punitive expedition to our town. The Communists, meanwhile, had fled to the woods ... Three chaotic days later, at ten in the evening, we finally saw the lights of the first Russian tank. The entire population went out to meet the Russian. On top of the first tank stood an officer who told us that the Polish Fascist government was demolished.²²⁸

According to Polish accounts, a number of Poles—among them military officers—were killed. Rev. Józef Dziemian, the local pastor, escaped from the town and managed to avoid the gangs of Belorussian peasants roaming in the countryside. He fell into the hands of a rural revolutionary committee and was handed over to two guards—one a Jew, the other a Belorussian—and taken by them to Byeń. He narrowly escaped lynching on the way because of a chance encounter with a Soviet commissar. When he returned to Byeń, Rev. Dziemian was taken before the revolutionary committee, who discussed his fate; some of them wanted to murder him immediately, as did the rabble, while others opted to await the arrival of the Soviet authorities. Rev. Dziemian was interned together with some forty local Poles, mostly from the educated classes, such as state officials, teachers, and reserve officers, and guarded by Belorussians and Jews. After midnight, the guards would call out names of prisoners and take them from the premises. Soon after, shots were heard at a distance. When Rev. Dziemian was taken for interrogation to the revolutionary committee, the rabble again attempted to lynch him. He was interrogated for twelve hours and subjected to fierce beatings by Belorussian and Jewish interrogators. The arrival of Soviet commissars, who forbade any further executions, again saved his life. Rev. Dziemian and the remaining thirteen prisoners were taken to Slonim and handed over to the NKVD. There he was imprisoned in a room which was tightly packed with thirty Poles, among them counts, owners of estates, members of Parliament, and state officials. Although falsely charged of shooting at the rabble, he was released after an interrogation which exposed the charge to be baseless, on the intervention of a Soviet lieutenant who—quite remarkably—happened to be a Pole by origin.²²⁹ Characteristically, Jewish accounts avoid mention of such excesses directed against Poles, and consequently, historians who rely exclusively on Jewish accounts present a skewed picture of those events.

Armed groups of snipers opened fire on Polish army units on the outskirts of Zelwa and Dereczyn. A revolutionary committee composed mainly of Jews and some Belorussians had seized control of the town of *Zelwa* on September 18th. Polish supply columns were captured and Polish soldiers disarmed. Polish troops stormed the town and arrested some of the armed insurgents, but on the intervention of a priest, who was fearful of Soviet retaliation, they spared the culprits. After the Polish forces retreated, groups of young armed Belorussians and Jews with red armbands continued to terrorize the Polish population, arresting and torturing scores of victims of choice: Polish settlers, landowners, politicians, state officials, officers, policemen, and clergymen. Among those executed by local collaborators on orders of the revolutionary

²²⁸ Bryna Bar Oni, *The Vapor* (Chicago: Visual Impact, 1976), 22–23.

²²⁹ Tadeusz Krahel, *Doświadczeni zniewoleniem: Duchowni archidiecezji wileńskiej respresjonowani w latach okupacji sowieckiej (1939–1941)* (Białystok: Polskie Towarzystwo Historyczne–Oddział w Białymstoku, 2005), 31, 183–94. Rev. Dziemian believes he was spared because members of the Jewish community in Byeń, with whom he had been on good terms before the war, intervened with the Jewish communists who were now in charge of the town. Repeated occurrences like this demonstrate that Jewish communists were not generally estranged from the Jewish community, contrary to what apologists claim.

kangaroo court were Rev. Jan Kryński, the 78-year-old local Catholic pastor, Rev. Dawid Jakubson, the pastor of the Orthodox parish, and a dozen other Polish captives.²³⁰

According to an account of a Jewish lawyer named Jacovitzky, as recorded by Yitzhak Shalev, exceptionally a Jew was also targeted, but they escaped the fate of the Poles. The rabbi of Zelwa was also apparently “wanted” by local revolutionaries but received a warning and was saved, unlike the two priests and other Poles.

On one of the nights when there was no government in the town, because the Polish authorities had left the town and the Red Army had not yet arrived, some people knocked on my door, representing themselves as officials of the Soviet Regime, and demanded that I [Jacovitzky] open the door. Two men entered the house, both armed, with red armbands on their sleeves. They ordered me to get dressed, and follow after them. When we left the house, they directed me to go to the municipal building, and they followed me with drawn revolvers. In the municipal building, they took me to a room where they told me to sit down and keep quiet. A short while later, the “American” was brought into the room (this was a descriptor used for a rich gentile who had come from America and had bought himself a small piece of property near Zelwa [Zelwa]. Everyone knew him as the “American”). After him, they brought in two other men who owned property in the area (whose names I don’t remember) and finally, they brought in the young [sic] Catholic priest from the church on Razboiaishitza Street.

During all this time, we were under the surveillance of three armed men, who did not permit us to talk among ourselves. From the behavior of our guards, and from the fragments of sentences I was able to hear, I gathered that one other individual was still to be brought into the room. After an extended wait, two armed men with red armbands entered the room, and informed the three that they can’t find the Rabbi at home. They organized searches in all synagogues, but he was not to be found there either. After a short conference, they decided to send the two original men back to the Rabbi’s house and the remaining ones would begin with us. Up to that moment we had no idea of what awaited us.

The first one was the “American.” He was ordered to get up and go to the exit. Behind him walked two of the guards with drawn revolvers. One was left behind to guard those who were left in the room.

They left the building, went around the structure, and brought the “American” to the wall of the building that was about three meters from the window of the room in which we were sitting, and with no delay, proceeded to shoot him. When he fell dead, they picked him up and threw his body into a wagon hitched to a horse that was tied up near the window. All this took place in the full view of the rest of the detainees who were sitting in front of the window.

After his they took one of the men who owned property in town, and his fate was the same as the “American’s,” and then the second man who owned land. When it came to the priest’s turn, the dawn started to break. I saw him standing against the wall, crossing himself continuously. He was also shot, and his body thrown into the wagon. I was left for last. I heard the steps of the executioners getting closer to the room. I also heard the wagon moving from its place. The door was opened swiftly, and the two entered the room, and ordered me to get up and leave the place as quickly as possible. They warned me, that if I revealed what had happened during the night, my blood would be on my own head. Apparently, after daybreak, when the residents of the area arose to go to work, they didn’t have the nerve to continue with their activities.

Thanks to your Rabbi who was not at home, they lost a lot of time, and were unable to finish their work before dawn, and that is how I survived.

... rumors and stories spread about the night of the murders. It was told, that a short time before the Red Underground reached the Rabbi’s home, that Ephraim Moskovsky reached the Rabbi and warned the Rabbi about what was about to happen. He advised the Rabbi to flee his house and find a place to hide, until the threat passed. ...

When I [Yitzhak Shalev] reached Israel after the war, my townsfolk told me about what they had heard from the mouth of the *Rebbetzin* Kosovsky. Therefore, it was Ephraim Moskovsky who came to the house of the Rabbi that night and told him what was about to happen, and in this manner, the life of the Rabbi was

²³⁰ Wierzbicki, *Polacy i Białorusini w zaborze sowiecki*, 86–87, 147–48, 162–63; Mariusz Filipowicz, “Zbrodnie w Zelwie,” *Biuletyn Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej*, no. 12 (December 2004): 80–83; Krahel, *Doświadczeni zniewoleniem*, 68.

saved.²³¹

The arrival of the Red Army was “met with song and dance,” according to one eyewitness. “There was a great deal of happiness in the town.”²³²

Armed rebels seized control of *Dereczyn* on September 17th, and arrested the deputy commander of a battalion dispatched to that town from Słonim, and his chauffeur. When the commander’s battalion arrived in Dereczyn the following morning, it was fired at by young armed Jews whom the Polish forces then expelled. A search was conducted in a house where several Jewish insurgents had taken refuge. One suspected insurgent was killed when he shot and wounded a Polish soldier.²³³ Jewish accounts essentially confirm the Polish version, except for the claim that the Jew who was shot was an innocent person.²³⁴ The town’s memorial book contains some vague allegations of an impending “pogrom” and provides some information about the attempted lynching of Rev. Jerzy Poczobutt-Odlanicki, the local Catholic pastor. Since there was no attempt on the life of the local rabbi, this was not simply a revolutionary assault on a religious figure but was directed specifically against him as a Pole and a Catholic.

Jekuthiel Khmelnitsky: Afterwards came September 1939 and the outbreak of the Second World War. ... Dereczyn was left literally with no one in charge, the people fled, and the Soviets had not yet arrived ... groups of young people together with a few [Belorussian] Christians tried to assert control in the town, and just plain started trouble for no good reason, which nearly led to the outbreak of a pogrom in Dereczyn [Dereczyn]. In the end, the Soviet ‘leadership’ finally arrived.

Pesha Feinsilber: Local Jewish youth, along with [Belorussian] Christians from nearby villages took over the forces in Dereczyn on a temporary basis, until the Russians would arrive. They had a little bit of armament.

Immediately on that first night, they came knocking on my door, and ordered me to open the store, and to provide red cloth for banners and tablecloths, in order to receive the Red Army.

On the second night, three vehicles with Polish officers drove through Dereczyn, after whom were supposed to come a contingent of the Polish army. The temporary authorities detained the Polish officers, beat them up, confiscated their autos, and arrested them. In town, an uproar and panic ensued: the contingent of Polish army

²³¹ Yitzhak Shalev, “The Rescue of Rabbi Kosovsky,” in Yerachmiel Moorstein, ed., *Zelva Memorial Book* (Mahwah, New Jersey: Jacob Solomon Berger, 1992), 92–93. Supposedly, the Soviet authorities went through the motions of bringing some of the culprits to trial, but nothing came of it: “The new regime organized an investigation, and the evidence led to five young gentiles from the village of Borodetz [Borodziez] that belonged to the communist underground. They were also regular employees at the factory owned by Borodetzky [a Jew who was later deported to the Soviet interior]. The Soviet regime wanted to demonstrate that there is law and justice in the socialist order, and arranged a public trial for them. I attended several sessions at the courthouse. The defendants sat on the bench for the defense, with broad and insolent smiles on their faces. They didn’t lie, and didn’t admit anything. All the witnesses that appeared for the defense testified to the appointments the defendants had in the underground, and their heroism there. The spectators at the trial had the impression that the court was on the verge of awarding the defendants laurels of honor and heroism. The trial continued with recesses of weeks, from one session to the next. The defendants, meanwhile, went free, and continued to do their normal jobs. Naturally, the lawyer Jacovitzky kept his secret to himself, and I also kept my word of honor to him. Both of us knew that our testimony would not harm the defendants, but probably would harm us.” Ibid., 93. According to Soviet sources, a Red Army soldier by the name of Floruk, who ordered the executions, was arrested by the authorities, but his fate is not known. See Mariusz Filipowicz, “Zbrodnia w Zelwie,” *Biuletyn Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej*, no. 12 (December 2004): 80–83.

²³² Eliyahu Rutchik, “The Russian Occupation at the Beginning of the War,” in Lashowitz, *Volkovysk: The Story of a Jewish-Zionist Community* (Tel-Aviv, 1988), 119, Part III of *The Volkovysk Memorial Book*.

²³³ Wierzbicki, *Polacy i Białorusini w zaborze sowiecki*, 162–64.

²³⁴ Testimony of Zajdel Ferder, Archive of the Jewish Historical Institute (Warsaw), Record Group 301, number 2094. Ferder refers to a Jewish “self-defence” group which stopped a Polish military vehicle and proceeded to check its credentials. After the arrival of a large Polish military detachment, the self-defence group fled. Several members took refuge in the home of the miller Shmuel Bekstein and his brother. The soldiers reportedly shot Shmuel Bekstein, and his brother died of a stroke. Allegedly, the Bekstein brother were “completely innocent,” as the Poles were not interested in pursuing the rebels.

was expected any minute, and the Poles [surely] would take out their displeasure at the arrest of the officers on us, the Jews. Many Jews fled the town, and hid out among Christians and in the fields. ...

In the early morning, the Rabbi was summoned to the local priest [Rev. Poczobutt-Odlanicki]. There it was demanded of him that he should try to influence the young people, and obtain the release of the Polish officers from jail, because of the impending danger attending the arrival of the Polish army contingent who might wreck all of Dereczin. Only after expending considerable energy, did the Rabbi and the priest obtain the keys to the jail, and release the officers.

At about ten in the morning, the retreating Polish army entered. The officers singled out the *Beckenstein* home, and related how the “Reds” that fell upon them and wounded one of them had hidden themselves in the yard of this house. The officers singled out the *Beckenstein* home, and related how the “Reds” that fell upon them and wounded one of them had hidden themselves in the yard of this house. The Poles immediately shot into *Beckenstein*’s windows. ... With shouts that they had been fired upon from the walls of the house, they shot the elder [Hirschel] *Beckenstein*. ...

All the Jews began to emerge from hiding and began to prepare a reception for the Red Army. The following morning, the first detachments of Soviet soldiers arrived in wagons. They were greeted with joy and hand-clapping. When the first tanks arrived, they were greeted with shouts of: “To your health! Hurrah! Hurrah!” The entire town turned out to greet them.

Meir Bakalchuk: From my father [Rabbi Bakalchuk] and friends, I came to learn what Dereczin went through in those last days of Polish rule, and in the transition period until the Soviets arrived. A group of young people, responsible to no one, but intoxicated with communist doctrine, attempted to ‘seize control’ in Dereczin before the arrival of the Soviet army. They detained several Polish officers who were retreating. Following these officers, who were a vanguard for a much larger retreating Polish force, the Polish soldiers arrived ... My father put his life on the line, and went out to the inflamed Polish soldiers, and promised to locate their officers. By exerting great energy, he was able to persuade these young people to release these Polish officers. The retreating Poles were in a hurry to flee as fast as possible from the enemy ...

During those frightful days without a regime in place in Dereczin, another incident occurred: a notification went out all over town that the left wing youth, both Jews and [some Belorussian] Christians alike, were planning to shoot the local Catholic priest [Rev. Poczubutt-Odlanicki], who was known to be a liberal-minded individual, and who also had friendly relations with the Jews. On the prior day, the local priest in Zelva [Zelwa] had indeed been hung, whom the inflamed young people had accused of being sharply anti-communist.

When my father learned of the danger that awaited the priest of Dereczin, he resolved to do something to defuse the murder plot, for which the Jews would, ultimately, God forbid, pay dearly. My father went to the priest in the middle of the night, and surreptitiously brought him to our house. The following morning, large groups of young people surrounded our house, demanding that the priest be handed over to them. My father stood himself in the doorway and told them that only over his dead body would they be able to break into our house.

In the middle of this conversation between my father and this gathered crowd, the first vanguard of Soviet officials arrived in town. Seeing a large crowd in front of our house, they asked what was going on. When they found out about the issue with the priest, one of the Soviet officials asked my mother for a small table. He stood on the table and declared to the crowd that ‘the Soviet regime does everything according to the rule of law, and nobody has a right to try and sentence anyone out of this process.’ The young people were disarmed, and the Soviet military expressed their thanks to my father for his proper and sober position.

... I must recall Shmuel the youth from Dereczin, a hard-bitten communist. It was he who demanded of my father in Dereczin that he turn over the priest, who had hidden himself with us. He served the Soviet authorities faithfully in Dereczin, and when the Russians retreated, they took Shmuel with them.²³⁵

²³⁵ *Dereczin*, 206, 248, 324–25, 328. This is a translation of the memorial book *Sefer Derets'in* published in Yiddish and Hebrew in Tel Aviv in 1966. One of the contributors, Kayla Azaf, writes about a “pogrom” in which “several martyrs fell.” *Ibid.*, 290. Typically, despite the undoubted existence of Jewish perpetrators, Jewish accounts invariably allege that individualized retaliations were directed at entirely blameless persons. *Ibid.*, 206. Historian Yehuda Bauer reduces—and indeed misrepresents—this entire episode to the following: “Poles—it is unclear whether the Polish army or local people—tried to organize a pogrom, but the local, presumably Catholic priest prevented this from happening.” See Bauer, *The Death of the Shtetl*, 33. Bauer bases himself on just one account—selected from among several in the *Dereczin* memorial book—authored by Masha and Abraham-Hirsch Kulakowski, which reads: “The war was already almost two weeks in progress before Dereczin received a detachment of several tens of Polish youths, who were sent as a military formation to protect law and order. You are to understand that the ‘ordering’ started with the Jews. Several Jews fell victims at their hands, and they occupied themselves with instituting their bloody work. With armed weapons in hand, they forced several tens of the Jewish populace into an old abandoned barn, and wanted to torch it. It was only thanks to the energetic intervention of the town priest that these Jews were saved from an awful death.” See *Dereczin*, 196. Historian Andrzej Żbikowski avoids these problematic events entirely. See Żbikowski, *U genezy Jedwabnego*, 144, 282.

Of course, the platitudes of the eloquent Soviet officer were nothing more than a charade. Not only did the Soviets execute thousands of Poles extrajudicially, but they also encouraged excesses against Poles by the minorities and took no action to punish the culprits. Meir Bakalchuk was to later run into a member of the local lynch mob in exile in the Soviet interior:

I must recall *Shmuel* the youth from Dereczin, a hard-bitten communist. It was he who demanded of my father in Dereczin that he turn over the priest, who had hidden himself with us. He served the Soviet authorities faithfully in Dereczin, and when the Russians retreated, they took *Shmuel* with them.²³⁶

The Germans occupied *Trzcianne* near Łomża on September 14, but soon evacuated it to make way for Soviet forces. As the newly formed Jewish militia ventured out to meet the Red Army, they unexpectedly encountered a Polish detachment still engaged in military operations. When the Polish detachment arrived in the village they charged the Jewish delegation, headed by a rabbi, and destroyed an arch erected to welcome the Soviets. Polish soldiers destroyed the gate and threatened to burn down the village.²³⁷

Already on the 18th of September, armed groups of Jews in *Iwaniki*, in Polesia, were joined by Jewish deserters from the Polish army and formed a local militia. In *Motol* and near *Telechany*, where the new authorities consisted of prewar Jewish communists, the local Jewish militia engaged the Polish police and soldiers in battle.²³⁸

Daniel Golombka, a Jew from *Rożyszcze*, a small Volhynian town near the prewar Soviet border, painted a grim picture of what, by the pen of others, might well have been portrayed as another anti-Semitic pogrom staged by Polish soldiers:

²³⁶ *Dereczin*, 328.

²³⁷ Account of Czesław Borowski, as cited in Tomasz Strzembosz, “Przemilczana kolaboracja,” *Rzeczpospolita* (Warsaw), January 27, 2001. See also 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, Part A, 970. These threats of retaliation, which were often not carried out, should be compared to the widespread practice of levelling the homes of suspected Palestinian insurgents by the Israeli occupation authorities.

²³⁸ Rozenblat, “Evrei v sisteme mezhnatsionalnykh otnoshenii v zapadnykh oblastiakh Belarusi, 1939–1941 gg.,” *Białoruskie Zeszyty Historyczne*, no. 13 (2000): 92. According to the Telechany memorial book, “by September 17, 1939, when the Red Army broke through its borders to liberate [sic] western White Russia and western Ukraine, there were organized authorities in Telekhany that were able to maintain law and order ... until the arrival of the regular Red Army forces. In the newly elected committee, the following people were members: Ephraim and Leibel Klitenik, Yisrael David Kagan, Yisraelik Bernstein, Motka Roshchinder, Berl Rubacha and others.” This same source describes these people as “leftist” youths persecuted by the Polish “fascist” regime. See “Telekhany and World War One”, in Sh. Sokoler, *Telekhan* (Los Angeles: Telekhan Memorial Book Committee, 1963), 52 ff. (English translation posted on the Internet at www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/Telekhany/Telekhany.html). According to the Telechany memorial book, which does not mention the assault on the Polish forces noted by Rozenblat above, “A few divisions of the broken Polish army started passing through Telekhany. One of the officers who were unable to bear the affront [not only of the Jews’ “unending joy” at the prospect of the imminent arrival of the Red Army, but also likely of the shooting at Polish forces] warned us not to be happy. They were going to gather forces and chase out the Bolsheviks and the Germans. As revenge, the Polish soldiers committed various offences: they shot civilians (Aharon Landman, Yitzchak’s youngest son, was wounded) and forcibly took away a few young men as far as the Krogelevitch villages and even further. The police in Telekhany ran around like drugged mice.” Soon, however, the Polish authorities left and Leibel Klitenick was “appointed” the new “commander” of the town. “The town went about preparing to meet the Red Army. A tower was built on Sventevolia [Świętowola?] Street, and was decorated with greenery, and people had to start sloganeering in Russian. ... Anyone at all who could help out with the preparations to meet the Red Army did so. Girls sewed red flags and decorated the People’s Clubhouse. ... The Jewish youth were then called to a meeting, and Leibel Klitenick handed out the guns. The group called themselves the Red Guard ... I remember that Beinish Mozirer (Leiba Chaya’s son) and I patrolled Sventevolia Street every night ... Everyone participated voluntarily and faithfully for several months without any compensation. When the Soviet government later paid each person fifty rubles for their work in the Red Guard, some complained that this meant they were serving in expectation of compensation. This showed how enthusiastic the young people were about the change in regime. ... The various Soviet institutions were set up. And the young people started learning Russian. ... Due to the fact that the Jewish young people were more educated and dedicated to the new situation, they therefore filled all job positions.” See Leizer Lutsky, “The Famous Date—Remember Forever!,” in *ibid.*, 89 ff.

The following morning found the communist youth, Jews and Ukrainians, rejoicing in the streets. ...

The communists set up a militia of local youth. They enthusiastically decided to form a guard of honour to welcome the Red Army, decorating the square with pictures of Stalin and the communist greats and bringing the fire brigade orchestra. But instead of the victorious Red Army, a train arrived bearing a load of Polish troops who apparently had not heard of the Molotov-Ribbentrop agreement. The newly-formed militia enthusiastically set out to capture the Polish troops. Shooting and general chaos followed with all those in the vicinity taking cover, including those who had gathered to welcome the Reds.²³⁹

A Polish eyewitness confirms the same general picture:

Railway transports of Polish soldiers pass through town toward the east. The Polish authorities have left. Jews wearing red armbands and carrying rifles are on the streets. They praise the Red Army. They look askance at the Polish trains and, finally, decide to intervene.

They approached a group of Polish officers who came down onto the platform. One of them struck a Polish officer in the face and said: "You Polish mug. Hand over your weapons!" The Polish captain took out his gun and shot the assailant. He then yelled to the wagons: "Shoot, men." Polish soldiers then opened fire, poured out of the wagons and started a chase. Bullets flew in the streets. Nine assailants were hit. The fleeing Jews screamed: "The Polish army won!"²⁴⁰

The stalwart Soviet allies remained undeterred, however, as another Jew recalls:

Right after the Soviets entered Rożyszcze, a Communist youth organization ... seized control of the town. ... these young Communists marched on the streets of the town with guns. They wore red armbands to identify themselves and arrested people thought to be fascists or enemies of the communist cause. I was afraid just to walk from the train station to Ytzel's house. I was afraid even though some [likely many—M/P.] of the young men with armbands were Jews.²⁴¹

It was not as if there had been a history of marked animosity between Poles and Jews in that area which could have precipitated this state of affairs. A Jew from the nearby village of Kopaczówka, typical of many small localities, makes this very point in the Rożyszcze Memorial Book: "The relations between the Jews and the local Gentile population, which was mostly Polish, had been very good until the outbreak of the war."²⁴² A Polish prisoner of war who had been released by the Germans and was making his way home was offered some food by a Jewish woman when he passed through the outskirts of Rożyszcze toward the end of September.²⁴³

In advance of the Soviet entry a group of armed Ukrainians and some Jews seized control of the largely Jewish town of *Stepań*, disarmed the Polish police and arrested more than a dozen Polish functionaries—

²³⁹ Gershon Zik, ed., *Rożyszcze: My Old Home* [Rożyszcze Memorial Book] (Tel Aviv: The Rozhishcher Committee in Israel, 1976), 27. Actually, the secret, sordid terms of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, which was simply a non-aggression agreement, had not been publicly released at the time, but memoirists tend to write with the benefit of hindsight and also selectively. For example, few of the rejoicing crowd referred to by Golombka as "the communist youth" would have actually been card-carrying communists. As acknowledged by a Jew from Złoczów, pro-communist elements on which to draw were in abundant supply in the interwar period, and the number of communist supporters mushroomed after the Soviet takeover: "many young Jews became affiliated with extremist political movements: in Złoczów we were about equally divided between Zionists and Communists. The Zionists were split into many groups ranging from followers of Jabotynski to Hashomer Hatzair, the former, extreme right, the latter overtly or covertly Communist." See Samuel Lipa Tennenbaum, *Złoczów Memoir* (New York: Shengold Publishers, 1986), 55.

²⁴⁰ Account of Krystyna Buholec, "I chwalący czerwoną armię ...," *Nasza Polska*, September 8, 1999. Also cited in Nowak, *Przemilczane zbrodnie*, 24 (Bucholz).

²⁴¹ Jack Pomerantz and Lyric Wallwork Winik, *Run East: Flight From the Holocaust* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1997), 26.

²⁴² Zik, *Rożyszcze*, 45.

²⁴³ F. [Franciszek] Radecki, letter, *Głos Polski* (Toronto), February 8, 1997.

civil servants, policemen, teachers—and refugees from central Poland. They were detained in the police station located in the municipal building, where some of them were beaten. On their retreat westward, the night of September 19th and the following morning, squadrons of the Frontier Defence Corps and Machine Gun Battalion stormed the town in order to cross over the bridge on the River Horyń. In the ensuing skirmish, there were losses on both sides.²⁴⁴

Polish soldiers were ambushed and fired on in *Kolki*, also in Volhynia, by groups of saboteurs comprised of Jews and Ukrainians. The Polish troops were able to encircle the fifth columnists in a mill and shot them. The area was set on fire.²⁴⁵ Some Polish policemen had also been captured and murdered by local diversionaries. In retaliation, some members of the *selsovet* (village soviet) were executed.²⁴⁶

Near *Zborów*, in the Tarnopol region, the local Jewish militia and Ukrainian nationalists shot at retreating Polish soldiers. Previously, they had already seized control of the town of Zborów and massacred some of the Polish police.²⁴⁷

When a platoon of Polish infantry, fleeing both the invading German and Soviet armies, entered *Sokal* on September 23rd, they were confronted by about a dozen self-styled Jewish militiamen with red armbands who, brandishing their rifles, attempted to arrest and disarm the Poles. After giving the Jews a warning which they did not heed, one of the soldiers threw a grenade that exploded and wounded a few of the militiamen. The following day two of the Jewish collaborators died in hospital. On September 25th the city was taken by German and Soviet troops, but the Germans promptly withdrew. The Red Army organized a funeral with full honours for the fallen “proletarian heroes” who, according to posters plastered throughout the town, perished in combat with the “Polish fascists.”²⁴⁸

In the largely Jewish town of *Luboml*, just east of the Bug River in Volhynia, local Jews took turns collaborating first with Germans, who originally occupied the town for two days on September 20th, and then with the Soviets, who took control of the town only on September 24th. Pro-Soviet Jews and Ukrainians had formed a revolutionary committee and seized power on September 18th after the departure of the Polish army. The people’s guard, composed of up to 150 Jews and Ukrainians, arrested the county supervisor (*starosta*), public prosecutor and members of the town administration. When the Germans arrived, these militias apprehended and disarmed Polish soldiers, tearing the Polish emblems off their coats and uniforms, and handed them over to the Germans. As could be expected, when the Germans departed and Polish soldiers in the vicinity learned of what was happening, they struck back at the collaborators during the hiatus. Some of the captured insurgents were executed locally, while others were taken to the Polish garrison in Chełm. When the Soviet army entered on September 24th, Jews came out in large

²⁴⁴ Szawłowski, *Wojna polsko-sowiecka 1939* (1995, 1997), vol. 1, 171; Czesław Piotrowski, *Krwawe żniwa za Styrem, Horyniem i Sluczą: Wspomnienia z rodzinnych stron z czasów okupacji* (Warsaw: Światowy Związek Żołnierzy Armii Krajowej Okręg Wołyński, 1995), 34–35, 36; Siemaszko and Siemaszko, *Ludobójstwo dokonane przez nacjonalistów ukraińskich na ludność polską Wołynia, 1939–1945*, vol. 1, 298.

²⁴⁵ Janicki, *W obronie Przebraża i w drodze do Berlina*, 11, 12.

²⁴⁶ Liszewski, *Wojna polsko-sowiecka 1939 r.*, 117; Szawłowski, *Wojna polsko-sowiecka 1939* (1995, 1997), vol. 1, 199, and vol. 2, 141–43. According to one report, Soviet planes bombed the Polish unit in Gródek (Horodok) resulting in the loss of many soldiers and civilians. Marauders then pulled the clothes off the victims. See Yehuda Merin, “The Last ‘Neilah’ Prayer,” in Asher Tarmon, ed., *Memorial Book: The Jewish Communities of Manyevitz, Horodok, Lishnivka, Troyanuvka, Povursk, and Kolki (Wołyn Region)* (Tel-Aviv: Organization of Survivors of Manyevitz, Horodok, Lishnivka, Troyanuvka, Povursk, Kolki and Surroundings Living in Israel and Overseas, 2004), 366–67.

²⁴⁷ Włodzimierz Samira, *Nie byłem tym...kim byłem* (London: n.p. 1994), 5–6.

²⁴⁸ Leszek A. Lechowicz, “Ironia losu,” *Dziennik Związkowy* (Chicago), September 5–7, 2003, based on the testimony of Roman Wawrzonek.

numbers to welcome them. The Jewish militia disarmed any Polish soldiers they came across, apprehended them, and handed them over to the Soviets.²⁴⁹

A similar situation took place in *Kobryń*, in Polesia, where the Germans armed local Jewish Communists, who then carried out diversionary assaults on Polish soldiers. Two flags—a German swastika and a Soviet

²⁴⁹ The foregoing is based on the following eyewitness accounts: Włodzimierz Wojciechowski, a Polish rescuer awarded by Yad Vashem—see Barbara Stanisławczyk, *Czterdzieści twardych* (Warsaw: ABC, 1997), 156–57; Szawłowski, *Wojna polsko-sowiecka 1939* (1995, 1997), vol. 1, 221–22 (which refers only to Ukrainian fifth columnists); Piotr Zarzycki, *2 Batalion Mostów Kolejowych* (Pruszków: Ajaks, 1994), 37–38; Władysław Jotysz, “Telegram do Stalina,” *Nasza Polska*, September 8, 1999. The latter account is also cited in Nowak, *Przemilczane zbrodnie*, 39 (as Totysz). For additional confirmation based on Soviet sources and Ukrainian see Andrii Rukkas, “Antypolski zbrojni występy na Wołyni (veresen 1939 r.),” in Iaroslav Isaievych, ed., *Wołyn i Kholmshchyna 1938–1947 rr.: Polsko-ukraińskie protystoiannia ta ioho vidlunnia. Doslidzhennia, dokumenty, spohady* (Lviv: Natsionalna akademiia nauk Ukrainy, Instytut ukrainoznavstva im. I. Krypiakevycha, 2003), 134–35. Generally, it is difficult to reconstruct a coherent sequence of events from the selective, fragmentary and often contradictory and incoherent accounts found in Jewish memorial books. In the case of Luboml (known as Libivne in Yiddish), the situation is particularly complicated as the town was occupied first by the Germans, and then by the Soviets. The introduction to the Luboml Memorial Book speaks of Polish bands of “Andekes” [Endeks] who “overran the town, slaughtering about a dozen Jews in cold blood.” A careful reading of several Jewish accounts in that book is required to piece together the following chronology: When the Germans entered Luboml for a brief period (“a few days”), “a militia composed of Jews and Ukrainians was formed whose job it was to keep order in the town”; “several ... Jewish young men were appointed to the town militia by the temporary Jewish-Ukrainian City Council,” which worked hand in glove with the German military authorities in disarming captured Polish soldiers. “During their presence in our town, the Germans behaved like normal occupying authorities. They did no ill to the Jews.” After the Germans departed, there was a brief hiatus during which “both Jews and gentiles ... formed a defense militia that managed to chase away” ... marauding Ukrainian gangs from outlying villages. Concurrently, in anticipation of the arrival of the Soviet army, local Bolshevik sympathizers erected a “triumphal arch” at the main entrance to the town “with red flags and other decorations and slogans in honor of the Red army,” “which had come to free our citizens from Polish enslavement.” “Comrades” armed “with guns, having taken power into their own hands,” gathered at the quarters of the “self-defense organization,” i.e., the militia, and “walked around arrogantly, with heads held high, and it seemed as if there were none equal to them.” When remnants of the Polish army re-entered Luboml, they destroyed the “triumphal arch” and “rounded up the pro-Soviet youths [i.e., the so-called self-defence group or militia] (some gentiles among them) and led them to the station all beaten up and bloodied.” “Comrade” Veyner, who would “ride around with a revolver in his hand on a big thoroughbred horse” and “acted like the former police officer of the shtetl,” was the first to be shot. “There were also rumors that before their retreat, the Poles wanted to torch the city, but the Polish priest convinced them not to, saying the victory arch was the work of individuals.” “The Jews ran to the priest, who, together with the attorney’s wife, Mrs. Myalovitska [Miałowicka?], intervened by telling the gentiles that not all Jews were Communists.” “When the Red Army entered Libivne, the leftists in our town received them with pomp and celebration. There were many Jewish young men among them.” After the long-awaited Soviet arrival, “the militia reorganized, once again composed of Jews and Ukrainians.” “Zalman Rubinshteyn [he was a Communist] made himself the leader of the shtetl. He chose as his aides Moyshe Koltun, Moyshe Bobtses, Rafael Poyntsyes, as well as a couple of the town’s gentile youths.” “Those Jews who were needed by the Soviets were utilized by the new regime, even though they once had been rich. For instance, Chayim Kroyt, a former owner of a sawmill, was appointed as director of his own confiscated establishment. The same happened to other townspeople. The Soviet authorities did not arrest political opponents, nor the rich of the shtetl.” Meanwhile, according to Jewish reports, “anti-Semitic” Polish soldiers had simply butchered “the peaceful, long-suffering Jewish population, frightened and unarmed. Any Jew encountered on the street was shot and murdered on the spot without any distinction.” Allegedly, “Not one gentile [from the self-defence group] received any beating! Those who suffered were Jews and no one else but Jews!” Finally, under Soviet rule, Jews were allegedly relegated to the most menial work: “The pay was not high—otherwise the non-Jews would have gotten the work.” See Berl Kagan, ed., *Luboml: The Memorial Book of a Vanished Shtetl* (Hoboken, New Jersey: Ktav Publishing House, 1997), xix, 230–36, 240–43, 261, 290, 343. Typical of most Jewish memorial books, this one is also rather vague about the activities of Jewish collaborators after greeting the Soviet Army, as well about the fate of the Poles under Soviet rule. Yakov Wenglinski, a Jew who arrived in Luboml as part of the Polish army after the withdrawal of the Germans, noted only Ukrainians among the insurgents at that time: “The German murderers had already been there and withdrawn and everyone waited for the Russians to march in. Meanwhile the Ukrainians were in control. Free as a bird, they murdered Jews in the streets and shot at the Poles. ... We began to shoot the Ukrainian hooligans and the struggle with them lasted for 6 to 8 hours.” See Yakov Wenglinski, “From Cold Siberia to the Sunny Homeland,” in L. Losh, ed., *Sefer yizkor le-kehilat Radomsk ve-ha-seviva* (Tel Aviv: Former Residents of Radomsk, 1967), 411, translated as *Memorial Book of the Community of Radomsk and Vicinity*, Internet: <<http://www.jewishgen.org/Yizkor/radomsko/radomsko.html>>.

star—flew over the town simultaneously and in harmony.²⁵⁰ Tellingly, when German and Soviet forces met at *Brześć* on the Bug River, they celebrated their joint victory over Poland by staging a massive parade at which German General Heinz Guderian greeted Soviet General (“kombrig”) Semen Krivoshein, a Jew, who saluted the Nazi swastika.²⁵¹

The cases of Grodno and Skidel illustrate that the stories of anti-Jewish pogroms perpetrated by Poles in September 1939 must be dismissed as baseless. In fact, these stories serve as a smokescreen for Jewish misconduct directed at Poles. As such, their mindless repetition only discredits Holocaust historiography. Furthermore, it should not be assumed that pro-Soviet conduct on the part of Jews was simply a response to an overriding fear of a German takeover. Jewish cooperation with the Germans, when the opportunity presented itself, as in the cases of Luboml and Kobryń, was also a factor to be reckoned with.²⁵² The common denominator of the activities of the Jewish militia in particular, as will be substantiated further, was not its anti-Nazi but rather its anti-Polish animus.

In a number of localities in central and southern Poland Jews came out to greet the German invaders, sometimes even shouting “Heil Hitler.”²⁵³ (There is no record of any such welcomes extended to the German invaders by ethnic Poles.) One such display occurred in Radom where a Jewish delegation, headed

²⁵⁰ Wierzbicki, *Polacy i Białorusini w zaborze sowiecki*, 181.

²⁵¹ Vladimir Levin and David Meltser, *Chernaia kniga z krasnymi stranitsami: Tragediia i geroizm evreev Belorussii* (Baltimore: Vestnik Information Agency, 1996), 322; Szawłowski, *Wojna polsko-sowiecka 1939* (1995, 1997), vol. 1, 233.

²⁵² Numerous examples of this strange phenomenon are found in the “Appendix: Collaboration with the Nazis.”

²⁵³ According to credible reports, Jews “sometimes cravenly shout[ed] ‘Chail Chitler’, their pronunciation of ‘Heil Hitler’, as the Germans arrived.” See Michael Burleigh, *Moral Combat: A History of World War II* (London: HarperPress, 2010), 122. A Jewish girl recalled the day the German army marched into Kraków: “My father and I were among the silent crowds in the street. Their soldiers certainly looked young, handsome and impressive in their well-cut green-grey uniforms. My father said to me, ‘They look so well-presented,’ and I heard admiration in his voice. Then an officer stepped out and called, ‘Can anyone here speak German?’ Without hesitation, my father approached him.” See Halina Zylberman, *Swimming Under Water* (Caulfield South, Victoria: Makor Jewish Community Library, 2001), 17. A Jew in Rzeszów was easily duped into believing that the German invaders were potential benefactors, according to one Jew witness: “I recall to this day how one of our neighbors, Bielfeld, came to our home and told us with excitement how good the Germans are, in that they distribute sugar and other such products, which we had not been able to obtain for some time. He explained how they honored him with a meal fit for a king—in return for some small matter, such as the giving of information about the address of the Jewish communal organization and other such organizations.” See Klara Ma’ayan Munzberg, “During the Nazi Occupation,” in *Rzeszow Community Memorial Book*, Internet: <<http://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/rzeszow/rzeszow.html>>, translation of M. Yari-Wold, *Kehilat Raysha: Sefer zikaron* (Tel Aviv: Former Residents of Rzeszow in Israel and the USA, 1967), 322 ff.

by a rabbi and other leaders of the community, marched down the flower-strewn Mikołaj Rej Street on September 8, 1939 to welcome the German army.²⁵⁴ In Janów Lubelski, as one eyewitness recalls,

All of a sudden a group of men appeared from behind a brick house. There were about six men in the group. They wore long black topcoats and black hats. One of them carried a loaf of bread on a tray and another a dish of salt, symbols of hospitality. They were representatives of the Jewish community in the city who waited to welcome the first soldiers of the Nazi army entering the city. When they heard our footsteps on the

²⁵⁴ Józef Łyżwa, "Pomagałem, a potem siedziałem," *Gazeta Polska* (Warsaw), February 10, 1994. A Jewish delegation led by a rabbi greeted the Germans in Zaręby Kościelne near Ostrów Mazowiecka. See Tomasz Strzembosz, "Zstąpienie szatana czy przyjazd gestapo," *Rzeczpospolita*, May 12, 2001. For other examples see: Tadeusz Bednarczyk, *Życie codzienne warszawskiego getta: Warszawskie getto i ludzie (1939–1945 i dalej)* (Warsaw: Ojczyzna, 1995), 242 (Jews built triumphal arches in Łódź, Pabianice, and elsewhere, and Jewish community leaders, headed by rabbis dressed in ceremonial robes, greeted the Germans bearing trays with bread and salt); Eugeniusz Buczyński, *Smutny wrzesień: Wspomnienia* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1985), 132 (Ukrainian nationalists and Jews together erected a triumphal arch for the Germans in Przemyśl and looted Polish military buildings); Elinor J. Brecher, *Schindler's Legacy: True Stories of the List Survivors* (New York: Penguin, 1994), 56 (Jews greeted the Germans in Kraków); Jake Gelwert, *From Auschwitz to Ithaca: The Transnational Journey of Jake Geldwert* (Bethesda, Maryland: CDL Press, 2002), 28 (Jews greeted the Germans in Kraków); Piotrowski, *Poland's Holocaust*, 315 n.167 (Jews greeted the Germans in Janów Lubelski); Jacek Romanek, *Kolaboracja z Sowietami na terenie województwa lubelskiego we wrześniu i październiku 1939 r.* (Lublin and Warsaw: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej–Komisja Ścigania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu, Oddział w Lublinie, 2019), 116 (Jews greeted the German invaders on Plac Łokietka in Lublin). The last known Jewish delegation to welcome the German army was probably in Międzyrzec Podlaski on October 10, 1939, after the departure of the Red Army from that town. See Józef Geresz, *Międzyrzec Podlaski: Dzieje miasta i okolic* (Biała Podlaska and Międzyrzec Podlaski: Ośrodek Wschodni "Civitas Christiana", 1995), 299. Confirmation of these events can also be found in a report of a leftist Italian diplomat who was stationed in Poland: "in the first days of the conflict, numerous Jews greeted the entrance of the German armies into Polish cities with cries of joy." See Eugenio Reale, *Raporty: Polska 1945–1946* (Paris: Institut Littéraire, 1968), 204.

In Oświęcim, on September 1, 1939, two Jews took in and cared for a wounded German, who had parachuted from a crashing plane, without informing the Polish authorities of his presence. When the Germans arrived on September 3rd, the Jews led them to the wounded man who, it turned out, was an important Nazi officer. According to Moshe Weiss:

Before candle lighting, on Friday, September 1, 1939, the day Germany invaded Poland, two Oswiecim [Oświęcim] Jews, the wealthy businessman Leo "Eliezer" Shenker and a companion, heard a plane crash into a field near Shenker's villa. From their flattened position to escape the bombing, they watched in amazement as a man attached to what seemed like a giant umbrella floating to the ground and struggled to disentangle himself from the ropes that harnessed him to his strange contraption. The man was wounded and bleeding, and the two Jews ran to his aid and carried him to a nearby house. He was a German pilot whose plane had been shot down by Polish anti-aircraft guns. His co-pilot had been killed in the attack. The surviving pilot's leg and several teeth were broken. The Jews tended the wounded man and did not inform the Polish authorities of his presence. When the Germans entered Oswiecim on the third of September, the Jews led them to the wounded man, who, it turned out, was an important Nazi officer. While the Nazis could not really understand why the Jews had gone to so much trouble to save a German life, they were nevertheless grateful.

Leo Shenker, a leader of the Oswiecim Jewish community, became friendly with the wounded Nazi officer, and as a result of this connection was in a position to gain many favors for the Jews.

See Moshe Weiss, *From Oswiecim to Auschwitz* (Oakville, Ontario; Buffalo: Mosaic Press, 1994), 156. Henryk Schönker presents this story in a somewhat different light. He states that the German officer was a pilot whose plane had been shot down while bombing Oświęcim. Fearful of possible future retaliation by the Germans, his father, Leon Schönker, the leader of the Jewish community, decided not to hand the officer over to the Polish authorities, who, in any event, allegedly had ceased to function in that town. Leon Schönker hid the German officer at his factory with the assistance of a caretaker, a Christian of German origin. Later, the grateful German officer alleviated conditions for Jews in the town, at least for a time. See Henryk Schönker, *Dotknięcie aniola* (Warsaw: Ośrodek Karta, 2005), 22–24. The motivation behind some of these actions is baffling because German designs, albeit not yet a full-blown Holocaust, were plainly apparent from the outset and public mistreatment and humiliation of Jews was widespread. In the town of Będzin, the Germans perpetrated a pogrom on September 8th, setting fire to the synagogue and Jewish houses. A large group of Jews who fled was sheltered by Rev. Mieczysław Zawadzki on the grounds of the Catholic church. See Stanisław Wroński and Maria Zwolakowa, *Polacy Żydzi 1939–1945* (Warsaw: Książka i Wiedza, 1971), 321. Was it merely a matter of opportunism? Part of the answer may lie in the popular sentiments shared even by the élite of the Jewish community and expressed best in the wartime diary of Chaim Kaplan, a rabbi, educator and author from Warsaw, cited later in the text.

street, they thought that we were the German soldiers. After discovering their mistake, they were embarrassed and returned behind the building to wait for the Germans.²⁵⁵

Such incidents strongly suggest that a much more important impetus for the resounding welcome given to the Soviets was the desire to ingratiate themselves with the new rulers, rather than to express their happiness for having being saved from German rule whose impact most scarcely knew.

As mentioned earlier, Jews often surfaced as guides for the invading Soviet troops. An eyewitness from *Lwów* recalled:

I was at the Plac Mariacki in the centre of town when the Bolsheviks entered. Jews from Lwów rode on horseback with the front ranks. As members of the Communist Party they had offered their services to the Soviet army and were employed as guides.²⁵⁶

In *Dziszna*, a Jew by the name of Szulman, the son of the owner of a large textile store, also acted as a guide for the Soviet Army.²⁵⁷ Later he would draw up lists of Poles who, as “enemies of the state,” were arrested and deported for “crimes” such as having fought in the Polish-Soviet War of 1919–1920.²⁵⁸

The stage was set for the unfolding tragedy that befell the Poles of the Eastern Borderlands.

²⁵⁵ Marian S. Mazgaj, *In the Polish Secret War: Memoir of a World War II Freedom Fighter* (Jefferson, North Carolina and London: McFarland, 2009), 16. See also Piotrowski, *Poland's Holocaust*, 315 n.167.

Szawłowski, *Wojna polsko-sowiecka 1939* (1995, 1997), vol. 1, 229 (Tyszowiec, near Zamość); Nowak, *Przemilczane zbrodnie*, 27 (Kuty); Grzelak, *Wrzesień 1939 na Kresach w relacjach*, 79 (Dziszna), 172 (Jews with red armbands were plainly visible sitting on Soviet tanks rolling into Wilno).

²⁵⁶ Kozłowski, “Więzienie sowieckie (1): Pamiętnik,” *Kultura*, no. 10 (October 1957): 88.

²⁵⁷ Liszewski, *Wojna polsko-sowiecka 1939 r.*, 37; Szawłowski, *Wojna polsko-sowiecka 1939* (1995, 1997), vol. 1, 71.

²⁵⁸ Account of Halina Balcerak in Grzelak, *Wrzesień 1939 na Kresach w relacjach*, 79.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Hunt for Polish Officers and Soldiers: Rites of Violence? and Their Mistreatment

The Soviet invaders were accompanied by operative groups of the NKVD, the state security apparatus, who oversaw the hunt for and arrest of groups of people identified in advance as enemies of the Soviet Union, among them person who held leadership positions in the state administration and military, members of the intelligentsia and justice system, and those connected to Poland's state security including the police. These NKVD operative groups also established their own security presence in all larger centres. By October 1, 1939, they managed to arrest almost 4,000 people in "Western Ukraine" and by mid-November 1939, almost 6,000 persons in "Western Belorussia."²⁵⁹ Almost all of those arrested were ethnic Poles.

A key component for the success of this operation was the recruitment of a dynamic network of informers, agents and casual denouncers from among the local population, especially the militias and committees that had sprung up spontaneously, in exchange for lucrative positions in the new civilian administration. Among the collaborators were many Jews, who often formed and headed self-appointed militias and committees to help usher in Soviet rule.

Polish soldiers, especially officers, were hunted down like animals, rounded up and detained in large numbers by the Soviet invaders and their collaborators. These hunts took on a ritual character. After their apprehension, the Polish captives were often mistreated in public and executed. Those who refused to surrender their weapons were shot summarily.²⁶⁰ The scene of Polish prisoners of war often brought open rejoicing on the part of the Jewish population who lined the roads to witness these spectacles. Some Jews directed abuse and assaults at the captured Poles.

The spirit of the new era was abundantly clear to the endangered Polish military personnel. Once out of uniform, they had to hide first and foremost not from the Soviet invaders, who could scarcely tell them apart, but from local collaborators, among whom Jews figured prominently. As one Polish officer recalls,

Roads were a nightmare. Ukrainians and Jews stealthily murdered soldiers returning home or handed them over to the NKVD. The militia or police was ... mostly Jewish. They wore red armbands on their sleeves and were armed. They detested everything that was Polish ... He who did not see this and did not live through it has no idea what a horrible hell they, the Jews, created on these Polish territories which the Bolsheviks occupied.²⁶¹

²⁵⁹ Piotr Kołakowski, "Sowiecki aparat bezpieczeństwa wobec podziemia polskiego na Kresach Wschodnich 1939–1941: Zarys problematyki," in Hanna Konopka and Daniel Boćkowski, eds., *Polska i jej wschodni sąsiedzi w XX wieku: Studia i materiały ofiarowane prof. Dr. hab. Michałowi Gnatowskiemu w 70-lecie urodzin* (Białystok: Uniwersytet w Białymstoku, 2004), 295–96. The number of arrests continued to rise throughout the occupation and began to include members of other ethnic groups, though Poles continued to be overrepresented. By the end of 1939, 10,566 persons had been arrested in "Western Ukraine," including 5,406 Poles, 2,779 Ukrainians, and 439 Jews; in 1940, 47,403 persons were arrested, including 15,518 Poles, 15,024 Ukrainians, and 10,924 Jews, the latter mostly for illegal crossing of the German-Soviet border; by May of the following year, another 8,594 persons were arrested, including 5,418 Ukrainians, 1,121 Poles, and 801 Jews. In total, some 66,500 persons were arrested between September 1939 and May 1941 in "Western Ukraine" in addition to those deported to the Gulag in the large deportation operations. See Grzegorz Hryciuk, "Zmiany liczebności Wołynia podczas okupacji radzieckiej w latach 1939–1941," in Konopka and Boćkowski, *Polska i jej wschodni sąsiedzi w XX wieku*, 376; Grzegorz Hryciuk, "Zmiany ludnościowe i narodowościowe w Galicji Wschodniej i na Wołyniu w latach 1939–1948," in Ciesielski, *Przemiany narodowościowe na Kresach Wschodnich II Rzeczypospolitej 1931–1948*, 157; Grzegorz Hryciuk, *Przemiany narodowościowe i ludnościowe w Galicji Wschodniej i na Wołyniu w latach 1931–1948* (Toruń: Adam Marszałek, 2005), 181–82.

²⁶⁰ For example, a Polish sergeant was killed for refusing to hand over his weapon to a Jew. See Julian Grzesik, *"Alija": Martyrologia Żydów europejskich* (Lublin: n.p., 1989), as cited in Nowak, *Przemilczane zbrodnie*, 60.

²⁶¹ Account of Antoni Baszkowski, quoted in Nowak, *Przemilczane zbrodnie*, 119.

In the vicinity *Smorgonie*, before the arrival of the Soviets, bands of Jews robbed military supply columns and disarmed small groups of soldiers.²⁶² In *Raków*, near the Soviet border,

The local Jews reacted hysterically at the sight of the Russian “benefactors.” They kissed [Soviet] tanks, tore Polish flags from buildings and trampled them, and spat at and verbally abused Polish soldiers whom they had captured somewhere. They seized a Polish commander, a captain of a company [Frontier Defence Corps], and led him triumphantly [to be handed over to the Soviets]. The entire group ganged up on this one defenceless person, ripping his shirt on the chest and shoving him around. As we watched this scene we were stunned and horrified. These were after all our neighbours, once ordinary, peaceful people. We had lived together for years. The children attended the same schools, played together and this was entirely natural for us. Our parents shopped [in their stores]... No one interfered with each other. ... There were no grounds for animosity or conflict. So we could not comprehend what had possessed them, where this hatred came from.²⁶³

The newly formed Jewish militia hunted down Polish policemen and handed them over to the Soviets. At least two Polish police officers, Łączak and Wiszniewski, were murdered.²⁶⁴

As soon as the Soviets arrived in *Nowogródek*, Jews with red armbands came to the home of Constable Kazimierz Kosiński, who had left for Wilno earlier that day. Not finding him there, they demanded that his terrified wife hand over his bicycle.²⁶⁵ Other Poles were not so lucky, as Adam Szymel from Nowogródek recalls:

From the moment the Soviets invaded, there began a terror with the arrest of Polish policemen, army personnel, and government employees. The invaders wanted to wipe out all Polish leaders and intelligentsia so they could rule more easily. My father [a reserve officer] fell victim to this terror. On September 19, he was arrested but, after a few hours of interrogation, was allowed to return home. ... that night, one of the local Jews who had been elevated to a position of authority in the Communist Government, came with several Soviet soldiers with bayonets mounted on their rifles and arrested him. They handcuffed him and took him to prison. That was the last time we saw him. We were filled with great despair and a sense of helplessness.

My mother went to the prison every day in the hope of seeing Father, but she never saw him again. We were allowed to deliver parcels with food and clothing to the prison and foolishly believed that, as long as the guards accepted packages for our father, then he had to be alive. After a few weeks, the guards refused to accept packages for him, so we assumed that he had been deported to Russia. There was no trace of him and we could find out nothing about him, yet he was in this prison all the time; a family friend saw him a few months later, chained to other prisoners, being led to the railway station.²⁶⁶

Polish policemen, soldiers, and officials were captured and driven through the streets of *Pińsk* often bloodied because of the beatings they were subjected to. In the first few days, the Soviets gave free rein to the newly formed Red militia and workers’ guard. According to a Jewish source, the workers’ guard, headed by Benjamin Dodiuk and composed mostly of Jews including M. Zhukovsky-Zylber (his deputy), G. Shklarnik, S. Shklarnik, Vladimir Antonovich, Abram Gorbat, and Yudel Kot, apprehended Polish

²⁶² Jarosław Wołkonowski, “ZWK-AK a problem mniejszości etnicznych na Wileńszczyźnie,” in Piotr Niwiński, ed., *Opór wobec systemów totalitarnych na Wileńszczyźnie w okresie II wojny światowej* (Gdańsk: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, 2003), 40.

²⁶³ Testimony of Stefan Malawski as cited in Grażyna Dziedzińska, “‘Wyzwalanie’ Rakowa,” *Nasza Polska*, February 20, 2001.

²⁶⁴ Testimony of Władysław Ludwiński, in the author’s possession.

²⁶⁵ Jacek Hugo-Bader, “A rewolucja to przecież to miała być przyjemność,” *Gazeta Wyborcza, Magazyn Gazety* (Warsaw), November 15, 1996.

²⁶⁶ Bogusia J. Wojciechowska, comp. and ed., *Waiting To Be Heard: The Polish Christian Experience Under Nazi and Stalinist Occupation, 1939–1945* (Bloomington, Indiana: AuthorHouse, 2009), 41.

officers and policemen and executed them with impunity.²⁶⁷ Patriotic Polish youth who rallied to the defence of their country were also not spared. Often they were turned in by ordinary Jews, even women, as the following Jewish account illustrates.

I knew a woman called Bashke, the mother of four children. At the beginning of the war the woman hid in an orchard for protection from the air attacks. A Russian mounted soldier passing by was shot at by two young Poles, but he escaped unhurt. He dismounted from his horse to find out who had fired the shots. The woman pointed to the two young men, and they were arrested.²⁶⁸

A Jew who had informed the Polish authorities about Communist cells was lynched on the street.²⁶⁹

Near *Pińsk*, Henryk Skirmuntt (no relation to Count Skirmunt mentioned below), a soldier in the Polish Army, was apprehended by a Jew with a red armband and bearing a rifle who handed him over to the Soviets. As he was led into a courtyard packed with Polish soldiers, he was struck twice in the spine with the butt of a rifle.²⁷⁰

When the Polish army was retreating, Jan Radożycki found himself near the San River where he came across a group of Jews with red armbands tearing weapons out of the arms of Polish soldiers and yelling: “Yours has come to end.” Their contempt for Poland was obvious and painful.²⁷¹

In *Lubieszów*, a gang of Jewish teenagers attacked and beat up a Polish officer as he was leaving church.²⁷² Throughout this region, after seizing arms and organizing themselves into bands of “people’s militia,” Jews terrorized the local Polish officials and inhabitants and shot at and apprehended Polish soldiers driven back by the German forces.²⁷³

In an unidentified town east of Lublin,

We stopped on a side street close to the market square, where a group of people was building a triumphant arc [sic] draped with a red flag decorated with a hammer and sickle. It was quite busy in the market square, where some people, Jews in the greater part, wearing red armbands and carrying rifles were disarming soldiers as they arrived. We also saw a [Polish] Blue Policeman arrested and, after several minutes of a loud discussion, executed. ... A short time later, we saw a Soviet cavalry patrol, as it approached the triumphant

²⁶⁷ Rozenblat, “Evrei v sisteme mezhnatsionalnykh otnoshenii v zapadnykh oblastiakh Belarusi, 1939–1941 gg.,” *Białoruskie Zeszyty Historyczne*, no. 13 (2000): 94; Evgenii Rozenblat and Irina Elenskaia, *Pinskie evrei* (Brest: Brestskii gos. Universitet, 1997), 44–45; Wierzbicki, *Polacy i Żydzi w zaborze sowieckim*, 76.

²⁶⁸ Nachum Boneh, *History of the Jews of Pinsk*, Part I, Chapter 1 (“The First Month of the Nazi Occupation”); translation of *Pinsk sefer edut ve-zikaron le-kehillat Pinsk-Karlin*, vol. II (Tel Aviv: Former Residents of Pinsk-Karlin in Israel, 1977), posted on the Internet at www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/pinsk/pinsk.html. According to this source, after the German invasion, “Old accounts between local Jews and various Gentiles were now settled. ... When the Germans came, they found the woman and with the help of the Polish police handed her over to the Gestapo.”

²⁶⁹ Account of Jakub Rosenblum in Siekierski and Tych, *Widziałem anioła śmierci*, 316.

²⁷⁰ Rowiński, *Moje zderzenie z bolszewikami we wrześniu 1939 roku*, 16.

²⁷¹ Jan Radożycki, “Nasze się skończyło,” *Nasz Dziennik* (Warsaw), August 18, 2001.

²⁷² Account of Zbigniew Małyszczycycki, dated November 23, 1997 (in the author’s possession).

²⁷³ Account of Zbigniew Małyszczycycki, dated November 23, 1997 (in the author’s possession); Felicja Wilczewska, *Nim minęło 25 lat* (Toronto: Century Publishing Company, 1983), 18–19, 21.

arc. People wearing red armbands cheered the Soviets, throwing flowers at them. Soon cheers intensified insanely as the Soviet tanks arrived.²⁷⁴

On his discharge from the Polish army in Łuck, Volhynia, after the Soviet invasion, Zenobiusz Janicki made his way to his home town of **Przebraże**, 25 km away. Individual and small groups of soldiers returning from the front were frequently set upon by Ukrainians and Jews and robbed, on occasion even killed. In Przebraże, Janicki witnessed how his Jewish neighbour Dawid Gilden, the proprietor of a grocery store who had attained the rank of corporal in the Polish army, accosted a Polish soldier on the road with a pistol and stole a blanket from him.²⁷⁵

Aleksander Pluta, a company sergeant, was one of many soldiers who tried to make his way back home after being discharged from his unit near **Równe**, in Volhynia.

We headed toward Równe because there was a train station there. We tried to avoid the city so we followed paths in areas which were not built up. ... However, near the city itself we had to enter its outskirts... There patrols formed of NKVD men and Jews awaited us. They were young and hated Poles. They captured Polish officers who tried to blend in. The Russians could not distinguish officers from soldiers. Jews were needed for that purpose. They also carried guns. Near the larger cities and in the centre of the cities Jews filled these functions themselves without Red Army men. Those they recognized as, or suspected of being, officers were led away somewhere farther. It was they [these officers] who were doubtless sent to Katyn and other death camps. We walked for several days and the same thing happened daily.²⁷⁶

An eyewitness reported how, as she was walking with her mother in Równe, a young Jew, about 15 years old, approached a dejected Polish officer and struck him on the face and began to laugh out loud. He struck the officer so hard that his cap flew off his head. Jews nearby broke out in laughter and merriment. A group of Soviet officers witnessed the scene from afar. One of them approached the Jewish youth and told him to pick up the cap and put it on the Polish officer's head. The young Jew was stunned and stood motionless. The Soviet officer repeated his order with urgency. The young Jew bent over to pick up the cap. The Polish officer took the cap and placed it on his head, and then saluted the Soviet officer. The Soviet officer returned the salute and left. The sordid spectacle came to an end as the young Jew scurried off.²⁷⁷

After surrendering their arms in Busk and receiving a pass to return to their homes, Polish soldiers were robbed of their bicycles, money and possessions en route by Ukrainian and Jewish bands and communist committees. They managed to obtain civilian clothes in a Polish settlement. When they arrived in **Włodzimierz Wołyński** they were arrested by Jews and delivered to the NKVD.²⁷⁸ Indeed, many Jews in that town donned red armbands and rushed to help the NKVD identify targeted Poles and round them up. Poles tried to avoid the streets and often went into hiding for fear of being lynched.²⁷⁹

Near **Uścilug**, a Jew with a red armband seized a rifle from a Soviet officer and shot dead a captured Polish officer. This was even too much to take for the Soviet officer. He admonished the Jew, who tried to

²⁷⁴ Bojomir Tworzyński, *As I Remember: Polish Home Army in the Konecki and Nowogródek Regions, 1939–1945* (Markham, Ontario: n.p. 2009), 4. Translated from the Polish: *Tak jak pamiętam: AK–Ziemia Konecka i Nowogródzka 1939–1945* (Łódź: n.p., 1995).

²⁷⁵ Janicki, *W obronie Przebraża i w drodze do Berlina*, 10. Lejbisz Gilden later became a professional “agitator” under Soviet rule. Ibid., 13.

²⁷⁶ Account of Aleksander Pluta, quoted in Nowak, *Przemilczane zbrodnie*, 73–74.

²⁷⁷ Testimony of Alicja Maria Nowakowska-Antonowicz, Archiwum Historii Mówionej, Internet: <<https://www.1944.pl/archiwum-historii-mowionej/alicia-maria-nowakowska-antonowicz,2849.html>>.

²⁷⁸ Account no. 4488 in Żaroń, *Agresja Związku Radzieckiego na Polskę 17 września 1939*, 124.

²⁷⁹ Account of Bolesław Dorociński in *Biuletyn Informacyjny 27 Dywizji Wołyńskiej Armii Krajowej*, no. 4 (64) (1999): 53. See also Jan Żaryn and Tomasz Sudoł, eds., *Polacy ratujący Żydów: Historie niezwykle* (Warsaw: Neriton, 2014), 204.

justify what he did by stressing that it was, after all, a Polish officer. The Soviet officer then struck the Jew in disgust.²⁸⁰

The capital of Volhynia, **Łuck**, was overrun with self-appointed militiamen, mostly Jews, on the lookout for Polish soldiers whom they disarmed.²⁸¹ Officers were apprehended and handed over to the Soviets. When two young Polish officer cadets who had been released from service after the Soviet invasion were making their way home, they were accosted by a group of young Jews with red armbands when they attempted to board a train. These young ruffians tore the Polish eagles off the officer cadets' caps while mocking them.²⁸² A hunt for Polish officers in **Kowel** was undertaken by local Jews.²⁸³

Similar reports come from **Wiśniowiec**, in Volhynia, and nearby **Zbaraż**, in Tarnopol province, where

revolutionary committees were established consisting mostly of young Jews. In Polish uniforms and with red armbands, armed with rifles, they guard the buildings of their committees. They also stop soldiers and force them to enter the place. There they strip-search them, most often looking for arms, and they humiliate them with foul language.²⁸⁴

A resident of the village of **Kościuszków** near Brody recalled:

... some young Polish Jews and Ukrainians began collaborating with the NKVD and joined the police forces. They targeted Polish officers in hiding, policemen, government workers, and intellectuals. I remember in **Beresteczko**, two young Jewish policemen led a police officer by a rope around his neck to an NKVD officer. He disappeared, like so many of us, never to be seen again. Two Ukrainians, Mykoła Hnatiuk and Dubyński, came to my father demanding all documents and legal seals from the village of Kościuszków. ... Soviet authorities distributed anti-Polish propaganda and posters. One that stuck in my memory is of a Russian soldier stabbing a fallen Polish soldier with a bayonet on the rifle. Some of these posters were removed during the night and the Polish population was accused (rightly) of these deeds.²⁸⁵

But it was not just the young “emancipated” Jews, though hardly card-carrying members of the Communist Party, who took part in spectacles like this repeated again and again throughout Eastern Poland. In **Skalat**, a town near the Soviet border, on September 17th Orthodox Jews formed armed parties to chase down and apprehend Poles in anticipation of the Soviet entry.

Groups of Orthodox Jews dressed in long, black or charcoal gaberdines with wide red armbands, their heads covered with black yarmulkas from which long side curls dangled, carried rifles with long bayonets. When an armed group like this ran their gaberdines flew open and from under their black vests stood out their white ziziths [tassels] which hung down. ... On one of the side streets we saw this black band surround two Polish non-commissioned officers who were walking unarmed. Quite animated, the Jews led the apprehended men

²⁸⁰ Romanek, *Kolaboracja z Sowietami na terenie województwa lubelskiego we wrześniu i październiku 1939 r.*, 73 (based on the memoir of Wiktor Dawidziuk).

²⁸¹ Żbikowski, *Archiwum Ringelbluma*, vol. 3, 686. The career of Jerzy Pomianowski (Birnbaum), a young Communist who was active in the local Workers' Guard in Łuck, is enlightening. He was able to complete his medical studies in the Soviet Union during the war, published in leading Communist journals, and returned to Poland in 1946 where he held a series of lucrative positions. See Romuald Bury, “Dajcie mu nagrodę, a powiem wam, kim on jest ...,” <<http://www.polskiejutro.com>>, nos. 150–151, March 21–28, 2005.

²⁸² Account of Marian Fijał (in the author's possession).

²⁸³ (Name withheld), “Kto czerpie korzyści,” letter, *Rzeczpospolita* (Warsaw), May 23, 2000.

²⁸⁴ Jan Zalewski, *Stała się omyłka...: Wspomnienia z niewoli sowieckiej wrzesień 1939–sierpień 1941* (Warsaw: Kolejowa Oficyna Wydawnicza, 1994), 30.

²⁸⁵ Edward Juszyński, “In the Valley of Death,” in Michael Carolan, ed., *The Mass Deportation of Poles to Siberia: A Historical Narrative Based on the Written Testimony of the Polish Siberian Survivors* (Chicago: Siberian Society of U.S.A. and Classic Printing, 2009), 128–29.

away. Polish army men captured in this manner were then delivered to Red Army men or the NKVD as soon as the Soviet army entered the town. Many of those apprehended by the Jewish militia later lost their lives in Katyn and other places of Soviet genocide. [Polish] policemen caught by the Jews were executed immediately by Red Army men.

We encountered more and more of these organized groups in black gaberdines on the streets. We left Skalat in a hurry. ... After columns of Soviet tanks rolled through the city without stopping and moved onward, the Jews, who were the largest group of residents of Skalat, formed their own Red militia. They apprehended and imprisoned Polish soldiers and policemen. They even prepared a joyful, official welcome to greet the armies of the Soviet aggressor when they entered the town. Skalat was thus taken over by Jewish irredentists.²⁸⁶

In **Złoczów**, strips of red cloth were hung from windows and balconies and Polish soldiers were fired at in the streets. Polish soldiers were apprehended and disarmed by Jewish communists and Ukrainians.²⁸⁷ On September 19th, Sergeant Jan Bernard Soliński of the Frontier Defence Corps and his colleagues were ordered by a captain of the Red Army, a Jew, to leave the premises where they had taken refuge and to surrender their arms. A large and highly agitated crowd of Jews and Ukrainians surrounded the Poles. They were screaming and chanting and they threatened the Poles saying, “Your Poland has come to an end. We will now be in charge.”²⁸⁸

In **Sasów**, a small town near Złoczów, the newly formed militia, consisting of Ukrainians and Jews, apprehended more than twenty Polish soldiers and policemen and handed them over to the Soviet army. After a provocation (in which a grenade was thrown into the room in the school where they were held), the Poles were executed by the Soviets. One of the main organizers of the Red militia was Lipa Halpern, a prewar Communist, who was instrumental in the deportation of more than a dozen Polish families to the Gulag in February 1940. Later Halpern worked in the NKVD regional command in Olesko.²⁸⁹

In **Czortków**, a Jewish and Ukrainian rabble followed Soviet soldiers around town disarming Polish officers and soldiers, whom they cursed and insulted verbally. The captured Poles were then driven to the jail.²⁹⁰

In **Nowe Brusno** near Rawa Ruska, Abraham Starkman and his brother, whose father was a well-to-do Jewish farmer, took charge of the local workers’ militia which disarmed Polish soldiers and executed a few Polish officers captured near that village.²⁹¹ Reports of Jews and Ukrainians assisting the NKVD in capturing Polish officers, policemen and officials come from **Jamelna** near Gródek Jagielloński.²⁹²

In **Jaryczów** near Lwów,

²⁸⁶ Account of Władysław Dymitrowski, as quoted in Nowak, *Przemilczane zbrodnie*, 25–26.

²⁸⁷ Account no. 5085 in Żaroń, *Agresja Związku Radzieckiego na Polskę 17 września 1939*, 125–126.

²⁸⁸ Szawłowski, *Wojna polsko-sowiecka 1939* (1995, 1997), vol. 1, 395. Such gatherings and outbursts were commonplace. See also Lesław Jurewicz’s account from Czortków, in his memoirs, *Niepotrzebny* (London: Polish Cultural Foundation, 1977), 19.

²⁸⁹ *Na Rubieży* (Wrocław), no. 10 (1994): 15; *Na Rubieży*, no. 49 (2001): 28–29; Henryk Komański and Szczepan Siekierka, *Ludobójstwo dokonane przez nacjonalistów ukraińskich na Polakach w województwie tarnopolskim 1939–1946* (Wrocław: Nortom, 2004), 965.

²⁹⁰ Account of Wiesław Antochow in Grzelak, *Wrzesień 1939 na Kresach w relacjach*, 357.

²⁹¹ Franciszek Gonczyński, *Raj proletariacki* (London: Gryf Publications, 1950), 43. Starkman was eventually arrested in Lwów after leaving the Soviet militia; he was bitter that someone who had ardently supported the Soviet regime, as he had, would be thrown into a jail full of Poles.

²⁹² Szczepan Siekierka, Henryk Komański, and Krzysztof Bulzacki, *Ludobójstwo dokonane przez nacjonalistów ukraińskich na Polakach w województwie lwowskim 1939–1947* (Wrocław: Stowarzyszenie Upamiętnienia Ofiar Zbrodni Ukraińskich Nacjonalistów we Wrocławiu, 2006), 240.

The little town was just going through its first spasm of revolution. Some Polish officers, described as “spies”—God knows on whose behalf—were arrested. The Ukrainian Nationalists formed a procession with flags and banners, which they followed through the streets, with revolvers in their hands. Young Jews formed another procession, with a red flag and a portrait of Stalin, carried exactly like a holy ikon. The two groups finally came face to face and quarrelled, with the result that they together looted the store of the Polish Spirits Monopoly. When everyone had got drunk, they wanted to organize a pogrom of the Poles in the town. Fortunately there were too many Poles to be safely attacked and in the meantime someone launched the rumour that the Germans were coming.

Instead of the Germans, two Bolshevik commissars arrived with a platoon of troops a few hours afterwards. The Ukrainian leaders turned meek and silent, as two of them had been arrested. The Jews all went home and sat tight there, while the Bolshevik commissar inquired about the local intelligentsia.²⁹³

Conditions in *Lwów* were described by many witnesses: Polish soldiers, especially officers, were disarmed, abused verbally and physically, and hauled off by the Red militia, composed mostly of Jews and Ukrainians, and by ordinary citizens to Soviet posts.²⁹⁴ This base conduct toward fellow citizens sometimes elicited a feeling of disgust on the part of ordinary, decent Soviet soldiers.

After the arrival of the Soviets in Lwów on September 23, 1939, I witnessed several incidents on the part of Jews toward Poles. The first was the welcome given to the arriving Soviet army. Jews seized weapons from Polish soldiers as they [the Jews] kicked and mocked them. They tied red ribbons to the barrels of stolen rifles and red armbands on their sleeves. I saw how one Polish soldier who was already disarmed was surrounded by a Jewish patrol consisting of three self-styled armed militiamen with red armbands on their sleeves (this took place just as the Soviet army was entering Lwów); they tore the military hat from his head and were jostling him around. At that time a Soviet patrol came by and when they saw what was happening, they disarmed the Jewish patrol, gave them a boot and told them to run off. It was a painful sight to see a disarmed Polish soldier being attacked by Polish Jews.²⁹⁵

A group of Jews with red armbands dragged Lieutenant-Colonel Tadeusz Prauss, the commander of an airforce regiment, out of his house, pushing him around and beating him on his head and face. They thrust him in a carriage, paraded him publicly as an “enemy of the people” and spat at him.²⁹⁶ A uniformed Polish officer was captured on Meizels Street by two Jews with red armbands and rifles. After abusing him they led him to the Brygidki prison.²⁹⁷ A former student of the renowned Jewish scholar Hugo Steinhaus, by the name of Borek, was arrested in his home after being denounced to the NKVD as a reserve officer in the Polish army by his Jewish orderly.²⁹⁸ When Witold Rapf went to stay with his crippled uncle, an ex-colonel of the Polish army, in Lwów in November 1939,

Two NKVD officers, accompanied by three young Jews wearing red armbands, came at night and arrested my uncle. They made offensive and disgracing remarks, pointing to a painting of Jesus and a picture of

²⁹³ Wegierski, *September 1939*, 126–27.

²⁹⁴ Hryciuk, *Polacy we Lwowie 1939–1944*, 17, 29.

²⁹⁵ Account of Mieczysław Hampel in *Lwów i Kresy: Biuletyn Koła Lwowian* (London), no. 88 (December 2000), 26.

²⁹⁶ Grażyna Dziedzińska, “Jerzy Biesiadowski—wytrwały,” *Nasza Polska* (Warsaw), June 9, 1999, also cited in Nowak, *Przemilczane zbrodnie*, 91.

²⁹⁷ Account of Tadeusz Czuba, quoted in Nowak, *Przemilczane zbrodnie*, 117–18.

²⁹⁸ Steinhaus, *Wspomnienia i zapiski*, 220. Notwithstanding her experiences, the mother of the denounced Pole, of whom all traces had disappeared, did not think of revenge. She even offered to shelter Steinhaus in her home in Borysław.

Marshal Józef Piłsudski, Poland's dictator from 1926 until his death in 1935, was head of state and commander-in-chief of the Polish army during the Polish-Soviet War of 1919–1920, and thus aroused enormous resentment and even hatred among the Soviets because of Poland's victory over the Red Army.

Pointing out to the Soviets the direction of Polish troop movements and fleeing Polish soldiers became a common pastime. In *Kuty* near Kołomyja, the self-proclaimed Jewish militia quickly informed Soviet tank drivers that a Polish military truck had just departed for the nearby Romanian border. Unable to overtake it, the tank fired machine-gun volley at the truck killing a Polish quartermaster by the name of Tadeusz Dołęga-Mostowicz, a well-known Polish literary figure.³⁰⁰

Witold Karpiński was part of group of Polish soldiers who were captured by the Soviets when they attempted to escape to Romania. Those soldiers who refused to lay down their arms were executed on the spot. The soldiers were then taken to *Stanisławów*, where they were guarded by local Jewish women who were armed. They were then taken to Szepetówka near the Soviet border.³⁰¹

Near *Śniatyn*, three Polish officers in plainclothes were apprehended crossing the River Prut to Romania in October 1939. They were detained and briefly imprisoned in Kołomyja before being deported to the Gulag. Their interrogations were carried out with the assistance of local Jews, among them a doctor, who acted as interpreters. In one case, the doctor himself levelled abuse at one of the Polish officers, who were accused of being spies, and called him a "liar." When he moved to strike the Polish officer, his over-zealousness was too much to bear for even the hardened Soviet functionaries, who then dispensed with the collaborator's services.³⁰²

A Polish officer, disguised as soldier, was trying to make his way to the Polish-Hungarian border when he was apprehended by Ukrainian militiamen near the village of *Skole*. Suspected of being a Polish officer, he was taken to the village and handed over to two Jewish militiamen who took him to the Soviet commissar for questioning. A local Jewish woman, who acted as secretary, mistress and Russian interpreter for the commissar, "embellished [the officer's] confession with communist jargon obviously learned from propaganda leaflets." During his interrogation captured Polish state employees, policeman and gamekeepers were brought in by the militiamen, who carried out their duties with enthusiasm; the commissar sent them to the local prison. Since the officer had false identification, his guise of being a simple soldier was eventually accepted and he was released to go home.³⁰³

On September 25th, the Soviets murdered the staff and patients of a Polish military hospital in the village of *Grabowiec* near Zamość. Some of the wounded soldiers were shot in the makeshift hospital, others who had difficulty walking were shot just outside the building. A group of about twenty soldiers were led to a hill on the outskirts of the village, pushed around and cursed by a group of young Jews with red armbands, and executed there. They are buried in a communal grave in the local cemetery.³⁰⁴

A Polish soldier recalled with shock what he experienced and felt when the first Soviet soldiers arrived in the outskirts of *Lwów*:

About 5 p.m., we heard some unusual voices and a lot of noise on the street ... I could not resist the temptation to go out and see what was happening. I observed a very strange scene: A small group of people—

²⁹⁹ See Redlich, *Together and Apart in Brzezany*, 89.

³⁰⁰ Account of Stanisław Szuwart, quoted in Nowak, *Przemilczane zbrodnie*, 27.

³⁰¹ Wanda Wasicka, "Gimnazjalny kolega," *News of Polonia/Wiadomości Polonijne* (Pasadena, California), September 2005: 18.

³⁰² Account of Włodzimierz Tylkowski (in the author's possession).

³⁰³ Wegierski, *September 1939*, 162–73.

³⁰⁴ Krzysztof Czubara, "W Grabowcu Sowietci 'polowali' na polskich oficerów: Bój na Grabowieckiej Górze," *Tygodnik Zamojski*, September 29, 2005.

many of them Jews, and evidently Communists—were surrounding a lone and scared looking Soviet soldier and screaming anti-Polish slogans, “Down with the Polish government!! ... Down with Poland!! ... Long live the Soviet Union!!”

I could not believe my eyes! Why would these people be so happy? Why would the Jews be against the Polish government and Poland itself? They had a very good life in Poland, and were free. With the exception of some small minority [of non-Jews], no one bothered them before the war. They were able to do whatever they wanted and most of them were well-to-do. What an unpleasant surprise it was for me to witness a scene like this. ... I could not help but express my dismay and disgust when I turned to a tall, middle-aged man and asked him why these people were so happy. I didn’t quite finish what I was going to say, when he turned to me menacingly and said in a loud voice: “Are you not happy, you S.O.B.?! I’ll show you!” He then started towards me with his not-so-friendly intentions. Obviously I did not make him happy with my remarks and questions, but I could only rectify the situation by running away towards the bunker where I would feel safe with my friends.

“My God! Where am I?! These people are traitors,” I mumbled to myself for quite some time as a result of this unfortunate episode.³⁰⁵

On the night of 18/19 September, 1939, a few Polish detachments had attempted to defend *Wilno*, but were ordered to retreat together with the police. The city’s defence was left in the hands of weak volunteer groups and a few regular Polish army units, with no air or tank support. After twelve hours or so of battle the Soviet units gradually began to take control of specific neighbourhoods of the city. The defenders retreated in the direction of the Polish-Lithuanian border. Local communist supporters occasionally shot at the retreating soldiers. One such incident occurred on Bułtupski Lane, where three Polish soldiers were shot at from a building owned by a Jew. One of the soldiers was killed, and the other two threw grenades into a window of the building. Even before the Soviet troops arrived, groups of young Jews with red armbands appeared on the city’s streets carrying rifles. According to Dov Levin, Jewish youth comprised a “significant proportion of the armed Civil Militia in various quarters” of Wilno. They immediately started to hunt down and arrest Polish officers, policemen, soldiers, and others who had taken refuge in the city.³⁰⁶ Their ranks included not only Jewish Communists but also Bundists and some Belarusian and Polish Communists.³⁰⁷ According to one Jewish observer, they disarmed Polish soldiers “in an ugly manner and

³⁰⁵ Julius F. Przesmycki, *The Sold Out Dream: Memoirs of a Polish Freedom Fighter* (Stevens Point, Wisconsin: Point Publications, 1991), 53. The demonstration was soon dispersed by Polish soldiers who fired shots at the rabble, wounding some of them. *Ibid.*, 54.

³⁰⁶ Marek Wierzbicki, “Polish-Jewish Relations in Vilna and the Region of Western Vilna under Soviet Occupation, 1939–1941,” in *Polin*, vol. 19 (2007): 491; Levin “The Jews of Vilna under Soviet Rule, 19 September–28 October 1939,” in *Polin*, vol. 9 (1996): 114; Janusz Potkański, *Pożegnanie Wilna*, manuscript. See also Stanisława Lewandowska, *Życie codzienne Wilna w latach II wojny światowej* (Warsaw: Neriton and Instytut Historii PAN, 1997), 17; Stanisława Lewandowska, *Losy wilnian: Zapis rzeczywistości okupacyjnej. Ludzie, fakty, wydarzenia 1939–1945*, 3rd edition (Warsaw: Neriton and Instytut Historii PAN), 19. Lewandowska points out that, after the Soviets retreated and handed the city over to the Lithuanians at the end of October 1939, there were spontaneous manifestations against the new occupiers. Rioting broke out when the Polish currency was devalued artificially and prices soared. Many Jewish shops were demolished and 23 persons were injured. The Lithuanian police carried out a number of arrests and pressed charges against suspected ringleaders. See Lewandowska, *Losy wilnian*, 33–34, 200–1. According to a Lithuanian historian, serious disorders broke out on October 31, consisting of protests by Poles against the Lithuanian occupation; largely Jewish, pro-Soviet gatherings; clashes with the newly arrived Lithuanian police and military; and violent confrontations between Poles and Jews. Lithuanian forces assisted by Red Army soldiers managed to quell most of the unrest within a few days, arresting 66 rioters, including 44 Poles and 20 Jews. See Saulius Sužiedėlis, “The Historical Sources for Antisemitism in Lithuania and Jewish-Lithuanian Relations during the 1930s,” in Alvydas Nikžentaitis, Stefan Schreiner, and Darius Staliūnas, *The Vanished World of Lithuanian Jews* (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2004), 141–42.

³⁰⁷ Wanda Krystyna Roman, “Litwini, Białorusini, Żydzi i Rosjanie w raportach komendanta wileńskiego okręgu SZP–ZWZ,” in Gnatowski and Boćkowski, *Polacy–Żydzi–Białorusini–Litwini na północno-wschodnich ziemiach Polski a władza radziecka (1939–1945)*, 177–93, here at 190; Marek Wierzbicki, “Polish-Jewish Relations in Vilna and the Region of Western Vilna under Soviet Occupation, 1939–1941,” in *Polin*, vol. 19 (2007): 491–92.

with great satisfaction. A Jew would spit in the face of a Polish soldier after taking his rifle.”³⁰⁸ They ripped epaulets and eagle insignias from the uniforms of Polish soldiers. (Historian Dov Levin, however, stresses that the militiamen removed the soldiers’ weapons “in such a friendly way that the defeated Polish smiled despite their sadness.”³⁰⁹) Polish reports are similar: a young Jew ran up to a despondent Polish soldier in a suburb of Wilno and slapped him on the face.³¹⁰ Another eyewitness reported:

In the streets Jewish children latched on to Soviet military vehicles and joyfully greeted the new occupiers. Militia patrols with red armbands, formed mostly of Wilno Jews and Communists, were everywhere. I will never forget the sight of a Polish soldier walking down a street (apparently on his way home) without a belt and carrying a haversack. Suddenly a group of teenagers detached themselves from a Soviet truck and, undoubtedly wanting to demonstrate its fighting spirit and enmity toward the remnants of Polish statehood, spat at that emaciated soldier and tried to rip the buttons off his military coat. And—imagine this!—the reaction of the Soviet soldiers was entirely different from what that swarm of teenagers turned savage expected. They told them to leave the soldier in peace explaining, “He’s just an ordinary soldier. Don’t harass him.” And that viperous and squalid group of callow youth left shamefaced.³¹¹

A group of young armed Jews burst into the 4th commissariat of the Polish state police where they ordered the Poles to leave and even attempted to physically expel them.³¹² The main train station in Wilno was a particularly hazardous place to venture since it was infested with NKVD agents and the largely Jewish citizens’ militia, whose main task was to stop suspicious people, especially Polish officers out of uniform. Suspects were followed to their homes and their credentials were checked.³¹³ Jews in the service of the Bolsheviks also carried out night-time searches of Polish homes to look for arms.³¹⁴ About 80 percent of those arrested were Poles.³¹⁵ Soviet reports sang the praises of the predominantly Jewish Workers’ Guard

³⁰⁸ Musiał, “Stosunki polsko-żydowskie na Kresach Wschodnich R.P. pod okupacją sowiecką (1939–1941),” *Biuletyn Kwartalny Radomskiego Towarzystwa Naukowego*, vol. 34, no. 1 (1999): 120.

³⁰⁹ Levin, “The Jews of Vilna under Soviet Rule, 19 September–28 October 1939,” in *Polin*, vol. 9 (1996): 115.

³¹⁰ Helena Pasierbska, “Tak było na Kresach,” *Nasz Dziennik*, June 22, 2001. The author also mentions that the Horodniczy family from Kościeniewiczze were identified by Jews for deportation.

³¹¹ Janusz Hrybacz, “Panie Boże! ...Zamień mi Niebo na Wilno,” *Magazyn Wileński* (Vilnius), no. 10 (2001): 35–51.

³¹² Jarosław Wołkonowski, “ZWK-AK a problem mniejszości etnicznych na Wileńszczyźnie,” in Niwiński, *Opór wobec systemów totalitarnych na Wileńszczyźnie w okresie II wojny światowej*, 40; Marek Wierzbicki, “Polish-Jewish Relations in Vilna and the Region of Western Vilna under Soviet Occupation, 1939–1941,” in *Polin*, vol. 19 (2007): 492.

³¹³ Blum, “O broń i orły narodowe”... (*Z Wilna przez Francję i Szwajcarię do Włoch*), 102.

³¹⁴ Kazimierz Kucharski, *Konspiracyjny ruch niepodległościowy w Wilnie w okresie od września 1939 r. do 25 maja 1941 r.* (Bydgoszcz: Towarzystwo Miłośników Wilna i Ziemi Wileńskiej w Bydgoszczy, 1994), 7.

³¹⁵ Lewandowska, *Życie codzienne Wilna w latach II wojny światowej*, 147. Among those arrested were the uncle and aunt of Edmund Maziarz. His aunt was released after several weeks, but the uncle disappeared without a trace. See Żaryn and Sudół, *Polacy ratujący Żydów*, 264.

who maintained “order” and confiscated weapons: “The mood among the members of the Workers’ Guard is elated; they carry out every order willingly and with enthusiasm.”³¹⁶

Numerous reports speak of the abusive treatment meted out to Polish prisoners of war by Jews in Eastern Poland. (This appears to have been a predilection of the Jewish minority, as there are no reports of Ukrainians or Belorussians taking part in such activities.) This conduct—early reminiscent of the displays of hatred directed toward Polish prisoners of war by pro-Nazi German civilians—ranks among the most shameful episodes in occupied Europe and one about which Poles quite understandably retain bitter memories.

When a large crowd formed as the Soviets marched Polish prisoners of war along the highway to *Monasterzyska* near Buczacz, young Jewish hooligans who lined the street spat at the Polish soldiers and threw rocks at them. As one witness recalled, the Poles who came out to see their loved ones being led away were appalled by this callous conduct.

They must have been encouraged by their parents to perform such base deeds. My mother could not stand by idly looking at this any longer and took them to task. When that did not help, she grabbed one of them by the collar and gave him a light jerk. All of a sudden, out of nowhere, some older Jews appeared with red armbands on their coats and wanted to push my mother into the convoy led by the Soviets. Some Ukrainian women we knew saved her and me by raising a terrible outcry. This must have frightened the Jews because they ran off. Unfortunately, the young Jews continued to hurl insults at our soldiers.

These brief incidents stuck in my mother’s mind for a long time. But that did not prevent her from sheltering Jews during the German occupation at risk to our lives. Perhaps among them were those who, in 1939, wanted to hand my mother over to the Soviets.³¹⁷

When the Soviets led captured Polish soldiers, with their hands tied behind their backs, through the streets of *Skala Podolska*, crowds of Jews and Ukrainians converged to observe the show, screaming at them: “Kill the Polish swines!” and “The Polish swine is dead!”³¹⁸

An eyewitness observed Jews jeering and spitting at disarmed Polish soldiers and policemen assembled in the courtyard of the police station in *Stanisławów* before being marched to the local jail. Many of the Jews who had lined Kamiński Street along with their children wore red armbands and publicly derided the Poles as they passed in front of them.³¹⁹

In *Dolina* near Stryj, where Jews greeted the invading Soviet army with flowers and offered them bread and salt (a traditional greeting), a Polish officer was slapped in the face by a local Jew, who screamed at him, “There will be no more Poland of the *Pans*.”³²⁰

The day after the Soviet entry into *Dubno*, Volhynia,

Two young Jews, communist militiamen, brought out a couple of Polish officers, a colonel and a lieutenant, from a house. In the market-place, surrounded by a party of militiamen (of course all armed with rifles), stood a superior sort of commissar, a young fellow with a markedly Semitic cast of countenance. The officers were brought before him, whereupon he addressed a few words in Russian to the colonel—and slapped him hard in the face. The colonel took the blow in silence, and bowed ... Presently the commissar ordered the two

³¹⁶ This is from Situational Report No. 43 of Lavrenti Tsanava, the People’s Commissar for Internal Affairs of Soviet Belorussia, dated October 9, 1939. The report appears in “*Zachodnia Białoruś*” 17 IX 1939–22 VI 1941: *Wydarzenia i losy ludzkie. Rok 1939*, vol. 1 (Warsaw: Rytm, 1998), 183. See also Musiał, “Stosunki polsko-żydowskie na Kresach Wschodnich R.P. pod okupacją sowiecką (1939–1941),” *Biuletyn Kwartalny Radomskiego Towarzystwa Naukowego*, vol. 34, no. 1 (1999): 121.

³¹⁷ Juliusz Kierenko, “Uratowały nas znajome Rusinki,” *Nasza Polska*, September 22, 1999. Juliusz Kierenko’s account is also quoted in Nowak, *Przemilczane zbrodnie*, 88–89.

³¹⁸ *Na Rubieży* (Wrocław), no. 47 (2000): 52.

³¹⁹ Janina Grygar, letter, *Głos Polski* (Toronto), October 4, 1996.

³²⁰ Grzegorz Mazur, *Pokucie w latach drugiej wojny światowej: Położenie ludności, polityka okupantów, działalność podziemia* (Kraków: Uniwersytet Jagielloński, 1994), 24, 25.

officers to put up their hands, while they were searched and their belts taken from them.³²¹

The subsequent fate of the Polish officers is not known.

In some cases, however, Polish officers could not bear the public humiliation. A Polish woman recalled a scene she witnessed in *Drużkopol*, Volhynia, upon the Soviet entry:

From a crowd of her own people [who had assembled to greet the Soviets] a young Jewish woman emerged. She approached a Polish officer and delivered a swinging blow to his face. ... The Polish officer calmly pulled a gun out of his holster (creating a panic among the rabble), held it against his temple and pulled the trigger.³²²

In *Białozórka* near Krzemieniec, the sight of long lines of Polish prisoners of war aroused provocative cries and laughter on the part of Jews and Ukrainians. The Polish captives were met by a group of young Jews, among them a young woman, who came out of the Polish state police building dressed in Polish military coats stripped of their shoulder-straps. Wearing red armbands they insulted and mocked the Polish officers from a distance: "You Polish swine. ... Your rule is over. Take those roosters [a disparaging reference to Poland's national emblem, the white eagle] off your hats!" The first officer they struck was a general, whose hat went flying off into the mud as he was hit in the head. This was a signal for the young Jews to collectively ill-treat a group of Polish officers who had been separated from the column of prisoners of war.³²³

Kazimierz Tadeusz Czelny, a young Pole who accompanied his father, Stanisław Czelny, a major in the reserve of the medical corps of the Polish Army, encountered the following reception in the vicinity of *Lwów*:

As we approached every Ukrainian village, we were fired upon. In towns, we were also shot at by the Jewish militia, armed with stolen Polish army rifles and wearing red armbands. As we approached the outskirts of Lwów, we came upon a tragicomic spectacle: In a meadow beside the main road, about ten of the Jewish militiamen were guarding a sizable squadron of one of the elite Polish cavalry regiments. Soviet tank forces had disarmed the Polish regiment and had assigned their new "allies," the Jews, to guard the Poles. I recall a feeling of pain and disgust that those who were Polish citizens should behave so treacherously.³²⁴

Another Polish soldier reported a similar occurrence in that region: "After my capture by Soviet troops in 1939 I was guarded by a Jewish militia, who often treated former Polish officers with the utmost brutality." According to Karliński, the behaviour of the Jewish guards even occasioned interventions on the part of the Soviets.³²⁵ Another report comes from Stanisław Kurczaba, who, after his capture by the Soviets, was guarded by local Jews in *Tumacz*.³²⁶

³²¹ Sledzinski, *Governor Frank's Dark Harvest*, 11; Śledziński, *Swastyka nad Warszawą: Dwa i pół roku pod okupacją niemiecką w Polsce*, 6–7.

³²² Memoirs of Zofia Orłowska, "Mój Wołyń" (in the author's possession). That author's published memoirs, *Tajgo, pamiętna tajgo...* (Wrocław: Polskie Towarzystwo Ludoznawcze we Wrocławiu, 1991), commence with her family's deportation in February 1940.

³²³ Adolf Kołodziej, *Ich życie i sny: Dzieje prawdziwe...* (Pruszków: Ajaks, 1996), 74.

³²⁴ Richard C. Lukas, ed., *Out of the Inferno: Poles Remember the Holocaust* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1989), 39–40. See also K.T. Czelny, *My Journey from Auschwitz to Buckingham Palace* (London: n.p., 1994).

³²⁵ Stanisław Burza-Karliński, "Poles have brave record of aiding Jewish escapes," letter, *Toronto Star*, July 25, 1992. The publication of this letter, written in the author's official capacity with the Canadian Polish Congress, elicited hate mail from several Jews.

³²⁶ Marek Dereń, "Niemy krzyk murów," *Nasz Dziennik*, November 17–18, 2001.

Additional examples of the despicable behaviour of the Jewish masses of Lwów toward Polish prisoners of war, who were showered with abuse and whose eagles and military distinctions were torn from their uniforms, are noted by General Władysław Anders and others.³²⁷ Even former acquaintances could not be counted on for an act of kindness.

When Stanisław Milczarczyk, a reserve non-commissioned officer in the Frontier Defence Corps, was taken captive and held in a freight wagon full of Polish prisoners of war, he spotted a Jew by the name of Szmul from his native Ciechanów guarding the stationary train. He called out to Szmul, now an armed Red militiaman, to bring some water for the thirty prisoners. Enraged, Szmul rushed over to wagon, hurled insults at Milczarczyk, and jabbed at him with his bayonet. Just a short while ago Szmul had sold fruit to Milczarczyk, who owned a small grocer's shop in his home town.³²⁸

In the city of **Ostróg**, in Volhynia, local Jews and Ukrainians started to apprehend Polish soldiers on their own initiative, already on September 17, 1939.³²⁹

Near **Kostopol**, just before their execution by the Soviets,

When the column was being marched through the town, the local Jews spat at the Polish soldiers, heaped the foulest epithets upon them, and threw rocks at them.³³⁰

As a column of Polish prisoners of war was being led by Red Army men through the nearly empty streets of **Włodzimierz Wołyński** in the early morning hours, a young Jew mocked them yelling, "You sons-of-bitches. You'll now get what you deserve. It's good that they're taking you away." Some Polish women who stood nearby were in tears. The contrast was striking.³³¹

General Jan Lachowicz filed the following report about his internment in **Kowel**, Volhynia:

On September 28, we received orders to 'pack up' and leave our cells. In the prison yard we met up with most of the officers of our platoon and many others from various military formations. We were escorted in a column to the barracks by a civilian guard with red armbands and former Polish soldiers—unfortunately all of them were Polish Jews. We moved out... Our escort consisted of the same (Jews) with armbands and Polish rifles... After a time, a rabble of young Jews gathered on each side of our column, marching along with us on the sidewalks and shouting insults at us. What is worse, they soon began to spit at us and here and there even pelted our column with rocks.³³²

In **Zaleszczyki**, near the Romanian border, a Polish prisoner of war recalled his fate, typical of many Polish soldiers:

On September 19th, I was taken captive by the Bolsheviks. I was wounded and was taken to the hospital in Zaleszczyki. Our fate was horrible. The NKVD handed us over to Jews armed with rifles and guns. These were Polish Jews in civilian clothes with armbands. They treated the wounded soldiers with unusual brutality.

³²⁷ Piotrowski, *Poland's Holocaust*, 52–53, based on Krystyna Kersten, *Polacy, Żydzi, komunizm: Anatomia półprawd 1939–1968* (Warsaw: Niezależna Oficyna Wydawnicza, 1992), 26, 31.

³²⁸ Account of Marek Jan Chodakiewicz (in the author's possession).

³²⁹ Siemaszko and Siemaszko, *Ludobójstwo dokonane przez nacjonalistów ukraińskich na ludności polskiej Wołynia 1939–1945*, vol. 1, 985.

³³⁰ Testimony of Edmund Zaremba in Jerzy Pelc-Piastowski, "Gdzie są ci jeńcy?" *Niepodległość i Pamięć* (Warsaw), no. 3 (1995): 104; also found in Henryk Pająk and Stanisław Żochowski, *Rządy zbirów 1940–1990* (Lublin: Retro, 1996), 56.

³³¹ Account of Zygmunt K. Dąbrowski in Rowiński, *Moje zdarzenie z bolszewikami we wrześniu 1939 roku*, 199. During their detention these Polish soldiers had been guarded by a Jew, who had acquired the mannerisms of the Soviet security police. Ibid., 198.

³³² Liszewski, *Wojna polsko-sowiecka 1939 r.*, 265–66; Szawłowski, *Wojna polsko-sowiecka 1939* (1995, 1997), vol. 2, 156.

They struck us and kicked us. They searched out officers and handed them over to the NKVD. They screamed at us that we were bourgeois lackeys who had sucked their blood, and that they would now suck our blood. They hurled many insults at us which I won't repeat because they were so vulgar. They heaped profanities on us.³³³

Attitudes had not changed when bedraggled Polish prisoners were led in a column through Uman', in Soviet Ukraine, the following summer: "The sidewalks are full of Jews. Some of them yell at us: 'Polish Pans.' ... They look at us with hostility."³³⁴

The treatment of Polish prisoners of war by the ordinary Jewish civilian population of Soviet-occupied Eastern Poland has no parallel anywhere else in occupied Europe.³³⁵ At that time, in German-occupied Poland, Jews were not being hunted down in this manner (except by ethnic Germans³³⁶), but rather, like the Poles, faced random terror. There the plight of prisoners of war and refugees, regardless of nationality or religion, elicited widespread sympathy on the part of the Poles. As one Jew who served in the Polish army put it, "What an ideal brotherhood existed between Poles and Jews! ... How generously and hospitably the Polish peasant received refugees!"³³⁷ (Among Jews in Eastern Poland, however, such solidarity rarely extended beyond offering relief to Jewish refugees from the German zone.)

Nor is there any record of Jewish captives being publicly harassed and abused by Poles, as Poles were in the Soviet zone.³³⁸ When Jews, whether soldiers or civilians, were interned or fled or were expelled from

³³³ Account no. 3904 in Żaroń, *Agresja Związku Radzieckiego na Polskę 17 września 1939*, 126.

³³⁴ Memoirs of Czesław Blicharski as cited in Musiał, "Stosunki polsko-żydowskie na Kresach Wschodnich R.P. pod okupacją sowiecką (1939–1941)," *Biuletyn Kwartalny Radomskiego Towarzystwa Naukowego*, vol. 34, no. 1 (1999): 111. Blicharski also recalled that a Jewish nurse in Kiev refused to treat a seriously ill prisoner because he was a Pole.

³³⁵ Using the methodology of Jan T. Gross, it is worth pointing out that Jewish betrayal and denunciations of Poles are a recurring theme with a long tradition in Polish history. Not only can conditions in September 1939 be compared to those during the Bolshevik invasion of 1920, but comparisons can also be found in earlier periods. For example, after the failure of the Polish uprising in Poznań (the cradle of Polish statehood) in 1848, Jews decorated their homes with Prussian flags and made a point of demonstrating their loyalties by engaging in anti-Polish rhetoric and abusing Polish insurgents who were marched in the streets of the city. These scenes even filled German Colonel von Brandt with deep disgust. See Antoni Chołonecki, *My, Żydzi i Kongres* (Kraków, 1919), 18, which cites J. Moraczewski's study, *Wypadki poznańskie w roku 1848*. Prince Otto von Bismarck, Germany's chancellor from 1871 to 1890, undoubtedly an authority on the subject matter, told A. Tatishchev, "Why did God create Polish Jews if not so that we may use them for espionage?"

³³⁶ A diary by a Jew from Łódź recorded the following on September 9, 1939: "Local German youths lie in ambush, waiting for passing Jews, mercilessly attacking them, snipping beards, plucking hair until blood flows, aglow with sadistic enjoyment at their wild sport. This has become their National Mission, and they perform it with the proverbial German thoroughness." Hashomer Hatzair Organization, *Youth Amidst the Ruins: A Chronicle of Jewish Youth in the War* (New York: Scopus Publishing Company, 1941), 14.

³³⁷ Calel Perechodnik, *Am I a Murderer?: Testament of a Jewish Ghetto Policeman* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press/HarperCollins, 1996), 1. Perechodnik marched westward for more than eight days until he ended up in Słomim, in Eastern Poland.

³³⁸ Cases have also been recorded of Jews in the German zone openly abusing Polish prisoners of war. When Jan Żuk, a second lieutenant in the 17th Section (Platoon) of the Light Artillery, was taken captive after the surrender of Warsaw on September 27, 1939, Polish officers who were marched through small towns outside Warsaw on their way to detention camps were spat at by Jews. Based on the account of Leon Żuk (in the author's possession). Facts such as this underscore that similar incidents in the Soviet zone had nothing to do with mere gratitude for being "saved" from the Germans.

their homes by the Germans, many Poles came to their assistance.³³⁹ Moreover, there are numerous Jewish accounts from the German zone from this same period attesting to the fact that Jewish soldiers were

³³⁹ Abraham Lewin, a Warsaw rabbi, recorded: "I have heard many stories of Jews who fled Warsaw on that momentous day, 6 September 1939, and were given shelter, hospitality and food by Polish peasants who did not ask for any payment for their help." See Abraham Lewin, *A Cup of Tears: A Diary of the Warsaw Ghetto* (Oxford and New York: Basil Black in association with the Institute for Polish-Jewish Studies, Oxford, 1988), 124. In Sandomierz, for example, Bishop Jan Kanty Lorek, with the agreement of the Polish town council, dispatched Rev. Jan Stępień to intercede on behalf of a very large number of Jewish men taken from Sandomierz and interned in an open-air camp in Zochcinek, near Opatów. After a payment of contributions collected from townspeople, the Jews were released. "I remember that autumn evening as long columns of [Jewish] men passed me by," recalled Rev. Stępień. "Although it was dark, the eyes of those men glowed with sincere appreciation. Prayers in my intention and in that of Bishop Lorek's took place in the Sandomierz synagogue for a week." See *Udział kapelanów w drugiej wojnie światowej* (Warsaw: Akademia Teologii Katolickiej, 1984), 282. This information is confirmed in *Eth ezkera—Whenever I Remember: Memorial Book of the Jewish Community in Tzoyzmir (Sandomierz)* (Tel Aviv: Association of Tzoyzmir Jews, 1993), 565–66: "After our release, we heard that Nuske Kleinman and Leibl Goldberg, who had miraculously evaded the march to Zochcin, asked the Polish priest, professor Szymanski [Adam Szymański, the rector of the diocesan seminary], who was known as a friend of Jews, to intervene with the Germans on our behalf. He immediately got in touch with the German authorities in town. We also heard that the Sandomierz Bishop, Jan Lorek, intervened with the authorities on our behalf." In Rzeszów, Polish nuns openly displayed their sympathy for downtrodden prisoners of war, both Poles and Jews, taken during the September campaign, by bringing them kettles of food to the school yard where they were guarded by the Germans. "The Jewish hostages from Kolbuszowa refused to eat non-kosher food and literally starved. I owned a few "złoty" (Polish currency) and asked the nuns if they could possibly buy me some chocolate in town. They fulfilled my request and that chocolate was the only food the Jewish hostages would eat. The nuns let me know of the horrible misfortune befalling the Jews of Rzeszow caused by the German army right after the beginning of the invasion." See the testimony of Chaim Bank in *A Memorial to the Brzozow Community*, Abraham Levite, ed. (Israel: The Survivors of Brzozow, 1984), 95–96. The Franciscan friary in Niepokalanów, near Warsaw, headed by Father Maksymilian Kolbe, took in and cared for approximately 1,500 Jews expelled from Western Poland in 1939–1940, with local residents helping out. See Patricia Treece, *A Man for Others: Maximilian Kolbe, Saint of Auschwitz* (New York: Harper & Row, 1982; reissued by Our Sunday Visitor, Huntington, Indiana), 91–93, and especially the words of praise by the Jewish guests. On January 2, 1940, Emanuel Ringelblum wrote in his diary, *Kronika getta warszawskiego: Wrzesień 1939–styczeń 1943* (Warsaw: Czytelnik, 1983), at 68: "In Limanowa, the behaviour of the Franciscans toward 1,300 Jewish refugees (500 from Kalisz, 500 from Lublin, and some 300 from Poznań) was very favourable. They gave them accommodations in their buildings and helped them [in various ways] ... even giving them a calf to kill." In the summer of 1940, when the Germans expelled the Jews from the town of Konin to the General Government, one of the expellees recalled: "One ought to emphasize the help we received from the priest of Grodziec, who occupied himself with handing out coffee and tea to us, and distributing milk to the children. Until late into the night there were warm kettles in the square. Bread was also given out. Besides that, the priest went around appealing to the peasants to give accommodation to the deportees, and help to the homeless. ... The Germans sought an opportunity to arrest him and this happened after he helped the Jews in Grodziec. Soon afterwards came news of his death." See Theo Richmond, *Konin: A Quest* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1995), 163. Henryk Lubraniecki, who was confined in the ghetto in Krośniewice near Kutno, declared: "I want to underline that the Poles helped us a great deal." See Dorota Sierpacka, "Postawy Polaków wobec ludności żydowskiej w Kraju Warty," in Aleksandra Namysło, ed., *Zagłada Żydów na polskich terenach wcielonych do Rzeszy* (Warsaw: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej–Komisja Ścigania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu, 2008), 201, n42. Such displays of solidarity, which could be multiplied, continued throughout the war, undeterred by reports of Jewish conduct in the Soviet zone. Rabbi Shimon Huberband, an inmate of a labour camp in Kampinos, near Warsaw, in April and May 1941, recalled in his book, *Kiddush Hashem: Jewish Religious and Cultural Life in Poland During the Holocaust* (Hoboken, New Jersey: Ktav Publishing House, and Yeshiva University Press, 1987), at 95 and 101: "the priest of Kampinos had been giving fiery sermons about us in church every Sunday. He forcefully called upon the Christian population to assist us in all possible ways. And he also attacked the guards and the Christian camp administrators, referring to them as Antichrists. He harshly condemned the guards who beat and murdered the unfortunate Jewish inmates so mercilessly. ... We marched through the village. We were given a warm farewell by the entire Christian population. ... We owed him, the priest of Kampinos, a great deal. Many of us owed our lives to the warm and fiery sermons of this saintly person." In Poznań, a stronghold of the National Democratic (Endek) Party, relations with the Jews imprisoned in the Stadion labour camp in 1941–1943 were amicable. Samuel Bronowski, who appeared as a witness in the trial of Arthur Greiser, Gauleiter of the so-called Wartheland, made the following deposition before the Supreme National Tribunal: "The only help possible was aid in kind by supplying food. In the camp we received 200 grams of bread and one litre of turnip soup per day. Obviously, those who had no help from outside were bound to die within a short time. A committee was

frequently protected by their fellow Polish soldiers when asked to identify themselves by the Germans.³⁴⁰ (The vast majority of Jews in the Polish army did, however, identify themselves to the Germans as Jews. Their immediate fate did not prove to be worse than that of Polish soldiers—almost all of the Jews were soon released and allowed to return to their homes. On the other hand, many Polish soldiers were held as prisoners for the entire war.)

The hunt for and denunciation of Polish officers and officials by local collaborators did not subside with the Soviet entry. It continued well into the Soviet occupation, as the following examples show.

Still making their way home to Volhynia in October 1939, two soldiers who had served in the Frontier Defence Corps were stopped by two Jewish militiamen armed with Polish rifles in *Busk*, north of Lwów. Knowing the fate that awaited them in the local commissariat, they seized their rifles and gave the Jewish

³⁴⁰ When the army unit of Lieutenant Stanisław Strzałkowski was captured by the Germans near Tomaszów Lubelski, he openly protested the German order to segregate Jewish prisoners of war from Christian ones. The German Wehrmacht officer in charge told him that he was fortunate that he was not dealing with an SS officer because he would have been executed on the spot. See “Krzyż powinien pozostać tam, gdzie jest,” *Gazeta* (Ontario edition), August 21–27, 1998. Martin Zaidenstadt, a Jewish soldier in the Polish army who was captured at the beginning of the war and transferred from a prisoner-of-war camp to Dachau, recalled: “When the Nazi guards said: all Jews step forward, my Polish comrades held me back and protected me.” See Alan Cowell, “A Dachau survivor who won’t forget,” *Gazette* (Montreal), October 27, 1997 (reprinted from the *New York Times*). See also Timothy W. Ryback, *The Last Survivor: In Search of Martin Zaidenstadt* (New York: Pantheon Books/Random House, 1999), 123; this book provides a further example at 161. Giterman, who held a position of authority in the Warsaw ghetto, recalled the Poles with whom he was interned in a German prisoner-of-war camp with great admiration: their solidarity and friendship toward the Jewish inmates was universal. See Ringelblum, *Kronika getta warszawskiego*, 520. Sydney W., who was wounded during the fighting in September 1939 and interned in a prisoner-of-war camp in Radom, was warned by a Polish officer not to reveal his Jewish identity to the Germans. A prewar Polish neighbour of his from Pułtusk, with the help of a member of the National Democratic Party (an “Endek”), snuck him into a hospital to undergo an emergency operation. In the hospital, a Catholic priest helped to maintain his cover by taking him into the choir. Sydney W. was eventually released, along with the other prisoners, when the camp was dissolved. See Schoenfeld, *Holocaust Memoirs*, 293–95. Rev. Józef Czach, the chaplain of the 54th battalion of the Polish army stationed in Tarnopol, vouched for Mendel (Martin) Helicher, a Jewish officer in the Polish army who was taken prisoner by the Germans in September 1939 and held in a prisoner-of-war camp in Gorlice. After a medical examination Helicher was identified as a Jew and imprisoned. Two Polish officers from Tarnopol and the priest intervened on his behalf with the camp officials. The chaplain maintained that Helicher was a Catholic who had been circumcised as a result of an operation, and thus secured his release from prison. Haim Preshel, ed., *Mikulince: Sefer yizkor* (Israel: Organization of Mikulincean Survivors in Israel and in the United States of America, 1985), 104–13. Another Jewish soldier, who was injured when his unit was captured by the Germans on October 5, 1939, was cared for by Polish nuns at St. Casimir Hospital in Radom. One “very kind” nun helped him contact his mother in Łódź and provided him with the address of a retired Polish lady in Lwów, where he headed, “who was poor but very obliging.” Despite the nun’s parting advice to him—“‘Bądź Polakiem’ (‘Be Polish’), with its unspoken implication: ‘Fight for Poland,’” this young man from a leftist Jewish family decided to enrol in the komсомol. See K.S. Karol, *Between Two Worlds: The Life of a Young Pole in Russia, 1939–46* (New York: A New Republic Book/Henry Holt and Company, 1986), 19–24. (Although the author’s parents were Jews and atheists they sent him to a Catholic high school run by priests where he was exempted from religious teaching. Karol states that he “was never personally beaten up as a ‘dirty Yid,’” which is well worth noting given that in Toronto, for example, in the 1930’s and 1940’s, Jewish high school students returning home through Christian neighbourhoods were frequently assaulted. The internationally acclaimed architect Frank Gehry, who grew up in then Protestant Ontario, recalled: “In Canada when I was a kid, I remember going to restaurants with my father that had signs saying NO JEWS ALLOWED. I used to get beaten up for killing Christ.” See “The Frank Gehry Experience,” *Time (Magazine)*, June 26, 2000, 52. In the case of Poland, such incidents are magnified through the prism of poverty and lack of opportunity that all of her citizens faced.) Jerzy Mirewicz, a Jesuit priest, was instrumental in the escape of seventeen Jewish prisoners of war from a camp on Lipowa Street in Lublin in 1940; these Jews made it to relative safety of the Soviet zone and some of them returned to Lublin with the Soviet forces in 1944. Two of those whom Fr. Mirewicz had rescued wanted nothing to do with him, fearing exile to Siberia by the Communist Lublin Government on the suspicion of having collaborated with a sympathizer of the exiled Polish Government. See Vincent A. Lapomarda, *The Jesuits and the Third Reich* (Lewiston/Queenston and Lampeter: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1989), 129–31. One would be hard-pressed to find a similar collective display of solidarity on the part of Jews toward Poles in the Soviet zone, although individual acts of compassion did occur, examples of which are noted later on. When the tide turned in 1941, the attitude of the Polish population toward Soviet prisoners of war was also generally friendly and, to the extent possible, helpful. Poles interceded, usually with no success, on behalf of Soviet prisoners, who were routinely mistreated brutally by the Germans, and hid many Soviet prisoners who managed to escape sure death at German hands. Alarmed, the Germans issued an order forbidding any form of assistance under penalty of death or life imprisonment. See Tomasz Szarota, *Życie codzienne w stolicach okupowanej Europy: Szkice historyczne; Kronika wydarzeń* (Warsaw: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1995), 173–74.

militiamen a good thrashing before escaping. One of the Poles could not remain for long in his home town of Klewań, or afterwards in Lwów, because of the vigilance of the NKVD and Jewish militias. He was eventually apprehended near *Malkinia* in March 1940 when he attempted to cross over to the German zone. While the Pole was interned in an NKVD prison, a young Jewish interpreter demonstrated great zeal in eliciting information from him in the course of his interrogation.³⁴¹

A group of fourteen members of the nascent Polish underground, the Union for Armed Struggle (Związek Walki Zbrojnej, the precursor of the Home Army), was arrested in *Lwów* in March and April 1940. After undergoing show trials, all but one of them were executed the following February. Their families were deported to the Soviet interior. The chief interrogator, who subjected them to brutal torture during their detention in Lwów, was a Jew by the name of E. M. Libenson (Liebenson), a senior lieutenant of the NKVD.³⁴² Libenson's name also appears in other prisoners' accounts as a sadistic torturer.³⁴³ A Jewish resident of *Maciejów*, in Volhynia, described the impact of the mistreatment of prisoners by police on ordinary citizens who happened to hear the cries of victims:

We lived in our home which was a two family house built in the late 20's. With the arrival of the Soviets the tenant that shared the house with us was evicted and the local council moved its office there for a short time without paying any rent. Afterwards the police moved in for a period of six months. We were warned by the commanding officer to see, to hear and to keep quiet. Non-compliance would mean eviction from our own home.

The office of the police interrogator was adjacent to our room. Interrogation of suspects hostile to the Soviet regime, both Jews and non-Jews would take place late at night. The interrogations were conducted aggressively with beating until blood ran. Screaming, abuse, insult and crying was heard when the interrogated insisted he was innocent. One night I was awakened by screaming and I heard the suspect begging his interrogator to stop torturing him and to do away with him by hanging. The answer was: "We do not hang our enemies we shoot them like dogs." I couldn't stand any more of the horror that night and I ran out of the house.

And so we adhered to the warning and kept our mouths shut. After six hard months the militia moved out and joined their offices with the NKVD.³⁴⁴

A Pole, whose remnant group of the defeated Polish army was captured by the Soviets as late as February 1940, recalled his imprisonment in *Białystok* and *Brześć*, where he was told by a Jewish major of the NKVD that Poland would never rise again. The mood among the jailers, on learning of the defeat of France in June of that year, was indicative of which side and what values they were rooting for:

The joy of the NKVD, consisting mostly of the Jews who interrogated us, was indescribable. They were elated. The Soviet Union would now divide Europe with Hitler. ... Elated they drank for several days into a state of unconsciousness. That for us was the most difficult time. All hope had evaporated.³⁴⁵

Jews were known to appropriate and wear Polish officers' uniforms without any qualms. When Meylekh Tshemnov (Melech Ciemny), a native of Warsaw, arrived in Łuniniec in November 1939, he was provided with such a uniform by local Jews, who also started to wear them allegedly because of a shortage of

³⁴¹ Henryk Jerzewski, "Szalała NKWD i policja żydowska ...," *Nasza Polska*, September 8, 1999.

³⁴² Elżbieta Kotarska, *Proces czternastu* (Warsaw: Volumen, 1998), 49, *passim*.

³⁴³ Account of Rev. Włodzimierz Cieński, quoted in Nowak, *Przemilczane zbrodnie*, 125.

³⁴⁴ "The Survival of Avrum Aryeh Bejell during World War II," *Israel Resource Review*, January 4, 2010, Internet: <<http://www.israelbehindthenews.com/bin/content.cgi?ID=3856&q=1>>.

³⁴⁵ Account of Stanisław Karolkiewicz in "Honor musi mieć swoją wartość," (an interview with the President of the World Association of Soldiers of the Home Army conducted by Andrzej Kumor), *Gazeta* (Toronto), October 2-4, 1998 (no. 190): 18.

clothing.³⁴⁶

³⁴⁶ Meylekh Tshemni, *Vunder in vander: Betlekh fun mayn togbukh: September 1939–september 1969*, vol. 1 (Ramat-Gan: Eygns, 1971), 13.

CHAPTER FIVE

The Persecution and Murder of Polish Policemen, Officials, Political Figures, Landowners, Clergymen, and Settlers

Numerous testimonies attest to the prominent role played by Jews in the militias and revolutionary committees that sprung up both spontaneously and at Soviet urging. These entities often played a decisive part in getting the new regime and its machinery of repression off the ground. Their activities were buttressed by large numbers of individual collaborators acting on their own initiative in furtherance of the Soviet cause. In some places, carnivalesque scenes of violence and derision unfolded before the eyes of the stunned citizenry.

Throughout Eastern Poland, militias and revolutionary committees were formed by local Jewish, Belorussian and Ukrainian pro-Soviet elements. One of the first tasks undertaken by the militias was disarming the remnants of the Polish state police in anticipation of the arrival of the Red Army. With the blessing of the Soviet invaders, local collaborators apprehended, robbed, and even murdered Polish officials, policemen, teachers, politicians, community leaders, landowners, and “colonists” (i.e., interwar settlers)—the so-called enemies of the people. They also robbed and set fire to Polish property and destroyed Polish national and religious monuments. Scores of murders of individuals and groups have been recorded. Plundering of Polish property took on massive proportions, with the spoils enriching the collaborators’ families and their community.³⁴⁷

One of the earliest and most heinous crimes was the murder of a score Poles, or possibly more, in the village of *Brzostowica Mała* near Grodno. A carnival of violence exploded on September 17–18, before the Soviets were installed in the area. A pro-Communist band with red armbands and armed with blades and axes, consisting of Jews and Belorussians and led by a Jewish trader by the name of Zusko Ajzik, entered the village, dragged people out of their houses screaming, and cruelly massacred the entire Polish population, possibly as many as fifty people. The victims included Count Antoni Wołkowicki and his wife Ludwika, his brother-in-law Zygmunt Woynicz-Sianożęcki, the county reeve and his secretary, the accountant, the mailman, and the local teacher. The victims of this orgy of violence were tortured, tied with barbed wire, pummelled with sticks, forced to swallow quicklime, thrown into a ditch and buried alive. The paralyzed Countess Ludwika Wołkowicka was dragged to the execution site by her hair. The murder was ordered by Żak Motyl, a Jew who headed the revolutionary committee in Brzostowica Wielka which was composed of Jews and Belorussians. Typically, the culprits were never punished. On the contrary, the NKVD officers praised them for their “class-conscious” actions. Ajzik became the president of the local cooperative and several others were accepted into the militia. The racist aspect of this bloodbath, however, is undeniable: only members of the Polish minority perished at the hands of their non-Polish neighbours—Stalin’s willing executioners.³⁴⁸ The Nazis, who were not very original but were good learners of genocide techniques, doubtless emulated the neighbour-on-neighbour violence that was carried out with impunity under Soviet auspices in 1939, when they entered these territories in the summer of 1941.

Janusz Brochwicz-Lewiński, an officer cadet who attained the rank of corporal in 1939, was captured by the Soviets near *Stolpce*. He was one of fifteen Poles, among them a judge, a pastor, a chaplain, a teacher, and several civil servants, taken before an NKVD tribunal in groups of five and sentenced to death. Fortunately, his group managed to escape while being transported to their unknown execution site. The other ten condemned Poles were executed by firing squad. While Brochwicz-Lewiński was imprisoned in

³⁴⁷ Liszewski, *Wojna polsko-sowiecka 1939 r.*, 75; Krajewski, *Na Ziemi Nowogródzkiej*, 7–9; Strzembosz, *Okupacja sowiecka (1939–1941) w świetle tajnych dokumentów*, 16. Once the Soviet regime was installed, these same collaborators were rewarded with positions in the official militia and local administration. See Strzembosz, *ibid.*, 21.

³⁴⁸ Krzysztof Jasiewicz, *Lista strat ziemiaństwa polskiego 1939–1945* (Warsaw: Pomost-Alfa, 1995), 927, 1136–37; Wierzbicki, *Polacy i Białorusini w zaborze sowieckim*, 70–72; Szawłowski, *Wojna polsko-sowiecka 1939* (1995, 1997), vol. 1, 370; Wojciech Wybranowski, “Musieli zginąć, bo byli Polakami,” *Nasz Dziennik*, September 4, 2001; Wojciech Wybranowski, “Są pierwsi świadkowie,” *Nasz Dziennik*, September 8–9, 2001; Wojciech Wybranowski, “Komuniści przyszli nocą,” *Nasz Dziennik*, September 23, 2001; Wojciech Wybranowski, “Dochodzenie w sprawie mordu na Polakach w Brzostowicy Małej utknęło w martwym punkcie: Kłopotliwe śledztwo,” *Nasz Dziennik*, October 2, 2002; Wojciech Wybranowski, “Dochodzenie IPN po publikacji ‘Naszego Dziennika’: Sprawców nie wykryto,” *Nasz Dziennik*, February 24, 2005. According to another version, the victims were shot. Ajzik was reportedly executed by the Germans in June 1941 on the site of the massacre of the Wołkowickis.

Stołpce, an NKVD officer made the rounds in the company of his aide, a local Jew from the town's newly formed Red militia, who fingered Polish officers and members of the educated class, now the so-called enemies of the people, by their occupation: judge, teacher, policeman, civil servant, forest-ranger, landowner.³⁴⁹

Equally despicable were the murders of Catholic clergymen carried out by roving gangs of Jews and Belorussians in September 1939, such as that of Rev. Bronisław Fedorowicz, the pastor of *Skrundzie* near Słonim, and those of Rev. Antoni Twardowski, pastor of *Juraciszki* near Wołożyn, and the latter's cleric, the Jesuit Stanisław Zuziak.³⁵⁰ A gang of Jews and Belorussians pelted rocks at Rev. Adam Udalski in *Wołożyn*. Surprisingly, he was rescued by Chona Rogowin, a Jewish Communist, whose family Rev. Udalski had assisted while Rogowin was incarcerated before the war for his subversive activities as a Communist.³⁵¹ A rabble of pro-Soviet Jews and Belorussians came to apprehend Rev. Józef Bajko, the pastor of *Naliboki* near Stołpce, intending either to hand him over to the Soviet authorities or to possibly lynch him (as had been done in other localities). A large gathering of parishioners foiled these plans, allowing Rev. Bajko to escape before the arrival of the NKVD.³⁵²

Henryk Poszwiński, the prewar mayor of *Zdzięcioł*, a town near Nowogródek, provided a vivid description of the "new order" in his town:

In Zdzięcioł a Jewish woman by the name of Josielewicz stood at the head of the revolutionary committee which was organized even before the arrival of the Soviet army.

The local police left town just after the Red Army had crossed the border. On the evening of September 17th, I was informed that a band of criminals released from jail was getting ready to rob some stores. I called a meeting of the fire brigade and civilian guard and these two organizations began to provide security in our town. The stores were spared but the [criminal] bands attacked the defenceless civilians who were escaping eastward from the Germans. The culprits stripped them of their clothes, shoes and anything else they had on them. Those who resisted were cruelly killed on the spot. Outside the town, roadside ditches were strewn with dead people. ... The revolutionary committee, which soon disarmed the fire brigade and civilian guard, stood by idly while all this was taking place.

In the morning hours of September 18th, a small detachment of the Polish army still traversed Zdzięcioł. It was a field hospital team transported in a dozen or so horse-drawn carriages. The convoy consisted of thirty soldiers led by a sergeant. The revolutionary committee attempted to stop and disarm them. The soldiers discharged a volley of gunfire into the air. The revolutionary committee ran out of town in a stampede and hid in the thickets of the municipal cemetery. ...

In the afternoon hours of September 18th, the Soviet army entered Nowogródek. That evening the first three Soviet tanks arrived in Zdzięcioł. The entire revolutionary committee, headed by Josielewicz, came out to greet the invaders shouting: "Long live the great Stalin!" After a short stop the tanks moved toward Słonim. The revolutionary committee ordered owners to display red flags from their houses. The Poles cried like children as they tore the white portion off the [red and white] Polish flags. ...

In the morning hours of September 19th, a Jew from the revolutionary committee came to the town hall and advised me that I was being summoned by the committee to attend a meeting concerning an epidemic of foot-and-mouth disease which had broken out among some cattle that had been brought to Zdzięcioł. Believing what I had been told to be true, I immediately got up from my desk and accompanied that man to the headquarters of the committee located at the other end of town. I had to wait about an hour before I was taken to the chairwoman's office. During that time I observed the true picture of the "revolution." Hundreds of

³⁴⁹ Mateusz Wyrwich, "Powrót z Powstania," *Tygodnik Solidarność*, September 5, 2003; Michał Wołlejko, "Chłopak silny jak stal," *Obserwator: Biuletyn Biura Bezpieczeństwa Narodowego*, no. 1 (1) (2008): 104–18, here at 109–10.

³⁵⁰ Szawłowski, *Wojna polsko-sowiecka 1939* (1995, 1997), vol. 1, 360.

³⁵¹ Accounts of Ksawery Suchocki, Emilia Suchocka, and Janina Zdasień, as noted by Stanisław Karlik, Internet: <<http://www.iwieniec.plewako.pl/martyrologia/dorastanie.htm>>.

³⁵² Wierzbicki, *Polacy i Białorusini w zaborze sowieckim*, 115. When the Germans invaded the Soviet Union in June 1941, reportedly an unnamed priest, who allegedly was known as a notorious anti-Semite, intervened on behalf of Jews who were beset in Naliboki by local bands. See Cholawsky, *The Jews of Belorussia during World War II*, 272. Rev. Bajko assisted Jews in other ways during the German occupation, and he and his vicar, Rev. Józef Baradyn, were locked in a barn and burned alive in August 1943 on suspicion of helping Jews and partisans. See Waclaw Zajackowski, *Martyrs of Charity*, Part One (Washington, D.C.: St. Maximilian Kolbe Foundation, 1987), Entry 378.

people surrounded the committee premises; most of them were women who had broken out in tears and were wailing. "Return our stolen property!" they cried. "Release our husbands and fathers of our children!" ...

People who had been badly beaten occupied the corners of the room; most of them were refugees fleeing the Germans. The committee members, who were dressed in civilian clothes with red armbands and had Soviet stars on their hats, carried rifles or revolvers in their hands and competed with each other in brutally mistreating these people. It was a sight that I had difficulty countenancing.

After about an hour's wait the door was thrown open and I was summoned into the chairwoman's office. When I entered I noticed three rifle barrels pointed at me. One of the bandits yelled, "Hands up!" I raised my hands and turned to the chairwoman. "What have I done wrong? Why are you treating me like this?" Although she knew Polish well, Josielewicz replied in Russian, "You will find out in due course." ...

After being searched [and stripped of all my personal effects] I was instructed to move toward the table occupied by Josielewicz, the chairwoman, and by a Soviet NKVD officer. The officer removed a form from his bag and started to complete it. ... The last portion of the form asked for the reason for my arrest and imprisonment. Before filling it out, the NKVD officer turned to the chairwoman and asked what to enter. The chairwoman replied, "He's a Polish officer, a Polish patriot, the former mayor of the town. That's probably reason enough." The NKVD officer wrote in this portion: "Dangerous element."

After filling out this form, three committee members escorted me to police detention. In a small detention room built to hold no more than four people for a short period, there were twenty-three people who had been arrested. Unable to sit down in that crowded place, we had to stand one next to another the whole time. People fainted from lack of air and had to relieve themselves on the spot. Among those arrested were school principals, county reeves, village administrators, officials and various other people who had escaped eastward from the Germans, as well as a priest who often repeated under his breath, "Forgive them Father, for they know not what they do."

We spent almost an entire day in this place of detention. Finally, on September 20th, we were put in a truck and taken to the jail in Nowogródek. During the entire journey, which lasted more than an hour, we were lying on the floor of the truck used to transport coal while four Jews from the revolutionary committee watched over us with rifles in their hands. Every now and then one of them would warn us, "Don't lift your heads, or you'll get a bullet in your skull."

Along the road over which the truck moved slowly we encountered in many places Soviet artillery going in the opposite direction. Soviet soldiers would approach our vehicle during the stops and ask, "Who are you carrying and where are you going?"

"We're taking Poles to the jail," the guards would answer.

"What have they done wrong?"

"They haven't done anything. It's enough that they're Poles!"³⁵³

In *Baranowicze*, Jews filled the ranks of the Red militia and denounced Polish officers, policemen, teachers, and government officials to the NKVD. At night black box-like carriages arrived at the homes of these people. They were loaded on and taken to the train station, from where they were deported to the Gulag never to be heard from again.³⁵⁴ Among those arrested with the assistance of local Jews was the sister of Bogusław J. Jędrzejec and eight members of her family. Her husband and father were murdered by the NKVD in Baranowicze; the rest of the family was deported to the Soviet interior in the winter of 1939–1940.³⁵⁵ According to historian Yehuda Bauer, "Jewish agents of the Soviet secret police penetrated every corner; everyone was terrified of being denounced and deported."³⁵⁶

In *Slonim*,

A provisional city administration was organized in Slonim, headed by Matvei Kolotov, a Jew from Minsk. ...

Kolotov immediately began organizing a "Workers Guard" (a temporary militia) whose function was to maintain order in the city. Heading this Guard was Chaim Chomsky, a veteran Communist. ...

³⁵³ Henryk Poszwiński, *Spod Łowicza do Londynu* (London: Oficyna Poetów i Malarzy, 1967), 112–15.

³⁵⁴ Account of Bronisław Stankiewicz, as quoted in Peter Raina, *Książd Henryk Jankowski nie ma za co przepraszać* (Warsaw: Książka Polska, 1995), 170.

³⁵⁵ Bogusław J. Jędrzejec, *Walka i pamięć* (Katowice and Rybnik: n.p., 1996), 105, as cited in Nowak, *Przemilczane zbrodnie*, 117.

³⁵⁶ Yehuda Bauer, "Jewish Baranowicze in the Holocaust," *Yad Vashem Studies*, vol. 31 (2003): 147.

... And no sooner did the NKVD arrive than it made itself felt everywhere. First they deported merchants, manufacturers, Polish officers and police; then Bundists, Zionists, Trotskyites and Polish “colonists” and “kulaks” from the villages. Many innocent people were caught in this dragnet.³⁵⁷

According to Polish sources, Chaim Chomsky (Chomski), who took charge of the revolutionary committee, issued instructions to have the Polish mayor Bieńskiewicz arrested when he reported to work on September 18; afterwards, all traces of the mayor disappeared.³⁵⁸ Another victim was the Polish secret policeman Jan Chmielewski, who was eventually released from jail when the Germans arrived on June 23, 1941. Chmielewski later took revenge on Leybl Bliacher for having denounced him to the NKVD.³⁵⁹

A Jew soldier in the Polish army who found himself in Slonim for a brief period in September 1939, claims that the only Jews who collaborated with the Soviet invaders were long-time Communists: “I don’t deny that there were Jews—old-time Communists—who disarmed Polish detachments,” but adds, quite correctly, “but can one blame this on all the Jews?”³⁶⁰

In *Kleck*,

a delegation from town accompanied by crowds of Jews and Eastern Orthodox believers carrying liturgical banners came to meet the Soviet army ... they greeted the guests with shouts and sang Communist songs mixed in with liturgical hymns in this incomprehensible effusion.³⁶¹

One of the Soviet leaders stood on a tank and declared that the Red Army had liberated the inhabitants from Polish oppression. He then asked that the “head” of the town be brought to him. People from the enthusiastic crowd fetched Jan Kuroczycki, a retired colonel of the Polish army and former mayor. Soviet soldiers tied a rope around Kuroczycki’s neck and their tank dragged his body on the cobblestones until he was dead.³⁶²

In *Duniłowicze*, a small town near Postawy, a Jewish woman by the name of Chana led Soviet soldiers to the home of her neighbour, Józef Obuchowski, a sergeant of the Frontier Defence Corps. Pointing to his wife she said, “This is a Polish *Pani* [lady—the feminine of *Pan*], her husband is in the military.” The soldiers tore apart the house looking in vain for her husband, the sergeant. The Polish woman was taken away instead. During her interrogation, which lasted twenty-four hours, she was forced to keep her hands raised and was drenched with water until she passed out.³⁶³

Another Polish *Pani*, Mrs. Kwiatkowska, was arrested by the Jewish Committee on her estate near the towns of *Woločyn* and *Wiszniew* soon after the Soviet army passed through. The *de facto* local authority rested with such groups which had sprung up like mushrooms. It was they who led the Soviet officials to their prey. Mrs. Kwiatkowska endured Soviet prisons until the end of 1949.³⁶⁴

³⁵⁷ Alpert, *The Destruction of Slonim Jewry*, 10–11.

³⁵⁸ Tadeusz Sosiński, *Ziemia nowogródzka: Zarys dziejów* (Warsaw: Wojciech Lewicki, 2001), 62.

³⁵⁹ Alpert, *The Destruction of Slonim Jewry*, 35, 41.

³⁶⁰ Perechodnik, *Am I a Murderer?*, 2.

³⁶¹ Wierzbicki, *Polacy i Białorusini w zaborze sowieckim*, 43.

³⁶² Barbara Petrozolin-Skowrońska, ed., *Nieświeskie wspomnienia: Ciąg dalszy...* (Warsaw: Łośgraf, 2004).

³⁶³ Account of Barbara Obuchowska-Duś, as cited in Szawłowski, *Wojna polsko-sowiecka 1939* (1995, 1997), vol. 1, 358–59. This Polish family was taken in by a friendly Lithuanian family.

³⁶⁴ Account of Mirosław Kwiatkowski, quoted in Nowak, *Przemilczane zbrodnie*, 120.

Witold Rozwadowski and his father were arrested on their estate near *Kucewicz*. The former was held interned in Oszmiana, where he was murdered by a Jewish colleague who had joined the Soviet militia.³⁶⁵
In *Oszmiana*,

The temporary authorities consisted of Jews and Communists...who proclaimed themselves the commissars of the town. Power was exercised with the help of the militia consisting for the most part of Jews and Communists. The Jews and Communists served the Bolsheviks through denunciations out of spite and by betraying soldiers and police out of uniform. ... The militia was the terror of the population because individual militiamen competed with each other in their servility.³⁶⁶

In *Nowa Wilejka*,

The positions of authority were filled solely by Jews and Soviet citizens, who were very well provided for in every respect by the Soviet authorities. The latter also oversaw the agitators, who had at their disposal Jews and local riff-raff. The Soviet authorities issued the following directives: agitation centres were established, the so-called agitpunkts, and a large number of agitators, mostly Jews, were brought in from Soviet Russia.

They were ordered to hold meetings of the local riff-raff with Communist leanings, former prisoners and Jews in order to prepare them to help out. They were ordered to hold meetings at which all things Polish, the Polish system, and the Polish government were criticized and condemned and Polish patriots were mocked. The public was called on to denounce such people because they were dangerous for the Soviets, to arrest them, and to deport them. The [Polish] public was not receptive and even replied with a furor: what for? All of these insults and demands came from the mouths of Soviet agitators and Jews.

These meetings were generally compulsory and those who did not attend faced repercussions. ...

Mass searches were carried out at the homes of former military men, policemen and civil servants, and those people who were thought to be harmful to the Soviet Union were arrested.

The searches and arrests all took place only at night; they were carried out by the police, which was always overseen by the NKVD. Hardly anyone came out of such a search whole; someone from the entire family inevitably fell victim to it. Very often during the searches they seized documents, money, valuables, photographs of former military men and policemen, and important papers, all of which simply disappeared. The searches were entirely pro forma because these people were already judged (found guilty) in advance, for the most part by the Jewish Communists. After these people were arrested examinations and investigations followed, and the most incredible confessions were extracted from them as a result of all sorts of repressions and torture. That was their sole and favourite goal: the destruction and wreaking rage upon the Poles. In order to extract additional information about those Poles who still enjoyed their freedom, apart from formal investigations, Jewish Communists were planted in prison cells to investigate and to extract such information from their victims.

For example, one night a group of Poles was arrested by local Jews overseen by the NKVD. The victims were then examined and investigated using "light torture" methods such as hitting on the head, while it was covered with cardboard, with the spine of a book or a heavy book or a rubber club. After such investigations people walked around half-dazed, lost consciousness briefly, or even lost their minds. Many of my friends fell into this category, for example, Krawczyk, the headman of the Polish state in Nowa Wilejka, Second Lieutenant Zygmunt Piórko, in the active service of the Third Combat Battalion Wilno, also from Nowa Wilejka, and many others. The former could not endure it and died; Piórko latter suffered a nervous disorder of the brain and went insane. ...

At this time they ordered the compulsory registration of the population and the issuance of temporary identity documents or attestations for which the population was afraid to go and show themselves to the Soviet authorities, at whose side local Jews sat as clerks and provided an opinion about every Pole who came to register.

Many Poles resided there or hid without registering, which also increased the number of those arrested and the new victims of torture. After fulfilling all of the orders of the Soviet authorities and packing part of the Polish population into jail as a hostile element for the Soviets, they quickly embarked on their next task, pre-election agitation, which took place on a wide scale. A large number of agitators were sent from Soviet Russia, and these gathered the local riff-raff to help out, such as Jews and former prisoners, not only political ones but also others. They started to convoke all sorts of meetings, which were compulsory under threat. ...

On the scheduled meeting days agitators were dispatched to workplaces. They called a break in the work or an earlier quitting time and led everyone to the place where the meeting was to take place, advising them in

³⁶⁵ Jasiewicz, *Lista strat ziemiaństwa polskiego 1939–1945*, 887.

³⁶⁶ Account of Henryk Robert Hassa (no. 3917), Archives of the Polish Ministry of Information and Documentation, Hoover Institution on War, Revolution and Peace, posted on the Internet at www.sfpol.com/zarchiw Hoovera.html.

advance that no one was to be missing. ... Meetings held on days off work...or those announced by written notices were doomed. ...only Jews and some poorly educated children came. ...

Every meeting was graced by a large cordon of uniformed and undercover police, as well as by the local Jewish population. ...the agitators kept repeating that they would take care of the resisters. ...

The agitators and Jews frequently raised all sorts of nonsense about General Sikorski [the leader of Poland's government in exile] and the former Polish government. They said that one should get out of one's head the notion that liberation would come from General Sikorski or from England or from anyone else. At this the Jews, agitators and militia replied with applause... The [Polish] population sat there silently without giving any signs of life.

A committee was set up to draw up electoral lists. For the most part Jews were assigned to the committee; they went from house to house and registered everyone eighteen and over. For example, to my wife's parents came two Jewish women, accompanied by an agitator, a young Jew from Wilno, to register them. ...

In order to win more people over to their side, they ordered the redistribution of land seized from [Polish] settlers and wealthy landholders to labourers, poor farmers and Jews... Only the Jews willingly took the land given to them...

Premises were designated, the city was divided up into regions and an electoral committee was struck. The electoral committee consisted mainly of Jews, some members of the local riff-raff and Soviet agitators, many of whom were Jews too. ...

The polling stations were manned by Jews, the families of Soviet agitators, and others. The elections got underway. The mood of the [Polish] population was gloomy.

The polling stations were full of Soviet agitators, politruks [political commissars], uniformed and undercover police, as well as Jews and NKVD. A large number of Soviet soldiers and automobiles were assigned to help out. ...

[Because many Poles were evading] late in the evening the agitators, Soviet soldiers, NKVD and Jews set out in automobiles to collect eligible voters from their homes and drive them to cast their votes. ...

Up until the last moment they did not inform us officially of the fact that there was a plebiscite and the actual purpose of the voting [namely, to sanction the incorporation of seized Polish territory into the Soviet Union—*M.P.*], thus everyone [i.e. the Poles] considered this to be a big joke, because voting for unknown people and unknown purposes was absurd. Even though it was forbidden to cross things off or to make changes on the ballots, there was a lot of crossing out. Any voter who made some inappropriate gesture with his ballot was observed and noted by the agitators. ... A few weeks after the elections, searches, arrests, repressions and torture recommenced again on a large scale, as well as the deportation of the Polish population to the so-called polar bear country.³⁶⁷

A Polish woman recalls how the shopkeeper Rumkowa's son, her Jewish neighbours who knew the townspeople well, helped the Soviets round up and arrest targeted Poles in Nowa Wilejka. When the Germans arrived in mid-1941 and the Lithuanian police started to harass the Jews, this same Jewish shopkeeper bemoaned what was happening to the Jews. The Polish woman then reminded the shopkeeper of how her own son had behaved when the Bolsheviks arrived. Embarrassed, the Jewish woman hung her head in silence.³⁶⁸

In *Białystok*, the NKVD utilized the members of the largely Jewish citizens' committee, which was formed before the entry of the Red Army, to create a workers' militia armed with weapons confiscated from Polish soldiers. The militia carried out huge numbers of searches in Polish homes. As one witness reports, "They looked for weapons in every nook and cranny. If they found anything made of gold, such as rings and bracelets, they took it for their own use, and if one offered resistance, they were threatened with death."³⁶⁹

³⁶⁷ Account of Bronisław Kotlicki (no. 2042), Archives of the Polish Ministry of Information and Documentation, Hoover Institution on War, Revolution and Peace, posted on the Internet at www.sfpol.com/zarchiwhoovera.html.

³⁶⁸ Bożena Koroczycka, "Pomagali w likwidowaniu polskich rodzin," *Nasza Polska*, September 22, 1999. This same woman recalled how, during the evacuation of Wilno in mid-1944, German soldiers continued to scour the town looking for Jewish hideouts, shooting off their rifles and throwing grenades into buildings. Notwithstanding the danger, the large group of Poles with whom she was housed, with the agreement of all, took in two Jewish women who came knocking on their gate.

³⁶⁹ Report found in the Hoover Institute in Stanford, California, in *Ścisłe tajny raport o okupacji Białostocczyzny* (Agencja Wydawnicza "JJ" spółka z o.o.—n.p., n.d.), 14.

A pro-Communist committee made of Jews, which was led by Awraam Łaznik, seized control of the town of **Sokółka**, north of Białystok. The Red militia, composed of local Jews (many of them Bund members, and an aggressive cobbler by the name of Goldacki) and headed by Szymon Aszkiewicz, a reserve officer of the Polish army, arrested many Polish officials and prominent local Poles and executed three Polish policemen. They conducted numerous raids, looking for arms and seizing radio receivers and photo cameras.³⁷⁰ A Jewish blacksmith named Abel Łabędych shot a Polish policeman in the nearby village of **Bogusze**, on September 24th.³⁷¹

On October 12, 1939, a Jewish neighbour, who had played in the firefighters' orchestra in **Zabludów** before the war and now donned a red armband, led the NKVD to the home of the Szyłkiewicz family, who were active in the Catholic Action movement, to arrest Bronisława Szyłkiewicz. She was imprisoned in Białystok and later transferred to the prison in Gorki, in the Soviet interior. Afterwards, the NKVD arrested five other members of that family. Other prominent Poles were also arrested in Zabludów, based on lists of "socially dangerous elements" that local Jews who worked closely with the NKVD helped to draw up.³⁷² A head forester named Łabecki was summoned to a Soviet post established in the town of **Sokółka**. He was kicked and beaten by armed Jews wearing red armbands. Devastated by this brutal treatment he took his life by throwing himself under a train. His wife and six-year-old son were deported to Irkutsk in the winter of 1940.³⁷³

Stefan Kurowski had better luck when he was stopped on his bicycle on a highway on the outskirts of **Lapy**, west of Białystok, by a Jewish militiaman. Fanatically consumed by his new role, this young Jew burst into a long tirade against the *Pans'* Poland whose "oppression" of the Jews he was now avenging as an enforcer of Soviet authority. Having nearly fallen into a trance as a result of his political agitation, this militiaman, less aggressive and brutal than most, seemed to have forgotten why he had stopped Kurowski in the first place and allowed him to continue on his way.³⁷⁴ While their military incompetence was also commented on by others, the local Jewish militia later proved to be an extremely useful tool for the Soviet occupiers in carrying out tasks such as stealing the church bell and preparing lists of Poles for deportation.³⁷⁵ Rev. Józef Dowgwiłło was arrested in **Mońki** in the fall of 1939 at the instigation of local Jewish activists and imprisoned in Knyszyn. Uncharacteristically, he was released after a crowd of Poles gathered at the NKVD headquarters and petitioned for his freedom.³⁷⁶

The NKVD, accompanied by Jewish militiamen, came to **Sieburczyn** to arrest the landowner Jan Nepomucen Bisping and his family on October 4, 1939. The men were tied up and beaten in the wagon that transported the Polish family to Wizna, where the town's Jewish inhabitants ridiculed them. The following

³⁷⁰ Wierzbicki, *Polacy i Białorusini w zaborze sowieckim*, 116; account of Stefan Włodzimierz Popławski in Paweł Machcewicz and Krzysztof Persak, eds., *Wokół Jedwabnego: Studia i Dokumenty* (Warsaw: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej-Komisja Ścigania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu, 2002), vol. 2, 112.

³⁷¹ Ibid.

³⁷² Mieczysław Szyłkiewicz, *Na wojennym szlaku: Z Zabludowa do Zabludowa* (Białystok: Miejska Biblioteka Publiczna w Zabludowie and Prymat, 2009), 6–7, 46–47; Leończuk, *Wspomnienia budzą mnie po nocach...*, 69–70.

³⁷³ Account of Stanisław P. in Gross and Grudzińska-Gross, *W czterdziestym nas Matko na Sybir zesłali...*, 85.

³⁷⁴ Account of Professor Stefan Kurowski, quoted in Nowak, *Przemilczane zbrodnie*, 114.

³⁷⁵ Testimony of Mieczysław Daniłowicz as cited in Zdzisław Skrok, "Prawda nie po naszej myśli," *Rzeczpospolita* (Warsaw), February 10, 2001.

³⁷⁶ Roman Dzwonkowski, "Represje wobec polskiego duchowieństwa katolickiego na ziemiach północno-wschodnich II RP 1939–1941," in Michał Gnatowski and Daniel Boćkowski, eds., *Sowietyzacja i rusyfikacja północno-wschodnich ziem II Rzeczypospolitej (1939–1941): Studia i materiały* (Białystok: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu w Białymstoku, 2003), 87.

day they were taken to Łomża. His family was released but Bisping was never seen again.³⁷⁷ In the small town of **Wizna** near Łomża, Aleksander Gawrychowski, the former township administrator (*wójt*), was seized from his home by Jewish militiamen at the beginning of October on charges of being an armed supporter of the Polish authorities. More arrests and interrogations of alleged Polish conspirators took place the next day: Jerzy Blum, Stanisław Drozdowski, Jan Kadłubowski, Piotr Nitkiewicz and Stanisław Gawrychowski. Among the interrogators were the brothers Chaim and Avigdor Czapnicki, prewar Zionists. Other Jewish militiamen from this small locality included: Abraham Birger, Lejzor Kiwajko, Kałmaniewicz, and Chaim Węgierko.³⁷⁸

In **Supraśl** near Białystok,

Some of the Jews, including Toleh Kagan, Baruch Gamzu and even Arke Rabinowitz, the Rabbi's son received permission to carry arms. ... One day, Issar, the decorator's son Itzik, burst into the priest's house with a gun and stole a radio.³⁷⁹

In Polesia, Count Henryk Skirmunt and his sister left their manor house in Mołodów near Drohiczyn Poleski on September 17th, hoping to escape the Soviets. When passing through the nearby Jewish hamlet of **Motol**, their automobile was stopped and they were detained by a group of Jewish Communist sympathizers. Not only did their Jewish neighbours fail to come to their assistance, but they prevented their escape. Shortly thereafter both of them were executed.³⁸⁰

A Polish high school student from **Brześć nad Bugiem** (Brześć on the Bug, Brest Litovsk) recalled:

The Germans first occupied Brześć on September 15, 1939, but already by the end of the month the Red Army entered, greeted enthusiastically by the Jewish community with bread and salt and flowers... From that time we Poles often heard slurs and threats directed against us... I will never forget the sight of a Polish policeman—led in handcuffs by militiamen along Jagiellońska Street—who was surrounded by Jews howling and spitting at him, throwing rubbish and stones at him, and disparaging him cruelly.³⁸¹

The Jewish militia seized the brother of Feliks Starosielec from his high school in Brześć. He was arrested, charged and promptly executed.³⁸² Eugeniusz (Enzel) Stup described how the Workers' Guard in **Kobryń**, which he headed, hunted down Polish police officers.³⁸³

A Polish woman and her young daughter were shot and robbed by a mixed Jewish-Ukrainian patrol in the village of **Wołynka**, near the railway line to Włodawa.³⁸⁴ In **Janów Poleski**, Stanisław Doliwa-Falkowski, a

³⁷⁷ Janina Leskiewiczowa, ed., et al., *Ziemiańscy XX wieku: Słownik biograficzny*, Part 6 (Warsaw: DiG, 2002), 5.

³⁷⁸ Stanisław Gawrychowski, *Na placówce AK (1939–1945)* (Warsaw and Łomża: Towarzystwo Przyjaciół Ziemi Łomżyńskiej, 1997), 59, 60–62. The leader of this clique happened to be a Pole, Feliks Choński, a prewar Communist, who was executed by the Polish underground soon after the Soviet retreat in June 1941. Ibid., 85. On Chaim Czapnicki's prewar Zionist affiliation see Anna Bikont, *My z Jedwabnego* (Warsaw: Prószyński i Sówka, 2004), 268; Anna Bikont, *The Crime and the Silence: Confronting the Massacre of Jews in Wartime Jedwabne* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2015), 361.

³⁷⁹ Ya'akov Pat (Yaacov Patt), *Life and Death in Shadow of the Forest: The Story of Supraśl—A Shtetl in Eastern Poland* (Israel: n.p., 1991), 34.

³⁸⁰ Jędrzej Giertych, *In Defence of My Country* (London: The Roman Dmowski Society, 1981), 294. See also, Szawłowski, *Wojna polsko-sowiecka 1939* (1995, 1997), vol. 1, 375.

³⁸¹ Maria Borkowska, "Witali Sowietów chlebem i solą," letter, *Gazeta Polska* (Warsaw), February 10, 1994.

³⁸² Account of Feliks Starosielec, quoted in Nowak, *Przemilczane zbrodnie*, 59.

³⁸³ Piotr Gontarczyk, *Polska Partia Robotnicza: Droga do władzy 1941–1944* (Warsaw: Fronda, 2003), 60, n.45.

³⁸⁴ Account of Władysław Zańczuk, quoted in Nowak, *Przemilczane zbrodnie*, 61–62.

landowner, was sheltered by friendly Jews only to be apprehended and executed by the local Red militia, composed largely of Jews.³⁸⁵

In **Pińsk**, in Polesia, Basey Giler, a Jewish member of the Communist Party, recognized the Polish Minister of Justice, Czesław Michałowski, and pointed him out to the largely Jewish workers' guard, who promptly arrested him.³⁸⁶ The reaction of the Jewish population to the fate of Polish officials is described by Julius Margolin:

First, the officials of the original Polish government disappeared before our eyes. Nobody was concerned, however, and I doubt if a second thought was given to their fate. Yet the method at work, typically Bolshevik, required not merely their dismissal, but their liquidation *in toto*. Thus they disappeared without leaving a trace.³⁸⁷

Reports from Volhynia are also plentiful. What transpired in the town of **Boremel** was typical of virtually all the cities and small towns of that region. Jews and Ukrainians with red armbands had paved the way for Soviet rule by disarming the local Polish police in September 1939.³⁸⁸

In a predominantly Jewish settlement near the town of **Maniewiczze**, local Jews and Ukrainians robbed the homes of Poles and took part in arresting Poles. A Polish policeman by the name of Król was killed by Ukrainians.³⁸⁹

In the town of **Szumsk**, Ukrainian and Jewish police arrested Jan Unold, an engineer and social activist. He was imprisoned in Krzemieniec. Fortunately, and quite exceptionally, Unold was released by a Soviet prosecutor whom he knew from his studies in Kiev.³⁹⁰

In **Ostróg**, Jews and Ukrainians assisted the NKVD in arresting local officials, including the mayor Stanisław Żurkowski and the judge Tadeusz Wawrzynowski, as well as functionaries of the Polish state police.³⁹¹

³⁸⁵ Jasiewicz, *Lista strat ziemiaństwa polskiego 1939–1945*, 271.

³⁸⁶ Rozenblat, "Evrei v sisteme mezhnatsionalnykh otnoshenii v zapadnykh oblastiakh Belarusi, 1939–1941 gg.," *Białoruskie Zeszyty Historyczne*, no. 13 (2000): 92. Holocaust historian Tikva Fatal-Knaani provides a sanitized version of these events which avoids identifying local Jews as culprits in the round-up of Polish officials: "On the evening of September 17, 1939, the first tanks of the Soviet advance entered the city ... The Communists, who had been operating underground, went to the outskirts of the city to greet the Soviet advance force. ... The next day, a new civil administration, composed of outsiders, was established, and the Polish mayor imprisoned. ... Those [Polish officials] who remained in the city were arrested and banished to the Soviet Union by the NKVD." See Tikva Fatal-Knaani, "The Jews of Pinsk, 1939–1943, Through the Prism of New Documentation," in *Yad Vashem Studies*, vol. 29 (2001): 152.

³⁸⁷ Margolin, "When the Red Army Liberated Pinsk," *Commentary*, vol. 14, no. 6 (December 1952): 524.

³⁸⁸ Siemaszko and Siemaszko, *Ludobójstwo dokonane przez nacjonalistów ukraińskich na ludności polskiej Wołynia 1939–1945*, vol. 1, 53; *Na Rubieży* (Wrocław), no. 43 (2000): 34.

³⁸⁹ Siemaszko and Siemaszko, *Ludobójstwo dokonane przez nacjonalistów ukraińskich na ludności polskiej Wołynia 1939–1945*, vol. 1, 365. Typically, the Jewish memorial book for this is silent about these episodes. See Tarmon, *Memorial Book*, 26–27, 265, 294, 366.

³⁹⁰ Siemaszko and Siemaszko, *Ludobójstwo dokonane przez nacjonalistów ukraińskich na ludności polskiej Wołynia 1939–1945*, vol. 1, 455.

³⁹¹ Siemaszko and Siemaszko, *Ludobójstwo dokonane przez nacjonalistów ukraińskich na ludności polskiej Wołynia 1939–1945*, vol. 1, 985. One Jew in particular is remembered for pointing out Poles who were promptly arrested. See Żaryn and Sudół, *Polacy ratujący Żydów*, 379.

Many Jews joined the local militia in *Sarny*.³⁹² The militia, composed of Jews and Ukrainians, took an active part in assisting the NKVD in its searches and arrests of Poles.³⁹³ Local Jews armed with handguns, accompanied by a few Soviet soldiers, marched Polish policemen in groups of five to their place of execution in a nearby forest. During the ordeal the Jews spat at the policemen and called them derogatory names.³⁹⁴

Jews in *Jagodzin* near Luboml came out in large numbers to greet the Soviets. A Jew by the name of Herszko warned a Polish acquaintance: “You Poles are already all in a sack; all that remains to be done is to tie it up.”³⁹⁵ According to Jechel Szlachter, a Jewish timber merchant from Tomaszówka near Brześć,

After the entry of the Bolsheviks ... in vicinity of **Luboml and Brześć counties** the Bolsheviks formed bands of all sorts of criminal elements whose aim was to spread terror and attack fugitives from the German occupation zone. I personally observed and saw the activities of such bands near Tomaszówka, where I resided, and Szack. The bands that marauded there consisted of Jews, Ukrainians and Belorussians. The head of one of the bands was Stefan Studniarski, a Pole from the settlement of Tomaszówka, and another band was led by a Jew from Szack. I know that these bands were not only formed by the Bolsheviks, but they were also armed and directed by them. The organizer of these bands and their director was Capt. Zorin of the NKVD border guards whose office was located in Aleksandrówka near Tomaszówka. The activities of these bands consisted of destroying Polish intelligentsia fleeing from the German zone. Upon apprehending a member of the Polish intelligentsia or an officer, they immediately murdered them without any trial. Mass murders like this were perpetrated on the highway from Tomaszówka to Luboml and on the road from Tomaszówka to Polenc [Pulemiec], in a pine forest where the bodies of those murdered were buried. Further, in Szack, about 200 metres from the cemetery, there are the graves of some 2,000 [sic—this number is probably an error] murdered Poles. Their bodies were buried in a ditch near the road. I know that the bands murdered a lieutenant, whose name I don’t remember, who lived near my home ... the head of the police, the chief forester in Szack, the forester and his wife. ... A whole series of people offered their services to the Bolsheviks. In Tomaszówka, especially Icek Biały, Srul Kagan, Moszko Rychtman, Moszko Lichtensztejn and a number of others. These persons cooperated with Capt. Zorin of the NKVD in organizing bands. The Ukrainians Fedor Zeniuk and Nykyfor Gałuch from the village of Pulmo helped out the Bolsheviks. The band that Gałuch belonged to the murdered landowner [Władysław] Filipowicz of Pulmo, in the county of Luboml, whom they continued to whip even after he died. A few days later he was buried near a fence. ... This same Gałuch and his band also murdered two brothers named Dzięgielewski, policemen, one of whom was the village head of the township of Pulmo and Hołowno. All of these murders were perpetrated on orders from the NKVD and in the presence of NKVD functionaries—border guards who observed everything. These bands also took part in robbing Polish property which they divided among themselves and the NKVD.³⁹⁶

At the beginning of October 1939, a telegram signed by 70 Jews from *Luboml* was dispatched to Stalin, thanking the Soviet dictator for “liberating” Volhynia and beseeching him to hold them close to his heart.³⁹⁷

In *Jarosławicze* near Łuck,

³⁹² Yehuda Bauer, “Sarny and Rokitno in the Holocaust: A Case Study of Two Townships in Wołyn (Volhynia),” in Katz, *The Shtetl*, 260.

³⁹³ Siemaszko and Siemaszko, *Ludobójstwo dokonane przez nacjonalistów ukraińskich na ludności polskiej Wołynia 1939–1945*, vol. 1, 807.

³⁹⁴ Szawłowski, *Wojna polsko-sowiecka 1939* (1995, 1997), vol. 1, 390.

³⁹⁵ Nowak, *Przemilczane zbrodnie*, 39.

³⁹⁶ Wierzbicki, *Polacy i Żydzi w zaborze sowieckim*, 77–78. See also Siemaszko and Siemaszko, *Ludobójstwo dokonane przez nacjonalistów ukraińskich na ludności polskiej Wołynia, 1939–1945*, vol. 1, 526–27.

³⁹⁷ Memoir of Edmund Kasprzycki, an employee of the postal and telecommunications office in Luboml, as cited in Nowak, *Przemilczane zbrodnie*, 39. See also Władysław Jotysz, “Telegram do Stalina,” *Nasza Polska*, September 8, 1999.

It started with individual cases—arrests and disappearances, especially of Poles. Great help and great zeal in making all sorts of denunciations to the NKVD was shown by the Jews.³⁹⁸

The predominantly Jewish Communist militia seized control of the town of **Łuck** on September 18th and killed a Polish policeman.³⁹⁹ A Polish officer who had taken refuge in that city was fortunate enough to escape from the clutches of the Jewish militiaman who had attempted to arrest him on the street.⁴⁰⁰ Other Polish soldiers were not so lucky. As Herman Kruk recalls,

The day after the entry of the Bolsheviks, groups of the new militia disarmed Polish soldiers. A Jewish fellow stopped a high profile Polish officer and challenged him to give him his weapon. The officer gave his revolver, which he carried on his belt. Finally, the young militiaman began removing the medals from the officer. The officer complained that he couldn't take them from him. The fellow threatened him with the rifle. The officer then took another revolver out of a holster and shot the militiaman on the spot. The officer was arrested.⁴⁰¹

The officer in question was doubtless executed summarily by the Soviets, as was their practice. There is no question, however, except perhaps for a die-hard Communist or an ardent Jewish nationalist, as to who was the hero and who was the traitor in this black-and-white scenario. Once the Soviets were installed, Polish officials were brought before a field court-martial at which a Jewish law student by the name of Ettinger, the commander of the Workers' Guard, acted as the local adviser. Proffering opinions about those marked for execution, Ettinger in effect sealed their ultimate fate.⁴⁰²

In **Berezno**,

The many Ukrainians and members of the Jewish poorer classes who spontaneously greeted the Red Army soldiers started to show their enmity toward the Poles, who were in the minority. They searched for Polish officials and civil servants and for escapees from the western and central regions who had sought refuge from the Germans, and pointed them out to the NKVD. Massive arrests of those fingered and deportations followed.⁴⁰³

In **Dubno**, on September 17th, local Jewish Communists who had spontaneously formed a militia apprehended Bartłomiej Poliszczuk (Varfolomii Polishchuk), a former reeve and Ukrainian who loyally fulfilled his duties to the Polish state. He was handed over to the Soviets, never to be heard from again. (Poliszczuk's name has appeared on a list of executed Polish officials released by the Russian authorities in the 1990s.) Not realizing how efficient their fifth column was, a few days later the NKVD came looking for

³⁹⁸ Account of Mieczysław Jankowski in *Świadkowie mówią* (Warsaw: Światowy Związek Żołnierzy Armii Krajowej Okręg Wołyń, 1996), 7.

³⁹⁹ Wacław Zagórski, *Wolność w niewoli* (London: n.p., 1971), 22.

⁴⁰⁰ Gonczyński, *Raj proletariacki*, 11.

⁴⁰¹ Herman Kruk, *The Last Days of the Jerusalem of Lithuania: Chronicles from the Vilna Ghetto and the Camps, 1939–1944* (New Haven and London: YIVO Institute for Jewish Research and Yale University Press, 2002), 22 (entry for September 19–October 6, 1939). For another Jewish testimony confirming that “many Jews” entered the newly formed Red militia in Łuck, see Tadeusz Epsztein, Justyna Majewska, and Aleksandra Bańkowska, eds., *Archiwum Ringelbluma: Kospiracyjne Archiwum Getta Warszawskiego*, vol. 15: *Wrzesień 1939, Listy kaliskie, Listy plockie* (Warsaw: Żydowski Instytut Historyczny im. Emanuela Ringelbluma, 2014), 117.

⁴⁰² Zagórski, *Wolność w niewoli*, 25–27. See also Liszewski, *Wojna polsko-sowiecka 1939 r.*, 141; Szawłowski, *Wojna polsko-sowiecka 1939* (1995, 1997), vol. 1, 398. Ettinger was the son of a well-to-do merchant from Łuck.

⁴⁰³ Władysław Hermaszewski, *Echa Wołynia* (Warsaw: Bellona, 1995), 43.

Poliszczyk at his home: His name had been put on a list, prepared by local Communists, of Polish officials earmarked for arrest.⁴⁰⁴

The aristocratic Potocki family who owned an estate in *Derażne* near Kostopol were fortunate enough to be able to buy off the NKVD functionaries who descended on their home with a purse of gold. During their stay at the estate awaiting their bounty, the functionaries imbibed alcohol and kept singing “We, the Jerusalem Cavalry.”⁴⁰⁵

In *Krzemieniec*, a self-styled Jewish militia disarmed the citizens’ guard formed by students from the lyceum.⁴⁰⁶ A Pole from Krzemieniec recalled:

When I went out on the streets that day, numerous patrol units, militiamen composed of Jews, were circling the streets. They walked about with red armbands and guns, searching whoever they encountered. There were few Soviet troops. Only in the days that followed did the Soviet divisions march through the city.⁴⁰⁷

The events and mood in Krzemieniec were vividly captured in the memoirs of Janina Sułkowska, the daughter of the county secretary, Jan Sułkowski, whose ultimate fate is described later on.

The Poles watched the Soviet invaders with a mixture of revulsion and fear. Not a few of us cried. But as disconcerting was the emergence of a local Jewish militia which was friendly to the Red Army and had made its appearance even *before* the enemy had marched in. Armed and organized its first task was to arrest the students and Boy Scouts who had been posted as guards and who carried old carbines in some cases taller than them. The Jews roughed up the shocked youngsters who had considered their captors as friends and classmates, before turning them over to the Soviets from whom they had prior directions. What was the fate of those young Poles? In many cases torture and death. This Jewish militia would help carry out the Soviet’s dirty work during their occupation. My family would fall victim to them.

In town, Jews and Ukrainians were cheering and ingratiating themselves with the Soviets. I recognized many neighbours and acquaintances among those who were now jostling Poles and eyeing their property for future theft. Jewish men offered gifts to the Russians while their wives and daughters kissed their tanks. Among this rabble were criminals released from jail by the Soviets to create mayhem. They were all emboldened by posters that had suddenly appeared urging various groups to attack Poles with axes and scythes. And the Soviet officers indicated they would not stand in the way of slaughter which was already turning the countryside red with the blood of the Polish minority outnumbered by Ukrainians and Jews.

On that day I had my first encounter with a swaggering group of traitors attired in leather jackets, red armbands or sashes, stolen pistols, and hatred in their eyes. I beheld a number of classmates among them, including girlfriends. These mostly young Jews, often well-educated and from rich or religious families, now addressed everyone as “comrade.” One of them gestured a slash across the throat at me. Their love for Communism and Joseph Stalin would know no bounds—especially human sacrifice. They were much worse than the blackmailers and denouncers who emerged in great numbers among the Jews and who were interested in the goods and jobs of their Polish victims.

Starting as communist sympathisers who flocked to the militia or acted as informers, these political types would soon graduate into “agitators,” administrators and even sadistic interrogators for the Soviets as they filled positions in the new order. A knowledge of the language and the local scene, combined with their fanaticism, would be essential to the NKVD’s reign of terror; they eagerly compiled lists and arrested Poles—and Jews, whom they considered to be enemies of the state. They were the ones who on horseback would chase my father down the main street like an animal, to act as interpreter for their torture victims.

A sizable minority of Polish Jews from all levels collaborated, usually passively but often actively, with the Soviet occupiers in their liquidation of Poles in eastern Poland in 1939–1941. For many, including my kin,

⁴⁰⁴ Wiktor Poliszczyk, *Gorzka prawda: Cień Bandery nad zbrodnią ludobójstwa* (Toronto: n.p., 2004), 19; account of Wiktor Poliszczyk (in the author’s possession).

⁴⁰⁵ Janusz Miliszkiewicz, “Rękopis oddany w zastaw,” *Rzeczpospolita*, October 22–23, 2005.

⁴⁰⁶ Sławomir Mączak, “Uzupełnienie dot. artykułu Antoniego Jagodzińskiego ‘Początki okupacji sowieckiej w Krzemieńcu,’” *Życie krzemienieckie* (London), no. 8 (July 1994), 45.

⁴⁰⁷ Account of Zdzisław Jagodziński in Grudzińska-Gross and Gross, *War Through Children’s Eyes*, 184.

the last sight they had of Poland or of their loved ones, was a cattle train bound for Siberia—and a Jew or a Ukrainian, or both, with a rifle on every wagon.⁴⁰⁸

The Jewish militia from the Jewish village of Osowa and the Ukrainian militia from Mydzk, the harbingers of the new Soviet order, wasted no time descending on the Polish settlement of *Ożgowo* and others near Huta Stepańska to carry out arrests of targeted Poles.⁴⁰⁹

The attitude of the Jewish population changed overnight in *Kąty* near Krzemieniec. The better goods were hidden away in their shops and they became “vulgar and insulting” toward Poles. They openly ridiculed the Polish government and social institutions, and made life difficult for the Poles.

Young Jews entered the militia and in that capacity came to our village and beat up some officer trainees (Romek Kucharski and others) for their alleged crimes (as former members of the Officers’ Training Corps “Strzelec”).⁴¹⁰

In *Równe*,

In the newly formed militia, which engaged members of the local population, there were very many Jews. Undoubtedly the auxiliary apparatus of the NKVD, and thus agents of all kinds, also took in many of them.⁴¹¹

The local population—Jews and Ukrainians—helped the Soviets a great deal ... They chased down Polish patriots and handed them over to the NKVD.⁴¹²

According to a Jewish witness,

The day after the entry of the Soviet army into Równe, ... enraged mobs recruited from those elements who were always ready to loot ... began to demand that the “exploiters”, bourgeoisie and local “Pans” be punished. Armed with weapons and sticks they started to drag the guilty out of offices, stores and private houses. The first victims were employees of the courts, the public prosecutor’s office and the police. They were led down the middle of the street under the barrel of rifles, surrounded from all sides and accompanied by a shower of profanities. Apparently this was supposed to be the revolutionary element of the oppressed national minorities of the Ukraine. On the sidewalks one could see functionaries discretely maintaining order.

The following day, the revolutionary element of armed civilians vanished imperceptibly from the streets of the city, and in their place appeared the organs of order ... Thus began the systematic and precisely planned process of plucking out from society those people who were recognized as enemies of the Soviet regime.⁴¹³

Among the many Polish officials arrested in Równe were: Dezydery Smockiewicz, a deputy to the Sejm (Poland’s Parliament); Tadeusz Dworakowski, a former senator; five judges of the District Court; and the

⁴⁰⁸ “A Gulag and Holocaust Memoir of Janina Sulkowska-Gładun,” in Christopher Jacek Gładun *Poland’s Holocaust: A Family Chronicle of Soviet and Nazi Terror*, posted on the Internet at www.geocities.com/chrisgladun/memoir.

⁴⁰⁹ Account of Robert Janicki in Leon Karłowicz and Leon Popek, ed. and comp., *Śladami ludobójstwa na Wołyniu: Okrutna przestroga*, Part II (Lublin: Polihymnia—Towarzystwo Przyjaciół Krzemieńca i Ziemi Wołyńsko-Podolskiej, Stowarzyszenie Upamiętnienia Polaków Pomordowanych na Wołyniu z siedzibą w Zamościu, and Środowisko 27 Wołyńskiej Dywizji Piechoty Armii Krajowej Oddział Lubelski, 1998), 121–22.

⁴¹⁰ Account of Feliks Jasiński in Jerzy Dębski and Leon Popek, eds., *Okrutna przestroga* (Lublin: Towarzystwo Przyjaciół Krzemieńca i Ziemi Wołyńsko-Podolskiej, Stowarzyszenie “Civitas Christiana”—Ośrodek w Lublinie, Stowarzyszenie Upamiętnienia Polaków Pomordowanych na Wołyniu z siedzibą w Zamościu, and Środowisko 27 Wołyńskiej Dywizji Piechoty Armii Krajowej Oddział Lubelski, 1997), 165.

⁴¹¹ Account of Zygmunt Drażan in *ibid.*, 240, 242.

⁴¹² Account of Andrzej Kulus (no. 8152), Archives of the Polish Ministry of Information and Documentation, Hoover Institution on War, Revolution and Peace, posted on the Internet at www.sfpol.com/zarchiwwhoovera.html.

⁴¹³ Elias Bialski, *Patrząc prosto w oczy* (Montreal: Polish-Jewish Heritage Foundation, 2002), 39–40.

deputy prosecutor. All of them were later murdered. Two assistant prosecutors were also arrested. One of the principal denouncers was an articling student, the son of a well-to-do local Jewish family.⁴¹⁴ These harsh measures did not dampen the enthusiasm of young Jews for the Soviet regime: whenever a picture of Stalin appeared on the screen in the local cinema they stood and howled ecstatically.⁴¹⁵

In *Aleksandria* near Równe, Jews and Ukrainians formed a militia and disarmed the Polish police in anticipation of the arrival of the Soviets. Accompanied by local militiamen, a Soviet commissar went to the estate of Prince Hubert Lubomirski on September 21st and executed him, even though Ukrainian and Jewish residents had vouched for the prince's good character.⁴¹⁶

In *Włodzimierz Wołyński*, local Communists and Jews were quick to denounce local officials, who soon disappeared without a trace.⁴¹⁷ In the nearby village of *Krzeczów*, Ukrainians and Jews seized on the opportunity to arrest and murder Polish military settlers.⁴¹⁸

A young Pole who was apprehended in *Różyszcze* on September 24 when he tried to obtain a pass to Kowel described his encounter with his interrogator as follows:

The whole thing became complicated when we were taken before the commissar himself. He was a young Jew with a red star in his lapel. He started a regular interrogation...that I was surely a student, I surely belonged to the ONR [National Radical Camp], had beaten Jews, etc.⁴¹⁹

In *Huta Pieniacka* near Brody, a self-styled militia consisting of four Ukrainians and two Jews took over the police station and post office. They donned red armbands and carried out arrests in anticipation of the arrival of the Soviets.⁴²⁰

⁴¹⁴ Szawłowski, *Wojna polsko-sowiecka 1939* (1995, 1997), vol. 1, 397.

⁴¹⁵ Zbigniew Janczewski, letter, *Gazeta Wyborcza* (Warsaw), April 27, 1998.

⁴¹⁶ According to Wanda Lubomirska, her father, Prince Hubert Lubomirski, was executed by the NKVD immediately after the Soviet entry despite the fact that all the Ukrainian peasants who worked on his estate stated that they had been treated very well. See Wanda Lubomirska, *Karmazynowy reportaż* (London: Biblioteka Polska, 1946), 12. Local Jewish militiamen were given orders to take the rest of the family, including two children, and shoot them on a nearby bridge. In a highly unusual display of humanity on the part of the generally servile and cruel Communist militia, the family was taken instead to the local police commander, who allowed them to escape early the next morning. *Ibid.*, 12–14. See also the account of Jan Bader in Siekierski and Tych, *Widziałem anioła śmierci*, 468, who states that after the Polish army had left Aleksandria on September 16th, Ukrainians armed themselves and began to attack Jews. The commander of the Polish police, who had not yet left the town, armed the Jewish militia so that they could protect the Jewish population.

⁴¹⁷ Account of Wanda Skorupska, as quoted in Szawłowski, *Wojna polsko-sowiecka 1939* (1995, 1997), vol. 2, 207; account of Władysław Godek, quoted in Nowak, *Przemilczane zbrodnie*, 72.

⁴¹⁸ Siemaszko and Siemaszko, *Ludobójstwo dokonane przez nacjonalistów ukraińskich na ludności polskiej Wołynia 1939–1945*, vol. 1, 831.

⁴¹⁹ As cited in Żbikowski, “Jewish Reaction to the Soviet Arrival in the Kresy in September 1939,” in *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry*, vol. 13 (2000): 69.

⁴²⁰ Piotrowski, *Krwawe żniwa za Styrem, Horyniem i Sluczą*, 34–35, 36. During the German occupation, the Polish villagers provided extensive assistance to some 30 Jews who took shelter in the surrounding forests, and protected a number of Jews who took up residence in this Polish village, including the family of Dr. Goldenberg from Podkamień. (The entire village was massacred by the SS Galizien on February 28, 1944.) See the testimony of Feiweil Auerbach, deposited at Żydowski Instytut Historyczny in Warsaw (no. 1200); *Na Rubieży* (Wrocław), no. 12 (1995), 11, 13, 15, 17; *Na Rubieży* (Wrocław), no. 54 (2001), 19, 24.

A militia consisting mostly of Jews soon appeared on the streets of **Tarnopol**. Dressed in Polish military coats and armed with Polish rifles, they entered homes searching for those who were now wanted by the new authorities.⁴²¹ The jails were filled and executions abounded:

While descending to the first floor level, we saw five Polish officers being led by Soviet soldiers out of an unrented, unfurnished apartment where the officers had slept the night before. We followed them to the street. ... A few moments later, we saw the five officers lined up against the wall of a small white house under the bridge and shot dead by an impromptu firing squad. ...

Two Polish uniformed railroad men escorted by the Soviets passed us, followed by two escorted mail carriers. Seconds later, we heard a volley of shots. All were executed on the same spot where the five officers had been executed.⁴²²

A Polish official (a former mayor of Łódź), a socialist who had found temporary refuge in the home of a local Jewish doctor, recalled:

At that time the Communists fulfilled the most shameful role. They not only formed a “fifth column,” but also were the veritable right hand of the NKVD in their war against the socialists and Polish political activists. They especially denounced members of the Polish Socialist Party and Bund. Alarmed by the arrests that had begun in town, after about a week our hosts advised us to go to some smaller county town where it would be easier to hide out for a time.⁴²³

When pro-Soviet Jews spread rumours that Polish officers shot at Soviet soldiers from the bell tower of the Dominican church in Tarnopol, the Soviets opened fire and set the church ablaze causing serious damage to the building and its contents. Clergy from the monastery were arrested and almost shot as a result of this false denunciation. Upon examination, however, the tower was found to be locked shut and there was no trace of any activity there. The Soviets, nevertheless, encouraged townspeople to plunder the monastery.⁴²⁴

A number of prominent Poles were arrested in **Germakówka** near Borszczów: the police commander Styczyński, the principal of the public school Gayrów, the mill owners Muller (husband and wife), and a few other families, all of whom were taken away without a trace. The list of Polish victims was prepared in the home of a Jew named Raabe.⁴²⁵

On the eve of the Soviet invasion, armed Jews attacked the railway workers in **Stanisławów** in order to seize control of the train station. When the Soviets arrived in the city, Jewish houses were decorated with red flags and banners bearing slogans like “Long Live Wise Stalin.” A militia made up mostly of Jews and Ukrainians patrolled the town.⁴²⁶ Leon Rosenthal, the chief of the Red militia, was particularly active in

⁴²¹ Czesław E. Blicharski, *Tarnopol w latach 1809–1945 (od epizodu epopei napoleońskiej do wypędzenia)* (Biskupice: n.p., 1993), 289; Czesław E. Blicharski, *Tarnopolanie na starym ojców szlaku* (Biskupice: n.p., 1994), 203.

⁴²² Witold Saski, *Crossing Many Bridges: Memoirs of a Pharmacist in Poland, the Soviet Union, the Middle East, Italy, the United Kingdom, and Nebraska* (Manhattan, Kansas: Sunflower University Press, 1988), 35.

⁴²³ Jan Kwapiński, *1939–1945: Kartki z pamiętnika* (London: Światowy Związek Polaków z Zagranicy, 1947), 7.

⁴²⁴ Szawlowski, *Wojna polsko-sowiecka 1939* (1995, 1997), vol. 1, 292; Blicharski, *Tarnopol w latach 1809–1945*, 288.

⁴²⁵ Komański and Siekierka, *Ludobójstwo dokonane przez nacjonalistów ukraińskich na Polakach w województwie tarnopolskim 1939–1946*, 539.

⁴²⁶ Gonczyński, *Raj proletariacki*, 17.

carrying out arrests of Poles.⁴²⁷ Local Jews staged a mobile show with effigies mocking prewar Polish leaders. The spectacle attracted a large Jewish rabble which chanted anti-Polish slogans.⁴²⁸

In nearby *Dolina*, the NKVD, accompanied by two local Jews known to the Poles, descended on a home to arrest young Polish men who belonged to Polish patriotic organizations. One of the young Poles was killed in the local jail; the others were deported to Siberia.⁴²⁹ In *Sokolów*, about 30 young Poles who were members of the rifleman association (Strzelce) were arrested towards the end of 1939 based on a list prepared by a local Jew who worked for the NKVD in Stryj. They were imprisoned in Stryj and then deported to a labour camp in the Soviet interior, never to be heard of again.⁴³⁰

Tadeusz Hajda, a teacher of Polish at the King Kazimierz Jagiellończyk High School in *Kolomyja*, was arrested by Jewish collaborators and handed over to the NKVD shortly after the entry of the Soviets. Luck was with him because he was freed from prison because of a petition signed by Poles, Ukrainians and German colonists, though banished to a remote village school.⁴³¹ (Frequent acts of solidarity such as this belie the much repeated and exaggerated claim of open hostility among these various groups in interwar Poland.) A Polish policeman named Wyżykiewicz was not so fortunate. A Jew fingered him to a Ukrainian mob who smashed his skull.⁴³²

In *Kalusz*, the invading Soviet army was greeted boisterously

by entire throngs of the Jewish community who called out [in Russian], “Our people are coming.” They bore red armbands on their sleeves and bountiful bouquets of flowers which they threw on the vehicles; they embraced the tanks with their bodies. And these were Jews who we knew had property and shops... Polish children began to be discriminated against by Jewish children who yelled, “*Oy vey*, where’s your Poland?” The sons of our Jewish neighbours, Itzek and Munio Haber, called to us, “Look, look. *Sigit, sigit*. A Polish officer is riding on his white horse.”

And thus immediately began the cleansing of the Polish population. Jews with red armbands, as representatives of the authorities, started to liquidate the Polish police, post offices, and above all took care of the military officers and soldiers. The officers were deported; those who defended themselves were shot. Polish soldiers who tried to escape to Romania over the Carpathians were killed.⁴³³

In *Gwoździec*, Jews and Ukrainians decorated the bridge to the town to greet the Red Army. They flocked to meetings organized by the Soviets to slander the Poles and flooded the Soviet authorities with denunciations of all sorts.⁴³⁴ Communist fighting squads composed of Jews and Ukrainians roamed the streets terrorizing the Polish population and entered the Catholic church to search for arms. A Jewish mob set upon and beat a Polish woman as she left church and screamed at her, “Your time is over; ours is just beginning. Stop praying here.” A few days later, at night, a group of masked Poles met up with the Jewish

⁴²⁷ Krakowiecki, *Książka o Kołymie*, 15.

⁴²⁸ A. & J. Wiszniowski, letter, *Głos Polski* (Toronto), May 24, 1996.

⁴²⁹ Ibid.

⁴³⁰ *Na Rubieży*, no. 80 (2005): 36.

⁴³¹ Account of Andrzej Hajda, quoted in Nowak, *Przemilczane zbrodnie*, 150.

⁴³² Account of Zygmunt Wyżykiewicz (in the author’s possession).

⁴³³ Account of Janina Długosz-Adamowska, quoted in Nowak, *Przemilczane zbrodnie*, 119–20.

⁴³⁴ J. Rokicka, “Było sobie takie miasteczko na Pokuciu,” *Semper Fidelis* (Wrocław), no. 5 (22) September-October 1994: 31.

hoodlums in some dark alleys and gave them a good thrashing. Jewish harassment subsided somewhat after that.⁴³⁵

When three Soviet tanks from Kołomyja descended on a company of Polish state police and border guards in **Delatyn**, local Jews and Ukrainians helped to disarm the Poles.⁴³⁶ Among those apprehended and disarmed outside of Delatyn, with the help of the Red militia consisting of Jews and Ukrainians, was Józef Dutka, a senior police officer from Myszyn. Dutka was imprisoned in Kołomyja together with other Polish policemen and executed in Stanisławów on October 20, 1939.⁴³⁷

In **Sambor**, the Jews who entered the Red militia roamed the town searching for Polish officials. Many of them were arrested and executed.⁴³⁸ Those who managed to hide out for a time, like police commissioner Bryl from **Horodenka**, were denounced by local Jews and Ukrainian nationalists.⁴³⁹

In **Drohobycz**, the local militia, made up of Jews and Ukrainians, carried out inspections and drew up lists of those to be arrested and deported. Together with the NKVD they arrested Bronisław Naja, the commander of the Polish state police in nearby **Schodnica**.⁴⁴⁰ Hesio Josefsberg became the propaganda chief at the town hall.⁴⁴¹ In October 1939, two NKVD men, a Ukrainian and a Jew, came to arrest Michał Piechowicz, the former mayor of Drohobycz, who was not heard of since.⁴⁴²

Jewish and Ukrainian Communists hunted down Polish policemen and civil servants in the vicinity of **Bóbrka** and handed them over to the NKVD. Szklanny, local commander of the Polish State Police, was murdered near the brickyard by the NKVD and two Jewish Communists, Kahane from Podhorodyszcze and Rod Majorek from Bóbrka.⁴⁴³

Abraham Sterzer, a Jewish doctor from **Lwów**, recalled:

When the Red Army marched into [Eastern Galicia], the Jews behaved as if Messiah had arrived. They flocked to sign up for various communist-front organizations, joined the NKVD secret police.⁴⁴⁴

⁴³⁵ Bronisław Terpin, *Przegraną zwycięzcy: Odyseja żołnierza polskiego Drugiego Korpusu* (London, Ontario: n.p., 1989), 12–13.

⁴³⁶ Szawłowski, *Wojna polsko-sowiecka 1939* (1995, 1997), vol. 1, 301.

⁴³⁷ Account of Jadwiga Dutka in *Na Rubieży* (Wrocław), no. 33/34 (1999): 35.

⁴³⁸ Damian Jakubiec, “Ludzie byli żywcem zamurowani,” *Nasza Polska*, September 22, 1999.

⁴³⁹ Wincenty Urban, *Droga krzyżowa Archidiecezji Lwowskiej w latach II wojny światowej 1939–1945* (Wrocław: n.p., 1983), 81; Szczepan Siekierka, Henryk Komański, and Eugeniusz Różański, *Ludobójstwo dokonane przez nacjonalistów ukraińskich na Polakach w województwie stanisławowskim 1939–1946* (Wrocław: Stowarzyszenie Upamiętnienia Ofiar Zbrodni Ukraińskich Nacjonalistów, 2008), 111.

⁴⁴⁰ Józef Pietrusza, “Zagłębie Drohobycko-Borysławskie w okresie II wojny światowej,” *Technika Naftowa i Gazownicza* (Krosno), no. 4 (1992), as cited in Marian Kałuski, *Cienie, które dzielą: Zarys stosunków polsko-żydowskich na Ziemi Drohobyckiej* (Warsaw: von borowiecky, 2000), 123. See also Budzyński, *Miasto Schulza*, 126–27.

⁴⁴¹ Henryk Grynberg, *Drohobycz, Drohobycz and Other Stories: True Tales from the Holocaust and Life After* (New York: Penguin Books, 2002), 17–18.

⁴⁴² Budzyński, *Miasto Schulza*, 128.

⁴⁴³ *Na Rubieży* (Wrocław), no. 52 (2001): 30; Siekierka, Komański, and Bulzacki, *Ludobójstwo dokonane przez nacjonalistów ukraińskich na Polakach w województwie lwowskim 1939–1947*, 33.

⁴⁴⁴ See his account “We Fought For Ukraine!” *The Ukrainian Quarterly*, vol. 20, no. 1 (1964): 40.

Adolf Folkmann recalled:

Workers councils were introduced in all factories and workshops, and a civilian militia was organized. The members of this militia were chiefly workers and young Jews.⁴⁴⁵

On September 26th, Leon Kozłowski, a former minister in the Polish government, was taken by Soviet officers from the museum on Plac Mariacki, where he was installed temporarily, to the NKVD premises on Sapieha Street.

The officers who arrested me engaged me in a conversation, a sort of interrogation, and stated that people like me, enemies of the people, the Soviet system destroys and puts out of action. One of them pointed out that he was a Jew and that I should remember well that it was a Jew who had arrested me and that he, a Jew, would be the cause of my eventual destruction which would inevitably occur. ...

My cell became overcrowded by the next day. Twelve people were placed in it on a bare wooden floor. ... The vast majority of prisoners were, of course, Poles. There was an army officer, a police inspector, a uniformed lieutenant from the reserves who was a lawyer by profession from Łódź, a judge of the district court, a railway worker, a student from the Polytechnic University, and a student from the Higher School of Foreign Trade. A similar make-up of people, as I later learned, was found in the other cells: judges, policemen, captured army officers, social activists, workers, students. All of them, like I, had been arrested based on denunciations by Communists, for the most part Jews.⁴⁴⁶

Toward the end of September 1939, Zygmunt Winter, a Jewish colleague from high school days, brought the NKVD to apprehend Zdzisław Zakrzewski, an activist in the All-Poland Youth organization at the Lwów Polytechnic University. Not finding him at home, the NKVD arrested Zakrzewski's father, Wilhelm, an officer of the Polish state police, who was soon executed. Zakrzewski's mother and sister were later deported to Kazakhstan, where his mother perished. Zdzisław Zakrzewski, together with a group of colleagues who made their way to the Polish army in France, had several run-ins with armed revolutionary committees composed of Jews and Ukrainians in *Jagielnica* and a village near *Śniatyn* from which they managed to extricate themselves.⁴⁴⁷

Edward Trznadel, a Polish official who had taken refuge in *Lwów*, was apprehended by some Jewish communists from Olkusz. They took him to the commissariat and denounced him as their persecutor. Fortunately for Trznadel, after being interrogated, he was released.⁴⁴⁸ Ironically, Trznadel had been on good terms with the Jewish community in Olkusz, where he served as deputy county supervisor (*starosta*) and was even called on to mediate disputes within that community.⁴⁴⁹ Marian Kukiz, a former policeman, was arrested by the NKVD after his hideout was betrayed by a Jewish travelling salesman by the name of Orgiel. He was murdered in a Lwów prison in June 1941. In April 1940, that same Jew, dressed in an

⁴⁴⁵ Stefan Szende, *The Promise Hitler Kept* (New York: Roy Publishers, 1945), 17.

⁴⁴⁶ Kozłowski, "Więzenie sowieckie (1): Pamiętnik," *Kultura*, no. 10 (October 1957): 90–91; Leon Kozłowski, *Moje przeżycia w więzieniu sowieckim i na wolności w czasie wojny w Rosji sowieckiej* (Warsaw: LTW, 2001), 20.

⁴⁴⁷ Accounts of Zdzisław Zakrzewski, recorded on June 15, 1989 and November 11, 2000 (in the author's possession). See also Marek Jan Chodakiewicz, "Szmulek chciał być sowieckim generałem: Postawy Żydów na Kresach 1939–1941," *Gazeta Polska* (Warsaw), December 1, 1994; Marek Jan Chodakiewicz, *Żydzi i Polacy 1918–1955: Współistnienie, zagłada, komunizm* (Warsaw: Fronda, 2000), 131–32; Zdzisław Zakrzewski, "Zdrada kolegi," letter, *Rzeczpospolita* (Warsaw), February 3, 2001; Zdzisław Zakrzewski, "Na Politechnice Lwowskiej," *Glaukopis: Pismo społeczno-historyczne*, no. 5–6 (2006): 113.

⁴⁴⁸ Jacek Trznadel, *Mój ojciec Edward* (Zawiercie: Miejski Ośrodek Kultury "Centrum," 1998), 57, 59.

⁴⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 28.

NKVD cap, forced Marian Kukiz's wife and two children onto a cattle car in which they were deported to Kazakhstan.⁴⁵⁰

There are numerous similar examples from Lwów, where Poles continued to be arrested throughout the Soviet occupation.⁴⁵¹ A Polish woman saw her husband, a doctor of gentry origin, killed in their home by Jews.⁴⁵² In the fall of 1940, Stanisław Schultz, a 40-year-old Pole who had been excused from active military service for health reasons, was denounced as a Polish officer by a Jewish neighbour. He was exiled to hard labour in eastern Siberia and was not heard of again.⁴⁵³ Michał Byczyszyn was arrested on the street in 1941 by Jewish communists.⁴⁵⁴ Jewish students of Professor Zdzisław Żygulski advised him that he had been spared in their denunciation of their fellow Polish students, alleged "anti-Semites." Żygulski thereby escaped arrest by the NKVD.⁴⁵⁵ A Jew from Leżajsk who made his way to *Sieniawa* immediately took advantage of his new position to strike at his political foes:

We arrived in Sienawa [sic], the closest town to us. As soon as I arrived, I was employed by the Russians in the government offices. There I found Manek Gadola, one of the prime founders of the anti-Semitic Andak [Endek] movement. I took a bit of revenge on him when I assigned him to the task of cleaning the streets of the town.⁴⁵⁶

Many accounts also identify Jews acting as jailers and interrogators throughout Eastern Poland already during these early days of the occupation, in towns like *Równe*, *Włodzimierz Wołyński*, *Hrubieszów*,

⁴⁵⁰ "Mocny wpis Pawła Kukiza na temat Jedwabnego," July 10, 2017, Internet: <<http://telewizjarepublika.pl/mocny-wpis-pawla-kukiza-na-temat-jedwabnego,51097.html>>.

⁴⁵¹ See also Jan Marszałek, *Ukrzyżować księdza Jankowskiego* (Warsaw: Polska Oficyna Wydawnicza, 1998), 184–220, which enumerates dozens of Poles from Lwów who lost their lives directly at the hands of Jews or because of denunciations by Jews. The Polish underground reports on which this information is based will be detailed in Jan Marszałek's forthcoming book, *Rozstrzelany Lwów*.

⁴⁵² Account of Janina Długosz-Adamowska, quoted in Nowak, *Przemilczane zbrodnie*, 59.

⁴⁵³ Account of Zbigniew Schultz, quoted in Nowak, *Przemilczane zbrodnie*, 74. Schultz points out that denunciations of Poles by Jews were commonplace at that time; he estimates that 80 percent of the Poles deported to Siberia were deported as a result of Jewish denunciations.

⁴⁵⁴ Testimony of Janina Byczyszyn-Herbst, as cited in Nowak, *Przemilczane zbrodnie*, based on the periodical *Westerplatte*, no. 4 (May-June 1994), 27.

⁴⁵⁵ Account of Iwo Cyprian Pogonowski (in the author's possession).

⁴⁵⁶ M.N. Yarut, "Lizhensk—Russia-Lizhensk," in H. Rabin, ed., *Lizhensk: Sefer zikaron le-kedoshei Lizhensk she-nispu be-shoat ha-natsim* (Tel Aviv: Former Residents of Leżajsk in Israel, 1970), 96 ff., translated as *Memorial Book of the Martyrs of Leżajsk Who Perished in the Holocaust*, Internet: <<http://www.jewishgen.org/Yizkor/Lazajsk/Lezajsk.html>>.

Grodno, Lwów, Augustów, and others.⁴⁵⁷ Witold Sągajłło, an officer in the Polish navy who was caught by the Soviet invasion of Eastern Poland, recalled that “nearly every commissar” he had the misfortune to meet was a Jew.⁴⁵⁸

Kazimierz Bączyński, a Polish soldier who was arrested and held in a camp near Stanisławów in southeastern Poland, recalled: “Our guard was a Jew, which was not unusual as the Jews co-operated with the Russians.”⁴⁵⁹ A Pole imprisoned in *Kolomyja* recalls:

In a cell for six people they packed thirty-six people. By a strange coincidence Władek [Władysław Traczuk] found himself in the company of policemen from his town of Gwoździec. Among them were Zalewski, Wolno, Gosztyła and Klincza. Seeing the emaciated Władek, one of them gave him a little bread and another a spoonful of soup. They were thus able to nourish him somewhat. These policemen were interrogated every night. After their ordeal they returned to their cell staggering on their feet, all mangled and bloody. Jews and Ukrainians whom we recognized often passed down the corridors. They would stop in front of the cell, point at someone with their finger, and tell the NKVD officer who accompanied them, “That’s the one.” After such a visit the fingered victim was treated especially badly. Zalewski and Klincza were beaten the most. ... Few of them managed to leave that prison alive.⁴⁶⁰

⁴⁵⁷ Rowiński, *Moje zderzenie z bolszewikami we wrześniu 1939 roku*, 107 (Równe), 198 (Włodzimierz Wołyński), 212 (Hrubieszów); Spector, *Lost Jewish Worlds*, 99 (Grodno); Narcyza Piskorz, “Nasza Augustowszczyzna,” in Jasiewicz, *Europa niepowincona*, 726 (Augustów). One of the jailers believed to have been involved in the murder of political prisoners in Lwów was a Jew by the name of Schechter. See the account of Zbigniew Schultz, quoted in Nowak, *Przemilczane zbrodnie*, 66. For additional examples from Lwów, see Waław Grubiński, *Miedzy mlotem a sierpem* (London: Stowarzyszenie Pisarzy Polskich, 1948), 172–73; Gonczyński, *Raj proletariacki*, 43, 56; and the account of Aleksander Wat quoted later in the text. For accounts from Wilno, see Zenowiusz Ponarski, “Wileńskie reminiscencje Martenki,” *Nowy Kurier* (Toronto), December 15–31, 1999. Jews also took part in the show trials of Polish prisoners. See Maria Paduszyńska, “Sprawozdanie ze śledztwa w sprawie zbrodni NKWD na więźniach więzień w Mińsku,” *My, Sybiracy* (Związek Sybiraków Oddział Wojewódzki w Łodzi), no. 4 (1993): 97. Poles also encountered Jewish jailers, interrogators, kapos, and politruks, often very brutal and sadistic ones, in the service of the NKVD in the Soviet Union interior. See, for example, Władysław Wielhorski, *Wspomnienia z przeżyć w niewoli sowieckiej* (London: Instytut Polski i Muzeum Sikorskiego, and Orbis, 1965), 94; Jan Zbrucz, *Czy byłem szpiegiem* (Curitiba: Redakcja “Ludu,” 1953), vol. 2, 21–25, 28–29, 46, 48, 57; Sylwester Mora [Kazimierz Zamorski] and Piotr Zwierniak [Stanisław Starzewski], *Sprawiedliwość sowiecka* (Italy: n.p., 1945; Warsaw: Alfa-Wero, 1994), 401–402, as cited in Nowak, *Przemilczane zbrodnie*, 127. Feliks Mantel, a Polish Jew, recalled that the most dogged and sadistic of his NKVD interrogators in the Soviet interior (Uzbekistan) was a young Soviet Jew named Kogan. Foaming at the mouth and spitting at Mantel, the Soviet interrogator could not comprehend how a Polish Jew could speak only Polish and work as an official in the service of the “anti-Semitic” Polish nation. (Mantel had been employed by the Polish state as an attorney.) See Feliks Mantel, *Wachlarz wspomnień* (Paris: Księgarnia Polska, 1980), 162–63. An inmate of Ostashkov recalled that the deputy commander of that infamous camp for Polish officers was a Polish Jew from Sokółka, a ruthless NKVD captain who was the “terror of the entire camp.” See the account of Jan B. in Gross and Grudzińska-Gross in *W czterdziestym nas Matko na Sybir zesłali...*, 388. Based on the testimony of a Polish Jew by the name of Abraham Vidro (Wydra), an article that appeared in an Israeli newspaper in 1971 strongly suggests that Jewish functionaries were implicated in the massacre of Polish officers at Katyn and other camps. See “A Jewish Major [Yehoshua Sorokin] in the Soviet Security Service Confessed: ‘What My Eyes Saw—The World Will Not Believe,’” *Maariv* (Tel Aviv), July 21, 1971. Russian investigative journalist Vladimir Abarinov believes that NKVD General Leonid F. Raikhman (or Reichman, alias Zaitsev) may have been the immediate organizer of the Katyn massacre; he also lists other NKVD-NKGB officers who were directly involved in the Katyn action. See Abarinov, *The Murderers of Katyn*, 170. Based on a large number of sources, Jacek Trznadel identified Lazar Kaganovich as one of those who, along with Stalin, signed the execution order and a number of other Jews implicated in the Katyn massacre (Begman, Elman, Feldman, Gertsovsky, Goberman, Granovsky, Krongauz, Leibkind, Raikhman, Slutsky, Vishnyakova, Vitkov, Zilberman), as well as some who were actual perpetrators at the scene (Abram Borisovich and Chaim Finberg). See Jacek Trznadel, *Powrót rozstrzelanej armii: Katyn-fakty, rewizje, poglądy* (Komorów: Antyk—Marcin Dybowski, 1994), 94–115, 336. It has been reported that some of these perpetrators later emigrated to the United States and Israel.

⁴⁵⁸ Witold Sągajłło, *Man In the Middle: A Story of the Polish Resistance, 1940–45* (London: Leo Cooper in Association with Secker & Warburg, 1984), 91.

⁴⁵⁹ Wojciechowska, *Waiting To Be Heard*, 59.

⁴⁶⁰ Terpin, *Przegranicy zwycięzcy*, 18.

Wiesław Karpiński, who was held in the Zamarstynowska prison in *Lwów* after his arrest in October 1939 for belonging to a “secret counterrevolutionary” organization, recalled the collaboration of some of his fellow inmates:

One, a hunchback by the name of Rapaport, was a Trotskyite; the other a Bundist (follower of the Jewish Socialist Party). ...

At first Rapaport was in great solidarity with other prisoners and viewed the Soviets as our common enemy. As time went by he must have changed his mind and asked the guards to take him to see the interrogators. He was taken out a few times and finally announced that he had come to terms with his captors. As a communist, even if of a different sort, he was empowered to introduce a communist regime into our cell. The inmates with a working class background were to use the beds and have other privileges, while the inmates of bourgeois origin were to sleep on the floor and do all the menial tasks. He threatened us with dire consequences in case of noncompliance. His friend the Bundist was very reluctant to join but he did. We not only ignored his strutting but also denounced him as a commie bootlicker. ... There were no dire consequences.⁴⁶¹

An Englishwoman who was living in Poland and happened to arrive in *Wilno* in October 1939, where she found temporary lodging for payment in a building owned by a Jew, penned her impressions shortly after witnessing these events. Although prone to generalizations—as are most Holocaust accounts for that matter, her status as an impartial observer of a dark reality that was unfolding before her eyes is beyond question.

As a class, the Jews went over wholesale to the Bolsheviks. In Wilno and elsewhere the worst type of Jew turned informer overnight. Thousands of the same Jews who had counted on the Polish Army to save them from Hitler arrived as refugees from the German Occupation and proceeded to sell the Poles in the Russian Occupation like hot cakes. Even the G.P.U. [State Political Administration] agents whom they guided from house to house expressed contempt for these self-appointed jackals. Many Jewish individuals must have felt the same, only painfully and deeply. Nevertheless, the truth remains that within the Russian Occupation the patriot's worst enemy at this time was his Jewish fellow citizen. The Bolshevik regime, the Jews thought, meant power for themselves. In the towns and even in the villages ... the local Committee and the militia, supposed to represent the entire community, began to be made up entirely from this renegade and revolutionary Jewish element. How it has been since, I do not know. I think it likely that their day is already over.

Our landlord himself said very little. He was a good sort of man, and he hated the upstart type of Jew as only Jews can. We were fairly secure from a surprise so long as we lodged with him. No Jewish houses were searched. The house-to-house searches went on every night, from curfew (at six o'clock by Polish time, eight o'clock by the new time taken from Moscow) until the lifting of curfew in the early morning. The loot taken was human beings. Four or five long trains of prisoners left every day for Russia. Others remained on the railway sidings indefinitely, until it was almost impossible to distinguish between the living and the dead. As long afterwards as the beginning of December, a Lithuanian official told me of the appalling truck-loads of victims they had found still there when they took over the city, and still there in December; and of the Soviet indifference and apathy, more than genuine sadism, before facts of this kind. Lithuanian intervention did not interest them either. Somebody, some day, was going to go into the matter. In the meantime a few dozen victims more or less—they could not imagine why the Lithuanians even troubled to ask questions. For all I know those trucks are still standing on the sidings. The first convoys were taken from among what were called the political suspects. That meant, without exception, every Pole who had administered the Code. Judges, magistrates, and every other member of the legal profession, down to the lawyers' clerks. It included any private citizen who had ever sat on a jury to try a member of the Communist party. Every Pole who had in any way stood for national leadership in the town. Every Pole whose scientific, literary or other labour had been in a national direction. All these had figured under the label of Political Suspects or Patriots on lists drawn up long before the Red Armies passed the frontiers. Gaps in the lists were filled up by the informers. By the time we arrived in the town, it was the turn of the professions and the skilled trades. Doctors, dentists, engineers and, after them, mechanics and artisans. Any skilled manual labourer, even a locksmith or a zinc-cutter, was needed for the interior of Russia, where skilled labour is absolutely lacking. A population of one hundred and eighty million cannot produce, under its present regime, even the artisans it needs. It cannot, apparently, produce even cabbage. The thunderstruck inhabitants of Wilno saw the departure of cabbages, worn brooms, wooden tables, trestles, and rough plank flooring torn out of barracks and institutions, for Moscow. The Russian uniform was poorer and shoddier than the poorest garments the townspeople, anxious not to show themselves in wool and furs, could muster. The soldiers, while they were still allowed to talk

⁴⁶¹ Janusz Karpinski and Wiesław Karpiński, *It's a Long Way To Glasgow* (Toronto: Becker Associates, [2006]), 96–98.

with us, exclaimed, admired, and exclaimed again at the riches of a provincial town in reality never rich; beautiful but frugal, ruined and beginning to be famished. All their wonderings and exclamations had a single theme. How could these things be possible in a capitalist state? The capitalist state, they had always been told, consisted of a bourgeois minority and a people of slaves. On the contrary, they now saw with their own eyes a country in which every citizen was a bourgeois. Our doctors, our learned professions, they said, do not live like a doorkeeper lives here. A few, who dared, passionately uttered: They have lied to us! At the same time, with the profoundest melancholy, they realized how far-reaching for themselves would be the consequences of their having perceived the lie: We shall never return to our homes, they said; we will never be allowed to cross our own frontiers again. Either we will be shot, or it will be Siberia, in chains. They will not dare to let us tell what we have seen. They did not realize yet that there was a third solution of their problem. That arrangements had already been made for them to keep eternal silence in Finland. One other thing had also been certain. Once the Baltic countries had accepted servitude, the Finns would be attacked and would defend themselves.

Officers read and wrote with difficulty. An engineer described his own studies: 'First I went to the village school for three years. After that they sent me to the township and put me through a mangle in the Polytechnic for two more.' Many of them had never seen watches before. They tested unknown things by putting them in their mouths, like children. Face creams out of tubes were not so bad. Coloured cakes of soap made them angry by lathering on their tongues and having an unexpected taste. At a performance of a propaganda play commanded at the theatre, women Commissars turned up in nightdresses of artificial silk tricot, bought in the town, which they had supposed to be evening gowns. The audience was quite unable to control its laughter. A police charge could not have stopped it. The Russians had sense enough to realize that laughter is a weapon too. The mortified Commissars were obliged to retire. Until they did the performance simply could not go on. Soldiers appeared in the villages demanding civilian clothes: when the time comes, they said to the peasants, we will go together against Moscow. The most curious and most startling thing the townspeople observed was that some of them, passing before a church, furtively made the sign of the cross. This was not the generation which hated Christ. It was, we had supposed, the generation which did not even know Him. When he asked them what they meant, they said: 'In our homes the old people have told us secretly about this Man, and shown us His Sign.'

The Russo-Lithuanian agreement was announced. A little later it was ratified. Wilno was to be handed over by the 16th of October [1939]. The Lithuanian Government broadcast their intention to maintain friendly relations with the Poles under their jurisdiction ... The young woman in the Consulate was radiant. The Jews were crestfallen. The White Russians were furious. The few thousand Lithuanians living in Wilno almost burst with importance. The Poles were not asked what they felt, and there was nothing left to them except to feel. The Russians, I daresay, laughed. At any rate, up to the 16th and for another eleven days after it their armoured cars rumbled through the streets all night and stood outside the shops, the University and the Banks all day. When Wilno was handed over, it was as empty as a cracked nutshell. Even the radio station had been blown up and the scrap taken away. The Lithuanian Army waited humbly at the frontier, cooling its heels. When they were at last allowed in, there was hardly a seat or a table left in the barracks they took over. Even the floors had been ripped up. Metal knobs and finger-plates and locks were taken even from private apartments. Typewriters from offices. Money out of tills. The entire bag of tricks, including the gas burners and the revolving chairs, from the laboratory of the University. After the 16th a good deal of doubt even began to be expressed as to whether the Russians had ever intended to hand the city over at all.⁴⁶²

⁴⁶² Anon., *My Name Is Million: The Experiences of an Englishwoman in Poland* (London: Faber and Faber, 1940), 262–67.

CHAPTER SIX

Anti-Polish and Anti-Christian Agitation, Vandalism and Looting

Despite the claims of equal treatment of all nationalities, the Soviet Union excelled in persecuting various groups on ethnic grounds. The first nationality to be targeted in the 1930s was the Polish minority in Soviet Ukraine and Soviet Belorussia who were arrested en masse and deported to the Soviet interior. Ten of thousands of Poles perished during that ordeal. With the signing of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact the Soviet press adopted a pro-Nazi point of view and embarked on an anti-Polish propaganda campaign which soon turned into an all-out policy of combating not only Polish institutions, schools, and organizations, but indeed all manifestations of Polishness.⁴⁶³

Hitler's speeches berating Poland and the Poles were quoted extensively. Virtually every issue of each major Soviet Russian newspaper ran at least one hostile article, with a height of thirty-nine such articles and poems in *Pravda* on September 19, 1939, two days after the Soviet invasion of Poland. But not only did the Soviet press appeal to, and thus perpetuate, centuries-old nationalistic hatreds, it gave a clear signal to the local Russian-speaking authorities to condone or encourage violence against Poles. This official sanctioning of violence, combined with the prewar grievances of the minorities, made Poles into scapegoats.⁴⁶⁴

The Soviet press encouraged hatred of "Poland of the *Pans*," "Polish gentry," or simply "Poles," while ignoring the fact that the government of the second republic had abolished all titles of nobility. As historian Ewa M. Thompson explains,

The connotations of the word *pan* in Russian indicate that the press was referring not only to social class but also, and primarily, to nationality and to Polish social manners traditionally perceived by Russians as pretentious and excessively rooted. In regard to this assortment of Polish targets, an abusive vocabulary was used in articles, poems, and stories written by Russians of otherwise spotless reputations. Things Polish were vilified ... Poland was presented as a place where a small group of Polish nobles brutalized millions of Belorussians, Ukrainians, and Jews. *Gentlemen's [Pans'] Poland* became a term of abuse and a synonym for all that was wrong with the conquered territories. ... Witnesses of the horrors of Polish rule wrote their testimonials for newspapers, and Hitler's allegations about Poland were approvingly quoted.⁴⁶⁵

Broad cross-sections of Jewish society joined in this anti-Polish campaign which took on a highly ritualized format:

On 30 September [1939] *Finansovaia gazeta* reported that during such festivities [of "liberation" from the oppression of the Polish overlords] in the city of Białystok, "a 20-year-old house painter Goldkorn ... proposed that a telegram with thanks be sent to Comrade Stalin." On 20 September *Pravda* described "a meeting of the intelligentsia" in the town of Stonim ... In this town of under 20,000, 750 members of the local intelligentsia were said to have attended this meeting, among them "Drs. Weiss and Kovarskii" who gave anti-Polish speeches. On 13 October in *Pravda*, G. Rylkin ridiculed Tomasz Kapitułko, former head of a labor union in Białystok, only because Kapitułko was Polish. On 20 October in *Pravda* A. Erlikh spoke of "western Belorussia that had been tortured by Poles." On 29 September 1939 *Pravda* published a testimonial by a Mr. Prager about his stay in a "Polish concentration camp." On 10 March 1940 *Pravda* published an article entitled 'Letters from western parts of Ukraine and Belorussia,' which stated that an American Jewish

⁴⁶³ For a description of conditions in the Białystok regions see Wojciech Śleszyński, "Polityka narodowościowa władz sowieckich na obszarze przedwojennego województwa białostockiego w latach 1939–1941," *Dzieje Najnowsze*, no. 4 (2001): 57–64.

⁴⁶⁴ Ewa M. Thompson, "Nationalist Propaganda in the Soviet Russian Press, 1939–1941," *Slavic Review*, vol. 50, no. 2 (Summer 1991): 385–99. See also Ewa M. Thompson, *Imperial Knowledge: Russian Literature and Colonialism* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 2000); Władimir A. Niewieżyn [Vladimir A. Nevezhin], *Tajne plany Stalina: Propaganda sowiecka w przededniu wojny z Trzecią Rzeszą 1939–1941* (Kraków: Arcana, 2000), 79–94.

⁴⁶⁵ Thompson, "Nationalist Propaganda in the Soviet Russian Press, 1939–1941," *Slavic Review*, vol. 50, no. 2 (Summer 1991): 391.

daily published in New York in Yiddish had issued a special supplement containing letters from persons in Soviet-occupied Poland. An inhabitant of Grodno is said to have written the following to his brother in the United States: 'Dear brother: Now we are free. We have jobs and try to forget the terrible life in Poland in the past.' ... The prominence given by the Soviet papers to Jewish names in the descriptions could hardly be accidental [though they were likely representative of the prominence of that group—*M.P.*] ...⁴⁶⁶

Numerous accounts found throughout this compilation attest to the frequency with which derogatory statements about Poland and Poles were made in public, especially at meetings and rallies. Anti-Polish agitation was also prevalent in private settings where spontaneous outbursts were the order of the day in the early period.⁴⁶⁷ As one Jewish witness reported, "As for the Jews, they took revenge on Poles sometimes in a very nasty way; the expression 'Your time is over' was not only much used, but, by and large, overused."⁴⁶⁸ Even religious Jews could use the prevailing political climate to disparage Poles with impunity about such things as their non-kosher diet and their Catholic beliefs.⁴⁶⁹ The tone, after all, was set by the occupiers themselves, as witnessed in the following scene described by a Jew from Złoczów:

Particularly obnoxious was the behavior of the Russian adolescents, sons and daughters of the Russian "aristocracy," higher party members or senior military officers, who strutted about drunk, using loud and obscene language, taunting people who spoke Polish.⁴⁷⁰

The first interwar politician to come out publicly in support of the German-Soviet partition of Poland was Jakub Wygodski, a Zionist leader and former deputy to Poland's Sejm (Parliament), who would later head the city's Jewish council. Wygodski stated in an interview published on September 18, 1939, that "the majority of the Jewish community expresses its satisfaction at the fact that the Lithuanians have entered Wilno," an opinion seconded by Benjamin Bursztejn, another local Zionist activist.⁴⁷¹ Examples of other forms of anti-Polish and anti-Catholic activities carried out by Jews abound.

⁴⁶⁶ Ibid., 392. Thompson ends the last sentence with the following speculative conclusion: "and it could not have escaped the editors' attention that, in due time and magnified by word-of-mouth inaccuracies, it would foster anti-Semitism among Poles."

⁴⁶⁷ Leopold Gadzina, who boarded a train in Małyńsk, in Volhynia, with his family received an unceremonious welcome from various Jewish passengers whom he addressed as Pans, in the customary Polish fashion: "Poland is finished. Here in the Soviet Union we are all citizens, tovarishes. We're all equal, there are no Pans." Another Jew added that Poland was a fascist state that persecuted its minorities: "So it's good that this Poland has come to an end." A third added, "Well he's a Polish officer, a fascist and capitalist." These Jews accented their pro-Soviet disposition by speaking in Russian. See Rowiński, *Moje zderzenie z bolszewikami we wrześniu 1939 r.*, 61.

⁴⁶⁸ As cited in Żbikowski, "Jewish Reaction to the Soviet Arrival in the Kresy in September 1939," in *Polin*, vol. 13 (2000): 68.

⁴⁶⁹ Zofia Sierpińska, *Anatema* (Łódź: Klio, 1994), 22. The author describes the hostile atmosphere she experienced in the home of a Jewish woman in Tarnopol, where her family rented two small rooms.

⁴⁷⁰ Tennenbaum, *Zloczow Memoir*, 148–49.

⁴⁷¹ Jacek M. Majchrowski, et al., *Kto był kim w Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej* (Warsaw: BGW, 1994), 480–81; Piotr Łossowski, *Litwa a sprawy polskie 1939–1940* (Warsaw: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1982), 215; Jarosław Wołkonowski, "ZWK-AK a problem mniejszości etnicznych na Wileńszczyźnie," in Niewiński, *Opór wobec systemów totalitarnych na Wileńszczyźnie w okresie II wojny światowej*, 42. Polish historian Stanisława Lewandowska points out that the anti-Polish measures introduced by the new Lithuanian authorities gained significant though not unanimous support among the Jewish populace, especially the proletariat. See Lewandowska, *losy wilnian*, 36.

As in the case of *Wielkie Oczy*, a village near Lubaczów noted earlier,⁴⁷² Jewish youths who joined the komsomol roamed the vicinity of *Skidel* near Grodno destroying Catholic roadside shrines.⁴⁷³ Near *Łysków*, south of Wołkowysk, a roadside cross was knocked over and the figure of the crucified Jesus was removed.⁴⁷⁴ Jews demolished the statue of St. John adorning a pond in *Naliboki* near Stołpce, and threw it into the water.⁴⁷⁵

In *Wolożyn*, a Jew who prepared the market square for the erection of a statue of Stalin detonated a large cross that stood in the way. Jewish Communists by the name of Schmarka Itzkovich and Yishaiau Rubin removed religious banners from the Catholic church in *Wiszniew*, affixed red flags to the poles, and paraded with them across town to the market square. There they stood at the head of the committee that welcomed the Red Army and its officers with bread and salt.⁴⁷⁶

A group of young Jews hurled rocks at the Carmelite monastery in *Wiśniowiec*, Volhynia, smashing the historic stained-glass windows of the church.⁴⁷⁷ The local Communist militia, comprised of Jews and Ukrainians, desecrated portraits in the Catholic bishop's residence in *Łuck* by poking out the eyes with bayonets.⁴⁷⁸

Jews attempted unsuccessfully to seize the Catholic chapel in the colony of *Szemiótówka* near Kobryń.⁴⁷⁹ Shortly after the Soviet entry a civilian mob of about 100 people, almost all of them Jews, armed with pistols and bearing red armbands, stormed into the seminary in *Pińsk* and stole all the possessions in that complex of buildings. The priests and clerics were rounded up and forced into the courtyard and threatened with execution as enemies of the Communist regime. A Soviet patrol, drawn there by the commotion, liberated the priests from their frenzied captors.⁴⁸⁰ (The Soviets were not, of course, opposed to oppressing the clergy—that had after all killed off tens of thousands of Christian clergymen since the Revolution—but it was they who would decide when the time was right to strike, and not their overzealous lackeys.)

⁴⁷² Gross and Grudzińska-Gross, *W czterdziestym nas Matko na Sybir zesłali...*, 29. The testimony from the Yad Vashem archive is that of Dr. Stanisław Henryk Szarota (Strasser); it is posted at: <<http://wielkieoczy.itgo.com/Memories/SH.htm>>. Dr. Szarota notes that the entire komsomol was made up of Jews, with the exception of one non-Jew.

⁴⁷³ Beata Calka, "Czy to są filmy dla kretynów?" letter, *Ojczyzna*, no. 4 (109) (February 15, 1996): 12. Notwithstanding such conduct, after the German takeover, a local priest hid a Jew until June 1943, when he was accepted into the 27th Division of the Home Army. See Wroński and Zwolakowa, *Polacy Żydzi 1939–1945*, 386.

⁴⁷⁴ Stella H. Synowiec-Tobis, *The Fulfillment of Visionary Return: A Historical Narrative Based on Two Memoirs Written by the Author at Ages 13 and 15* (Northbrook, Illinois: Artpol Printing, 1998), 41.

⁴⁷⁵ Account of Maria Chilicka, dated March 3, 2004 (in the author's possession).

⁴⁷⁶ Levin, *The Lesser of Two Evils*, 63; Gdaliyau Dudman, "Vishnevo during the War," in Abramson, *Vishneva, ke-fi she-hayetah ve-enenah od*, 125 ff.

⁴⁷⁷ Edward Prus, *Holocaust po banderowsku: Czy Żydzi byli w UPA?* (Wrocław: Nortom, 1995), 71.

⁴⁷⁸ Szawłowski, *Wojna polsko-sowiecka 1939* (1997), vol. 2, 383.

⁴⁷⁹ Wilczewska, *Nim minęło 25 lat*, 21.

⁴⁸⁰ Eugeniusz Borowski, "Martyrologia duchowieństwa diecezji pińskiej," in Bohdan Bejze and Antoni Galiński, eds., *Martyrologia duchowieństwa polskiego 1939–1956* (Łódź: Archidiecezjalne Wydawnictwo Łódzkie, 1992), 98; Wierzbicki, *Polacy i Żydzi w zaborze sowieckim*, 76.

Elsewhere in that town Polish women locked themselves in a church to prevent Jewish policemen from desecrating it.⁴⁸¹

A group of Jews, composed of both men and women, invaded the Catholic church and rectory in **Łomazy** near Biała Podlaska. They destroyed liturgical robes, religious artefacts and church records.⁴⁸² The pastor of **Pawłów** near Chełm was evicted from his rectory, which was taken over by Abuś Nysenkorn, a local Jew who took charge of the newly formed revolutionary committee and Red militia and declared himself to be village head.⁴⁸³ In **Jedwabne**, a local harness maker and Communist sympathizer by the name of Yakov Katz defecated in front of the church door (though not in front of the synagogue), and mocked the “stupid Polacks” for building a church that became an outhouse.⁴⁸⁴ There is no information that the synagogues in these towns was profaned by Jews (or Poles), so clearly the assaults on the Catholic churches had an ethno-religious dimension.

In **Świsłocz**, the newly appointed Jewish mayor, Weiner, carried out an inspection of the Catholic church and rectory and demanded that the priest open the tabernacle. The Catholic nuns were removed from the children’s shelter and an uncouth Jewish who despised Poles and Catholics was placed in charge.⁴⁸⁵ In **Uściług**, on the Bug River, in Volhynia, local Jews organized a pro-atheist spectacle in which a horse was dressed in Christian liturgical vestments and paraded around town.⁴⁸⁶ The wife of the head of the revolutionary committee, Klara Kohn, also an ardent Communist herself, evicted the nuns who worked in the hospital in **Śniatyn**, closed the chapel and discarded the religious artificacts in it.⁴⁸⁷

It should be noted that Soviet soldiers did not take part in these sacrilegious displays. They appear to have been an entirely local initiative directed at the Catholic Church. They mirrored the actions carried out by the Nazis in German-occupied Poland. There too the Germans destroyed countless Catholic churches, shrines and monuments and German soldiers, dressed in clerical robes and carrying banners and other religious artefacts, conducted mock processions.⁴⁸⁸ There is no record of similar assaults on synagogues

⁴⁸¹ Wilczewska, *Nim minęło 25 lat*, 33–34. Notwithstanding such conduct, Monsignor Witold Iwicki, the vicar general of the diocese of Pińsk, organized aid for the Jews under German rule, for which he was executed in Janów Poleski on January 23, 1943. See Szymon Datner, *Las sprawiedliwych: Karta z dziejów ratownictwa Żydów w okupowanej Polsce* (Warsaw: Książka i Wiedza, 1968), 104, 113. The Catholic bishop of Pińsk, Karol Niemira, who served as pastor of St. Augustine’s Church in Warsaw during the war, provided Jews with false identity documents and financial assistance. See the account of Henryk Szladkowski (Slade) in Andrzej Chciuk, ed., *Saving Jews in War-Torn Poland 1939–1945* (Clayton, Victoria: Wilke and Company, 1969), 50; Tatiana Berenstein and Adam Rutkowski, *Assistance to the Jews in Poland, 1939–1945* (Warsaw: Polonia Publishing House, 1963), 40.

⁴⁸² Romuald Szudejko, “Społeczność żydowska w Łomazach—przyczynek do dziejów,” *Biuletyn Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego*, no. 188 (1998): 87.

⁴⁸³ Romanek, *Kolaboracja z Sowietami na terenie województwa lubelskiego we wrześniu i październiku 1939 r.*, 93–94.

⁴⁸⁴ Kazimierz Laudański, “Jeśli mamy wspólną Ojczyznę...,” *Nasza Polska*, November 20, 2001.

⁴⁸⁵ Krahel, *Doświadczeni zniewoleniem*, 205. Rev. Albin Horba states that a number of local Poles were conscripted by the NKVD to spy on and denounce fellow citizens but they revealed themselves and warned people to be cautious. *Ibid.*, 206.

⁴⁸⁶ Edward Flis, *Naród wybrany: Reportaż zesłańca i żołnierza* (Warsaw: Ojczyzna, 1994), 11.

⁴⁸⁷ Marek Jan Chodakiewicz, “Taki polski Kowalski: Wspomnienie o Tadeuszu Ungarze,” *Glaukopis* (Warsaw), no. 4 (2006): 238–39. See also Jadwiga Ungar, “Straszne dla Polaków czasy,” letter, *Rzeczpospolita* (Warsaw), February 3, 2001.

⁴⁸⁸ A photograph of a mock religious procession staged by German soldiers is found between pages 70 and 71 in *The Persecution of the Catholic Church in German-Occupied Poland: Reports Presented by H.E. Cardinal Hlond, Primate of Poland, To Pope Pius XII, Vatican Broadcasts and Other Reliable Evidence* (London: Burns Oates, 1941).

and rabbis in the Soviet zone.⁴⁸⁹ When a Jewish Communist called for destruction of the Catholic Church in Marijampolė, Lithuania, the reaction of the Catholic peasants assembled at the rally was pointedly on mark:

during one of the rallies in Mariampole [Marijampolė], a Communist hotshot, of Jewish origin, proposed a project of amazing daring “The time has finally arrived when we have to start to exterminate superstition and destroy prejudice. I make a motion to destroy the church in Mariampole.”

There was silence as if in a cemetery. A peasant arose to second the motion: “WE agree, Comrade. Prejudice must be destroyed. But, you see, the Catholic Church is very large. We have to gain experience in blowing up buildings. Your synagogue is a smaller building. I propose a motion: Let us begin to exterminate superstition by blowing up your synagogue.”

Laughter and applause filled the room.⁴⁹⁰

In total, some 60 Polish Catholic priests were murdered or deported to the Gulag during the Soviet occupation.⁴⁹¹ One regional NKVD report from September 1940 states that, unlike Catholic priests, the activities of rabbis were not being monitored.⁴⁹²

Bishop Franciszek Barda of *Przemysł* reported in November 1939 that his chancery had been taken over as a dwelling place for Jews and that some Jewish women had attempted to occupy the episcopal residence where the auxiliary bishop and several priests resided.⁴⁹³ In *Żółkiew*, militiamen, most of them Jews, expropriated a monastery in order to house Jewish refugees from the German zone.⁴⁹⁴ Jews held dances in the Franciscan monastery in *Hanaczów* near Przemyślany which were boycotted by the Poles.⁴⁹⁵ The rectory in *Baturyn* near Mołodeczno was occupied by a Jew who was the director of a state alcohol distillery.⁴⁹⁶

A committee consisting of Jewish Communists was put in charge of the schools of the Benedictine and Ursuline Orders in *Lwów*; they implemented the new atheistic curriculum bereft of references to Polish

⁴⁸⁹ A source cited by an Israeli historian concedes that “the Jewish rabbis were treated less strictly than the Catholic priests.” See Levin, *The Lesser of Two Evils*, 332 n.18.

⁴⁹⁰ Henryk Tomaszewski, “Memoir of Inhuman Lands,” in Jan Bukowicz, ed., *The Marian Martyrs of Rosica: Accounts of the Heroic Witness of Blessed George Kaszyra and Blessed Anthony Leszczewicz* (Stockbridge, Massachusetts: Marian Press, 2000), 114.

⁴⁹¹ Roman Dzwonkowski, “Represje wobec polskiego duchowieństwa katolickiego na ziemiach północno-wschodnich II RP 1939–1941,” in Gnatowski and Boćkowski, *Sowietyzacja i rusyfikacja północno-wschodnich ziem II Rzeczypospolitej (1939–1941)*, 75–93.

⁴⁹² Michał Gnatowski, *Niepokorna Białostoczczyzna: Opór społeczny i polskie podziemie niepodległościowe w regionie białostockim w latach 1939–1941 w radzieckich źródłach* (Białystok: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu w Białymstoku, 2001), 248.

⁴⁹³ John F. Morley, *Vatican Diplomacy and the Jews During the Holocaust, 1933–1943* (New York: Ktav, 1980), 133.

⁴⁹⁴ Levin, *The Lesser of Two Evils*, 63.

⁴⁹⁵ Jolanta Chodorska, ed., *Godni synowie naszej Ojczyzny: Świadectwa nadesłane na apel Radia Maryja* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Sióstr Loretanek, 2002), Part Two, 203.

⁴⁹⁶ Wacław Sęk, *Proboszcz z gorącego pogranicza* (Lublin: Norbertinum, 2002), 33.

history.⁴⁹⁷ A Jew by the name of Schnellig was appointed the “director” of the Catholic seminary in Lwów. Schnellig oversaw the confiscation of the furnishings of Bishop Eugeniusz Baziak, who had to leave the building, and summoned the militia to invigilate all activities at the seminary. Schnellig took every opportunity to mock Poland and the Poles. He even ordered the Franciscan Sisters of the Family of Mary (Marian Sisters), who ran a nearby nursery school, to issue sacramental wine to the children for lunch.⁴⁹⁸ Another Jew, who had completed his rabbinical studies, frequently stood watch outside the seminary church and attempted to engage the clerics in conversation about religion. This Jew was very malicious and aggressive and ridiculed the Catholic faith.⁴⁹⁹

Student delegations were convoked to a theatre in Lwów on October 15, 1939 and informed that religious instruction and prayers were being banned at schools and crucifixes would be removed. Jewish delegates raised cheers in honour of Stalin and the Communist Party and started to sing the Internationale. When Polish students intoned the hymns “We Want God” (“*My chcemy Boga*”) and “We Will Not Forsake This Land” (“*Nie rzucim ziemi*”) in protest, a scuffle broke out. As a result, many of the Polish students were arrested.⁵⁰⁰

Before the sham referendum held in the Fall of 1939 to secure the populace’s approval to the incorporation of the southeastern Borderlands into the Ukrainian SSR, trucks decorated with red flags, banners and placards, and full of mostly Jewish youths boisterously singing songs praising the Soviet Union and maligning Poland and Poles, circulated throughout Lwów.⁵⁰¹

Jewish teachers took charge of the orphanage of the Sisters Servants of the Blessed Virgin Mary of the Immaculate Conception in *Bilka Szlachecka* near Lwów, and ardently preached atheism to the children.⁵⁰²

⁴⁹⁷ Beata Obertyńska (Marta Rudzka), *W domu niewoli*, Second edition (Chicago: Grono Przyjaciół, 1968), 12. Despite their experiences various Catholic orders of women later came to the assistance of Jews in Lwów, among them the Albertine Sisters, the Benedictine Sisters, the Benedictine Sisters of the Perpetual Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, the Carmelite Sisters, the Sisters of Charity, the Poor Clares of Perpetual Adoration, the Felician Sisters, the Franciscan Sisters of the Family of Mary, the Magdalene Sisters, the School Sisters of Notre Dame, the Sisters of the Resurrection, the Sacré Coeur Sisters, and the Ursuline Sisters. Some of their activities have been chronicled in Ewa Kurek, *Your Life Is Worth Mine: How Polish Nuns Saved Hundreds of Jewish Children in German-Occupied Poland, 1939–1945* (New York: Hippocrene, 1997).

⁴⁹⁸ Stanisław Bizuń, *Historia krzyżemznaczona: Wspomnienia z życia Kościoła katolickiego na Ziemi Lwowskiej 1939–1945* (Lublin: Instytut Badań nad Polonią i Duszpasterstwem Polonijnym Katolickiego Uniwersytetu Lubelskiego, and Oddział Lubelski Stowarzyszenia “Wspólnota Polska”, 1993), 64–66. According to the memoirs of Andrzej Jus and Karolina Jus, *Our Journey in the Valley of Tears* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), 73–74, 78–81, 90, Bishop Baziak was instrumental in the rescue of Karolina Jus (née Frist) and offered to shelter her parents and her only sister as well. Karolina’s father, who believed the risk to their lives at the hands of the Germans, to be exaggerated, declined the offer though “full of admiration for the bishop’s attitude, for his open-mindedness and honesty and for the way he criticized anti-Semitism.” The Franciscan Sisters of the Family of Mary rescued more than 600 Jews in the many convents and institutions they operated in Lwów and throughout Poland. Among many sources, see Kurek, *Your Life Is Worth Mine*, 129.

⁴⁹⁹ Bizuń, *Historia krzyżemznaczona*, 75–76.

⁵⁰⁰ Marian Żegota-Januszajtis, *Życie moje tak burzliwe...: Wspomnienia i dokumenty* (Warsaw: Bis-Press, 1993), 333; Hryciuk, *Polacy we Lwowie 1939–1944*, 127.

⁵⁰¹ Anna Rudzińska, “Wspomnienia lwowskie 1939–1940,” *Zeszyty Historyczne* (Paris), vo. 137 (2001): 136.

⁵⁰² Urban, *Droga krzyżowa Archidiecezji Lwowskiej w latach II wojny światowej 1939–1945*, 86–87.

Young Jews distributed anti-religious leaflets during Catholic religious services.⁵⁰³ (Jewish and Ukrainian enforcers were ruthless in collecting food quotas from farmers.⁵⁰⁴)

The Christmas season presented an opportunity for a Jewish teacher in *Derażne* near Kostopol to tear religious medallions off the necks of Christian children and to forbid them from wearing them.⁵⁰⁵

On February 22, 1940, a group of school children in *Borysław* started singing the Polish religious hymn “*Boże, coś Polskę*” [“God, who protected Poland”], instead of the Internationale. This led to the arrest of Monsignor Andrzej Osikowicz, who was eventually released after interventions by the Polish population. A group of Jewish Communist supporters broke into the Catholic church, desecrated it and seized religious artifacts. A mêlée broke out with a group of enraged Catholics in which six Jews culprits were injured.⁵⁰⁶

Many of the newly appointed teachers, who became ardent supporters of the Soviet regime, were local Jews whose educational and pedagogical qualifications were often rather poor. However, the principals of many schools were Jews who had been brought in from the Soviet Union; they were committed ideologues without exception.⁵⁰⁷

A similar atmosphere prevailed in community centres. A young Pole recalled a visit he paid to the local People’s Home in *Zambrów* in the summer of 1940, where festivities were going on to mark a Bolshevik holiday. Most of those in attendance were young Jews, who boisterously sang revolutionary songs maligning “Polish *pans*”. One of the young Poles intoned a Polish patriotic song which silenced the room. The young Poles quickly ran off, but one of them was summoned to the *selsovet* the next day to answer for the disruption. Slyly he gave altered lyrics and the NKVD let him off over the protest of the Jewish police commander and Jewish director of the People’s Home.⁵⁰⁸

The destruction of libraries and burning of Polish books was a common spectacle under both the Nazi and Soviet rules in Poland.⁵⁰⁹ In *Białzórka* near Krzemieniec, where the Bolsheviks were greeted enthusiastically by Ukrainians and Jews, one of the first deeds in which the rabble joined was the destruction of the local library and the burning of Polish books.⁵¹⁰

⁵⁰³ Wegierski, *September 1939*, 134–35.

⁵⁰⁴ Siekierka, Komański, and Bulzacki, *Ludobójstwo dokonane przez nacjonalistów ukraińskich na Polakach w województwie lwowskim 1939–1947*, 641.

⁵⁰⁵ Account of Włodzimierz Drohomirecki in *Świadkowie mówią*, 97.

⁵⁰⁶ The incidents in Borysław are based on a Polish underground report in Archiwum Zakładu Historii Ruchu Ludowego in Warsaw, Archiwum Stanisława Kota, sygnatura 20, k. 14. Such events are often portrayed as anti-Semitic pogroms in Jewish literature. Although allegedly an anti-Semite, Rev. Osikowicz, the local pastor, was arrested by the Germans for encouraging his parishioners to assist Jews. He had himself provided many Jews with false baptismal documents. He was deported to Majdanek concentration camp where he died on December 29, 1943. See Wacław Zajączkowski, *Martyrs of Charity: Christian and Jewish Response to the Holocaust*, Part One (Washington, D.C.: St. Maximilian Kolbe Foundation, 1987), 129–30; Yisrael Gutman and Shmuel Krakowski, *Unequal Victims: Poles and Jews During World War Two* (New York: Holocaust Library, 1986), 227.

⁵⁰⁷ Levin, *The Lesser of Two Evils*, 109.

⁵⁰⁸ Account of Edward Daniszewski in Aniela Malanowska, *Z dziejów walk z okupantami w powiecie zambrowskim w latach 1939–1945* (Warsaw: Rytm, 2003), 117–18.

⁵⁰⁹ Grudzińska-Gross and Gross, *War Through Children’s Eyes*, 56 (near Wołkowysk), 71 (Lwów), 195 (Łuck), 197 (near Równe), 199 (near Sarny). See also Głowacki, *Sowieci wobec Polaków na ziemiach wschodnich II Rzeczypospolitej 1939–1941*, 550–52.

⁵¹⁰ Account of Regina Owczarczak in Karłowicz, *Śladami ludobójstwa na Wołyniu*, 203; also reproduced in Stanisław Zagórski, comp., *Wschodnie losy Polaków* (Łomża: Stopka, 1996), vol. 6, 172.

A similar fate met the Pedagogical Library attached to the Emilia Plater High School in **Grodno**. A commission composed of two Jews arrived at the library in December 1939 to examine the holdings. If a book contained the word “God,” that was enough to justify its destruction regardless of the subject matter which the inspectors did not know or care to know. Almost the entire collection was confiscated and later burned.

The archives assembled in the Dominican monastery in **Lwów** were also ravaged. Books and documents, some of them very old and priceless, were destroyed deliberately and through neglect. The chief custodian was a Jew from Łódź, an NKVD informer, who kept taking over more of the building and did his utmost to try to evict the monks. Fortunately, on occasion, some people at the Municipal Office came to their aid. This Jew also played a key role in luring Father Czesław Kaniak, the second prior, to a meeting in the nearby arsenal ostensibly to sign a lease. Father Kaniak was arrested and taken to the NKVD prison on Pelczyńska Street. He was never heard of again. (There is some indication he was sentenced in Kirovograd in November 1940.)⁵¹¹ On Easter Sunday in 1940, a youth brigade attached to the security services invaded the church and disrupted the mass. Upon leaving the church worshippers were confronted with the blaring music of the Internationale.⁵¹²

Soon after the Soviet arrival, a large rally was organized in the old market square in **Lomża** at which a Jew stood on a motor vehicle screaming that the Poles will now be put in their place. When word leaked out that the NKVD would be staging a public book burning, Polish students conspired to smuggle books out of their high school library. The plan was foiled by the school’s new principal, Sura Malinowicz, a local, pro-Soviet Jewish woman, who promptly reported the students to the authorities. The female students were arrested and the library holdings were destroyed.⁵¹³

Public ceremonies in which Polish books were burned were conducted in many cities and towns. At the end of February and beginning of March 1940, Polish books seized from schools, libraries and even private collections were brought by Jews and Old Believers to the former Polish high school in **Brasław**, where they were trampled on as they were dumped into a temporary storage room. The Soviet-appointed principal also searched the students and confiscated any Polish books in their possession. In other localities, Polish books were dumped into lakes, while the Internationale was played and crowds consisting mostly of Jews cheered the spectacle.⁵¹⁴

As under Nazi rule numerous Polish monuments were destroyed or desecrated throughout Eastern Poland. Polish coat of arms and emblems, as well as pictures of Polish leaders, were removed immediately from government offices, schools and public places.⁵¹⁵ With the help of the local Jewish population, a monument honouring the Poles who rose against the Russian occupiers in 1863–1864 was destroyed in **Zambrów** on orders of a Jewish commissar. (Local Jews, including town councillors, had vehemently opposed its

Account of Dorota Sawicka, as cited in Nowak, *Przemilczane zbrodnie*, 191–92.

⁵¹¹ Zygmunt Mazur, “Dominikanie lwowscy w podwójnej niewoli,” *Gazeta* (Toronto), no. 144 (December 1991). Notwithstanding their experiences in Lwów, Tarnopol, and Czortków, described elsewhere, Polish Dominicans did not shy away from helping Jews under the German occupation. They provided material assistance and issued hundreds of false baptismal certificates to Jews; when the Germans got wind of the operation, Father Sylwester Paluch, who headed it, barely managed to escape arrest. Although a number of Jews survived thanks to Father Paluch’s documents and occupied important positions in postwar Poland, none of them found the time to attend his funeral in Warsaw in 1983.

⁵¹² Bizuń, *Historia krzyżem znaczone*, 57–58.

⁵¹³ Henryk Milewski, “Sytuacja poprzedzająca zesłanie i warunki bytowe zesłańców polskich w ZSRR w latach 1940–1946,” *Studia Łomżyńskie*, vol. 5 (1995): 111.

⁵¹⁴ Szemiel, *Wspomnienia kresowiaka a lat wojny*, 58.

⁵¹⁵ Grudzińska-Gross and Gross, *War Through Children’s Eyes*, 46 (Białowieża), 71 (Lwów), 50 (near Grodno), 172 (near Horochów), 197 (near Równe), 199 (near Sarny).

erection before the war.) A statue of St. John was pelted with stones and damaged during the May Day celebration in that town in 1940.⁵¹⁶

Led by a local Communist named Friedmann, Jews in *Trzcianne* armed with crowbars, hammers and spades smashed a monument commemorating Polish soldiers who fell in the Polish-Soviet War of 1919–1920. First they destroyed the Polish eagle, then a plaque with an inscription, and finally the plinth of the monument.⁵¹⁷ In order to mark the entry of the Soviet Army, Jewish teenagers in *Baranowicze* converged on the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier located in the centre of the town and smashed the eagle, the Polish national emblem, that adorned that monument with their axes.⁵¹⁸

In *Dzisna*, in the evening of September 17th, a group of Jews together with a few Belorussians set out with torches to demolish a bust of Marshal Józef Piłsudski, widely revered as having saved Poland from the Bolshevik onslaught in 1921, located in the centre of Józef Poniatowski Avenue. Singing the Internationale, they hacked the monument to pieces with crowbars and axes.⁵¹⁹ A memorial tablet commemorating the Polish students who fell in defence of *Lwów* in 1918–1919 was blotted out by Jews in that city.⁵²⁰ Polish high school students who were taken to cinemas to watch Soviet film chronicles in October 1939, and mocked the alleged accomplishments of Soviet learning and technology, were fingered by Jews and escorted out by the NKVD. They were soon dispatched to the Gulag.⁵²¹

Even children of Jewish “capitalists” such as Samuel Pisar, the son of a prominent Jewish landlord in *Białystok*, where hardly any native Russians lived, fell under the sway of Marxist ideology and Soviet anti-Polish imperialism:

In school, my education underwent a radical change for the better. It would be a mistake to regard Soviet schooling, even in Stalin’s day, merely as crude indoctrination. ...

For me, the world acquired a perfect clarity. The Soviet Union was progressive; the rest of the world was antiquated, still subject to the hateful forms of exploitation of man by man that were characteristic of the czarist era. Russian was declared to be the official language at my school ... Polish was abolished altogether.

With great solemnity I announced to my parents that when I grew up, I wanted to be a general of the Soviet Air Force. Meanwhile, I joined the Pioneers and the Cadets, and by the age of twelve had risen to junior officer rank. My favorite music was martial and I still remember some of the songs we sang, marching in parades to celebrate the anniversary of the Great October Revolution while the red flag, with the hammer and sickle, fluttered above: “If tomorrow be war, if tomorrow we march, be ready for battle today” ...⁵²²

That these actions were not motivated solely by Communist zeal, but had a distinct anti-Polish and anti-Catholic edge, is underscored by the fact that there is no record of Jewish monuments and synagogues

⁵¹⁶ The incidents in Zambrów were noted in Leszek Żebrowski, “Na manowcach ‘Dialogu,’” *Nasza Polska*, June 24, 1998. The source for these incidents is the wartime memoirs (typescript) of Józef Klimaszewski (*nom de guerre* “Cień”), *W cieniu czerwonego boru*, previously in Muzeum Ruchu Rewolucyjnego, now in Archiwum Państwowy, in Białystok (pages 7, 9, 29).

⁵¹⁷ Michał Mońko, “Nóż w plecy,” *Tygodnik Solidarność*, September 16, 2005.

⁵¹⁸ Bohdan Skaradziński, “Antysemitizm i polonofobia,” *Więź* (Warsaw), February 2000, 143.

⁵¹⁹ Account of Halina Balcerak in Grzelak, *Wrzesień 1939 na Kresach w relacjach*, 79–80.

⁵²⁰ Lukas, *The Forgotten Holocaust*, 128.

⁵²¹ Account of Andrzej Reymann, *Najjaśniejsza Rzeczpospolita*, 1993, as cited in Marian Kałuski, *Wypełniali przykazanie miłosierdzia: Polski Kościół i polscy katolicy wobec holocaustu* (Warsaw: von borowiecky, 2000), 63–64.

⁵²² Samuel Pisar, *Of Blood and Hope* (Boston and Toronto: Little, Brown, 1980), 178–79.

being vandalized or profaned.⁵²³ It is noteworthy that the anti-religious policies and anti-Church activities of the Soviet regime were overseen (until his death in 1943) by Yemelian Yaroslavsky (actually Miney Israilevich Gubelman), a Jew who had started up the powerful Association of Atheists. Yaroslavsky attracted many fanatical followers among Jews, who vigorously persecuted and virtually destroyed the (largely Polish) Roman Catholic Church in the Soviet Union before the outbreak of World War II.⁵²⁴

The first Christmas under Soviet rule was marred by Adam Ważyk (Wagman), a Jewish literary figure in prewar Poland, who railed against the Catholic clergy in the communist daily *Czerwony Sztandar* published in Lwów, for spreading religious propaganda “around the Christmas tree.”⁵²⁵

As we shall see, in their role as members of the militia and in other official capacities, Jews engaged in widespread pilfering of property belonging to Poles. The initial stages of the Soviet occupation also presented an opportunity for Jewish gangs, and others, to loot Polish estates. An estate in *Podweryszki* near Bieniakonie (southeast of Wilno) owned by the Kiersnowski family was totally stripped of its belongings. One of the gangs who plundered the mansion was led by a local Jew.⁵²⁶ The home of a Polish family in *Bieniakonie* was invaded by a Jewish woman, a neighbour, who stripped the windows of its embroidered curtains and removed the stove. As she left, she said “Your time is over.”⁵²⁷ In *Brańsk*, a local Jewish official named Pruszański (probably Welwl Pulszański) came to the home of a Pole and demanded an expensive bedroom he had just recently purchased.⁵²⁸

Poles also felt Jewish wrath in their day-to-day lives. Jewish shops in *Dzisna* remained closed and goods were not allowed to be purchased until the new Soviet authorities arrived. The Jews thereby left their Christian neighbours, their long-time clients, to fend for themselves.⁵²⁹ The local Polish school was soon turned into a Russian one, even though there were extremely few Russians in the area. A Polish student

⁵²³ The evidence suggests that, with few exceptions, Jewish religious institutions and organizations were not formally disbanded as were large numbers of Christian ones. However, laicization of Jewish life made enormous inroads and religious practices declined dramatically, much more so than among the Christian population. See Ewa Kowalska, *Przeżyć, aby wrócić!: Polscy zesłańcy lat 1940–1941 w ZSRR i ich losy do roku 1946* (Warsaw: Neriton, and Instytut Historii PAN, 1998), 69–70; Głowacki, *Sowieci wobec Polaków na ziemiach wschodnich II Rzeczypospolitej 1939–1941*, 604, 610; Levin, *The Lesser of Two Evils*, 155–58.

⁵²⁴ Nowak, *Przemilczane zbrodnie*, 156–57. See Głowacki, *Sowieci wobec Polaków na ziemiach wschodnich II Rzeczypospolitej 1939–1941*, 609–610 for a description of the measures Yaroslavsky undertook in Poland’s Eastern Borderlands.

⁵²⁵ Jacek Trznadel, *Kolaboranci: Tadeusz Boy-Żeleński i grupa komunistycznych pisarzy we Lwowie 1939–1941* (Komorów: Antyk–Marcin Dybowski, 1998), 450.

⁵²⁶ Ryszard Kiersnowski, *Tam i wtedy: W Podweryszkach, w Wilnie i w puszczy, 1939–1945* (Warsaw: Editions Spotkania, 1994), 39.

⁵²⁷ Testimony of Anna Bardzyńska (née Jarosz) in Grażyna Dziedzińska, “Dziewczyna z tamtych lat,” *Nasza Polska*, December 20–27, 2005. When the Germans created a ghetto for the local Jews in the nearby town of Werenowo (Werenów), Poles came to their assistance. Poles rescued a number of Jews who had been shot by the Germans and left for dead in a pit they were forced to dig for themselves. Wounded Jews, among them some children, were brought to the local hospital where they were cared for by Dr. Uszyński, a member of the underground, and Polish nurses including Anna Bardzyńska’s mother. Anna Bardzyńska went to look for sugar to pacify the young Jewish children who were in pain. The next day she went to confess the “theft” of the sugar, a rare commodity, which she took from a home without asking. Moved by her account, Rev. Apolinary Zubelewicz blessed the young conspirator.

⁵²⁸ Testimony of Janina Woińska, Polish Witnesses to the Holocaust Project, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Internet: <https://collections.ushmm.org/oh_findingaids/RG-50.488.0052_trs_en.pdf>.

⁵²⁹ Account of Halina Balcerak in Grzelak, *Wrzesień 1939 na Kresach w relacjach*, 80.

recalls being reproached by her teacher, a Jewish friend of her mother's and a graduate of the Stefan Batory University in Wilno, in Russian: "Stop speaking in that dog's language. Your Poland will never return."⁵³⁰

Chaim Chomsky (Chomski), the head of the municipal administration (*gorsovet*) in *Stonim* and an ardent opponent of Polish statehood, forbade the use of the Polish language in public.⁵³¹ Two Polish women who were speaking Polish publicly in Iwie (Iwje) were accosted by the local Communist secretary, a young Jew named Rahacz, who said to them, "Forget about speaking Polish. Your Pans' Poland will never return!"⁵³²

In *Szumsk* near Krzemieniec,

The Jews ... showed particular hostility towards Poles. They donned red armbands and proclaimed themselves to be a militia. They harassed Poles for every possible reason. They forbade us to speak Polish in front of the church.⁵³³

Even the first secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Belorussia, Pantelemon Ponomarenko, spoke disdainfully of the appearance of Jewish aggression towards the Poles—their neighbours and former clients—he personally witnessed in *Bialystok*:

I myself saw in Bialystok one big, fat Jew—the owner of a large store, this was at the very start, how a Polish female worker came to him with her purse, he seized her by her collar and threw her out of the store, while saying they drank our blood with pleasure ...

The Jewish population in particular has gotten out of hand in this respect. ... the Jews started to assail all of the Poles, all of them without exception ...⁵³⁴

When a spectacle shown in a Jewish theatre in Bialystok in November 1939 mocked the former Polish authorities, the entire audience laughed uncontrollably. The presentation had a tremendous reception in Bialystok and the troop went on the road to other cities.⁵³⁵

Symbolic funerals were held throughout Eastern Poland to mark the destruction of the Polish state. An eyewitness recalls a parade held in *Boryslaw* on November 7, 1939, the anniversary of the Bolshevik Revolution, to mark the "Funeral of the Pans' Poland." A coffin with the words "Pans' Poland" written on it was laid on a derelict carriage, pulled by a lean, deathly looking nag. Various Polish flags were hung from the carriage and dragged along the ground. A group of Jewish activists followed the carriage barefoot, dressed in the torn uniforms of Polish generals. Among them was a tall, slender Jew dressed in a top hat and disheveled tuxedo with a white ribbon bearing the name "Minister Beck".⁵³⁶

Another eyewitness reported on such an event staged in Boryslaw in which, to their credit, not all Jews rejoiced:

Someone thought up the idea of holding a funeral for Poland. They made a coffin and wrote "Poland" on two sides of it. The funeral procession made its way through the entire city. Students from all the schools in Boryslaw were sent to this macabre event. "Poland" was buried in the sports stadium ...

⁵³⁰ Ibid.

⁵³¹ Sosiński, *Ziemia nowogródzka*, 69.

⁵³² Kazimierz Niechwiadowicz, *Moje Sobotniki*, Second revised edition (Poznań: Gawia, 2004).

⁵³³ Account of Mieczysław and Irena Trawiński in Siemaszko and Siemaszko, *Ludobójstwo dokonane przez nacjonalistów ukraińskich na ludności polskiej Wołynia 1939–1945*, vol. 2, 1165.

⁵³⁴ Cited in Evgenii S. Rozenblat, "'Contact Zones' in Interethnic Relations—The Case of Western Belarus," in Barkan, Cole, and Struve, *Shared History, Divided Memory*, 212.

⁵³⁵ Żbikowski, *Archiwum Ringelbluma*, vol. 3, 84.

⁵³⁶ Budzyński, *Miasto Schulza*, 156.

The next day at school we had to report. Not everyone had participated in the funeral. They knew very well who did not attend the burial arranged for our homeland.

I stood on the small rug in the administrative office: “Krupikówna, you weren’t at the funeral.” “I couldn’t go because the elastic in my underwear broke...” I replied to the school authority. My [Jewish] girlfriend [Fredzia] Wajdman said, “I don’t like going to funerals. I prefer weddings.” Somehow we got off easy. The person who questioned us about our absence at the funeral, although a Jewish woman, was sympathetic. May God send us more good Jews like that.⁵³⁷

In *Drohobycz*, the end of a series of lengthy speeches praising the Soviet Union was the signal for the procession of a decorated vehicle carrying a coffin with portraits of Polish dignitaries, a (Polish) red and white flag, a (Polish) eagle, and a police hat. The crown recited a verse celebrating the division of Poland between Germany and the Red Army.⁵³⁸ A coffin with “Poland” inscribed on it was also paraded around *Lwów*.⁵³⁹

The new authorities also used every opportunity to foster hatred for Poland. In the largely Jewish town of *Zofiówka* (or *Zoffówka*) near Łuck, anti-Polish posters were plastered on many homes. At the start of the new school year (delayed until October 1939), the NKVD further poisoned the atmosphere by inciting students to recall incidents of harassment of ethnic minorities in independent Poland. This call was taken up by a portion of the Jewish youth, even though relations among students of various ethnic and religious backgrounds in prewar Polish schools had been proper. Their conduct and taunts caused many Polish students to drop out of school.⁵⁴⁰ In a *Pińsk* school, Jewish students called their Polish colleagues “Polish

⁵³⁷ Janina Ziemiańska, “Z Kresów do Nowego Jorku (1),” *Nasz Głos*, June 10, 1999. Ziemiańska, née Krupik, mentions another Jewish friend, Hesi Sznajder-Krochmal, who mourned the fate of Poland along with his Polish schoolmates.

⁵³⁸ Budzyński, *Miasto Schulza*, 127.

⁵³⁹ Nowak, *Przemilczane zbrodnie*, 85.

⁵⁴⁰ Account of Józef Ostrowski in Karłowicz, *Śladami łobobójstwa na Wołyniu*, 256. Both the students and teaching staff of the senior public school in Zofiówka were mostly Jewish. Although the principal was a Pole, the four teachers were Jews. The student body also included Poles, Ukrainians and Germans, all of whom got along well. This was not an exceptional situation: Polish state schools accepted students from all national and religious groups and employed non-Polish teachers. For example, at the Królowa Jadwiga School in Równe, the principal was a Ukrainian and one of the form masters was a Jew. See *Ilustrowany przewodnik po Równem* (Lublin: Towarzystwo Przyjaciół Krzemieńca i Ziemi Wołyńsko-Podolskiej, 1999), 96, photo 164. At the state-run King Władysław Jagiełło high school in Drohobycz, in the latter half of the 1930s, the student body consisted of Poles and Jews roughly in numbers, and a smaller contingent of Ukrainians. Of the 30 teachers, 8 were Jews and 6 were Ukrainians. Inter-ethnic relations were entirely amicable. See Stanisław Siekierski, ed., *Żyli wśród nas...: Wspomnienia Polaków i Żydów nadesłane na konkurs pamięci polsko-żydowskiej o nagrodę imienia Dawida Ben Guriona* (Płońsk: Zarząd Miasta Płońsk, Miejskie Centrum Kultury w Płońsku, and Towarzystwo Miłośników Ziemi Płońskiej, 2001), 73–75. Shimon Redlich describes the situation in a rather typical high school in Brzeżany, a town of about 13,000, half of whom were Poles, thirty percent Jews, and twenty percent Ukrainians (who predominated in the surrounding countryside), thus: “Fairly good relations prevailed among its Polish, Ukrainian, and Jewish students and faculty. The three religions—Roman Catholicism, Greek Catholicism, and Judaism—were taught in separate groups to all Gimnazjum students. The data available for 1936 quite accurately portray the ethnic and gender profile of the Gimnazjum in the interwar years. Out of 580 students, 293 were Poles, 176 were Ukrainians, and 111 were Jews. Among them were 339 males and 241 females. ... The faculty consisted of 23 male and 3 female teachers. Thirteen of them were Polish, 8 were Ukrainian, and 5 were Jewish. A look at one particular graduating class, that of 1934, reveals that of the 26 students who succeeded in their *matura* matriculation exams, 11 were males and 15 were females. Eleven were Jewish, 9 were Polish, and 6 were Ukrainian. ... The prevailing atmosphere in the Gimnazjum was that of serious scholarship and respect for the teachers.” See Redlich, *Together and Apart in Brzezany*, 48–49. That author stresses that “despite some instances of anti-Semitism, there was never a pogrom-like atmosphere in prewar Brzezany. Jewish religious and community life seemed to thrive. Middle-class Jews led quite comfortable lives. ... Brzezany neighborhoods were quite mixed and relations were correct, at the very least.” *Ibid.*, 53, 60.

dogs.”⁵⁴¹ After witnessing his Jewish colleague deface an image of Marshal Józef Piłsudski, a Polish youth shoved the youth in a ditch. This allegedly “anti-Semitic” act led to the young Pole’s expulsion from school.⁵⁴²

Public meetings, rallies and assemblies inevitably became forums for anti-Polish agitation as Jews wanted to dispay their dominance over public space. On their way to a compulsory assembly to mark the 1917 October Revolution in the House of Culture in the town of **Braslaw** on November 6, 1939, two Polish high school boys were accosted by a group of young Jews who shoved them off the sidewalk yelling: “Off the road, Polish pigs, your time is over!” At the assembly, a newsreel announced the demise of “Lords’ Poland,” accompanied by the frantic clapping of the Jewish audience. The following day, a parade was held in which a vociferous group of Jews carried banners in Yiddish and Russian with portraits of Soviet leaders, red stars and red flags.⁵⁴³

At gatherings like this held throughout the Eastern Borderlands, independent Poland was ridiculed and accused of outrageous acts of oppression directed at just about everyone: minorities, workers, peasants, military servicemen, children of school age, etc. Jews were particularly prominent at political rallies where they relished taking swipes at Poland and Poles: “*Nu*, Poland’s finally gone to the devil.” “Poland is in a sack held by Hitler at one end and by Stalin at the other.”⁵⁴⁴

This gave rise to an atmosphere in which crude denunciations abounded. In the student self-government election at a high school in **Braslaw**, one of the candidates, the daughter of a well-to-do Jew who owned a large food store, portrayed herself as the child of a poor labourer who had to endure hunger, poverty and persecution by the Polish authorities because of her Communist beliefs and Jewish origin.⁵⁴⁵ At a public meeting held in **Wolożyn** the participants were invited to tell about their life under the Polish regime. A Jew ascended the stage and, turning his face to the wall, showed a hole in his torn pants, and then he said, “Our whole life under the Polaks was like my pants.”⁵⁴⁶

Electoral campaigns also became a source of ethnic friction. In **Mir**, although Jewish nationalists found entirely unsuitable the local Jewish candidate to the National Assembly, an uneducated blacksmith by the name of Bruk, they were united in supporting him: “even the rabbi will vote for him just to sting the Poles.”⁵⁴⁷

Some 200 people assembled for a meeting organized by the Soviet authorities in **Ustrzyki Dolne**. Szymrko Bergenbaum, an affluent Jew from Sanok who owned a store, restaurant and skittle-alley and whose children had completed their higher education under Polish rule, shouted from the dais that Poland had been shot to hell. He snapped the Polish flag he held in his hand and stomped on it.⁵⁴⁸

During the 1940 May Day rally in **Wizna**, Lejb Guzowski, who held the position of political agitator at the school and secretary of the local Communist organization, stood on the base of the destroyed Polish military monument and railed at the Polish population who had been instructed to assemble for the event:

⁵⁴¹ Rozenblat, “Evrei v sisteme mezhnatsionalnykh otnoshenii v zapadnykh oblastiakh Belarusi, 1939–1941 gg.,” *Białoruskie Zeszyty Historyczne*, no. 13 (2000): 100.

⁵⁴² Józef Jan Kuźmiński, *Z Iwieńca i Stołpców do Białegostoku* (Białystok: n.p., 1993).

⁵⁴³ Szemiel, *Wspomnienia kresowiaka z lat wojny*, 44–46.

⁵⁴⁴ Account of Tadeusz Czuba, quoted in Nowak, *Przemilczane zbrodnie*, 93.

⁵⁴⁵ Szemiel, *Wspomnienia kresowiaka a lat wojny*, 59.

⁵⁴⁶ Mendl Goldshmid (Ramat Itskhak), “Volozhyn under the Soviet Regime,” in Leoni, *Wolożyn: Sefer shel ha-ir ve-shel yeshivat “Ets Hayim”*, 532.

⁵⁴⁷ Strzembosz, *Okupacja sowiecka (1939–1941) w świetle tajnych dokumentów*, 182.

⁵⁴⁸ Account of Sylwester Belza in Andrzej Potocki, *Bieszczadzkie losy: Bojkowie i Żydzi* (Rzeszów and Krosno: Apla, 2000), 168.

“You have to remember once and for all that Poland will never return. The great Soviet Union and we are the masters of this land.” The Jews in the crowd yelled out: “Long live the Red Army! Long live our great leader and father Stalin!” The Poles were dejected and enraged at the conduct of the occupiers and their collaborators. That June Guzowski was executed by the Polish underground.⁵⁴⁹

At times, Jews competed with one another in fabricating charges against the Polish state. One young Jew in Lwów railed on how every Polish count, officer and landowner had the right to cast from six to ten votes in Polish elections, whereas a peasant or worker did not have even one vote.⁵⁵⁰ A Jewish professor noted, with shame, that Jewish speakers dominated a special meeting called at the University of Lwów to greet the new Soviet rulers: “There was no nonsense or lie that this portion of the Jewish youth who believed that their dreams had been fulfilled would not let itself be taken in by.”⁵⁵¹

Poles were also compelled to attend these spectacles and anyone who dared to question the malicious and humiliating attacks was soon arrested and given a harsh prison term.⁵⁵² Needless to say, prewar Communists and the radicalized Jewish youth did not need much encouragement to jump on the bandwagon. But this circus also attracted masses of non-Communist Jews who were consumed by the Soviet propaganda. As one teenage resident of *Grodno* from a prominent, well-to-do family recalls,

My father was enthusiastic about the possibilities now that eastern Poland was about to be annexed to the Soviet Union, and he took me with him to speeches and political rallies. At the first one we attended, a Soviet political officer had harangued a huge crowd. I struggled to understand the words. “There is no need to fear Hitler,” he said. “Hitler is dead. We have killed him.” Even I knew that was a lie. But my father didn’t seem to care that the speeches were all propaganda. He believed that the war was now over and that our part of Poland was on the verge of becoming a much better place. All the wonderful things we had heard about for years on Radio Moscow were about to come true. ...

Many Jews were Socialists or Communists, and all of a sudden they began taking important positions. ... No one, for example, was allowed to say “Zhid” anymore, the common term for Jew [actually, the only Polish word for Jew—*M.P.*] that carried with it an offensive connotation... All of a sudden one was not permitted to pronounce this standard vocabulary item upon pain of a visit from the NKVD. How, then, to indicate a Jewish person? It was a problem you could hear some Poles struggling with. ‘He’s a Zdi... a Zhi... a... you know, he’s one of those who pray in the synagogue.’⁵⁵³

The People’s Assemblies of Western Belorussia and Western Ukraine, convoked at the end of October 1939, provided a forum for local delegates to show their new loyalties. One Jewish speaker who had completed teachers’ college in Poland, speaking in Yiddish, claimed that in Poland, “schools were a rare

⁵⁴⁹ Gawrychowski, *Na placówce AK (1939–1945)*, 64.

⁵⁵⁰ Account of Beata Obertyńska in Gross and Grudzińska-Gross, *W czterdziestym nas Matko na Sybir zesłali...*, 35.

⁵⁵¹ Steinhaus, *Wspomnienia i zapiski*, 170–71.

⁵⁵² A number of examples are provided in Nowak, *Przemilczane zbrodnie*, 146–48.

⁵⁵³ Felix Zandman with David Chanoff, *Never the Last Journey* (New York: Schocken, 1995), 28–29. Like many Soviet enthusiasts, the author’s father, Aaron Zandman, was neither poor nor uneducated—he had a Ph.D. in chemistry from the University of Vienna and had married into the wealthy Freydovicz family and became a junior partner in the family building and supply business. The Freydovicz firm, most of whose employees were Jews, built large projects for the Polish government, including barracks and bridges. Described as a “Zionist Socialist,” Aaron Zandman attended illegal May Day demonstrations and listened to Radio Moscow. He spoke to his children only in Yiddish, never Polish. The author attended a secular Hebrew-language school, part of a Zionist educational movement, where various Zionist organizations competed with each other: “Tensions among them ran high. In school the kids even had fist-fights, especially between Hashomer and Betar. Betar wanted a state, which was enough for Hashomer to accuse the Betar kids of fascism. ... Hashomer wanted to improve social conditions, which in the Betaris’ minds made them all Communists.” Ibid., 11–21. As for mutual relations between Poles and Jews, “They were two nations living on the same land ... The two communities lived together as neighbors, some hating each other, some liking each other, but always with an edge of uneasiness and, on the Jews’ part, an underlayer of anxiety.” Ibid., 17–18.

exception and consisted of one or two classes.” He called on the delegates to incorporate the region into Soviet Belorussia.⁵⁵⁴

Another speaker, a Jewish deputy from Boryslaw, maintained that under Polish rule more than 20,000 people in his city of 45,000 were starving. He exalted the Soviet invaders for their concern for the workers and urged that the region be incorporated into Soviet Ukraine.⁵⁵⁵

Loyalties changed overnight. A Jewish lawyer from central Poland by the name of Henoch Korngold had always distanced himself from his Jewish colleagues in Wilno, the “Litvaks” who spoke Russian among themselves, underscoring that he was a Pole of the Jewish religion. After Poland’s defeat, however, he expressed to a former Polish judge his delight that the “Polish rule had finally come to an end.”⁵⁵⁶

One Jew recalled, shortly after, typical scenes he had witnessed:

As for the Jews they took their revenge on Poles in a manner that was oftentimes very hideous. The expression “your days are over” was not only used very frequently, but usually it was abused. Once in a crowded train I was a witness to how a Jew who was standing turned to a Pole who was seated and took him to task for not offering him his seat. When the Pole replied that he did not see why he should give up his seat, an avalanche of invectives and insults came at him among them, like a refrain, the Jew repeated, “Do you think that these are the good old days?”⁵⁵⁷

A Jew from *Mir* expressed the sentiments of many of his compatriots when he commented about the transformed relations between Poles and Jews: “I have to admit that we were quite happy to see them [the Poles] in their present condition. ... Our rulers of yesterday were made small and humble.”⁵⁵⁸ There was precious little brotherhood to be had.

This state of affairs was not to the liking of all Jews, however. A faculty colleague of Wanda Pomykalska’s father, who had taken refuge in *Stanisławów*, confided:

The Jewish youngsters of this city ... were being registered to serve in a Red militia, and were very enthusiastic. ...

Lanski particularly noted that the many parochial schools had lost their nuns, priests and crucifixes, and in their place now were Marxist teachers, many of whom, he said, were of Jewish faith. Instead of the moralities and faith of religion, he said, the teachings were now strictly Marxist dogma.

While Lanski himself was Jewish, he did not agree with what was being done. “The clever Communists are getting their messages across and leaving the Jews to take the blame,” he said.⁵⁵⁹

Of course, the Soviets should not shoulder all the blame. Without a multitude of willing collaborators scenes like those described above could not have occurred.

⁵⁵⁴ Adam Sudoł, *Początki sowietyzacji Kresów Wschodnich Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej (jesień 1939 roku)* (Bydgoszcz and Toruń: Wyższa Szkoła Pedagogiczna w Bydgoszczy, 1997), 172. In fact, as accounts cited in this compilation show, many Jews were employed as teachers in Polish state schools. For example, in Zofiówka, in Volhynia, a number of Jewish and Ukrainian teachers taught at the public school in that town. See Siemaszko and Siemaszko, *Ludobójstwo dokonane przez nacjonalistów ukraińskich na ludności polskiej Wołynia 1939–1945*, vol. 2, 1193.

⁵⁵⁵ Sudoł, *Początki sowietyzacji Kresów Wschodnich Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej (jesień 1939 roku)*, 172.

⁵⁵⁶ Stanisław Mianowski, *Świat, który odszedł: Wspomnienia wilnianina 1895–1945* (Warsaw: Rytm, 1995), 172–73.

⁵⁵⁷ Cited in Musiał, “Stosunki polsko-żydowskie na Kresach Wschodnich R.P. pod okupacją sowiecką (1939–1941),” *Biuletyn Kwartalny Radomskiego Towarzystwa Naukowego*, vol. 34, no. 1 (1999): 122.

⁵⁵⁸ Pinchuk, *Shtetl Jews under Soviet Rule*, 98–99.

⁵⁵⁹ Pomykalski, *The Horror Trains*, 97.

CHAPTER SEVEN

A Few Short Weeks Was All That Was Needed to Leave a Mark

The original border agreed to in the secret protocol to the Nazi-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact of August 23, 1939 divided Poland along the Narew-Vistula-San Rivers. However, by the Nazi-Soviet Boundary and Friendship Treaty of September 28, 1939, the USSR exchanged the territory between the Vistula and Bug Rivers (Lublin Province and part of Warsaw Province) for control over Lithuania, which was added to the Soviet sphere of influence. The predominantly Polish city of Wilno was officially transferred to Lithuania on October 10, 1939, and that country was annexed by the Soviet Union in mid-June the following year.⁵⁶⁰

From September 22, 1939, a large swath of the Lublin Province was occupied by the Red Army. Those territories remained under Soviet rule until the Red Army retreated to the east side of the Bug River on October 5, 1939. Local collaborators—eager to establish the “new order”—left an indelible mark that was to take a toll on relations between Poles and Jews throughout the war. In the course of just two short weeks of Soviet rule, as many as 500 Poles perished at the hands of or with the active assistance of local collaborators.⁵⁶¹

In *Chelm*, arches adorned with flowers were erected by Jews to welcome the invading Soviet army. Throngs of excited Jews, both young and old, converged on the streets of Chelm wearing red armbands. Jewish community leaders came out to greet the Soviets with bread and salt.⁵⁶² Armed militia groups roamed the town hunting down their victims—Polish soldiers and officials. Polish soldiers were disarmed, physically attacked, and handed over to the Soviets. Soviets were led to the homes of Polish officers. Polish captives were held in terrible conditions before being executed locally or shipped off to the Soviet interior.⁵⁶³ Wounded Polish soldiers were rounded up in the local hospital, loaded on freight trains, and

⁵⁶⁰ There are conflicting reports on the state of relations between Poles and Jews in Wilno at the time of the departure of the Soviet troops and the arrival of the Lithuanian forces towards the end of October 1939, and on the state of relations between Lithuanians and Jews in June 1940 when the Soviets reentered the city. The inability of the Lithuanian authorities to ensure supplies of food for the population and to curtail hoarding of and speculation in food by Jewish shop owners resulted in huge demonstrations on October 31, 1939, in which both Jews and Poles took part, and in looting of food stores, both Jewish and Polish. Jewish demonstrators shouted pro-Soviet slogans, whereas Polish demonstrators denounced the Lithuanian occupiers. As a result of the ensuing demonstrations and riots which lasted for several days (and in which only some of the demonstrators took part and committed excesses), scores of Poles, Jews, Russians, and Belorussians were arrested. See Liekis, *1939*, 265–71; Alfred Erich Senn, *Lithuania 1940: Revolution from Above* (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2007), 55–57, 198–201; Marek Wierzbicki, “Polish-Jewish Relations in Vilna and the Region of Western Vilna under Soviet Occupation, 1939–1941,” *Polin*, vol. 19 (2007): 500–1; Wojciech Rojek, “Wielka Brytania wobec państwowej przynależności Wileńszczyzny (sierpień 1939–sierpień 1940),” in Krzysztof Jasiewicz, ed., *Tygiel narodów Stosunki społeczne i etniczne na dawnych ziemiach wschodnich Rzeczypospolitej 1939–1953* (Warsaw: Instytut Studiów Politycznych PAN, Rytm, and Polonia Aid Foundation Trust, 2002), 262.

⁵⁶¹ For a pioneering monograph on this topic see Jacek Romanek, *Kolaboracja z Sowietami na terenie województwa lubelskiego we wrześniu i październiku 1939 r.* (Lublin and Warsaw: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej–Komisja Ścigania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu, Oddział w Lublinie, 2019). The estimate of Polish victims of this collaboration is found on page 184.

⁵⁶² Testimony of Barbara Zakrzewska cited in Aleksander Solarewicz, “Sowieci w polskim dworze,” *Rzeczpospolita*, September 16, 2009.

⁵⁶³ Jerzy Masłowski, “Sowieci w Chełmie w świetle pamiętnika Marty Wańkowicz,” in Tomasz Rodziewicz, ed., *Agresja sowiecka 17 września 1939 roku na Kresach Wschodnich i Lubelszczyźnie: Studia i materiały* (Lublin: Towarzystwo Przyjaciół Grodna i Wilna—Oddział w Lublinie, 2009), 132; Romanek, *Kolaboracja z Sowietami na terenie województwa lubelskiego we wrześniu i październiku 1939 r.*, 88–90.

shipped to prisoner of war camps in the East.⁵⁶⁴ Searches for targeted Poles also presented an opportunity for the militiamen to rob them.⁵⁶⁵

According to an eyewitness,

It was late in the afternoon, about six o'clock. On the street we were crossing we witnessed a gang of about ten to fifteen Jewish youths assaulting a young soldier with their knives, truncheons and bayonets. Each of the Jews wanted to have his share in the murder. The entire group attacked him as he was walking alone. This took place just some fifty to a hundred metres in front of us. We were walking in the same direction as that soldier. Seeing what was happening and hearing the voices of the soldier and the Jews who were killing him I felt weak and fainted. My father dragged me to the entrance of a building ... That picture remains with me to this day.⁵⁶⁶

When a Polish army unit led by Lieutenant Janusz Pawelkiewicz entered Chełm just before the arrival of the Soviet army on September 25th, the soldiers encountered the grisly sight of twelve Polish officers nailed to the floor of a school, the deed of local Jews.⁵⁶⁷

According to Israeli historian Dov Levin,

A Jewish Communist who had been released from prison by the outbreak of the war and reached the town of Chełm, which was under Soviet rule at the time (it was subsequently handed over to the Germans), describes the entire town as having been in Jewish hands; the mayor [Zwiling] was Jewish, and all the policemen and municipal office holders were Jewish Communists with the exception of "a few Poles."⁵⁶⁸

With the Soviet retreat from this area,

An organized group of artisans reached Luck [Łuck, in Volhynia] from Chełm, which had fallen to the Germans, leaving their wives and children behind. The members of this group, carrying a faded red flag that they had saved from the 1905 revolution as a talisman, ... formed a commune, found jobs, and pooled their income.⁵⁶⁹

It is worth noting that, after the German takeover, when a heavy levy was imposed on the Jewish community of Chełm in late 1939, the local Polish intelligentsia contributed food and money.⁵⁷⁰

In the largely Jewish town of **Kosów Lacki** lying north of Sokołów Podlaski,

The Russians were quick to organize a local government, and a few young men who had been members of the illegal Communist Party in Kosow [Kosów Lacki] proudly helped them. Volunteering for the militia and

⁵⁶⁴ Marian Turski, ed., *Losy żydowskie: Świadectwo żywych*, vol. 2 (Warsaw: Stowarzyszenie Żydów Kombatanów i Poszkodowanych w II Wojnie Światowej, 1999), 164.

⁵⁶⁵ Romanek, *Kolaboracja z Sowietami na terenie województwa lubelskiego we wrześniu i październiku 1939 r.*, 88–89.

⁵⁶⁶ Account of Michał Ławacz, quoted in Nowak, *Przemilczane zbrodnie*, 58–59.

⁵⁶⁷ Paweł Piotrowski, "Oficerowie przybici gwoździami do podłogi," *Nasza Polska*, September 15, 1999.

⁵⁶⁸ Levin, *The Lesser of Two Evils*, 43. See also Paweł Kiernikowski, "Wrzesień 1939 na Ziemi Chełmskiej," *Rocznik Chełmski*, vol. 4 (1998): 137–39 for confirmation of this picture and descriptions of harassment of Polish military and state officials.

⁵⁶⁹ Levin, *The Lesser of Two Evils*, 186.

⁵⁷⁰ Samuel D. Kassow, *Who Will Write Our History?: Emanuel Ringelblum, the Warsaw Ghetto, and the Oyneg Shabes Archive* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007), 275.

guiding the Soviet troops around the region. ... But after a few days the Russians left. ... Many young people chose to leave with the Russians.⁵⁷¹

When the Soviet army entered *Biała Podlaska* on September 25, Jewish tradesmen erected a triumphal gate on which they mounted several red flags and a banner reading “Welcome.” Many Jewish houses displayed red flags. The newly formed Red militia, composed mostly of Jews and Ukrainians, led the hunt for Polish soldiers and estate owners, whom the militiamen handed over to the NKVD. Civilians with red armbands, for the most part Jews, led Soviet officials to the homes of Polish officers to conduct searches and seizures of weapons.⁵⁷² According to Yosel Epelbaum (later Joseph Pell),

True, some of the Jewish communists, operating openly for the first time, rubbed the Poles’ noses in their defeat. One young Jewish woman, proudly holding a red flag in her hand, stood in front of city hall and blocked the Polish mayor from entering. Other Jews informed the Soviet military commanders of Polish officials who had been the harshest anticommunists before the war. These unfortunates were now slated for deportation to the Stalinist gulag.

There were bizarre moments, too. In a communist parade down the main street, a woman with one leg much shorter than the other limped along shouting in Yiddish, “*Alle gleich, alle gleich.*” (All are equal, all are equal.)⁵⁷³

In *Łomazy* near Biała Podlaska, a group of young Jewish men, Communist sympathizers, apprehended several prominent Poles, whom they considered to be “Fascists,” and turned them over to the Soviets. Some

⁵⁷¹ Account of Rivka Barlev in *Kosow Lacki* (San Francisco: Holocaust Center of Northern California, 1992), 21.

⁵⁷² Paweł Borek, “Garnizon Biała Podlaska podczas wojny obronnej 1939 roku,” *Radzyński Rocznik Humanistyczny*, vol. 3 (2005): 119–35, here at 131–32; Romanek, *Kolaboracja z Sowietami na terenie województwa lubelskiego we wrześniu i październiku 1939 r.*, 70–72.

⁵⁷³ Joseph Pell and Fred Rosenbaum, *Taking Risks: A Jewish Youth in the Soviet Partisans and His Unlikely Life in California* (Berkeley: Western Jewish History Center of the Judah L. Magnes Museum and RDR Books, 2004), 35.

of those arrested were executed by the Soviets locally; others were deported and their fate is unknown.⁵⁷⁴ The local revolutionary committee, composed of Jews, staged a warm welcome for the Soviets. It included Epelbaum, who was appointed chairman, Litman, who headed the workers' militia, Moszko Połosecki, and Mejer Kuk.⁵⁷⁵ During the brief Soviet occupation, a group of Jews, both men and women, invaded and profaned the Catholic church and parish rectory. They destroyed liturgical robes, religious artefacts and church records.⁵⁷⁶

In villages and towns such as *Kodeń, Połoski, Ślawatycze, Terespol* and *Janów Podlaski*, the Jewish community came out in full force to greet the Red Army. Young Jews formed the core of the newly created

⁵⁷⁴ According to Adam Winder (Abraham Wunderbojm or Wunderboim of Łomazy), the young pro-Soviet Jews who arrested the local prominent Poles were employed by his father, Pinhas Wunderboim, a harness maker. When the Soviets left the town on October 8, 1939, "Polish Fascists went after the people who helped the Russians." Allegedly, they killed a girl who had made a red flag to greet the Soviets and killed or arrested (Winder gives two versions) an older man whose son had been involved with the Soviets. Some Poles accused Winder's father of having instructed his young employees as to whom to arrest and stabbed him and set fire to his house. (Although his family left Łomazy after this incident, Pinhas Wunderboim returned to recover merchandise he had left with Polish farmers.) Winder claims that the Jews who had donned red armbands during the Soviet occupation left with the Soviets. See the testimony of Adam Winder (Abraham Wunderbojm or Wunderboim), dated August 15, 1995, Shoah Foundation Institute Visual History Archive, University of Southern California, Interview code 5517. According to another Jewish report, several of the Poles who had been arrested were executed by the Soviets, and several others were deported. The Jewish informant stated that the Poles—quite correctly, it seems—suspected the Jews, who had welcomed the Soviets, of having played a part in the apprehension and fate of these Poles. According to the Jewish informant, who accuses the Poles of staging a pogrom, several Jews were killed by Poles after the Soviets left Łomazy. See Aleksandra Bańkowska, ed., *Archiwum Ringelbluma: Konspiracyjne Archiwum Getta Warszawskiego*, vol. 6: *Generalne Gubernatorstwo: Relacje i dokumenty* (Warsaw: Żydowski Instytut Historyczny im. Emanuela Ringelbluma, 2012), 73–74. According to regional historian Romuald Szudejko, a few Jews were assaulted after the Soviets left Łomazy; a Jewish woman was shot accidentally, and one house was set on fire. Some Poles also came to the aid of the Jews who were wrongly accused. All of these factors point to targeted reprisals against actual or suspected Soviet collaborators, unlike the Jewish assaults on Poles which struck at innocent persons and communal and religious institutions. It is the latter, rather than the former, which bore the hallmarks of an unprovoked pogrom. See Romuald Szudejko, "Społeczność żydowska w Łomazach— przyczynek do dziejów," *Biuletyn Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego*, no. 188 (1998): 86–87. Winder's account (under the name of Abraham Wunderboim) in the town's memorial book does not mention the arrest of Poles by Jews, the profanation of the church, or the heavy involvement of Jews in the short-lived Soviet regime. He claims that the Poles staged an unprovoked "pogrom" and tried to kill his entire family: "Immediately, after the Red Army left the city, some Christians started a pogrom against the Jews. They murdered the daughter of Pesach Berman, 22 years old Mina. They attached [sic] also my father and hurt him badly in his head. The hooligans surrounded our house, blocked all exits and set fire on the apartment from all sides. Their intention was to burn it with all the people inside. Luckily, there was a good man who was prepared to save the lives of my family." See Yitzhak Alperovitz, ed., *The Łomaz Book: A Memorial to the Jewish Community of Łomaz* (Tel Aviv: The Łomaz Society in Israel with the participation of the Łomaz Society in the United States of America, 1994), 39 (English section). In the entry for Łomazy in Dean, *Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos, 1933–1945*, vol. II, Part A, 671, Laura Crago provides the following synopsis: "A Wehrmacht unit occupied Łomazy on September 13, 1939, but quickly abandoned it to the Soviet occupation. Tensions [sic] between Jews and Poles erupted during the time that the Soviets occupied the town and afterwards, leading to at least two Jewish deaths and prompting many Jews to flee to Parczew or Soviet-occupied territory." She then mentions that on reoccupying Łomazy, the Germans appointed a "Polish collaborationist administration." The entry does not refer to the collaborationist administration established by the Soviets or to Jewish collaboration with the Soviets, and suppresses the information about the arrest of prominent Poles and desecration of the Catholic church by Jews. The number of Jewish deaths is inflated to "at least two," even though only one has been confirmed. Thus, characteristically, the lives, safety and religious sensibilities of Poles are written off as unworthy of any apparent interest or concern.

⁵⁷⁵ Romuald Szudejko, "Społeczność żydowska w Łomazach—przyczynek do dziejów," *Biuletyn Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego*, no. 188 (1998): 86–87.

⁵⁷⁶ Romuald Szudejko, "Społeczność żydowska w Łomazach—przyczynek do dziejów," *Biuletyn Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego*, no. 188 (1998): 87.

Red militia, which kept order for the Soviet invaders.⁵⁷⁷ The entire administration of city of *Międzyrzec Podlaski* was also taken over by local Jews:

The communist Jews were glad to meet their comrades. They all took over control of the municipal offices and enjoyed the power tremendously. The festivities didn't last long, since Germany and the Soviet Union signed a treaty that determined the border between the U.S.S.R. and the Third Reich would be the Bug River. And so again, the Russians left and the Germans came back. About 2,000 Jews who belonged to the Communist Party joined the Red Army, and fled to the East.⁵⁷⁸

A young Zionist, a committed member of the Hashomer Hatzair, describes the adjustment of the Jewish community of *Radzyń Podlaski* to the new order.

In our town, unrest, tension and excitement prevailed. There were heated discussions, particularly among our Jewish boys, since our future was a stake. ... we expected communism to be the complete liberation of all working and peace-loving people. All the idealistic slogans and phrases which were spoken and written about communism would now become reality. Our Zionist dreams had proved to be illusory and seemed to have been outdated by historical events. ...

Soon news arrived that outposts of the Red Army had been seen in towns and villages nearby. The jubilation was great, especially among us Jews. The roads in and out of the town were, however, still full of the rest of the Polish Army: cavalry, infantry and artillery. There was constant movement in the streets. In the nearby woods and villages the rest of the Polish Army was regrouped and drawn together finally. On the edge of the town some Russian trucks with soldiers of the Red Army appeared.

The local communists, with their red armbands welcomed their Russian comrades. They received rifles from them and proceeded to take over control of the town. All the dreams of the Red Revolution, it seemed, would come true within minutes. The great liberation had begun. The remaining officers were stripped of their power and public offices taken over. Enemies of communism and anti-Semites [i.e., the Polish officials] were quickly prosecuted and relieved of their duties. The majority of them, however, had already gone into hiding out of fear.

The joy of many older Jews of the upper class and that of the Zionists was restrained. The majority, however, were glad to have witnessed that day—the day on which the promise of the Red Revolution would be fulfilled. ...

The wearers of red armbands, most of them young and Jewish, were conspicuous in the town as they raced back and forth on confiscated bicycles or in coaches drawn by fine horses.

I observed all this with respect and perhaps with some jealousy, too. I felt like someone who had been on the wrong horse. After some consideration, I found an excuse in my lack of experience at age seventeen. I also was consoled by the recognition that I was pink, although it was clear that only true red was acceptable at that moment. To play an important part, I would have to have been older and redder, I regretted that.

Among the new rulers with red armbands, I recognized Abraham Pinkus who was their leader. I knew him very well, since he worked at the town's power plant where I had recently found a job. ...

The day was hardly over when the Russians on the edge of the town moved their trucks eastward and the world of Abraham Pinkus and his comrades fell apart completely. Instantly, the Polish cavalry appeared ... who took over the city ... With the Russians, the new communist leaders also left, using any available means of transportation for their trek eastward.⁵⁷⁹

In *Łęczna* near Lublin, upon the Soviet entry a group of Jews formed a militia, armed themselves, and took control of the town. They paraded around in red armbands even though it was not still apparent where the Soviet-German demarcation line would run. They issued various demands to the local Polish officials

⁵⁷⁷ Andrzej Tłomacki, "Przyczynki do stosunków żydowskich na terenie południowo-wschodnich Podlasia w latach 1944–1947 na przykładzie gminy Janów Podlaski," in *Radzyński Rocznik Humanistyczny*, vol. 4 (2006): 187–200, here at 188. Reportedly, approximately twenty Jews joined the Red militia in Sławatycze and patrolled the area with rifles.

⁵⁷⁸ Avraham Gafni, "My Story," *Mezritch Internet Bulletin*, posted on the Internet at: <http://members.nbci.com/_XCM/mezritch/>.

⁵⁷⁹ Joseph Schupack, *The Dead Years* ([New York]: Holocaust Library, 1986), 9–11.

and threatened to hang them from a lamppost if they did not erect a bridge across the River Wieprz by the following morning.⁵⁸⁰

In **Józefów Bilgorajski**, a small town of 3,000 inhabitants, a local Jew known as Major organized a four-member armed patrol of the Red militia, all of them Jews, who toured the countryside on carriages confiscating from the villagers supplies that had been abandoned by the Polish army. When one of the residents of the village of Majdan Nepryski turned to the local commander of the NKVD for confirmation of this order, he denied issuing it and ordered the return of the seized goods. Previously, Major had organized rallies denouncing the Poles as oppressors of the Jews.⁵⁸¹

Young Jews joined the Red militia in **Tomaszów Lubelski** and helped the Soviets to arrest landowners and members of the intelligentsia.⁵⁸² Jews with red armbands accompanied Soviet military men on their inspections of hospitals and private homes in search of Polish officers among the wounded and hidden Polish soldiers.⁵⁸³ (These episodes are missing from the town's Jewish memorial book which claims that the Poles were planning a pogrom.⁵⁸⁴) When the Soviets ceded the town to the Germans masses of Jews flocked to accompany them on their retreat to the Bug River. Finding themselves sandwiched between the Soviet and German forces near Bełżec, shots were fired at the Jews from both sides and many of them were killed.⁵⁸⁵

In **Krasnobród** near Zamość, zealous young Jews with red armbands, in their rush to organize the new order, descended on the local monastery to announce to the prelate, rather rudely, that the building would have to be evacuated. No reason for the eviction was given. It is likely that this "local" initiative had not been sanctioned by the Soviets.⁵⁸⁶

A contingent of Soviets led by three local Jews came looking for Polish soldiers and officers hidden among the refugees who had taken shelter in the Bernardine monastery in **Radecznica** near Zamość. A Jew who had observed their arrival passed on the information. Fortunately, the soldiers and officers had changed out of their uniforms and some had left already, so they were not detected.⁵⁸⁷

In **Tarnogród**, where the Soviet occupation lasted only four days,

⁵⁸⁰ Wojciech Wieczorek, "Polacy i Żydzi w upiornej dekadzie," *Więź* (Warsaw), July 1999, 17. According to Błażej Jaczyński, a resident of Łęczna, a Jew by the name of Grynberg declared that the Jews had gained their freedom. After their arrival the Germans arrested a few Jewish militiamen and executed them in Lubartów. See the testimony of Błażej Jaczyński, posted at <<http://www.jews-lublin.net/index.php?page=92§ion=13>>.

⁵⁸¹ Account of Zbigniew Adamowicz in Nowak, *Przemilczane zbrodnie*, 115. See also Władysław Ćwik, *Dzieje Józefowa* (Rzeszów: Krajowa Agencja Wydawnicza, 1992), 152.

⁵⁸² Mieczysław Edward Szpyra, *Moja wojna z Hitlerem, Banderą i Stalinem* (Lublin: Norbertinum, 2001), 43.

⁵⁸³ Andrzej Kownacki, *Czy było warto?: Wspomnienia* (Lublin: Towarzystwo Naukowe Katolickiego Uniwersytetu Lubelskiego, 2000), 320–23.

⁵⁸⁴ Joseph M. Moskop, ed., *The Tomaszow-Lubleski Memorial Book* (New York: The Tomashover Relief Committee, 1965), translated as *Tomaszow Lubelski* (Mahwah, New Jersey: Jacob Solomon Berger, 2008), especially 363, 424, 463–64.

⁵⁸⁵ Kownacki, *Czy było warto?*, 327–28.

⁵⁸⁶ Marcin Bardel, *Z Krasnobrodu przez obozy i obczyznę do rodzinnych stron* (Lublin: Oddział Lubelski Stowarzyszenia "Wspólnota Polska," 1994), 91; Edward Walewander, *Kapłani Zamojszczyzny okresu okupacji: Szkice do historii regionu i Kościoła* (Lublin: Oddział Lubelski Stowarzyszenia "Wspólnota Polska," 1996), 95.

⁵⁸⁷ Józef Waław Płonka, "Wspomnienia z lat 1939–1946," Internet: <<http://horajec.republika.pl/okup7.html>>. In revenge, after the Soviets left and before the arrival of the Germans, some shots were fired at the Jewish homes in Radecznica; two Jews were wounded and one was killed.

The Jews welcomed them [the Red Army] and a committee of support for the Soviet Union was set up ... Leibus Prester was elected Vice-Chairman. A Soviet-sponsored civil militia was also established, with the participation of a number of Jewish youths. The pro-Soviet activity of the Jews increased the animosity towards them, especially when the Russians arrested the Polish mayor and appointed one of their supporters in his stead.⁵⁸⁸

According to Jewish reports from **Zamość**, the Jewish community was ecstatic over the arrival of the Soviets and enlisted in large numbers to help build the “new order”:

Between Yom Kippur and Sukkot of the year ... the Germans left the town. We learned about the Russians entering. The Jews were afraid of pogroms and assaults by Poles during the entry of the Russians. They kept their shops closed, the doors barred. All the men gathered in the gateways armed with crowbars, axes, and other bits of iron to defend themselves against assault by Poles, but there was no assault.

After three days Russian tanks with many soldiers on them entered the town. Jews rejoiced and came to the market square. The army went on, and a ‘city council’ was established consisting of formerly arrested communists of whom the majority were Jews. The local Jewish communist Holcman was placed at the head of it. ... Each night there were meetings at the market place. Holcman and others delivered communist speeches in Polish, Russian, and Yiddish.⁵⁸⁹

... after 13 days of German presence in Zamość—they leave the city.

Zamość is left without authority in charge. A citizen’s militia is put together ... The Poles are hoping that the Polish Army will march into the city at an opportune moment and take over the city. But when the first of the Red Army tanks make their appearance in the Neustadt [New Town], a citizen’s militia is created lead [sic] by the professor from the Yiddish Gymnasium, Schnelling.

I am witness to the negotiation undertaken by Schnelling at the Rathaus [town hall] with Hanary [a member of the Polish militia], regarding the transfer of weapons, and the dissolution of the [Polish] militia. They offer no resistance. Our Jewish brethren have ammunition, and together with [a few] left-leaning Poles, they take over the city.

... the Zamość Jews receive the Red Army with great joy. The Magistrate is decorated with red flags. The Jewish youth of Zamość is especially active in greeting and receiving the marching divisions of the Soviet Army. One now sees Jews with beards in the streets of Zamość talking to members of the Red Army. Here, you can see how the Zamość porter, David Kaplan dances a *kazatsky* in the middle of the street with a group of Red Army soldiers.

A ‘Revcom’ [revolutionary committee] is created, lead [sic] by three Zamość Jews: Hackman, Goldvarg, and Schnelling. Hundreds of Zamość young people take part in the militia.

Also, a tragic mishap occurred, which deserves to be recalled. Yekel Eltzter is killed by a bullet that is accidentally discharged from a revolver being handled by a friend. Thousands of people from Zamość escort this well-known anti-fascist fighter to his final rest. His coffin, decorated with flowers, and guarded, is set out in the Yiddish I.L. Peretz Library, where each person can pay his last respects. Hundreds of floral wreaths are carried during the funeral, and for the first time in the history of Zamość Jewry, he is bidden farewell by a representative of the Red Army.⁵⁹⁰

As if they had grown out from under the ground, a procession of two hundred tanks appeared with a red flag. At the head of the procession was the well-known communist in Zamosc [Zamość], Josef Ionczak. When the tanks arrived, a tank driver came out and addressed the procession. After the shouting of Hurrahs, in honor of the Red Army, and for Stalin, he asked the audience to disperse. The tanks arranged themselves on the marketplace.

Meanwhile, the young people, and others, utilized the situation and grabbed the weaponry that the Polish soldiers had turned in. With the consent of the Soviet military command, this armed group took over the authority in the city. The result of this was to guard against the occurrence on any provocation.

⁵⁸⁸ “Tarnograd” in Abraham Wein, ed., *Pinkas hakehillot Polin*, vol. 7 (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1999), 250–53; translated as *Encyclopedia of Jewish Communities in Poland*, Internet: <https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/pinkas_poland/pol7_00250.html>.

⁵⁸⁹ As cited in Żbikowski, “Jewish Reaction to the Soviet Arrival in the Kresy in September 1939,” in *Polin*, vol. 13 (2000): 67.

⁵⁹⁰ Beryl Eisenkopf, “Residents of Zamość in a Fight During the Hitlerist Occupation,” in Mordechai V. Bernstein, ed., *The Zamosc Memorial Book: A Memorial Book of a Center of Jewish Life Destroyed by the Nazis* (Mahwah, New Jersey: Jacob Solomon Berger, 2004), 583.

People dispersed, heroic doers, Hope ran through the streets. Wherever a Polish soldier was encountered, he was searched, to see whether or not he was armed. If any sort of weapon was found on his person, it was confiscated. In the evening, a detachment of Soviet soldiers arrived, who patrolled the city.

The next day, an official citizens militia was created to safeguard the peace and security of the city. It was possible for everyone to sign up for the militia. In the first few days, indeed, it already numbered in the hundreds.

Immediately, on the second night, a tragic incident took place. It was in the middle of the night, at the location of the militia (in the former municipal building of the *Neustadt* [New Town]). A number of comrades were sitting—Yekel Eltzter, Aharon Schor, and others. They were playing with revolvers. At a certain moment, the revolver held by Aharon Schor discharged, and the bullet hit Eltzter in the heart. He died a couple of hours later. This tragic incident made an impression in the entire city. Yekel Eltzter was one of the most talented and intelligent of the group. He was 26 years old. He had a military funeral. A Soviet colonel gave the eulogy.⁵⁹¹

In Zamosc [Zamość], so many Jews joined the local militia that they accounted for a majority in its ranks. When the Soviets quit the town (after the border between the Soviet and German areas was drawn), scores of Jewish militiamen joined Red Army formations that were retreating to the east.⁵⁹²

I remember the hours of exaltation, especially among those Jews who had some connection with the Communist Party. With much enthusiasm they joined the “People’s Militia”. Among them were also some individuals who helped the Russians to disarm Polish officers and soldiers who had found refuge in the surrounding woods.⁵⁹³

What Jewish accounts don’t tell you is what the actual activities of the militia, numbering around 100 men, entailed. Acting on their own initiative as well as on instructions from the Soviet military commander, the largely Jewish militia went around arresting army officers, soldiers, policemen, municipal employees, social activists, members of the National Democratic Party, and clergymen. Hundreds of prisoners were kept under the open sky near the prison on Okrzeja Street. They were mistreated, particularly by Jewish militiamen, and robbed of their belongings—boots, watches, bicycles, wagons, etc. Wounded prisoners were forced to undress to their underwear. Some of those arrested were executed, such as a group of policemen near the Rotunda. In the New Town, young, armed Jews with red armbands marched columns of Polish soldiers to the town square where a hysterical Jewish mob whistled and jeered at them.⁵⁹⁴

A Jewish woman by the name of Huberman, who was put in charge of the hospital pharmacy in Zamość, refused to issue medicine to wounded Polish soldiers.⁵⁹⁵ The daughter of a prosperous Jewish restaurateur, on spotting a Polish officer in plainclothes, screamed at the top of her lungs to Soviet soldiers nearby:

⁵⁹¹ Leib Gewirtz, “The Last Day in the *Neustadt*,” in *ibid.*, 539.

⁵⁹² Levin, *The Lesser of Two Evils*, 43.

⁵⁹³ Moshe Frank, *To Survive and Testify: Holocaust Traumas of a Jewish Child from Zamosc* (Tel Aviv: Ha-Kibuts ha-meuhad, 1998), 19. The author goes on to explain the consequences on the attitude of some Poles under the subsequent German occupation: “Acts like these, although there were not many, would in future provide many Poles with the incentive and justification not to aid persecuted Jews. Such was the case when I was a child on the run and some Poles, who in their generosity wanted to save me and other Jews, were scolded by their neighbours: ‘We saw how a little Jew with a big rifle disarmed our patriotic officers and handed them over to the Russians.’”

⁵⁹⁴ Krzysztof Czubara, “Pod sowiecką okupacją,” *Tygodnik Zamojski*, September 18, 1996, reproduced in Szawłowski, *Wojna polsko-sowiecka 1939* (1997), vol. 2, 434. See Romanek, Romanek, *Kolaboracja z Sowietami na terenie województwa lubelskiego we wrześniu i październiku 1939 r.* Romanek, *Kolaboracja z Sowietami na terenie województwa lubelskiego we wrześniu i październiku 1939 r.*, 139–40.

⁵⁹⁵ *Ibid.* (Czubara), 435; account of Mieczysław T. (in the author’s possession).

“Catch him! Catch him!”⁵⁹⁶ A Catholic priest managed to avoid being apprehended by Jewish militiamen because of the intervention of local Poles.⁵⁹⁷

After plundering the region, the Soviets retreated several weeks after their arrival. They were accompanied by a sizeable retinue of Jews (up to several thousand from Zamość alone), including well-to-do ones, who loaded vast quantities of goods onto trains headed east. On reaching the Bug River, the Soviets detached the carriages carrying the passengers and unceremoniously dumped most of the Jews on the German side of the redrawn border. The wagons carrying the confiscated Jewish belongings proceeded into the Soviet zone. The stranded Jews trickled home on foot.⁵⁹⁸

Two Polish soldiers, still in uniform but unarmed, were set upon by a group of armed Jews in the village of **Wierzba**, located north of Zamość, and murdered.⁵⁹⁹ Nearby, east of Zamość, before the arrival of the Germans in **Grabowiec**, twelve Polish officers dressed in civilian clothes who had been sheltered by the local Polish population were brutally murdered in the bakery of a rich Jew called Pergamen. Another Jew, known as “Kuka,” took the bodies to the cemetery and dumped them in a ditch.⁶⁰⁰

Jewish militiamen seized Polish soldiers who had come out of battle with the German forces and held them captive in an open square in **Krasnystaw**. Where a Jewish committee had formed to greet the Red Army. A Jew on a horse charged at the soldiers brandishing a sword. A Polish cavalry patrol that happened to pass through fired a shot in the air and the Jewish militia scattered like mice. The Polish army did not seek out the fifth columnists to punish them even though they could have easily, and justifiably, done so.⁶⁰¹

In nearby **Izbica**, a predominantly Jewish town, a Jewish resident recalled:

It was a dreary, drizzly day when the Russians approached Izbica. A “Red Militia” was organized by local Communists, whose leader was a former cobbler, a Jew named Abram Wajs. ... As some Polish soldiers and

⁵⁹⁶ Account of Edward T. (in the author’s possession).

⁵⁹⁷ Szawłowski, *Wojna polsko-sowiecka 1939* (1997), vol. 2, 434.

⁵⁹⁸ Szawłowski, *Wojna polsko-sowiecka 1939* (1997), vol. 2, 435.

⁵⁹⁹ Account of Józef Chudzik, quoted in Nowak, *Przemilczane zbrodnie*, 59.

⁶⁰⁰ Account of Ryszard Pedowski, as cited in Piotrowski, *Poland’s Holocaust*, 54–55. Another source confirms this account and the fact that “Kuka” was later poisoned because he started to talk about his involvement in these events. See the account of Bolesław Boratyński referred to in Jerzy Robert Nowak, “A Żydzi całowali sowieckie czołgi...” *Głos* (Warsaw), February 24, 2001.

⁶⁰¹ Account of Wojciech Putkiewicz, dated February 15, 2001 (in the author’s possession).

officers were still in the town, the local Communists, together with the Russian soldiers, set off immediately to disarm them.⁶⁰²

According to another Jew from that same town, the Bolsheviks

were given a friendly welcome [by the Jews]. Some of the [Jewish] young people joined the militia and wore red armbands. The Bolsheviks took the squires' cattle and carried it away on trucks. The militia helped them search for weapons. The Bolsheviks were only there for eight days. As they were leaving they advised the Jews to go with them. ... About a hundred families decided to go, including us.⁶⁰³

Polish reports confirm this state of affairs:

I saw a large gathering of the Jewish population. Among the crowd on the roadway stood two not-too-large armoured vehicles ... The Jewish elders ceremoniously greeted the [Soviet soldiers who had] arrived with candies and drinks. The enthusiasm with which they greeted their welcome guests was apparent.

I observed this scene standing at the side, and near me was an elderly Pole to whom an old Jew turned with the words: "Just look at how splendid our army is! If only I could talk with them." I was surprised by the words "our army." Apparently, the Jewish community regarded their country to be Soviet Russia. ... It was also a surprise for me ... how they could assemble such a large crowd in such a short time and arrange a welcome for our invaders.⁶⁰⁴

The Jewish militia set out to disarm Polish soldiers who were still fighting the Soviets. Since the militiamen were not yet armed, when a Polish officer shot his pistol into the air as a warning, they scattered like mice.⁶⁰⁵

⁶⁰² Thomas Toivi Blatt, *From the Ashes of Sobibor: A Story of Survival* (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1997), 11–12. According to Jewish sources, "During the three days between the Soviet exit and the second entry of the Germans into Izbica, a group of anti-Semitic thugs took the law into their own hands and initiated violent attacks on Jews: breaking into their homes and shops, vandalizing, looting and torturing the victims." It should be noted that no such incidents occurred at the time of the first German entry in September 1939. See "Izbica" in Abraham Wein, ed., *Pinkas hakehillot Polin*, vol. 7 (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1999), 72–75; translated as *Encyclopedia of Jewish Communities in Poland*, Internet: <https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/pinkas_poland/pol7_00072.html>. Although neither of the above sources mentions that Jews were killed during this hiatus, Thomas Blatt stated in an oral interview: "A group of Jews stood on the street outside talking, and some Poles threw a grenade at them. And they killed a few and they wounded a few." See Interview with Thomas Blatt, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Washington, D.C., September 6, 1990. This grenade incident is confirmed in a Polish report; however, there was just one fatal casualty and several persons were injured. See Ryszard Adamczyk, *Izbicy dni powszednie: Wojna i okupacja: Pamiętnik pisany po latach* (Lublin: Norbertinum, 2007), 65. Adamczyk mentions, on p. 64, that Rev. Michał Jabłoński, the pastor of Tarnogóra near Izbica, condemned the actions of looters during the strife that broke out after the Soviets departed and before the Germans arrived. For another report alleging plunder in a nearby locality see "Turobin" in Abraham Wein, ed., *Pinkas hakehillot Polin*, vol. 7 (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1999), 241–44; translated as *Encyclopedia of Jewish Communities in Poland*, Internet: <https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/pinkas_poland/pol7_00241.html>

⁶⁰³ Account of Eliezer Hoffman in Grynberg, *Children of Zion*, 52; the same account appears in Grudzińska-Gross and Gross, *War Through Children's Eyes*, 224–25. In both cases, the English translation of this account was edited to remove an explicit reference to the Jewish nationality of the militiamen: "Część młodzieży żydowskiej zapisała się do milicji i nosiła czerwone opaski." See Tomasz Strzembosz, "Panu Prof. Gutmanowi do sztambucha," *Więź* (Warsaw), June 2001: 95. After making their way to Włodzimierz, in Volhynia, Eliezer Hoffman's family "volunteered" for work inside Russia in order to avoid forcible deportation. Things went well at first (they were taken to "a nice village where only Jews lived"), but they eventually ended up in a camp in the interior, where "There were many Jews among [the] NKVD agents. Some spoke Yiddish. We traded with them. ... Russian agents of the NKVD had nothing to do with this." Having lost their parents who had fallen ill and died, Eliezer and his brother Abraham were taken to an orphanage: "Out of 300 children, 100 died. Forty-seven Jewish children remained alive. [General Anders'] Polish army took us to Teheran." See Grudzińska-Gross and Gross, *War Through Children's Eyes*, 229.

⁶⁰⁴ Adamczyk, *Izbicy dni powszednie*, 61–62.

⁶⁰⁵ Adamczyk, *Izbicy dni powszednie*, 63.

Similar reports come from Jews from **Krzeszów** (“Many people joined the red militia”), **Bilgoraj** (“at once a people’s militia was formed”⁶⁰⁶), and **Żółkiewka** (“then the Russians came, and our young communists joined the militia”⁶⁰⁷). According to the candid testimony of a Jewish resident,

At that time Jewish Communists and their sympathizers appeared on the scene. Not only did they greet the Red Army men, but also during their short 10-day stay they managed to spite some Poles. ... At a community meeting, attended by a lot of people, ... an unknown person from Warsaw and some people from Żółkiewka came forward with grievances against the reeve [wójt] Walery Wac, that during his tenure he did not do much good for the township. ... The reeve, like a criminal, had to justify himself, proving that he had nothing wrong, but rather built a school, a highway, the township brickyard, etc. ... the former policeman Rzepka ... was told that his rule was over.

Indeed, it was taken over by militiamen ... who received rifles from the Soviets. I remember the names of some of them like Chaim Libster, Mosze Sanes, Josef Szor and their commander, Kobielski, a Pole. ... in front of the police station two older Jews with red armbands, who had used to conduct a mobile trade with villagers ... hung up red flags ... I must add, with regret, that my sister Szprynca was among them. ... Not only does her conduct cause me grief, but also the then behaviour of some of the Jewish youth, because I am deeply convinced that it was a big mistake on their part. One’s motherland is the country in which one was born, and one shouldn’t spit into the well from which one drinks water.⁶⁰⁸

In fact, the preparations to greet the Red Army started before their arrival in Żółkiewka. A Jewish Communist activist demanded that a red flag be flown on the municipal post office building. When the director explained that they had no red flag, he was told, accompanied by threats, to rip off the white portion of the Polish flag. The largely Jewish Red militia, headed by Chaim Libster, organized pro-Soviet meetings and the showing of propaganda films. Armed militiamen, mouthing anti-Polish slogans and threats, captured and disarmed Polish soldiers returning from the front and handed them over to the Soviets.⁶⁰⁹ According to a scholarly Jewish publication, however, nothing untoward occurred: “Jews and

⁶⁰⁶ A. [Abraham] Kronenberg, ed., *Khurbn Bilgoraj* (Tel Aviv: n.p., 1956), Polish translation: *Zagłada Bilgoraja: Księga pamięci* (Gdańsk: Słowo/obraz.terytoria, 2009), 180; Tomasz Strzembosz, “Panu Prof. Gutmanowi do sztambucha,” *Więź* (Warsaw), June 2001: 95. The Polish and Ukrainian members of the revolutionary committee and people’s militia who remained in Bilgoraj—Eustachy Knap, Adam Koneczny, Aleksander Kyc, Stefan Leus, Stanisław Majewski, Jan Paszkowski, Mikołaj Piorun (Perun), Michał Stachurski, and Jan Tałanda—were arrested by the Gestapo in May 1942 and sent to Auschwitz. See “Dzieje Biłgoraja: Wojna, okupacja i ruch oporu,” Internet: <http://www.bilgoraj.lbl.pl/hist/dzieje/wojna_okupacja.php>.

⁶⁰⁷ Account of Itzhak Lichtman in Miriam Novitch, ed., *Sobibor: Martyrdom and Revolt* (New York: Holocaust Library, 1980), 80; Teresa Prekerowa, “Stosunek ludności polskiej do żydowskich uciekinierów z obozów zagłady w Treblince, Sobiborze i Bełżcu w świetle relacji żydowskich i polskich,” *Biuletyn Głównej Komisji Badania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu—Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej*, no. 35 (1993): 105.

⁶⁰⁸ Chaim Zylberklang, *Z Żółkiewki do Erec Israel: Przez Kottas, Buzułuk, Ural, Polskę, Niemcy i Francję*, Second revised and expanded edition (Lublin: Akko, 2004), 77. Zylberklang notes that Walery Wac was a just, friendly and sincere person who made no distinction between Jews and Poles. He was eventually arrested by the Germans and perished in a concentration camp. *Ibid.*, 80.

⁶⁰⁹ Romanek, *Kolaboracja z Sowietami na terenie województwa lubelskiego we wrześniu i październiku 1939 r.*, 106–7. According to a Polish account, a Pole named Kołodziejczyk was denounced by a Jew and arrested by the Soviets, but was released when some Jews with whom he did business vouched for him. See Paweł Reszka, “IPN o mordzie w Żółkiewce,” *Gazeta Wyborcza* (Lublin edition), October 29, 2004.

Poles, organized a militia which took upon itself administration of the affairs of Z [Żółkiewka] and the preservation of order.”⁶¹⁰

A revolutionary committee, headed by Yeheskel Koytzer, sprang up in **Piaski Luterskie** to support the Soviet invaders. Hersz Majer, a well-educated person from Warsaw, became a commissar. A triumphal arch was erected near the Catholic church. Some Jews, armed with rifles, disarmed and assaulted Polish soldiers, and handed them over to the Red Army. A well-to-do Jew accosted Edmund Kubiś, a Polish soldier, with derision: “Where is your Poland? So much for your fighting, tear that hen [i.e., the Polish eagle] off your hat!” Apparently, a Red star was more to this Jew’s liking than the Polish national emblem.⁶¹¹ A group of Jews, which included Jankiel Dreszer, led the Soviets to the rectory of Rev. Piotr Stodulski and, under threat of force, seized his canonical chain. (Rabbi Jose Luft managed to obtain it and returned it to Rev. Stodulski.) When the Soviets retreated eastwards a short while later, many young Jews left with them.⁶¹²

In the village of *Narol*,

the local Communists helped the Bolsheviks to search for weapons. The Poles were outraged by that. When the Bolsheviks were leaving, some Polish friends of ours warned that the Polish population felt hostile toward the Jews because of the way the Jewish communists had behaved and advised us to leave the town as there

⁶¹⁰ “Zolkiewka,” in Abraham Wein, ed., *Pinkas hakehillot Polin*, vol. 7 (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1999), 196–98; translated as *Encyclopedia of Jewish Communities in Poland*, Internet: <https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/pinkas_poland/pol7_00196.html>. Żółkiewka was one of the few towns where, after the withdrawal of the Soviets and before the arrival of the Germans in October 1939, a pogrom occurred. About a score of Jews were killed on the night of October 7, 1939 and into the following day. According to Itzhak Lichtman, some young Jews who had welcomed the Soviets were killed, as were some members of well-to-do families who were also robbed. See his account in Novitch, *Sobibor*, 81. According to another resident, the newly armed militiamen were merely “keeping order” in the town, but their actions were falsely perceived as “treason” by the Poles. The pogrom, which took 22 lives, occurred simply because “those Jewish youngsters started wearing red bands on their sleeves.” See the Yad Vashem Interview with Nathan Irland (Finkelstein), Internet: <<https://kehillalinks.jewishgen.org/zolkiewka/Zolkiewka%20-%20Summary%20of%20Nathan%20Irland%20interview.htm>>. See also Gutman, *Unequal Victims*, 34; Zylberklang, *Z Żółkiewki do Erec Israel*, 81–82, 231–32; Paweł Reszka, “Miejsce zbrodni: Żółkiewka,” *Gazeta Wyborcza*, July 10–11, 2004; Paweł Reszka, “IPN o mordzie w Żółkiewce,” *Gazeta Wyborcza* (Lublin edition), August 1, 2005; Paweł P. Reszka, “Mord na tle rabunkowym w Żółkiewce,” *Gazeta Wyborcza* (Lublin edition), March 30, 2007.

⁶¹¹ Adamczyk, *Izbicy dni powszednie*, 62.

⁶¹² Testimony of Marianna Krasnodębska in Anna Dąbrowska, ed., *Światła w ciemności: Sprawiedliwi Wśród Narodów Świata. Relacje* (Lublin: Ośrodek Brama Grodzka–Teatr NN, 2008); “Piaski Luterskie” in Abraham Wein, ed., *Pinkas hakehillot Polin*, vol. 7 (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1999), 384–87; translated as *Encyclopedia of Jewish Communities in Poland*, Internet: <https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/pinkas_poland/pol7_00384.html>. According to the latter source, some Poles took revenge after the Soviet forces pulled out of Piaski Luterski, but before the second arrival of the Germans: “a number of Jews were taken to the old cemetery and shot.” This is not confirmed by Marianna Krasnodębska, who was recognized as a Righteous Gentile by Yad Vashem.

might be acts of revenge. We told others about this, and almost all the Jews left in the direction of Rawa Ruska.⁶¹³

When the Soviets entered *Hrubieszów* on September 21st, Jews came out in full force to greet them. Within a short while, dressed in red armbands and carrying rifles, they stood guard in front of all the important public buildings. A young Pole recalled how his Jewish friend, now a Soviet guard with a rifle, threatened to arrest him for using the Polish word for “Jew” (“Żyd”), rather than the Russian term “Evrei.”⁶¹⁴ (As we know from other accounts, the use of the Polish word “Żyd” could easily result in deportation to a concentration camp for five years, whereas offensive references to “Polish Pans” were the order of the day!⁶¹⁵)

Local Jews—small pedlars and traders—donned red armbands, obtained rifles, and helped the Soviets round up Polish soldiers. When, during a brief interlude, some Poles brought the soldiers something to

⁶¹³ Account of Nachum Teper cited in Grynberg, *Children of Zion*, 52; also cited in Siekierski and Tych, *Widziałem aniola śmierci*, 172 (both of these sources refer to the village as Nachal). In actual fact, the understandably hostile attitude of the Poles in the face of these flagrant acts of collaboration rarely resulted in violent acts of revenge. Nor were Poles deterred from providing widespread assistance to Jews under the subsequent German occupation of these same territories. Moreover, the attitude of the Poles toward Jews deported to the Soviet interior was, according to Jewish testimonies, generally favourable. “In our *posiolk* [settlement],” recalled one Jew, “there were thirty Poles and six hundred Jews, and relations with them were very good.” According to another account: “In the *posiolk* were many Poles who were friendly to us, helped us settle in, and gave us useful advice.” Ibid., 89. Based on testimonies of Jewish teenagers recorded shortly after their release from the Gulag, that same source indicates that Jewish deportees also encountered Jews in the ranks of the NKVD in the Soviet interior: “In Sovsa there were Jews among the NKVD men, some of whom even spoke Yiddish.” Ibid., 102. A Polish Jew, who along with others escaped from forced labour in a mine, recalled the assistance and warm reception they received at the Polish delegate’s office in Chelabinsk which employed many Jews: “Hundreds of young Jews arrived daily. They all received food and clothing ... In the months of May, June, July and August [1942] the delegate’s office rescued the lives of thousands of Jews.” These offices were soon shut down by the Soviets, however, and their officials were arrested. See Samuel Dickson, “Jak Polacy ratowali Żydów w ZSSR,” *Na Antenie* (London), December 1972, 20–23. Jerzy Gliksman, a Jewish deportee, writes that he was nominated by the Polish Embassy in the USSR as head of one of their welfare posts in the Southern Kazakstan region (Gazalkent): “Here I organized a children’s home, dining room, and a base for distributing clothing and food, which began arriving for the benefit of Poles in increasing quantities from abroad, mostly from the United States.” See Jerzy Gliksman, *Tell the West: An Account of His Experiences as a Slave Laborer in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics* (New York: The Gresham Press, 1948), 357. Israeli historian David Engel writes: “Jews consistently complained about the [Polish] government-in-exile’s behavior in Jewish affairs, especially in the area of welfare assistance for refugees of Polish citizenship ... Western Jewish spokesmen charged that Polish Jewish refugees in the Soviet Union were deliberately being denied a share of the relief funds administered by the Polish government ... Moreover, more than 100,000 Jews received support in one form or another from a Polish relief institution in the Soviet Union; they amounted to almost 40 percent of the total number of Polish citizens served.” See David Engel, “Polish Government-in-Exile,” in Walter Laqueur, ed., *The Holocaust Encyclopedia* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2001), 484. Yet we know that Jews comprised less than twenty percent of deportees to the Soviet Union, so despite all the maligning they clearly received much more than their fair share of assistance. For confirmation that Jews occupied a disproportionately high number of supervisory positions in the social services sector of the Polish missions in the Soviet Union and that Jews benefited foremost from their assistance but nonetheless made unsubstantiated charges of discrimination, see Gąsowski, *Pod sztandarami Orla Białego*, 89. Moreover, some Polish refugees reported discrimination at the hands of Polish officials, likely of Jewish origin, who favoured Jews in the distribution of food, clothing, housing, transportation and other forms of assistance. See the accounts of Elżbieta Pawlicka and Genowefa Paciurek in Stanisław Zagórski, comp., *Wschodnie losy Polaków* (Łomża: Stopka, 1996), vol. 6, 67, 69. These claims do not appear to be baseless in light of the statistical data supplied by David Engel and Tomasz Gąsowski. Gąsowski also points out the disturbing fact that a significant portion of the Jewish establishment even led a concerted international campaign to tarnish Poles as Fascists. See Gąsowski, *Pod sztandarami Orla Białego*, 168–69.

⁶¹⁴ Account of Tadeusz Ludas in Marian Turski, ed., *Polish Witnesses to the Shoah* (London and Portland, Oregon: Vallentine Mitchell, 2010), 220; Wiktoria Śliwowska, ed., *Czarny rok... Czarne lata...* (Warsaw: Stowarzyszenie Dzieci Holocaustu w Polsce, 1996), 73.

⁶¹⁵ Account of Zygmunt Drażan in Dębski and Popek, *Okrutna przestroga*, 240. According to Dov Levin, in Eastern Galicia, “use of the pejorative *zhid* was banned upon penalty of three months’ imprisonment. The locals’ argument—that this word was accepted and not necessarily derogatory in Polish—was dismissed.” See Levin, *The Lesser of Two Evils*, 61.

drink and a few of them managed to escape, one of the servile Jews rushed to inform the Soviets. One Pole wrote:

My God, you should have seen with what satisfaction the Jews pushed around and jabbed [Polish soldiers] with the bayonets on their rifles. What were our poor, tired and wounded Polish prisoners of war to do?⁶¹⁶

Another Pole recalled:

On September 23rd, we were encircled by Soviet tanks and driven to a mill in Hrubieszów. We were surrounded by local militiamen—Jews—who in a very crude manner pointed out who [among the Poles] was in command. ... The bulk of the officers and non-commissioned officers who did not seize the chance to escape are on the list of those murdered in Katyn. Many Jews, not only communists, filled positions in the Soviet administration and helped the NKVD capture Polish officers and administrative personnel.⁶¹⁷

When Wincenty Smal, an employee of the state revenue office in Hrubieszów, ventured into the village of *Moniatycze* on September 28, he was arrested by two members of the local Red militia, a Ukrainian named Mykola Shymanskyi and a Jew by the name of Jankiel (son of Abram). He was led to the township office, now presided over by a Ukrainian secretary named Teodor Iosenko, where he was brutally beaten. That evening Smal was taken to the Catholic cemetery and executed with a bullet shot close range through the back of his skull. His bloodied body was left lying on its back in plain view by the main road to the cemetery.⁶¹⁸

When the demarcation line moved eastward to the Bug River in October 1939, German Nazis and Jews with red armbands (the latter were in the service of the Soviets) courted one another and exchanged pleasantries when the Germans came to collect wounded German soldiers from a hospital not far from Hrubieszów.⁶¹⁹ These congenial scenes were all the more surprising given the ongoing German expulsions of Jews from the area, and their being driven back by Soviet guards.⁶²⁰

Such conduct on the part of Jews—their blatant displays of hostility toward Poland and Poles, their overzealousness and utter servility in serving their new master—cannot be explained away by the tenuous argument that the Jews were simply glad to see that it was the Soviets, rather than the Germans, who arrived there first. Moreover, the treatment of captured Polish soldiers understandably incensed the local Polish population and created a deep rift along ethnic lines.

Dr. Zygmunt Klukowski observed conditions in *Szczebrzeszyn*:

Around 5 A.M. [on September 27, 1939] the first Soviet soldiers entered Szczebrzeszyn. After a short stay at City hall they left again. A few hours later I noticed several civilian Communists wearing red bands on their left arms. Around 4 P.M. I left the hospital to find out any news. I saw Polish soldiers from whom the Communists [N.B. the Polish text refers to the assailants as Jewish adolescents⁶²¹] were taking belts,

⁶¹⁶ Urszula Postępska, “Widok był przerażający,” *Nasza Polska*, September 22, 1999.

⁶¹⁷ J. K. Kuncewicz, letter, *Tygodnik Kulturalny*, May 7, 1989.

⁶¹⁸ Henryk Smalej, *Zbrodnie ukraińskie na terenie gminy Moniatycze pow. Hrubieszów w l. 1939–1944*, 2nd revised and expanded edition (Zamość: n.p., 2005), 95.

⁶¹⁹ Rowiński, *Moje zderzenie z bolszewikami we wrześniu 1939 roku*, 215.

⁶²⁰ Levin, *The Lesser of Two Evils*, 182.

⁶²¹ Zygmunt Klukowski, *Zamojszczyzna*, vol. 1: 1918–1943 (Warsaw: Ośrodek Karta, 2007), 97; Zygmunt Klukowski, *Zamojszczyzna 1918–1959* (Warsaw: Ośrodek Karta, 2017), 159. The Polish text reads in part: “Trzeba mieć bardzo mocne nerwy, żeby znieść widok szmatławych, oberwanych wyrostków żydowskich, rewidujących żołnierzy polskich, odbierających im nie tylko broń, pasy, czasem konie, lecz nawet ściągających im buty; przejmujących całą władzę w mieście w swoje ręce. Trzeba mieć bardzo mocne nerwy, żeby znieść widok szmatławych, oberwanych wyrostków żydowskich, rewidujących żołnierzy polskich, odbierających im nie tylko broń, pasy, czasem konie, lecz nawet ściągających im buty; przejmujących całą władzę w mieście w swoje ręce.”

haversacks, and map cases. The Communists took the administration into their own hands. ... Just before dark I noticed a large group of Polish soldiers coming into the city. The Communists tried to take their possessions, but the local people standing on either side of the soldiers took so strong a position that they retreated.

Many Jews left Szczepieszyn [on October 7th] with the Soviet army, especially those who were part of the Red Militia.⁶²²

A Polish resident of that town recalled:

It soon transpired that the main task of the “red militia” was to disarm Polish soldiers and, at the same time, to seek out Polish officers who, like Polish policemen, were handed over to the NKVD. They were all deported to the USSR where they perished.

The “red militia” was formed mostly by Jewish youth, who had full rights as citizens of Poland. They now wreaked their rage on soldiers returning from the war. I saw how they surrounded one of them and, putting the barrel of a rifle to his back, took off his boots and belt and led him through the town. I knew these Jews and I was terror-stricken. Another time a few “red militiamen” attempted to lead a few soldiers, but some people who happened to pass by started to form a barrier around them so as to allow them to escape. The militiamen became more and more aggressive and a scuffle ensued. All of a sudden an older, important-looking military man sprang away, took out his revolver and yelled out: “Get away you Jews, because I’ll shoot.” The frightened militiamen fled.

During these street occurrences younger girl guides from a social assistance troop started to patrol the roads leading to the town and warned military men about the danger. They pointed out homes where the soldiers could change into civilian clothes.⁶²³

Another eyewitness, a local priest, paints a similar picture:

In Szczepieszyn and its environs Communists surfaced, and almost all of them were young Jews. They put on red armbands, started to assume “power,” and formed a “people’s militia.” Above all they started to disarm individual Polish soldiers, robbing them, tearing off their uniforms, and shooting officers as “bourgeois.” They supported Soviet Russia and prophesied revenge and death for Poland. They were overjoyed at the fall of Poland. ... They hung red flags around the town, and even on the bell tower of the church near the town square. Until now I had believed that everyone thought of Poland as I did, including Polish Jews. They, however, did not regard Poland as their homeland, but just as their country of residence ...⁶²⁴

On September 29th, two Jews apprehended Wincenty Panasiuk, a Polish platoon commander, and brought him to the makeshift headquarters of the Red militia in *Frampol*. During his interrogation by Abram Rozenberg, the commander, and his militiamen, the Polish officer refused to remove the Polish eagle from his cap and his military shoulder straps with insignia. When Rozenberg attempted to remove these by force, the Polish officer fought back. The enraged militiamen stabbed him to death with their bayonets. His body was dragged out into a field at night and buried secretly.⁶²⁵ The fate in store for more than a dozen members of the Polish community by the largely Jewish revolutionary committee was cut short by the surprise Soviet

⁶²² Zygmunt Klukowski, *Diary from the Years of Occupation, 1939–44* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 32–33.

⁶²³ Jerzy Józwiakowski, *Armia Krajowa na Zamojszczyźnie* (Lublin: Norbertinum, 2001), vol. 1: 19–20.

⁶²⁴ Czesław Stanisław Bartnik, *Mistyka wsi: Z autobiografii młodości 1929–1956* (Warsaw: Instytut Prymasowski Ślubów Narodowych, 1988; Żrebce: n.p., 1999), 228. These pro-Soviet activities did not deter Poles from coming to the assistance of Jews soon thereafter when the tide turned abruptly. On October 22, 1939, a Jewish delegation turned to the local Catholic pastor, Rev. Józef Cieśllicki, to intercede on behalf of a group of eleven Jews seized by the Germans and falsely charged with committing an act of violence against the German administration. Rev. Cieśllicki formed a committee of prominent community members to plead with the German authorities. The Jews were acquitted by a German military court. Klukowski, *Diary from the Years of Occupation, 1939–44*, 45; Philip Friedman, *Their Brothers’ Keepers* (New York: Holocaust Library, 1978), 125.

⁶²⁵ Ryszard Jasiński, “Frampolski wrzesień 1939 roku,” *Wokół Frampola*, Towarzystwo Przyjaciół Frampola, no. 3 (July 1998): 20–23. See also Romanek, *Kolaboracja z Sowietami na terenie województwa lubelskiego we wrześniu i październiku 1939 r.*, 82–83.

withdrawal after a brief six-day occupation. Among those earmarked for execution were military officers, political figures, municipal officials, the fire chief, the local Catholic pastor, the church organist, teachers—in other words, virtually the entire leadership of the Polish community. Not one Jew was targeted.⁶²⁶

The local collaborators were steadfast in their loyalty to the Soviet Union. A Jewish doctor recalled that the militia that sprung up in *Siedlce*, which the Soviets occupied on September 29, 1939, was composed mostly of Jews.⁶²⁷ With the help of the newly formed civil guard, arrests of some 170 members of the local Polish élite (and a few Jewish community leaders), among them the mayor and Catholic bishop, ensued immediately. Just before the Soviet retreat on October 9, the prisoners were forced to march to the stronghold of Brześć on the Bug River, which remained in Soviet hands, under the guard of the Soviet soldiers and Jewish militiamen. Local Communist supporters left before the Soviets cordially handed control over the town to the Germans in an official ceremony.⁶²⁸ “As the Germans marched back into Siedlce, the streets were deserted by Jews and Poles alike.”⁶²⁹

Relying on Jewish sources, historian Dov Levin notes that the Soviet army had not managed to enter *Lublin* itself, thus disappointing the “welcoming committees among leftist circles.”⁶³⁰

⁶²⁶ Ibid. (Jasiński), no. 2 (April 1997): 14–15.

⁶²⁷ Epsztein, Majewska, and Bańkowska, *Archiwum Ringelbluma*, vol. 15, 64.

⁶²⁸ Bechta, *Rewolucja, mit, badytyzm*, 40; Edward Kopówka, *Żydzi siedleccy* (Siedlce: n.p., 2001), 58–59.

⁶²⁹ Donath, *My Bones Don't Rest in Auschwitz*, 14.

⁶³⁰ Levin, *The Lesser of Two Evils*, 6. The Communist movement and pro-Communist factions in Lublin were overwhelmingly Jewish, and in outlying smaller towns almost exclusively so. See Emil Horoch, “Udział ludności żydowskiej Lublina w organizacji miejskiej Komunistycznej Partii Polskiej,” in Tadeusz Radzik, ed., *Żydzi w Lublinie: Materiały do dziejów społeczności żydowskiej Lublina* (Lublin: Uniwersytet Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej, 1995), 227–44.

CHAPTER EIGHT

A Smooth Transition

In order to carry out the planned sweeps of Poles and other targeted groups, reliance on local collaborators was indispensable. Civilian denunciations took on massive proportions. Lists of people to be deported had to be carefully prepared with the assistance of local people, very often Jews.⁶³¹ Polish historians confirm that Jews continued to play a prominent role in the Red militia, the right hand of the NKVD, throughout the Soviet occupation.⁶³² (According to one Jewish author, the customary sight of Jewish militiamen patrolling the streets resulted in Poles referring to the Bolshevik regime as “Jewish rule.”⁶³³) Enthusiastic supporters of the Soviet regime also had an important administrative, economic, social and propaganda role to play.

Jan T. Gross, an American sociologist of Polish-Jewish origin, explains why the transition to Soviet rule went so smoothly.

Even before the Soviets entered, citizens’ committees or militias were spontaneously formed in many places to replace the local Polish administration, which had either fled or lost the ability to enforce order. ... These committees often acted as hosts to Red Army units. ... in the first moment of encounter, the Soviet commanders relied on such welcoming committees and militias. The Soviets armed them or authorized them to carry the weapons that they had already acquired ... Their primary immediate task involved ferreting out hiding Polish officers and policemen.

These first militias were a strange lot. In some areas, particularly in the larger towns where the majority of the 1.7 million Jews living in this territory dwelt, they were predominantly Jewish, often organized by communist sympathizers. ...

In any case, the initial collaboration of ethnic minorities allowed for the effective penetration of local society. The effect of this collaboration on the occupier’s administration cannot be overestimated. ... They were carrying out a social revolution in eastern Poland, which could not be accomplished without *local* support...

A new administration was quickly established in the conquered territories. ... In higher administrative echelons, the *gmina* [the smallest territorial administrative unit], either Soviet officials or Polish communist sympathizers (usually Jews) always held supervisory positions. In addition to committees, militia detachments were formed, which were soon subsumed under the command of the NKVD (the Soviet secret police) operatives. This was the network through which the social and political transformation was to be implemented.

In the first phase of the takeover, committees were used mainly for expropriations and arrests. But the Soviets soon gave them a more important task: a mass mobilization of the local population in support of the new regime. On October 22, barely one month after they crossed the Polish frontier, the Soviets organized a plebiscite in eastern Poland. [This was a key component of the incorporation of these territories into the Soviet Union.] ... After assisting in the initial exercise of intimidating the local population, the committees were then supposed to draw the inhabitants together and mobilize them on behalf of the new regime.⁶³⁴

Israeli historian Ben-Cion Pinchuk paints a similar picture:

Indicative of the human resources and potential in the Jewish community was the important role played by the Jews during the transition period and the first phase of organizing the new regime. There were many places, usually those removed from the major routes of the advancing Red Army, where the interregnum lasted for some days. The power vacuum created was filled quite often by local temporary executive

⁶³¹ Mazur, *Pokucie w latach drugiej wojny światowej*, 44.

⁶³² In the Polish territories incorporated into the Ukrainian SSR, the militia was composed mostly of Ukrainians and Jews; many of the Ukrainians were transferred to the Soviet interior. Ibid. (Mazur), 31.

⁶³³ Moshe Ajzenbud, *The Commissar Took Care* (Brunswick, Victoria: Globe Press, 1986), 7.

⁶³⁴ Grudzińska-Gross and Gross, *War Through Children’s Eyes*, 8, 19–20.

committees. Jews played a prominent role in those committees, which lasted in many places until they were replaced by officials from the Soviet Union.

The creation of the temporary committees was a local initiative ... There were places where committees were created to organize the reception for the Soviet units and provide what they considered new Soviet-like authority as a temporary replacement for the disintegrating Polish administration. 'Revolutionary committees', as some of the committees were called, according to numerous Polish reports consisted almost entirely of Jews, with a few Ukrainians. A citizens' militia served as the executive tool of the committees. In the two organizations Jews played a dominant role, according to Polish sources. Jewish communists tried in some places to establish what they considered a Soviet administration. The committees behaved as if they were the government until the entrance of the Red Army. They initiated 'socialist' reforms, occasionally coming into conflict with the local population.

Expression of suppressed grudges and hatreds against the haughty Polish officials could be detected during the transition. ... it was a time for settling scores, a time of retribution. Detectives and policemen were disarmed and arrested. Polish officials reported that they were told by local Jews 'Your time has passed, a new epoch begins.' The Polish population felt itself alienated and threatened and tried to avoid public attention ... There were many instances of arbitrariness and of settling accounts with those who were well-to-do or in authority in the old regime, Jews and Poles alike. Those who were Communists before were 'engaged now on their own in "nationalizing" stores, houses, merchandise, and settling old grudges. Arbitrarily they make arrests and investigations,' related a survivor. Harassment of the more affluent, expropriation and distribution of goods among the poor without authorization from the incoming regime, were typical of the transition time. The persecution, expropriations, and occasional imprisonment were indicative of the social changes that would take place. ...

Jews participated in disproportionate numbers in the Soviet-established institutions during the first few weeks of the new regime [and also afterwards—*M.P.*]. ... The Polish population could not serve as a source of manpower for the new institutions... The Jewish community particularly in the shtetlach constituted a large reservoir of manpower, relatively well-educated, reliable as far as its outside relations were concerned and, what was equally important, available and eager to cooperate.

Jewish youth formed special organizations whose role was to facilitate the establishment of the new regime. In many places the first Soviet-appointed institutions contained a very high proportion of Jews. Governmental and economic institutions, the militia in particular—organized by the authorities as a local police force—employed many Jews. The shtetl Jews ... were willing to fill every available opening, thus playing an important role in the initial stages of building the Soviet system in former Eastern Poland.⁶³⁵

During the transition period the local Communists were used...in helping build up the Soviet system. After the formal annexation local Communists were systematically removed from responsible positions, some were even arrested. Many of them received subordinate administrative appointments, particularly in fields where knowledge of local conditions or direct contact with the population was required. They were employed in factories, schools, the militia, as NKVD informers and later as propagandists in the election campaigns.⁶³⁶

Israeli historian Aharon Weiss concurs with this assessment:

From the first days of Soviet rule, the Jews were absorbed into the state administration, together with all its offshoots, without any restriction, and they were represented in it to an extent exceeding their proportion of the population as a whole. There are some who hold that political considerations played a part in the inclusion of a relatively high proportion of Jews in the Soviet administration. The Soviets saw in the Jews an element loyal to the new regime, and sometimes even sympathetic to it. The Soviets were aware of the hostile attitude of the Poles... There was a similar situation among the Ukrainians, who were imbued with strong nationalistic feelings. These facts were very well known to the Soviet authorities when they came to man the administrative machine, the main purpose of which was to carry out Soviet policy and assist in the establishment of the new regime. And so the Jews, perhaps more than the other two nations in Eastern Galicia, met the requirements of the authorities. The Jews at this time had no political ambitions such as would have excited the suspicions of the Soviets or given them cause to exercise reserve.⁶³⁷

⁶³⁵ Pinchuk, *Shtetl Jews under Soviet Rule*, 25–26.

⁶³⁶ *Ibid.*, 49.

⁶³⁷ Aharon Weiss, "Some Economic and Social Problems of the Jews of Eastern Galicia in the Period of Soviet Rule (1939–41)," in Davies and Polonsky, *Jews in Eastern Poland and the USSR, 1939–46*, 97.

Israeli historian Dov Levin, who exaggerates the role of prewar Communists and is rather reticent and sketchy about the concrete activities of the largely Jewish Red militia, writes:

During the preparations for the arrival of the Red Army, and immediately after its advent, young Jews in many locations formed semi-military groupings with names like “People’s Militia,” “Workers’ Guard,” and so on. It was the task of these organizations to maintain local security, order, and sound administration. Above all, they were to prevent any disturbances as the Red Army came in. These youngsters often armed themselves with light weapons left behind by the Polish police. In lieu of uniforms, they tied red ribbons to their sleeves. The very fact of armed Jews visibly imposing their order made their fellow Jews even more eager to greet the Soviet forces.⁶³⁸

In the very first days of the Red Army presence in eastern Poland, parts of Romania and the Baltic countries—and, in certain cases, even preceding the takeover—Jews were active in setting up the institutions of the new government. They were prominent in guard formations of the militia, bodies known as revolutionary or provisional “committees,” and so on. The presence of Jews in these organizations was conspicuous in the towns and cities. Some participants belonged to Jewish leftist circles; and some were young adults who identified with the Soviet regime despite the lack of a defined ideological background. Most, however, were Communist Party members who, having just emerged from prison or the underground, regarded themselves as natural partners in laying the foundations of the new regime.

In the Soviet military administration it was widely (and correctly) believed at the time that the Jewish minority was one of the most reliable elements in existence at that stage. This was especially true in eastern Poland, where the Soviet authorities had not had time to prepare properly for the new situation in view of the dizzying speed of events in the autumn of 1939. Jews were visible in all agencies of the civil administration as the Soviet regime consolidated itself before the official annexation of the western Ukraine and western Belorussia in November, 1939.

... A Jew headed the provisional committee of the town of Stryj. In Borislav [Boryslaw], well-known Communists who had spent many years in Polish prisons assumed important positions in the municipal administration. According to Jewish sources, Jews accounted for 70 percent of the members of the militia in certain Eastern Galician localities. ...

A new Jewish elite of sorts, composed of officials and confidantes of the new establishment, took shape at this time. Its members were people who, until the Red Army takeover, had been marginal players in the arena of Jewish public activity. This new elite replaced, to some extent, the veteran elite that was immobilized, silenced or eliminated by the circumstances of the new war and the new realities. This trend persisted even after Ukrainians and Belorussians dislodged the Jewish functionaries who had established the provisional institutions.⁶³⁹

Many Jews, confident that the changes following the Soviet annexation would be long-lasting, preferred to adjust to the new circumstances. Quite a few collaborated with the authorities, some out of ideological identification and others for reasons of sympathy and gratitude. ...

Unlike non-Jewish resistance groups affiliated with the majority peoples (e.g., Ukrainians and Lithuanians), Zionist groups did not reject the fact of the annexation of their areas of residence.⁶⁴⁰

[Zionist youth] movements did not regard themselves as enemies of the regime, instead hoping that over time the regime would change its policies regarding Judaism and Zionism. ...none of them (not even Betar) professed hostile trends or thoughts, and all were careful to avoid any manifestation of anti-Sovietism.⁶⁴¹

Labeling of the Soviet administration as a “Jewish regime” became widespread when Jewish militiamen helped NKVD agents send local Poles into exile. ... Landlords and estate owners must have harbored much

⁶³⁸ Levin, *The Lesser of Two Evils*, 35.

⁶³⁹ *Ibid.*, 42–44.

⁶⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 235.

⁶⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 255–56.

bitterness when forced to greet, with strained politeness, young Jews who came to confiscate their property.⁶⁴²

One of the most surprising metamorphoses was the overnight transformation of ardent Zionists into militant Communists. This phenomenon is remarked on by a number of observers, among them Karol Estreicher, a professor of the Jagiellonian University:

In *Skole*, a small town in the Carpathians [near Stryj], the leader of the local Zionist youth organization of “Chalucs” [Hechalutz] became a communist immediately, and transformed the club into a Bolshevik one. The portrait of Stalin supplanted the picture of Herzl in the common room, but the membership of the organization remained the same.⁶⁴³

According to historian Yehuda Bauer, “Jewish agents of the Soviet secret police penetrated every corner; everyone was terrified of being denounced and deported.”⁶⁴⁴

According to historian Evgenii Rozenblat, many Jews occupied leading positions in the NKVD apparatus and judicial system, which played key roles in subjugating the conquered territories. As of October 1940, more than forty percent of all positions in the judicial apparatus of the Pińsk region were held by Jews.⁶⁴⁵ Local Jewish recruits were bolstered by the arrival of large numbers of Soviet Jews in the service of an oppressive regime whose aim was to destroy all vestiges of Polish nationhood. Of the 2,789 apparatchiks sent to Białystok in September and October 1939 (this number does not include functionaries of the militia and NKVD), 600 (or 21.5 percent) were Jews.⁶⁴⁶ The personal party cards of party members (starting in 1940) who came to Pińsk in order to work for the municipal committee of the Communist Party show that about 25 percent of them were Jews and that some were senior officials, such as party secretaries.⁶⁴⁷

That there were not more Jews in the service of the new regime was not a function of a shortage of eager Jews but because many of those who volunteered their services, especially prewar Communists from central Poland, were rebuffed and even repressed.⁶⁴⁸ However,

In contrast to the hurdles that the [Communist] Party placed in the path of persons seeking admission—newcomers and veterans alike—the Komsomol and the Pioneer (Communist Party children’s organization) branches opened their doors to teenagers and children. Membership in these organizations became highly acceptable, and Jewish youth thronged to them. This was especially so in the towns and the outlying areas,

⁶⁴² Ibid., 63.

⁶⁴³ Wegierski, *September 1939*, 153.

⁶⁴⁴ Yehuda Bauer, “Jewish Baranowicze in the Holocaust,” *Yad Vashem Studies*, vol. 31 (2003): 147.

⁶⁴⁵ Rozenblat, “Evrei v sisteme mezhnatsionalnykh otnoshenii v zapadnykh oblastiakh Belarusi, 1939–1941 gg.,” *Białoruskie Zeszyty Historyczne*, no. 13 (2000): 98.

⁶⁴⁶ Gnatowski, *W radzieckich okowach*, 156. The arrival of *vostochniki* or Easterners from the Soviet Union diluted the prominence of local people in the administration. For example, up to October 10, 1940, 12,396 people arrived in the Białystok District to occupy senior positions of authority, of whom 43.9% were Belorussians, 34.4% Russians, and 15.9% Jews. The personnel of the Headquarters of the District Militia consisted of 1,714 persons, of whom 62.5% were Belorussians, 20.5% Russians, and 11% Jews. See Michał Gnatowski, “Radzieccy funkcjonariusze na Białostocczyźnie (1939–1941),” in Gnatowski and Boćkowski, *Sowietyzacja i rusyfikacja północno-wschodnich ziem II Rzeczypospolitej (1939–1941)*, 187, 198.

⁶⁴⁷ Tikva Fatal-Knaani, “The Jews of Pinsk, 1939–1943, Through the Prism of New Documentation,” in *Yad Vashem Studies*, vol. 29 (2001): 157.

⁶⁴⁸ Levin, *The Lesser of Two Evils*, 56–57.

where youth movements had played a paramount role. All were welcome, even those who had previously belonged to Zionist, religious, or Bundist movements or parties. ...

The Pioneers also attracted relatively large numbers of Jews.⁶⁴⁹

Symptomatic of the prevalent mood were the long line-ups of Jews, among them many elderly people, which began to form in front of the polling stations hours in advance of their early morning opening on October 22, 1939 to cast their votes for Stalin and the annexation of Poland's Eastern Borderlands. They did so ostentatiously and often with great enthusiasm.⁶⁵⁰

The electoral committee in Lwów was headed by prominent Jewish communists, members of the Communist Party of "Western Ukraine," such as Jerzy Borejsza (Goldberg), his brother Józef Różański (Goldberg), Ozjasz Szechter (later Michnik), Hilary Minc, and others. After the Soviet "liberation" of Poland in 1944, they adroitly switched their "national" allegiance and were installed in leading positions in Stalinist Poland.⁶⁵¹

Most Jews had no qualms about acquiring the properties of those—mostly Poles—deported after the conquest of the eastern half of Poland in 1939. Leopold Weiss, who was the recipient of post-Polish property in Lwów, describes this state of affairs in an apparently jocular manner:

These generous accommodations were provided to us complements of the Soviets, or, more accurately the former landlord, an unfortunate member of the "bourgeois", who at the moment, was most likely, living like a Khanty Eskimo, netting sardines at an ice hole in some gulag under the midnight sun of the Arctic.⁶⁵²

⁶⁴⁹ Ibid., 57–58.

⁶⁵⁰ Gonczyński, *Raj proletariacki*, 24; Sudół, *Początki sowietyzacji Kresów Wschodnich Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej (jesień 1939 roku)*, 398–400.

⁶⁵¹ Nowak, *Przemilczane zbrodnie*, 153.

⁶⁵² Jakob Weiss, *The Lemberg Mosaic: The Memoirs of Two Who Survived the Destruction of Jewish Galicia* (New York: Alderbrook Press, 2010), 143.

CHAPTER NINE

Positions of Authority and Privilege

It did not take long for the Jews to leave their mark on all aspects of life under the new regime. Although the top positions were reserved for Soviet bureaucrats, among whom were many Jews, the middle and lower administrative positions were given over to local supporters of the new regime. Jewish and Polish sources confirm that, after eliminating virtually all Poles from official positions, the Soviets initially favoured the Jews, and to a lesser extent the Ukrainians and Belorussians. Jews took over all sorts of positions in numbers far exceeding their share of the population and thus profited from the misfortune of Poles.

Although Jewish historians claim that Jewish overrepresentation in administrative positions dropped dramatically after the first few months of Soviet rule, this has not been substantiated by any in-depth research. As we shall see, many Jewish memoirs dispute that assertion. It is true, however, that the Soviets were far more careful in designating candidates for “elected” positions; Ukrainians and Belorussians were favoured for the sake of appearance, but these positions were largely ceremonial.⁶⁵³ Moreover, there was a large influx of Jews from the Soviet Union sent as tools of the newly imposed Soviet regime, including many members of the security apparatus. According to historian Dov Levin,

Many Soviet Jews were sent west to the annexed areas as administrative and economic clerks in the civil and military bureaucracies. ... Many were assigned key positions and ruled with a high hand. The locals [i.e. Jews] came to resent the arrogant, contemptuous “easterners,” who habitually dissembled about the high standard of living in the USSR.⁶⁵⁴

Historian Ben-Cion Pinchuk confirms this state of affairs:

Soviet Jews were present in large numbers in the different branches of the civil and economic administration. They were plant managers, school teachers, commercial agents, investigators of the NKVD, etc.⁶⁵⁵

In the initial stages, as Jewish sources acknowledge, there was a rush by local Jews to take over any position that became available. According to the *Rohatyn* Memorial Book,

The Jews welcomed the Soviet soldiers openly ... Jews were employed by the Soviet officials in the administration and even in the local militia. Jews went gladly to these tasks ... Each of these artels [cartels or workers' associations] or cooperatives was headed by ... in most cases a Jew. ... workers in the artels worked

⁶⁵³ Musiał, “Stosunki polsko-żydowskie na Kresach Wschodnich R.P. pod okupacją sowiecką (1939–1941),” *Biuletyn Kwartalny Radomskiego Towarzystwa Naukowego*, vol. 34, no. 1 (1999): 113–114. While Jewish representation in “elected” positions was not disproportionate, Poles were generally underrepresented in this area. See Strzembosz, ed., *Okupacja sowiecka (1939–1941) w świetle tajnych dokumentów*, 194–206; Krzysztof Jasiewicz, *Zagłada polskich Kresów: Ziemiaństwo polskie na Kresach Północno-Wschodnich Rzeczypospolitej pod okupacją sowiecką 1939–1941* (Warsaw: Volumen, and Instytut Studiów Politycznych PAN, 1997), 185 n.33. In Eastern Galicia and Volhynia, where Ukrainians formed the majority of the population, the cadres were drawn from members of the Communist Party, and in mid-1941, of the 37,000 party members and candidates, Ukrainians accounted for 63.1 percent, Russians (virtually all of them non-natives) 19.1 percent, Jews 13.4 percent, and other nationalities 4.4 percent. Mazur, *Pokucie w drugiej wojny światowej*, 31, 33, 48. Showering lucrative positions on Jews often had nothing to do with their qualifications. For example, qualified Polish teachers were dismissed from schools where Polish remained the language of instruction and unqualified Jews who often did not know Polish well, were engaged in their place. About one hundred Jews from Horodenka, many of whom had just completed two years of education and spoke Polish poorly, were accepted into a cursory training course for teachers in Stanisławów. *Ibid.*, 40.

⁶⁵⁴ Levin, *The Lesser of Two Evils*, 220–21.

⁶⁵⁵ Pinchuk, *Shtetl Jews under Soviet Rule*, 135.

under the guidance of Jewish directors. Control over the factories was in the hands of the Party, which again had greater trust in the Jews than in the non-Jews.⁶⁵⁶

In **Dmytrów** near Radziechów, “The Jews were elevated to government offices (treasury, courts, militia, schools, post office, county supervisor’s office, etc.), and they were also employed to gather information [i.e., as informers] in the town and villages.” Most of the agitators in the campaign leading up to the sham vote sanctioning the annexation of Eastern Poland were Jews, both Soviet and local.⁶⁵⁷

In **Sambor**, “Many Jews joined city and government services. The Russians trusted the Jewish population more than the Poles and Ukrainians, and, therefore, the higher posts were allotted to Jews.”⁶⁵⁸ In **Rawa Ruska**, “Quite a few Jewish youths became members of the Soviet-organized militia.”⁶⁵⁹ In **Lubaczów**, Jews came out en masse to greet the Red Army bringing them flowers and yelling out: “Our army has arrived.” Representatives of the Jewish community welcomed them with an offering of bread and salt on a tray. That same day a militia was constituted composed of young Jews who wore red armbands.⁶⁶⁰

In **Stanisławów**,

On September 18, the Soviets entered Stanislawow [Stanisławów]. ... At the outset of Soviet rule, several local Jewish communists worked in the interim town council, including A. Eckstein (vice mayor), Rozenal (head of police), Kochman (his deputy), Mendel Blumenstein (head of the prison), Shkulnik (his deputy), and the lawyer Hausknecht (head of the post office).⁶⁶¹

The administrative positions in offices and factories were taken over by Jews and Ukrainians. The Poles were relegated to clerical positions and worked as labourers. The workers’ councils were headed by party members sent from the Soviet Union for this purpose and, in some cases, by local Jews.⁶⁶²

In **Kuty**, south of Kołomyja,

On September 17, 1939 units of the Red Army entered Kuty. A temporary local committee was organized, and a large number of the members were local Jewish Communists. There were also many Jewish youths in

⁶⁵⁶ M. Amihai, ed., *Kehilat Rohatyn ve-ha-seviva (The Rohatyn Jewish Community: A Town that Perished)* (Tel Aviv: Rohatyn Association of Israel, 1962), 44.

⁶⁵⁷ Account of Ewaryst Leopold H. in Gross and Grudzińska-Gross, *W czterdziestym nas Matko na Sybir zesłali...*, 291, 292.

⁶⁵⁸ Toni Nacht (Halperin), “From Occupation to Occupation,” in Alexander Manor, ed., *The Book of Sambor and Stari-Sambor* (Tel Aviv: Sambor/Stary Sambor Society, 1980), xxxviii. The author mentions that homes and businesses were confiscated; some wealthy Jews were exiled to Siberia; and a pharmacist, her husband, and young child committed suicide to prevent their exile to Siberia. “Life was dark and gloomy and the general atmosphere was of anxiety and depression. Long lines formed due to the lack of food items.”

⁶⁵⁹ “Rawa-Ruska” in Danuta Dabrowska, Abraham Wein, and Aharon Weiss, eds., *Pinkas hakehillot Polin*, vol. 2 (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1980), 498–503; translated as *Encyclopedia of Jewish Communities in Poland*, Internet: <https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/pinkas_poland/pol2_00498.html>.

⁶⁶⁰ Testimony of Marian Kopf in Tomasz Bereza, Piotr Chmielowiec, and Janusz Grechuta, eds., *W cieniu “linii Mołotowa”: Ochrona granicy ZSRR z III Rzeszą między Wiszną a Solokiją w latach 1939–1941* (Rzeszów: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej–Komisja Ścigania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu, 2002), 135–36.

⁶⁶¹ “Stanisławów” in Danuta Dabrowska, Abraham Wein, Aharon Weiss, eds., *Pinkas hakehillot Polin*, vol. 2, 359–76 (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1980), at 368; translated as *Encyclopaedia of Jewish Communities in Poland*, Internet: <https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/pinkas_poland/pol2_00359.html>. This source goes on to point out: “However, after the area was merged into the Ukrainian Republic, the Soviets from the east took over the senior positions, and the local communists were relegated to marginal [i.e. secondary—M.P.] roles.”

⁶⁶² Gonczyński, *Raj proletariacki*, 17.

the militia ...⁶⁶³

In **Żabie** near Kosów Huculski,

Hardly had the dust of the Soviet invasion settled when our local Communists assumed a self-important air and took over all the key posts in the municipal administration.⁶⁶⁴

Not surprisingly, when the tide turned, the collaborators took to flight, as in **Zaleszczyki**:

A group of Jewish communists held key positions in the new regime. When the war with Germany broke out [in June 1941], a small number of Jews—mainly Jewish communist activists—fled to the USSR. Scared of revenge by the Germans and Ukrainian nationalists, they fled to Chernowitz to hide.⁶⁶⁵

The impact of the new order was soon felt by the local population, in particular the Poles. In **Czortków**,

When the Jewish Communists came home [after their release from jail], they helped to organize a new government system in our city. The Russian authorities appointed a Jewish mayor and he appointed many Jewish and Ukrainian Communists to various top positions at City hall, police, fire, banking, and other institutions.

Within days, the police came at night, with prepared lists, to round up the Polish intelligentsia, government employees, army officers, and nationalists with their families were taken to the railway station. They were being expelled, and sent to Siberia. The same transport also included a few rich Jews who owned large stores, but their families were left behind.

With the reorganization of city life the Russians used the Jews in every aspect of commerce, banking, and reorganization of the villages according to their system. The educated Ukrainians took part in the reorganization, but the Poles had difficulties getting a decent job. They were considered second class citizens ... they were being discriminated ...

Election day was declared for people who had passports to vote for joining Polish territories to the U.S.S.R. I, myself, was very proud to participate in the election process as a sixteen year old Jewish boy. It was a national holiday and the mood was very festive.

Most of the Jewish population voted for joining ...⁶⁶⁶

In **Brzezany**, the leading positions of authority were taken over by Jews:

The first Soviet mayor of Brzezany [Brzeżany] was Kunio Grad, a Jew who had been a Communist and a political prisoner before the war. ... Isaac Sauberberg, a Jewish ex-political prisoner, who was one of the most active members of the KPZU, the Communist Party of Western Ukraine in the area, was appointed head of the Financial Department. ... Kuba Winter, a Jew who had been active in distributing illegal Communist propaganda ... became head of the Brzezany post office.

⁶⁶³ “Kuty” in Danuta Dabrowska, Abraham Wein, and Aharon Weiss, eds., *Pinkas hakehillot Polin*, vol. 2 (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1980), 460–63; translated as *Encyclopaedia of Jewish Communities in Poland*, Internet: <https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/pinkas_poland/pol2_00460.html>. This source goes on to state: “but after the strengthening of the Ukrainization process, many Jews were fired in 1940 from the local municipal institutions.”

⁶⁶⁴ Jehoschua Gertner and Danek Gertner, *Home is No More: The Destruction of the Jews of Kosow and Zabie* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2000), 166.

⁶⁶⁵ “Zaleszczyki” in Danuta Dabrowska, Abraham Wein, and Aharon Weiss, eds., *Pinkas hakehillot Polin*, vol. 2 (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1980), 195–99, at 198; translated as *Encyclopedia of Jewish Communities in Poland*, Internet: <https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/pinkas_poland/pol2_00198.html>.

⁶⁶⁶ Abraham Morgenstern, *Chortkov Remembered: The Annihilation of a Jewish Community* (Dumont, New Jersey: n.p., 1990), 11, 13. The collaborators with the Soviet regime were not restricted to prewar Communists, but included also new converts and pro-Soviet elements. Although the author’s father was a merchant before the war, through connections he was able to obtain employment as a supervisor in a grain company and his passport listed his occupation as a clerk, thus avoiding possible repercussions as a “bourgeois.” Ibid., 12.

Itschie [Isaac Sauberberg] was appointed to several successive positions, and when the Soviets retreated in the summer of 1941, he and his family joined them. ... The most prominent Jewish Communist in Brzezany was Elkana, or Kunio, Grad. His family too, like Itschie Sauberberg's, was a traditional Jewish family. ... The peak of his career was his service as the first Soviet mayor of Brzezany in the fall of 1939, during the first weeks of the Soviet rule. He left Brzezany with the retreating Soviet administration in the summer of 1941. Kunio Grad was among the few Brzezany Jews who survived the war in Russia. Grad lived after the war in Poland and served as an officer with the ... Polish Security. Eventually he emigrated to Canada and died there.⁶⁶⁷

... as soon as the Russian soldiers marched into Brzezany, the local Communists put on the red armbands which had been forbidden until now and invaded the town hall. Then they took over the police stations and every other location that gave them power in the city. Within a few weeks they had robbed us of nearly everything. Our store was nationalized by the Russians so it no longer belonged to us. A man my father would not even have hired to sweep the floor now ran our business, which was renamed a collective. It was not a successful endeavor and one day everything left in the store was loaded into big wagons and disappeared.⁶⁶⁸

In *Malów* near Trembowla,

When the Soviet army arrived initially, young leftist Jews came out of hiding; those who had left Hashomer Hatzair and those who belonged to the Communist underground movement that had been banned in Poland ... They enlisted in the Red Militia and wanted to help the new regime set up an administration in the towns and cities.⁶⁶⁹

The Jews in *Skalat* adjusted effortlessly to the new conditions:

It was quite understandable that the Jews were able to adjust more easily to the new life, since the Soviet regime trusted the Jewish population more than it did the Gentiles. A significant portion of the Jews—the workers, the artisans and the working intelligentsia, therefore, took on leading roles in the economic and social life of the town. They held important positions in cooperatives and in communal and public institutions. No one group could have adjusted better to the newly created conditions of life than the Jews.⁶⁷⁰

According to a Jewish testimony from *Kamień Koszyrski* in Polesia,

We formed a self-defense unit to maintain order in the town... We destroyed the ammunition left behind by the retreating [Polish] armies.

At the same time, Russian forces entered Poland. Within three weeks, their advance units moved into our town. Whatever weapons were left we turned over to them; we disbanded our self-defense unit and many of us enlisted in their militia.⁶⁷¹

In *Maniewiczze*, Volhynia,

Old and young, the Jews came out to greet the vanguard of the Red Army with flowers and sweets. ...

⁶⁶⁷ Redlich, *Together and Apart in Brzezany*, 58–59, 84.

⁶⁶⁸ Hersch Altman, *On the Fields of Loneliness* (New York and Jerusalem: Yad Vashem and The Holocaust Survivors' Memoirs Project, 2006), 19–20.

⁶⁶⁹ Testimony of Israel Goldfliess in B. F. Sabrin, ed., *Alliance for Murder: The Nazi-Ukrainian Nationalist Partnership in Genocide* (New York: Sarpedon, 1991), 45.

⁶⁷⁰ Abraham Weissbrod, *Death of a Shtetl*, Internet: <<http://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/skalat1/skalat.html>>, chapter 2; translation of J. Kaplan, ed., *Es shtarbt a shtetl: Megiles Skalat* (Munich: Central Historical Commission of the Central Committee of Liberated Jews in the U.S. Zone of Germany, 1948).

⁶⁷¹ Shlomo Kogan, "The Long Road," in Leo W. Schwarz, ed., *The Root and the Bough: The Epic of an Enduring People* (New York and Toronto: Rinehart & Company, 1949), 100.

The next day, tanks and other vehicles arrived. After them came the Soviet governors who declared Soviet authority.

At first, the government depended on the local population. A Ukrainian was named mayor, and his deputy was a Jew. The militia was made up only of the town's residents. All communists came out from the underground and wore red ribbons on their sleeves, and offered their allegiance to the new regime. ...

The first opportunity to prove their loyalty to the Soviet regime presented itself when the government held a referendum whereby the residents were demanded to declare their support for the annexation of western Ukraine to the U.S.S.R. It is impossible to describe the great public support for the "referendum." All groups and places of work competed as to who would show the greatest enthusiasm for the "most-desired" takeover. People thronged to the polling booths and voted as in one voice for the annexation. ...

Soviet propaganda instilled a feeling of security into the general population, but it was the Jews, more than the other sectors, that believed in the slogans and propaganda and had true faith in the stability of the government. They also lay their trust in the great Soviet military force.⁶⁷²

This was the case despite the reality that Jews confronted on a daily basis and transformed the community almost overnight without any protest:

The Jews of Manyevitz [Maniewiczze] were forced to prove their total willingness to become acceptable to the authorities. They first had to blot out all signs of belonging to any "bourgeois Zionist organization." The language of study in the Hebrew school "Tarbut" became Yiddish; Zionist youth groups were stamped out. The youth group Comsomol was established and the youth thronged to its club centers. ...

Synagogues were not closed, but very, very few attended services. Only the old and very devout endangered themselves by continuing their life-long traditional ways. Although no specific ban had been put on the public praying or on other religious ceremonies, the propaganda against religion was so strong that people felt their lives were jeopardized by going to the synagogue. ...

During this relatively short period of 21 months, drastic changes had taken over the lives of the Jews in all of western Ukraine and in Russia: economically, culturally, socially, and in religious practices. ... The vibrant and rich cultural life enjoyed by the Jews of the town completely vanished and seemed never to have existed, in spite of the fact that the Jewish population almost doubled during this period.⁶⁷³

In *Krzemieniec*,

With the Russian conquest of the town (Sept. 22, 1939) a Jew, Moshe Sugan, a local Communist, was appointed mayor... In that time period a Jew, Avraham Rayz, was appointed chief of police...⁶⁷⁴

When the Red Army arrived on the 22nd, it was received cheerfully. ... a "temporary administration" was formed immediately—under the authority of the Russian army and politicians—to which were added some local clerks from the Jewish intelligentsia, and the Communists who were released from jails and returned to Kremenets.

In general, the new regime showed a tendency to favor the Jews who were an intellectual and devoted element, while among the Polish, many were members of nationalistic movements. ...

In those days they said that during the Soviet regime... Jews received jobs in offices; Poles were permitted to deal in second-hand clothes... Ukrainians were permitted to have their signs in Ukrainian...

At the end of 1939 the citizens were ordered to vote, for or against, annexing the city to the Ukrainian-Soviet republic. Obviously the Jews voted for the annexation. ...

The termination of national Jewish life came without the need for action by the authorities. The Jews understood that under Soviet rule, public activities were not acceptable, and they had better concern themselves with their personal needs only. ...

All the Zionist and other organizations ceased to exist. All the skilled people devoted themselves to adapting to the new way of life. ... the Zionist Hebrews are useful and faithful subjects to the Soviet regime. And, indeed, the Jews adapted themselves quickly to life under the new regime. ...

⁶⁷² Tarmon, *Memorial Book*, 27–29.

⁶⁷³ Tarmon, *Memorial Book*, 27–29.

⁶⁷⁴ Zev Shumski, "The Jews in the Town," in Abraham Samuel Stein, ed., *Pinkas Kremenits: Sefer zikaron* (Tel Aviv: Former Residents of Krzemieniec in Israel, 1954), 86. An English translation is posted on the Internet at: www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/kremenets/Kremenets.html

Key positions were given, generally, to party members who came from eastern Russia, and were “Easterners” {“Vastatshniki”), and were assisted by some local Communists. For example, Meir Pinchuk (a former member of “HaShomer HaTzair” turned Communist), was appointed in charge of the High School, and his wife of other schools. ...

It is interesting to note that some of the Jewish laborers who were leaning towards communism, thought that now they would be relieved from labor and would be given positions in government institutions, but the new authorities preferred choosing from the intelligentsia, and rejected them completely, or gave them a minor job, like in charge of a storage plant.⁶⁷⁵

According to a Polish source, “either Bolsheviks or local Communists, most of them Jews, were appointed to the higher offices in the city. ... In the New Year (1940) a Polish ten-year school was created. Pińczuk [Pinchuk], a Jew and a communist, was appointed director.”⁶⁷⁶ From another source, we learn that the said Pinchuk had no prior background in the field of education.⁶⁷⁷ Elsewhere in that county: “They abolished Polish offices and put Bolsheviks and Jews in place of Poles.”⁶⁷⁸

Janina Sułkowska describes the conditions that pervaded every aspect of life in Krzemieniec:

For Poles and those among the Ukrainian and Jewish communities who opposed the occupation, life was hell. The NKVD made good use of collaborators especially the local Communist Party which was almost exclusively Jewish. From headquarters in the Treasury Office, lavishly refurbished with plundered riches, the NKVD would decide the fate of victims over vodka and fine food—aided by Jews who for reasons ranging from politics to settling old scores, turned in their neighbours. They eagerly fulfilled the duty of every party member to spy on and denounce the citizenry, resulting in brutal interrogations and show trials where the usual sentence was eight years at hard labour in Siberia. Even walking down the street was an ordeal as the Russian secret police and the Jewish or Ukrainian militia would arrest a person on any pretext—even for being well-dressed.

What particularly disturbed me was the humiliation of my beloved Lyceum which was revered as a great Polish institution that welcomed students of all backgrounds: rich or poor, Polish, Ukrainian and Jewish. The Soviets methodically transformed it into a dreary and repressive model based on their Soviet system, and this required mass firings and arrests of Polish professors, staff and pupils. New directors and teachers were appointed from local unqualified Communists whose main attribute was loyalty to their Soviet overlords, and later personnel would be brought in from the USSR.

I could never forgive those Krzemiencian Jews, including friends, who played a great part in the destruction of an institution from which some had themselves graduated. Many Jews and Ukrainians however mourned the loss of this respected school, even as new students, Jewish and Ukrainian, were brought in to eradicate the despised Polish presence. ...

My younger sister Wanda brought back horror stories of scholastic life under the vicious directorship of Pinchas Pinczuk [Pinchuk], a Jewish former student of the Lyceum who had been imprisoned in Poland for his Communist activities, and who now used Jewish students to betray Polish classmates who wore religious symbols or were patriotic, often with deadly consequences for the student and his or her family. As the deportations started, fewer and fewer of Wanda’s classmates would appear in class. ...

The Soviets emptied the school libraries and dumped the books into a pile for destruction, while the priceless Lyceum Library of 40,000 books was put into the hands of a young Jew who functioned as head censor and book-burner. The duties of school curator fell to two local Jews, one who was deemed qualified as he was an accountant with the publisher of Lyceum texts and material. The position of school inspector was taken over by a young Jewish female doctor who demanded that students donate money to the “International Organizations of Revolutionary Help”—with dire consequences for those who didn’t pay. Jewish “assistants” in uniforms spread terror and enforced the new order which would see the number of Polish students decline drastically, including the arrest of a Polish professor and several students for belonging to “a counter-revolutionary organization.” ...

My mother, brother and I returned in a dejected mood from the election for delegates to the Soviet of the Union, in which the citizenry was “encouraged” by teenage Jewish thugs working as “propagandists” to

⁶⁷⁵ Aizik Hofman, “Twenty-One Months under Soviet Rule,” in *ibid.*, 66–68.

⁶⁷⁶ Account of Zdzisław Jagodziński in Grudzińska-Gross and Gross, *War Through Children’s Eyes*, 184–85.

⁶⁷⁷ Antoni Jagodziński, “Początki okupacji sowieckiej w Krzemieńcu,” *Życie Krzemienieckie*, no. 7 (January 1994): 14.

⁶⁷⁸ Account of Sław R. in Grudzińska-Gross and Gross, *War Through Children’s Eyes*, 178.

publicly deposit a pre-filled ballot directly into the box—with a warning not to write anything on it.

We immediately began preparing a package of food for my father [Jan Sulkowski, the former county secretary] who had been arrested on Good Friday [1940] and was spending his third day at NKVD headquarters. We knew his arrest had been inevitable, but it was a shock when they bundled him off like some terrible criminal. Little did we know of the beatings he was presently undergoing. Later he would face a sham trial conducted by the Soviets and be sentenced to hard labour—on “evidence” given by his Jewish and Ukrainian employees.⁶⁷⁹

Jan Sulkowski would be deported to the Gulag, where he died never again seeing his wife or youngest daughter.

The phenomenon of appointing unqualified Jews to teaching positions, mentioned above, was widespread. Historian Dov Levin concedes that “hundreds of young Jews, some lacking in higher education, passed courses of several weeks’ duration and were sent to work at all levels in the school system.”⁶⁸⁰ Obviously, most of these advancements came at the expense of far better qualified non-Jews. This was the case in *Różana*, in Polesia, where Jews promptly took over most positions of authority:

On September 17, we waited impatiently for the arrival of the Russians. We went out to greet them with flowers in our hands. We were informed of the approach of the Russians from the nearby town of Slonim. There was great joy when their first tank arrived. Everyone wished each other “*Mazel Tov*.”

The new guard began. The Russian police and post office were housed in Sobol’s two-story house. Through them, the young Communists ran the civic affairs. These included David Rabinowich, who was the director of the sawmill and flower mill of Pines; and Chaikel Wissotzky (the son of Simcha the hat maker) who became the director of the hide factory. Yaakov Meir Maruchnik, a tanner from the “Other Side of the River” Lane, who was not previously known at all as a Communist activist, became one of the most active members in the Communist movement after that time. Obviously, when the Communist rule began, he was appointed by the government as a representative to the Minsk Soviet.⁶⁸¹

How did Roza [Michnovsky] suddenly become a teacher during the Russian era? We learn this and many other things from those days from the letters of David-Noach Sokolovsky. His letter of May 14, 1940 states: “We did not suffer from the retreat of the Polish army. Shimon returned from the army. Father is working. We are healthy, earning money, and satisfied. The Germans did not reach us. Today we feel ourselves calm and secure under the protection of the mighty Red Army and in our great homeland the U.S.S.R. I organized the school in the town. Ethel and Michla are taking a short course that will enable them to be teachers. Roza is with them as well. They receive stipends that enable them to study and complete the course.”

He tells in his letter of September 9, 1940: “Ethel and Roza are already working as teachers in the village of Krupa, and Michla in the village of Polonsk [Połonsk].” However, David-Noach did not live in the city for a long time, as is described in his letter of September 22, 1940: “I already do not live in the town, but rather in a village called Milkovich, a distance of 14 kilometers from Ruzhany [Różana]. I come to town once a week on the “outing” day.” (This is what Sunday was called, which was a day off for everyone regardless of religion and nationality.)

From this letter we learn that the Jewish Sabbath did not exist as a rest day for the Jews during the Russian era. It was not only the Sabbath that disappeared from the horizon. Even before this, the Tarbut Hebrew School had disappeared.⁶⁸²

Not all Jews, however, were entranced by the new “workers’ paradise” and the authorities’ local enforcers:

⁶⁷⁹ “A Gulag and Holocaust Memoir of Janina Sulkowska-Gladun,” in Gladun, *Poland’s Holocaust: A Family Chronicle of Soviet and Nazi Terror*.

⁶⁸⁰ Levin, *The Lesser of Two Evils*, 77.

⁶⁸¹ Moshe Lev, “Nineteen Days of the German-Polish War, and Russian Jurisdiction in Ruzhany,” in M. Sokolowsky [Meir Sokolovsky], ed., *Rozhinoy: Sefer zikaron le-kehilat Rozhinoy ve-ha-seviva* (Tel Aviv: Former Residents of Rozhinoy in Israel, 1957), 150; translated as *Rozana: A Memorial Book to the Jewish Community*, Internet: <<https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/ruzhany/ruzhany.html>>.

⁶⁸² Meir Sokolovsky, “Echoes in Writing,” in Sokolowsky, *Rozhinoy*, 152.

During the first days of Russian rule, disarray fell upon the city. ... Difficult life began in the city itself. The shops, which still remained open for a brief time, closed. As well, the independent tradesmen were not able to maintain their stand, and were forced to join one of the cooperative groups and receive the wages of a worker. For the most part, the workers remained without work. I, for example, worked for the tailor Chaim Kimerman. They joined him to the tailors' cooperative group, for he had a machine, but I, as the employee, was not accepted for the reason that I did not have a machine, so I was let go from my work.

I was forced to work in the forest. When I did not have work in the city, I suspected that they would send me out from my city to another work place. The door could have opened at any moment, and one of the young Communist workers—David Rabinowich, Chaikel Wissotzky, the Kaganowicz brothers, and Sheindel Joselwicz—could come to inform me that I must travel to work in such and such a place that is outside our city. This indeed happened. Once I was sent to dig a ditch near Kobrin where the Russians had demanded workers. The young activists in the city fulfilled their request, as usual. ...

It was difficult to obtain bread. In order to do so, one had to get up in the night and stand in line in order to be among the first to receive the kilogram of bread. People wasted a great deal of time standing in the lineup. There were those who put their allotment away and then stood in line once more to receive an additional kilogram, for what would a person not do to sustain himself and his family? People also received clothing by standing in line for a long time. People even stood in line to obtain liquor, even those people who did not use it for drinking, but rather for selling. The vodka was received for a cheap price and later sold for an inflated price, which of course lightened the budget of the person.⁶⁸³

With the entry of the Russians, weeks and months of getting accustomed to the new living conditions ensued. The merchants whose stores were liquidated and closed remained without a staff of bread. Many other people of the city were also left without livelihood. Both groups looked for work so that they could sustain themselves. They transferred from job to job because they could not get used to difficult work conditions due to their older age, or because a job that they had started with had ended, and they had to look for another. In most cases, the salary was insufficient for livelihood.⁶⁸⁴

Jews also flooded administrative positions in offices in *Budzanów*, though not due to any objective qualifications they possessed:

In this office, most of the employees and administrators were the Jews from Yanov [Janów] and Budzanov [Budzanów]. There were very few Gentiles. The Jews from these shtetls were noted for their knowledge more than the Gentiles, and they were more capable at office jobs. We worked, we excelled ...⁶⁸⁵

In *Łomża*, where denunciations were frequent, virtually all of the administrative offices and positions were occupied by Jews.⁶⁸⁶ In September of 1940, a high-ranking NKVD official from that town averred:

The Jews supported us and only they continued to be visible. It also became fashionable for every director of an institution or business concern to boast that they no longer employed even one Pole.⁶⁸⁷

In the nearby village of *Przytuły*, where the Jews greeted the Soviets with flowers,

Only Jews were put in positions of authority. All the Poles who worked in the commune office were arrested. The Jews formed committees and persecuted the Poles. The head of the committee was Wileński. My brother

⁶⁸³ Moshe Lev, "Nineteen Days of the German-Polish War, and Russian Jurisdiction in Ruzhany," in Sokolowsky, *Rozhinoy*, 150–51.

⁶⁸⁴ Meir Sokolowsky, "Echoes in Writing," in Sokolowsky, *Rozhinoy*, 151–52.

⁶⁸⁵ Immanuel (Donio) Ashberg, "My Shtetl Yanov," in I. Siegelman, ed., *Sefer Budzanow* (Haifa: Former Residents of Budzanow in Israel, 1968), 139 ff., translated as *Book of Budaznow*, Internet: <<http://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/Budanov/Budanov.html>>.

⁶⁸⁶ *Walka*, no. 44, November 7, 1941. *Walka* was an underground publication of the right-wing Stronnictwo Narodowe (National Party).

⁶⁸⁷ Cited in Gnatowski, *W radzieckich okowach*, 159.

had to hide on account of him because they wanted to shoot him. They often carried out searches and always at night. Many civil servants were arrested and shipped out without a trace. Property owned by the Poles was taken away and divided among the Jews and even among some Poles who conformed to Russian instructions.⁶⁸⁸

In *Stawiski*,

The executive authority was handed over to the dregs of society from the national minorities [the only minority in that area was the Jews—*M.P.*]. The result was often frequent arrests, confiscations, evictions from homes, destruction of national monuments. The pre-election agitation was well organized; it started off with a thorough census of the local population.⁶⁸⁹

The first to be arrested were civil servants such as the mayor, the commune head, postal workers, government clerks, policemen, teachers, officers and the civilian population. ... I remember well the first deportation in February 1940, the first transport of our population. A long string of wagons loaded with belongings and people. ...

The electoral committee was made up of NKVD members and local people who were favourably disposed toward Soviet authority. They were mostly Jews.⁶⁹⁰

In *Kolno*,

Former Jewish communists—Marvid, Shlomo Krelenstein, Yissacher Niphke, Greenbaum and others, cooperated, out of ideological convictions and sincere faith, with the new rulers. ... Zerach Stavisky, Akiva Kashipopa and some other Jewish fellows were employed by the Soviet militia ...

Several “artels” were established, including a tailors’ artel directed by Michael Borech, and a bakers’ artel headed by Teitelbaum, as well as shoemakers’, carpenters’, locksmiths’ and other craftsmen’s artels. Mendel Sokol, a former merchant, was held in high esteem by the new authorities and was appointed by the Soviet municipality to be superintendant of the construction of the new hospital, the public baths and other institutions. Later, they even entrusted him with the trench-fortifications, the front-line of defence near the town opposite the East-Prussian border.⁶⁹¹

The first mass arrests occurred on the eve of March 13, 1940 and continued into the following day. Sixty-three families were seized ... Afterwards arrests followed systematically.⁶⁹²

In *Zabludów* near Białystok, where there had been a mixed civil militia comprised of Poles and Jews before the arrival of the Soviets, according to Jewish resident:

The civil and half army government settled in the old city hall (the magistrate): drafted civilian Soviets, most of them party members ruled there, and their leader, as we found out, was a Jew by the name Margolin. ...

Like every new and strange regime the Soviets needed collaborators (this time upon ideological background) from the population, which they could find easily, especially among us Jews, and from the White Russians, who saw themselves as the main partners in the upcoming changes. ... Their innocence was based on revenge, and not on ideology ... Most of the people that tried to be part of the new government came from the poor population ...

⁶⁸⁸ Account of Anna Zalewska (no. 9148), Archives of the Polish Ministry of Information and Documentation, Hoover Institution on War, Revolution and Peace, posted on the Internet at www.sfpol.com/zarchiwhoovera.html.

⁶⁸⁹ Account of Waclaw Świdorski (no. 6188), Archives of the Polish Ministry of Information and Documentation, Hoover Institution on War, Revolution and Peace, posted on the Internet at www.sfpol.com/zarchiwhoovera.html.

⁶⁹⁰ Account of Henryka Kotarska (no. 3362), Archives of the Polish Ministry of Information and Documentation, Hoover Institution on War, Revolution and Peace, posted on the Internet at www.sfpol.com/zarchiwhoovera.html.

⁶⁹¹ Aizik Remba and Benjamin Halevy, eds., *Kolno Memorial Book* (Tel Aviv: The Kolner Organization and Sifriat Po'alim, 1971), 46–47.

⁶⁹² Account from Kolno, Archives of the Polish Ministry of Information and Documentation, Hoover Institution on War, Revolution and Peace, posted on the Internet at www.sfpol.com/zarchiwhoovera.html.

The town filled up with military personnel's family and Soviet clerks. Over time some of them became friendly, especially [toward] the Jews. The Polish, except for a few of them, stayed away from the Soviets and saw the Jews as collaborators ...⁶⁹³

In **Zambrów**, which had been bombed by the Germans, the Jews were "overjoyed" when the Red Army arrived: "there was dancing in the streets, the joy being so great."⁶⁹⁴ "Their first act was the appointment of Fishman (Kaufmann's son-in-law) as Commissar of Zambrov [Zambrów]."⁶⁹⁵

Life in Zambrow began to normalize itself in accordance with the Soviet style. It was our communist youth that had a large part in the introduction and establishment of the communist way of life.⁶⁹⁶

The Zambrow Jews breathed more freely: all citizens are equal. ... Even the very observant Jews, who were far from being in sympathy with communism, saw, in the Red Army, a means to save the oppressed Jews. This example serves to illustrate the fact: On the First of May, many religious Jews marched with a red flag, among them: my father Abraham Shmuel the Shokhet, wearing their long kapotes, etc.⁶⁹⁷

In **Kolaki** near Zambrów,

the Soviet authorities took over the state offices ... Next they created a militia consisting of ruffians, mostly from the Russian and Jewish population.⁶⁹⁸

In the town of **Sokoły**,

The municipal functionaries were mostly Jews. Their salaries ranged between 150 and 600 rubles per month. In order to be accepted for a government position, one had to be politically kosher in the eyes of the local political bosses. The Lapchinsky family had special rights. The members of this family set their sights on important positions; they were glorified because of the distinction of their brother Chaim, who had rotted in

⁶⁹³ Account of Eliyahu Ben Moshe-Baruch and Bluma Zesler in Nechama Shmueli-Schmusch, ed., *Zabludow: Dapim mi-tokh yisker-bukh* (Tel Aviv: The Zabludow Community in Israel, 1987). An English translation of this memorial book is posted on the Internet at www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/zabludow/. From another account in that book, by Phinia Korovski, we learn that after the Germans arrived at the end of June 1941, "whoever could save anything brought it to the Christians ... The Germans forced their way into Rabbi Jochanan Mirsky's house ... they dragged him to the street and started beating him ... a few Christians tried to help and with a lot of effort they were able to release him." That source also describes some looting and harassment of Jews by a small number of Christians.

⁶⁹⁴ Yitzhak Golombeck, "Blood, Fire, and Columns of Smoke," in Yom-Tov Levinsky, ed., *The Zambrow Memorial Book: In Memory of a Martyred Community That Was Exterminated* (Mahwah, New Jersey: Jacob Solomon Berger, 2010), 65, Internet: <<http://www.museumoffamilyhistory.com/z/zyb-01.htm>>.

⁶⁹⁵ Yom-Tov Lewinsky, ed., *Sefer Zambrow (Zambrove) [The Book of Zambrov: Memories of Our Town Which Had Been Annihilated by the Nazis and Does Not Exist Any More]* (Tel Aviv: The Zambrover Societies in U.S.A., Argentine and Israel, 1963), 25 (English section).

⁶⁹⁶ Yitzhak Golombeck, "Blood, Fire, and Columns of Smoke," in Yom-Tov Levinsky, ed., *The Zambrow Memorial Book: In Memory of a Martyred Community That Was Exterminated* (Mahwah, New Jersey: Jacob Solomon Berger, 2010), 65, Internet: <<http://www.museumoffamilyhistory.com/z/zyb-01.htm>>.

⁶⁹⁷ Yitzhak Stupnik, "The Beginning of the End," in Lewinsky, *Sefer Zambrow (Zambrove)*, 116, and in Yom-Tov Levinsky, ed., *The Zambrow Memorial Book: In Memory of a Martyred Community That Was Exterminated* (Mahwah, New Jersey: Jacob Solomon Berger, 2010), 62, Internet: <<http://www.museumoffamilyhistory.com/z/zyb-01.htm>>. By way of comparison, the editor describes interwar Poland in the following terms: "There were no citizen's rights, and no rights as human beings. Poland ... had become 100 times worse than the worst of the Czarist times." Ibid., 56.

⁶⁹⁸ Account of Antoni Dołęgowski (no. 11002), Archives of the Polish Ministry of Information and Documentation, Hoover Institution on War, Revolution and Peace, posted on the Internet at www.sfpol.com/zarchiwwhoovera.html.

prison for four years because of his [subversive] Communist activities when he was a student at the Teachers Seminary in Białystok [Białystok].

... the economic situation of the middle-class and small merchants during the Soviet occupation was better than it had been during the Polish regime before the War. It is true that officially, the Soviets proclaimed war on speculators, but they actually did not intervene in the citizens' business; they did not conduct searches and they did not harm the merchants.

The Soviet soldiers craved all kinds of merchandise, and they were very thankful when the merchants sold to them. Thus, unofficial trading flourished and there was plenty of income.⁶⁹⁹

In *Zaręby Kościelne* near Ostrów Mazowiecka, where "first meeting with the Red Army and the Jewish young men" was described as "ecstatic," a revolutionary committee and Jewish militia ("young men with red armbands and carrying Polish rifles") are soon in control.⁷⁰⁰

During the Russian occupation, the cultural and community life in Zaromb [Zaręby] was administered by a committee: Chaim Mayer Fayntak, Leyzer Levin, Leytche Fridman, Eliehu Pravde and Rokhel Dishke. The Polish shoemaker, Vishilitzki, worked with them.⁷⁰¹

The entire municipal administration of *Nadwórna*, about 50 kilometres south of Stanisławów, was taken over by local Jews.⁷⁰² A Pole who donned a red star on his hat to blend in was greeted as "tovarishch" by Jewish militiamen he encountered during his short stay there.⁷⁰³

The fear that gripped Poles, however, was not shared by most Jews. In small towns, Jews felt particularly secure and could count on the protection of fellow Jews in power: "My father did not vote [in the Soviet elections], but we were not afraid that anything would happen to us, since *Boćki* was a small town where power was in the hands of the local Communists."⁷⁰⁴

In *Brańsk*,

When Rabbi Benizon Kagan ... applied to the local labor exchange for work, the bureau director told him that the matter could be arranged only if the rabbi declared himself to be an atheist. After complaints and appeals to the top Party echelons, Rabbi Kagan was assigned to a petty bookkeeping position and was even excused from work on the Sabbath and Jewish festivals.⁷⁰⁵

⁶⁹⁹ Maik, *Deliverance*, 14–15. Maik claims that "During the Polish regime before the War, Jewish shop owners and craftsmen were persecuted, subject to trials and punishments for transgressions under the trading laws. In comparison ..., the Jewish merchants felt freer under the Soviet occupation, even though they were legally subject to heavy punishment." Ibid., 16–17.

⁷⁰⁰ Gershon Liberman, "The Liquidation of Zaromb," in *Li-zikaron olam: Di Zaromber yidn vos zaynen umgekumen al kidesh-hashem* (New York: United Zaromber Relief, 1947); posted on the Internet in English translation at www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/zareby/.

⁷⁰¹ Z. Shaykowski (Shavke Fridman), "Destruction of Zaromb," in *ibid.*

⁷⁰² Liszewski, *Wojna polsko-sowiecka 1939 r.*, 156; Szawłowski, *Wojna polsko-sowiecka 1939* (1995, 1997), vol. 1, 301.

⁷⁰³ Gonczyński, *Raj proletariacki*, 24.

⁷⁰⁴ Grynberg, *Children of Zion*, 66.

⁷⁰⁵ Levin, *The Lesser of Two Evils*, 74–75.

When the local pharmacy, which belonged to a Polish female pharmacist, was nationalized, a local Jew named Chomski, who was not a pharmacist, was appointed the manager and only Jews were hired to work there.⁷⁰⁶

After the departure of the Germans around September 20th, and before the arrival of the Soviets later than month, a Provisional Workers' and Peasant's Committee composed of Jews and Belorussians took control of the town of *Siemiatycze*. After organizing a welcome for the Soviet invaders, some of its members joined the newly formed Workers' and Peasant's Militia. Arrests of political and class enemies, mostly Poles, soon followed.⁷⁰⁷

In *Dzisna* county,

The bolsheviks established 'selsovet' [village soviets], 'raikomy' [regional (county) committees] and other committees which the Jews, local communists, and those who arrived from Russia joined. The first founder of [the] militia was a Jew Srol Zelikman, a local citizen. ... The bolsheviks persecuted the Poles a lot in prisons. In *Wilejka* where the prison was one could hear shouts and moans, so in order not to hear them the bolsheviks started up engines, to drown out the moans.⁷⁰⁸

In *Gródek* near Mołodeczno,

Our shtetl, the village of Horodok [Gródek], fell to the Soviets. ...

The Communist Party with the help of a few local, and until then clandestine, Jewish Communists took over the town. Mass meetings with communist orators spewing propaganda were held to "brainwash" us. Occasional arrests continued. Secrecy and spying on neighbors became a way of life.⁷⁰⁹

In *Kleck* and *Lachowicze* near Nieśwież, not far from the Soviet border,

The Jews cheered the Russians as their liberators from Polish Fascism, which had made anti-Semitism an official policy between the two World Wars. ... The gentiles, on the other hand, were dismayed and badly

⁷⁰⁶ Testimony of Janina Woińska, Polish Witnesses to the Holocaust Project, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Internet: <https://collections.ushmm.org/oh_findingaids/RG-50.488.0052_trs_en.pdf>.

⁷⁰⁷ Jerzy Nowicki, "Siemiatycze—wrzesień 1939," *Głos Siemiatycz Online*, posted on the Internet at http://box.zetobi.com.pl/glos_siemiatycze/histor.html.

⁷⁰⁸ Account of Andrzej K. in Grudzińska-Gross and Gross, *War Through Children's Eyes*, 155.

⁷⁰⁹ Account of Moshe Baran, "A Shtetl's Life Is Ended," in Anita Brostoff and Sheila Chamovitz, eds., *Flares of Memory: Stories of Childhood during the Holocaust* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 37.

frightened. ... the Communist youth, suddenly promoted from “illegals” to “guardians of law and order,” came out of hiding; they marched through the streets with rifles given them by the Russians ...⁷¹⁰

I had to be very careful because a large number of poor Jews were committed to communism and in the towns the majority of commissars [sic] and cadres were Soviet Jews.⁷¹¹

In *Lubcz* near Nowogródek,

Not only was the chairman of the local soviet Jewish; so were the managers of all the retail shops, without exception. The same was true for a local winery and canned food factory, the district office, the chief accounting division of the local tax office, and a footwear cooperative. Moreover, a majority of the 200 Soviet clerks who were brought in to fill positions of responsibility were Jews.⁷¹²

In *Dokszyc* near Głębokie,

To the best of my knowledge the military representatives of the new government were 3 politruks, permanently stationed in our town. The first, Sluzky, was a Jew ... the second of Lithuanian origin ... the third was a Russian.

... These elections took place in late October 1939, when the following three candidates were elected. The first was Leibe Rozov, a former communist who had also been appointed commander of the militia, composed almost entirely of service-eligible Jewish youth clean of any anti-Soviet record. ...

In fact, these fears did not materialize. No measures were taken against Zionists—none were exiled to Siberia ...

For the young generation, however, this period was a true revolution.

These functionaries included the second Party Secretary, Voronov, whose family was Jewish. ... The regional (*Ispolskom*) chairman, Wilensky, also Jewish ... The third secretary, Levin, also Jewish ...⁷¹³

⁷¹⁰ (Rabbi) Alter Pekier, *From Kletzk to Siberia: A Yeshiva Bachur's Wanderings during the Holocaust* (Brooklyn, New York: Mesorah Publications, 1985), 24–26. The author, a yeshiva student at the time, holds seemingly strange but symptomatic views about Poland, which he sees only in a negative light. Although his family had fled persecution in the Soviet Union after World War I and took refuge in Poland, where they lived in peace and prosperity, he displays little if any gratitude. He repeatedly labels Poland a “Fascist” state, with scant appreciation of the fact that it was thanks to the united efforts of Christian Poles that Bolshevism was repulsed in 1921 and he was able to enjoy a Jewish lifestyle and obtain a religious education, the loss of which he mourned. Many of the yeshiva students soon fled to Lithuania where they resumed their studies. When that country was invaded by the Soviet Union in June 1940, the attitude of the Jews was reportedly quite different from that displayed by the Jews at the fall of Poland: “The day in July, 1940, when Russia completed the annexation of Lithuania was a day of mourning for all the Jews, but particularly us yeshivah students.” Eventually, the yeshiva students were rounded up and deported to the Soviet interior when they refused to accept Soviet citizenship: “Who could have surmised Hitler’s ultimate plans for the Jews?” he writes, recalling the state of knowledge at the time. *Ibid.*, 54. The circumstances of their arrest on June 14, 1941 are described as follows: “Early the next morning, we were awoken by an insistent knock on the door of the building in which we were quartered. We saw a gang of young Jewish Communists outside: later, we learned that they had been hand-picked by the local Soviet authorities to ‘process’ us. They told us that we were to report immediately to the *selkom*.” *Ibid.*, 55–56. About the apparent generosity of the peasants in the Kleck area in the fall of 1939 he writes in a somewhat niggardly manner: “The peasants in the area, certain that most of their land would be confiscated, offered us [i.e., the yeshiva students] the remnants of their vegetable crops as gifts, under the condition that we harvest the produce ourselves. And so, every morning, we yeshivah *bachurim* went out to the fields with hired horses and wagons. In the evening, we returned to the yeshivah with wagonloads of potatoes, carrots, onions and cucumbers.” *Ibid.*, 26.

⁷¹¹ Account of Edward Wierzbicki in Henryka Łappo, et al., eds., *Z Kresów Wschodnich RP na wygnanie: Opowieści zesłańców 1940–1946* (London: Ognisko Rodzin Osadników Kresowych, 1996), 567, and Jeśmanowa, *Stalin's Ethnic in Eastern Poland*, 638.

⁷¹² Levin, *The Lesser of Two Evils*, 71–72.

⁷¹³ Account of Arie Henkin, “Dokshitz Memories,” Internet: <http://www.shtetlinks.jewishgen.org/dokshitz/Dok_Arie.html>.

Thus middle class Jews were also the beneficiaries of Soviet economic restructuring. For example, Menahem Reznik of *Lida*, formerly a Po-alei Tsiyon functionary and an owner of two shops in the town, was appointed assistant to the director of the economic section of the local NKVD because the latter was a relative of his. Leizer Malbim, formerly an affluent merchant, a leader of the Berit ha-Hayyal (Union of Jewish Veterans) in *Nowogródek*, and the son of the local kehilla, managed the timber and forests trust for some time.⁷¹⁴

A Jew by the name of Matvei Kolotov (Motl Kolotnitsky) was the Soviet functionary sent to *Slonim* to set up a civil administration. The building that had once housed the Polish Savings Fund was taken over by the Gosbank (the Soviet government bank). Kolotov replaced the Polish clerks with “Jewish boys and girls, with a few Russian clerks thrown in.” Several newly appointed Gosbank officials were former executives of the Jewish Commercial Bank and the local Jewish People’s Bank. These two institutions and all their employees had been transferred to new the Gosbank branch.⁷¹⁵

In *Drohiczyn*, as in many other localities, Polish teachers were dismissed from their positions and replaced by Jewish ones who often lacked the basic qualifications.⁷¹⁶

According to a Jewish testimony from the Lwów region, “From the start the Jews occupied most of the lower positions in the Soviet administration, although the key posts were always in the hands of Soviet officials.”⁷¹⁷ Henryk Reiss, a Jew who settled in Lwów, wrote:

At that time being Jewish in Lwów made life easier. The Soviet authorities did not trust the Poles nor the Ukrainians who dreamed of a free Ukraine ... There remained the Jews. They were the only ones who greeted the Red Army with flowers, like saviours. The Polish government in exile in London appealed not to cooperate with the Soviet occupiers. The Poles, at the outset at least, did not report for employment. They waited. The Jews could not or would not wait. It was easy to get positions. For Jews it was even very easy. ...

Ninety percent of the members of our (engineering) association were Jews. A similar situation prevailed in all of the associations and cooperatives in Lwów which encompassed all of the branches of industry, production and trade. Is it surprising that the Poles, who endeavoured not to cooperate with the Russians in accordance with instructions from the Polish government in London, regarded the Jews as collaborators, as Bolshevik agents? ...

Our entire technical staff sat around their desks almost idle.⁷¹⁸

Another Jew reported that many Jews were employed in all of the offices in the city and that Jews were put in charge of most of the stores, warehouses and business establishments.⁷¹⁹ In *Drohobycz*, *Luck*, and doubtless many other localities, Jews used their positions as overseers of warehouses to siphon off foodstuff and various goods that soon became scarce for the average consumer.⁷²⁰

⁷¹⁴ Levin, *The Lesser of Two Evils*, 311 n.14.

⁷¹⁵ Levin, *The Lesser of Two Evils*, 66.

⁷¹⁶ Zenon Skrzypkowski, *Przyszliśmy was oswobodzić...: Drohiczynskie wspomnienia z lat niewoli* (Warsaw: n.p., 1991), 35.

⁷¹⁷ Testimony of Fela Schnek, Yad Vashem archives, E/664, p. 1, as cited in Davies and Polonsky, *Jews in Eastern Poland and the USSR, 1939–46*, 19.

⁷¹⁸ Henryk Reiss, *Z deszczu pod rynną...: Wspomnienia polskiego Żyda* (Warsaw: Polonia, 1993), 41.

⁷¹⁹ Musiał, “Stosunki polsko-żydowskie na Kresach Wschodnich R.P. pod okupacją sowiecką (1939–1941),” *Biuletyn Kwartalny Radomskiego Towarzystwa Naukowego*, vol. 34, no. 1 (1999): 118–119.

⁷²⁰ Kałuski, *Cienie, które dzielą*, 123–24; Joseph Stevens, *Good Morning* (Allendale, Michigan: Grand Valley State University, 2001), 61.

When the Soviet authorities issued instructions to clamp down on illegal trade which had reached massive proportions, Jews often turned to well-positioned Jewish officials for assistance for relatives caught in such transgressions. The following account is from *Maniewiczze* in Volhynia:

Simcha ... bought cases of vodka on the black market and began to sell bottles for a profit. But it wasn't long before he was caught and jailed. ... When my parents sought out one of the Jews among the high-ranking Soviet functionaries to intervene on Simcha's behalf, the official demanded vodka as a bribe!

Within a week my brother was released ...⁷²¹

Reports from many communities confirm that most Jews accommodated to the new conditions and did not face any particular hardships, as in the town of *Kosów Huculski*.

Jewish workers now had an easy time of it; the Soviets accepted them right off. The new rulers behaved very correctly toward the Jewish intelligentsia and professional class—doctors, dentists, teachers, bureaucrats.⁷²²

Moreover, the often-repeated claim that Soviet policies resulted in the ruination of the Jewish merchant class and tradespeople is an unwarranted generalization that must be looked at in context. The bulk of small shopkeepers and self-employed artisans generally fared well, and even owners of larger enterprises often remained in place as directors of their nationalized firms,⁷²³ as was the case in *Bielska Wola* near Sarny, in Volhynia:

My father, as the owner of a flour mill, was considered at the time to be a “kulak” (a rich person). ... In the end, the mill was bought by the government for a token sum, and my father was appointed manager, at the workers' request. He was also appointed manager of a fulling mill, which had been competing with us and which, until then, had belonged to a Polish landowner. That mill was larger than ours and more sophisticated. ... He was also appointed accountant of the mill, and thanks to those two appointments, our situation improved tremendously, compared to what it had been when my father worked on his own. The Soviet regime, in our case, had done us good ...⁷²⁴

According to Dov Levin,

Many Jews found positions planning and implementing the nationalization policy, either as “trustees” of the regime or as experts. The latter ... included former owners of plants and businesses. Some of the non-Jewish experts (Poles in the western Ukraine and western Belorussia, for example) were reluctant to fill the positions offered them for national and political reasons; in some areas this gave Jewish officials access to prominent economic positions (at least at first) at a rate far exceeding their share of the population.⁷²⁵

A conspicuous example of continuity was the baking industry in Lvov [Lwów], which had been dominated by Jews until the war. The bakeries were nationalized in late 1939, aggregated into a single municipal enterprise, and converted into branches of this municipal enterprise for baked goods. ... Apart from this largely representative position [i.e. the head of the enterprise—a Ukrainian Soviet], all the work—management, planning, and direct labor at the ovens—remained in Jewish hands. Former bakery owners ... now wage earners, served as work foremen, among other functions.

⁷²¹ Pell, *Taking Risks*, 40.

⁷²² Gertner and Gertner, *Home Is No More*, 63.

⁷²³ Pinchuk, *Shtetl Jews under Soviet Rule*, 53–56.

⁷²⁴ Testimony of Shraga Glaz in Nevo and Berger, eds., *We Remember*, 191–92.

⁷²⁵ Levin, *The Lesser of Two Evils*, 71–72.

In Wolhynia [Volhynia], and other areas of western Belorussia and Lithuania, many Jews continued working in the lumber industry. Now, however, they held governmental inspection and management positions that formerly had been reserved for Poles and Lithuanians ...⁷²⁶

Since few non-Jews were engaged as artisans in the towns and cities, quite a few artels were Jewish through and through. ... Leadership in the small artels was usually exercised by local Jews.⁷²⁷

In December, 1939, *Der Stern* published a letter signed by Jews from western Ukraine, thanking Comrade Stalin “for having saved [them] from the economic distress and unemployment” that prevailed before the war in Poland. ... Although the initiative behind these notices had presumably been taken by official agencies, it seems likely that, at least in the initial period, these pieces reflected some degree of genuine, sincere identification of certain Jewish groups with the policies of the new regime.⁷²⁸

One cannot deny, however, that many Jews derived many direct and indirect advantages from the new regime. For one thing, Jewish youth gained access to extensive opportunities for study. For another, the new regimen was highly beneficial to wage earners in certain industries. ...

It therefore comes as no surprise that the working class and other rank-and-file harbored genuine sympathy for the new regime—at least in the first stages of sovietization—along with gratitude and expectations of further economic improvement. Most of the artisans, too, suffered no detriment; indeed, some found themselves better off than before ...⁷²⁹

As Yehuda Bauer notes, most Jews seemed to accommodate quite well to the new conditions:

In postwar testimonies Jews remembered struggling for food and other essential commodities, but practically all of them also said that they somehow managed, some of them reasonably well. In the small shtetlach it was easier than in the larger towns, because shtetl Jews could barter with peasants in the surrounding countryside. Many had small lots of land themselves, which they were permitted to keep. ... Even former “capitalists” managed to survive reasonably well. An interesting case in point is that of Leib Kronish, of Zborow [Zborów]. Kornish was the former head of the local branch of the religious Zionist movement (Mizrachi) and a member of the local prewar kahal. He, his family, and a few other wealthier people were candidates for deportation; their Soviet passports contained the dreaded paragraph 11, which marked them as dangerous elements. His property was nationalized (he says that the Soviets did not nationalize non-Jewish property, which seems to be patently untrue). But then he managed to be appointed the manager of an organization that collected straw, and he hired some fifty Hasidim (ultra-orthodox Jews), who then did not have to work on the Shabbat. He did quite well, until the Germans arrived.

People did reasonably well, but it is still true that the Jewish middle class was, by and large, ruined by the sudden change in the money system. ...

And yet, as time went on—that is, in late 1940 and early 1941—Jews came to occupy a Soviet version of their traditional economic position as a middle class.⁷³⁰

Yehuda Bauer also writes: “The consensus among survivors is that due to the corruption and manipulation of the Soviet bureaucracy, Jews generally did not suffer economic deprivation under the Soviets.”⁷³¹ This is not surprising. Pilfering of state property was widespread, and those who were in the best position to

⁷²⁶ Ibid., 78.

⁷²⁷ Ibid., 80–81.

⁷²⁸ Ibid., 80.

⁷²⁹ Ibid., 87.

⁷³⁰ Bauer, *The Death of the Shtetl*, 49–50.

⁷³¹ Yehuda Bauer, “Sarny and Rokitno in the Holocaust: A Case Study of Two Townships in Wolyn (Volhynia),” in Katz, *The Shtetl*, 262.

engage in such activities were those—usually Jews—occupying supervisory positions in state-run enterprises.⁷³²

Despite claims to the contrary, social justice sorely eluded Soviet-occupied Eastern Poland in many respects. Poles were increasingly excluded from institutions of higher learning, whereas Jews were favoured far in excess of their share of the population (about 10 percent). The entire character of the University of Lwów, a city with a Polish majority (Ukrainians predominated in the countryside), changed dramatically with Jews becoming the largest group of students. While Poles may have been increasingly overrepresented at Polish universities from around the mid-1930s, Jews were still proportionately represented among the student body, after having enjoyed significant overrepresentation in the 1920s. Under Soviet rule, Jews were overrepresented by a factor of four to nine, depending on the institution, while Poles were increasingly shut out. Official Soviet statistics thus demonstrate that there was *less*—not

⁷³² For example, Richard Vanger (Węgier) describes his father and uncle's extensive pilfering in their workplace in the town of Stołowicze, where they engaged in lucrative black market dealings and maintained good relations with local commissars. See the Oral history interview of Richard Vanger, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Accession Number 1995.A.1272.388, RG Number RG-50.120.0388, Internet: <<https://collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/irn50729>>.

more—ethnic-based equality under Soviet rule than in interwar Poland.⁷³³ The use of Russian in education skyrocketed even though there very few native speakers of that language, further belying the myth of equal opportunity for all ethnic and linguistic groups in the Soviet Union.

Contemporary accounts of Jews gathered in the underground archives of the Warsaw Ghetto under the

⁷³³ In the 1934–1935 academic year, there were 5,900 students at the University of Lwów, broken down by religion as follows: 3,793 Latin-rite Roman Catholics (64.3%), 1,211 Jews (20.5%), 739 Greek Catholics or Eastern-rite Roman Catholics (12.5%), and 67 Lutherans. In the 1937–1938 academic year, the enrolment dropped to 5,214 students, consisting of 72.5% Latin-rite Roman Catholics, 10.2% Jews (approximately 530 students), and 13.3% others. See Adam Redzik, ed., *Academia militans: Uniwersytet Jana Kazimierza we Lwowie* (Kraków: Wysoki Zamek, 2015), 202. Under Soviet rule, the enrolment at the University of Lwów declined further to 1,835 in March 1940 and 1,617 at the beginning of 1941, in part because the Faculty of Medicine was severed from the university, Jews counted 697 and 715, respectively, in those years. Thus, the much touted claim—advanced by Jews, Soviet sources and Western historians—that Jews gained enormous educational opportunities, in absolute numbers, that had been previously denied to them under Polish rule is simply crude propaganda. However, they did enjoy enormous favouritism. Official Soviet statistics from early 1941 give the Jewish share of various insitutions of higher learning in Lwów as follows: 44.2 percent at the University, 56.7 percent at the Polytechnic, 42.3 percent at the Medical Academy, 51.5 percent at the Pedagogical Institute, and 88.1 percent at the Business Academy. This marked an increase in the Jewish share over the previous year. In March 1940, the enrolment at the University of Lwów as 1,835, of whom 697 were Jews (37.98%), 617 Poles (33.62%), and 493 Ukrainians (26.87%). The first year enrolment showed an even higher percentage of Jews (304 or about 43%), followed by Ukrainians (289), and Poles (108). At the beginning of 1941, the enrolment stood at 1,617, of whom 715 were Jews (44.21%), 540 Ukrainians (33.4%), and 362 Poles (22.39%). See Zbysław Popławski, *Dzieje Politechniki Lwowskiej 1844–1945* (Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy imienia Ossolińskich, 1992), 281 (the percentage of Jews at the Business Academy has been adjusted, as it was computed incorrectly in this book); Grzegorz Hryciuk, *Polacy we Lwowie 1939–1944: Życie codzienne* (Warsaw: Książka i Wiedza, 2000), 132–33. Jews were also overrepresented at institutions of higher learning in other cities. For example, Jews comprised 44% of the students at the Pedagogical Institute in Białystok, and Belorussians and Russians accounted for 25% and 14% respectively. Poles, who formed the majority population of the district, comprised just 16% of the student body. The make-up of those accepted at the Teachers College in Grodno was 49% Jewish, 40% Belorussian, and 12% Russian. See Wojciech Śleszyński, *Okupacja sowiecka na Białostocczyźnie 1939–1941: Propaganda i indoktrynacja* (Białystok: Benkowski and Białostockie Towarzystwo Naukowe, 2001), 470.

The *numerus clausus*, or quota, introduced at some Polish universities in the 1930s, sought to limit Jewish enrolment to that group's overall share of the country's population; it came in response to the marked overrepresentation of Jewish students at those universities in the early 1920s when they made up about 25 percent of the entire student body. Similar policies were already in place in many European countries such as Hungary, where it was pioneered in the early 1920s, in Austria, the Baltic countries (Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania), Czechoslovakia, Germany, the Netherlands, Romania, the United Kingdom, and Yugoslavia. See Peter Tibor Nagy, "The *Numerus Clausus* in Inter-War Hungary: Pioneering European Antisemitism," in *East European Jewish Affairs*, vol. 35, no. 1 (June 2005): 13–22; American Jewish Committee, *The Jewish Communities of Nazi-Occupied Europe* (New York: Howard Fertig, 1982), Estonia, 2–3, Latvia, 21, Lithuania, 6. The number of Jewish students at Tartu University in Estonia dropped precipitously from 188 in 1926 (4% of the student body) to 69 in 1938 (2.1%). As restrictions were imposed on Jewish students in the medical, agricultural, and engineering faculties, the number of Jewish university students in Lithuania fell from 26.5% (1,206) in 1932 to 14.7% (500) in 1938. Jewish students at the University of Kaunas were required to occupy separate benches in the lecture halls. Moreover, like in other countries, attacks on Jews in the streets and on Jewish property were not uncommon in Lithuania. Nationalist economic policies also targeted Jews. Dov Levin, "Lithuania" in Gershon David Hundert, ed., *The YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2008), vol. 1, 1073; Christoph Dieckmann, "Holocaust in the Lithuanian Provinces: Case Studies of Jurbarkas and Utena," in Beate Kosmala and Georgi Verbeeck, eds., *Facing the Catastrophe: Jews and Non-Jews in Europe during World War II* (Oxford and New York: Berg, 2011), 74. British intellectual Rafael F. Scharf, who attended the Jagiellonian University in Kraków, writes: "It is true that there was the so-called *numerus clausus* in the Faculty of Medicine, meaning that only a restricted number of Jewish students were accepted—and we made a great deal of fuss about it. If there had been no restrictions of that kind ... Jewish medics might have greatly outnumbered their non-Jewish colleagues—a situation which, not surprisingly, was not tenable in the prevailing conditions. Considering that sons and daughters of practicing Doctors of Medicine could, if they wished, enter the Faculty outside the quota, that *numerus clausus* rule, in retrospect, does not appear so monstrous." See Scharf, *Poland, What Have I To Do with Thee...*, 209. Jews were also able to get around the quota by using their connections with influential persons. See Heather Laskey, *Night Voices: Heard in the Shadow of Hitler and Stalin* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2003), 27. According to official Polish sources, in 1934–35 Jews accounted for 18 percent of all high school students, 16.2 percent of vocational school students, and 14.8 percent of higher school (university, etc.) students. They comprised 23.7 percent of the enrolment at the University of Warsaw, 25.8 percent at the Jagiellonian University in Kraków, 29.7 percent at the Stefan Batory University in Wilno, and 31.8 percent at the John Casimir University in

direction of Emanuel Ringelblum⁷³⁴ reinforce this picture and attest to the privileged position enjoyed by the Jewish population under Soviet rule. These accounts are important for three reasons. One, they were usually written by educated people shortly after the events they witnessed and are generally more sophisticated than memoirs and accounts written by local residents long after war and through the prism of the Holocaust or Gulag. Two, they were written by outsiders who tend to be more objective about local conditions than the residents themselves, who are generally absorbed with the fate of their own families and communities. Three, the fact that these themes appear in a number of accounts (though not all—doubtless because the observers were reluctant to write honestly about such prejudicial occurrences or were simply unconcerned about them) is a clear indication of how glaring conditions must have been to the perceptive onlooker: there would have been no conceivable reason for them to have embellished or exaggerated what they saw. The following accounts are illustrative.

A Jewish resident of *Białystok* noted: “In practice, in filling positions and offices Jews were somewhat favoured because they were trusted more than Poles who were treated with some disrespect.”⁷³⁵ Of the 267 students accepted into the Pedagogical Institute in this predominantly Polish region, 210 were Jews and 29 Belorussians.⁷³⁶ Almost all of the principals of the Polish-language schools that remained open were replaced by non-Poles, a very large percentage of them Jews.⁷³⁷

According to Polish reports, by December 1939 the entire administration in Białystok was in the hands of officials from Soviet Belorussia and Jewish Communists, both local people and refugees from the German zone.⁷³⁸ With this realignment, the attitude of the Jews also changed to one of hostility, contempt, and derision. Only a very small portion of the Jewish population behaved properly.⁷³⁹

In *Wilno*, the prewar police were replaced by the Workers’ Guard, and the Workers’ Militia was created to “flush out” suspected “enemies” of the New Order. Jews played a key role in both organizations.⁷⁴⁰ With the help of local Communists, mainly Jews, the Soviets seized Polish administrative, agricultural and financial institutions.⁷⁴¹ A Jewish publication from that time describes the participation of a young Jew from Wilno in the appropriation of a Polish estate owners’ lounge.⁷⁴² According to Dr. Shlomo Katz, who

⁷³⁴ These contemporary accounts constitute the most candid body of disclosure on the part of Jews of Jewish-Polish relations under Soviet rule and are cited extensively in the works of Polish historians Andrzej Żbikowski and Bogdan Musiał, but are overlooked by Jan T. Gross.

⁷³⁵ Andrzej Żbikowski, “Żydzi polscy pod okupacją sowiecką 1939–1941,” in *Studia z dziejów Żydów w Polsce: Materiały dla szkół średnich i wyższych* (Warsaw: Żydowski Instytut Historyczny, Instytut Naukowo-Badawczy, 1995), vol. 2: 64.

⁷³⁶ Gnatowski, *W radzieckich okowach*, 93.

⁷³⁷ *Ibid.*, 165.

⁷³⁸ Report of the Polish Embassy in Kuybyshev, dated May 31, 1942, in *Ścisłe tajny raport o okupacji Białostocczyzny*, 6.

⁷³⁹ *Ibid.*, 10. Some Jewish refugees also complained about the attitude of the Jews of Białystok towards them. “At first, we stayed with a Jewish family, but that only lasted until our money ran out. I have to, unfortunately, be honest here: Białystok’s Jewish population didn’t look very favourably on this wave of refugees.” See Ann Szedlecki, *Album of My Life* (Toronto: Azrieli Foundation, 2009), 66.

⁷⁴⁰ Marek Wierzbicki, “Polish-Jewish Relations in Vilna and the Region of Western Vilna under Soviet Occupation, 1939–1941,” in *Polin*, vol. 19 (2007): 493.

⁷⁴¹ Liszewski, *Wojna polsko-sowiecka 1939 r.*, 44; Szawłowski, *Wojna polsko-sowiecka 1939* (1995, 1997), vol. 1, 355.

⁷⁴² Levin, *The Lesser of Two Evils*, 310 n.50.

served in the Workers' Guard, at least 80 percent of the guards were Jewish, and a significant number held administrative positions.⁷⁴³ Many Jews joined the newly created Soviet administration, replacing Polish officials who had been dismissed. During the first Soviet occupation of Wilno the number of Soviet officials sent from the USSR was relatively small. Hence the importance of the locals consequently increased and Jewish influence within the Soviet apparatus was relatively large.⁷⁴⁴

In many cases, attitudes changed overnight, and Jews ignored or even turned on their Polish friends and neighbours. There was also open rejoicing at the defeat of Poland. "Your rule is over," an elated Jew was heard to say in a crowded train. "We will now be in charge."⁷⁴⁵ A young Jew who lived in Wilno recalled:

The Bolsheviks were generally disposed favourably toward the Jews and had total confidence in them. They were assured of their entire sympathy and devotion. For that reason they put Jews in all the managerial and responsible positions and did not entrust them to the Poles who had occupied them previously.⁷⁴⁶

A Jewish woman from Wilno summed up the situation candidly and quite aptly when she wrote:

Under Bolshevik rule anti-Jewish sentiments grew significantly. In large measure the Jews themselves were responsible for this ... Jews often denounced Poles ... and as a result Poles were put in prison and sent to Siberia. At every turn they mocked Poles, yelled out that their Poland was no more ... Jewish Communists mocked Poles' patriotism, denounced their illegal conversations, pointed out Polish officers and former high officials, co-operated with the NKVD of their own volition, and took part in arrests. ... The Bolsheviks on the whole treated Jews favourably, had complete faith in them and were confident of their devoted sympathy and trust. For that reason they put Jews in all of the leading and influential positions which they would not entrust to Poles who formerly occupied them.⁷⁴⁷

As historian Marek Wierzbicki points out, the support of the Jews for the Soviet invaders was broad-based:

The attitude of Vilna's [Wilno's] Jews towards the Soviet authorities was clearly mixed. The Jewish communists were the greatest enthusiasts of the new order, and they eagerly joined in the creation of the Soviet government in Vilna. The leftists for the most part supported the changes that came in the wake of the Red Army's occupation, as did the poorer members of the petit bourgeoisie and the lumpenproletariat. Young Jews, regardless of political convictions, were glad to have the opportunity to study and participate in social and political life, and the Soviet authorities took note of their engagement in politics. In one example of this type of activism a rally took place at the Stefan Batory University on 9 October [1939] in which approximately 2,000 students and university teachers participated. In a report from that event we read:

Students from the ethnic minorities were particularly enthusiastic ... A Jewish student named Rudnicki, speaking at the meeting in Yiddish, said: 'For the first time since the former Polish state was founded, ethnic minorities can speak and study in their own mother tongues. We thank Comrade Stalin for sending the Red Army to western Belarus, which liberated the peoples of western Belarus for ever from the yoke and captivity of the Polish lords.'

The mood was similar among some members of the Jewish intelligentsia, who expected Jewish culture to have the chance to develop freely under the Soviets. In contrast to the majority of Poles, who displayed

⁷⁴³ The Workers' Guard was later transformed into the Red militia. The number of Jewish "guards" in Wilno alone was in the hundreds. See Levin, "The Jews of Vilna under Soviet Rule, 19 September–28 October 1939," in *Polin*, vol. 9 (1996): 115 n.20; Marek Wierzbicki, "Polish-Jewish Relations in Vilna and the Region of Western Vilna under Soviet Occupation, 1939–1941," in *Polin*, vol. 19 (2007): 493.

⁷⁴⁴ Marek Wierzbicki, "Polish-Jewish Relations in Vilna and the Region of Western Vilna under Soviet Occupation, 1939–1941," in *Polin*, vol. 19 (2007): 493–94.

⁷⁴⁵ Zygmunt Szczęśny Brzozowski, *Litwa—Wilno 1910–1945* (Paris: Editions Spotkania, 1987), 27.

⁷⁴⁶ As cited in Musiał, "Stosunki polsko-żydowskie na Kresach Wschodnich R.P. pod okupacją sowiecką (1939–1941)," *Biuletyn Kwartalny Radomskiego Towarzystwa Naukowego*, vol. 34, no. 1 (1999): 118.

⁷⁴⁷ As cited in Żbikowski, "Żydzi polscy pod okupacją sowiecką 1939–1941," in *Studia z dziejów Żydów w Polsce*, vol. 2: 64–65.

reservations or animosity, many Jews continued to support the Soviets even after four Jewish dailies in Vilna were closed. (Even the leftist *Dziennik Wileński*, whose banner headline on the day the Soviets entered the city had read 'The Jews of Vilna Celebrate the Arrival of the Red Army', was shut down.)

However, some of the Jewish political elites who were far from communism regarded Soviet politics with great reticence, despite an initial sense of relief. Along with the enthusiasm some Jews showed for the Soviet government, there were often displays of animosity and even hatred towards the previous government and Poles in general. Jews would ridicule Poles publicly, reminding them of their lost independence. Shouts of 'Your [time] is over' were so commonplace that they echoed in Polish ears for many years to come.⁷⁴⁸

In **Grodno**, a Jewish source recorded:

Poles were denied access to senior public-service positions ... and former senior officials and leading personalities were arrested ... and exiled to remote regions of Russia together with their families.⁷⁴⁹

The entire management of the hospital in **Iwieniec** was taken over by Jews after the Polish director was arrested in October 1939.⁷⁵⁰

In the place of Poles, whom the Soviets did not trust, came Jews, in whom the Soviets had "complete confidence." According to historian Evgenii Rozenblat, 405 out of 564 positions in local industry, or approximately 72 percent, were allocated to Jews.⁷⁵¹ According to another Jewish observer from Grodno,

When the Bolsheviks entered Polish territory, they were very mistrustful of the Polish population, and they fully trusted the Jews. They deported to Russia the more influential Poles and those who before the war held important jobs, and all of the offices were filled mostly with Jews, who everywhere were entrusted with positions of power. For these reasons, the Polish population generally assumed a very hostile attitude. ... It needs to be mentioned that the Jews themselves stirred up this hatred because as soon as the Russian armies entered, they showed their disregard for the Poles and often humiliated them. The coming of the Bolsheviks was greeted by Jews with great joy. Now they felt proud and secure, they almost considered themselves in charge of the situation; towards the Poles they were condescending and arrogant, and they often let them feel their powerlessness and scorned them because of it. In Grodno there were numerous occurrences when a Polish woman approached a Jewish vegetable vendor who refused to sell to her: 'Get out of here, you Pollack, I don't want to know you.' There were many Jews who at any opportunity took special delight in mentioning to Poles that their time was over, that now nothing depended on them, and that they had to obey the Soviet authority.

The economic situation of the Jews in the occupied territory was much better than that of the Polish population. While the Poles had to earn their living through hard work, the Jews took the better jobs and were employed in lighter work. Poles were mostly employed in factories and kolkhozes, whereas Jews preferred to work as clerks in warehouses and shops, etc. Even if salaries in these positions were officially much lower than those of workers in factories, while working as clerks, shop assistants, and warehouse attendants they had the opportunity to take advantage of their skills in [illegal] trading and speculation; they manipulated in various ways and thus attained significant private incomes.⁷⁵²

Jews employed in state-owned stores would favour Jews over non-Jews when goods were in short supply and line-ups grew long. As a Jew from Leżajsk who took up residence in **Lwów** confirms, non-Jews fell outside the net of those to whom compassion was owed.

⁷⁴⁸ Marek Wierzbicki, "Polish-Jewish Relations in Vilna and the Region of Western Vilna under Soviet Occupation, 1939–1941," in *Polin*, vol. 19 (2007): 495–96.

⁷⁴⁹ Spector, *Lost Jewish Worlds*, 87.

⁷⁵⁰ Kuźmiński, *Z Iwieńca i Stołpców do Białegostoku*.

⁷⁵¹ Rozenblat, "Evrei v sisteme mezhnatsionalnykh otnoshenii v zapadnykh oblastiakh Belarusi, 1939–1941 gg.," *Białoruskie Zeszyty Historyczne*, no. 13 (2000): 98.

⁷⁵² As cited in Żbikowski, "Jewish Reaction to the Soviet Arrival in the Kresy in September 1939," in *Polin*, vol. 13 (2000): 68–69. The translation has been adjusted for accuracy and fluency.

Business in Lemberg was difficult. During the early morning hours, we had to stand in line for a long time in order to obtain something as simple as soap. Times were tough, however the brothers in tragedy did help each other. Girls who worked in the government shops attempted to help a fellow native when they recognized him. They tried to shorten his wait in order to save his time, and they also tried to add something extra.

In a roundabout manner it became known that in certain places, girls from our town worked, and a bit more soap could be obtained, or it was possible to obtain bread without a lineup. Everyone would then go to such a store.⁷⁵³

Moreover, as illustrated earlier, Jewish vendors often refused to sell goods to Poles. Edmund Bosakowski from *Białozórka* near Krzemieniec recounts that a Jewish woman who ran the local cooperative angrily motioned to him to leave the store after addressing him in an ostentatious and derogatory manner and in Ukrainian: “I don’t sell to *Lakhs*!”⁷⁵⁴ Had a Pole spoken derogatory words such as these to a Jew, the Pole would have been arrested. On the other hand, Jews could and did address Poles in this fashion with impunity.

Jewish militiamen and youths in *Wilno* were known to throw Poles out of food lines, rough them up, and even knock old women to the ground. The harassment was so blatant that Soviet functionaries felt compelled to come to the assistance of abused Poles.⁷⁵⁵ Eventually, they put a stop to it. Otherwise, it would have persisted and gained momentum. Historian Marek Wierzbicki describes scenes similar to those Jews complained about in the German zone of occupation:

The Jewish militiamen were openly hostile to the Polish population, and their attitudes and behaviour exacerbated Polish-Jewish feeling in the city. Eyewitness accounts tell of how Jewish members of the militia harassed Poles. In one example Maria Piekarska described how Jewish militiamen harassed and ridiculed Poles as they waited in queues. Marian Targowski, a court clerk, accused the Jewish militiamen of abusing their rights in order to terrorize the population. This ‘terrorizing of the population’ was said to have occurred when the residents of Vilna [Wilno] crowded into queues for bread and other provisions. Andrzej Jałbryzkowski, the nephew of Romuald Jałbryzkowski, the archbishop of Vilna, told of similar incidents in his report about his time in Vilna during the Soviet and Lithuanian occupations. According to the younger Jałbryzkowski, it was most often young Jews who harassed the Poles as they queued, ‘brazenly throwing the Poles out of the queues until Soviet officials finally forbade them to do it any more’. In another instance the seven members of a militia patrol (made up of five Belorussians and two Jews) entered the apartment of a tailor named Leonard Żuromski. The militiamen searched him for tobacco, and took his bicycle and a suitcase. According to one Vilna official, the Jewish militiamen were arrogant and belligerent towards the Poles.⁷⁵⁶

Poles were often underemployed and had to resort to selling their belongings (jewelry, furniture, clothing, etc.) in order to purchase much needed food supplies. Jewish black marketeers took advantage of the dire

⁷⁵³ M.N. Yarut, “Lizhensk—Russia-Lizhensk,” in H. Rabin, ed., *Lizhensk*, 96 ff.

⁷⁵⁴ Account of Edmund Bosakowski in Wiesław Myśliwski, comp., *Wschodnie losy Polaków* (Łomża: Stopka, 1991), vol. 2, 200. “Lakh” is a derogatory term used in Ukrainian for “Pole.” As elsewhere, peasant committees composed of Ukrainians and Jews carried out inspections of the homes of Polish settlers, drawing up lists of livestock and inventory that was, for the most part, seized.

⁷⁵⁵ Wierzbicki, *Polacy i Żydzi w zaborze sowieckim*, 194; Andrzej Grabia Jałbryzkowski, *Wspomnienia wileńskie (1939–1940)* (Warsaw: Aspra-Jr, 2005), 54.

⁷⁵⁶ Marek Wierzbicki, “Polish-Jewish Relations in Vilna and the Region of Western Vilna under Soviet Occupation, 1939–1941,” in *Polin*, vol. 19 (2007): 496.

situation of Christians by buying up their possessions for a fraction of their value.⁷⁵⁷ Poles earmarked for deportation to the Gulag frantically sold off their furniture and other belongings for whatever they could get. Fani Brener (née Bokstein), a resident of *Bereza Kartuska* in Polesia, recalled:

In my home new furniture appeared which my parents purchased from Poles, so-called settlers, whom the Soviets had deported as an unsure element. A plush settee was placed in my room, along with a wardrobe and small table on which stood a radio. In the dining room and kitchen there was a hutch. In my parents' bedroom was hung a kilim from Zakopane.⁷⁵⁸

Jews also bought up for a pittance property seized by the authorities from Polish deportees and auctioned off.⁷⁵⁹ In some localities Poles were evicted from their homes which were then taken over by Jews (e.g., in *Jaremcz* and *Mikuliczyn*).⁷⁶⁰ When the village of *Milków* was cleared of its Polish inhabitants (they were deported by cattle car to Bessarabia in the dead of winter in January 1941), Jews descended on the village with their carriages and dismantled and plundered what remained.⁷⁶¹ In many cases, Polish property was simply confiscated by Jewish militiamen or by Jewish neighbours who had ostensibly taken it for "safekeeping."

The following Polish testimony is from the small town of *Telechany*, in Polesia:

We lived in Telechany near Pińsk where my father, Stefan Boratyński, was a judge in the municipal court. ... My father always purchased cigarettes and other small items he needed from a Jew named Szamszel. ... My mother also made her purchases in a Jewish shop next door ... Before the war these Jews behaved in a very friendly manner, but as soon as the Bolsheviks arrived they joined forces with them. They pretended to be friendly, but in an underhanded way they "informed" us of what might happen and offered their help. ...

Right after the entry of the Bolsheviks, some Jews told my parents that they should hide their clothing because it would, in all likelihood, be taken from us. I remember very well packing suits and fur coats belonging to my parents ... Two huge suitcases (double folded) were taken by these Jews for safekeeping. Soon after another man arrived—sent, it appears, by these Jews—who told us to get ready by evening a desk and two more suits which would be "borrowed." By November [1939] we were living in two nearly empty rooms. Our furniture was "borrowed" and some people had occupied the remainder of the dwelling.

The situation became progressively worse since we had to live from something. My mother approached Szamszel to return the clothing he had taken for safekeeping. This exchange probably lasted for a few days and finally he told her that he would not return anything. It was all his and we shouldn't make any claims or

⁷⁵⁷ Jan Smolka, *Przemyśl pod sowiecką okupacją: Wspomnienia z lat 1939–1941* (Przemyśl: Towarzystwo Przyjaciół Nauk w Przemyślu, and Regionalny Ośrodek Kultury, Edukacji i Nauki w Przemyślu, 1999), 44 (Przemyśl); Gonczyński, *Raj proletariacki*, 22 (Lwów); Wanda Maria Pasierbińska, "Od Ruska do Germańca," *Biuletyn Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej*, no. 12 (December 2004): 84–95, at p. 94; Petrozolin-Skowrońska, *Nieświeskie wspomnienia*, 308; Tarmon, *Memorial Book*, 295 (Maniewiczze). Andrzej Szeptycki (Andrii Sheptytskyi), the Uniate (Greek Catholic) archbishop of Lwów, who later intervened on behalf of the Jews by writing personally to Hitler and who is credited with rescuing scores of Jews, complained of this practice and the unethical business dealings of Jews in his reports to the Vatican. See Morley, *Vatican Diplomacy and the Jews During the Holocaust, 1933–1943*, 133; Franciszek Stopniak, "Katolickie duchowieństwo w Polsce i Żydzi w okresie niemieckiej okupacji," in Krzysztof Dunin-Wąsowicz, ed., *Spółczesność polska wobec martyrologii i walki Żydów w latach II wojny światowej: Materiały z sesji w Instytucie Historii PAN w dniu 11.III.1993 r.* (Warsaw: Instytut Historii PAN, 1996), 23. (Roman Szeptycki was descended on his mother's side from the famous Polish playwright Count Aleksander Fredro; on his father's side, the family had been Polonized for several generations. As an adult, Szeptycki decided to revert to his Ruthenian or Ukrainian ancestry, switched his rite from the Latin to the Eastern one, and assumed the name of Andrii Sheptytskyi.)

⁷⁵⁸ Fani Brener, *Di ershte helft lebn* (Tel Aviv: Y.L. Perets, 1989), 65.

⁷⁵⁹ "The Letters of Natalia Sulkowska," in Gladun, *Poland's Holocaust: A Family Chronicle of Soviet and Nazi Terror*, www.geocities.com/chrisgladun/memoir.

⁷⁶⁰ Mazur, *Pokucie w latach drugiej wojny światowej*, 44.

⁷⁶¹ Józef Mroczkowski, "Wojna w Oleszycach," *Karta* (Warsaw), no. 24 (1998): 108; Bereza, Chmielowiec, and Grechuta, *W cieniu "linii Mołotowa"*, 138.

things might get worse. What was “worse” actually occurred on December 21, when my father was taken away. Two days later he was shipped out of Telechany; to this day I do not know where he was murdered. In April 1940 my mother and I were deported to Kazakhstan, where we spent six years. Szamszel and others like him remained in Telechany.⁷⁶²

A Jew by the name of Józef Kohn, who headed up a revolutionary committee that greeted the Red Army as it entered *Śniatyn*, was eventually arrested in 1940 for misappropriating property that he had confiscated from nationalized Jewish businesses, an apparent “victim” of the wrath of his fellow Jews whom he had previously denounced. Kohn and his wife survived their deportation and returned after the war to Stalinist Poland where they received plum government positions.⁷⁶³ Nothing is known of Jews suffering punishment for stealing from Poles.

Jews also used their privileged positions to push their weight around and openly to deride Poles. In *Klewań* near Równe, line-ups for bread that formed at four o'clock in the morning were watched over by Jewish militiamen who would beat up or throw people out of line arbitrarily.⁷⁶⁴

A Polish woman from *Rożyszcze*, who had waited five hours in a line-up to purchase some meat, lost her turn when a Jewish woman let in another Jew who bought the last piece. When the Polish woman complained, she was called a “Polish mug whose time had come to an end.”⁷⁶⁵ A young girl recalled how she was pulled out of a food line by her hair by a Jewish woman who screamed at her, “Your days are over. It’s now our turn and there’s no room for you here.”

Even Jewish children readily succumbed to the temptation of using their junior positions to ridicule and harass their Polish schoolmates. In *Krzemieniec*, Polish students wearing miniature Polish eagles under their lapels were accosted by Jewish students, now young Communist Pioneers with red bandannas, who openly mocked the emblem of Poland, their former country. “Take off that rooster,” one of them snapped.⁷⁶⁶ Needless to say, Jews faced no sanctions for such all-too-frequent anti-Polish outbursts.

Jewish accounts from the Ringelblum archives in Warsaw, gathered during the war, as well as other accounts, attest to the fact that, contrary to the assertions made by Jewish historians, the Jews were not only privileged at the outset, but retained their privileged position throughout the Soviet occupation. Leopold Spira, a Jewish refugee from Kraków who took up residence in *Lwów*, recalled: “In that period [September–October 1939], it was evident that Jews were recruited for service in the militia. In the police commissariat on Kazimierzowska Street (the centre of the Jewish community in Lwów), apart from two or three Soviet officials, the majority of the officials were Jews, including the clerical staff.”⁷⁶⁷ Another Jewish account from Lwów states: “The attitude of other nationalities toward the Jews was strained throughout this period to some degree, and this was brought about exclusively by the fact that Jews pushed

⁷⁶² Account of Izabella Dybczyńska, “Donosili, podstępnie udając ‘przyjaźń,’” *Nasza Polska*, September 8, 1999, as cited in Nowak, *Przemilczane zbrodnie*, 134–35.

⁷⁶³ Marek Jan Chodakiewicz, “Taki polski Kowalski: Wspomnienie o Tadeuszu Ungarze,” *Glaukopis* (Warsaw), no. 4 (2006): 239. See also Jadwiga Ungar, “Straszne dla Polaków czasy,” letter, *Rzeczpospolita*, February 3, 2001.

⁷⁶⁴ Henryk Jerzewski, “Szalała NKWD i policja żydowska ...,” *Nasza Polska*, September 8, 1999.

⁷⁶⁵ Krystyna Buholc, “I chwalący czerwoną armię ...,” *Nasza Polska*, September 8, 1999.

Account of Czesława Bereźnicka, quoted in Nowak, *Przemilczane zbrodnie*, 86.

⁷⁶⁶ Account of Stanisław Osman, “Nowa władza,” *Życie Krzemienieckie*, no. 6 (July 1993), 19. The author, who experienced this deeply-felt slight, did not turn his back on the offending Jewish girl who severed the friendship. When the Germans entered Krzemieniec, like many Poles, he would bring her food to the ghetto. Her disappearance one day brought tears to his eyes.

⁷⁶⁷ Account of Leopold Spira cited in Jasiewicz, *Rzeczywistość sowiecka 1939–1941 w świadectwach polskich Żydów*, 89, 338.

to take over the leading positions.” Until April 1941, “the majority of the better jobs were filled by Jews.”⁷⁶⁸ Another Jew who resided in Lwów pointed out: “It also seemed to Wusia [his wife] that they [the Soviets] trusted Jews more than Poles or Ukrainians.”⁷⁶⁹ Foreign observers saw matters much the same way. The British Consul from Galați, Romania, reported that “Jews received preferential treatment and were given administrative posts.”⁷⁷⁰ As a Jewish engineer from Lwów acknowledges, Jews occupying such positions readily took advantage of them to misappropriate large quantities of state property for their private use.⁷⁷¹

This favoured status became a source of pride for many local Jews: “We were entirely happy to see Poles in their now lowly position. Our former rulers were brought down to size and humiliated.”⁷⁷² A Jewish refugee from Łódź conceded that Jews “often trifled with Poles in a very loathsome way and the expression ‘your days are passed’ was particularly abused.”⁷⁷³

While allowing Jews—who were very visible in the official propaganda apparatus and used their positions to the fullest—free range to publicly deride Poland and denigrate the Poles as cruel exploiters of the underprivileged classes, the Soviets punished perceived anti-Jewish slights with five years’ imprisonment on the ground of spreading ethnic hatred.⁷⁷⁴ In some cities (e.g., Stryj, Kałusz), Poles were even forbidden to reside in certain areas. After being evicted from their homes, these were taken over by non-Poles.⁷⁷⁵

⁷⁶⁸ Żbikowski, “Żydzi polscy pod okupacją sowiecką 1939–1941,” in *Studia z dziejów Żydów w Polsce*, vol. 2: 66.

⁷⁶⁹ William Ungar and David Chanoff, *Destined to Live* (Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America, 2000), 120.

⁷⁷⁰ Pinchuk, *Shtetl Jews under Soviet Rule*, 50.

⁷⁷¹ Reiss, *Z deszczu pod rynnę...*, 43–45.

⁷⁷² Żbikowski, “Żydzi polscy pod okupacją sowiecką 1939–1941,” in *Studia z dziejów Żydów w Polsce*, vol. 2: 66.

⁷⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁷⁴ Ibid. An example of how some Jews abused their favoured position is provided by a Pole from Równe who witnessed a Jewish woman he knew sneaking a friend into a ration line ahead of him. When this Pole referred to her as a Jewish woman (“Żydówka,” as opposed to using the Russian term “Evrei”), she screamed to the police that she was being called a “Jew” (supposedly a racist term) and claimed she was being assaulted. Notwithstanding, after the German takeover in 1941, this same Pole provided bread to this very woman who was forbidden to join the ration line because she was a Jew. See Zbigniew Janczewski, letter, *Gazeta Wyborcza* (Warsaw), April 27, 1998.

⁷⁷⁵ Mazur, *Pokucie w latach drugiej wojny światowej*, 33.

CHAPTER TEN

Collaborators and Informers

Every town and village in Eastern Poland witnessed daily displays of collaboration, betrayal and denunciation. Each of these actions carried with them the potential of a death sentence for the fingered victim.

In *Włodzimierz Wołyński*, a young Jew—the son of an affluent and popular local dentist—who, undaunted by his adverse experience with Soviet soldiers, immersed himself in such activities and eventually rose to the rank of vice-chairman of the city election committee, recalls:

The Soviet authorities organized a local militia and city council, filling the ranks with several of my [Jewish] friends who were members of the underground Communist Party. During the next several days I attended many political meetings and became a leader among young people who admired the Soviet Union. Badly wanting to be included in the avant-garde of the new society, I improvised passionate speeches and volunteered to be on committees. The Soviet authorities noticed my enthusiasm and invited me to many events, acknowledging me as a young leader.

My parents tried to cool my enthusiasm, however, warning, me to stay away from politics and not to get so deeply involved with people I did not know and a system I did not understand very well. I didn't argue with them but continued my activities, believing my dreams of social justice would be fulfilled now that our city was part of the Soviet Union. ... I overlooked the fact that the new regime did not bring happiness to everyone in Włodzimierz-Wołyński.

But in my youthful zeal I did not pay much attention to how the Soviet authorities took over the town. ... The Polish authorities and military personnel who had remained in town were arrested, along with clergy of all [Christian?] denominations. Many citizens, including my parents, condemned these actions, but to me they seemed logical and necessary; the clergy and Polish authorities had strong anti-Soviet and anti-Communist sentiments.

I absorbed the indoctrination and devoured the propaganda. ... I believed Stalin was mankind's great, progressive leader and that the social justice [sic] I had dreamed of for so long would be achieved by the new society.⁷⁷⁶

Later, when this Soviet lackey married in the summer of 1940, typically he did so in a traditional Jewish ceremony: "But old Rabbi Meyer Finkelhorn had not been harmed and was still performing religious ceremonies in private homes. The wedding took place in the waiting room of my father's dental office. ... We said our vows under the *hupa* in the middle of the room, and I stomped on the glass."⁷⁷⁷

Polish sources confirm that Jews from that town actively denounced Poles to the NKVD.⁷⁷⁸

On the basis of denunciations authored by Communists and Jews targeted people were arrested immediately. In Włodzimierz they arrested the lawyer Albin Ważyński, Major [Julian Jan] Pilczyński, the high school principal Leon Kisiel, the school inspector Mr. Jędryszka, and Strzelecki, the principal of one of the elementary schools. They were denounced by local Jews. They disappeared without a trace.⁷⁷⁹

⁷⁷⁶ Bardach and Gleeson, *Man Is Wolf to Man*, 26–29. It appears rather doubtful, however, that rabbis were among those arrested. Earlier, when Bardach and his colleague had run into Soviet soldiers on the road, they had "ordered us to put up our hands. ... Soldiers frisked us and took away our watches and money and my hunting knife. They didn't discover my hidden belt or pistol. Even though I had a rifle pointed at my back, I wasn't afraid of being shot. I believed that the Soviet Union was a paradise for the oppressed, ruled by workers and peasants, and that the Red Army was the enforcer of social justice.. I couldn't imagine them as my enemies; even at gunpoint I felt safer with the Red Army soldiers than with many of my Polish compatriots." Ibid., 19.

⁷⁷⁷ Bardach and Gleeson, *Man Is Wolf to Man*, 58.

⁷⁷⁸ Account of Władysław Godek, quoted in Nowak, *Przemilczane zbrodnie*, 72.

⁷⁷⁹ Account of Wanda Skorupska, a lawyer from Włodzimierz Wołyński, as quoted in Szawłowski, *Wojna polsko-sowiecka 1939* (1995, 1997), vol. 2, 207.

According to the memorial book⁷⁸⁰ of *Rokitno*, in Volhynia, a mixture of prewar Communists, Bundists and Jews with other affiliations rose to prominence. While there were denunciations against Betar Zionists (and likely others, especially Poles and those associated with the prewar Polish authorities), evidence of communal solidarity was strong, even among Communists.

[Baruch Shehori (Schwartzblat):] On 17 September 1939, several police and army officers left town. They were joined by tens of Polish families who were quite involved in public life. It was clear that changes were coming. Soon the news came that the Soviet army crossed the border and invaded Poland. A civilian police force was immediately organized. ... most of its members were Jews. At 11:00 A.M., the first Soviet tanks entered town. The reception was enthusiastic. We received them with red flags and they greeted us with songs and blessings. ...

Several young men had been imprisoned by the Polish authorities for their Communist activities. They suddenly rose to big positions. There were also Communist sympathizers or “Bund” members. They organized the municipal life and became Commissars. Their activities were not helpful to the Jewish population in town. Most of it consisted of storeowners and members of the middle class.⁷⁸¹

[Yosef Gendelman, a prewar Communist, imprisoned by the Polish authorities:] As [the Soviet Army] entered the town, the prison doors of Kovel [Kowel] were opened and we were liberated.

I immediately returned to Rokitno. It was already in the hands of the Soviet army. On the strength of my rights as a veteran Communist and a loyalist to Communism, I became a member of the town council. From an economic point of view, as well as a municipal one, we did our best to prevent any wrong to be done to the Jews of Rokitno.⁷⁸²

[Baruch Shehori (Schwartzblat):] Soon the Soviet regime was well established. Rokitno officially became the district capital. All the district offices of the present commissariats were quickly established. Many administrators arrived. ...

The Soviet civil servants attracted all the activist residents and they were assisted by suspicious looking and unwanted elements. Even in the first days, several Polish social activists and some Jews were arrested and exiled. The first Jews to be arrested were the pharmacist Noah Soltzman and the teacher Mordechai Gendelman. They stayed in prison in Sarny for several months and were released after undergoing special treatment. The prisoners returned to town mute and it was impossible to get a word out of them.

Mr. Gendelman, the teacher, was active for many years for JNF [Jewish National Fund] and he was a distinguished Bible teacher at the Tarbut school. He turned completely and suddenly became a sworn Communist. He announced publicly in school that he felt contempt towards all Jewish cultural values. He had previously taught these values to his pupils. He said they were only reactionary values. ...

I served as principal of the Ukrainian high school. My main function was to gather all the school children and all the young people in a special evening course. In addition, I had to teach the population the principles of the Soviet constitution, to call frequent meetings and to do propaganda for Communism. It was a great responsibility.

We did not encounter any limits when it came to keeping religious values. The two synagogues were not closed. Services continued without any interruption.⁷⁸³

[Yakov Schwartz:] Within a few days [after the Soviet invasion] the whole eastern part of Poland—or the western part of the Ukraine (so called by the Soviets) was conquered. The government began to establish itself. Veteran Communists, among them Jews from Rokitno who had been in Polish prisons for many years, were appointed to important municipal positions. The fancy clubhouse of the Polish officers was now available for the youth of Rokitno as a place to have fun.

They were drawn to it mainly out of curiosity. They were mostly Jewish youngsters. Some non-Jews came, but they did not really fit in and felt uncomfortable. ...

⁷⁸⁰ E. [Eliezer] Leoni, ed., *Rokitno–Wolyn and Surroundings: Memorial Book and Testimony*, Internet: <<http://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/rokitnoye/Rokitnoye.html>>; translation of E. Leoni, ed., *Rokitno (Volin) ve-ha-sevivah: Sefer edut ve-zikaron* (Tel Aviv: Former Residents of Rokitno in Israel, 1967).

⁷⁸¹ Baruch Shehori (Schwartzblat), “The Soviets Occupy Our Town,” in *ibid.*, 237.

⁷⁸² Yosef Gendelman, “Memories of a Rokitno Communist,” in *ibid.*, 191.

⁷⁸³ Baruch Shehori (Schwartzblat), “The Soviets Occupy Our Town,” in *ibid.*, 237 ff.

The Zionist parties and the youth movements self-destructed. ...

A local militia was formed to replace the Polish police. There were many Jews in it. In general, the Jews were prominent in all new government institutions.

On the first day of Succoth, early in the morning, a soldier came to our house and asked my father to present himself to the military commander in town. Several hours later, when my father had not returned, we went to investigate what was happening. We saw four of our citizens: Shimon Klorfein, Mordechai Gendelman the teacher, Noah Soltzman and my father sitting on a truck. They were surrounded by armed soldiers. Another truck packed with soldiers, their guns cocked, followed them. It was a shocking sight.

We found out that after an inquest they were taken to Sarny. There they were held and interrogated for a month. A former P.K.P. [Polish Communist Party—Actually, the Polish Communist Party did not recognize Polish rule over Eastern Poland, thus the regional organization would have been the Communist Party of Western Ukraine. *M.P.*] man, a refugee thrown out of Eretz Israel, had accused them of Zionist and anti-Soviet activities. He decided to take revenge on the Zionists and found a convenient location when the Soviets entered Rokitno. ...

After a month of investigations and interrogations, the detainees were released. It is important to emphasize the honesty of the Communists from Rokitno. When questioned by the investigators from the NKVD, they said that the detainees together with other residents had helped them and their families during the Polish regime. They provided them with lawyers and other assistance.

The first to be released was Mordechai Gendelman. It was at great personal cost and most humiliating. He was forced to sign a document promising to publicly announce that his work up to now was meant to delude innocent people and to show them the wrong way. The three others signed a promise to stop all Zionist activities and to be loyal to the Soviet regime.⁷⁸⁴

[Shimon Klorfein, a Betar member, i.e., a leftist Zionist:] When the Soviets occupied Rokitno we knew our dream of Aliyah had died. Still, a small group of members continued its activities underground until it was denounced by local Communists. Noah Soltzman, the teacher Mordechai Gendelman, Avraham Schwartz and I were jailed in Rokitno. This is how the Zionist movement in Rokitno, including Betar, was extinguished.⁷⁸⁵

In *Międzyrzecz Korecki*, a town near the Polish-Soviet border, Jews and Ukrainians came out in large numbers to greet the Soviet army on September 17, 1939. The Ukrainians built a triumphal gate on the main road entering the town. The Jews assembled in the market square, where they set up tables covered with white sheets and laden with bread, sausage and bottles of vodka and brought out barrels of herring. The Jewish elders together with the rabbi Jakub Zasławski came out to welcome the Red Army. Among those who gave themselves over to the new regime was Berek Don, who donned a red armband and pointed out to the NKVD which Poles to arrest. The first to be arrested was the police officer Aleksander Wróblewski, who was later executed in Bykovnia near Kiev. Berek Don would say to the Poles sneeringly, “Well, your Poland has come to an end.” Among the nine Poles who were arrested as “enemies of the people” and executed locally was a Jew by the name of Flembain, who had initiated the erection of a monument to Piłsudski. The monument was also destroyed by the Soviets. Don Berek attempted to have the family of Jan Jamróz, whom he had placed under house arrest, deported to the Gulag.⁷⁸⁶

The profile of a Jewish denouncer in the small (largely Ukrainian) town of *Świniuchy* near Horochów, in Volhynia, as recounted by a fellow Jew from that town, is particularly intriguing:

A man like this already had many people’s blood on his hands. In the old days, during the Polish regime, he beat children and screamed in Polish, “Jews, go to Palestine.” When the Russians came to the Ukraine in 1939, he was the first one to offer his services to the police, but because of his record as a teen-ager, his application was denied, so instead, he became the most nefarious informer in town. He was responsible for the death of many people. His activities inculcated the deepest hatred of Jews among Christians in Svyniukhy. When the Red Army left, he too was gone. The Germans captured him near Kiev. He registered as a Pole, as one who was exiled to Siberia by the Russians. He received a pass bearing a Polish name, but because of his arrant cowardice, he returned to his mother in the ghetto. In Lukacze [Łokacze] very few knew

⁷⁸⁴ Yakov Schwartz, “The Beginnings of the Soviet Occupation of Rokitno,” in *ibid.*, 244–45.

⁷⁸⁵ Shimon [Syoma] Klorfein, “The Second Generation of Betar,” in *ibid.*, 82.

⁷⁸⁶ Julian Jamróz, “Wspomnienia z Wołynia,” *Na Rubieży* (Wrocław), no. 123 (2012): 50–54, here at 51–52. After the war, Berek Don returned to Poland. Under the assumed name of Kazimierz Witaszewski, he took an active part in the persecution of Polish anti-Communist partisans during the Stalinist regime.

that Shlomo Gisztes had come back; it had to be handled very quietly. If the Ukrainians learned about it, many in the ghetto would have suffered.⁷⁸⁷

A Jew who had graduated in 1937 from a high school in *Lida* run by the Piarist Fathers reported that he joined a Jewish militia shortly before the Soviet invasion and patrolled the streets of the town. He remained in the militia after the arrival of the Soviets and did their bidding, even to the point of arresting a former teacher, seemingly oblivious to the consequences of his actions. He wrote unabashedly about his conduct during that period, not as a Communist (which he wasn't), but from the vantage point of an ordinary young Jew immersed in a ritual:

One day, while we were waiting for the Russians to occupy Lida, I went to the City Hall. To my surprise, I found a friend occupying the mayor's chair. He explained that, while a member of the left wing Zionist youth movement Hashomer Hatzier, he had also been a member of the Communist Party. The Communist Party was illegal in Poland. My friend had used the Hashomer as a cover. He asked if I would like to join the militia, and I did.

People in the militia were given special privileges. Never did I have to wait in line for anything. This by itself made joining the militia worthwhile. People looked up to you; it was a good feeling. ...

When the Soviet forces entered Lida, I felt that a new life had begun for us. ... That freedom turned out to be short-lived. Zionism was designated as counterrevolutionary and forbidden. ... the Russians did not know of my Zionist activities. I had earlier buried my Honoar Hatzioni flag ...

I remained in the militia under Russian supervision. For the moment, I was happy. As a militia member I had privileges and money, although there was little to buy. ... One day I had the pleasure of escorting a former teacher of mine, a blatant anti-semite, to jail. Russian soldiers arrested him and I was told to accompany them. As we marched the prisoner through the streets of Lida to the jail, I walked in front with my rifle and two Russian soldiers with bayonets behind him. What his fate was, I don't know.⁷⁸⁸

This account is complemented by one authored by a Pole, at that time the teenaged son of the director of a Catholic printing house in Lida, and another authored by a young Jewish woman, Frances Dworecki, the daughter of dentists whose social milieu was Polish (although culturally they considered themselves more Russian than Polish), who had also attended a Polish high school in that city but encountered no anti-Semitism.

I saw how the Jews welcomed the Red Army as it entered Lida on September 18, 1939. They were greeted with bread and salt. The town was full of red banners with Russian writing and portraits of Lenin and Stalin. Jews wore red armbands and neckerchiefs and held up their fists. This is an indication that they already had to prepare themselves before the war for this "welcome." Armed militia patrols composed of Jews from the proletariat began to circulate in the streets. The next day our printing house was seized and sealed.

⁷⁸⁷ Michael Diment, *The Lone Survivor: A Diary of the Lokacze Ghetto and Svyntukhy, Ukraine* (New York: Holocaust Library, 1992), 133.

⁷⁸⁸ Samuil Manski, *With God's Help* (Madison, Wisconsin: Charles F. Manski, 1990), 30–32. As one can detect from personal accounts like this one, although some Jews were later perhaps somewhat embarrassed by their deeds, few appear to be truly ashamed let alone sorry on account of their victims' fate. This author acknowledged that the previous principal of the high school, also a priest, "had been very fair to us Jews." Allegedly, his replacement was an "anti-semite." Ibid., 26. Samuil Manski (Samuel Mański) is one of many Jewish students remembered warmly by his Polish colleagues, who attest to amicable relations among students of various nationalities and religions but to a marked change in attitude on the part of the Jews after the arrival of the Soviets. Only one Jewish student at the aforementioned Piarist high school in Lida, namely Cyla Lewin, came to the aid of a fellow Polish student during the Soviet occupation, and she did this surreptitiously. See Władysław Naruszewicz, *Wspomnienia lidzianina* (Warsaw: Bellona, 2001), 116–17. Another memoir (referred to later) of a Jewish woman (Frances Dworecki) who also attended a Polish high school in Lida in the 1930s does not mention any anti-Semitic incidents at her school. As in other towns in Poland, the misdeeds of individual Jews did not deter the Catholic clergy from coming to the aid of Jews during the subsequent German occupation. As one Eastern Orthodox priest recalled: "During my visits to Lida I remember seeing groups of Jews, herded to work by members of the Gestapo, collectively removing their hats in respect, at the appearance of a Polish Catholic priest." See the account of Rev. Borys Kaminski in Chciuk, *Saving Jews in War-Torn Poland 1939–1945*, 33–34. The kindness of a local priest, who had taken in for safekeeping the property of some Jews, almost cost him his life when some Jews attempted to steal the property. Caught by the Germans, they betrayed the Judenrat officials who had paid off Polish municipal clerks to obtain residence permits for Jewish refugees from Wilno. As a result, a number of Jews were executed by the Germans; luckily, the priest escaped this punishment. See Spector, *Lost Jewish Worlds*, 212.

We were evicted from our home on December 24th while we were eating our Christmas Eve dinner. Jews assisted in each of these activities and they were more high-handed than the Soviet NKVD. They looted what they could from our home. We became paupers and were taken in by some acquaintances (there were six of us in one room). My father couldn't obtain work. After a year my sister and I were employed in a Soviet (Jewish) printing house where Poles were discriminated against. They were given the worst jobs and Jews got the better ones. Besides, the entire management was composed exclusively of Jews.

In February 1941, one of the Jewish employees started a fight with me in which I hit back. In those days it was enough to say the word "Jew" in Polish rather than in Russian to get oneself arrested, let alone strike a Jew. The next morning four NKVD members were waiting to arrest me on the spot. The following day I faced a mockery of a trial in court. I was accused of being a counter-revolutionary, a spy and above all of being an anti-Semite. I was then seventeen years old. I was kept in the jail on May 3rd Street in Lida where I was subjected to severe interrogation and torture. Today I am an invalid. My torturers were all Jews. The local Jews were a lot worse than the Soviet ones. I shall give you one example of many. After being interrogated and beaten for many hours I was placed before a firing squad. A Jewish NKVD member aimed his revolver at me and screamed at me to sign a confession or else he would shoot me. He finally fired a shot. My nerves were shattered, and I lost consciousness and fell ...⁷⁸⁹

We arrived in Wolożyn [Wołożyn] hours after its occupation by the Soviet Army. Aunt Tanya was very much alone and she needed the family, and was very happy to see us. My parents and my aunts were educated in Russia and were brought up in the Russian culture. They felt much closer to the Russians than to the Poles. ... We went to the street to greet the entering units. Aunt Liza was flirting with the officers. We settled for the time being, hoping to follow the army and to return to Lida. ...

[In Lida:] The first weeks of the change of the government were confusing. Many [Jewish] teenagers and young men volunteered as militiamen. They wore red bands on their sleeves and carried rifles. My cousin Edek was among them. Sometimes the weapon was in the hands of mentally deficient person. I have in mind a mentally retarded son of my piano teacher. He came up to our apartment very excited carrying the rifle. Mother talked him into giving her the weapon and she phoned his parents. Robert was sent to a mental institution near Wilno.

The communists in Lida were celebrating. They organized anti-capitalist demonstrations with long speeches. Most of the activists were Jews. There were some Bialorussian [sic] and Polish socialists. ...

On February 29, 1940 my father was arrested by the NKVD. We were having dinner when the doorbell rang. The maid Hela went to the door. She returned frightened, followed by 6 or more armed soldiers in NKVD uniforms. They ordered us to remain seated. Then they spread around to search the apartment. They told Hela that she is not a servant any longer, but a free citizen of the Soviet Republic. They did not realize that although Hela was a Bialorussian, she was a Catholic and very much against the Russian occupation. Hela was smart enough to lead them away from our safe. They took the camera, the radio, and painting of Marshal Pilsudski sitting in the park in his favored vacation place, Druskieniki. They took also my father's photo portrait, in which he was wearing the medal of the silver cross. Father received the Silver Cross for outstanding service to the Polish government. He was always very proud of receiving it. The search ended. Father was ordered to dress and he was taken away. Hela and I began to cry. Mother, her face flushed, right away planned her next move. My sister Ella was not at home. Our mother was an exceptionally brave woman. The following day she went to the offices of NKVD. One of the officers was the husband of a dentist working with my parents in the Polyclinic. He told her that an interrogation would take place. We had no idea why he was to be questioned. It all became clear, when we joined father in the GULAG. There was a complaint signed by Jewish men, that father was a "socially dangerous element". Under pressure father agreed to a "TROIKA" verdict of GULAG for 5 years. One of the men who signed was a teenager from the orphanage in training in our dental laboratory. It was a charity case for the period of training and later he became an assistant to two senior dental mechanics, two brothers from the city of Dubno.⁷⁹⁰

Another Jewish woman from Lida, Dina Gabel, who was deported to the Soviet interior in April 1940 together with her parents, recalled how members of the underground Communist Party rushed to the assistance of a horde of commissars who appeared on the scene and "felt like heroes and partners to the holy cause." But, to her chagrin, she also encountered ordinary Jews from affluent families like her own who had flocked to the cause. After her father's arrest by the NKVD in January 1940, she wrote a fateful

⁷⁸⁹ Account of Zbigniew Trzebiński, quoted in Nowak, *Przemilczane zbrodnie*, 149–50.

⁷⁹⁰ Frances Dworecki, *Autobiography* (Internet: <<http://www.shtetlinks.jewishgen.org/Lida-District/fd-toc.htm>>, 2002), chapters 6, 7, 8. In chapter 2, the author recalled that a prewar nanny of hers, a Polish girl from a nearby village, and her husband "were our friends in the difficult times of the Soviet occupation and during father's arrest by the Soviet Police."

letter to Stalin pleading for his release:

Evidently, it did not reach Moscow but wound up instead in the hands of the prosecutor in Lida. A few days later, I was summoned to his office.

The moment I stepped into the waiting room, I had an unpleasant surprise. ... The receptionist was a girl I knew well, though we weren't exactly good friends. Her parents were well-to-do people whom I also knew well, and I had never suspected her of having Communist connections to the extent that she should become the prosecutor's receptionist. I suppressed my surprise and said a friendly "good morning." She didn't answer. How quickly she had learned their tactics! Her face was cold and hard, and only her big gray eyes smiled a triumphant smile, without shame, showing delight in my agony.

She looked at the list on her desk and in a loud voice asked, "What is your name?"⁷⁹¹

Conspiratorial activities were severely hampered by Soviet infiltrators and local collaborators, mostly Jews. Even students came under the penetrating scrutiny of their Jewish colleagues. A group of female Polish high school students were denounced to the NKVD by their Jewish classmates who had prepared a list of suspected "subversives" among the Polish students in Lida.⁷⁹² Jewish residents of that town confirm this state of affairs:

Quite early some Jewish community leaders found their way to the authorities and the first who were hit were the Zionist youth movements and the Zionist movement in general. The pain was even greater when it became known that one of the informers was a pupil in the Tarbut school (a member of my sister's class).⁷⁹³

The young people who had before the war belonged to the Zionist organizations, with the arrival of the Bolsheviks, became dislodged from a strong stream on to the banks of a river. Suddenly they were torn out of their habits and ideas and thrown open to fear of arrest. The N.K.V.D. spread out a net of informers whose task it was to give the Zionist activists from before the war, into their hands. Everyone was afraid of his friend—maybe he is a traitor, and he will tell the N.K.V.D. what one did before the war.

Mainly the ones who were terrified were those who had belonged to the Bais-R school and to the "Shomer HaTsair." The first were afraid of the Soviet followers, and the second those who had the nerve to espouse Marxist ideas.

Day by day young people were arrested as well as older people. The families of those arrested didn't even know where they were. Fate laughed especially at the Communists, who had sat many years in the Polish jails [for their subversive activities—*M.P.*] ... With the arrival of the Soviets they came out in freedom like martyrs. One looked at them as heroes of the day. Not long did their popularity last. One by one they were once again taken from their beds at night and thrown into jail—but this time in the N.K.V.D.'s own prisons.

...
Very often we could see peddlers through the window of our house. One was a known N.K.V.D. informer. Before the war he belonged to HaShomer Hatzair, but he didn't inform on any of his friends.

⁷⁹¹ Dina Gabel, *Behind the Ice Curtain* (Lakewood, New Jersey: C.I.S. Publishers, 1992), 77, 93–94. Soon, however, some of the local Communists were arrested and charged with treason: "If you were real Communists," the accusation went, "why didn't you overthrow your government?" I had the opportunity to meet some of these erstwhile Polish [sic] Communists in Siberia, after the amnesty for Polish prisoners who had survived. Their idealism had long since evaporated, and their new and only goal was to reach the free world." Ibid., 77. These so-called Polish Communists, however, were in fact members of the Communist Party of Western Belorussia, as the Communist Party did not recognize Polish rule over the eastern half of interwar Poland. Gabel also acknowledges that Poles were quite capable of distinguishing between those Jews who supported the new regime and those who did not. Both Polish and Jewish employees of her father's factory protested their Jewish owners' removal: "On the day we moved out of the house, two long lines of Polish and Jewish workers positioned themselves in protest at the gate. 'We will not let our bosses leave!' they yelled. 'we want them here. They are like brothers to us!' The workers blocked the way but were removed by force. Three of them were arrested on the spot. What a spectacle it was for the Russians! Employees defending their blood-sucking employers? Unheard of! Finally, as a concession to the workers, the new bosses appointed my cousin Mendel, Uncle Yaakov's son, as manager of the plant..." Ibid., 81–82.

⁷⁹² Krajewski, *Na Ziemi Nowogródzkiej*, 15.

⁷⁹³ Liza Ettinger, *From the Lida Ghetto to the Bielski Partisans*, typescript, December, 1984, 3 (U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives).

Several days after the happening with my sister, suddenly Nachum Zatsepitsky flew into our house and warned Molye and Berele that they were about to be arrested. He urged that they should flee quickly.⁷⁹⁴

With the start of the new government there came Jewish collaborators, who began to change everything in the Zionist party; a person could be arrested in the middle of the night and his fate would be unknown. Later, his family would be given fifteen minutes to pack, and were then forced from their home and onto a train which would take them deep into Russia. Our lives had become fear and suspicion of everything; we were terrified to speak to strangers ...⁷⁹⁵

In *Ejszyski*, a small town south of Wilno which passed from Polish to Soviet hands in September 1939, and then to Lithuania at the end of October 1939 before reverting back to Soviet rule in June 1940, the majority of administrative and state security positions were taken over by Jews.⁷⁹⁶ Yaffa Eliach, a Jewish historian from that town, describes the situation as follows:

Under Soviet rule a regional revolutionary council known as the Revkum was established, which was responsible for Eishyshok and all the towns and villages in its vicinity. Headed by Hayyim Shuster, the Revkum began its program by attacking all the “reactionary” Zionist organizations and activities within the shtetl. Thus the Hebrew school was abolished and a Yiddish school for the children of the proletariat was opened; the speaking of Hebrew was forbidden; and the young people were pressed to join Communist rather than Zionist organizations. ...

The exiled shtetl Communists did not have to go very far either [after the Lithuanian takeover in October 1939], most of them settling in next-door Radun [Raduń] and other towns in Soviet Byelorussia. This group included Moshe Szulkin and his wife and children; Moshe’s sister Elka Jankelewicz and her husband and children; Hirshke and Fruml Slepak, and Hayyim-Yoshke Szczuczynski. ... Luba Ginunski, however, who had been asked to remain in Lithuania to keep the Communist flame burning (and also to supply information), spent most of her time traveling, in semi-hiding.

On June 15, 1940, the Soviet army crossed the Lithuanian border. ... This time around, during the second Soviet occupation, the local Jewish Communists—those who remained—had more of an opportunity to implement their Marxist ideology. Luba [Libke] Ginunski was the head of the local party, which included among its most active members Hayyim Shuster, his girlfriend Meitke Bielicki, Ruvke Boyarski di Bulbichke (the potato), [who headed the komsomol], Velvke Katz, and Pessah Cofnas. Among Luba’s priorities was the redistribution of land and property. The estates of the great Polish magnate Seklutski [?] and those of other members of the Polish nobility were parceled out ...

According to Luba, most of the subsequent activities of the Communists in Eishyshok were implemented by the comitet—the local Communist governing committee—in her absence. ... Rabbi Szymen Rozowski was thrown out of his spacious house, and the property of many of the most affluent members of the

⁷⁹⁴ Sarah Schiff (Rabinowitz), “The Russian Occupation,” in Alexander Manor, Itzhak Ganusovitch, and Aba Lando, eds., *Sefer Lida* (Tel Aviv: Former Residents of Lida in Israel and the Relief Committee of Lida Jews in USA, 1970), 265 ff.; posted on the Internet in English translation as *Book of Lida* at <<http://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/lida/lida.html>>. On the entry of the Red Army in 1939 she writes: “On the 17th of September early in the morning there were already masses of people standing impatiently on Suvalsky [Suwalska] Street waiting for the arrival of the Russian Army. No one paid attention to the rain that was coming down. Suddenly we heard in the distance resounding cheers. Everyone started pushing closer to the street to see what was happening. ‘They’re coming already,’ someone shouted over the others. In the distance I saw many mounted soldiers in long dark pelerines on horses. Thousands of mouths opened wide to welcome our redeemers from the German murderous hands with happy shrieks. There were however also others who stood uneasily and indifferent to everything.”

⁷⁹⁵ Chaim Basist, *The Story of the House of Plotnik-Monco-Basist*, December 2008, Internet: <<http://museumoffamilyhistory.com/wims-basist-01.htm>>.

⁷⁹⁶ Witold Andruszkiewicz, “Holocaust w Ejszyszkach,” *Zeszyty Historyczne*, no. 120 (1997): 84.

community was nationalized, their houses confiscated ...⁷⁹⁷

Unfortunately, like most Jewish authors, Eliach is preoccupied with the fate of the Jews and fails to notice the impact that the measures undertaken by local Jewish Communists had on the non-Jewish population. Local Jews even composed a popular rhyme encapsulating their communal sentiments toward their Polish neighbours:⁷⁹⁸

Szlachta do wywozu,
chłopi do kółchozu.

The gentry for deportation
the peasants to the kolkhozes.

Variations of this popular ditty were heard throughout the Eastern Borderlands. Leontyna Miłkowska (later Leśniewicz), from the village of Koczery near Drohiczyn (and Siemiatycze), who was awarded by Yad Vashem, recalled: “When the Soviet troops entered Poland, Jews welcomed them as if they were their best friends.” The lyrics sung by Jewish girls stayed in her memory:

Żydzi na urzędy,
Ruscy na kółchozy,
Polscy na wywozy.

(Jews for offices,
Russians for collective farms,
Poles for deportation.)⁷⁹⁹

That Jews themselves feared, above all, fellow Jews is confirmed by many Jewish accounts. Joseph R.

⁷⁹⁷ Yaffa Eliach, *There Once Was a World: A Nine-Hundred-Year Chronicle of the Shtetl of Eishyshok* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1998), 565–67, 571–72. Some of these Jewish collaborators, like Alter Michalowski, re-emerged after the Soviet “liberation” in mid-1944., who recalls: “After Lithuania was annexed to Soviet Russia [in June 1940], I served for four months as Militia commander of Aishishok [Ejszyszk]. When the Germans entered the town, I was of course forced to go into hiding for I did not manage to escape with the Red Army [in June 1941]. ... When the Russians returned [in July 1944], I went back to Aishishok. There I found Shalom Sonenzon [Sonenson], his brother Moshe ... I enlisted in the N.K.W.D. [NKVD] troop which operated in Aishishok and the vicinity to purge the area of the Hitler and White Polish partisans [Home Army members] who we had learned to know during our ‘hot’ ‘encounters’ with them in the forests. Moshe Sonenzon [sic] and myself, thirsty for revenge belonged to an armed unit which, while pretending to search for Germans and traitors took reprisals on the evil goys as they richly deserved. We terrorized the goys. We collected many articles and clothes robbed from Jews we had known and made those goys pay, if only a fraction for what they had done to us and our children. We also caught Germans who had fled in small groups to the woods during the big retreat, and ‘framed’ them. ... Once we captured six Germans, one of which was an S.S. officer. Moshe Sonenzon, myself and some other Jews took them to the old cemetery [sic] where the Aishishok Jews had expired in terrible torture. We placed the officer to one side and told him: ‘You will remain alive!’ ‘Yes, since I have a wife and sons in Germany’, he said and a flicker of hope lit his extinguished eyes. The rest of the Germans stood pale, trembling with fear. We did not prolong settling our account with them. A volley of bullets was fired and the contaminated bodies rolled on the ground by the big mass grave of our brothers. A small revenge for their crimes. ‘Now its your turn, dirty murderer’, Moshe shouted. The officer was palid [sic] with terror and realized that his end had come. He threw himself to the ground and started kissing the earth at our feet, crying and whimpering: ‘Good Jews! Pity me—I have a wife and children, I did you no wrong.’ ‘You have a wife and children, do you?’ Moshe shouted, ‘and we, didn’t we have wives and children? You had no pity for our families and all that was clear [sic] to us—you filthy murderer! You want to live?! You won’t live—you’ll die like dogs!’ While he was speaking he lifted his rifle butt and smashed the skull of the loathsome German.” See Perets Alufi and Shaul Kaleko (Barkeli), eds., *Eishishok, koroteha ve-hurbanah: pirke zikhronot ve-‘edyot (be-tseruf temunot)/liket* (Jerusalem: Committee of the Survivors of Eishishok in Israel, 1950); translated into English by Shoshanna Gavish, “Aishishuk”; *Its History and Its Destruction: Documentaries, Memories and Illustrations* (Jerusalem: n.p., 1980), 78–80.

⁷⁹⁸ Account of Antoni Jundo (in the author’s possession).

⁷⁹⁹ The Miłkowski Family, Polish Righteous, Internet: <<http://www.sprawiedliwi.org.pl/pl/family/523,rodzina-milkowskich/article=788,more-about-the-milkowsky-family>>.

Fizman, a Jewish-American historian, writes:

... in the midst of the very severe winter of 1939–1940, thousands of Jewish refugees [from the German zone]—entire yeshivas, those who were politically active and feared denunciation by [Jewish] communists they knew from back home, joined by Jewish businessmen from the Soviet occupied territories—attempted the trek to Wilno, crossing the heavily guarded new Soviet-Lithuanian frontier.⁸⁰⁰

In fact, a local Zionist network which smuggled Jews to Lithuania, still independent at the time, with the help of peasants on both sides of the border, was eventually betrayed to the Soviet authorities—as one Jew involved in the smuggling operation put it—by “our Communist brothers.”⁸⁰¹

In *Lida*, a centre for smuggling Jews into Lithuania,

Even here were swarms of Yevseksia [Jewish Section] and militia, doing their best to inform on us [i.e., the flight movement] to the authorities and cause arrests and sabotage to the maximum possible extent. ... there were also not a few Yevseksis in town, and (even) some traitors within the movement, who turned their coats and became enthusiastic Communists and collaborators with the Soviet Secret Police.

We felt we were being traced and we received reliable information that the organizers of the Zionist Flight was being sought. Names, identification and descriptions of some of our members had been given to the detectives. ...

The frequent arrests of our people, the increase in border guards and the seizure of many groups inevitably resulted in a reduction in activity that still went on, despite everything, until the outbreak of the German-Russian war.⁸⁰²

Historian Ben-Cion Pinchuk also confirms that, “To apprehend those fleeing and hiding, the NKVD used Jewish informers who were positioned in railway stations on the Polish-Lithuanian border, and in the streets of the major cities.”⁸⁰³ Jews were even known to turn on their friends. After fleeing from Warsaw to the Soviet-occupied zone, Mordechai Bernstein, an anti-Communist journalist, was betrayed by a childhood friend and jailed in Wilno. Fortunately, he survived the Gulag.⁸⁰⁴ Similarly, Yaakov Kolber, a Bundist, is believed to have denounced fellow refugees as “capitalists,” and they were then sentenced to hard labour.⁸⁰⁵

Kazimierz Kuźmiński, a forestry engineer who was part of the nascent anti-Soviet Polish underground, and his secretary Dąbrowa-Kostka, were arrested by the NKVD in *Iwieniec* in April 1940, after being denounced by the Jewish bookkeeper of the forest inspectorate.⁸⁰⁶ After joining the local militia, Shmuel Yossel, a poor Jew from *Michaliszki*, wearing the militia’s hat and holding a rifle, knocked at the window

⁸⁰⁰ Joseph R. Fizman, “The Quest for Status: Polish Jewish Refugees in Shanghai, 1941–1949,” *The Polish Review*, vol. 43, no. 4 (1998): 442. That author notes that one of the lurking dangers for Jews was “attacks by roaming Belarusan gangs.”

⁸⁰¹ Account of Shlomo Breuer in Alufi and Kaleko (Barkeli), *Eishishok, koroteha ve-hurbanah*; English translation, “*Aishishuk*”; *Its History and Its Destruction*, 48–49.

⁸⁰² Israel Solovietchik, “In the Brikha (Flight) Routes,” in Manor, *Sefer Lida*, 264; posted on the Internet in English translation as *Book of Lida* at <<http://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/lida/>>.

⁸⁰³ Pinchuk, *Shtetl Jews under Soviet Rule*, 37.

⁸⁰⁴ Sam Roberts, “Masha Leon, Society Columnist and Holocaust Survivor, Dies at 86,” *New York Times*, April 7, 2017.

⁸⁰⁵ Szedlecki, *Album of My Life*, 92–93.

⁸⁰⁶ Kuźmiński, *Z Iwieńca i Stołpców do Białegostoku*.

of a wealthy storekeeper who had exploited his sisters. When asked, “Who’s there?” he answered: “Shmuel Yossel the government.”⁸⁰⁷

In **Szczuczyn** near Łomża, as in countless other communities, assistance on the part of the local Communists and their supporters, almost all of them Jews, was also indispensable to the Soviets:

The Shtutsin [Szczuczyn] supporters of communism had after a short conference decided to greet the Red Army with flowers and music. ... The civilian municipal committee had naturally adopted the right in-law—members of the Communist party.

The following evening, one day after the Bolsheviks had seized power, they conducted arrests of Polish citizens. Arrested were: the former mayor Bilski, a few rich Poles from the intelligentsia, and all Polish landowners from around the city. They were sent to the Grayeve [Grajewo] and Łomża [Łomża] prison, later to Siberia.

A few days later the Bolsheviks attended to the Jews, those from the so-called bourgeois class. Some of them were sent to Siberia. ... The local communists had to approve which Jewish citizens could stay put and who must suffer exile 10 kilometers from the city.⁸⁰⁸

In the nearby town of **Radziłów**,

Immediately there appeared in our town supporters, Communists of course, who were at their [i.e., the Soviets’] disposal. ...

The local flunkies ... denounced us as ardent Zionist activists. ... Then they arrested my husband for his Zionist activity. ...

We were always prepared for new harassment, mostly because of the persecution by the local Jewish devils, whom we avoided as much as possible. ...

There were many rogues, but they ran away [with the Soviets].⁸⁰⁹

In 1939, the Soviets arrested my husband [chairman of “Hechalutz”] and all the others whom I have mentioned above. After a short while, they freed all of them except Szlapak whom they tortured for three months, since the communists strongly accused him. Why? Shlichim [emissaries] used to come to us from Eretz Yisroel and they would speak to large numbers of Jews. They spoke in Shul and the [Jewish] communists [from the “Peretz Library”] would disrupt. Szlapak would bring the police. But we never said they were communists, only that they were disturbing the peace. They would be removed. Later, they took revenge on him, and accused him strongly.⁸¹⁰

Szmul Wasersztajn, a Jew from nearby **Jedwabne**, traded in the countryside during the Soviet occupation. He bought livestock from local farmers, which he kept in the barn of a Polish acquaintance, and filled orders for meat. His biggest fear was falling into the hands of fellow Jews.⁸¹¹ In nearby **Wizna**, Chaim Czapnicki, a Zionist turned Soviet militiaman, betrayed a prewar rival, Jakub Cytrynowicz, a Jew who had converted to Catholicism on marrying a Polish woman. Cytrynowicz received a 5-year sentence for smuggling goods and was deported to the Soviet interior.⁸¹²

⁸⁰⁷ Cholawsky, *The Jews of Bielorussia during World War II*, 5.

⁸⁰⁸ Account of Moyshe Farbarovits in *The Destruction of the Community of Szczuczyn*, Internet: http://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/szczuczyn/Szczuczyn_Pol.html; translation of *Hurban kehilat Shtutsin* (Tel Aviv: Former Residents of Szczuczyn in Israel, 1954), 20 ff.

⁸⁰⁹ Memoir of Chaya Finkielsztejn, 1946, Yad Vashem archives. This is translated as follows in Bikont, *The Crime and the Silence*, 171: “In Radziłów, Jewish Communists put themselves at their disposal, there were some bootlickers, plenty of them, and they provoked all the misfortune.”

⁸¹⁰ Testimony of Chaya Finkielsztejn, Yad Vashem archives, file 033033–2636/255, August 16, 1966, Internet: <<http://www.radzilow.com/yadchaya.htm>>.

⁸¹¹ Andrzej Kaczyński, “Nie zabijaj,” *Rzeczpospolita*, July 10, 2000.

⁸¹² Bikont, *My z Jedwabnego*, 269; Bikont, *The Crime and the Silence*, 361.

In *Sokoły* near Białystok, numerous arrests occurred after denunciations by fellow Jews, but the following author finds a “silver lining” to rationalize their apparent misfortune.

Arrests and imprisonments began; following denouncements, single persons and entire families were driven out and exiled to far-away places in Russia. Any suspicion, or a single denouncement, was sufficient for a person to be imprisoned. This happened, for example to the former head of the community, Palek Goldstein. He was accused, as it were, of imposing heavy taxes on workers and extorting large sums from the public through a government loan that he imposed on the citizens during the last year before the War, with the help of the police and through pressure tactics. Palek was put in prison in Białystok [Białystok] and from there sent to Russia.

In this manner, they also imprisoned and exiled Yona Zilberstein, the former head of the Beitar [Revisionist Youth] unit in Sokoly, Beitar being, in their eyes, a fascist party. Following this imprisonment, four members of the family of Label Zilberstein, a successful merchant before the War, were sent to Russia. ...

Mendel Fleeer, a cattle dealer and wholesale meat supplier, was in line to be exiled. Once they found an animal in his possession without a veterinarian’s stamp. He was immediately arrested and exiled to Russia.

The imprisonments and exiles had a bitter influence on the local Jews. Later, under the evil Nazi regime, all the Jews envied those who had been imprisoned and exiled to the Soviet Union.⁸¹³

In *Szereszów* near Pruzana, the family of a Jewish merchant recalled:

A couple [of] Jewish young men got carried away with the enthusiasm of the new “Liberators”, the Bolsheviks and volunteered to work and cooperate with them. Any person with common sense understood that if we did not sell our merchandise, we had to have it stashed somewhere. In order to win favors with the Bolsheviks, these men had to prove their loyalty by being willing and ready to squeal on someone even a friend or relative. Those couple of young men informed the Militia that we have vodka. One of them with the ironic name of “Tzadik” which means a pious or a righteous man, later had the arrogance or insolence to brag about it.⁸¹⁴

In *Brody*, in the Tarnopol region, there were approximately 150–200 Jews who openly collaborated with the Soviet invaders. These Jews led Soviet officials on missions for the seizure of goods from Jewish merchants and Polish landowners. Although a few prewar Jewish Communists were arrested by the Soviets as unreliable, otherwise local Jews were favoured and—unlike Polish settlers—were not deported to the Gulag.⁸¹⁵

In *Podhajce*, in the Tarnopol region, as one Jew recalls:

Our family owned a big store located in the middle of the town, next to the marketplace. ...

One day a group of people forced their way through the closed store and declared that they are the “Nationalization Committee”. The group was headed by a neighbor, Josel Schechter. He assembled the whole family in the bedroom and informed us that we are being nationalized, that means that all business and personal property are taken over by the state. Each member of the family is allowed to take two pairs of shoes, two suits, two shirts, etc. All other personal belongings, all furniture and the store itself are nationalized and belongs [sic], from now on, to the Socialist State.

My mother broke down and started to cry. “For twenty years we worked day and night, now we are thrown out on the street like dogs. Why? I ask you why? Aren’t we human beings?”

Josel Schechter was our neighbor’s son and my mother’s schoolmate. He never married and supported by his father, he never worked a day in his life [sic]. Now, he was a big shot, advising the Russians how to exploit the newly conquered territories. ...

“Josel, I am asking only for my personal belongings, some dresses, underwear and stockings I wore. That’s all I am asking for.” Cried my mother.

We started to collect the meager belongings, when Josel observed that my father picked up a wedding ring from the night table and put it on his finger.

“Put the ring back. You are not allowed to take any jewelry,” barked Josel Schechter.

⁸¹³ Maik, *Deliverance*, 15–16.

⁸¹⁴ Moishe Kantorowitz, *My Mother’s Bequest: From Shershev to Auschwitz to Newfoundland* (2004), 160, Internet: <http://cpsa.info/shershev/my_mothers_bequest.pdf>.

⁸¹⁵ Testimony of Henryk Charasz, Shoah Foundation Institute Visual History Archive, University of Southern California, Interview code 14823.

“But this is my wedding band, am I not allowed to keep my wedding band?” Objected my father.

“You didn’t have it on your finger and you can’t take it now... That’s the rule.”

“Josel, you know that we were married for twenty years. Your Father attended our wedding. This is really his wedding ring. Let him keep it,” pleaded my mother.

“Nothing doing,” answered Josel, “I have to stick to my instructions. Please hurry up. We still have other stops to make.”

Crying, my mother pulled off her own wedding band and threw it into the drawer. ...

In the middle of the winter we were thrown out of our house without a place to live. “Tough luck,” commented Chairman Schechter, “For twenty years you exploited the poor people, I feel no mercy for you.” My hard working parents became exploiters and the freeloaders like Josel became the exploited workers. Another adjustment of the dictionary.

Luckily, the Russian officer that took over the apartment had more heart than the Jewish neighbors. He let us live in an unheated empty store back room, until we find a place to live.⁸¹⁶

However, as Jewish memoirs acknowledge, Jewish Communists in *Podhajce* and *Thuste*, as well as those who had connections to them, came to the assistance of their Jewish relatives and friends who had run into trouble with the authorities with regard to nationalization of their property and illicit transactions.⁸¹⁷

But it was the local Poles who were targeted most often. A Jewish woman from Ostrów Mazowiecka who relocated to the nearby village of *Króle Duże*, where she worked in milk depot, recalled excellent relations with the villagers. She treated the Poles with compassion, intervening on their behalf and warning them of inspections. However, as she points out, not all Jews were like her.

There were Jews in this same village and in others who denounced peasants during Soviet rule, and later paid for it dearly when German rule came. I did not squeeze peasants for milk, I tried to accommodate them. [She intervened on their behalf and warned them of inspections.] ... All the peasants in the village of Króle Duże knew me and they all respected me. I felt safe and good among them. Often I did not remember that I was a Jewish woman.⁸¹⁸

Michel (Mendel) Mielnicki, a Jew who hails from *Wasilków*, a small town near Białystok populated by Poles, Jews and Belorussians, presents a rather disingenuous portrait of his father Chaim, a newly recruited NKVD agent. He trivializes the impact of his father’s vile deeds and obscures the true profile of his many victims. Tellingly, Chaim Mielnicki, had no prior Communist connections (he was an entrepreneur and his political leanings were Bundist), nor did he have “any particular enemies in the local Christian community, at least before the Russian occupation in 1939.”⁸¹⁹ (In fact he had a number of Christian friends with whom he associated.) Nor were there any reported excesses by the Christian population in September 1939 when the Germans first arrived in that area.⁸²⁰

Despite his father’s new position with the NKVD and Mendel’s ardent involvement with the komsomol in his high school in Białystok, “It never occurred to me ... that there was any contradiction in the fact that I

⁸¹⁶ Alexander Kimel, “The Russians Are Coming,” *Memoirs*, posted on the Internet at <http://users.systec.com/kimel/russians.html>.

⁸¹⁷ Baruch Milch, *Testament: Z Archiwum Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego* (Warsaw: Ośrodek Karta, 2001) 84–85.

⁸¹⁸ Żbikowski, *U genezy Jedwabnego*, 69.

⁸¹⁹ Munro, *Białystok to Birkenau*, 28, 31.

⁸²⁰ *Ibid.*, 74–75.

was at the same time studying privately in preparation for my *bar mitzvah*.⁸²¹ (The ceremony was conducted in a synagogue with his father present.) As director of a local cheese factory (his day job), Chaim Mielnicki reaped considerable material benefits for his family.⁸²² His story thus belies the claim that only a handful of committed ideologues who had cut off their ties with the Jewish community were involved in the “dirty work” which, as we know, targeted primarily the Poles in the early part of the occupation. The lack of any trace of emotion or empathy on the part of the author in describing his Polish neighbours’ fate is noteworthy.

I don’t know exactly how my father became involved with the NKVD (the forerunner of the KGB), the Soviet intelligence and internal-security agency. ... I do remember, however, the NKVD commissars from Moscow, who would most often arrive at our house after dark, sitting in the living room, smoking one cigarette after another until they could barely see each other through the haze, talking in low voices with Father, as they went over their lists of suspected fifth columnists (so-called *Volksdeutscher* Poles), Polish fascists, ultranationalists, and other local “traitors” and “counter-revolutionaries.”

It was my understanding that he served as advisor to the NKVD about who among the local Poles was to be sent to Siberia, or otherwise dealt with. I don’t think he had anything to do with the arrest of local Jews, or the expulsion of Jewish refugees who had flooded into the Bialystok area from the German-occupied provinces ... Certainly, it is my firm belief that no one was ever murdered at my father’s behest.

Nevertheless, my mother was terribly upset by my father’s collaboration with the Russian secret service. ... I remember her begging him not to get involved. He disagreed. “We have to get rid of the fascists,” he told her. “They deserve to go to Siberia. They are not good for the Jewish people.” ...

Naturally, word of Father’s clandestine activities got out. The black limousine that the commissars parked in our driveway when they came to visit was sufficient in itself to blow any cover he might have desired. Consequently, when the Germans invaded Russia in June 1941, the name of Chaim Mielnicki was on the hit list of both the local anti-Semites (who proved more numerous than anyone imagined) and their new-found allies [sic], the *Gestapo* ... Because I was Chaim Mielnicki’s son, I found myself the target of Polish bullets when I returned to Bialystok after the War. That’s how much they came to hate him.⁸²³

Of course, one didn’t have to be a “fascist” to deplore Chaim Mielnicki’s actions. Moreover, they were directed not at some alleged “fascists” but at ordinary patriotic Poles—neighbours of the Mielnickis who may have been politically or socially active in the interwar period and their families. (A classic case of blaming the victims!) That this gave rise to retaliations when the Soviets fled in June 1941⁸²⁴ is not at all

⁸²¹ Ibid., 89. The author writes: “I became an ardent supporter of the Stalinist cause. I even gave up my skiing to attend indoctrination classes. And when they showed their propaganda films, I dutifully stood up to applaud every time Josef Stalin appeared upon the screen.” Tellingly, Mielnicki made no mention of any of these matters in the testimony he provided to the Central Committee of Jews in 1945 or in the Wasilków memorial book. For the former see Machcewicz and Persak, *Wokół Jedwabnego*, vol. 2, 356–58; for the latter see Leon Mendelewicz, ed., *The Wasilkower Memorial Book: Memories of Our Town Wasilkow Which Has Been Annihilated by the Nazis* (Melbourne: Wasilkower Committee, 1990).

⁸²² Ibid., 87. The author writes: “Whatever Mother thought about the NKVD activities, Father’s privileges (in addition to a decent salary) as a ‘comrade director’ made her life easier than it would otherwise have been, especially after he was promoted to the management of another, larger cream cheese plant. The directors of the various state enterprises in the Bialystok area not only had priority access to whatever became available in the way of consumer goods, they often traded products among themselves (i.e. *X* kilos of cream cheese for *X* kilos of cottage cheese, or *X* kilos of carp, or *X* kilos of fabric, or *X* quantity of whatever.”

⁸²³ Ibid., 82–84. It is disconcerting to read how a historian of the calibre of Martin Gilbert acquiesces in this charade in his foreword to this book. Ibid., 10. John Munro, billed as an “independent scholar,” is clearly out of his league; this becomes evident in the treatment of the most basic historical facts, for example, in Mielnicki’s bogus “justification” that Poles were assisting the Germans in brutalizing and murdering Jews during this period (ibid., 84–85), and in Mielnicki’s claim that he knew about the mass murder of Jews in Treblinka, Sobibór, Majdanek, Belżec, and Birkenau already in the early part of 1942 (ibid., 118). It is also curious that Chaim Mielnicki was warned by a Polish friend that he was “number one on the death list of the local Polish fascists.” Ibid., 94. As a result, the family fled to another town.

⁸²⁴ These events are described at 103–107 in *ibid.*, and were apparently even filmed by the Germans, which leads one to the conclusion that they were likely incited by them.

surprising—Jews, after all, frequently took revenge on Christians who betrayed Jews to the Germans.

What is also noteworthy is that, in helping to deport his Polish neighbours, Mielnicki openly admitted that he did so *qua* Jew—“They are not good for the Jewish people.” In this he undoubtedly embodied the sentiments of many Jews in that town. Some, like his wife, sensed that these specific actions, and not some pathological anti-Semitic syndrome on the part of Poles, would give rise to problems in the future. But what did ordinary Jews do or think when they saw respected members of their community turn into henchmen for the NKVD and prey on their Polish neighbours? Unfortunately, one generally encounters a deafening and ominous silence about such matters. In some cases, however, authors are forthright about Jewish approval for mistreatment of Poles. “We did not behave properly towards the Poles,” admitted Mina Dorn of Białystok. “[Many Jews] said: they were anti-Semites, so let them get what they deserve.”⁸²⁵

In *Kamieniec Litewski*,

The situation of the Jewish population changed for the worse. The local Communists, like Leybke Katz, Leyzer Dolinsky, Joseph Wolfson, Joseph Kupchik, the two Jacobson brothers from Zastavye [Zastawie], Malca Radisch and other such “prominent party-members” hastily assumed posts of authority under the new rulers. They were familiar with everyone and they knew well how and whom to oppress and persecute.⁸²⁶

In *Brzeżany*,

Tolek [Rapf]’s sister Halszka recalled one of the Soviet propaganda meetings in the center of the town. “There were many Jews in the crowd. I remember some who threatened my father and myself with their fists, calling him a bourgeois capitalist. On another occasion a man with Semitic features stood on a balcony near the Ratusz [town hall], addressing a crowd in broken Polish. He told them that the time of the capitalists was over.”⁸²⁷

A Jew from *Złoczów* in the Tarnopol region recalled:

This developing picture did not seem to hamper the enthusiasm of our domestic Communists, who were determined to have their day. Some of them were known to us; others who revealed themselves as Communists took us by surprise, among the latter a colleague of ours, Mundeck Werfel, son of a prominent Zionist. Some came out of the hideouts in which they were confined in the closing days of the war; others were released from prison; still others who had escaped east in anticipation of a German occupation now came back. The locals, particularly the “intellectuals,” decided not to wait for the arrival of Soviet civilian authorities, and forged ahead with the nationalization of the larger businesses in town. As the second largest employer in town, our factory was a prime target. The very next day after the Russian army marched in, Jasio Hessel, the son of a lawyer and the brother of one of my best friends, accompanied by his cousin, Felo Rosenbaum, strutted into our apartment, handguns dangling from their belts. “In the name of the people,” they rudely demanded the keys to the factory, mumbling something about putting an end to the exploitation of the workers. ... After getting the keys, they left without a goodbye just as they had come in without a good morning.

Other businesses in town were nationalized by the same or similar gangs within the first couple of days.

The rule of these self-appointed officials was very short-lived. A few days later the Russian civil authorities arrived. ...

Another few days passed when a car pulled in front of the house and two Russian officers and a woman got out. My father recognized the woman, Miss Czyzowicz, a pharmacist and an ardent Ukrainian nationalist. The elder of the two looked distinguished in his colonel’s uniform and was obviously Jewish. His name was Leibkind. He said that he had been appointed head of the Pharmaceutical Trust for the Lwow [Lwów] Oblast District... The other Russian, also Jewish, the *glavbush* (head bookkeeper of the trust), said very little. ...

Before the war, Złoczów’s police force consisted of a commander, a noncommissioned officer, and about a dozen policemen. ... Now we had a force of several hundred of the “people’s militia,” with a number of

⁸²⁵ Cited in Evgeny Finkel, *Ordinary Jews: Choice and Survival during the Holocaust* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2017), 46.

⁸²⁶ Dora Galperin, “The Destruction of Kamenets,” in Shmuel Eisenstadt and Mordechai Gelbart, eds., *Sefer yizkor le-kehilot Kamenits de-Lita, Zastavye ve-ha-kolonyot* (Tel Aviv: Kamieniec and Zastawie Committees in Israel and the United States, 1970), 91.

⁸²⁷ Redlich, *Together and Apart in Brzeżany*, 90.

Russian captains, lieutenants, and noncommissioned officers. In addition there was the dreaded NKVD, some in uniforms, others in plain clothes, watching over our well-being. Informers also infiltrated into each factory and establishment. More militiamen were posted in adjacent villages and hamlets. In short, there were literally thousands watching our every move and listening to our every word.

The first wave of mass arrests came. Always at night. The starosta [county supervisor], the mayor, the judges, the police (except for those smart enough to have shed their uniforms and disappear). Many civil officials, prominent Zionists, and what scared us most, many people at random, whose arrests were a puzzle to us, were herded into cattle cars and deported deep inside Russia, to Siberia, to Kazakhstan and to other distant places. ...

The factory had only a single member, Narayevski, who was also the secretary of the cell. To launch the Komsomol, the organizers brought the first members from outside the factory, who were appointed also the *normirovshchik* and the *planowyk*. It was Nazimova who recruited two additional members from the factory, Chana Letzter and Milek Krumstick, a printer's apprentice. The two came from very poor Jewish families and held their jobs because we pitied them, not because they deserved it. They were poor workers. ... Milek was simply nasty, but Chana was dangerous. ... She was the darling of Nazimova and, we suspected, an informer for the party and the NKVD.

For some months the new Komsomol group remained limited to four members ... Finally, ... Abronko did join... A few others, all Jews, followed him ... A year later, the party enlisted its first Catholic, Miecio, a simple peasant boy with strong muscles and pigeon-sized brain. ...

Next, the other Catholic workers in the factory offered a Mass for Miecio's soul. This naturally got back to Comrade Nazimova and to the NKVD with some repercussions ...

However, the Mass incident halted further attempts to recruit more youngsters into the Komsomol. The Catholics would not join, and obviously the party felt that the Jewish quota was more than filled ...

To Chana's great chagrin, one of the newcomers, a young Jewish woman from a middle-class family, a *gimnazjum* graduate, became the secretary of the Komsomol. ...

One of our workers, Golda Goldenberg, a devoted Communist and a member of the Komsomol ... her brother was a dyed-in-the-wool local Communist who had served time in ... Bereza Kartuska. He was the only local official to obtain a high position in the bureaucracy as a manager of the combined leather factories. ...

In general, local party members did not fare well. They were relegated to obscure positions in minor agencies. Hessel and Rosenbaum, for example, the first nationalizers of our factory, were given mere clerical positions in the court. The lawyer, Punio Imber ... joined the lawyers' union, which had little authority or influence. ...

However, regardless of penalties, absenteeism on Sundays was so high among Catholics that the seven-day week with Sunday off was soon restored. ... Jews were compelled to work on the Sabbath, and only a handful of the very orthodox stayed home. The government tolerated this defiance.⁸²⁸

Conditions in the outlying villages were similar. At the beginning of October 1939, in *Gologóry* near Złoczów, the village council (*selrada*) and a militia post consisting of Ukrainians and Jews identified about 10 Poles, among them Pigurniak, Holik and Rucki, who were promptly arrested by the NKVD.⁸²⁹

Ben-Cion Pinchuk, the Israeli historian mentioned earlier, provides the following synopsis:

The Soviet governing apparatus entered the provinces of Eastern Poland well prepared in its experience of rooting out enemies of the regime. The most active and sophisticated arm of the administration that came from the East was the security police, the NKVD. Within three or four weeks the NKVD had spread its net over the entire territory. It was a relatively easy task to locate and eliminate the first-line political leaders, those of them who did not escape into non-Soviet territories were apprehended in the first few weeks. But, in order to achieve the much broader aim of destroying the existing leadership infrastructure and undesirable elements of all kinds, the authorities had developed a refined search and control method. State, city and

⁸²⁸ Tennenbaum, *Zloczow Memoir*, 104–105, 114, 127–28, 137–38, 140. The repercussions directed at Catholic Poles as a result of their mass offering did not dampen the willingness of the Catholic clergy to come to the assistance of Jews under German rule. According to the Złoczów Memorial Book, "There were many priests who provided Jews they knew with original birth certificates in the names of persons long dead." One of those recipients was N. Altman, the wife of Dr. S. Altman, who obtained a birth and baptismal certificate in the name of Maria Rubiczeńska and survived with the assistance of a number of Poles. See I.M. Lask, ed., *Sefer kehilat Zlots'ov—The City of Zloczow* (Tel Aviv: Zloczower Relief Verband of America, 1967), columns 113, 152.

⁸²⁹ Komański and Siekierka, *Ludobójstwo dokonane przez nacjonalistów ukraińskich na Polakach w województwie tarnopolskim 1939–1946*, 977; *Na Rubieży* (Wrocław), no. 49 (2000): 36.

police archives were among the first institutions to be occupied and guarded by the new rulers. They were curious to discover the secrets guarded in the archives. Local collaborators translated from Polish and prepared detailed lists of suspects, to be used in the future. A fine net of informers was spread throughout the territories, in every institution, factory, enterprise and tenement. Local former Communists and new recruits were included among the informers. ... local Jewish Communists played an important role in locating former political activists and compiling the lists of 'undesirables' and 'class enemies'. The NKVD tried, often with success, to recruit people who had previously been active in Jewish institutions and political organizations and thus created an atmosphere of mutual suspicion and fear among former friends and colleagues.⁸³⁰

In addition to numerous Polish victims, among these "friends and colleagues" were also—as we have seen—a good number of fellow Jews.

Pinchuk, however, exaggerates the role of the relatively few prewar Communists. Very many of the collaborators—and there was no shortage of them—were new converts to the cause or simply pro-Soviet, and not necessarily committed ideologists. Israeli historian Shalom Cholawsky points out that it was from the poorer classes, who had no formal ties to the Communist Party, that many of the volunteers for the people's militia came forward.⁸³¹

According to Yitzhak Arad (Rudnicki), in *Święciany*, north of Wilno, "There were also many Jews who had shifted ground and become enthusiastic Communists; for ideological reasons they were quick to inform the authorities of all Zionist activity."⁸³² Arad states that Jews "constituted a fairly large proportion of those in local government and in the Communist party."⁸³³

In the town of *Ilja*, as one Jew recalls,

Official, veteran communists we did not have in town, but there quite a few potential sympathizers and people who leaned in that direction. We will not provide the details that illustrate the behavior of the "sympathizing" Jews, and how they made the lives of the wealthier town residents miserable.⁸³⁴

A young Zionist from Radzyń Podlaski who moved to *Brześć nad Bugiem* recalls his own transformation on a festive day marking Soviet rule:

I forgot about my Zionist attitude and all my troubles. The communists were right: Freedom for everyone! Why should one fight only for the Jewish and Zionist causes.

We Jewish boys discussed this subject for days and nights. Our opinions were always divided and we were never able to agree on the better and more just way. On that day, however, influenced by the euphoria and gala atmosphere, even I was willing to forget my previous views and to admit my errors: the communists were actually right.

With all my strength I fought my way into the parade in the hope of obtaining a place in the front, so that I could purposely carry one of the oversized Stalin portraits. As a sort of reconciliation, I wanted to carry the picture myself, regardless of how large it was. I soon felt the heavy beam press against my shoulder.

⁸³⁰ Pinchuk, *Shtetl Jews under Soviet Rule*, 34–35. For additional scholarly confirmation, see Meyer, *The Jews in the Soviet Satellites*, 335, where Bernard D. Weinryb writes: "There were also cases of denunciation and betrayal by former friends or foes."

⁸³¹ Cholawsky, *The Jews of Bielorussia during World War II*, 5. Cholawsky also states that "the regimes's local base of power included mainly Jewish and Bielorussian Communists." Ibid., 12.

⁸³² Yitzhak Arad, *The Partisan: From the Valley of Death to Mount Zion* (New York: Holocaust Library, 1979), 25.

⁸³³ Yitzhak Arad, *Ghetto in Flames: The Struggle and Destruction of the Jews in Vilna in the Holocaust* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Authority and Anti-Defamation League of B'nai Brith in New York, 1980), 27.

⁸³⁴ Yona Riar, "The Holocaust," in A. Kopilevitz, ed., *The Community of Il'ya: Chapters of Life and Destruction*, Internet: <<http://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/ilya/Ilya.html>>; English translation of A. Kopilevitz, ed., *Kehilat Il'ya: Pirkei hayim ve-hashmada* (Tel Aviv: Association of Former Residents of Il'ya in Israel, 1962), 421 ff.

Periodically I glanced up at Stalin and saw him benevolently smiling down at me; I still felt thankful and indebted to him.⁸³⁵

The Jewish community's most substantial foe proved to be their own countrymen. An account from Volhynia avers:

it was the Jewish communists who abolished the teaching of Hebrew and the Hebrew schools, in two months. The non-Jewish *politruks* (political commissars) did not even know that Hebrew was taught.⁸³⁶

Denunciations assumed unheard of proportions. According to Dov Levin, the assistance of local collaborators who knew intimately the workings of their own community was indispensable. In addition to arresting kehillot leaders, members of town councils, and officials in now-outlawed political and party organizations, they also struck at Bundist and Zionist activists:

The authorities, it transpired, had made preparations for these arrests and carried them out [in late 1939] with the help of local Communists, who had drawn up detailed lists of Zionist activists, public functionaries, and individuals who had relatives in Palestine.⁸³⁷

Whenever the security services thought the rosters of functionaries and public figures were incomplete, they consulted local Communists and sympathizers. There is no other way to explain how the security services were able to carry out arrests within a week or two of having reached the area. Moreover, the Zionists and socialists could not have been culled from the masses of refugees from western Poland on such a large scale without the assistance of Jewish Communists, who stalked them "like beasts of prey in the streets of Bialystok [Białystok], Luck [Łuck], Grodno, and Kowel."

Subsequently, after nearly all political activists in or around the previous regime had been uncovered, the security services had no further need of veteran Communists. Any information that they could not supply was provided by informers who reported everything going on in the here-and-now. Since the public was oblivious to the informers' relationship with the security services, the informers were both more efficient in their mission and more dangerous for their victims. They became even more menacing when the new regime settled in and spared no efforts to combine them into a permanent network.⁸³⁸

According to Yehuda Bauer,

The Soviets encountered no difficulty in recruiting Jewish informers; some people were more than willing to denounce other Jews for real or supposed anti-Soviet behavior or simply for having been active in Bundist, Zionist, or religious activities under the previous regime. As a matter of fact, informing on others became something of a profession. As in Nazi Germany, even family members sometimes informed on each other.⁸³⁹

Many members of the Zionist Hashomer Hatsair switched allegiance to the Komsomol. So pervasive was the phenomenon that during the war the Jewish underground decided that

it is an imperative, if [we] survive, to put to death all the Jewish traitors in the service of the Russians or the Germans. That doesn't mean that the underground regime is against the Soviet regime as such, but the

⁸³⁵ Schupack, *The Dead Years*, 18.

⁸³⁶ Testimony of Beti Ajzensztajn-Kesher, quoted in Davies and Polonsky, *Jews in Eastern Poland and the USSR, 1939-46*, 19.

⁸³⁷ Levin, *The Lesser of Two Evils*, 260.

⁸³⁸ Levin, *The Lesser of Two Evils*, 269.

⁸³⁹ Bauer, *The Death of the Shtetl*, 39.

‘Zionist turncoats who escaped to the Bolsheviks’ (zionim mumrim) ... are responsible for an exceptionally large number of [losses of] human lives.⁸⁴⁰

Examples of Jews turning on fellow Jews abound in Jewish testimonies. A Jew in charge of the printing press of the newspaper *Zaria* in **Brześć na Bugiem** was denounced by Communists from Warsaw employed by that newspaper as a former Polish soldier. He was arrested, held in a local prison, and the deported to the Gulag.⁸⁴¹ In **Kurzeniec** near Wilejka,

They [i.e., Hashomer Hatzair] also tried to move to Vilna [Wilno] as a group. But the plan was leaked to the Soviet N.K.V.D., apparently by the girlfriend of one of the members, and was never realized.⁸⁴²

The entire infrastructure of the Bund in **Wilno** was destroyed during the short six-week occupation of that city between September 19 and October 28, 1939, because of betrayals by its own members. A wave of arrests ensued in a number of other towns. The situation was felt to be so precarious that Bund members who had sought refuge in the Soviet zone, already in October 1939 started to return to their homes in the German zone where Jewish political organizations were not under attack.⁸⁴³ However, for some reason, members of the ultra-nationalist Betar movement were spared. Israel Eldad, who found himself in Soviet-occupied Wilno along with Menachem Begin, while acknowledging the extensive pro-Soviet intelligence work of local Jews, suspected Communist connivance in what happened.

Too many Jews worked for the secret police, too many people knew about the forged visas and passports. The Soviets must have known. Yet the government feigned ignorance, allowing us to leave. One cannot seek logic here.⁸⁴⁴

In **Raduń**, a small town near Wilno,

Yankele Stolnicki was a Jew from Radun who had been a young Communist leader. When the Russians occupied the city, he had been appointed secretary of the Communist Party, and in this post, had compiled lists of affluent Jews for the Russians. ... many of these Jews were subsequently sent to Siberia, losing both their families and their wealth.⁸⁴⁵

⁸⁴⁰ Anonymous, “Edut-nirshema bemazkirut haeliona im bo haedim,” n.d., Tel Yitzhak: Massuah Archive, cited in Evgeny Finkel, *Victims’ Politics: Jewish Behavior During the Holocaust*, Doctoral Dissertation, University of Wisconsin—Madison, 2012. Later, however, the document stated that it was decided that in the case of those who served the soviet authorities, the decision on whether and how to punish such people would be made on a “case by case” basis.

⁸⁴¹ Account of Abram Klok in Siekierski and Tych, *Widzialem aniola śmierci*, 346–47.

⁸⁴² Yehuda Bauer, “Kurzeniec—A Jewish Shtetl in the Holocaust,” *Yalkut Moreshet: Holocaust Documentation and Research* [Tel Aviv], no. 1 (Winter 2003): 138.

⁸⁴³ Blatman, *For Our Freedom and Yours*, 17–19.

⁸⁴⁴ Israel Eldad, *The First Tith: Memoirs and Edifying Discourses of the Hebrew War for Freedom* (Tel Aviv: The Jabotinsky Institute in Israel, 2008), 63.

⁸⁴⁵ Leon Kahn, *No Time To Mourn: A True Story of a Jewish Partisan Fighter* (Vancouver: Laurelton Press, 1978), 169. After the Germans invaded, a Polish farmer sheltered Stolnicki for three years. When the Soviet front approached, Stolnicki promptly turned on the Poles by informing the Soviets of the location of a Polish partisan unit. While Stolnicki and another Jewish colleague acted as “escorts” for the Polish captives, a change of guards took place and the pair were mistaken for Poles and imprisoned by the Soviets. Stolnicki’s pleas fell on deaf ears and he was about to face a Soviet firing squad along with the “traitorous” Poles. However, the last-minute intervention of a Jewish colleague in the services of the NKVD saved “poor” Stolnicki. Ibid., 168–69.

In *Nowogródek*, “most” of the members of the militia that had formed spontaneously were Jews, who allegedly “belonged to the secret Communist Party.”⁸⁴⁶ Arrests of Polish officials and officers ensued,⁸⁴⁷ as did “neighbourly” robberies of Poles.⁸⁴⁸ Denunciations were also a frequent occurrence, and targeted Jews as well as Poles. According to the daughter of one of the town’s well-to-do Jewish families,

Most prominent families in town were shipped off at night and not heard from again. Somebody “snitched” about Papa’s Zionism and the NKVD called him in. I don’t know how he bought his freedom but, for the moment, we were left alone.⁸⁴⁹

Curiously, this didn’t cause her to turn against or shun the denouncers from among the Jewish community. When, after the German entry in June 1941, a Polish friend

had found many documents in the offices of the former NKVD—among them a list of informers ... The list of informers which Eddie showed me had, to my horror, many names I knew. There were many Jewish names, of course, and also the husband of our beautician. I let all the people listed know and advised them to hide or leave town. I begged Eddie and pleaded ... to give me the list so we could destroy it once and for all.

I warned him that, as a Pole, he would be next in line for persecution after the Jews. ... If he weren’t killed by the surviving Jews, he would be treated as a traitor by his own.⁸⁵⁰

They ended up burning the list. Among the Jews who had cooperated with the Soviet authorities by denouncing rich Jews in Nowogródek was Arkie Lubczanski.⁸⁵¹

A shopkeeper in *Lida* named Gad Zandman “had hidden some of his merchandise, including expensive fabrics, behind a double wall in his nationalized shop; someone informed on him, and he was sentenced to ten years in prison and expelled.”⁸⁵² A militiaman who had observed that a certain Jew had several nice suits which he coveted, informed the NKVD that this person was against the Soviet rule and exposed his plans to escape to Lithuania. “When my uncle [Shlomo] went to collect his belongings, he was nabbed and sent to a Siberian labor camp.”⁸⁵³

In *Pohost Zahorodny* (or *Pohost Zahorodzki*) in Polesia,

Zionist activities, along with other political and public agencies, were banned. Prominent activists were interned or exiled. David Bobrow, my oldest brother, was arrested for being a Revisionist leader. ...

⁸⁴⁶ Kagan and Cohen, *Surviving the Holocaust with the Russian Jewish Partisans*, 135–36.

⁸⁴⁷ Kagan and Cohen, *Surviving the Holocaust with the Russian Jewish Partisans*, 34.

⁸⁴⁸ Andrzej Suchcitz, “Żydzi wobec upadku Rzeczypospolitej w relacjach polskich z Kresów Wschodnich 1939–1941,” in Jasiewicz, *Świat niepożegnany*, 261.

⁸⁴⁹ Sulia Wolozhinski Rubin, *Against the Tide: The Story of an Unknown Partisan* (Jerusalem: Posner & Sons, 1980), 55.

⁸⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 69.

⁸⁵¹ Nechama Tec, *Defiance: The Bielski Partisans* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 112.

⁸⁵² Spector, *Lost Jewish Worlds*, 233.

⁸⁵³ Shalom Yoran, *The Defiant: A True Story* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1996), 38.

... he'd risen to a high position under the Soviets. Someone got jealous and made up some lies about him. The Soviets would call it "denouncing" someone. So David ended up being put in jail by the Russians and freed by the Germans.⁸⁵⁴

Józef Zeligman, a principal of a private high school in *Białystok*, was denounced to the NKVD by Władysław Tykociński, one of his Jewish students, for having criticized the Soviet Union in a prewar article. Zeligman was arrested. His wife gathered materials critical of him published in the Polish nationalist press in the interwar period and used these to convince the regional chief of the NKVD that the damning references (criticisms of the Soviet Union) were not Zeligman's (in fact, they were).⁸⁵⁵ Understandably, Zeligman's wife came to favour the Germans over the Soviets, at least temporarily.⁸⁵⁶

Izhak Shumowitz, a successful manager of a bakery in the village of *Czerwony Bór* near Zambrów, was told that someone had informed on him to the NKVD and that he faced deportation. A friendly official was able to find out that the informer was "none other than the Jew who acted as manager of the local store. A further informer turned out to be the wagon driver who worked for this man." Billeted in his home was an officer named Boris, who turned out to be a Jew: "he was active in some secret department, where his assignment was to denounce officers who had set up gas stations in the region."⁸⁵⁷ Shumowitz also traces the fortunes of some local Jewish Communists, the Stupnick brothers from Zambrów, through the Soviet and German occupations, and then in Stalinist Poland:

One of fellow citizens who lived nearby was a shoemaker, with many close connections with the villagers in the region. He had three young nephews in Zambrov [Zambrów] who used to visit him from time to time. In the past, these men had been fervent communists, active and gifted. In the days of the Soviet regime, one of them was appointed Commissar of the Zambrov province. When the Germans arrived in Zambrov, these young men fled to their uncle in Chervony Bur [Czerwony Bór], who managed to find shelter for his nephews, each in a different place. ...

This was a very moving meeting for me, for we met with no less than the three Stupnick brothers, with whom we had started collecting arms, and dreamt of forming a group that would fight for its existence. ...

Each member of the group was armed with a gun supplied by the Stupnick brothers. ...

The Stupnicks were in the habit of going to the pigpens of the villagers, and stealing some of the animals. They had worked out their won methods of overcoming the animals and silencing them during this operation. That night, we joined them in their operations, and we returned to the bunker at Gosk's farm with a load of meat and other food supplies. ...

Our stay here [in Zambrów] was naturally of a temporary nature, our sights were set for Israel. Perhaps that is the reason why I was furious when I heard that the Stupnick brothers had returned to their communist activities. We thought of Communism and Nazism as similar evils, and even though the divide between them was great, the Soviets were in no small degree responsible for our sufferings. It was difficult to come to terms with those who try to overlook, or to forget this chapter of history.⁸⁵⁸

Israel Liechtenstein also recalled other Communist lackeys from *Zambrów* who made life unbearable for its residents:

In order to get documentation, one had to grovel at the police headquarters, yet Jewish communists working for the Russian commissars endlessly harassed and bullied those of their own minority. The communist Jews

⁸⁵⁴ Stephen Edward Paper (as told to), *Voices from the Forest: The True Story of Abram and Julia Bobrow* (Bloomington, Indiana: 1st Books, 2004), 16, 18.

⁸⁵⁵ Gustaw Kerszman, *Jak ginąć, to razem* (Montreal: Polish-Jewish Heritage Foundation, 2003), 22. After the war Tykociński rose to the rank of colonel in the Polish army and "defected" from his post as Poland's military attaché in West Berlin.

⁸⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 33.

⁸⁵⁷ Rivka and Israel Teyer, eds., *The Red Forest: As Narrated by Izhak Shumowitz* (Raanana, Israel: Docostory, 2005?), 68–71.

⁸⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 88, 169, 193, 219.

were the worst; they saw it their duty to persecute all Zionist and wealthy Jews, informing against them and damaging them as much as they could. The Jews who wanted to fulfill a communist vision believed in greatly reducing poverty, having a fervent dislike of capitalist activities such as trading. ...

We were considered a capitalist family due to our properties. I remember my father had a secret cupboard in his store where he would hide exclusive merchandise, such as expensive bed covers. ... Problems began earlier than any of us had expected, as one day, Perla—a Jewish communist student—appeared in our store; she was no better than the Russians themselves. She accused my father of smuggling expensive merchandise, and though my father explained that he only hid the merchandise in a closet to prevent theft, she did not believe him and made several accusations. My father had no choice but to pay for her silence, yet we knew that we could not go on bribing all those who were hungry for easily earned money, and soon after, my father decided to leave the store and give it up to Russian hands. ...

It was my father's hope that finding a house away from city center, less populated by Russian and Jewish communists, would reduce any attention we might draw. ...

At first we did not suffer money problems, as the hastily hidden funds were enough for me to buy food and bring it back home. I could wander freely around town, as the Russians did not know me; though I still feared the communist Jews, as some may have known my face and would have readily reported me to Russian soldiers. I dressed as the local Polish people did, so I would not arouse suspicion.⁸⁵⁹

In **Grodno**, after witnessing executions and denunciations of Poles and bullying and harassing of Polish children at school—all at the hands of local Jews—an obliging Polish family was implored by a Jewish shopkeeper to conceal her goods from the plague of local Jewish informers whom she and other Jews feared. She bemoaned the behaviour of her fellow Jews who preyed on their own people and praised the Poles for their communal solidarity in the face of the Soviet occupants.⁸⁶⁰ Another Jewish woman blamed the Jewish pro-Communist riff-raff for denouncing her husband, a small shopkeeper, who was arrested and mistreated as a result.⁸⁶¹

In **Kosów**, when the Soviets confiscated books from Jewish libraries, including holy books,

In this action, they were dutifully assisted by their Jewish comrades. Once I asked our councilman, David Bancher, why he participated in removing and destroying even non-political books in our library. His reply: "Everything in Hebrew is unworthy."⁸⁶²

In **Pińsk**,

The local fifth column helped draw up a list of the "leisure elements," which included storekeepers, furniture dealers, lawyers, merchants—hundreds and hundreds of people in all. All these Jews were expelled from the cities and sent out into the little towns or the countryside, where nobody knew them and they lived as shelterless refugees.⁸⁶³

In **Rożyszcze**,

[The Soviets] issued an order to open the shops and to trade as usual. The Soviets, themselves, buying everything they could lay their hands on and in short order emptying the stores. Many merchants then started hiding some goods because it was possible to obtain food from the peasants only in exchange for goods. Soon the police started conducting searches for hidden goods. They were aided by locals who had been communists still in the days of the Poles, ... When concealed goods were found, public trials were held and the sentence was deportation to Siberia. This sentence had a very depressing effect on the town because Siberia was synonymous with hard labour and death from cold and starvation.

⁸⁵⁹ Lauren Lior-Liechtenstein, Philippe Lior-Liechtenstein, and Sarah Gibbons, ed., *Remember Never to Forget: The Life Story of Israel Lior* (Bloomington, Indiana: Xlibris, 2010), 43, 45–47.

⁸⁶⁰ Tadeusz Bodnar, *Znad Niemna przez Sybir do II Korpusu* (Wrocław: Nortom, 1997), 84, 86, 88, 98–99.

⁸⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 112.

⁸⁶² Gertner and Gertner, *Home Is No More*, 62.

⁸⁶³ Margolin, "When the Red Army Liberated Pinsk," *Commentary*, vol. 14, no. 6 (December 1952): 524.

Among those sentenced were Yankele (Shuster) Greenboim's sons, Haim and Motel, Aharon Tepper and his brother Wolf. After great efforts on the part of Lazer Shapira, Wolf Tepper's sentence was squashed. ...

Those who in the past had been Zionists, members of Hehalutz or Betar, were disturbed from time to time. We were awakened in the middle of the night to do snow removal or other similar hard physical labour. This situation lasted for about two months until the Soviets sent people from Russia to take over the civil municipal administration and these latter removed the locals from positions of authority.⁸⁶⁴

Two Jews from *Lwów* describe their family's experiences as follows:

With both parents working, we thought that we had now become legitimate members of the "working class". Until one night ...

They came after midnight, both wearing NKVD uniforms. ... One was big, fat, blond and looked like a pig. His name was Brasilovsky. The other was small, thin, dark, and looked like a rat. His name was Bornstein. Both were arrogant and threatening, particularly when my mother dared to ask an occasional question. Of course, her questions were never answered. They came to search. They looked into all our closets and lockers, into every drawer. I do not know what they found and what they took. My parents never discussed this with me. The search lasted a couple of hours. At the end they informed my father that he was under arrest and told him to dress. Then he was led away. My mother was frightened to death and so was I. The collapse of our empire was now complete.

The next day my mother was notified that we would all be exiled to Siberia, unless we paid a "contribution" of one kilogram of gold coins to the Soviet government. The money had to be paid within 24 hours. Somehow mother made the necessary arrangements and 1 kg of US\$ 20 coins was provided on time. The next day my father was released. He returned home without a smile and never told me what happened to him during those two days. Whatever my mother knew, she kept to herself. As we later found out, the "contribution" went straight into the pockets of Brasilovsky and Bornstein. A short time later their scam of searching homes of wealthy people and extorting "contributions" was uncovered and they were arrested. During their trial my father was subpoenaed as a witness. After answering questions, he was told that the gold would be returned. 57 years later I am still waiting for the fulfillment of that promise.

... Seeing my father being led away by a pig and a rat, both in NKVD uniforms, left indelible marks on my way of thinking. It immensely influenced my philosophy of life, and to a large extent my later political allegiances. I became permanently distrustful of the Soviet Union and of everything that smelled of communism.⁸⁶⁵

September 17: In *Lwów* there was a great shock, because the war was with the Germans, but it was the Soviet army that marched into *Lwów*. From a window in our skyscraper, we watched how crowds of people greeted the Bolsheviks. ...

This was the first blow for our family, because the Bolsheviks mainly looked for factory owners, bankers, and other rich people. [In fact their first target were Polish state officials and military officers.—*Ed.*] We were at the top of the list for deportation to Siberia. We thus thought about going into hiding. We had to watch out for certain Jewish neighbors whom we knew to be Communists. ...

For a few days there was dead silence. One day my sister and I were in Hotel George, across the street from our skyscraper, because all sorts of valuables there were being packed up. When we went out of the hotel with our uncle, we saw that there were two Russian cars and a large army truck in front of our house. Uncle tried to convince us that we should wait on the street until they went away or go back to the hotel, but we insisted that we wanted to go to Mama and Papa. It turned out that the house was full of guests. There were high-ranking Russian officers, and we later found out they were Bolshevik NKVD [Soviet Secret Police]. We did not sense any fear at home; Mama was lively, and the officers were very courteous. This whole crowd was brought to us by a Communist named Ari Zusman, who came from a poor Jewish family and not so long before was still selling lemonade at the market.

Mama was delighted when we arrived. There was plenty of food and wine on the table, and Zusman behaved as if he were in his own home. We were told that we were in no danger and that although the Soviet government would take over our properties, Papa would still remain in charge. The feat lasted until late into the night. Nobody believed Zusman, and the family decided to escape, as far from *Lwów* as possible.

I remember, as if it were today, that very late at night in November 1939, the NKVD came to our house accompanied by several Jews we knew (because formerly, they had been our employees), dressed in Russian uniforms. These Jews were very aggressive. My mama was very beautiful, and as I recall from a subsequent conversation between my grandparents, two of these Jews with the NKVD wanted to rape her. An officer calmed them down.

⁸⁶⁴ Zik, *Rożyszcze*, 27–28.

⁸⁶⁵ Weissberg, *I Remember...*, 57–58.

They demanded that the documentation for the factories, hotels, movie theatres, and other property be turned over to them. ... The Russian officer told them not to touch anything. An argument ensued; the officer told them he was in charge and took out his pistol. The situation became dangerous. He put them at attention and told them to get out.

The house was filled with fear. The officer received all the documents; he even made out a receipt and said, "Now, my host, give us some vodka." ... There were three of them, and they even sent for those who had been told to get out. They ate and drank their fill, and each got several bottles of Baczewski vodka and plenty of food for the road. But these Jews who had worked for us and were now in Russian uniforms in drunken condition insisted that the NKVD officer take us this very day to prison. Once again it nearly ended in shooting. In the end, the officer telephoned military headquarters, which quickly sent some people who handcuffed those four Jews collaborating with the NKVD and took them away in their car.⁸⁶⁶

Jacob Celemenski, a Bundist activist from central Poland who took refuge in Lwów, recalled:

The first arrests among Bund activists had already been made, among them Lwow [Lwów] Bund leaders Dr Karl Ainoigler and Emanuel Szerer ... Comrade [Shoel] Gezunt, [veteran Lwów Tailors' Union chairman], advised me not to look for tailoring work at the union hall because I was known there and could be pointed out. I would do best to disappear from Lwow altogether, as it was teeming with Bolshevik informers. The advice sounded right, and I listened.

I knew Vilno [Wilno] would not be overlooked or spared for long, just as I knew that staying around Lwow, meant certain arrest. I decided to return to Krakow [Kraków].⁸⁶⁷

A Jew associated with the Korkis Technical High School, a Jewish school in Lwów, recalled:

In September [1939] school started. The Soviets had made some changes, the most obvious one was that they had sent Badian [the school's director] and his family to Siberia and had elevated Horatzky Horowitz. Apparently a Korkis staff member, nobody knew exactly who it was, had denounced Badian as a reactionary. The fact that he had been a Czarist officer sealed his fate. ...

Although the Russians changed directors, they didn't change the make-up of Korkis' students. The school had always been for Jewish students and it stayed that way, but they eliminated the Jewish part of the curriculum.⁸⁶⁸

William Tannenzapf recalled a close call with a Jewish *agent provocateur* active in his hometown of *Stanisławów* as well as other collaborators:

Once, on my way home from work, I met a man named Kerzner on the street. We had been members of the same Revisionist Zionist organization a decade earlier, but had had nothing to do with each other since then. Kerzner greeted me with great enthusiasm and seemed interested in my job. Then he asked whether I was going to join the group at a memorial service they were organizing for the recently deceased Revisionist leader Ze'ev Jabotinsky. I explained that I had given up politics a long time ago in order to concentrate on my primary interest, engineering. He responded that he was aware of my significant professional reputation and understood my position. Several months later I found out that that conversation saved my life. I didn't know at the time that Kerzner, a lawyer and Zionist, had become a Soviet *agent provocateur*. He rattled out the people who went to the memorial service and they were arrested. Later, when the Soviets retreated before the advancing Germans, they were executed. Feuer, a boy I had known well for a long time, miraculously escaped the murder and told me that when he and the other arrested participants had been taken to court, Kerzner was the star witness for the prosecution.

May Day was the big holiday for the Soviets, and on that day in 1941 the Soviet general manager of the power station awarded bonuses to top performers. Even though I was considered a star performer, I got nothing. I was called into the office of the general manager who was a Communist Party member. He told me

⁸⁶⁶ Account of Edmund Rudolf de Pellier in Jakub Gutenbaum and Agnieszka Latała, *The Last Eyewitnesses: Children of the Holocaust Speak*, vol. 2 (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 2005), 159–61.

⁸⁶⁷ Jacob Celemenski, *Elegy For My People: Memoirs of an Underground Courier of the Jewish Labor Bund in Nazi-Occupied Poland 1939–45* (Melbourne: The Jacob Celemenski Memorial Trust, 2000), 6–7.

⁸⁶⁸ William Ungar with David Chanoff, *Destined to Live* (Lanham, Maryland, New York, Oxford: University Press of America, 2000), 135.

he couldn't give me a bonus because a co-worker had informed him that I had been a Zionist before the war. ... The name of the co-worker, he told me, was my long-time school buddy, Brenner.

... Among the refugees who arrived in Stanisławów were [my wife] Charlotte's brother, Jacek ... Jacek, a Communist, immediately got a very good job. The others also found employment quickly. Our relations with them were fairly cool since Charlotte's brothers ... appeared not to be eager to associate with us, the former "Zionist fascists."

... Charlotte contacted her brothers who were fleeing to the east and asked them to let me join them. They agreed and then promptly reneged. ...

Surprisingly, not all local Communists had fared well during the Soviet occupation. A newspaper vendor, who had befriended me and let me peruse the latest editions for a moderate fee before the war, was a long-time Communist. As soon as the Soviets arrived, he left for the Soviet Union to enjoy his dreamland. After about six months, he came back bedraggled and told me that the Poles who jailed him for two years to cure him of communism had failed, yet the Soviets who jailed him for only two weeks had succeeded completely. Another example was my cousin, Nuchim Schapira, who had earlier replaced me with his Communist Party sole-mate at his factory. When his plant was nationalized, he removed a single barrel of vodka from the premises before leaving. The police considered this stealing (even though it was his property), and he was jailed and then exiled to Siberia.⁸⁶⁹

A Jewish teenager in *Brzeżany* discovered that, as the son of a storeowner, he was a part of the enemy capitalist class and was treated harshly by his "adversaries":

it was now the Pioneers, sons of the local Communists, against the sons of the Bourgeois. They insulted me in school and assaulted me on the playground. Getting a fist in my ribs became a daily occurrence.⁸⁷⁰

Connections often assisted those who might otherwise face deportation to avoid their fate, as a resident of *Wiszniew* explains:

So what did the Jews do? They used all their connections and resorted to cronyism to join the poor class, which was really the most privileged class under the Soviet rule. One day, a second committee came, sent by the NKVD to clean the population of all unwanted elements, meaning anti-Soviet elements. First, they deported all the Asodniks [*osadnik*, plural *osadnicy*]; they were the Polish settlers from the old veterans of Polish legionnaires who had received land from the Polish government as a reward for their service. After that came all the people who were suspected as anti-Communists; these were mostly from the village's Christian population. Their "crime" got them sent to prison and later to Siberia. A few of the Jews also suffered. Three Jews who were suspected anti-Communists (Zeev Davidson, Yishai Rubin, and Mordechai Zallak) were arrested and sent to Siberia—first them alone, and shortly after also their family members.⁸⁷¹

A similar situation prevailed in *Bereza Kartuska*, in Polesia:

Past Polish officials and landowners were expelled to Siberia. They also wanted to expel Jews that had big businesses in the past, but the Jewish communists implored them and achieved the annulment of this cruel ordinance by claiming that they now were poor and not rich people, and their debts had grown very large.⁸⁷²

While connections often proved to be very beneficial, as the following account from *Lwów* shows, they

⁸⁶⁹ William Tannenzapf and Renate Krakauer, *Memories From the Abyss/But I Had A Happy Childhood* (Toronto: Azrieli Foundation, 2009), 9–12.

⁸⁷⁰ Altman, *On the Fields of Loneliness*, 19. Altman notes that when NKVD secret policemen came for a refugee from German-occupied Poland who lived with them as a boarder, they shouted pejoratively: "Zhid! [Jew] Open up!" "Zhid! Your face wants a fist!" Ibid., 21.

⁸⁷¹ Cheina Rabinovich, "Vishnevo during the Second World War," in Abramson, *Vishneva, ke-fi she-hayetah ve-enenah od*, 107 ff.

⁸⁷² Elie Mote Bockshtein, "Kartuz Bereza 1939–1941," in Chaim Ben Israel, ed., *Kartuz-Bereza: Sefer zikaron ve-edut le-kelilah she-hushmedah* (Tel Aviv: Organization of Survivors of Kartuz-Bereza, 1993), 242 ff.; English translation *Kartuz-Bereza: Our Town Memorial Book* posted on the Internet: <<http://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/bereza93/bereza93.html>>.

could not always stave off deportation.

At one point Yunia brought us news, obtained from her husband [a tank officer in Red Army], that Soviet authorities were aware that our family had fled [to Poland] from Kamenets-Podolski [in Soviet Ukraine] in 1921. This was unsettling news. My father became concerned that we would be labeled undesirables, arrested, and sent to Siberia.

My father asked [his sister] Yunia for help. She spoke to her husband, and he somehow arranged for us to stay in Lvov. My parents were greatly relieved. They thought that deportation into deep Russia was the worst thing that could happen to us. They never imagined that deportation could have been our family's salvation.⁸⁷³

Ultimately, relatively few native Jewish residents of Eastern Poland suffered expulsion to the Gulag. As noted earlier, most of the Jewish deportees were refugees from the German zone. Moreover, few Poles had the resources or connections to escape their fate.

In *Brańsk* near Bielsk Podlaski, where Jews came out in throngs to welcome the Soviet invaders, attitudes changed overnight. A Pole who greeted a former Jewish classmate on the street got a blunt response in Russian: "Kiss my ass."⁸⁷⁴ Many local Jews entered the Red militia and most of the official positions were handed over to Jews and to some people brought in from the Soviet Union.⁸⁷⁵ Initially, Poles were targeted for arrest and deportation. Later on, some Jews also faced similar treatment, instigated by fellow Jews who collaborated with the Soviet regime.

... the communist-leaning Jewish poor and youth were in their element. They eagerly joined in implementing the new order. Alter Trus, a Jewish chronicler, described a great many abuses committed by Jewish communists on fellow Jews. Jews also took up responsible positions in the town administration closed to Poles. Half of the Red militia was composed of communists who had come from the East; the other half were local Jews. ... The attitude of the majority of Jews toward the Poles worsened considerably, and the Poles viewed very critically the close cooperation of the Jews with the Soviets.⁸⁷⁶

Almost all managerial positions in the city were staffed by local Jews or newly arrived Byelorussians and Russians. At the end of October and in November 1939, a wide-scale campaign of nationalization and collectivization of private, state, and cooperative property was conducted. One of the local Jews, Alter Trus, wrote a description of those events: "A new privileged class emerged. Store owners were regarded as the bourgeoisie that had to be destroyed. Welwl Pulszański [Velvl Pulshansky], Benie [and] Fajwel Szustels [Shuster], Ryfcie Pytlak, all old communists, become [the] most important persons in the city. They were joined by Szepsel Preiser [Praisels] and Chaje Man [Chaim Mann]. They occupied themselves with nationalizing [expropriating] Brańsk's bourgeoisie." Examples of abuses committed during the execution of official duties by overzealous and not too honest officials, mainly of Jewish and Byelorussian origin, are provided by Trus. The actions of these persons were characterized by duplicity. Hiding behind their lofty goals and the broader social good, "they [took] goods from stores, [looked] for money and for valuables which they [stuffed] into their pockets. This is their payment for nationalization. A souvenir has to remain. They [hid] the better goods among their acquaintances in order to sell them later. This is what Welwl Pulszański and his wife were doing in the stores belonging to Elko Gotlib and the son of Lejzer Rubin. Szepsel Preiser and Chaje Man were doing the same in Motl Konopiaty's shop. Konopiaty [Kanapyate] protested that he was not subject to nationalization. When the case was cleared and the goods had to be returned, it turned out that they had vanished. Whoever was on good terms with Szepsel Preiser and

⁸⁷³ Lala Fishman and Steven Weingartner, *Lala's Story: A Memoir of the Holocaust* (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1997), 110.

⁸⁷⁴ Piotr Szczepański (Zbigniew Romaniuk), "Pogromy, mordy i pogromiki," *Kurier Poranny* (Białystok, Wydanie AB), April 12, 1996.

⁸⁷⁵ Zbigniew Romaniuk, "Twenty-One Months of Soviet Rule in Brańsk," in *The Story of Two Shtetls, Brańsk and Ejszyski: An Overview of Polish-Jewish Relations in Northeastern Poland during World War II* (Toronto and Chicago: The Polish Educational Foundation in North America, 1998), Part One, 54–56.

⁸⁷⁶ "Confessions of Zbigniew Romaniuk," an interview conducted by Wojciech A. Wierzewski, in *The Story of Two Shtetls*, Part One, 25–26.

Pulszański had nothing to worry about.” These examples are good illustrations of how the principles of the new political system were introduced.⁸⁷⁷

The new official apparatus treated all Poles as potential enemies. They endeavored to sovietize people susceptible to communist ideas and to liquidate patriots. This situation had a very strong influence on shaping moods among Poles and among that part of the Jewish population which did not collaborate with the occupants. Propaganda posters about Soviet-German friendship provoked additional repugnance. The NKVD created a network of confidants. ... Through denunciations and anonymous letters to the NKVD and the Communist Party, some people began to settle old scores. This suited the occupants. At that time one Soviet soldier stated, not without some reason, that the biggest danger for the inhabitants of Brańsk was themselves.⁸⁷⁸

At a time when they were going to send some of the Poles to Russia [i.e., the Gulag], there come together about ten youths with rifles, throw the Christian belongings onto a wagon, and terrorize the neighbors. Hatred towards all Jews increased. They now start on all the former community activists, prominent people, Zionists, former councilmen of the Bransk community, and they are all arrested, sent with the procession of prisoners under escort to Russia. ...

Naturally, not everyone could become accustomed to the new order, to the new laws, of not being traders. People such as these were arrested. At this same time, former community activists such as Alter Trus, Yosef-Betsalel Kestin, the Kantchik family, Lyeu. All became poor. The complaint against such people was counter-revolutionary. The fault for the arrests falls directly on several Branskers who sought to get rid of the former activists of the former regime.⁸⁷⁹

The fact that there was a power shift in some towns and that local Communists were replaced by those imported from the East did not signify that the local Communists' utility was spent. In *Dawidgródek*, according to a Jewish source,

The town authority was in the hands of local Communist activists. The Soviets allowed them to run things for the first few months. About 6–7 Jewish and 3–4 Christian [Belorussian] Communist activists dominated the town during the course of those first months. These few Communist activists inscribed a sad chapter in the history of the town, on the one hand because they denounced to the NKVD (Soviet security organization) the majority of Zionist workers in town, leading to the subsequent arrest of these people. And on the other hand they incited the majority of the *Horodchukas* [i.e., Belorussians] against the entire Jewish population. ...

Gradually... the local Communist activists who had run the town until then were replaced by imported Soviet citizens. The town president, the police chief, the leaders of the various economic, cultural and social institutions were all replaced by *vastatchnikas* [Easterners]. Also, the other more-or-less responsible posts were occupied by Soviet citizens. The local Communist heretofore-town leaders were then employed in second-rank posts, and were used by the NKVD to give information about each and every inhabitant. These local Communist activists willingly took on this “honorable” mission, transforming themselves into simple informers, devising false accusations against their victims. ...

The mood of the Jews was very depressed. They understood that the NKVD used not only the local Communist activists but also other disguised local agents and informants who gave them information concerning every single town inhabitant. In reality there were those in the town, including also upstanding and elderly Jews, who worked along with the NKVD, giving them information and carrying out their assignments. ...

Thus there were among the informers people of various ages, political hues and social strata. No one knew for sure who was working with the NKVD and therefore everyone was suspected of being a possible agent.

⁸⁷⁷ Romaniuk, “Twenty-One Months of Soviet Rule in Brańsk,” in *The Story of Two Shtetls*, Part One, 55–56. This passage is based largely on “Bransk Under the Soviet Regime (According to Maishe Yentchman’s Account),” in A. [Alter] Trus and J. [Julius] Cohen, *Bransk: Sefer ha-zikaron* (New York: Bransker Relief Committee of New York, 1948), 247–48; translated as *Bransk: Book of Memories*, Internet: <<https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/Bransk/Bransk.html>>.

⁸⁷⁸ Romaniuk, “Twenty-One Months of Soviet Rule in Brańsk,” in *The Story of Two Shtetls*, Part One, 61.

⁸⁷⁹ “Bransk Under the Soviet Regime (According to Maishe Yentchman’s Account),” in Trus and Cohen, *Bransk: Sefer ha-zikaron*, 246–50, here at 248, 250; translated as *Bransk: Book of Memories*, Internet: <<https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/Bransk/Bransk.html>>.

The mutual suspicion resulted in the fear of speaking a word in front of others.⁸⁸⁰

Although this source notes that “Polish officials and colonists were removed along with their families, close friends and relatives,” no details are provided as to how the Soviets were able to swiftly identify and to carry out the arrest and deportation of that targeted minority who formed about six percent of the county’s population.

It would be a mistake, however, to conclude, as some Jewish historians maintain, that the growing ranks of Jewish Communists were either revolutionaries or hailed from the poor or socially marginal elements, and that they divorced themselves from their community and relinquished their ties and any solidarity they felt with fellow Jews. As copious cases illustrate, many of them were not committed ideologues but simply pro-Communist or pro-Soviet. Moreover, they hailed from all social strata, often shifted their political allegiance, and generally enjoyed widespread popular support in their communities. In many cases, they came from Zionist backgrounds and did not find their new allegiance to Marxist socialism to be incompatible with Zionism, and their official break with Zionist organizations did not signify a relinquishing of the love of the Jewish nation and Eretz Israel that was instilled into them in childhood.⁸⁸¹ Jewish Communists were known to promote the use of Yiddish and Hebrew in state schools, and most of the prewar Jewish principals and teachers were allowed to keep their positions, provided they accepted the educational tenets of the new regime.⁸⁸² A substantial portion of Jewish Communists circumcized their sons and had them bar mitzvaed and weddings as prescribed by religious law were commonplace.⁸⁸³ Moreover, there is ample evidence Jewish Communists often favoured and protected their own, especially in the smaller localities. Misappropriation of state property was rampant.

According to Jewish source, in **Luck**, in Volhynia,

When the Soviets entered Luck, the Jewish Communists started to collaborate with them immediately. The Folkists and Bundists also became at once great supporters of the new Soviet masters. ...

Before the war there lived in Luck an important Communist activist, Menachem Librich. He came from a wealthy home; likewise his wife Donia Blumenkranc was also the daughter of wealthy Hasidic parents. When the Soviets entered the city, Menachem Librich became the interim chairman of the gorsoviet [town council]. He was not ill-disposed toward the wealthy prewar Jews. ...

On New Year’s eve 1939–40 I was stopped by the NKVD because a Jewish policeman who worked for the Soviets, Jankl Knepl ... wanted to take my passport. I didn’t want to hand it over so in the ensuing struggle the passport was torn. I was arrested for destroying a Soviet passport. The NKVD accused me of being a counter-revolutionary and the son of a bourgeois. My brother, who was a doctor in Luck, intervened wherever he could and I was eventually released. But the real reason for my release was thanks to Gerszonowicz, the secretary of the local section of the Communist Party, who was a Jew from Kiev.⁸⁸⁴

One day, Dov Berger came to warn me [Yitzhak Zuckerman, a Zionist activist] to stop my activity and get out of Luck [Luck]. The source of the warning was one Ochs, a Communist leader in Luck and mayor of the city; he had a position in Poland after the war, too. This Ochs had a brother in He-Halutz and he asked him to warn me before they arrested me. It turns out that that Communist saved me from prison. After the war, he returned to Poland from Russia and played a central role in propaganda in Poland. ...

We still thought the Soviet regime was a liberating regime. But there were Communists who knew Jewish society and did denounce us. In the cities and towns, this was the first time in their lives they could be policemen. Moreover, there were a lot of Jewish Communists, not organized in a party, who did make

⁸⁸⁰ Yosef Lipshitz, “Years of Turbulence and Death,” in Helman, *Memorial Book of David-Horodok*, 56–59.

⁸⁸¹ Zunia Shtrom, *Hurbn un kamf (fun Kovner geto tsu di Rudnitsker velder): Zikhroynes* (Tel Aviv: Aroysgegebn fun “Farband fun partizaner, untergrunt-kemfers un geto-oyfshtendlers in Yisroel,” 1990), 64.

⁸⁸² Levin, *The Lesser of Two Evils*, 92.

⁸⁸³ Levin, *The Lesser of Two Evils*, 161–62.

⁸⁸⁴ Account of Jakub Elbirt, “Mój Łuck,” in Jasiewicz, *Europa nieprowincjonalna*, 1105–1106.

trouble. Anyone who remained loyal to Zionism or the Halutz movement had to flee from his small town to other places. Yitzhak Perlis knew someone in his town who warned him to get out. And he did.⁸⁸⁵

In *Horochów*, in Volhynia,

Although we of the younger generation were Zionists, we did not suffer under the new regime, and this fact is to the credit of the Jewish Communists in our town, who did not take revenge or inform on the rich, the merchants or the Zionists as Jewish Communists in other places had done. After some time nearly all my friends, even those whose families had been rich, received jobs. Most of us worked as teachers. The “Tarbut” Hebrew School became a government institution with Yiddish as the language of instruction. Simcha Perlmutter was the director and among the teachers were: Naomi Hevel, my relative, Yisrael Goldfarb, Herschel Bierfeld and others. I taught in the High School with Niomka Fisch, Raizel Blechmann and others. I also began to study at Lvov [Lwów] University at this period. One had to get used to new times, new people, new habits and new demands. We, as Jews, knew how to adapt ourselves to new conditions and it was not long before we settled down to our work.⁸⁸⁶

A witness from the predominantly Jewish town of *Warkowicze* near Dubno, in Volhynia, where the Red Army was also “warmly received,” recalls:

They began by harassing the “rich Jews” (merchants) and anybody known to be a Zionist, threatening them with exile to Siberia. ... Then Warkowicze’s own communist, Israel Keitel, came home from Kartus Bereza [Bereza Kartuska], a Polish jail for political prisoners, where he had been interned for years (he had naturally been released by the Russians). He intervened with the Soviet authorities on our behalf, and as a result, no Jew was sent away from Warkowicze to Siberia.

Still everyone had to register for work, and we Goldbergs were in some difficulties over how to conceal our status. ... I decided to pass myself off as a notary’s clerk. In my work at the *biuro*, I often had to go to the notary’s office in Rovno [Równe] ... and I had become very friendly with Shumski, the assistant notary. Now I contacted him, and though he was a Ukrainian, he agreed to back up my story. We went to register together.

In the forms that we were given to fill out, Shumski wrote down that he was an assistant notary. I wrote down that I was a clerk for a notary. The Russian official read through our forms and then looked us over.

“Why is he an assistant and you only a clerk?” he asked me.

I thought fast. “Because the Poles are so anti-Semitic,” I replied quickly. “They would never give a high position to a Jew.”

“So,” the official said. “From now on, he will remain the assistant, and you will be the notary.”

I could hardly believe my good luck. For once, being a Jew turned out to be an advantage. ...

Shumski and I began work a day or two later in the notary office in Rovno. ... I must have done well, because after I’d been a notary for two months, a senior official arrived from Kiev and made me the *starshii notarius* (chief notary) for all of Volhynia. There were fourteen people working under me at my own office, and I was in charge of twenty-four other notaries throughout the region.⁸⁸⁷

The following accounts from the town of *Lanowce* near Krzemieniec, in Volhynia, also attest to solidarity among Jews, including Communists. But this sense of solidarity did not extend beyond their own community—to the “Other.”

The Lanowitz [Lanowce] Jews deserve praise for the fact that no betrayal occurred. Their solidarity held. I, the daughter of a “reactionary” was found fit for the job of head secretary at the Municipality. I was recommended for the job by the local party secretary who liked me. Other Jews were also chosen for key posts in the town administration. These functionaries considered the saving of Jewish residents from arrest and deportation as one of the important administrative tasks. It is worth noting that Lanowitz experienced few deportation cases. No more than 2–3 persons were denounced by Ukrainians and deported. There was no way to ransom these persons.

I was working for Yunek Farber in his egg warehouse when the Soviets marched into Lanowitz in 1939. I was considered as a “kosher” proletarian. As the Soviets reorganized the municipal administration, I was

⁸⁸⁵ Zuckerman, *A Surplus of Memory*, 22, 29.

⁸⁸⁶ Ephraim Schwartzmann, “With the Red Army from Stalingrad to Berlin,” in Kariv, ed., *Sefer Horchiv*, 69.

⁸⁸⁷ Sam and Anna Goldenberg, *Whispers in the Darkness* (New York: Shengold Publishers, 1988), 32–33.

considered “close” to the regime. The Soviet administration organized a new Police force, consisting of Ukrainians and Jews. Berchik, Hirsch-Ber and I, were selected as Police commanders. My task was to observe all that went on in our town. The task was an unpleasant one because the Soviet administration viewed the Lanowitz residents as a “suspect element”.

Fortunately, none of the propertied Jews were either arrested or deported to Siberia. This was partly the result of our efforts to prevent this from happening. While we tried to protect local Jews, we could not prevent confiscation of private property altogether. As the Soviet Politruks (managers) became established locally, they proceeded to nationalize significant private property. ...

The new administration permitted the local retailers to trade as in the past. One day, the authorities decided to raid the offices of the wholesalers and factories in Lvov [Lwów] from whom the Lanowitz retailers drew their supplies. The authorities estimated the turnover of each retailer based on the sums indicated by the deferred checks of a given retailer, discovered in their offices. The additional tax levied on each retailer was in proportion to the discovered turnover.

The main victim of this new tax was Uziel Reichman, on whom a 5,000 ruble tax was levied. He refused to pay this tax, was indicted, convicted, and given a five year prison term, to be followed by exile to Siberia. His sentencing brought forth strong communal support. Two local doctors who in the past competed with one another, and who had distanced themselves from Jewish life, Dr. Lutwack and Dr. Lutz Eisenstat, the latter the town’s senior physician, examined Reichman and certified that he is too ill to serve his sentence. As a result, he was not arrested nor deported. ... Reichman remained in his house but had to pay the tax.

The youths of Lanowitz, Zionist in their orientation, fluent in Hebrew and steeped in its literature, had to stop all their Zionist activities. They joined the Communist Youth organization to assure their political safety.

... Jews continued to pray in their synagogues. In fact, they spent many hours in public prayer ...

A few of us got married. Those about to marry would hire a Rabbi secretly, yet for political safety register their intent to wed with the city registrar. These young couples viewed civil marriage registration as a plague that cannot be avoided. Having a wedding ceremony performed by a Rabbi was still considered by our youths as their primary social obligation. ... Moshe Kerner married a teacher from Yampil [Jampol] who was a die-hard communist. The couple only registered their marriage with the local civil authorities. When their first son was born, they had him properly circumcised. Our mayor, Yizhak Shmikh, found it necessary on this occasion to dismiss the mother from the party.⁸⁸⁸

Jews often received warnings of their impending arrest or deportation from fellow Jews. A Jew from *Stryj* recalled:

Before leaving the city [in June 1941] the Soviet authorities took a parting shot at several residents who were suspected of Zionism, including ordinary residents who were perfectly innocent. They were taken out of their beds at midnight and carried away to Siberia. ... An acquaintance of mine in the N.K.V.D. [doubtless a Jew—*M.P.*] told my wife that my name was also on the list of candidates for Siberia. If I had not hidden with a Polish family I would also have been taken away.⁸⁸⁹

Both Aleksander and Maria Kahn of *Boryslaw* received separate warnings from fellow Jews of their impending arrest and fled to Lwów, taking their children with them.⁸⁹⁰ Roma Brand’s father of *Niemirów* received a tip “from local Communist that he and six other ‘rich’ men living in Niemirow were to be deported to Siberia.” He fled to Lwów where his daughter was able to get him a job through her connections.⁸⁹¹ The family of Lusja Sigall (later Ewa Tuszyńska), who had taken up residence in *Lwów*,

⁸⁸⁸ Feirel Melamed (Pnina Perle), “Remembering Lanowitz in My Wanderings,” and Arye Ginzburg (Atchi), “From Lanowitz to the Soviet Union,” in H. Rabin, ed., *Lanovits: Sefer zikaron le-kedoshei Lanovits she-nispu be-shoat ha-natsim* (Tel Aviv: Association of Former Residents of Lanowce, 1970), 104–112; translated as *Lanowce: Memorial Book of the Martyrs of Lanowce Who Perished During the Holocaust*, Internet: <<http://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/Lanovtsy/Lanovtsy.html>>.

⁸⁸⁹ Jonah Friedler, “The Death of a Community,” Chapter Three (Under Soviet Rule), in Natan Kudish, Ada Barlev, Maier Kass, Shimon Rosenberg, and Avigdor Rotfeld, eds., *Seifer Stryj [Sitri]* (Tel Aviv: Former Residents of Stryj in Israel, 1962), 40; translated as *Book of Stryj*, Internet: <<http://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/stryj2/stryj2.html>>.

⁸⁹⁰ Kałuski, *Cienie, które dzielą*, 124.

⁸⁹¹ Sandra Brand, *I Dared To Live* (New York: Shengold, 1978), 120.

received a warning from a distant relative of their impending arrest in March 1940, and relocated to Rożyszcze in Volhynia.⁸⁹²

A Jew from *Przemyśl* recalled the warning her father had received:

There was a Jewish lady who was the secretary of the Communist Party in Przemyśl. She was the daughter of a friend of my father. This lady tried to warn my father because he tried to run the *yeshiva* underground. The Russians were deporting people they considered undesirable to Siberia.⁸⁹³

Another Jew from that town described how his father's communal ties assisted him in getting a reprieve:

After about a year the Russians found out that we were wealthy, which was a crime at that time. We were sentenced to ten years in Siberia. Since my father had connections in the NKVD (later KGB), he bribed them for an extension of six months to salvage some goods that were in the warehouse.

Before our time was up, in 1941, once again the German Army attacked. This time they attacked the Russians.⁸⁹⁴

A Jewish woman from *Kolomyja* recalled the assistance she sought for a Jew who had registered to return to the German zone:

The refugees were young and middle-aged men (few with families) who had fled eastward during the first days of the German invasion of Poland. Many had tried to escape being drafted into the Polish army, and many had run to avoid the Nazi occupation. All found themselves in the Soviet zone of Poland and many remained homeless and jobless. Most were heartbroken about the fate of families left behind in the west. Believing the Soviet reassurances, they "registered" and made themselves ready for transport. As soon as I learned that Romek had registered, I convinced him to go into hiding. No sooner did he follow my pleading than a "guest" visited, asking for Romek and his whereabouts. This "guest" was an old friend of my husband's who had himself been a political prisoner. We were horrified that a person with his experience of injustice would allow himself to be used in a police role. He was embarrassed in front of us, and he left, assuring me that "all will blow over in a few days." All those who had registered were rounded up the next morning. ...

A few months later, Romek, along with many other young men, was called up for the draft. Again, I was petrified that he would end up in the Soviet army and that I would lose him. So once again I used all of the contacts my husband and I could find, and I was able to "save" him.⁸⁹⁵

A Jew who served under the chief of the militia, also a Jew, in *Stojanów* recalls:

[Chief] Kashinsky placed me in the criminology department, as an interpreter, questioning people and informers. Kashinsky used to tell me when they were going to search someone's property. I would then go home and tell my brothers, who would then run to warn the people. This went on for over two months. Kashinsky knew I was doing this. He didn't want to hurt people, but he was forced [sic] to conduct these searches. I was able to warn one [Jewish] man who had a lot of hardware hidden because he had been in the hardware business; and I warned another [Jewish] man who had stashed away shoes from his shoe

⁸⁹² Ewa Turzyńska, *Sądzonym mi było żyć...* (Warsaw: Żydowski Instytut Historyczny im. Emanuela Ringelbluma, 2009), 70–71.

⁸⁹³ Account of Juda Nissanov (Jehuda Sprung) in Hartman and Krochmal, *I Remember Every Day...*, 28.

⁸⁹⁴ Account of Janek (Jacek) Zimmermann in Hartman and Krochmal, *I Remember Every Day...*, 34.

⁸⁹⁵ Blanca Rosenberg, *To Tell at Last: Survival under False Identity, 1941–45* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 73–74.

business.⁸⁹⁶

But this “interpreter” with a heart of gold was no slouch. He was soon sent to the criminology school in Lwów and, in his words, “I was the first member of *Komsomol* from the eastern part of occupied Poland. I became a real Communist.” His father became the agricultural inspector and head of a cooperative.

I was really a big shot. When I left the criminology school, I was already a full lieutenant. ... I was in charge of spies working on both sides of the border. I must have done a tremendous job because I was advanced so quickly.⁸⁹⁷

Margit Raab Kalina, who fled from Karvina, in Czech Silesia, to **Lwów**, recalled her family’s “lucky break” when the NKVD came searching for refugees from central Poland:

Mostly during the night, NKVD men in white uniforms, looking like ghosts, search the houses for refugees. It is night, we are all dressed, waiting. Poldi [Weitzner, her cousin—*M.P.*] is with us. Two NKVD ghosts enter and want to take us. Poldi shows them his Komsomol identification card. They start to talk. It turns out that both men are Jewish. They give us a *Bumazhka*, a permit to remain in Lwów.⁸⁹⁸

Occasionally, Poles were the recipients of inside information about their impending arrest or deportation. Near the end of January 1940, Tadeusz Frasunkiewicz’s mother was told in confidence that their family was on a list of people from *Nieśwież* earmarked for deportation. The warning came from the son of their neighbour, Charlap, a Jewish merchant whose sons had joined the ranks of the NKVD. The Frasunkiewicz heeded the warning and fled to the German zone, as did the family of Jan Wilk, who received a similar warning from their landlord, a Jewish tailor named Szkolnik. Szkolnik had learned of their impending deportation from his son, a Communist who had fled to the Soviet Union before the war and returned to Nieśwież with the Red Army.⁸⁹⁹

Among the committed Jewish Communists, especially those who had fled to the Soviet zone in September 1939, denunciations became a way of life. Józef Światło (Izak Fleischfarb), a postwar colonel of the notorious Tenth Department in the Ministry of Public Security who defected to the United States in 1953, provided the following damning testimony about the activities of his fellow Jewish communists in **Lwów**:

[Luna or Julia Brystygier] started her career in Lwów, at the time of the entry of the Soviet army in 1939. As the former wife of Dr. Nathan Brystygier, a Zionist activist in the pre-war period, Luna had all the required contacts and connections. Immediately after the arrival of the Red Army in Lwów in 1939 Brystygier started denouncing people on such a scale that she antagonized even some Communist Party members. That was the beginning of her feud with Colonel [Józef] Rozanski [Róžański, actually Goldberg], now the director of the investigation department of the “Bezpieka” [Security] political police. At that time, Rozanski and [Jerzy] Borejsza (Rozanski’s brother) competed in denouncing people to the N.K.V.D. (now known as the K.G.B.). There was sharp rivalry between them in that area. Eager to win, Brystygier wrote to the N.K.V.D. a report

⁸⁹⁶ Testimony of Irving Zahn in Carole Garbuny Vogel, ed., *We Shall Not Forget!: Memories of the Holocaust*, Second edition (Lexington, Massachusetts: Temple Isaiah, 1995), 293. Before the war Irving Zahn had been involved with a Zionist organization and attended an agricultural college. Shortly after the Soviet entry, he was taken under the wing of Colonel Shustokopf, the grandson of an Odessa rabbi. In a separate account in that same volume, Irving Zand’s wife, Maria Fischer, described how her father, a banker from Tarnopol, and his brother, who had been arrested in December 1939 as wealthy capitalists, secured their release: a cousin of hers had made friends with some people in the NKVD and negotiated a payoff of gold, watches, and other valuables. *Ibid.*, 274.

⁸⁹⁷ Vogel, *We Shall Not Forget!*, 295. In all likelihood, Zahn merely apprehended people who crossed the German-Soviet border illegally. This traffic consisted, for the most part, of Jews.

⁸⁹⁸ Isabelle Choko, Frances Irwin, Lotti Kahana-Aufleger, Margit Raab Kalina, and Jane Lipski, *Stolen Youth: Five Women’s Survival in the Holocaust* (New York and Jerusalem: Yad Vashem and The Holocaust Survivors’ Memoirs Project, 2005), 197.

⁸⁹⁹ Accounts of Tadeusz Frasunkiewicz and Stanisława Tartanus in Petrozolin-Skowrońska, *Nieświeskie wspomnienia*, 50, 308.

accusing Rozanski of being a member of a Zionist family. It was true that his father, Dr. Goldberg, was before the war editor of the Zionist newspaper "Haynt." Rozanski knew about that report and I recall him complaining: "Just think, comrade, that ... squealed on me! But comrade Luna forgets that I have had a longer career in the N.K.V.D. than she." ...

After the entry of the Red Army in Lwow Brystygier conducted her activity as an informer by organizing the so-called Committee for Political Prisoners. That committee was instrumental in helping the N.K.V.D. to capture party deviants and that was how Brystygier finished off some of the comrades. She has now a very strong position at the "Bezpieka" headquarters.⁹⁰⁰

Betrayals of fellow Communists became the order of the day. A writer by the name of Stanisław Sulikowski (Zalcman), who worked for the Communist newspaper *Czerwony Sztandar* in Lwów, was turned in by his fellow journalists.⁹⁰¹ Baruch Cukier, the assistant editor of that paper, who then went by the name of Witold Kolski, railed against the leftist literary intellectuals who had been arrested in Lwów as being thoroughly imbued with "Polish nationalism."⁹⁰²

Similar conditions obtained in *Białystok* where

Finger-pointing began to proliferate, sometimes behind closed doors, sometimes in public. In a literary gathering in Białystok ... one of the Warsaw writers began to gesture in the direction of several of his Polish colleagues, saying: "This one's a Zionist," "This one's a Bundist," and so forth. ... Refugee writers ... joked about colleagues from Warsaw and Lodz [Łódź] who had rushed to "paint themselves red" and churn out enthusiastic reportage and features in the local newspaper, "as if their forefathers had been Communists from time immemorial."⁹⁰³

Some Jewish Communists had checkered careers with interludes with the Gestapo under the German occupation. Izydor Reisler, who under the assumed name of Jerzy Sawicki was an influential figure on the Lawyers' Council in Soviet Lwów and persecuted its Polish members, turned agent for the Gestapo in the Lwów ghetto. This did not prevent him from rising to the position of prosecutor at the Supreme National Tribunal and Supreme Court in Stalinist Poland.⁹⁰⁴ Another example of a Jew who served many masters was described by Stanisław Taubenschlag, a scion of a prominent Jewish family from Kraków and son of Professor Rafał Taubenschlag, dean of the Jagellonian University. Stanisław Taubenschlag was pursued by Danek Redlich, the son of a Jewish official in Kraków, who denounced him to the Gestapo while on a mission for the Polish underground in Warsaw. Taubenschlag managed to extricate himself and survived this trap, but his pursuer was now a wanted man.

The news of my tribulations in Warsaw quickly spread in the circles of young people. The hunt was now on for Danek Redlich who, it transpired, had been in the employ of the Bolsheviks in Lvov [Lwów] and had betrayed several people there. When Lvov was occupied by the Germans, this professional agent, entered the

⁹⁰⁰ Stefan Korbonski, *The Jews and the Poles in World War II* (New York: Hippocrene, 1989), 75–76. This is based on Zbigniew Błażyński, *Mówi Józef Światło: Za kulisami bezpieki i partii 1940–1955*, Third revised edition (London: Polska Fundacja Kulturalna, 1986), 64–65.

⁹⁰¹ Grubiński, *Miedzy młotem a sierpem*, 166–67. According to a Polish co-prisoner of his in the Zamarstynowska Street prison, Zalcman remained an ardent defender of Communism in prison and expressed the opinion that his punishment was just. He was apparently executed. See Stanisław Skrzypek, *Rosja jaką widziałem: Wspomnienia z lat 1939–1942* (Newtown, Mid-Wales: Montgomeryshire Printing Co., 1949), 39–40.

⁹⁰² Gontarczyk, *Polska Partia Robotnicza*, 164–65.

⁹⁰³ Levin, *The Lesser of Two Evils*, 130.

⁹⁰⁴ *Słownik biograficzny działaczy polskiego ruchu robotniczego*, Second revised and expanded edition (Warsaw: Książka i Wiedza, 1993), vol. 3 (Sawicki Jerzy); Błażyński, *Mówi Józef Światło*, 228.

service of the Gestapo. After the war he worked in the security service (UB). In the 1950s he went to Venezuela where he met his death in a car accident in Caracas.⁹⁰⁵

But above all, it was ordinary Jews who swelled the ranks of the regime's offices and organs of oppression and whose commitment ensured the success of its policies in the field. While there is a marked tendency in Western writing to advance the view that Jews who took part in such activities were estranged from and even ostracized by their community, the biographies gathered in this book amply belie that contention. Michael (Moishe Mordechai) Goldberg, who was born in *Pińsk*, Polesia, in 1916, presents a story that is not at all untypical. Like most Jews, he was raised in a household that was religious, conservative, and intensely nationalistic, was brought up in a community that fostered those values, and attended religious schools that molded the young generation in those traditions. These became lasting values that Goldberg, despite his many transformations, never forsook.

I soon began to attend school. The schools at that time were styled in the form of a cheder, (a Hebrew school), but with a more modern system which taught the Polish language and mathematics. However, the main emphasis of our education was based on Jewish religious and nationalistic ideals which planted in our young minds the roots of Jewish heritage. I thus completed five years of private studies. As a result of the influence of my religious school teachers, I became very religious during that span of time. I remember that I used to go to pray three times a day in the neighborhood shul. ... My father [who ran a successful tailor shop], on the other hand, was far from the religious persuasion. He was, from his earliest years, very active in the Marxist-Zionist party. ...

At the age of 17, I met a girl my age. ... She became a great influence on my thinking and she brought me into the Halutz Youth organization. This was a Zionist organization which believed in the creation of a Jewish homeland. I became very active in this organization whose ideals I saw as the only solution to the problems of my people. ...

During this time, I met a new friend, Rosenberg, who was to play a large role in my future. He was one of the leaders of the illegal Marxist youth organization in Poland. He brought me into the dream of a society which would solve all the international economic and social problems. I was carried away with this dream—that only a socialist revolution would solve the Jewish problem as it would solve all the other societal problems. I felt I had to join a movement which could improve our life in all aspects. I gave up the dream of leaving Poland as an impossible dream. ...

This was the year [i.e., 1937] I was to be called to serve in the Polish army, a situation which created problems for my father. First of all, he had become dependent upon me, and second of all, being a smart man, my father predicted the oncoming war. He decided to do everything in his power to see that I avoid serving time in the army. He went to a special complex to lose weight and arrived at the stage in which he was unable to do any physical work. Then he went for a government medical examination which decided that he could not support his children. I thus became the only provider for our family. I realized later what a personal sacrifice my father had to make to accomplish the task of keeping me out of the army.⁹⁰⁶

As we have seen, with the arrival of the Soviets invaders in September 1939, Polish officials were fingered by Jews in Pińsk; the workers' guard in that predominantly Jewish city executed captured Polish officers and policemen; and a Jewish mob swarmed the Catholic seminary, rounded up the priests and clerics and threatened to execute them. Oblivious to these events, Michael Goldberg embarked on his new career and became a mainstay of the new regime.

On the morning of September 17th, I saw the remaining Polish soldiers crossing the bridge over the river, leaving Pinsk on their way south, hoping to escape the Red Army. We witnessed the destruction of the bridge by the retreating Polish army. That was the end of the Polish rule of Pinsk. A few hours later, we saw the oncoming Russian troops. I remember a moment when my sister Yetta and I started to kiss each other from excitement when we saw the "liberators". [Since the Germans had never entered the town, Goldberg doubtless had in mind the town's "liberation" from the Poles.] And again my intelligent father passed a remark. "Don't celebrate, give the new rule a chance to see how it is in life." For me, personally, this looked like the final judgment, the beginning of an era of justice for all. ...

⁹⁰⁵ Stanisław Taubenschlag (Stanley Townsend), *To Be A Jew in Occupied Poland: Cracow, Auschwitz, Buchenwald* (Oświęcim: Frap Books, 1998), 57.

⁹⁰⁶ Michael Goldberg, *Memories of a Generation*, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, typescript, April 1988, 7–15.

Before the war, when I was active in the illegal Marxist movement, we had organized a group which was trying to educate itself and to prepare for a time when we had to really participate in leadership in a new society. Our teachers were students from Vilna [Wilno] University and leaders in the illegal movement. They taught us economic and political science from a socialist perspective, and also the Russian language. ... To establish the new rule, the Soviets needed to organize local political cadres, and people like me found themselves in demand as leaders. ...

With the establishment of the new rule, my friend, Isaac Rosenberg, who brought me into the Marxist movement, had become one of the top leaders in the regime and also sponsored my activities. When the tailor cooperative was organized, I became the manager of the cooperative. ...

Despite the political turmoil and economic hardships of the time, our family's life began to improve. I was paid a large salary and I found a job for my sister Yetta as the supply manager in the same organization. ... I advanced higher in my political career and when the central bureau of city cooperatives was created, I became the chief of propaganda. At the same time I became active in the city party committee.⁹⁰⁷

Goldberg maintains that his disenchantment with the regime started to set in in the winter of 1940, when the Soviets "began to conduct a reign of terror against the local populace." He nonetheless manoeuvred and adapted to the evolving situation, retaining his formal ties to the regime and informal ties to his community.

First, during the night, portions of the Polish population of Pinsk started to disappear and were deported to Siberia. After that, came the deportations of Jewish people who were suspected of being members of socialist and Zionist organizations under the Polish rule. ...

My father's younger brother [Moishe Goldberg] was a very rich man, one of the few Jews who was active in the former Polish ruling party. Suddenly, Soviet security police were looking for him. ... My father approached me to help hide my uncle, as he felt that I had the power to do this.

At that time, I was seriously involved with Raizel, who was living at her uncle's home in Pinsk. *She found an apartment in her uncle's neighborhood which was formerly inhabited by a deported Polish family. She encouraged me to take this apartment, which was free from the government.* ... When I moved to the apartment, my uncle came to live with me. Actually, he was hiding there and I provided all the necessities for him as he was afraid to leave the apartment. His family was meanwhile deported from Pinsk to some faraway village. This was part of the campaign to deport all of the (formerly) rich people from Pinsk. After hiding him for four months I helped my uncle escape to the town of Vilna, which had just become [part of] an independent Lithuanian republic. ...

After my uncle left my apartment, my girlfriend Raizel moved in with me. Our parents, with their beliefs, started to pressure us to get married. In October 1940, ... At the home of Raizel's aunt was gathered the entire family, with a rabbi and a chupah. Thereafter a ritual Jewish wedding was performed.

When I look back at that period of time, I can see that my personal life had improved radically. I had a high position in the political administration which paid much better than the average worker. My wife obtained a government office position. We had a nice apartment. ... But I was not satisfied with my life because I started to detect more injustice in the new regime than in the previous ones. ... Besides that, with my Jewish nationalistic outlook on life, I realized that this new regime would not bring salvation to the Jews. I found myself becoming assimilated into a society which had no place for Jewish culture. For someone who had been raised in a completely Jewish environment during the Polish rule, an environment filled with Jewish daily newspapers, magazines and other publications, and with theatrical productions which were renowned world wide, it seemed to me that there was now no future for Jewish society.

By the end of 1940, the local party administration came to the conclusion that it no longer needed the help of the local cadres. ... Administrators from the original Soviet territories started to replace the local leaders, among whom I was one. At the time I had become very friendly with a couple from Leningrad who were in the highest party positions in the city. They were Jewish ... The husband confided in me one day that he had been approached by Soviet security people who were quite interested in my background of Zionist activities under the Polish regime, and that I was in danger of being arrested. He advised me to resign from my position and to look for some less noticeable means of employment. ... I achieved my resignation by stating reasons of poor health ...

In March 1941, with the heightening of international tensions, I was suddenly called up to join the armed forces.⁹⁰⁸

Having spent the war years with the Soviet army, Goldberg—now an ardent Zionist again—decided to sever his ties with the Soviet Union and to take advantage of the possibility of "repatriating" to Poland.

⁹⁰⁷ Ibid., 18–20.

⁹⁰⁸ Ibid., 22–26.

“Repatriation” was an option that Polish citizens of Jewish nationality who once cheered the Soviet invaders could access with few obstructions. For tens of thousands of them, Poland was just a stepping stone on the way to Palestine or the West. On the other hand, the majority of patriotic ethnic Poles who opted to move to Poland from eastern territories ceded to Soviet Belorussia and Soviet Lithuania were refused permission to do so by the Soviet authorities.

I read in the Moscow official paper *Pravda* a communique about a treaty between the Soviet Union and the new Polish republic and the repatriation from the Soviet Union of former Polish citizens. This could give me a chance to free myself from the Russian army in which it appeared I might otherwise have to stay for a long time. By the same token, it would also get me out of Russia. I composed a letter requesting transfer to the Polish army because of my Polish citizenship and gave the request to my commanding officer to be forwarded to the higher authorities. ...

At the beginning of September 1945 Petya, Volodya and I got a pass for the first day of Rosh Hashanah to visit the city [of Galați, Romania]. After the Holy Days services, we went, as usual, to Leo’s home ... I met Bunya’s brother, David ... David turned out also to be part of the Bricha organization in which he played a big role. ...

We were informed by a general that we were going to be transferred to the Polish army. ... After two weeks, we were served with departure papers to Polish cities of our choice. ...

I contacted my friend Osher whom we jokingly called “Ambassador” because he served on the Polish Committee established in Ishevsk for the needs of former Polish citizens who were receiving relief aid from Western countries. ... At that time one needed special permits to travel from one city to another, and Osher could provide me with all the necessary documents for this purpose. I trusted him because he was a special kind of man whose ideals coincided with mine. Osher eventually became one of the first to arrive in Palestine. ...

During the months of December 1945 and January 1946 the Jewish population in Pinsk grew to the thousands, only to diminish thereafter when the mass exodus to Palestine by way of Poland commenced.⁹⁰⁹

For personal reasons, however, Goldberg decided to remain the Soviet Union. Although he had a “stormy relationship” with a Russian woman who had saved his life, he broke up with her several times because she insisted on marriage. In his own words, “I had made clear to her several times that I would not marry a non-Jewish woman.” Indeed, he married a Jewish woman from Pińsk and did not leave the Soviet Union until the late-1950s when a smaller “repatriation” of former Polish citizens, again largely Jews, were allowed to leave the Soviet Union. Having made a full circle, Goldberg and his family arrived in Legnica, Poland, in October 1958. They soon obtained “a nice apartment, where for the first time in our lives we had a bathroom, running water and even gas.” But he remained bitter because he “was taught by the Poles and later by the Russians to hate that land which had swallowed all my dearest people,” who were actually murdered by the German invaders. Goldberg did not waste time in going to the Israeli Embassy in Warsaw to register for immigration to Israel, but decided to join his sister in America instead. He arrived in the United States in January 1961, settled in and became active in the Zionist movement.

Throughout the Eastern Borderlands, newly arrived Jewish officials from the Soviet Union assisted in the transition to the new regime. For example, in *Wiszniew*:

Through all that time, the authorities spread their propaganda amongst the population, concentrating especially on the youth. They sent two commissars from the KOMSOMOL, both young Jewish men. One was from Smolensk, the second from Gomel. The head of the SelSoviet appointed a Jewish commissar by the name of Gutin. He was about 40 years old, the son of a rabbi from the vicinity of Moscow. He was a very clever, educated man who spoke perfect Hebrew and became very involved amongst the Jews and the culture activities. He knew much about the essence of the Jewish town. The fact that he very hastily became part of the town made it very dangerous for us because he was such a devout, uncompromising Communist.⁹¹⁰

Some Jewish memoirs paint a truly idyllic portrait of life for Jews under the Soviet regime, as does the following one from *Bielsk Podlaski*:

during that time Bielsk really came to life. Bielsk girls married high ranking Soviet state officials of Jewish origin. Joy permeated the community ... Freedom and cordiality flourished under Soviet rule. Every evening

⁹⁰⁹ Ibid., 63–90.

⁹¹⁰ Cheina Rabinovich, “Vishnevo during the Second World War,” in Abramson, *Vishneva, ke-fi she-hayetah ve-enenah od*, 107 ff.

there were shows in the cinema, performances in the theatre, concerts, dance nights, readings and lectures. Artists came from other localities. ... The first of May was celebrated in Bielsk for the first time. There was a large manifestation, meetings in which the youth and school children took part. Both young and old organized the celebration together. It was sunny in Bielsk. The people enjoyed freedom, a great freedom.⁹¹¹

⁹¹¹ Rywka Litman-Pelner, "Bielsk pod rządami Sowietów," in Haim Rabin, ed., *Księga pamięci Żydów Bielska Podlaskiego* (Bielsk Podlaski: Stowarzyszenie Museum Małej Ojczyzny w Studziwodach, 2017), 495.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Victims of Choice

While the fact that Jewish Communists *also* harmed fellow Jews may be significant for the settling internal (intra-Jewish) accounts, it is really an irrelevant or, at best, a marginal consideration in terms of Jewish relations vis-à-vis Poles. This is especially so since these same Jewish Communists, with very few exceptions, lost no time reintegrating themselves into the Jewish community once their love affair with the Soviets ceased.

Yaffa Eliach description of the fate of the Communist collaborators from the small town of Ejszyszek, populated by some 3,000 Jews, is illustrative.

there were about fifty Communists operating clandestinely in Eishyshok during this period, about forty of whom were Jewish. Many of them were highly committed political activists ...

The Communists considered the government of Poland their enemy, and made violent attacks on the Polish police. When members of Beitar assisted the Polish police on market day during the mid-1930s, the Communists sometimes fought with them, too. ...

The majority of the shtetl Communists survived the Holocaust, having either fled to the Soviet Union or been exiled there by the time the Germans arrived. In a stunning reversal, they who had once denounced Zionists, who had sought to reform what they saw as the parochial ethnicity of shtetl life so that the Jews could move beyond that stunted identity to the Communist ideal of a universal brotherhood, ended up as staunch Zionists and fierce defenders of their Jewish, shtetl roots. For them ... life in the Soviet Union proved the best antidote of all to their Communist fervor ... Taking advantage of a post-World War II repatriation act, most of them left the Soviet Union and returned to Poland, from whence they were eventually able to make their way to Canada, the United States, and Israel.⁹¹²

Moreover, when assessing Polish-Jewish relations under the German occupation, Jewish historians, for example, lend little, if any, weight to the fact that the Poles who blackmailed Jews also often targeted fellow Poles. Furthermore, there is a dearth of evidence that Jews suffered at the hands of Polish communists.

For the most part, in the Soviet zone, Poles were the victims. The persecution and mistreatment of Poles took on a number of forms from anti-Polish agitation and denunciations to arrests and plundering of their possessions. The misdeeds were committed not only by those formally in the service of the Soviet regime, but also by countless unaffiliated helpers from all walks of life and social classes.

The town of *Mościska* near Przemyśl is rather typical in this regard. A Jewish eyewitness reports:

The changes were implemented by the militia and a committee of citizens, the majority of whom were Jews. By and large they were the dregs of the shtetl, led by a few Jewish communists, who now found themselves in charge after being released from jail. The Poles were contemptuous of the Jewish rabble parading through the streets with red armbands and rifles which they hardly knew how to use, glorying in power that was all too short-lived. A couple of months after they had done the dirty work, these Jewish officials were replaced by Russians and Ukrainians.⁹¹³

⁹¹² Eliach, *There Once Was a World*, 509–512. As one oral history study recounts, “Because of the relatively high membership of Jews in the KPP [Polish Communist Party], it is hardly surprising to find a fairly large contingent of Jewish communists—roughly thirty—in Aisheshuk [Ejszyszek]—these would have been adults out of a population of under 2,000 Jews—*M.P.*” ... It was quite obvious ... that a number of Aisheshker had been communists. Even the memorial book admits this. However, not one interviewee would admit that he or she had ever had even the slightest sympathy with communism. ... The fact is that a good number of the people I interviewed *were* communists—or at least sympathizers—and escaped the destruction of Aisheshuk by fleeing into the Soviet Union or by joining the Soviet army. ... When they left the Soviet Union at the war’s end, they arrived in a United States mired in McCarthyism. In order to get entrance visas, they signed sworn affidavits that they had never been communists nor had they ever set foot in the Soviet Union. ... Some have not told their spouses, and most have not told their children of their former political allegiances.” See Ellen Livingston, *Tradition and Modernism in the Shtetl: Aisheshuk, 1919–1939. An Oral History* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1986), 51, 107–108.

⁹¹³ Mark Verstandig, *I Rest My Case* (Melbourne: Saga Press, 1995), 98–99. The author also mentions specific cases of Jews denounced by fellow Jews as “capitalists, bourgeois, exploiters” and as “Zionists.”

In *Oleszyce*, a small town near Lubaczów, when the Soviets entered on September 27, 1939,

The Jews came out into the street in droves. They threw red flowers and kissed the [Soviet] tanks. Kaufman Durio, a Jew, was the first to hang a red blanket outside his prosperous store. The barber Anhalt (who used to kiss the priest's hand) pulled out some documents attesting to his long-standing membership in the Communist Party. They congratulated one another on their good fortune. ... "The Poles are history, good riddance to Poland"—those were the Jewish slogans one heard. ...

The first days of "freedom" in Oleszyce were accompanied by plundering and robbery. Livestock and fields belonging to Polish estates were distributed, the park and palace were ruined ...

A *selrada* [village council] was formed ... consisting entirely of Jews and Ukrainians. ... Apart from the *selrada*, the authority to spy and denounce was vested in the local militia and its helpers. At first it consisted of a dozen or so people, later it was reduced to a few. They were almost all Jews. ...

There were also Bolshevik confidants in Oleszyce. The fate of the common people was in their hands. Most of the victims were entirely innocent. Among the undercover agents were apparently some Poles and in all probability some Ukrainians. However, the participation of the Jews is beyond question. The most brutal were the four Jews Kaufman, Spindel, Schneider and Schiller. ... In a short time Spindel managed to denounce one hundred people who tried to cross over the Soviet-German frontier. ... For his accomplishment he was called to Moscow where he personally received a distinction from Kalinin. ...

All of the Jewish children and many of the Ukrainian children, more than forty of them, joined the "pioneers." ... The Jewish school was moved to the chancellery of the Catholic parish ... The upper rooms of the rectory were taken over by a Jewish doctor, Józef Schneebaum. ... Unkempt, impudent Jews filled the entire rectory groaning and spitting on the stairs and walls. The patients also came during the night, knocking by mistake on the priest's door ...⁹¹⁴

In *Borysław*,

From the first days they began to organize a local citizens' militia. I knew almost all of them by sight and their names, but couldn't find a Pole among them. These police wore civilian clothes; they had red bands on their sleeves bearing Russian writing and a crest. They were armed with hunting and sporting weapons that had been seized. ... Their task was to point out to the NKVD Polish families which, according to Soviet criteria, should be counted among the exploiters, bourgeois and bloodsuckers. They also helped to carry out searches and assisted with the transport of Polish families into the interior of the Soviet Union. They compiled separate lists of those to be arrested and those to be deported.⁹¹⁵

A Jew named Wal together with his NKVD colleagues descended on the home of a teacher in order to arrest her 18-year-old son, Jerzy Kozłowski. "That's the one," Wal said, pointing to his schoolmate Jerzy. When the Germans opened up the Soviet jail located in the local commissariat, after their entry into Borysław in June 1941, Jerzy's father found his son's body there, among hundreds of others. His wife fainted as her husband carried him out. A large, public funeral was organized to commemorate the victims of Bolshevism. Later on, the Germans apprehended the parents of Wal, who had fled with the Soviets, but the Kozłowskis wanted no part of German revenge. "It's true their son is a bandit, but the parents are decent people. I would like you to release them," Mrs. Kozłowska told the Germans. They were taken aback by her magnanimity.⁹¹⁶

A Jewish Communist Party activist from Borysław took over the home from which the Polish family of Józef and Maria Jurkiewicz was expelled, after their bakery in *Złoczów* was nationalized at the beginning of 1940.⁹¹⁷

⁹¹⁴ Mroczkowski, "Wojna w Oleszycach," *Karta*, 24: 101–105. Despite his adverse experiences, Rev. Mroczkowski provided food to Jews confined in the ghetto in Lubaczów. See Urban, *Droga Krzyżowa Archidiecezji Lwowskiej w latach II wojny światowej 1939–1945*, 120.

⁹¹⁵ Alfred Jasiński, "Borysławska apokalipsa," *Karta*, no. 4 (1991): 104–105.

⁹¹⁶ Janina Ziemiańska, "Z Kresów do Nowego Jorku (2)," *Nasz Głos*, June 25, 1999.

⁹¹⁷ Piotr Szubarczyk, "Modlitwa Janki, *Nasz Dziennik*, April 7–9, 2007.

A Jew from *Horodenka* recalled, “our lands, Western Ukraine, were occupied by the Soviet army. To be honest, that pleased a lot of Jews, many of whom then believed in the famous slogans about equality and elimination of unemployment, and above all we believed that there would be no more nationalism and racial discrimination.”⁹¹⁸ Another eyewitness from Horodenka stated that “most of the local men who volunteered to work in the Soviet militia and other security related establishments” were Jewish.⁹¹⁹ He described their activities as follows:

About a hundred men stood on the sidewalks along the street through the main square. A lot of them were members of the newly formed Communist militia, still in civilian clothes but with red armbands. The militia, or properly the People’s Militia, was the name for the new policemen, the civil force of the communist state. Their job was to maintain public order and to serve the NKVD, the Soviet secret police. ...

Those in the streets welcoming the Red Army were waving their arms, cheering, throwing flowers and blowing kisses at the Soviet tanks rolloing by. Most of them were Jewish.⁹²⁰

From the moment they took over, the Communists seemed to be obsessed with meetings. All day long there were meetings in the streets, in front of important buildings (especially churches), in the workplaces, in the schools. All of them followed the same routine. People were ordered to attend them and those who simply happened to be in the vicinity were rounded up and persuaded to join the meeting. The militia and party members would take down the name of anybody trying to leave a meeting before the end.⁹²¹

One day our geography teacher Jan Jurkow did not show up for his morning lecture. ... In the middle of the night he was taken from his home by the NKVD, the Soviet secret police, assisted by the local militia ... A few days later the son of a local printer, a high school student two years older than me named Ziunek Prager, was arrested the same way. ... His parents found out that after a week in Horodenka he was transferred to a prison in Kolomyja [Kolomyja] 40 km away where he died a few months later.

More arrests followed. Eventually they became a daily occurrence. We could see no pattern in the selection of people taken from their homes in the middle of the night—lawyers, teachers, factory workers, small farmers with half an acre of land and one mangy cow or two goats, young people and 90-year-old pensioners. They were mainly Poles but with a sprinkling of Ukrainians and Jews. ...

Meanwhile the local militia was trying to outdo the NKVD in their attempts to eradicate the “counter-revolutionary element” in Horodenka. They compiled lists of people who had been active in such pre-war “revolutionary” organizations as the Red Cross, Voluntary Fire Brigade, Boy Scouts, and Sokol Gymnast Association. All of them were considered suspect and one by one they were being arrested.⁹²²

News about the departure of my uncles, aunts and cousins reached the local militia and in no time a red-haired misshapen creature with a star on his cloth cap banged at our front door. As soon as we let him in he started going from room to room looking around. He carried a rifle slung under his arm the way hunters carry their shotguns. He wasn’t used to carrying one and it kept banging against furniture and doors. His gibberish, which purported to be Russian, was a mixture of Yiddish, Polish and Ukrainian, garnished by a few Russian words. But his message was clear. We had too much free space in our house and father’s study would be requisitioned for two Soviet soldiers.⁹²³

⁹¹⁸ Testimony of Tomasz Miedzinski (Tewie Szwach), February 2004, Internet: <<http://www.centropa.org/biography/tomasz-miedzinski>>.

⁹¹⁹ Aleksander Topolski, *Without Vodka: Wartime Adventures in Russia* (Ottawa: UP Press, 1999), 81. Many of the references to Jewish behaviour were removed from the subsequent edition of this book published by McArthur & Company of Toronto in 2000.

⁹²⁰ Ibid. (1999), 20.

⁹²¹ Ibid. (1999), 23.

⁹²² Ibid. (1999), 23–25.

⁹²³ Ibid. (1999), 33.

The three [Jewish] doctors [from Kraków] were caught by the Soviets while trying to cross the border to Romania. Somehow they had contacted Kielec who lived in Stecowa. For a few dollars he agreed to show them the way to Romania and walked them to a spot from where they could see the border. ... Although they were left almost at the border, the doctors lost their bearings and ran into a Soviet patrol. Hoping for more lenient treatment by their captors, they led the patrol to Kielec's house. Kielec was arrested together with an innocent friend of his who just happened to be at his house when the patrol arrived.⁹²⁴

The prison staff [in the main prison in Czortków] who conducted the search were a forbidding looking lot. They were recent recruits from the local population. ... Our new guard, a swaggering young Jewish fellow, was the most abusive of them all, swearing at us in crude Russian.⁹²⁵

My family also tried to obtain my release by bribing NKVD officials in Czortkow. They did not know then that NKVD officials at every level of the Soviet administration were terrified of being denounced by somebody for helping imprisoned "enemies of the people". As a rule they would refuse even to meet petitioners. However, the local militiamen would hint to the naïve that they had ways and means to reach the top commissars who could drop the charges and release the prisoners "but it would cost a lot of money."

After the war my mother and my sister Maria told me that they both fell for that. For a pair of golden earrings with emeralds and a matching brooch, a local militiaman promised to arrange a meeting with the "top NKVD man".⁹²⁶

Next in line of our official visitors were the *vospitateli*, a term loosely translated as educators or counsellors. They were free men who lived outside the prison. ... This title was applied to individuals whose official job was to indoctrinate us with the proper communist ideas, ... act as monitors and watch for any signs of negative attitudes toward the Soviet system, all the while quietly organizing a network of stool-pigeons ...

All of the *vospitateli* counsellors were Jewish. As a matter of fact nearly the entire administration of the Corrective Labour Colony [in Kiev] was staffed by Jews. They also held all the better jobs where no hard physical work was needed.⁹²⁷

Filek Birnbaum, a seventeen-year-old Polish Jew from Sniatyn [Śniatyn] near my hometown of Horodenka, was in charge of our cell. ... Filek Birnbaum's dad was a wealthy merchant in Sniatyn. ...

Filek Birnbaum had been under the wing of a group of Jewish adult prisoners who were working in the bedstead assembly shop. This was a good place to work. The low norms of production in that workshop had been set in cahoots with the *normirovshchik* (official who establishes the norms), the *naryadchik* (output calculator) and the accounting office. As a result every worker there was a Stakhanovite, a title awarded to those whose output soared well beyond the norm for the job. ... Those workers who more than fulfilled their norms were not only paid extra but were given access to special stores with better food and clothing, and sometimes moved into better apartments.⁹²⁸

In the early spring of 1940 the NKVD began rounding up and deporting to Siberia or the steppes of Central Asia the "socially dangerous element" from Soviet-occupied Poland. About that time an unexpected visitor came to see my family in the middle of the night. He was the aged Mr Frischling whose son had been my father's pupil before the first world war and whose grandson Dov was in one class with me in our high school. Under the Soviets, Dov's father became the chief of the local militia unit. It was he who sent his old father, Mr Frischling, with a message that our family was on the list of people to be arrested and deported the following morning. They left Horodenka by train in the wee hours of the morning, taking with them a few suitcases and a large wicker basket full of clothes. It was kind of the Frischlings to warn them, but they

⁹²⁴ Ibid. (1999), 51.

⁹²⁵ Ibid. (1999), 69, 70–71.

⁹²⁶ Ibid. (1999), 91.

⁹²⁷ Ibid. (1999), 169.

⁹²⁸ Ibid. (1999), 174–75.

rewarded themselves promptly for that good deed. No sooner had my family left Horodenka than the Frischlings and their friends helped themselves to everything they fancied in our house.⁹²⁹

A young Polish woman who fell into the hands of the NKVD when caught trying to cross the border over to Hungary recounts a similar experience including betrayal and a brutal interrogation with racial overtones.

Becoming suddenly affable, [Kindrachuk, the Ukrainian militiaman] said, “I will see you across the border safely if you will pay me one hundred zlotys (approximately twenty dollars, U.S.)” ... Kindrachuk confided that he would have to take us to the local militia who has spotted us. ... The peasant driver cracked his whip, and the horses trotted on to Delatyn. ... The peasant stopped in front of a small, dimly lit building. ... A few minutes later, he escorted us to the office.

I stopped in astonishment. There at the desk, sat David Glucksman, from my home town [Warsaw]. I had known him when we were students together. A large picture of Stalin with dark frame was behind him. Glucksman was as surprised as I was. ... All I could think to say was, “I had no idea you were a Communist.”

Glucksman glanced sharply at Kindrachuk, then looking at me steadily, he said, “I ... ah ... well ... it so happened the job was offered, and here I am.”⁹³⁰

[In the jail in Nadwórna, after being double-crossed by Kindrachuk]: Here, too, were a few Jewish people, which was a surprise because so many of them served the Communist cause. However, there were also some Jews here who apparently opposed the collectivization and were arrested along with the rest of us. Some warned us that this jail was known for brutal treatment ...

Then the story of Rosa was told. “Rosa was a communist,” another of the women told me. “Her father is a rabbi. She worked for the NKVD here in Nadwórna, and was unexpectedly arrested late one night by the very people she worked for. She was charged with being an enemy of the people.

“The only clue we have to what it was about is that her boyfriend was arrested first. We don’t know what he might have said. Then, her father—who had tried to intervene—was also arrested. They charged him, too, with being an ‘enemy of the people.’”⁹³¹

The big truck I was led into was tightly packed with fifty men and women. All were dirty from their long prison stay, yet were very intelligent, able people. There were teachers, farmers, foresters, doctors, and even a mayor among them. ...

After an hour drive, I saw that the road, visible above the rear half doors, looked familiar. It was the road into Stanislawow [Stanisławów]. Soon the familiar city streets appeared. The truck rounded a corner and entered a large backyard of what was once a school building. Drawn up around it was a large contingent of NKVD and local militia. The militia were carrying recognizable Polish rifles—stolen from the hands of our disarmed Polish soldiers, as I had seen before. This group seemed to be composed of half Jews and half Ukrainians. Despite their local origin, the two groups were working together. This fact struck me as a curious combination because I had always thought the two hated each other. Their hate seemed now to be directed against us, and with their pointed bayonets, they charged up to us with cold fury and roughly ordered us into the basement of the building.⁹³²

[During interrogations at the prison in Kiev in the spring of 1940]: An NKVD lieutenant sat at the table. He gestured for me to sit down opposite him ... He wore a crew cut and appeared to be about thirty-five years old. ... He knew some Polish. ...

“You were illegally crossing the Hungarian border.” ...

“If you refuse to give the truth,” he said, “You will get a much longer sentence.” He blew a stream of smoke from his cigarette, pushed the papers toward me, extended the pen, and said, “Sign.” ...

Again and again, he would start the interrogation over, repeating himself step by step. ...

With two or three hours of sleep, we kept going like this for almost a month, never knowing which would be one’s fateful night. ...

⁹²⁹ Ibid. (1999), 200–201.

⁹³⁰ Pomykalski, *The Horror Trains*, 112–13.

⁹³¹ Ibid., 132–35.

⁹³² Ibid., 134–35.

I was told again, “You Poles are against our best friends, the Germans. We the Soviets, have an alliance with Hitler. Being against the Nazi-communist alliance is counter-revolutionary,” he barked. ...

Some hours later, he leaned back in his chair and told me he was a Jew. Then he burst into laughter, saying, “Well now ... answer me—would a Polish girl be allowed to date a Jewish boy in Poland?”

Good God, I thought, another guilt was poured on me. But I was told about these questions in my cell. These questions were often aimed at Poles because they were Poles, and sometimes even misdirected at the Polish Jews, too.

I forced a smile, and then as mother used to do, I answered the question with a question, “Yes, but how about the good Jewish mother who always wants her son to marry a nice Jewish girl?”

He reddened. Moments later, he began scribbling furiously and was silent. The writing went on and on. ... once more I found myself asking a question. I asked whether the churches here stay open or closed.

“The synagogues, yes. The churches, no,” he said. He told me that the churches were turned into cinemas or horse stables and named Odessa’s Cathedral which was first closed and then leveled by dynamite.⁹³³

One young observer from **Luck**, in Volhynia, noted:

Among those arrested were Ruthenians [Ukrainians] and Jews and both of these minorities started changing their, at first very warm-hearted, attitude toward the actions of the Bolshevik authorities. After several Communist Jews and Ruthenian nationalists were arrested, the more reasonable ones began to turn away from the Reds. The Jewish intelligentsia led by the rabbi evidently drew up a list of Jews involved in the actions of the red authorities. Nevertheless the attitude of both these minorities toward the Poles continued to be very unfriendly and annoyances were the order of the day. This hatred manifested itself particularly during elections to the “supreme soviet,” when the Communists (mostly Jews) marked the Poles who dodged the balloting, they brought the urns to the beds of sick people, and also “accompanied” people to the polling place.⁹³⁴

Elsewhere in Volhynia, a Pole recalls with some bitterness:

The Ukrainians in the rural areas and the Jews from the urban areas were recruited into Soviet intelligence.

The Polish Jews, who, in general, had been better off than the Polish gentiles, showed their “gratitude” to the Poles. I am not an anti-Semite, but I cannot overlook the fact that the Jews, who had been welcome in Poland for several centuries (since at least the days of King Kazimierz Wielki [the Great]), enthusiastically supported the occupying powers. By collaborating with the Russian Communists, the Jews themselves sowed the seeds of anti-Semitic feelings among the Polish population of the Polish Eastern Borderlands. The Jews had no idea what the Germans were planning for them. Despite the conduct of many Polish Jews, a large bloc of Polish gentiles later risked their lives to assist the Jews during the later German occupation of Wołyń—Volhynia] and the ensuing Holocaust.⁹³⁵

The Polish chief of police, Eugeniusz Kowalski, was told by the Soviet invaders to continue in his post in **Tuczyn**, Volhynia. Within a week, however, the NKVD, accompanied by two Jews wearing red armbands, arrived at his home during the night to take him away. Similar scenes were enacted throughout Volhynia.⁹³⁶

In **Kowel**, a Polish doctor was denounced by a Soviet Jew, a doctor from Kiev, in October 1939, and deported to Karaganda. The Pole’s home was taken over by this Jew and later on his wife and four children were also deported to Siberia.⁹³⁷

A cruel fate awaited a Polish woman by the name of Marusia, who, dodging machine-gun fire, miraculously managed to escape from Soviet Ukraine in 1932 at the height of the artificial famine that had consumed her immediate family and millions of other kulaks. She settled in **Dubno** where she rebuilt her life as a factory worker, only to be betrayed to the NKVD in October 1939 by a Jewish co-worker, a

⁹³³ Ibid., 205–210.

⁹³⁴ Account of Witold T. in Grudzińska-Gross and Gross, *War Through Children’s Eyes*, 195–96.

⁹³⁵ Filip Ożarowski, *Wołyn Aflame* (Chicago: Wici, 1997), 20.

⁹³⁶ Account of Włodzimierz Lubiński, quoted in Nowak, *Przemilczane zbrodnie*, 72–73.

⁹³⁷ (Name withheld), “Kto czerpie korzyści,” letter, *Rzeczpospolita*, May 23, 2000.

professionial denouncer, who reported her as an escapee from the USSR. Marusia was imprisoned and disappeared in May 1940.⁹³⁸

Anti-Semitism could also be readily invoked as a pretext to strike at Poles. In *Huta Stepańska* near Kostopol, a farmer by the name of Henryk Sawicki was denounced as an “anti-Semite” and promptly arrested. His “anti-Semitism” stemmed from the competition that his bakery generated in the town of Stepań, where hitherto Jewish bakeries enjoyed a monopoly.⁹³⁹

In a small town near *Pińsk*, a Jewish woman with a red armband appeared on the doorstep of the home of a postmaster and denounced him to the NKVD as a Polish government employee. He was arrested and deported, never to be seen again. The Jewish woman had been poor before the war and, out of compassion, the postmaster’s wife would often leave milk or bread when passing by her house. When the postmaster’s wife asked her Jewish neighbour why she did this after all the help she had received, the woman answered: “Well, maybe someday I’ll bring milk for your children.” In due course, as the family of a deported Polish government employee, the postmaster’s wife and daughter were also exiled.⁹⁴⁰

A Jewish woman by the name of Weizingrin, who lived at number 10 św. Kinga Street in *Lwów*, made it her business to get as much information as possible regarding the whereabouts of the two sons of an elderly Polish woman by the name of Janowska, a fellow tenant. One of the sons had been a policeman in Przemyśl; the other a high-ranking member of the scouting organization. Unable to learn anything, Weizingrin started to harass the Poles who lived in her building. She would scream on the staircase, “*Nu*, your whore, Poland, lies in a grave again for a hundred years.”⁹⁴¹

One Pole recalled how, on October 2, 1939, two Jewish school colleagues from Tarnopol chased after him in Kościuszko Park in Lwów, screaming to the Red militia: “Polish fascist! Catch that fascist!” One of these Jews, Fritz Wechsler, joined the Soviet militia, while the other, Józef Ostersetzer, later became a policeman in the Tarnopol ghetto.⁹⁴² Fortunately, this Pole managed to escape from the clutches of his foes.

Tadeusz Niewolański, a sergeant in the Polish army, was less fortunate. After returning from war to Lwów he laid low in his home. When he ventured out on All Souls’ Day, November 2, 1939, to visit the grave of his sister in the Janów cemetery, he was recognized by local Jews whom he knew. They immediately called NKVD soldiers who chased after and captured him in the street. Niewolański was imprisoned in the Brygidki prison where he was most likely murdered.⁹⁴³

A team from the nationalization committee came to close down Edward Zimny’s bookshop on Batory Street in October 1939. After reading out a brief order they demanded the keys to the premises and told the

⁹³⁸ “A Gulag and Holocaust Memoir of Janina Sulkowska-Gladun,” in Gladun, *Poland’s Holocaust: A Family Chronicle of Soviet and Nazi Terror*.

⁹³⁹ Piotrowski, *Krwawe żniwa za Styrem, Horyniem i Sluczą*, 38.

⁹⁴⁰ This account was provided to John Radziłowski, an acquaintance of the Polish woman in question, and related to the author.

⁹⁴¹ Account of Zbigniew Schultz, as quoted in Nowak, *Przemilczane zbrodnie*, 86.

The allusion to the late 18th century partition of Poland would be painfully evident to every Pole; it had just been repeated by Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union.

⁹⁴² Czesław E. Blicharski, “Ja wiem, co to jest faszyzm,” letter, *Gazeta Polska* (Warsaw), April 6, 1995, and his memoirs, *Tarnopolanina żywot niepokorny* (Biskupice: n.p., 1996), 83. Another Pole from Lwów who had a run-in with Jewish denouncers and Jews in the service of the NKVD coming to arrest Poles was J. R. Stan, letter, *Gazeta* (Toronto), June 13, 1995.

⁹⁴³ Musiał, “Stosunki polsko-żydowskie na Kresach Wschodnich R.P. pod okupacją sowiecką (1939–1941),” *Biuletyn Kwartalny Radomskiego Towarzystwa Naukowego*, vol. 34, no. 1 (1999): 123.

proprietors to leave. To instil fear one of the team members, a Polish Jew, kept reaching into his back pocket where he carried a revolver.⁹⁴⁴

The following incident that occurred in Lwów illustrates how easy it was to denounce Poles based on false accusations in rather ordinary circumstances. A Jewish refugee from Warsaw

was walking down the street with his brother-in-law, a Pole, taking about family matters. In the course of the conversation they used the words “Warsaw,” “Jews,” “Russians,” “Germans,” etc. Suddenly, a Jew who had been walking behind them addressed them and asked them with anger what they were doing here if they were dissatisfied with the “Jewish-Soviet” regime. He then called over a militiaman and charged that the heroes of the story were counter-revolutionaries who were spreading hatred among nationalities. St. Amt. calmly explained to the militiaman that he himself was a Jew, and that the person next to him was his brother-in-law. He proceeded to show his passport. The militiaman accepted St. Amt.’s explanation and dismissed the charges against them.⁹⁴⁵

Had these passers-by both been ethnic Poles, it could have ended very badly for them. They could have been charged and imprisoned for inciting hatred. Needless to say, it would have been unthinkable for the reverse situation, where a Pole complained about derogatory statements made by a Jew, to have resulted in any problem for that Jew.

On October 20, 1939, Iusimov, the Soviet commissar appointed to oversee the Lwów Polytechnic University, convoked a meeting for the purpose of liquidating the prewar students’ corporation whose leadership was accused of abuses against the working class. The meeting was attended mostly by Jewish students and chaired by a Russian Jew. When Jewish Communists got up to speak they railed against activists of “anti-Semitic” organizations present in their midst and fingered several Polish students in the audience. In an atmosphere reminiscent of rallies in Nazi Germany, these students were seized from their places and forced to recant in front of the audience, all along they were punched and kicked. They were subsequently dragged from the meeting room and shot dead in the corridor outside, while the orchestra played on at the meeting. Their bodies were left in a pool of blood in plain view for the attendees to see as they filed out of the hall.⁹⁴⁶

Jewish students—komsomol activists who were often doing poorly in their studies—received the majority of appointments on admission committees. They soon instigated a witch hunt that led to the removal of Polish faculty members for allegedly oppressing Jewish students.⁹⁴⁷ The Jewish activists went out of their way to deride prewar Poland and the Poles, until the deputy minister of education let it be known, during a visit to the institution, that their conduct was unacceptable even by Soviet standards.⁹⁴⁸ Their enthusiasm for the Soviet regime did not wane, however, and was evident from their displaying the

⁹⁴⁴ Edward Zimny, *Wspomnienia: Ważne wydarzenia rodziny Zimnych* (Wrocław: Adwedykt Oficyna Wydawnicza Klubu Muzyki i Literatury, 2005), 12.

⁹⁴⁵ Huberband, *Kiddush Hashem*, 398.

⁹⁴⁶ Popławski, *Dzieje Politechniki Lwowskiej*, 266–68; Stefan Czarniecki, “Wydarzenia na Politechnice Lwowskiej w październiku 1939 r.”, in Tomasz Breza, ed., *Lwowskie pod okupacją sowiecką (1939–1941)* (Rzeszów: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, 2006), 67. The students executed at that time included Ludwik Płaczek, Jan Płończak, Henryk Różakowski, and Józef Obrocki. This incident is also noted in Hryciuk, *Polacy we Lwowie 1939–1944*, 21. A Jewish student at the university, Adam Herzig, recalled that his Polish literature instructor was badly beaten by “hooligans” who came to a public meeting and wanted to teach the “Polish patriot” how to behave. See Lena Allen-Shore, *Building Bridges: Pope John Paul II and the Horizon of Life* (Ottawa: Novalis, 2004), 172–73.

⁹⁴⁷ Popławski, *Dzieje Politechniki Lwowskiej*, 273; Zbysław Popławski, “Urywki lwowskich wspomnień,” *Glaukopis: Pismo społeczno-historyczne*, no. 5–6 (2006); 202–203.

⁹⁴⁸ Popławski, *Dzieje Politechniki Lwowskiej*, 272.

likenesses of Stalin on their clothing.⁹⁴⁹ Polish lawyers were one of the first groups to be arrested after many of them had been denounced by their Jewish colleagues.⁹⁵⁰

Stanisław Skrzypek, a Pole arrested in November 1939 for his underground activities, had a first-hand opportunity to view denouncers at work while he was held in the NKVD premises on Pełczyńska Street in Lwów.

In the course of those two days that I had to wait in the corridor I realized that the N.K.V.D. had succeeded in organizing an information gathering network. Every now and then there would pass in the corridors older men, women, even school students, who came to denounce their friends and colleagues. To be sure most of them were Jews ...⁹⁵¹

In *Trembowla*, the arrest and mistreatment of Poles was facilitated by local Jews and Ukrainians “who formed the core of the Soviet militia, donned red armbands, were issued rifles and took to collaborating with the Soviet authorities in getting rid of the remnants of Polish influences.”⁹⁵²

In nearby *Wierzbowiec*, local Jews with red armbands pointed out Poles who were then arrested and mistreated by the Soviets.⁹⁵³

In *Skalat*, Maciej Bernard, the head of the new Bolshevik town council, agitated for the pacification and deportation of Poles from the area, and mobilized the Workers’ Police, composed almost exclusively of Jews, to carry out those objectives.⁹⁵⁴

A Pole who had made his way to *Podwoleczyska* on a reconnaissance assignment for the nascent Polish underground aroused the suspicion of two young, ardent Jewish militiamen who arrested him and brought him to the NKVD office. Before his interrogation, the Pole had managed to eat the notes and photographs he had made. He convinced his NKVD interrogators that he had gotten lost looking for his family. He was released and taken to the train station.⁹⁵⁵

In *Złoczów*, Stefan Zugaja was arrested in November 1939 after being denounced by a Jewish woman named Lajder, an agent of the NKVD. Until May of 1941 he was imprisoned in the Castle in Złoczów, but his later fate remains unknown.⁹⁵⁶

The Polish underground in *Czortków* began collecting information about the activities of the NKVD and its collaborators consisting mostly of Jews, who were especially active in the militia where they compiled dossiers about the local population. As a result of such a denunciation Witold Łoziński, a Polish activist, was arrested already in the first weeks of the occupation. After a failed revolt against Soviet rule staged by the Polish underground on January 21, 1940, mass arrests of suspected Poles ensued based on intelligence reports prepared by local collaborators. One participant in the revolt was fortunate enough to escape to

⁹⁴⁹ Lukas, *The Forgotten Holocaust*, 128.

⁹⁵⁰ Chodakiewicz, *Żydzi i Polacy 1918–1955*, 132, based on a report by the Office of the Delegate of Poland’s government-in-exile, found in the Archiwum Akt Nowych in Warsaw, DR, sygnatura 202/I-45, vol. IV, k. 1033.

⁹⁵¹ Skrzypek, *Rosja jaką widziałem*, 33. Earlier, at 26, Skrzypek wrote that the Jews had become the “mainstay” of the Soviet regime and had filled most of the administrative positions and directorships of cooperatives, as well as providing recruits for the majority of NKVD agents.

⁹⁵² Waław Szetelnicki, *Trembowla: Kresowy bastion wiary i polskości* (Wrocław: Rubikon, 1992), 207–209.

⁹⁵³ Ibid., 234.

⁹⁵⁴ Jan Marszałek, “Agitatorzy stalinowscy w Polsce (1939–41),” in *Encyklopedia “Białych Plam”*, vol. 1, 51.

⁹⁵⁵ Szewczyński, *Nasze Kopyczyńce*, 24–25.

⁹⁵⁶ Testimony of Maria Zugaja, as cited in Nowak, *Przemilczane zbrodnie*, 59–60, based on the periodical *Westerplatte*, no. 2 (January–February 1994), 27.

Romania after the NKVD, guided by a young local Jew, descended on his family's home in search of him.⁹⁵⁷

Markus Ajzenszer, a Jew from Mizuń, was assigned the task of organizing the Soviet militia in *Stryj* and took an active part in arresting and deporting Poles. He became well-known for his brutal treatment of Polish officers, soldiers, settlers, teachers and priests.⁹⁵⁸

In *Śniatyn*, Władysław Bielecki and Wasilewski were two of several teachers at the local high school arrested by the NKVD after being denounced by Jews, who were filled with glee. Bielecki's denouncer, the father of a dull student, confided: "So why did he fail my son? Now he'll sit." Bielecki was executed as a reserve officer of the Polish army.⁹⁵⁹

Stanisław (Staszek) Jackowski, a "Righteous Gentile" who is credited with saving the lives of 32 Jewish men, women, and children in *Stanisławów*, recalled that "thousands of Jews willingly cooperated with the Soviets after their occupation of eastern Poland in 1939."⁹⁶⁰

An account from *Zaleszczyki* states: "My grandfather was deported to Siberia with his wife and four of my father's siblings after being denounced by a Jewish co-worker whom he had helped to get a job."⁹⁶¹ Another Pole from the *Stanisławów* region also commented on the large number of Jews who were guilty of betrayal.⁹⁶²

An eyewitness from *Kosów Huculski*, a small town of about 7,000 people in that same voivodship, recalls:

The first to be arrested were professional military men, police functionaries, township clerks, and some of the forest wardens. Some of the Ukrainians and Jews took an active role in compiling lists of "enemies of the people" and hunting down those earmarked for deportation to Siberia.⁹⁶³

In *Drohiczyn*, the NKVD soon attracted a network of helpers and denouncers made up of Jews and Belorussians. The Jews, in particular, took over important functions in the administration and militia. Out of a population of 2,500, some 30 families, for the most part Poles, were deported to the Gulag.⁹⁶⁴

In *Wilno*, which was reoccupied by the Soviets again in the summer of 1940 after their takeover of Lithuania,

All former Polish civil servants, army officers, large estate holders, factory owners ... were arrested and put in prison. The arrests took place mostly at night. They were carried out by NKVD functionaries with the assistance of the local militia consisting mostly of Jews.⁹⁶⁵

⁹⁵⁷ Testimony of Bronisław Łoziński and Franciszek (surname illegible) in Piotr Młotecki, "Powstanie w Czortkowie," *Karta* (Warsaw), no. 5 (May-July 1991): 31, 39.

⁹⁵⁸ Jan Marszałek, *Słownik biograficzny stalinizmu i jego ofiar w Polsce (1939–1941) w radzieckiej strefie okupacyjnej* (Warsaw: Polska Oficyna Wydawnicza, 1991), 9.

⁹⁵⁹ Marek Jan Chodakiewicz, "Taki polski Kowalski: Wspomnienie o Tadeuszu Ungarze," *Glaukopis* (Warsaw), no. 4 (2006): 239; Jadwiga Ungar, "Straszne dla Polaków," letter, *Rzeczpospolita*, February 3, 2001.

⁹⁶⁰ Lukas, *Out of the Inferno*, 76.

⁹⁶¹ Account of Hania Fedorowicz, dated February 12, 1988 (in the author's possession).

⁹⁶² Account of Zymunt Ł. in Gross, *W czterdziestym nas Matko na Sybir zesłali...*, 154.

⁹⁶³ Account of Rozalia Wołoszczuk in *Na Rubieży* (Wrocław), no. 31 (1998): 34.

⁹⁶⁴ Skrzypkowski, *Przyszliśmy was oswobodzić...*, 15–17.

⁹⁶⁵ Account of Bolesław Jankowski (no. 9625?), Archives of the Polish Ministry of Information and Documentation, Hoover Institution on War, Revolution and Peace, posted on the Internet at www.sfpol.com/zarchiwwhoovera.html.

The author of that account, Bolesław Jankowski, a former policeman, was fingered in the town of *Podbrzezie* on November 13, 1940 by Eljokum Berson, a Jewish Communist from Wilno who recognized him. He was arrested by the local police and sent for interrogation to Wilno and then to Łukiszki prison. He was sentenced to eight years of hard labour and exiled to Vorkuta. Some Zionists were also arrested, for example, Menachem Begin, a Beitar leader, was arrested at his home in Wilno on September 20, 1940 by an NKVD officer named Waldstein and imprisoned in Łukiszki before being deported to the Gulag to serve his sentence. A number of Begin's interrogators were Jews.⁹⁶⁶

Jews played a prominent role in the network of confidants established by the NKVD in Wilno and turned in many Poles.⁹⁶⁷ Historian Marek Wierzbicki writes:

Jews' denunciations of Poles to the Soviet authorities were another source of conflict. ... Judging by the frequency with which such denunciations are mentioned in Polish accounts, they must have been widespread. Militiamen searched for opponents to the Soviet regime of any kind, including officers, policemen, and political activists; they also acted as informants. Jewish civilians also informed on Poles. Although they were certainly not the only informers, it seems that they were the most numerous. According to [Andrzej] Jałbrzykowski, the Soviet authorities arrested and deported local Poles on the basis of a list culled from the reports of informers, most of whom were young Jews. This appears quite likely, since one of the Jewish eyewitnesses of those events described the Jewish role in informing on Poles in a similar way. In that account we read,

Jews often denounced Poles ... and as a result Poles were put in prison and sent to Siberia. At every turn they mocked Poles, yelled out that their Poland was no more ... Jewish Communists mocked Poles' patriotism, denounced their illegal conversations, pointed out Polish officers and former high officials, co-operated with the NKVD of their own volition, and took part in arrests.

Thus, because of their strongly pro-Soviet feelings and their participation in Soviet-directed activities, it seems likely that Jews did in fact figure prominently as Soviet informers.

The Soviet security police, the NKVD, used informers' reports to help them identify those who should be arrested. Informers also provided incriminating evidence, although sometimes it was enough that the subject belonged to a certain social or professional group. ... The arrests affected all ethnic groups in Vilna; Poles, however, were most often the targets because most of Vilna's pre-war bureaucrats, officers, and policemen were Polish. ... The arrests took place at night, in secret; nevertheless, the entire city soon knew of them. More than 560 persons were detained during the wave of arrests (not counting the Polish army officers and more obscure people who were never mentioned again). ...

The arrests were directed by NKVD officials, but local Workers' Guard units and the militia assisted in carrying them out. The locals were so enthusiastic that high-ranking functionaries of the NKVD noted their efforts with approval. ...

The participation of the Workers' Guard and the militia in arrests and (sometimes brutal) searches played a significant role in the deterioration of Polish-Jewish relations.⁹⁶⁸

Tadeusz Kiersnowski, a prominent lawyer, town councillor and activist in the National Party (Stronnictwo Narodowe), was arrested on July 12, 1940 by the NKVD, who came to his home in the company of a Jew. Kiersnowski was imprisoned in Łukiszki prison and deported to the Gulag on June 23, 1941. This same Jew then went to arrest Dr. Dobrzański, a member of the Polish Committee.⁹⁶⁹

Professor Stanisław Cywiński, a writer for the Catholic nationalist press, was denounced by Jews in Wilno, whereupon the Soviet authorities arrested him. He was imprisoned in Kirov, where he died in March

⁹⁶⁶ These details are found in the Polish translation of Begin's memoir, but not in the English version. See the first two chapters of Menachem Begin, *Białe noce* (Warsaw: CDN, 1989); Menachem Begin, *White Nights: The Story of a Prisoner in Russia* (London: Macdonald, 1957).

⁹⁶⁷ Lewandowska, *Życie codzienne Wilna w latach II wojny światowej*, 203.

⁹⁶⁸ Marek Wierzbicki, "Polish-Jewish Relations in Vilna and the Region of Western Vilna under Soviet Occupation, 1939–1941," in *Polin*, vol. 19 (2007): 497–99.

⁹⁶⁹ Kiersnowski, *Tam i wtedy*, 40.

1941 after being severely tortured.⁹⁷⁰ But leftists were not immune either: Dewojna, the director of the Revenue Office in **Białystok**, was also denounced by Jews and was executed.⁹⁷¹

According to Polish reports, mass arrests of Poles in the Białystok region commenced in October 1939. The NKVD and the Red militia, recruited mainly from the local Jewish population, used the materials copiously gathered by the illegal Alliance of Communist Youth of Western Belorussia.⁹⁷² (Even before the war that ethnically Polish area was not regarded as part of Poland in Communist propaganda.)

Even in small towns of under 1,000 people, such as **Jody** near Braśław, there was no shortage of collaborators. According to a Jewish resident,

The NKVD (Soviet Secret Police) soon created a climate of fear in Jody. A few of our Jewish boys worked with the NKVD and a few Jews became prominent in the new government of Jody. ... Our families were considered neutral because of two episodes which brought us suffering under the Russians.

In December, 1939 our mill in Jody burned to the ground. The next morning my father and my uncles Abraham, Meir, Leibke, and Hillel were arrested and sent to the jail in Braśław [Braśław], charged with arson and as enemies of the State. Someone, (we think we know who) [one can safely assume it was a fellow Jew—*M.P.*] had told the NKVD that my uncle Hillel had said that “rather than give the mill to the Communists, we will burn it down.” Of course, that was not true, but under Soviet “justice” no witness had to face the accused. A signed statement by a single witness was sufficient to condemn anyone to a long prison term or even death. ... The following day, my father and my uncle Abraham were released. [This was accomplished with the intervention of Soviet officers quartered in the family home who also helped to get the others out of prison. Poles, on the other hand, rarely had such connections.—*M.P.*] ...

The NKVD was systematically arresting and deporting thousands of people. Anyone that was rich in Poland, or was a Polish government employee, or anyone they did not like or just suspected may be an enemy of the state was at risk. A new system of informers developed and many innocent people were arrested and deported without any trial.⁹⁷³

In **Kleck**, near the prewar Soviet border, a local Jew led some Soviet soldiers to the home of a Polish notary whose automobiles they seized. In February 1940, another local Jew came to register the family, who were subsequently deported to Kazakhstan in April of that year. The notary’s wife recalled: “Unfortunately, many of our local Jews assisted the new arrivals [i.e., Soviets] by pointing out families [for deportation] and by taking part in searches and other activities.”⁹⁷⁴

In the town of **Kurzeniec** near Wilejka,

The Soviet authorities were helped along in these and other matters by local activists who cooperated with them, often to the detriment of others—Jews as well as non-Jews—and informed on them as to their wealth, political reliability, and so forth. Some people were taxed into poverty, deprived of their houses, furniture, and all material goods. Some were even sent to Siberia as a result of the activities of informers. ... Most of these activists had retreated along with the Soviets, well ahead of the approaching Germans, because they feared retribution from the non-Jewish population who were anti-Soviet. ... Many of those who fled survived the war. Of the families that activists left behind, none survived. During the first weeks of the German

⁹⁷⁰ “W Wilnie i w Toruniu: Rozmowa z prof. Konradem Górskim,” *Życie Literackie*, September 11, 1988; Jerzy Surwiło, *Rachunki nie zamknięte: Wileńskie ślady na drogach cierpień* (Vilnius: Magazyn Wileński, 1992), 115.

⁹⁷¹ Gonczyński, *Raj protelariacki*, 14.

⁹⁷² Report of the Polish Embassy in Kuybyshev, dated May 31, 1942, in *Ściśle tajny raport o okupacji Białostockiej*, 8.

⁹⁷³ Peter Silverman, David Smuschkowitz, and Peter Smuszkowicz, *From Victims to Victors* (Concord, Ontario: The Canadian Society for Yad Vashem, 1992), 62, 67–68.

⁹⁷⁴ Irena Szulakiewicz-Krzemińska, “...choć dzieci przywiozłam w zdrowiu,” *Wspomnienia Sybiraków* (Warsaw: Komisja Historyczna Zarządu Głównego Związku Sybiraków), vol. 5 (1991): 125, 129.

occupation, such an outcome could not be foreseen. Had anybody described such a scenario as eventually coming to pass, we would have considered them deranged.⁹⁷⁵

Bronisław Cianiecki, who lived in an area *north of Wilno*, described the fate of his family which was ruined by a denunciation.

In 1940 my father was a medical officer in the area of Hoduciszki, Święciany, Łyntupy and Moldzievicze. A Jewish woman by the name of Birgsztajn, his assistant, reported to the Soviet authorities that my father was connected with, helped and sheltered enemies of the Soviet Union. In the middle of winter, the NKVD arrested my father in his white frock and with his medical first-aid case. My mother and we four underage children—two older sisters, a younger brother and myself—were left to fend for ourselves. After a while a local Belorussian state employee told my mother in confidence that any day we would be exiled to Siberia. We escaped to Wilno at night taking refuge with some friends. The NKVD found us indirectly through the Lithuanian police. We four children were taken away from our mother by force and placed in a house near the Orthodox church on Ostrobramska Street. ... After some time we were taken from Ostrobramska Street and, together with a few hundred Polish children, placed in some cottages located in a forest on the Wilia River more than a dozen kilometres from Wilno ... [When the Germans attacked in June 1941], during the night the Jewish-Bolshevik teaching staff shut the doors of the children's buildings with steel bars, leaving us to die without food, while they drove off in vehicles ... The children yelled and cried terribly. The doors were opened by a woman from a forester's lodge who happened to be gathering dry twigs in the forest and responded to the children's screaming. Hundreds of children scattered in the forest and I do not know what became of them. The four of us returned to Wilno holding each other's hands.⁹⁷⁶

Eugeniusz Klimowicz, a member of a Polish underground organization in *Naliboki*, northeast of Nowogródek, was arrested and imprisoned by the Soviets. During his interrogation he was shown a denunciation concocted by Chaja Szymonowicz, a local Jewish woman who had been well-off financially.⁹⁷⁷ A Polish woman from that townlet had already come to know Szymonowicz from the warning she had uttered on behalf of the town's Jews: the Poles would now be drinking the water in which Jews washed their feet. Reportedly, no Jews were deported from Naliboki by the Soviets.⁹⁷⁸

The area around *Jedwabne* had a particularly strong Polish anti-Soviet underground. On June 25, 1940 a resolution was passed at a special meeting of the Communist Regional Committee Office in Białystok to engage the security forces, the militia and the local committees to liquidate the Polish underground.⁹⁷⁹ (According to Soviet sources, the attempts to recruit Polish agents and informants was largely unsuccessful

⁹⁷⁵ Charles Gelman, *Do Not Go Gentle: A Memoir of Jewish Resistance in Poland, 1941–1945* (Hamden, Conn.: Archon, 1989), 4–5.

⁹⁷⁶ Account of Bronisław Cianiecki, quoted in Nowak, *Przemilczane zbrodnie*, 75.

⁹⁷⁷ Account of Eugeniusz Klimowicz, dated May 30, 1956 (written in the Wronki prison to the President of the Supreme Military Tribunal in Warsaw), 31 (in the author's possession). Although the author had an opportunity to avenge himself against his denouncer after the Soviets fled in June 1941 and he headed the interim citizens' order guard, Chaja Szymonowicz was not harmed during her brief detention, nor were the other Jews accused of collaboration with the Soviet regime. The detentions were, in fact, largely for their own protection from angry and unruly individuals, and all of the Jews were released, on Klimowicz's intervention, after the Germans arrived. *Ibid.*, 29–32. Nonetheless, this incident was tacked on to other charges Klimowicz faced in Stalinist Poland; his main offence, however, was to have been part of the local self-defence group in Naliboki which refused to subordinate itself to the Soviet partisans. In retaliation, the Soviet partisans, together with the Jewish Bielski Brigade, attacked Naliboki on May 8, 1943 and massacred 129 residents, among them women. Since there was a mutual non-aggression agreement in effect, the self-defence unit was taken by surprise and did not offer resistance. *Ibid.*, 4–19. See also Mark Paul, "Anti-Semitic Pogrom in Ejszyski? An Overview of Polish-Jewish Relations in Wartime Northeastern Poland," in *The Story of Two Shtetls*, Part Two, 110–112. Not one of the Soviet or Jewish culprits has ever been punished for this, or any other, war crime perpetrated against Poles.

⁹⁷⁸ Account of Maria Chilicka, dated March 3, 2004 (in the author's possession).

⁹⁷⁹ Gnatowski, *W radzieckich okowach*, 126.

and their usefulness was very limited; captured members of the Polish underground who were spared in exchange for their services as agents were soon liquidated.⁹⁸⁰) The head of the Jedwabne regional district of the NKVD reported in January 1941, that most of the village councils were in the hands of the Polish underground.⁹⁸¹

A corporal in the Polish army from the village of *Witynie* near Jedwabne, who was next in command of the local Polish underground organization, was delivered into the hands of his sadistic NKVD torturers on July 4, 1940 by a local Russian resident and a Jew by the name of Socher Lewinowicz, who had been put in charge of the newly formed village cooperative. After enduring months of torture in various prisons, he was coerced to confess and was sentenced to eight years in the Gulag. He was deported to the far northern reaches of Russia in January of the following year.⁹⁸²

Kazimierz Żebrowski, a small landowner who was denounced to the NKVD after returning from the September 1939 campaign, managed to flee from his home in *Żebry-Wybranowo* near Łomża and went into hiding. The NKVD became constant visitors, in particular a Polish Jew who served in their ranks, harassing the family on account of the disappearance of its head. The entire family was eventually arrested on June 20, 1941, at two in the morning, and deported.⁹⁸³

During the voting in November 1939 to sanction the incorporation of this area into Soviet Belorussia, an NKVD officer accompanied by a Jew came to the rectory in *Szumowo* to ensure that the priests went to the polls. When a Polish school principal objected to his being nominated for a position on the local committee, a Jewish organizer warned him not to oppose Soviet rule. After the German invasion in June 1941, one of the priests from Szumowo, Rev. Kazimierz Łupiński, was shown a denunciation, found in the former NKVD office in Śniadowo, which a local Jew had filed, accusing him of contacts with a Polish army officer.⁹⁸⁴

In the Volhynian villages near *Rokitno*, arrogant Jews in red armbands—in their new roles as reeves, militiamen and functionaries of all manner—became conspicuous. They struck fear in the villagers when they came around to record the names of the residents and carry out inventories of all kinds—landholdings, livestock, etc. They posted placards depicting Polish farmers as yoked oxen and summoned them to lengthy meetings at which the Polish authorities were maligned. Jews also came around to purchase cattle and hogs at cut-prices, urging the Poles: “Sell quickly because you’ll need the money. The freight trains have already been assembled for you at the station in Rokitno.”⁹⁸⁵

In *Krzemieniec*, Jews assumed leading positions in the administration and educational facilities. The task of purging the holdings of the library of the famed lyceum fell to a young Jewish Communist. Jews were especially visible in the electoral committees agitating in favour of the formal incorporation of Eastern Poland into the Soviet Union. A large number of NKVD confidants, recruited from the ranks of local

⁹⁸⁰ Ibid., 127, 148–51.

⁹⁸¹ Jan Jerzy Milewski, “Okupacja sowiecka w Białostockiem (1939–1941): Próba charakterystyki,” in Chmielowiec, *Okupacja sowiecka ziem polskich (1939–1941)*, 205.

⁹⁸² Account of Antoni B. (Borawski) in Gross and Grudzińska-Gross, *W czterdziestym nas Matko na Sybir zesłali...*, 332.

⁹⁸³ Account of Teresa Sosnowska (née Żebrowska), “Przeżycia mojej rodziny od 1941 r.,” dated January 1997 (in the author’s possession).

⁹⁸⁴ Jan Żaryn, “Przez pomyłkę: Ziemia łomżyńska w latach 1939–1945. Rozmowa z ks. Kazimierzem Łupińskim z parafii Szumowo,” *Biuletyn Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej*, no. 8–9 (September–October 2002): 112–17; Jan Jerzy Milewski, “Okupacja sowiecka w Białostockiem (1939–1941): Próba charakterystyki,” in Chmielowiec, *Okupacja sowiecka ziem polskich (1939–1941)*, 204.

⁹⁸⁵ Leon Żur, *Mój wołyński epos* (Suwałki: Hańcza, 1997), 43–44, 46. Another account from Rokitno refers to the rather passive reception given by the Ukrainian population to the invading Soviet forces, whereas many Jews, among them shop proprietors, were ecstatic, throwing flowers and screaming, “Long live tovarishches Molotov and Voroshilov.” See the account of Stanisław Sikora in Grzelak, *Wrzesień 1939 na Kresach w relacjach*, 295.

Jewish Communists, facilitated the arrests of scores of Polish officials.⁹⁸⁶ In October 1939, the NKVD, accompanied by local Jewish and Ukrainian militiamen, arrested Zaufal, the *starosta* (county supervisor) of Krzemieniec.⁹⁸⁷

Jan Sułkowski's turn came on March 22, 1940, Good Friday, when he was arrested in Krzemieniec after being denounced by a Jewish neighbour, Josek Kagan, an informer for the NKVD. Sułkowski, the county secretary, was charged with such crimes as "associating with kulaks" and "speaking of the poor quality of products from the USSR." The case was a travesty of justice with local Jews testifying against him as "witnesses" and a Jewish people's judge rubber-stamping the verdict.⁹⁸⁸

His daughter, Janina Sułkowska Gładun, recalls her own arrest in Krzemieniec in late March 1940. She was imprisoned in **Dubno** for a year together with her Polish colleagues from the underground and was subjected to forms of torture and racist taunting at the hands of the sadistic Jewish warden not unlike those administered by the Nazis in their prisons.⁹⁸⁹

I recognized Truchun [Trukhun] as the NKVD officer who had arrested my father; he was accompanied by an ordinary Red Army soldier and a local Jewish militiaman. I did not know that most of my underground comrades were similarly being rounded up, or were already in custody and undergoing interrogation. Our underground organization was being methodically smashed by the NKVD.

Truchun announced that I was under arrest and we were pushed into a corner of the kitchen while a search was conducted. The house was ransacked and my personal property scattered; Truchun threw my letters and a school photo of me into his briefcase. They were searching for "evidence"—and for booty which they could claim. I was frightened that they would discover my secret messages and orders which I kept in a hollowed-out soap near the stove. False ID's and other incriminating documents were hidden in our sofa and in an old wine-skin. The Jew had heard something rustling in the wine-skin and was greedily throttling it like it was an animal that had swallowed something valuable. But luckily for us he abandoned the search to go with Truchun to get a car. ...

I was driven to Dubno by car and immediately taken to the office of NKVD Colonel Vinokur,⁹⁹⁰ the *Nachalnik* or Commandant for the region. His office was crammed with an assortment of furniture, food, and plundered items that included commodes, sofas, tapestries and a glass-case with jams and conserves. ...

Vinokur was seated behind a large desk and politely asked me to sit down across from him in a plush chair. ... Chaim Vinokur spoke to me in Ukrainian (he was a Jew from Kiev) while I answered in Polish. ... The interrogators peppered me with questions in Russian ... A rather dim-witted Jewish girl was called in as a translator but I was able to befuddle her. She was quickly sent away by Vinokur who would soon demonstrate to the boys from Moscow the finer points of an interrogation... The session had been going in circles for

⁹⁸⁶ Antoni Jagodziński, "Początki okupacji sowieckiej w Krzemieńcu," *Życie Krzemienieckie*, no. 7 (January 1994), 11–15.

⁹⁸⁷ Account of Janina Sułkowska Gładun (in the author's possession).

⁹⁸⁸ "The Trial of Jan Sułkowski" and "The Letters of Natalia Sułkowska," in Gładun, *Poland's Holocaust: A Family Chronicle of Soviet and Nazi Terror*, posted on the Internet at [www.geocities.com/chrisgladun/jantrial & natalia](http://www.geocities.com/chrisgladun/jantrial&natalia).

⁹⁸⁹ Another Pole who noted such treatment in his memoirs was Sławomir Rawicz: These men and the men of Minsk and Kharkhov were all Russians [undoubtedly, this term is used generically by the author to refer to Soviets regardless of their ethnic background—*M.P.*], motivated by the same hatreds, working along the same lines, one-tracked. I was bawled at, my answers were cut off half-heard, the table was thumped until the heavy inkstand leapt up and rattled back. Polish spy. Polish traitor. Polish bastard. Polish fascist. Insults were thrown in with the questions. A new and tense, unsmiling Mischa rose to continue the questioning. ... "Now, Rawicz, you Polish son of a bitch," he said, "we have finished pandering to your stupidity. You know you are a dirty spy and you are going to tell us all about it." See Slavomir Rawicz, *The Long Walk* (London: Constable, 1956), 18–19.

⁹⁹⁰ Major Iakov Davidovich Vinokur, of the GPU state security agency, became the chief of the Dubno district NKVD in July 1940, and when the NKVD split in early 1941 into the KKVD and NKGB, Vinokur became chief of the district NKGB. By June 1941 he had reached the rank of major. His papers identified him as a Jew. See Marco Carynnyk, "The Palace on the Ikva—Dubno, September 18th, 1939 and June 24th, 1941," in Barkan, Cole and Struve, *Shared History, Divided Memory*, 297–98.

several hours and I was very tired. ... How easily I had fallen into his trap! I felt like a child caught with her hands in the cookie jar.

"Take this *polskaia kurva* [Polish whore] out!" Vinokur waved his hand as the men from Moscow nodded their heads in awe. ... I soon discovered that most of the positions in the prison and security systems were given to the dregs of Jewish society. ...

Following my family's arrest, my interrogations became more vicious as I would spend some 40 sessions on a chair beneath a glaring light surrounded by NKVD interrogators. The anger in Vinokur and Titov now flowed to the surface. They screamed in my face and promised me a death sentence. They paraded tortured friends in front of me whom they would later murder. They kept me in solitary confinement and in a frozen cell. And they tortured me. The majority of my interrogations took place in the first half of my year-long stay in Dubno jail which was from March 1940 to March 1941.

One particular session is burned into my memory. It seemed like another dreary night. I was dismissing Titov's endless and predictable questions which he spit into my face, with my usual shrugs, when Colonel Vinokur emerged from the background and twisted my chair close to his face.

"So you don't think I could just kill you like a dog?" he growled.

I sensed that this was something more than the usual threats. He narrowed his eyes and a muscle twitched in his cheek. He undid his holster and took out his revolver. ... Suddenly I felt him brushing my cheek with the cold barrel, and then against my temple. I could distinctly feel the rolling of the tumbler, and then the *click* of the trigger. My God! He was playing Russian roulette against my head!

"Believe. Believe, you Polish cunt!" Vinokur screamed and pulled the trigger. The sound of the hammer exploded in my head—but no bullet came forth. And then he pulled it a second time, and a third time. ... I came close to fainting ... and then Vinokur put his gun away. ...

A week later I was to experience another unusual and "shocking" method of torture which had been concocted by my tormentors. I became a guinea pig in their experimentation in the art of arriving at the "truth." This was their "electric chair."

I was taken for a nightly session and was seated in the regular chair under the light. ... suddenly I was thrown out of the chair by some great unseen force! I found myself on the floor with my legs twitching. What had happened?

They picked me up and threw me back into the seat. I was asked the same question, which I barely heard and didn't answer—and once more I was hurled into the air. I shook like a rag doll. The shock was repeated a third time and I started to choke. After a minute or so of trying to catch my breath, the disembodied voice of Colonel Vinokur boringly announced that he was satisfied—for now.

I was dragged back to my cell. My body felt peculiar, but it was my mind that took somewhat longer to recuperate. Marusia [my cellmate] later told me that I was babbling and sobbing. ...

It was also a chair that in a less dramatic way caused even more excruciating and much longer-lasting pain. I was barely 5 foot 2 inches and my legs dangled like a child's when seated in the interrogation chair. The sessions almost always lasted through the night for eight hours and longer, during which I was not allowed to eat or go to the washroom, nor could I get off this throne to rest my feet on the ground. The cumulative effect of muscular inactivity and the build-up of blood in my lower limbs caused my feet and legs to swell—and produced horrible pain, especially when first trying to walk. ...

However, I realized that my treatment at the hands of the NKVD was mild compared to what many of my friends were subject to, perhaps in the very same interrogation chambers. Leon Kowal was repeatedly beaten as was Pius Zaleski. Others had needles jammed under their fingernails, their fingers were crushed and their testicles burned. Women were also beaten or kept in cells of freezing water or human sewage. Many of them would eventually be murdered. Yet what I was to experience later in the Gulag was such that I looked upon my stay in Dubno as my "golden days."⁹⁹¹

Zbigniew Jan Dąbrowski, who was imprisoned in *Luck* before being deported to Kolyma, shared a cell with a Jewish dentist from Torczyn who had been denounced for hiding valuables and arrested. This Jew was again denounced inside the jail by a Jewish kapo who had been planted in their cell and in whom the dentist confided. When Dąbrowski was finally taken to trial after five months of interrogation, he and his fellow accused were assigned a lawyer from the security office by the name of Rachman, a Jew who spoke Polish poorly. Rather than defending his "clients," Rachman worked hand in glove with the judges to

⁹⁹¹ "A Gulag and Holocaust Memoir of Janina Sulkowska-Gladun," in Gladun, *Poland's Holocaust: A Family Chronicle of Soviet and Nazi Terror*. Sulkowska also encountered a Jewish dentist from Krzemieniec who couldn't hide her contempt for everything Polish nor her new-found love of the Soviet Union. A Ukrainian woman who was imprisoned at Dubno stated that women prisoners were routinely raped during their interrogation. See the testimony of Valentyna Łepieszkievicz in "Dubno—drugi Katyń," *Nasza Polska* (Warsaw), 17 July, 2001.

ensure their speedy conviction as counter-revolutionaries. Dąbrowski received a fifteen-year sentence of hard labour in the Gulag.⁹⁹²

In **Derażne**, local Jews and Ukrainians denounced the former Polish authorities and openly rejoiced at the downfall of Poland.⁹⁹³ Local Jews as well as Ukrainians were involved in the arrest of Polish settlers in the colony of **Pilsudy (Horodziec)** near Antonówka, in Sarny county.⁹⁹⁴

In **Niweck**, a colony near Dąbrowica, local Ukrainians and Jews, among them members of the Communist committee, robbed the homes of the Polish settlers and denounced them to the Soviet authorities.⁹⁹⁵ Jews joined Ukrainians to rob Poles living in **Serchów** near Bielska Wola and **Klesów** (Sarny county). The Red militia helped the NKVD Poles and searched for Polish soldiers hiding in the forests.⁹⁹⁶

An eyewitness reported on the frequent denunciations and arrests in **Boryslaw**:

Denunciations and arrests ensued. The informers—mostly Jewish Communists—are operating at full steam. For the most part those who held state positions—policemen, judges and teachers—were being arrested. Even a forester was arrested. Those who had been imprisoned were loaded into cattle cars the windows of which were covered with barbed wire. Even women and children were forced into the wagons. Then at the main train station in Drohobycz the wagons were hooked up to form one train.

My godmother, Janina Latowska, helped to hide two policemen. These people had to change their sleeping places every night. They had to do this because arrests usually occurred at night. One day they took my godmother and her two sons, Jan and Kazik, and her daughter, Jadzia, from their home. Two days later they took the family of my cousin Kazimierz Turkiewicz along with his wife and four children, the youngest of which was six months.

We tried to help our family, but it wasn't easy. We went to Drohobycz daily to bring them some food. Sometimes we were successful—it depended on who was guarding the prisoners at the time. And one had to bring some vodka [as a bribe]. ...

Poles were brought into Drohobycz over a two week period. One day two locomotives were attached to the wagons and the train moved forward. Everyone was in tears—it was apparent that they were being deported to Siberia. Those poor unfortunates in the wagons intoned the Polish national anthem, “Jeszcze Polska nie zginęła” [“Poland has not yet perished”].⁹⁹⁷

After learning of a Polish student's participation in the war with Germany as a cadet, a komsorg (komsomol organizer) at his high school in **Drohobycz** rebuked him: “You fought on the side of the *Pans*, you defended the capitalists and large landowners of *Pans*’ Poland.” Even though the school was a Polish-language school, the komsomol consisted almost entirely of Jews and Ukrainians. At a meeting of the heads of school committees the son of a Jewish lawyer railed against the Poles, “You’re already in the sack. All

⁹⁹² Zbigniew Jan Dąbrowski, *Wspomnienia, które zawsze wracają: Pamięci tych wszystkich, którzy na zawsze pozostali pod Czerwonym Słupem* (Toronto: n.p., 1992; Wrocław: Biuro Tłumaczeń, 1997), 8–10.

⁹⁹³ Account of Włodzimierz Drohomirecki in *Świadkowie mówią*, 96.

⁹⁹⁴ Leon Popek, ed., *Osadnictwo wojskowe na Wołyniu* (Lublin: Towarzystwo Przyjaciół Krzemieńca i Ziemi Wołyńsko-Podolskiej, 1998), 75; Siemaszko and Siemaszko, *Ludobójstwo dokonane przez nacjonalistów ukraińskich na ludności polskiej Wołynia 1939–1945*, vol. 1, 744.

⁹⁹⁵ Popek, *Osadnictwo wojskowe na Wołyniu*, 76; Siemaszko and Siemaszko, *Ludobójstwo dokonane przez nacjonalistów ukraińskich na ludności polskiej Wołynia 1939–1945*, vol. 1, 754.

⁹⁹⁶ Siemaszko and Siemaszko, *Ludobójstwo dokonane przez nacjonalistów ukraińskich na ludności polskiej Wołynia 1939–1945*, vol. 1, 751, 775.

⁹⁹⁷ Janina Ziemiańska, “Z Kresów do Nowego Jorku (1),” *Nasz Głos*, June 10, 1999. When the tide turned with the arrival of the Germans in June 1941, Ziemiańska's family smuggled food to Jews in the ghetto. Ibid. (3), July 15, 1999.

that's left to do is to tie you up and throw you in the water."⁹⁹⁸ Poles were openly discriminated against in state offices. Soon mass arrests and deportations ensued—the victims were almost all Poles.⁹⁹⁹

Jan Onaczyszyn recalled the dramatic change in attitude shown by Jewish Bundists who now greeted his father, a Socialist, with the words: "Your Poland is no more, she's gone to hell! It's all our now!"¹⁰⁰⁰ After his arrest, Onaczyszyn was taken to trial and sentenced to 10 years' imprisonment as a "lackey of Pans' Poland" for anti-Soviet activities. His "defence" attorney, a local Jewish lawyer, acknowledged his "guilt" and asked for a reduced sentence because of the accused's young age.¹⁰⁰¹

A Jew by the name of Sussman, who became the director of his now nationalized brickyards in Drohobycz, was notorious for mistreating and insulting his Polish workers, whom he also underpaid. At their grumblings he thundered, "Stupid Polacks. Don't you know that you're already all in a sack and all that's left is to ship you out." He threatened to call in the NKVD and indeed some of the workers were denounced and arrested. Sussman was equally outspoken at meetings: "That damned rule of Polish *Pans*, capitalists and exploiters has come to an end. The *Pans*' Poland has fallen apart and will never return." In a highly unusual turn of events, the workers struck back at this erstwhile capitalist and denounced him as an exploiter. It turned out that Sussman had had connections with the prewar Polish government and, at that time, denounced Communists. Sussman himself was arrested by the NKVD in a stroke of poetic justice.¹⁰⁰²

When Tadeusz Chciuk, a courier for the Polish government-in-exile, dropped by unexpectedly to see his family in Drohobycz during one of his missions to Poland, his mother informed him of the sudden interest taken in him by Hela Wajs, a Jewish neighbour who had become an ardent champion of the Soviet regime and a vociferous opponent of Poland. His mother warned him: "You have to be terribly cautious and don't show yourself to people. Most of the Soviet supporters are found among the Jews. There are swarms of people like Wajs. You have to be on your guard day and night."¹⁰⁰³

Little wonder then that Chciuk, like Poles at the time, proclaimed:

we, Poles, fear Jews—not all of them, of course, but when we fear, we fear them more than anyone else. They are first in line to cooperate with the Bolsheviks, they are the most dangerous, they are everywhere, they are the most ardent Communists, they know a lot, they help to carry out a thorough investigation of the community. I myself have such colleagues from high school and university.

To this a Jewish woman, a family friend, replied, "I know, I know. You speak the truth. But you yourself said that they are not all like that. ... And for those respectable Jews, other Jews, those communists, are

⁹⁹⁸ Dominik Mieczysław Baczyński, *Ty musisz żyć, aby dać świadectwo prawdzie: Pamiętnik zesłańca* (Warsaw: Ministerstwo Obrony Narodowej, 1990), 12, 16, 22. After much persuasion, the author eventually joined the komsomol out of practical considerations, standing up for Polish students and intervening on their behalf whenever he could. *Ibid.*, 30, 39.

⁹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 12, 22, 35–37.

¹⁰⁰⁰ Budzyński, *Miasto Schulza*, 154.

¹⁰⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 153–54.

¹⁰⁰² Baczyński, *Ty musisz żyć, aby dać świadectwo prawdzie*, 30–34.

¹⁰⁰³ Celt, *Biali kurierzy*, 61.

also dangerous.” Chciuk answered her, “Certainly. But not as dangerous as for the Poles, not even half as dangerous.”¹⁰⁰⁴

A memoir from *Lwów* describes the warm reception given by many Jews to the invading Soviet army; their employment as informers at schools; their pro-Soviet political activity especially during the sham “elections” of October 1939; their political opportunism; and their anti-Polish agitation.¹⁰⁰⁵ The author also notes sporadic acts of Jewish solidarity with Poles, as when an elderly Jewish woman was brought to tears by the sight of Jews flocking to greet the Soviet invaders and the loss of “her” homeland—Poland.¹⁰⁰⁶

Scores of Polish priests were imprisoned, deported or executed in Soviet-occupied Eastern Poland between September 1939 and July 1941. One of them was Rev. Adam Gromadowski from the town of *Podwoleczyńska* near Skalat, who was arrested by the NKVD in April 1940, along with others, for distributing Polish underground newspapers and later executed. The arrest came about as a result of betrayal by a Jewish family in whom some Poles had confided.¹⁰⁰⁷

Poles attributed the death of Rev. Waław Rodzko, pastor of *Traby* in the archdiocese of Wilno, to a prewar conflict with local Jewish merchants, who were required by court order to remove their stalls from church property. Rev. Rodzko was abducted by unknown persons and murdered in May 1940 in the village of Rosalszczyzna. The Soviet authorities did not uncover the culprits.¹⁰⁰⁸ Rev. Bolesław Zabłudowski, who took refuge in Kaunas, was denounced by a Lithuanian Jew and arrested by the NKVD in the spring of 1941. He was deported to the Gulag.¹⁰⁰⁹

Rev. Józef Zator-Przytocki, who organized illegal crossings of Poles to Romania and Hungary and supplied endangered Poles with false documents, was more fortunate. Although betrayed to the NKVD by a Jewish confidant, he was able to leave *Stanisławów* in the Soviet zone surreptitiously and make his way to Kraków in the German zone.¹⁰¹⁰

¹⁰⁰⁴ Ibid., 209. This righteous Jewish woman may well be the only Jew who has ever apologized to the Poles for the despicable conduct of her fellow Jews. According to one Jewish source, apparently unaware of the situation prevailing in Soviet-occupied Poland, the fear of Jews was even felt by those Poles who had fled Poland to neighbouring Romania: “In the fall of 1939, after the outbreak of the German-Polish war, Sadagura [Sadgóra] was overrun by Polish, mostly Christian, refugees; they were well-received on the part of the Jews. The attitude of the Polish refugees towards their Jewish hosts was odd. It happened that many refugees fled the house where they had received warm hospitality as soon as they learned that the hosts were Jews.” See Leo Bruckenthal, “Sadagura,” in Hugo Gold, ed., *Geschichte der Juden in der Bukowina* (Tel Aviv: Olamenu Publishers, 1962), vol. II, 103. See also Wiesław Jan Wysocki, ed., *Kapelani wrześniowi: Służba duszpasterska w Wojsku Polskim w 1939 r. Dokumenty, relacje, opracowania* (Warsaw: Rytm, 2001), 731 (in a small town on the Romanian side of the border near Śniatyń, two poor elderly Jewish women shopkeepers offer overnight accommodation and some food to a group of Polish soldiers and their chaplain).

¹⁰⁰⁵ Barbara Męcarska-Kozłowska, *Burza nad Lwowem: Reportaż z lat wojennych 1939–1945 we Lwowie. Kartki z pamiętnika* (London: Polish Cultural Foundation, 1992). These references can be found, respectively, at 14, 264; 47–48; 265–66, 271–72; and 86–87, 288, 293.

¹⁰⁰⁶ Ibid., 14.

¹⁰⁰⁷ Aleksander Korman, “O księdzu Adamie Gromadowskim,” *Semper Fidelis*, no. 1 (18) 1994: 8–11.

¹⁰⁰⁸ Zygmunt Zieliński, ed., *Życie religijne w Polsce pod okupacją 1939–1945: Metropolie wileńska i lwowska, zakony* (Katowice: Unia, 1992), 494; Krahel, *Doświadczeni zniewoleniem*, 98–100; Tadeusz Krahel, *Archidiecezja wileńska w latach II wojny światowej: Studia i szkice* (Białystok: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej–Oddział w Białymstoku, 2014), 163–64, 221. According to Jewish sources, after the arrival of the German forces on July 2, 1941, a group of 30 Poles demolished Jewish homes in Miory and shot the rabbi and his wife. The unreliability of this source is clearly evident from the following statement: “Apparently this was done in retaliation for the imprisonment [sic] of the parish priest during the Soviet occupation, for which one Jew among the local residents was allegedly responsible.” See Dean, *Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos, 1933–1945*, vol. II, Part B, 1237.

¹⁰⁰⁹ Krahel, *Doświadczeni zniewoleniem*, 133.

¹⁰¹⁰ Anna Kołakowska, “Żołnierz Kościoła,” *Nasz Dziennik*, September 26, 2002.

Contrary to what some Jewish apologists contend, taking up positions in the Soviet regime did not necessarily signify that these Jews cut off contact with fellow Jews and were estranged from the Jewish community, that they forsook their Jewish heritage in favour of the communist ideology, and that they no longer functioned as Jews. The argument that they should not be judged as Jews, but simply as Communists who happened to be of Jewish origin, is simply untenable. There are just too many cases where Jews who turned Communist had no problem in reconciling their new-found status with their Jewishness.

In the town of **Kisielin**, in Volhynia, for example, Jews from the town council and militia transferred large quantities of Jewish goods from the town by stealth to store in hiding places in the countryside. A local teacher by the name of Ginzberg, who taught Jewish religion before the war, became a vociferous anti-religion agitator during the Soviet occupation who targeted Polish and Ukrainian youth. He continued nonetheless to practice Jewish religious rituals in his home and to instil them into his two sons who had joined the komsomol. (Confronted by a Pole regarding his hypocritical behaviour, out of fear of being exposed Ginzberg ceased his anti-Christian agitation.) A Jew from Kisielin who oversaw the collection of the onerous taxes levied on church property openly relished, in the presence of a Catholic priest, the prospect of the Soviet authorities destroying the “Polish” church.¹⁰¹¹

¹⁰¹¹ Włodzimierz Sławosz Dębski, *W kręgu kościoła kisielińskiego, czyli Wołyniacy z parafii Kisielin* (Lublin: n.p., 1992), 6, 9, 11.

CHAPTER TWELVE

An Atmosphere of Fanaticism

The mood of insecurity that descended on the towns and villages under Soviet rule cannot be adequately explained without regard to the role of Jewish Communists and those who were simply pro-Soviet. Very often their fanaticism was expressed by open displays of anti-Polish and anti-Christian sentiments. Surprisingly, anti-German sentiments were not voiced by the Jews publicly even in areas that initially experienced a short period of German rule. Gratuitous denunciations of Poles assumed massive proportions. Jewish officials, who very often had no suitable professional qualifications for their new positions, became omnipresent. Polish library collections and monuments were sacked.

The sullen atmosphere that enveloped *Przemyśl* was captured in memoirs recorded contemporaneously by Jan Smółka, the town's principal archivist. Smółka proved to be an astute observer of those events.¹⁰¹² The brief German occupation did not pit the Polish population against the Jewish townspeople. As one Jewish witness recalls,

When the Germans came to Przemyśl in 1939 they burned the old synagogue. I saw Polish people rushing with water to try to extinguish the fire.¹⁰¹³

Already within hours of the Soviet entry on September 28, 1939, a group of Jewish women burst into the grounds of the local museum where Smółka was employed. They trampled the flower beds and shrubbery and tore out flowers with which they ran to greet the Red Army. When Smółka left the museum that evening,

Throngs of Jews had poured into the streets and squares, which were overflowing, making it difficult to squeeze through. The Jews were overjoyed, insolent and arrogant. ... All sorts of riff-raff and criminal elements emerged and pushed their way around ... The shop windows were lit up and adorned with (rather poor) portraits of Lenin, Stalin, Molotov, Voroshilov, and other Bolshevik dignitaries. The same scene recurred over the next few days. The Jews were delighted. In the shops they screamed vulgarities about Poland which they directed at the Polish public. Even young Jewish women vented their joy. "You have no idea how happy I am that the Soviets have come," said one young Jewish woman to another on Franciszkańska Street.

Every evening Jewish women assembled in front of the building of the Revenue Office to sing to the Bolsheviks. When the administrative offices were opened up they were inundated with Jewish officials. Except for the top positions that were given over to Bolsheviks sent in for that purpose, here and there a token Aryan could be found, usually a Ukrainian, for decoration, but the bulk of the officials were Jews.

The Bolsheviks held various rallies in the town square where they erected a hideous stage of sorts which was painted red. They convened all those over whom they had some influence, above all the youth with their teachers. There was never any shortage of Jews to fill the square en masse. Once during such a masquerade the Jews started to shout invectives at the [Catholic] bishops and priests, but when some boy from the crowd yelled back at them "Down with the rabbis!" they threw themselves at him and wanted to beat him up. Luckily he escaped. Anti-religious propaganda targeted only the Christian faiths and not the Jewish religion, which the Jews were able to practice freely. They openly kept the Sabbath and baked matzo which they displayed on stands, but at the same time carefully scrutinized those who attended church and reported them to the authorities.

The Bolsheviks expelled Poles from the shops and kiosks and in their place brought in Jews. The entire public life was in their hands. ... Poles could not show their faces among them. I myself saw how they destroyed on Kazimierz Wielki Street the goods of a small Polish boy who was in tears over the loss of—it seemed—his only belongings.

Many Jews wandered in the street without any apparent purpose. In reality they occupied themselves with spying on the Polish population. They looked into who of the Poles remained and what they were doing, and informed on them to the authorities. For that reason many people found themselves in jails or in the Russian

¹⁰¹² Smółka, *Przemyśl pod sowiecką okupacją*, 32–36, 44, 56–58, 68, 74, 76, 80, 82, 94–98.

¹⁰¹³ Account of Juda Nissanov (Jehuda Sprung) in John J. Hartman and Jacek Krochmal, eds., *I Remember Every Day...: The Fates of the Jews of Przemyśl during World War II* (Przemyśl: Towarzystwo Przyjaciół Nauk w Przemyślu; Ann Arbor, Michigan: Remembrance & Reconciliation Inc., 2002), 30.

interior. The Jews spied ardently and manifested animalistic hatred towards all things Polish. Across from the museum, a Jewish woman by the name of Mehler, who lived at 8 Władycze Street, used to sit at her window and look at what was happening in the museum. So that no one would see her she covered her head with a green cloth and hid it behind some flowers. Disguised in this manner she would sit there idly at the window for long hours.

On the first floor of the neighbouring house lived a Jewish tinsmith who also watched the museum and informed [Roman] Szancer [a communist who was recently put in charge of the museum] that counter-revolutionaries were visiting the Leśniaks [Adam Leśniak was active in the museum from before the war] and that Mrs. Leśniak was a remnant of the Polish bourgeoisie. He reported that Mrs. Leśniak did nothing under Polish or Soviet rule, spent her time in the garden and ate chicken and goose. Szancer was alarmed at this denunciation because he was afraid that the authorities might accuse him of not watching over the museum carefully enough. He therefore explained to the Jew that it was impossible for counter-revolutionaries to be coming by because he himself remained at the museum during the entire day and would have seen that those who came were there on official business.¹⁰¹⁴

Groundless denunciations of Poles by Jews continued.¹⁰¹⁵ Jews, who before the war worked at market stalls or as craftsmen, now arrived in the museum as members of official inspection committees and the NKVD.¹⁰¹⁶ Jewish officials and staff were particularly intent on destroying Polish libraries and artefacts, both public and private, whenever the opportunity presented itself. The holdings of the museum were devastated by them and many paintings ruined.¹⁰¹⁷ Smółka describes a number of such incidents that occurred in Przemyśl:

Around the middle of October [1939] the painter Marian Stroński brought word to [Adam] Leśniak that the Bolsheviks were evicting Rev. Dr. [Jan] Kwolek, [a professor at the higher seminary in Przemyśl and director of the diocesan archives] from his home and that his library had to be saved. Leśniak ran immediately to the building of the Revenue Office where Rev. Kwolek lived on the third floor. Upon entering the building he saw various people, mostly Jews, wandering in the courtyard and corridors. Official documents were being removed from offices and bookcases on the third floor and thrown out the window into the muddy courtyard. This task was in the hands of residents of Przemyśl: three young Jewish women, one Jew and two Ukrainian women. Leśniak approached them and suggested politely that it was a shame to throw these documents out because they might still be useful, even as paper. One of the Jewish women shot back: “What for? Whatever is Polish has to be destroyed. We can’t afford to leave anything behind from the Polish bourgeois regime. It is now the time of the Soviets and Ukraine. We have nicer and better things.” And they continued to dump things into the courtyard. From there these documents were taken to a pond in Bakończyce, so that no one would think of salvaging them.¹⁰¹⁸

There are numerous Jewish testimonies that corroborate Smółka’s assessment. According to Max Wolfshaut-Dinkes who “never knew a non-Jewish communist” in his town of Przemyśl,

The Jews lived in fear, haunted by the prospect of expropriation and deportation to Siberia. They mistrusted one another and, above all, they feared the Jewish communists. These latter were fanatical supporters of the régime, zealous servants of the authorities. Faithful to their ‘duty’, they fought unscrupulously against the ‘terrible’ class enemy, composed of shopkeepers and craftsmen [most of whom were Jews—*M.P.*].

And, in another passage, Wolfshaut-Dinkes states:

I must confess that I found the conduct of the Jewish communists during the Soviet occupation terribly repugnant: they had a far too brutal attitude towards their employers. The Polish and Ukrainian employees

¹⁰¹⁴ Smółka, *Przemyśl pod sowiecką okupacją*, 34–35.

¹⁰¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 68.

¹⁰¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 74, 82–83.

¹⁰¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 76, 94–95, 96.

¹⁰¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 56.

did not denounce their former employers as exploiters so that their undertaking would be nationalised and they themselves sent to Siberia; unfortunately, the Jewish communists had no hesitation in doing this.¹⁰¹⁹

Another Jew from Przemyśl concurs in this assessment:

Most of the [Zionist] activists left Przemyśl as they feared an “invitation” to the NKVD. The secret service arrests were undoubtedly the result of denunciations made by local communists, who operated as denouncers by order from above.¹⁰²⁰

A Jew from Przemyśl who moved to Lwów to hide his capitalist background (his family owned a factory that employed a hundred workers) unexpectedly ran into trouble there.

I enrolled into a course of Soviet bookkeeping, and soon started working for them as a full bookkeeper. I got one of the highest salaries ... However this still did not go on smoothly; they discovered (with the help of Jewish Communists from Przemyśl) that I had a wealthy (read criminal) past. I was fired, but managed to get each time another job, and so to survive the time of the paradise occupation.

But Jews from Przemyśl point out that it was not just seasoned prewar Communists they feared, but ordinary Jews caught up in the revolutionary fervour of those times. As one Jew recalls,

A boy from one of the poor families, whom we fed every Friday, was the first one to declare himself a Communist when the Russians came in, and he was the one who took over our apartment and belongings. We didn't have to wait for the Germans at all—it was a Jewish fellow whom we had supported all along. He said, “Now I'm a Communist; the Communists are here and I'm the boss and you're going to be subservient to me.” He lay in my bed and insisted that my mother serve him food in bed and polish his shoes. ... As it turned out, his Communistic patriotism did not bring him glory. He just got a job as a guard.

... Naturally, this was very heartbreaking to us because this was the boy we had known since he was a child. He grew up under our own eyes, and here he was the one who was kicking us out.¹⁰²¹

Another Jew recalls how non-political relatives of his rallied to the support of the Soviet occupiers:

When the Russians conscripted my father, he rose quickly to the rank of lance corporal and was involved in the training on new Polish conscripts. ... My mother's younger brother, Abramek, became an ardent spokesman for the Communist cause and her older brother, Mundek ... came under my father's command during his military training.

My father liked the Russians ...

These relatively good times were not to last. ...¹⁰²²

The testimony of local Poles reinforces this picture:

One problem was that the Jewish people knew the Przemyśl intelligentsia very well. When the Soviets came, the Jews would give them the names for the proscriptive lists. They sucked up to the Soviets terribly. They dominated all the offices, there were young, often uneducated, Jews everywhere. We, young people right after

¹⁰¹⁹ These two passages are found in Max Wolfshaut-Dinkes, *Échec et mat: Récit d'un survivant de Pchemychl en Galicie* (Paris: Association les fils et filles des déportés juifs de France, 1983), 36 and 21–22, respectively, as quoted, in English translation, in Davies and Polonsky, *Jews in Eastern Poland and the USSR, 1939–46*, 18–19; and in Paweł Korzec and Jean-Charles Szurek, “Jews and Poles under Soviet Occupation (1939–1941): Conflicting Interests,” in *Polin: A Journal of Polish-Jewish Studies*, vol. 4 (1989): 216–17, 224 n.42.

¹⁰²⁰ Dr. M. Schattner, “From the Outbreak of WW II until the Liberation,” in Arie Menczer, ed., *Sefer Przemyśl* (Tel Aviv: Former Residents of Przemyśl in Israel, 1964), 375. An English translation is posted on the Internet at www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/przemysl/.

Account of Maurice Rinde (alias Wiktor Kroczykowski) in Hartman and Krochmal, *I Remember Every Day...*, 133.

¹⁰²¹ Account of Sidonia Lewin-Lax in Hartman and Krochmal, *I Remember Every Day...*, 109, 119.

¹⁰²² Account of Alfred Garfinkel (Garwood) in Hartman and Krochmal, *I Remember Every Day...*, 158.

the *matura* examination [matriculation], were pretty shocked by that, especially as we could not get any white-collar jobs at that time. I myself worked as a blacksmith's assistant.¹⁰²³

... when the Soviets came to Przemyśl ... everyone was obliged to register at "Prowspiłka," which was a trade union. The registration took place in a barrack in Tarnawskiego Street. That is where I met Hertzberger [who came from an Orthodox Jewish family]. He was sitting next to some Soviet dignitary. Plenty of rich Jews were waiting to be registered ... They were all supposed to tell their biographies in order to be admitted to "Prowspiłka." That Hertzberger was censoring their stories. When Buchband had told his story, Hertzberger asked: "Pray tell me, who owned that ironmonger's in Kazimierzowska Street?" Then Buchband leaned towards me and whispered: "Damn you!" and said aloud: "No, it wasn't mine, it was my wife's." The other Jews all used similar excuses. ... the Jews who had been shop owners, weren't [admitted to "Prowspiłka"]. ... So, on the one hand he was orthodox, on the other hand he cooperated quite closely with the Communists, being very much involved with them.¹⁰²⁴

Democratic slogans issued by the Soviet government resulted in the Jews starting to take the posts in the militia and the party offices, turning into Communists. They would put on peaked caps and when they passed one another in the street, their greeting would be: "Hello, comrade!"

Along with the Soviet rule came hunger. The Jews were behaving in a provocative way at that time, pushing their way through people queuing for food, thus evoking anti-Semitic feelings among the Poles. Some Jews contributed to that themselves, saying with satisfaction that now came the end of Poland. Following the Soviet propaganda, they would say: "The Poland of the lords is over." The Jewish intelligentsia did not take part in that, however. The ones who protested were lower classes, mostly petty shopkeepers [who depended on Christians for their livelihood—*M.P.*]. ...

I remember that once, during the Soviet occupation, a teenage Jewish boy joined the people queuing for bread (you could queue the whole day and get nothing) and, pushing his way to the front, announced that he was not going to stand in the queue because "the Poland of the lords" was over. No one could say anything to that, since the queue was watched by a Jewish policeman who took the boy's side and let him go first.¹⁰²⁵

A Pole who acted a secret courier delivering mail between the German and Soviet zones recalled his and his contact person's arrest in Soviet Przemyśl on November 28, 1939: "A young Jew whom I did not know came up to us with an armed militiaman and said: 'They arrived illegally from the other side. Please arrest them.'¹⁰²⁶ A Pole who lined up at the German commission in Soviet Przemyśl to register to return to his home in the German zone in May 1940, recalled how the petitioners, who included many Jews, were mistreated by Soviet functionaries: "A Jewish militiaman ran up, threw me to the ground by my collar, and kicked me ..."¹⁰²⁷

One of the most detailed accounts, penned by Abraham Trasawucki in 1946, describes conditions in *Skala Podolska*, a small town near Borszczów on the Zbrucz River, near the Polish-Soviet border. Trasawucki is rather selective, however, and omits mention of the fact that when the Soviets led captured Polish soldiers through the streets of the town, crowds of Jews and Ukrainians converged to observe the show, screaming "Kill the Polish swines!" and "The Polish swine is dead!"¹⁰²⁸ The fate of Polish officials,

¹⁰²³ Account of Apoloniusz Czyński in Hartman and Krochmal, *I Remember Every Day...*, 198.

¹⁰²⁴ Account of Apoloniusz Czyński in Hartman and Krochmal, *I Remember Every Day...*, 199–200.

¹⁰²⁵ Account of Jan Różański in Hartman and Krochmal, *I Remember Every Day...*, 219.

¹⁰²⁶ Account of Zdzisław Adamowicz in Myśliwski, comp. *Wschodnie losy Polaków*, vol. 4, 263. Adamowicz was imprisoned (most of the guards were Ukrainians who mistreated the prisoners) sentenced and deported to a prison camp in the Soviet interior.

¹⁰²⁷ Kosma Lenczowski, *Pamiętnik kapelana Legionów Polskich* (Kraków and Krosno: Prowincja Krakowska OO. Kapucynów, 1989), 186, cited in Mieczysław Wieliczko, *Dzieje społeczne Polaków w warunkach okupacji 1939–1944/1945* (Lublin: Uniwersytet Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej, 1999), 49.

¹⁰²⁸ *Na Rubieży* (Wrocław), no. 47 (2000): 52.

landowners, and professionals, who suffered the bulk of the repressions, often at the hands of local collaborators, and who were hit the hardest economically, also escapes the notice of Trasawucki. Interestingly, Jews who rose to power locally under the Soviets favoured fellow Jews and helped them weather the new order.

Later that night we saw the first Russian [i.e., Soviet] patrol on the road, inquiring if we had seen any Polish soldiers. Our joy grew ...

We hurried next door to our neighbor, Eli Yoles, to inform him of the current affairs. Together we celebrated and woke our other neighbors ... We watched the Russian platoons appear on the streets while the Ukrainians walked dejectedly through the village. Many Jewish soldiers accompanied the army and they called out to us in broken Yiddish, "Peace upon you Jews, you prayed well over the New Year holiday!"

The joy of that night remains in my mind. I doubt that I had ever seen such true joy among my family before that moment. People were jumping about, hugging and kissing each other. Our excitement knew no bounds.

"See how the little wheel turns if God wishes," my father told us. "Observe, my children, the difference between the Jews and the gentiles from yesterday to today."

Despite the excitement, Sunday was business as usual, and my father urged me to begin my regular chores, ... My father and I, along with my younger brother, Chunele, went into the city on foot, as the military traffic prevented us from taking the wagon.

We had reached the first houses of the Jewish area near the unfinished synagogue, when we came across a scene that was chaotic at best. It was six in the morning, but the entire shtetl was awake and running through the streets, congratulating each other. Amidst the tumult, we saw a group of unfamiliar Jews running towards us.

"Have you any butter?" they cried.

"Yes," we answered. "But first we must distribute to our established customers. We will then sell whatever is left to our new buyers."

Suddenly, I heard a voice from behind my shoulder. "The bourgeois have already devoured enough butter, they can now make ends meet!"

I turned in the direction of the voice and saw Motke Kremitzer's wife. I looked at her, not quite comprehending the implications of her words. Here was the start of a new hatred. Not a hatred between Jews and gentiles but an enmity between the so-called rich and the poor. ...

My father and I did not answer. We proceeded to walk down the street to our usual customers, and stopped on the sidewalk ..., when suddenly, the poor could not wait any longer and began to attack us, tearing away at the butter. My father and I were completely powerless to stop them. We could not even tell who had taken it; all we knew was that when our regular customers came for their orders, we had nothing left. The butter had been taken before my very eyes by people whom I had never seen before. My dear father walked away smiling and called out, "The money does not matter. Let the Jews eat in good health and enjoy!"

As we walked down the street, we came across a similar incident. The Jews had attacked Moshe Mozner's bakery and were taking away the bread. The scene was dreadful. People in the bakery had shut the doors against the mob and were passing bread through the windows. ...

God! Had the Russians brought hunger with them to our shtetl?

We continued along the road to my sister, Chaya and her husband, Mendel. Every shop we passed was being looted in the same manner. Every store, be it food or merchandise, was being torn apart.

The Jews who were not looting the streets were rejoicing. Whether old or young, communist or capitalist, everyone happily greeted the Russian army, our true liberators. We passed by the Polish barracks, now occupied by the Russian military. The windows had been knocked out and there were signs of rifle bullets.

We reached Chaya's home and they, too, were overjoyed by the recent developments. Chaya and Mendel told us that a shootout had occurred on their small street the previous night. ...

In those moments, we knew no hunger, nor poverty. We knew only that a great miracle had occurred and we wanted to spend every minute drinking in the excitement and the feeling of liberation.

Our Communist saviors were not content to save the city and let it return to its previous ways. Soon after that miraculous night, communists began to take over high offices such as the post office, police, barracks, and so on. Red banners were suspended from many office windows. A new order was at hand with new rules and new laws, very different from the days to which we were accustomed.

Some members of the Jewish community were Pro-communist and immediately cooperated with the Ukrainians. These Jews were rewarded with grand positions and a new militia began to take shape, comprised of both Jews and Ukrainians. These privileged citizens carried weapons on their shoulders and wore red bands on their arms.

The Russians attempted to interfere with commerce as well. Polish currency was accepted as an equal to the Russian ruble. Stores were re-opened, but were no longer privately owned; all businesses were to be run by the state. ...

When I arrived home, I found the shtetl in a state of commotion. Anyone with Polish currency was looking to spend it immediately on merchandise. A terrific incitement campaign had begun between the merchants and the simple people. All Zionist organizations, the Culture School dissolved. The House of the People

became a subsidiary of the tailors' workshop. In short, the Jewish community was effectively dissolved and reorganized according to the Russian [i.e., Soviet] system. New ordinances were issued daily.

Hersh Shvartzbach [Hersz Schwartzbach], recently liberated from Chortkow [Czortków] Prison, was elected [sic—appointed] city mayor, with Martukh Nikolo as spokesperson. Moyshe Levenkron, a former employee of the mill, became the director. Muni Platt was appointed secretary of the organized militia.

The final step in the Russian "integration" plan was to initiate various meetings in which songs of praise were sung to Father Stalin and his regime. The "Cleansing Process" had begun.

One of the first policies instituted by the newly founded Russian [i.e., Soviet] government was that of nationalization. This meant that all property was to be divided and shared among the people. Businesses were liquidated and a large percentage of the merchandise was taken by the gentiles [i.e., primarily Ukrainians] and the so-called simple Jews. ...

Several members of our community decided to use the system to the best advantage to prevent unfairness against poor farmers [sic—as if Ukrainian farmers were rich!]. Men such as Hersh Shvartzbach. Motke Kremitser, Moyshe Levenkron, Herzog, and Shaul Shatner assisted [the Jews] in any way they could. They took over Rachmiel Kasirer's business for themselves, but took him in as a laborer. Hard-earned Jewish possessions were pouring in like salt in water. ...

During this time, the nationalization process continued. As usual, the Jews [benefitting from information from Jewish insiders] sensed that difficult times were approaching and began to prepare themselves. Men who had never performed any physical labor rushed to work on the roads, railway tracks, rock quarries, and public yards. Work was a plague among the Jews; it spread to every family and home in town. Some had the common sense to move from our shtetl to other towns.

Before long, many Jewish enterprises had been nationalized. With these new policies, our Jewish youth rose to higher positions and displayed a brutal use of power against their former employers. Shaul Shatner, who had been employed by R. Kasirer throughout the years, now refused to allow the Kasirers to enter their home for a pair of socks. Moyshe Levenkron had earned every penny of his livelihood working for the Zaydmans in the mill, yet now he benefitted from the new laws.

But of course, the greatest share of wealth went to the Russians [i.e., Soviets]. Property was divided among poor Russian officials, the common Jews, and the gentiles. Entire apartment were taken from one family and handed to the next.

It seemed the natural evolution of the system was to begin rounding up those who did not fit in with the new society. The Russians began to "cleanse" the town by arresting individuals such as Motel Fish, Moyshe Dugi Meltzer, and Zalman Huzner. These men were named traitors and were forcibly removed from their homes. ...

The NKVD carried out all tasks at night. ...

In order to avoid an arrest, each family had to ensure that as many members as possible had an occupation. ... My sister, Sosi, was offered a position in the city as a nurse in an out-patient clinic. Hersh Shvartzbach [sic] offered my father a tract of land on which he could work. The land would allow us to retain our horse and buggy and to care for our animals. ...

As for my brother-in-law, Mendel, my father suggested that I speak to my friend Moyshe Levenkron. Moyshe ran the mill and was more than happy to accept Mendel as an employee. ...

The main source of income for us was in trading in the black market. Without these little trips on the side, the common laborers could not possibly have supported themselves under the Russian regime. The average salary was between 180 and 200 rubles a month, which was sufficient for a lunch of salt and water.

In truth, one could live quite well on such a salary; 100 kilograms of corn was 4.20 rubles and 1 kilogram of butter was 1.80 rubles. The real problem was that luxuries such as these were scarce. [Perhaps in part because of corruption and the thriving black market which siphoned off such commodities?] If ever they became available to shopkeepers, a line would form immediately and one could stand waiting for days. At this point the shopkeepers [who were virtually all Jews], followed by the militia [which was largely Jewish] and the Russian officials, took their share of goods without any regard to the queue. The NKVD was close behind them, so that by the time the locals entered the store there was no food to be had. This left the common laborers [largely Jews] with two options; trade via the black market, where items were priced at one hundred times the actual cost, or steal from their employers. The majority of the commoners opted for the second choice. Those who attempted to hold their moral ground were soon swollen from hunger. Stealing was rampant and almost expected, but when caught the punishment was severe.

Several members of our community were caught and imprisoned. Prison sentences were an average of eight to ten years for minor crimes, though it was possible [for Jews with connections] to buy one's freedom for a large sum of money. Noson Shimon received seven years for selling a small skin of leather on the black market. Meleck Weizinger received seven years, and Shmiel Srul two years for nothing at all. The system was such that petty thieves remained imprisoned for a longer period than one who had, for example, robbed a bank. Major crooks and criminals could afford to buy their way out of jail, whereas the small-time thieves were forced to sit out the full sentence, which was often grossly exaggerated. ...

Time passed, and a proposition was put forth to turn our village into a powiat (district). A great meeting was called, since the Russians were unable to institute this without the consent of the town's population. Several speakers came forward, each with fabricated tales, one more unlikely than the next. Shortly after, a vote was

taken, all in favor of the motion raised their hands; all hands in the room were raised. All opposed—praise the Lord!—not a single vote. ...

Future elections were held in much the same manner. Skala [Skala] became a district and then an annex of the great Soviet Union. New passports were issued for all the locals. ...

During this period, many Jewish families from Western Poland had fled their homes in hopes of salvation. Some families had joined our village and attempted to settle there; the Russian rule was [assumed to be] far better than Hitler and his German army. Soon after, it was rumored that those who had fled Western Poland and wished to return could register and be permitted to go home. As usual, Jews believed and went to register as soon as possible.

It was a matter of days before we heard that the NKVD and the militia [in which many Jews served] had gathered all registered Jews and transported them to Russia [i.e., the Soviet interior].

Life continued in this manner for some time. One day blended into the next, a routine of hard work, little pay, and tremendous fear [felt by some] of what was just around the corner. ...

Hersh Schwartzbach, our mayor, sent for my father and offered him a position as a buyer. My father would buy produce from the collective farmers. Together with Nusi Hersher, my father received a storage area and began to work, all the while supervised by a Russian [i.e., Soviet] *natshalnik* (supervisor). ... With Father working, our family was able to make a decent living. My brother-in-law Mendel did quite well at the mill.¹⁰²⁹

Another Jew from Skala Podolska recalled how he turned to his friend's brother, now an important official in the town, for permission to transport a large quantity of food, which was strictly forbidden and severely punished under laws against smuggling. The Communist official extended a favour to this acquaintance, one that would never have been extended to a non-Jew.

Hersz Schwartzbach, my friend's brother and the erstwhile pro-communist spiritual leader of the local "Ha-Shomer ha-Tzair," had become an important personage in the local administration.

He was now a trusted adviser to the Soviet occupation forces. I knew that neither my family in Tarnopol nor my friends waiting for me in Lwów had any way of obtaining sufficient foodstuffs. So I decided to pay a call on Schwartzbach. The worst he could do was say no; I trusted him not to imprison me. In fact, he greeted me with open arms. He was worried about his brother Szymon, who was in besieged Warsaw. ... I kept hesitating to come out with my request, since I could sense the esteem in which the Ukrainians and Russians there held him. But he himself inquired about my fate and asked if he could help. I explained things and he agreed. The current regulations were aimed only at speculators and black marketers. He knew I was no speculator. All he had to do was draw up a document. He summoned the party secretary.

Now Schwartzbach asked questions and I answered. He stressed the fact that I was an orphan while omitting any mention of my relatives in Skala or their property holdings. ... Everything went smoothly after that. I received the required permit. Sarka and Zysio packed bags and crates and helped me load it all on the train.¹⁰³⁰

The lack of information from the outside world was eventually shattered by horrific reports that trickled in through various channels. The locals proved to be more adept at gathering information and attuned to the reality of life in the Soviet Union than many Western reporters from leading papers such as the *Manchester Guardian*, who often parroted Soviet propaganda at face value while reporting harshly on conditions in interwar Poland.

There were no Yiddish newspapers or books available. Once in a while, *The Star*, the Jewish newspaper from Moscow, could be found, but it featured propaganda for the Soviet regime and Stalin. From a Jewish standpoint, there was no news to be heard.

The lack of news caused great excitement when a large shipment of wood arrived in Skala [Skala Podolska]. The wood was unloaded and needed to be transported to Kamenets-Podolski. Everyone wanted to be part of the crew that would handle the transportation, not so much for the money involved but more out of curiosity as to life in Russia [i.e., the Soviet Union]. Although Skala had been annexed and was now considered Russian territory, the Russian border remained closed to us, as it had been before. No one was permitted to go over the border, nor was anyone from Russia allowed to come to us.

Hersh reported for duty in the hope that he would be chosen as part of the crew. He was accepted, and traveled to Kamenets [in Soviet Ukraine] with the wood. Upon his return, he relayed all the secrets of the Russian Paradise. The truth was harder to hear than the fiction we had been fed. Russia was poverty-stricken.

¹⁰²⁹ Abraham Tracy [Trasawucki], *To Speak For the Silenced* (Jerusalem and New York: Devora, 2007), 13–24.

¹⁰³⁰ Henryk Zvi Zimmerman, *Przeżyłem pamiętam świadczę* (Kraków: Baran i Suszczyński, 1997), chapter 10.

People lived in terror. No one wanted to hear anything about politics, and if forced to speak about it, they simply praised the Russian regime and attempted to change the topic.

Hersh had visited many families in the Jewish community, mainly elderly Jews. Almost 99 percent of the youth knew nothing about their religion, other than the fact that they were Jewish. ...

Hersh described the long lines in front of every shop, regardless of whether there was anything to sell. The longest lines—and the most trouble—were in front of the bakeries and groceries, where the militia was forced to step in and keep order. Hersh, along with two others, approached one of the longest queues and discovered that they were waiting to buy sugar. They explained to the soldier in charge that they were traveling home and wished to enter the shop without waiting on the line. Imagine their astonishment when the guard addressed the patient citizens.

“Comrades! Several people from Western Ukraine stand here among us. Until just recently, they have been enslaved under the yoke of Polish bourgeois and aristocracy, and they have suffered for twenty-two years under the Polish army, without seeing one bit of sugar. Since they must travel home immediately, they request that you allow them into the shop ahead of the line. Do you consent?”

“Yes!” the response came as if in one voice.

My brother related how he had been escorted into the shop and presented in the same fashion. Hersh would have forgiven them all, if only not to hear the words again. He and each of his companions received two pounds of sugar, the maximum allotment, and went on their way.

What a terrible impression Russia had left on him! People had no beds, and were forced to sleep on straw. Farmers worked the land, but were forbidden to own it; they were content with a small garden adjacent to their huts. A family with a cow and several chickens was considered wealthy. A person’s livelihood was earned by day labor, which lasted for twelve hours in the warmer months. No one was permitted to arrive even five minutes late. The third tardiness was considered sabotage and the guilty party was dragged to Siberia, from where almost no one returned. Absences were even more difficult. A note was required from the doctor, and these were issued only in the case of high fever.

Legally, the common laborer was to receive twelve kilograms of wheat, and other items such as milk, straw, and wood. However, when the time came for payment, each worker was given half, and the remainder was paid out in currency with which he could buy absolutely nothing, for the shops all “sold” their goods to the first in line.

Compared to these horrors, our farmers were living in luxury [for the time being]. They were independent, were required to deliver a specified quota, but the rest was pure profit that could be sold or traded.

And yet, despite all the troubles, the onset of poverty, and the twisted legal policies, the majority of the Jewish population was content. We recognized that the Red Army had in fact liberated us from the Germans and we were not so quick to forget that our lives could have been far worse had the circumstances been different. Only those who had been directly affected by specific laws felt that life might have been better under Hitler’s rule. ...

Even the Russian holidays had been instituted and “accepted”; we celebrated May Day, Revolution Day, and Red Army Day. Each holiday featured a demonstration in which all were obligated to participate and bless Father Stalin and the Red Army.

With all these changes, our own Jewish holidays had begun to lose some of their flavor. Many began to work on Shabbat and designated Sunday as their day of rest.¹⁰³¹

In reality, the German army had never conquered most of Eastern Poland and the Jews living there, as we shall see, had very little information about conditions in German-occupied Poland. What is clear from this account is that there was little nostalgia among the Jews for Polish rule. Most Jews had quickly gotten used to the new order and preferred the Soviets to the Poles.

Throughout Eastern Poland the impressionable Jewish youth appeared to be enraptured by the New Order. Abraham Brumberg, then a student at a Jewish high school in Soviet-occupied *Wilno*, recalls the mood that still prevailed in his school in January 1941. The collective psychosis that seemed to overtake the students was markedly different from the atmosphere in schools attended by Polish students.

I was a student at the Yiddish Real Gimnazye, where most of my fellow students had enthusiastically welcomed the New Order and became members of the Young Pioneers, the Communist children’s organization. They trumpeted their love for Stalin and their detestation of the “bourgeoisie,” among whom only a few weeks earlier they had counted some of their dearest friends.¹⁰³²

¹⁰³¹ Tracy, *To Speak For the Silenced*, 25–28.

¹⁰³² Sławomir Kapralski, ed., *The Jews in Poland*, vol. II (Kraków: Judaica Foundation Center for Jewish Culture, 1999), 78.

Even when their would-be Soviet protectors turned on them, Jews could be found who had lost none of their pro-Communist and anti-Polish zeal. For example, a Jewish woman from Łódź by the name of Hinda was caught crossing the German-Soviet border illegally. The Soviets accused her of spying for Germany and imprisoned her even though she insisted at every turn that she was a committed Communist who had done time in prison in Poland. Not only did she try to ingratiate herself with the guards and authorities in every conceivable way, but also used every opportunity to inform the Russians how bad the Jews had it under Polish rule, how they were persecuted, and what poverty they lived in.¹⁰³³ Another young Jew from Łódź, also an ardent communist, continued to defend the Communist ideology and the educational values of labour camps to, of all people, his fellow camp inmates.¹⁰³⁴

One of the most shameful examples of collaboration involved prewar literary figures, for the most part Jews, who converged on **Lwów** after the German invasion. Some of their exploits have been described in Tadeusz Piotrowski's *Poland's Holocaust* and Jerzy Robert Nowak's *Przemilczane zbrodnie*. They were employed, in Stalin's words, as "engineers of the human soul." Their talent was put to good use during the "referendum" which was held to legitimize the Soviet takeover of Eastern Poland. They were also needed to staff communist newspapers published in Polish (which specialized in denigrating Poland, Poles and Christianity), to edit new textbooks in Polish "history" and "literature," to establish ties with the working class, to participate in mass mobilization campaigns, to promulgate official Soviet policies, to propagandize Soviet ideology, and to appear in public with Soviet writers and dignitaries.¹⁰³⁵

Few of these members of the Communist intellectual and literary elite departed from their chosen paths, and even fewer of those ever acknowledged their erroneous ways. One of the few who did so was Aleksander Wat, who would later speak of this period as his "abasement" under Communism and insist on paying the price for his two to three years of "moral insanity."¹⁰³⁶

Most of these Jewish intellectuals, however, who eventually resurfaced in Stalinist Poland, however, contented themselves with passing the years as Communist mouthpieces, denouncing one another, or, much more frequently, as "non-conformist" intellectuals. Jerzy Borejsza (Benjamin Goldberg), for example, denounced several scholars in Lwów, including Dr. Antoni Lewak, director of the publishing house at the famed Ossolineum Institute, who was executed in Kiev in April 1940.¹⁰³⁷

¹⁰³³ Obertyńska, *W domu niewoli*, 105–106.

¹⁰³⁴ Stanisław Piekut, *Pod krwawym niebem: Z Polski do Rosji Stalina* (London: Polska Fundacja Kulturalna, 1986), 36.

¹⁰³⁵ Piotrowski, *Poland's Holocaust*, 77–79. A much more extensive treatment of the activities of these Communist intellectuals is found in Jerzy Robert Nowak's *Przemilczane zbrodnie*, 166–94. The latter book refers to important recent literature on this subject such as Jacek Trznadel's *Kolaboranci* and Bohdan Urbankowski's *Czerwona msza czyli uśmiech Stalina*. Second revised and expanded edition (Warsaw: Alfa-Wero, 1998), 2 volumes. See also Jan Marszałek, "Agitatorzy stalinowscy w Polsce (1939–41)," in *Encyklopedia "Białych Plam"*, vol. 1, 47–51. The following were some of the "prominent" exponents of this group of pro-Soviet Jewish writers that also included many others in its ranks: Adam Ważyk (Wagman), Stanisław Jerzy Lec, Jerzy Borejsza (Goldberg), Leopold Lewin, Halina Górska, Adolf Rudnicki, Aleksander Dan (Weintraub), Aleksander Wat, Julian Strykowski (Pesach Stark), Mieczysław Jastrun, Bernard Baruch Cukier (Wiktor Kolski), Leon Pasternak, Jan Kott, and Lucjan Szenwald. After the Soviet "liberation" of Poland in 1944, many members of this clique of Communist intellectuals were recruited again to participate in the subsequent Stalinization of Poland: Jerzy Borejsza (Goldberg) assumed control over publications and the press; Artur Starewicz was in charge of propaganda; Leon Chajn became a Minister of Justice; Wiktor Grosz (Izaak Medres) became head of military information; Jakub Parwin represented Poland in various international bodies and headed the National Bank; Antoni Alster became Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs; Adam Schaff took control of the country's education; Julia Brystygier headed a department to combat the Catholic Church in the Ministry of Public Security; Roman Werfel became a leading communist ideologue; and Melania Kierczyńska (Cukier) became a leading exponent of Stalinist literary criticism.

¹⁰³⁶ Watowa, *Wszystko co najważniejsze...*, 122; cited in Nowak, *Przemilczane zbrodnie*, 184.

¹⁰³⁷ Wat, *Mój wiek*, Part One, 296.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

The Civilian Deportations

Most poignant of all are the accounts of the deportations, most often of entire families expelled from their homes on short notice and under harsh conditions, with the few possessions they could carry. The deportees were taken to nearby railway stations and loaded into cattle cars destined for labour camps and remote settlements in the far reaches of the Soviet Union. Victor Zaslavsky identifies greed on the part of their neighbours as one of the motives for denouncing Poles: “No doubt they were also motivated by the fact that they were allowed to appropriate the property of the deportees—a fact that is well documented.”¹⁰³⁸

The first large wave of deportations to the Gulag, in February 1940, occurred almost two years before the Germans embarked on their “resettlement” of the Jews from the ghettos. The brunt of the ensuing misfortune was borne by the Polish population, an overall minority in this part of Poland, though Jews too, mostly refugees from the German zone, and to a lesser extent Ukrainians, Belorussians, and Lithuanians, were included in the later waves of deportations.

Many of the deportees had been tried *in absentia* under the infamous Article 48 and sentenced to lengthy terms of imprisonment. The deportations could take place only with the precise, advance identification of the targeted “political” and “class enemies,” a task entrusted to local collaborators. As British historian Keith Sword has observed,

The degree of organisation and planning necessary on the part of the Soviet authorities was considerable ... Lists of the victims, their precise whereabouts and destinations had to be drawn up. So meticulous and precise was this preparation that cases are recorded of Poles being taken from prison to be reunited with their families at the railway station; also, children taken from school to be reunited with their parents at the station. Trusted personnel had to be mobilised to carry out the operations: the NKVD, local militias, the Army, and even trusted civilians were employed. Herschel Wajnrauch was a Soviet citizen—a journalist brought in to work on a Jewish newspaper in Białystok. He recalled: ‘The Soviet police did not have enough people to carry out the mass arrests, so ordinary Soviet [i.e. local] citizens were used to help. Our newspaper was asked to provide two people, and I was one of them. We were given weapons and went with the Police to arrest these people and send them to Siberia.’ The whole operation [i.e., the first mass deportation in February 1940 which included few non-Poles—*M.P.*] was carried out in such secrecy that it came as a complete surprise to most victims.¹⁰³⁹

Historian Grzegorz Mazur has detailed the mechanics of the operation. At the county and township level, a threesome overseen by the NKVD, and which included local Communist Party secretaries, had the final say as to who was to be deported. The functionaries carrying out the arrests designated people from the

¹⁰³⁸ Victor Zaslavsky, *Class Cleansing: The Katyn Massacre* (New York: Telos Press, 2009), 37–38.

¹⁰³⁹ Keith Sword, *Deportation and Exile: Poles in the Soviet Union, 1939–48* (London: St. Martin’s Press, 1994), 16–17. The Wajnrauch quote is from Jan T. Gross, “Wywózki do Rosji,” *Aneks* (London), no. 51–52 (1998): 69, and is based on his testimony before the U.S. House Select Committee on Communist Aggression, 83rd Congress, 2nd Session, 8th Interim Report (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1954), 40.

local administration and party bodies to assist them. This action was in turn overseen by the party committee and administrative bodies at the regional level.¹⁰⁴⁰

The role of local people serving in the militia and administration, in which Jews figured very prominently, was thus all-encompassing. Not only did they draw up lists of deportees, but they also arrested them and helped to drive them out of their homes, which they often looted. They escorted the deportees to cattle cars assembled at train stations and guarded them as they were loaded into trains and dispatched on their long, harsh journey to remote destinations.¹⁰⁴¹ The numerous accounts cited below corroborate this fully.

What is less known is the massive proportions of the misappropriation of property seized from the deportees and the outright thefts perpetrated by local officials during the course of deportations. This even resulted in the setting up of special commissions to investigate the widespread abuses, recover the stolen property, and punish the perpetrators. There is no evidence, however, that this undertaking met with success.¹⁰⁴²

The following report is from the town of **Boremel** in Volhynia:

The small town of Boremel counted about 3,000 inhabitants of which more than 2,000 were Jews. The remaining inhabitants consisted of Poles, Russians, Czechs and Ukrainians. After power was taken over by the Soviets, a local [Communist] Party committee was constituted whose national composition was uniform: Jewish. A lot depended on that direct authority: who would be deported, who would receive a favourable opinion, who would be finally classified one way or another.¹⁰⁴³

Similar reports come from numerous other localities. In **Beresteczko** near Horochów, also in Volhynia,

Poor Jews entered the Soviet administration and it is they who carried out the cleansing and deported people to Siberia by providing the NKVD with names of members of the Polish Legions, the families of officers, officials, judges and others. Ukrainian communists also joined the administration, but they displayed their hatred to a lesser degree and sometimes even warned people about their deportation.¹⁰⁴⁴

¹⁰⁴⁰ Grzegorz Mazur, "Polityka sowiecka na 'Zachodniej Ukrainie' 1939–1941 (zarys problematyki)," *Zeszyty Historyczne*, no. 130 (1999): 81. A similar mechanism prevailed in Latvia, as described in Geoffrey Swain, *Between Stalin and Hitler: Class War and Race War on the Dvina, 1940–46* (London and New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2004), 40–41:

The deportations in Daugavpils took place in the following way. Local communist leaders were briefed about the operation five days beforehand and instructed to establish a five-person planning team involving the city or district secretary and representatives from the security services. These teams were to identify local targets, in line with the guide figures issued to them from on high. The next stage was to identify a team of 204 people, made up from party and komsomol members and the non-party sympathisers. Then an élite group of 32 party members and candidate party members was identified which would be sent to rural areas of Daugavpils district. At 7.00 in the evening of 13 June [1941] the team was called to a meeting and told of the need to purge the town of counter-revolutionary elements; it was then given detailed instructions as to how the operation should be carried out. ... the decision was welcomed and there were no cases of 'cowardice' of people giving 'excuses' as to why they could not take part.

¹⁰⁴¹ Polish historian Ewa Kowalska also points out the pivotal role of local collaborators, including members of the komsomol, in identifying and deporting the Polish population in February 1940. See her study *Przeżyć, aby wrócić!*, 85, 86, 88.

¹⁰⁴² *Ibid.*, 89.

¹⁰⁴³ Kiesz, *Od Boremla do Chicago*, 66. Fortunately for the author, his father was the only doctor in the town and was widely respected. The author also recalls how one Jew who was well disposed towards the Poles warned many of them of their impending arrest and deportation. *Ibid.*, 67. Jews also flocked to the komsomol (communist youth organization); the author recalls that in his high school, in which the language of instruction was Polish, of the 60 students in the komsomol, only three were non-Jews. *Ibid.*, 47.

¹⁰⁴⁴ Account of Halina Wilczek in Karłowicz, *Śladami ludobójstwa na Wołyniu*, 39.

Very often entire Polish settlements were brutally deported in the dead of winter:

Suddenly, in the middle of the night, the surprised village was given a half an hour to get ready after which, in the bitter cold, the entire population was loaded on sleds, driven to the railroad, and packed onto trains. No one was spared. They took the elderly and the infants, the crippled and the imbeciles. Mothers who were giving birth were thrown out of their beds and told to climb on the sleds. They dragged those who were bed-ridden and paralyzed. In a village or settlement that had been slated for extinction no living soul had the right to remain. The livestock and inventory automatically became the property of the State ... Foremost it was the purely Polish villages and colonies and the military settlements that were victimized.

At that time they also deported all of the families of the foresters and gamekeepers and the remaining Polish intelligentsia who had been expelled from their manors and estates and were hiding in the villages and foresters' lodges. The militia which was employed to carry out this cleansing consisted mainly of local Jews, Ukrainian communists, and the Soviet militia that had been brought in furtively from Kiev for that purpose.¹⁰⁴⁵

At the time, a telling jingle made the rounds in *Włodzimierz Wołyński*, in Volhynia. It captured the mood in the air and the new reality being witnessed on a daily basis:

Nasi Żydki siędy tędy,
Wszystkie pójdą na urzędy,
Ukraińcy do kolchozu,
A Polaki do wywozu.

(Our Jews here and there,
Will all go into government offices,
The Ukrainians to the kolkhozes,
And the Poles will be deported.)¹⁰⁴⁶

Though sudden and swift, undertaken at night to catch the deportees off guard, and well orchestrated, the deportations were not camouflaged in any way. The immediate surroundings became aware of them immediately and commotion spread as the convoys of Poles made their way through villages and towns to train stations in the depth of winter. Once the deportees were loaded into cattle cars, their clamour could be heard far and wide. Frozen bodies lay strewn along the roads and railroad tracks for all to behold. The following is a description from *Ostrówek* near Iwacewicz:

On February 10, 1940, in the middle of the night, a group of armed NKVD ... men, together with the local militia, banged on our door. We were shoved against the wall and searched. All the holy ornaments had been ripped off our necks, thrown on the floor, trampled on, and thrown into the trash. Then they searched the room that we had been gathered up in and the rest of the premises. After the search had been completed, we were told that we had 15 minutes to leave the house. ... Before the 15 minutes were up, we had been pushed out the door. ...

As we entered the snow-covered courtyard, three sleighs harnessed with one horse to each waited for us. With each horse there was a man from Vierashki [Wieraszki was a neighbouring Ukrainian village—*M.P.*]. ... NKVD men ... pointing the rifles in our direction. My parents, Sabina, and Barbara had to walk beside our sleigh.

We were taken to the school where we met almost everybody from our community. The entire playground and the road to the Ostrovek village were covered with sleighs. After us, a few more families were brought in.

... At nightfall, a local man called out our names alphabetically. Each family left one by one, every member being checked. ... As we stepped outside, our guards and drivers were waiting. ...

From the time of the leaving of our homes, all the dogs in our little community had been howling. Cows were mooing and horses were neighing. It sounded as though a calamity had struck the earth ...

It was about ten miles to the railway station. ... Hungry, almost frozen, and exhausted to the limit, we arrived at the station. Seven-month pregnant Sabina walked all the way.

¹⁰⁴⁵ Obertyńska, *W domu niewoli*, 288–89.

¹⁰⁴⁶ Edward Rosa, *Wspomnienia lat przeżytych na Wołyniu* (Toronto: Alliance of the Polish Eastern Provinces, 1997), 16.

On a side track, a freight train was standing. We were shoved inside. Some of our neighbors were in and lamenting. ...

The doors of the car had been shut and locked from outside. ...

The next night, more people had been brought in to our car. They were from Mihalín [Michalín], about five miles from us. ...

That night there was a bump, a jerk, and we were moving. ... Someone had said that the Russians were going to take us into the forest and shoot us all. With that sort of statement, instant panic erupted. The women began to pray and cry, and the children followed. It turned into a gigantic beehive. ... We began singing an evening hymn.¹⁰⁴⁷

Stanisław Milewski, from the settlement of *Staniewicze* near Iwacewicze, recalled:

On February 10, 1940, at about 5 AM, we were woken by Communists, Russians, Ukrainians, and Jews, who encircled our house and lined us up against a wall. We thought that they were going to shoot us all; instead, they told us that we had an hour to pack. We were told that we were being deported to Russia, but not where. A family staying with us when then was told to go upstairs as they were not on the list. My sister was also not on the list so she was not taken. She cried and begged to be allowed to join us and, a day later they brought her to our wagon.

We were loaded onto cattle trucks and, here, began the tragedy. We stood for three days in Wasowicze [Iwacewicze] before heading towards Moscow. Some young people managed to wedge the door open, and then jumped off the train. This was not an option for families with children. ... The train would stop between stations; we would jump out and collect snow for water. It was terrible cold; I remember two old ladies froze to death.

We were taken to Archangel [Arkhangelsk near the White Sea].¹⁰⁴⁸

Similar descriptions of the deportations of February 10, 1940 abound. A railwayman in *Smorgonie*, in the Wilno region, recalled “the indescribable crying and wailing of mothers and children.” In the colony of *Dobra Wola* in Polesia, as the people were driven away “only crying, the howling of dogs and shots here and there could be heard at the station.” When the train left *Krzemieniec* loaded with deportees, “there was loud screaming and crying at the station.”¹⁰⁴⁹

Carriages carrying families, guarded by militiamen, converged on the train station in *Husiatyn* near the Soviet border. The station was surrounded by militiamen and the NKVD. “The picture was horrifying. Many children had frozen on the way to the station. The screaming of the mothers was so shrill that one could go mad ... From those mothers who wanted to take their frozen-dead children into the wagons, the bodies were seized and thrown directly into the snow.”¹⁰⁵⁰

The bodies of children who froze on the way to the train station in *Przemysł* were found by the roadside.¹⁰⁵¹ The railroad joining *Równe* and *Szpetówka* (*Szepietówka*) was lined with frozen bodies, mostly children, discarded on the tracks by the guards. Similar scenes occurred in *Białystok*, *Łomża*, and *Drohobycz*.¹⁰⁵² The Polish population who witnessed these cruel deeds was in a state of shock.

How did Jews react when their Polish neighbours were rounded up in full view and deported to the Gulag? Most Jewish memoirs are silent or dismissive about these events, as if they didn’t occur or were of no particular significance. A case in point is Ejszyski mentioned later. A few memoirs speak of the fate of the Poles but do not acknowledge that Jews were involved in the deportations in any way. When, they do, as in the case of Michel Mielnicki, noted earlier, it is the Polish victims of the deportation who are vilified.

¹⁰⁴⁷ Niebuda, *My Guardian Angel*, 30–36.

¹⁰⁴⁸ Wojciechowska, *Waiting To Be Heard*, 165.

¹⁰⁴⁹ Gross, “Wywózki do Rosji,” *Aneks* (London), no. 51–52 (1988): 44.

¹⁰⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 76.

¹⁰⁵¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵² *Ibid.*, 79–80.

A Jew from *Antopol* near Kobryń, in Polesia, rationalized the fate of those deported to the Gulag from the perspective of later events:

The new regime took to purging the atmosphere of reaction, kulaks, ideological and economic opposition, etc. Among others, recent Polish settlers were carried off to the interior of Russia. At night the military authorities informed the victims to dress and pack, and they were loaded on motor cars to be taken to an assembly center. ... [When the Germans attacked Russia in June 1941] The Soviet authorities threw everything they had onto the vehicles and rushed away, promising they would return. ... We now envied the kulaks who had been forcibly deported to the land beyond the Volga. They were sure of their lives.¹⁰⁵³

Miriam Berger, who witnessed the deportations in *Horochów*, Volhynia, is one of the exceptional few who indicated, in her memoirs, that she was truly moved by the plight of the Polish deportees:

It was at this time that the N.K.V.D. began its operations. Numerous vehicles were commandeered from the nearby villages and were used to transport Poles who had settled in the town to the railway. Those deported were allowed to take with them only as much of their belongings as could be packed in half an hour, and on reaching the railway cars were packed into wagons which took them away to work in Siberia. ... A few weeks later N.K.V.D. men reappeared with their vehicles and this time took away the families of Polish officers who had reached the town during the retreat of the Polish Army. It was the depths of winter and the journey to Siberia lasted several weeks. We heard that many children and old people could not stand the terrible hardships and died before reaching their destination. ... It was now the turn of the Kulaks, the rich peasants. Thousands of them, with their families were expelled ... Among them were old people who begged to be allowed to die in their homes, but their pleas fell on deaf ears.¹⁰⁵⁴

A similar sense of compassion, this time for fellow victims, was displayed by a young Jewish girl who was deported from *Wilno*, along with her family, wealthy industrialists, in June 1941. This was her recollection of what she witnessed upon arrival at the train station from where she was shipped to the Gulag:

Ahead of us the cattle cars were waiting for their human cargo. ... What I saw only added to my bewilderment ... I saw nothing more villainous than peasants—women in shawls, men in cotton jackets and trousers that resembled riding breeches. I saw Polish peasants, not a rich capitalist among them; yanked from their land, they had toted their belongings in sacks, in shawls, in cardboard boxes. I saw reflected in their stricken faces our mutual shock.¹⁰⁵⁵

Janusz Bardach was a young Jewish “idealist” from *Włodzimierz Wołyński* who found the arrest of Polish officials, military personnel and clergy “logical and necessary” because of their “strong anti-Soviet and anti-Communist sentiments.” He began to have second thoughts, however, when the Soviets started to victimize his parents’ middle-class Jewish friends and acquaintances.

In late November [1939], however, I became troubled by stories about the brutal treatment of local citizens during night searches and arrests. These operations usually focused on landowners and merchants, many of whom I had known since childhood and whose honesty and integrity had never been questioned. ...

¹⁰⁵³ Prof. P. Czerniak, “War Years in Antopol, (1939–1944), From a Diary,” in Benzion H. Ayalon, ed., *Antopol (Antepolie): Sefer zikaron* (Tel Aviv: Antopol Societies in Israel and America, 1972), posted on the Internet in English translation at www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/antopol/.

¹⁰⁵⁴ Berger, “The War,” in *Horchiv Memorial Book*, 40–41. Another albeit curt example is found in the Luboml memorial book: “We saw under what conditions Polish refugees were sent to Russia: They were shipped in freight cars, without any sanitary facilities, without food or water, and so we tried to get out of this somehow.” See Kagan, *Luboml* (1997), 237. In the Tlumacz memorial book, Ephraim Schreier attributes *pro forma* a sympathy on the part of the Jewish community at large: “The first transport of deportees to areas deep in Russia included peasants from the surrounding villages, farmers (kulaks), and nationalists. The Jewish community was saddened by the sight of the wagon trains in summer and the sleighs in winter, carrying the farmers and their families away.” See Shlomo Blond, Hoz-Katz Jzchak, Ephraim Schreier, Alexander Schwarzbard, and Munio Wurman, eds., *Memorial Book of Tlumacz: The Life and Destruction of a Jewish Community* (Tel Aviv: The Tlumacz Societies in Israel and the U.S.A., 1976), cxx.

¹⁰⁵⁵ Esther Hautzig, *The Endless Steppe: Growing Up in Siberia* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1968), 21–23.

I hadn't realized that the city council officials, all of whom I knew and thought were my friends, considered my parents capitalists and therefore *vragi naroda* ["enemies of the people"]. I couldn't believe that they would take forcefully take my father's property and my parents' valuables. ...

I followed Dmitri's advice not to ask any more questions and not to plead on behalf of my parents and their friends, and I immersed myself even more in political activity, hoping my devotion would save my parents from trouble. I stood up on the platform at meetings and enthusiastically gave reports. I was delegated to participate daily in local gatherings and eventually was nominated to be a designated speaker at the meetings required for all citizens. At these meetings, designed for the "political education of the masses," I presented and analyzed political and military events and explained the role of the Red Army, which was to save the eastern part of Poland from the capitalists by incorporating it into Ukraine. [Bardach was vice-chairman of the municipal election committee who agitated for the annexation of Eastern Poland into the Soviet Union.]

...

During the first week of December a curfew was imposed on the city. An increased number of soldiers patrolled the streets, and rumors spread that dozens of cattle cars were arriving at the train station. I went with my friends to the station to see what was going on. Red boxcars were lined up by the hundreds and hooked to coal-burning locomotives. Their presence indicated that deportations were being planned, but no one knew exactly when they would take place or who would be deported. ...

Late in the afternoon on December 5, Yuri Savchenko came to my house, out of breath, and told me that mass arrests and deportations would take place late that night. He thought my parents might be on the list. [Bardach immediately rushed off to warn his parents and family and friends. He was then taken by the NKVD as a *portnoi*, a civilian witness, to assist and witness the searches and arrests.] ...

Andrei handed me the list. I recognized many names—friends of mine and of my parents. I flipped to the second page and froze "Shimon Stern—4." Taubcia's father. My father's name was also on the list, but for some reason it had been crossed off. Perhaps I would be able to scratch off other names when no one was looking. ...

As we got closer to the train station, shouting, wailing, and crying pierced the air, punctuated by gruff Russian commands. Hundreds of deportees were gathered on the plaza and guarded by soldiers. Several trucks were parked on the circle in front of the station, a place usually reserved for carriages. We pulled up behind the last truck and watched those ahead of us unload. Soldiers with bayonets surrounded the trucks, taking every opportunity to threaten, kick, shove, and swear at the captives.¹⁰⁵⁶

This "idealist" also describes how ordinary Poles put their lives at risk for their Jewish employers who were slated for deportation and died in a Gestapo-like execution—an occurrence for which no Jewish counterpart has been found (though examples of Jews assisting Poles have been meticulously noted later on).

We drove halfway down Kowelska Street and stopped in front of one of the newest houses, that belonging to Dr. Schechter. His children, Dalek and Marusia, were close friends of mine. Gennady's mouth gaped open when he saw the magnificent facade. ...

Gennady ordered Andrei to break down the door, and after several blows with the crowbar the handle broke. ... He was determined to find the Schechter family.

In the backyard there was a large brick barn. The gardener, his wife, and the night watchman lived in the three attached rooms, and Gennady thought the Schechters might be hiding there. [In fact they were hiding in an underground shelter in the nearby orchard.] He pounded on the wooden door until the gardener and his wife, dressed in nightclothes, answered.

"Where's the Schechter family?"

"They're at home," the gardener murmured.

His soft, sleepy reply further angered Gennady. "You son of a whore!" He grabbed the gardener by his nightshirt and pulled him close. "Find them or I'll kill you!" Spit sprayed in the gardener's face. Gennady pulled the gardener outside and threw him on the ground. The man stood up, wiped the spit off his face, and ran toward the house.

The gardener's wife began to wail. "Holy Mary! Holy Jesus! Please, I beg you, leave us in peace. Oh God! Holy Mary! Save us!" This was too much for Gennady. Although he barely understood Polish, he understood her religious invocation.

He grabbed her by the robe, which opened, exposing her breasts. "Filthy whore. I'll teach you a lesson." He began to kiss and fondle the woman. Her screams pierced my heart.

The gardener came running back to the barn. "Sir, please stop. Leave my wife alone. I'll do whatever you want, but please, leave her alone!"

"Did you bring your master and his family?" Gennady shouted.

¹⁰⁵⁶ Bardach and Gleeson, *Man Is Wolf to Man*, 29–41. Bardach's "idealism" was not easily shaken. In August 1944 he published an article in the Moscow-based Communist journal *Nowe Widnokreği* denouncing the Polish government as a hotbed of pro-Nazi agitation ("Hitlerowska agentura w łonie rządu sanacyjnego").

"I don't know where the Schechter family is. I went through the entire house and checked the backyard. I couldn't find them anywhere." [Obviously, the gardener could not have done all that in the short interval; more importantly, he did not disclose the existence of the secret shelter.—*MP*] He had barely finished the sentence when Gennady punched him in the face.

The gardener's nose bled profusely. He put both hands to his face, still pleading with Gennady to leave his wife alone.

Gennady let go of the woman. "Liar!" he said. He pointed his pistol at the man's face and fired. The gardener's wife jumped on Gennady scratching him. He flung her to the ground and drew his pistol.

The night watchman appeared, and when he saw the gun pointed at the woman, he ran up to Gennady and pushed him, throwing him off balance. Kostia and Andrei cocked their pistols, ready to shoot, when Gennady shouted, "Leave him for me! I'll teach him what it means to attack an officer of the NKVD. He's going to lick my boots and beg to die quickly." Gennady smashed the pistol across his face and tried to kick him in the groin but missed, landing his foot on the watchman's stomach. The watchman doubled forward. Gennady smashed the pistol on the back of his head. ...

The watchman's face had puffed. His eyes were closed, his nose was bleeding, and his upper lip was split in half. Gennady straightened up and backed away from him. He looked exhausted, and I thought he had finished, but then he lunged at the watchman again, grabbed him by both ears, and tore them out. Blood spurted onto the ground. ...

As Gennady started to kick the watchman again ... Kostia and Andrei were dragging the gardener's wife into a corner. She screamed and twisted, trying to free her limbs. Andrei pinned down her arms while Kostia spread her legs. She screamed wildly, and Kostia slapped her across the face and cursed. When Gennady stumbled over, Kostia got up and pulled up his pants.

"How was it?" Gennady asked. "Did you give her a good Russian fuck?"

He breathed hard. "The bitch loved it."

"Is she still alive?"

"I think so. You go next, boss." But Andrei was already on top of her.

Gennady took two big swigs of vodka, then handed what little was left to Kostia. They both laughed wildly and slurred obscenities while Andrei raped the woman. She didn't scream anymore, and I didn't think she was moving. ...

I slipped outside and walked around in the cold air. A few minutes later, I heard two more shots.¹⁰⁵⁷

A Jewish doctor, who spent the Soviet occupation in home town of *Podhajce* and the nearby town of *Thuste*, somehow managed to turn a blind eye to the fate of Polish officials and military personnel arrested in September and October 1939, but pitied the Polish settlers who were deported in February 1940, and *some* of the later deportees.

And when the deportations to Russia began, they first deported the Polish settlers, then the families of officials and military personnel, afterwards the *bezidentsy*, that is the refugees from the west [i.e., German-occupied Poland], and then at the very end some Ukrainian nationalists. They should have started with the last group, and not with the hard-working settlers who were not in anyone's way—only in the way of the Ukrainian nationalists, who saw to it that they were deported in order to increase their chances for an independent Ukraine. With the utmost ruthlessness, and without taking into account the weather or a person's state of health, even in the depth of winter, they transported these unfortunate people under guard. Among them were pregnant women, just about to give birth, and also those who had just given birth. They were packed into freight trains like cattle and shipped into exile in a strange, cold country.¹⁰⁵⁸

For the most part, however, as many accounts illustrate, Jews were largely indifferent to the fate of the Poles and even profited from their misfortune. Many Jews lined the streets to rejoice at the scenes of their

¹⁰⁵⁷ Ibid., 46–49.

¹⁰⁵⁸ Milch, *Testament*, 91.

Polish neighbours being shipped off to the Gulag and mocked these destitute masses. Such “spectacles” became a popular form of entertainment.¹⁰⁵⁹

¹⁰⁵⁹ By way of contrast, though Polish reactions were not uniform to the subsequent fate of Jews under the German occupation, there were frequent open displays of compassion. When the Germans came to round up the Jews in Opoczno, near Piotrków Trybunalski in late 1942 under the ruse that they would go to Israel, Aaron Carmi (Chmielnicki) witnessed a scene that belies the oft-repeated charge of the universal hostility, or at best indifference, of the Polish masses to the plight of the Jews: “Local Polish residents stood on either side of the road and parted from us with farewell cries and gazes. Some of them shouted to their acquaintances to throw them a keepsake, and a few of us did so. From time to time we looked back at the town where we were born. ... Children came out into the street, stared and pointed their fingers. Poles stopped along the road. Passers-by stared at us in astonishment and asked: ‘Whither?’” See Yitshak Alfasi, ed., *Sefer Opots’nah: yad va-shem li-kehillah she-harvah* [Opoczno Memorial Book] (Tel Aviv: Irgun yots’e Opts’nah vecha-sevivah, 1989), 4. Irene Shapiro, who was deported from Białystok after the failed revolt in the ghetto recalled: “The fence of Fabryczna had been opened and the Germans march us out of the ghetto into streets full of Gentile people of Białystok who have come out to peer at us. Some have smirks on their faces, but most look at us with compassion and tears in their eyes and I wish I could ask them to hide us somewhere. Behind me, I hear Golda’s sonorous Yiddish: ‘Zey veinen, die Peilen take veinen far uns! (They are crying, the Poles are really crying for us!),’” See Irene Shapiro, *Revisiting the Shadows: Memoirs from War-torn Poland to the Statue of Liberty* (Elk River, Minnesota: DeForest Press, 2004), 200. Polish diaries and accounts from that period attest to widespread sympathy on the part of the Poles to the plight of Jews being deported from the ghettos. The staunchly traditional and nationalistic Catholic author Zofia Kossak-Szczucka would become famous for publishing an appeal in an underground leaflet in August 1942 (“The Protest”), at a time when the first large deportation (“Aktion”) greatly reduced the Warsaw ghetto. She called the destruction of the Jews “the most terrible crime history has ever witnessed.” The leaflet continued: “In the face of murder it is wrong to remain passive. Whoever is silent witnessing murder becomes a partner to the murder. Whoever does not condemn, condones. ... We have no means to actively counteract the German murders; we cannot help, nor can we rescue anybody. But we protest from the bottom of our hearts filled with pity, indignation, and horror. This protest is demanded of us by God, who does not allow us to kill. It is demanded by our Christian conscience. Every being calling itself human has the right to the love of his fellow man. The blood of the defenceless victims is calling for revenge. Who does not support the protest with us, is not a Catholic. We protest also as Poles. We do not believe that Poland could benefit from the horrible Nazi deeds.” The full text of “The Protest,” in both Polish and English translation, is found in Nechama Tec, *When Light Pierced the Darkness: Christian Rescue of Jews in Nazi-Occupied Poland* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 110–12. “The Protest” made an enormous impression on Polish society and was not challenged by any faction, even the extreme nationalists. This appeal has been minutely “dissected” and widely criticized by pundits because of its “anti-Semitic” context which, allegedly, had the effect of dampening support for the downtrodden Jews. The young idealist Władysław Bartoszewski, however, recalls it as his rallying call and its author as his beacon. See Witold Bereś and Jerzy Skoczylas, “Władysław Bartoszewski—świadek epoki,” *Gazeta Wyborcza*, February 16, 2002. It has also been criticized for appealing to the Poles’ Christian convictions rather than to their civic duty to come to the assistance of fellow citizens (i.e., the Jews). This charge seems particularly flimsy since its stated intention was to give primacy to universal Christian teachings over narrow nationalistic ambitions, however justified. Given the author’s personal involvement in the rescue of Jews, however, her sincerity has never been effectively challenged. Kossak-Szczucka also levelled harsh criticism at those Catholics who failed to recognize that the commandment to love one’s neighbour extended equally to the Jews in other publications such as the pamphlet entitled “Jesteś katolikiem... Jakim?” (“What kind of Catholic are you?”). See Władysław Bartoszewski, “75 lat w XX wieku: Pamiętnik mówiony (6),” *Więź* (Warsaw), July 1997, 118–19. Kossak-Szczucka was also a caustic critic of social mores in general. As a prisoner of Auschwitz she was subjected to and witnessed the suffering and humiliation of many women, including many Polish Catholics like herself. In her postwar diary she opined that the martyrdom of these Polish women was God’s punishment for enjoying themselves before the war, for wearing lipstick and silk stockings. See Władysław T. Bartoszewski, *The Convent in Auschwitz* (London: The Bowerdean Press, 1990), 19. In any event there is no evidence that her appeal on behalf of the Jews was opposed by any Polish circles, or that there was a backlash, as suggested in a recent book (discussed below). Indeed, anti-Jewish sentiments did not play a significant role in the underground press. At a historical conference held in Warsaw in August and September 1999, *Europe Under Nazi Rule and the Holocaust*, historian Andrzej Friszke presented a paper in which he concluded, based on his investigation of a broad spectrum of the Polish wartime underground press, that he did not find any publication in which the Holocaust was condoned. A more detailed study of the right-wing press has confirmed these findings. See Wojciech Jerzy Muszyński, *W walce o Wielką Polskę: Propaganda zaplecza politycznego Narodowych Sił Zbrojnych (1939–1945)* (Biała Podlaska: Rekonkwista, and Warsaw: Rachocki i S-ka, 2000), 288–311.

E. Thomas Wood and Stanisław M. Jankowski strongly suggest that Kossak-Szczucka’s organization *Front Odrodzenia Polski* (Front for the Rebirth of Poland—FOP) was attacked by the Catholic establishment for its support of the Jews: “Yet, in the name of Catholicism, the Front’s members put their lives on the line to support the Jews. They

When the Poles were being deported from **Zambrów** near Łomża, the Jews who gathered to watch the spectacle laughed merrily: “The Poles are going on a pilgrimage to Częstochowa,” they mocked.¹⁰⁶⁰ (The shrine of the Black Madonna on Jasna Góra in Częstochowa was the most revered shrine in Poland.)

In **Lubieszów**, in Polesia, Jews took part in the arrest and deportation of Polish settlers consisting of ex-servicemen and their families to Siberia in February 1940. As the Poles were led to the train station to be loaded into cattle cars in the depth of winter Jewish townspeople gathered around and applauded.¹⁰⁶¹

When later deportations engulfed Jews as well (in the more benign climactic conditions of the spring and summer of 1940), the reaction of the local Jewish population was markedly different from the send-off accorded to their Polish neighbours and exhibited a sense of brotherhood. They would bring food to these unfortunate Jews, mostly refugees from the German zone, who were being deported with the assistance of local Jewish communists¹⁰⁶²; sometimes they would even attempt to hide endangered Jews.¹⁰⁶³ According to one account,

Hundreds of Luboml Jews came to the [train] station to see their “refugees” off, for each had become used to his own refugee. At that moment the kind-heartedness of the people of Luboml became apparent, for these people, despite their own difficulties, have given us their help, either with a kind word or with beds for the homeless and packages of food.¹⁰⁶⁴

The litany of Polish accounts attesting to Jewish complicity in the deportations of the civilian population is long and sad. Already in October 1939, which Polish historian Daniel Boćkowski considers to be the first wave of deportations, the newly appointed village council and militia in **Białozórka** near Krzemieniec, in which many local Jews served,¹⁰⁶⁵ ordered and carried out the deportation of Polish settlers. In that early period, the settlers were given a generous three days’ notice of their expulsion and allowed to take only one cow and those belongings that would fit on a carriage.¹⁰⁶⁶

At a public meeting organized by the NKVD in the village market square, an agitated crowd of Jews and Ukrainians gathered calling for the deportation of the Polish “leeches.” Accompanied by the militia, Jews went from house to house making inventories of agricultural produce and livestock to be taken over by the council. The contempt that some of these Jews displayed toward their Polish neighbours with whom they

¹⁰⁶⁰ Józef Klimaszewski, *W cieniu czerwonego boru*, (typescript), 29.

¹⁰⁶¹ Account of Zbigniew Małyszczycycki, dated November 23, 1997 (in the author’s possession). Lubieszów was a small and mainly Jewish town in the largely Ukrainian county of Kamień Koszyrski. Poles formed six percent of the county’s population, and Jews four. Małyszczycycki recalls how, on an Easter Sunday before the war, as a high school student he was accosted by a gang of Jewish teenagers who wanted to attack him. Luckily, some friends of his appeared and drove the assailants away. After the Soviet retreat from Lubieszów at the end of June 1941, a Jewish family by the name of Gopenfeld was sheltered in the attic of his family’s home to escape marauding Ukrainian gangs; however, their hysterical behaviour almost gave them away. A large group of Jews hidden on an acquaintance’s farm in nearby Zamienie was betrayed by a 13-year-old Jew whom the group was reluctant to take in because he was poor. The Jewish teenager left the hiding place and reported it to the SS stationed in Lubieszów. The Jews and their Polish benefactors were executed and the farmstead was burned to the ground. The young Jew acted as a servant for the Germans until he was himself executed in April 1943 when the unit was transferred to Luboml.

¹⁰⁶² Kwapiński, *1939–1945*, 16 (Złoczów).

¹⁰⁶³ “Stanisławów” in Danuta Dąbrowska, Abraham Wein, Aharon Weiss, eds., *Pinkas hakehillot Polin*, vol. 2 (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1980), 359–76, at 368; translated as *Encyclopaedia of Jewish Communities in Poland*, Internet: <https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/pinkas_poland/pol2_00359.html>.

¹⁰⁶⁴ Kagan, *Luboml*, 238.

¹⁰⁶⁵ Zagórski, *Wschodnie losy Polaków*, vol. 6, 60.

¹⁰⁶⁶ Popek, *Osadnictwo wojskowe na Wołyniu*, 69.

had traded and lived amicably before the occupation was baffling for the Poles. Polish school children also felt the wrath of their new Jewish teacher, Fejga Baszer, who subjected them to differential treatment unknown at their school before the war.¹⁰⁶⁷

A Polish woman whose husband had been deported from *Stanisławów* in October 1939 recalled how, in April of the following year, she was taken from her home in the middle of the night together with her four young children and deported to Siberia. The Soviet soldier who came for her was, as in very many such cases, accompanied by a local Jew. Earlier, this Polish woman had been urged by an unknown Jewish woman to sell her furniture to her because she would soon have no need for it.¹⁰⁶⁸

I remember well the date October 26, 1939 because my husband, who had been condemned to death, managed to yell out through a window in his train wagon which was wired shut: "My dearest wife, hope for the best, I'll be back soon." Those were the last words heard from the lips of my dear husband and father of four children (10, 8, 4 and 1½ years old). ... I asked a Jew I knew, a Polish citizen, what should I do, who should I turn to to get my husband out of jail? ... "We are in charge now, and you want them to be released? No, they won't be released, they're taking them to Tyśmienica," he replied. "What will they do there?" I asked. The Jew answered: "A bullet in the skull—you don't want that?" I stood nailed to the ground. Seeing that this had hurt me badly, he sneered and walked away. ...

After my husband had been deported, one day a middle-aged Jewish woman came by and asked: "Do you have any furniture to sell?" "No I don't," I replied. ... "You're making a mistake because soon you won't need it." ... Eventually, I had to sell some of my furniture ... to the wife of a Soviet prosecutor. ... [Several weeks later she went to his home to collect the rest of the money owed for the furniture.] ... He sat at the table and his first words were why did I sell the furniture? I told him it was because you have taken my husband ... He listened and then said, "Don't blame us. Your people insisted on it." "Our people?" I said in an astonished voice. "Yes, it was your Jews who insisted on it. If you don't believe me, go to the court and you'll see who is standing by the door to the Grievance Chamber." ...

The third transport was for us women with children, the wives of the men who had already been deported. On April 13, 1940, at one o'clock at night, two people came: a Soviet soldier with a rifle over his shoulder and a somewhat older Jew, his interpreter, whose hat covered his eyes. "So do you have a weapon?" asked the Soviet. "No, I don't." Just to be sure I was told to stand by the wall and not move. First they searched the room where the children were sleeping. They awoke and started to cry ... They looked through all the drawers throwing the contents onto the floor. ... Finally, they said, "Let's go. You have a half hour to get ready. We're waiting for you." My parents did not live far away and they helped me gather together the things I needed most ... The Soviet and Jew looked on and said, "What's left belongs to the Soviet government."¹⁰⁶⁹

In *Bybło* and the surrounding villages, in the county of Rohatyn, local Jews and Ukrainians denounced Poles who were then arrested by the NKVD and deported.¹⁰⁷⁰ A similar fate met Polish residents of many

¹⁰⁶⁷ Kołodziej, *Ich życie i sny*, 75–76.

¹⁰⁶⁸ Janina Grygar, letter, *Głos Polski* (Toronto), October 4, 1996. The theme of Jewish traders urging Poles to sell specific property before their imminent—but unknown to the Poles—deportation or just before the confiscation of their property by the authorities arises in other accounts. See also Grażyna Strumiłło-Miłosz, *Znad Świtezi w głąb tajgi (Rozmowy z moją matką)* (Olsztyn: Pojezierze, 1990), 32, which recounts how an unknown Jewish trader offered to buy a piano from the author's mother, warning her just days before it was seized, "I advise you to sell it. ... Who knows what will enter their heads? It's easier to hide the cash. They'll take the piano, but you could get some cash. They may have grounds for a complaint as to why you sold it. But don't you worry about that. I'll look into a way out so that they won't have anything to say."

¹⁰⁶⁹ "A kulę w łeb wy nie chcecie?" *Nasza Polska*, September 15, 1999.

¹⁰⁷⁰ Stanisław Jastrzębski, *Oko w oko z banderowcami: Wspomnienia małoletniego żołnierza Armii Krajowej*, Second revised edition (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Archidiecezji Warszawskiej, 1996), 62. Similar conditions prevailed again after the Soviet return in 1944, when denunciations of Poles became commonplace. *Ibid.*, 191. The top administrative positions in that area were all taken over by Russians and Jews from Russia. *Ibid.*, 196.

other towns in Eastern Galicia: *Kosów Huculski*,¹⁰⁷¹ *Kuty*,¹⁰⁷² *Tyśmienica*,¹⁰⁷³ *Stryj*,¹⁰⁷⁴ *Budzanów*,¹⁰⁷⁵ *Rudki*,¹⁰⁷⁶ *Komarno*,¹⁰⁷⁷ *Bilka Szlachecka*,¹⁰⁷⁸ *Zaloziec*,¹⁰⁷⁹ *Podkamień*,¹⁰⁸⁰ *Sasów*,¹⁰⁸¹ *Śniatyn*,¹⁰⁸² *Żurawno*,¹⁰⁸³ and *Ihrowica*.¹⁰⁸⁴

The deportations conducted in the extremely harsh conditions of February 1940 stand out for their brutality. The following scene was witnessed in *Derażne* near Kostopol, in Volhynia:

The winter of 1940 was very frosty ... The Polish population is being deported ever more frequently: ‘kulaks,’ former Polish civil servants, teachers, the intelligentsia, gamekeepers, colonists, foresters, etc. They are driven daily to the train station in an endless procession of carriages. People freeze ... they can only take with them their clothes, a small sack, and a little food. The transports are guarded on both sides by NKVD soldiers. One cannot approach these people or pass them some warm food or clothes—they are treated by the Russians like the plague. The Ukrainians and Jews do not hide their joy and denounce whomever else they

¹⁰⁷¹ *Na Rubieży* (Wrocław), no. 31 (1998): 34.

¹⁰⁷² *Na Rubieży* (Wrocław), no. 54 (2001): 44; Siekierka, Komański, and Róžański, *Ludobójstwo dokonane przez nacjonalistów ukraińskich na Polakach w województwie stanisławowskim 1939–1946*, 283.

¹⁰⁷³ *Na Rubieży* (Wrocław), no. 32 (1998): 36; Siekierka, Komański, and Róžański, *Ludobójstwo dokonane przez nacjonalistów ukraińskich na Polakach w województwie stanisławowskim 1939–1946*, 711.

¹⁰⁷⁴ *Na Rubieży* (Wrocław), no. 35 (1999): 42.

¹⁰⁷⁵ *Na Rubieży* (Wrocław), no. 35 (1999): 48; *Na Rubieży* (Wrocław), no. 63 (2002): 52.

¹⁰⁷⁶ *Na Rubieży* (Wrocław), no. 42 (2000): 22.

¹⁰⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷⁸ *Na Rubieży* (Wrocław), no. 43 (2000): 5.

¹⁰⁷⁹ “Punkt 13,” an interview with Edward Prus, *Głos Polski* (Toronto), July 9, 1995.

¹⁰⁸⁰ *Na Rubieży* (Wrocław), no. 60 (2002): 53.

¹⁰⁸¹ *Na Rubieży* (Wrocław), no. 49 (2001): 30.

¹⁰⁸² *Na Rubieży* (Wrocław), no. 61 (2002): 23.

¹⁰⁸³ Siekierka, Komański, and Róžański, *Ludobójstwo dokonane przez nacjonalistów ukraińskich na Polakach w województwie stanisławowskim 1939–1946*, 766.

¹⁰⁸⁴ *Na Rubieży* (Wrocław), no. 127 (2013): 30. The deportation list for the NKVD was compiled by the Jews, N. Herszko and N. Mychel, and the Ukrainians, N. Zahaluk and N. Horbatiuk.

feel should be deported. We already know that some of the people detained by the NKVD are shot, but no one knows where.¹⁰⁸⁵

In *Huta Stepańska* near Kostopol, in Volhynia, a militia consisting of Ukrainian and Jewish riff-raff arrested local officials and handed them over to the Soviets. A pack of militiamen descended on the rectory of the Catholic church and seized the elderly parents of the pastor, Rev. Aleksander Czaban, who were around 80 years of age, pious and well-respected in the community. They were shoved around and mocked, and then loaded on a carriage. They perished in exile in Kamchatka.¹⁰⁸⁶

In *Białozórka* near Krzemieniec, entire Polish families were rounded up on February 10, 1940, permitted to take only a few possessions, and assembled at the local school. The NKVD officer who oversaw the operation was accompanied by Ukrainians from the local police and the secretary of the heavily Jewish village council. From there the Poles were taken by sled over snow-covered roads to the railway station in Maksymówka, where they were loaded into crowded cattle cars.¹⁰⁸⁷

In the colony of *Bajonówka* near Tuczyn, in the county of Równe, on February 10, 1940, at four o'clock in the morning, Polish settlers were brutally awoken by the NKVD and local Jewish communists and informed of their deportation. They were given one hour to pack some belongings, transported to the train station in Zdołbunów, and packed into cattle cars whose doors were then bolted shut. The bunk beds in the wagons were overcrowded with passengers. The next night the train set off for the Soviet interior.¹⁰⁸⁸

In the village of *Wola Ostrowiecka* near Luboml, the home of a Polish state gamekeeper was surrounded on February 10, 1940, by the NKVD and local Jews in their service. While the house was searched its inhabitants were forced against the wall with their hands raised. They were told they would be resettled in a different region and given two hours to pack whatever belongings they could carry. They were put on sleighs and taken to the train station in Luboml, where they were loaded into freight wagons. From there they set off on a two-month journey to their unknown destination in the Arkhangelsk region of northern Russia.¹⁰⁸⁹

Jan Chumko recalled the fate of his family in the settlement of *Kościuszków* near Łuck:

... rumours began to circulate with increasing regularity of approaching arrests and subsequent deportation to Siberia. ... It seemed that such deportation was aimed at adult males only so, to be on the safe side, during the night of the 9/10th February [1940] my father and two close friends left their homes and hid in the nearby mill. However soon after midnight not having their suspicions aroused, they decided to return to their families.

It was not long before we heard very insistent knocking on the door and our worst fears materialised. After entering our house the NKVD officer, assisted by local Ukrainians and Jewish militia armed to the teeth, read out a statement about deportation. He told us to pack our things and take sufficient food and necessities for about a month's journey. The exceptionally severe winter of 1940 further intensified the ghastliness of deportation.

After being loaded onto sledges we were taken as a family to the railway station in Nieświcz on the Lwów-Łuck line. Say was beginning to break as we arrived at the station and it was only then did we realise the huge scale of the deportation when we saw our friends from the osada [settlement] and other Poles from around the district being loaded into the cattle trucks. ... The next day, as we looked through the metal grille, came the dreadfully sad emotional moment as we said goodbye to our house. With tears in our eyes we sang patriotic songs.

¹⁰⁸⁵ Account of Włodzimierz Drohomirecki in *Świadkowie mówią*, 97.

¹⁰⁸⁶ Władysław Kobylański, *W szponach trzech wrogów* (Chicago: Wici, 1988), 12–13.

¹⁰⁸⁷ Kołodziej, *Ich życie i sny*, 80–81.

¹⁰⁸⁸ Account of Krystyna Ostrowska in Henryka Łappo, et al., eds., *Z Kresów Wschodnich Rzeczypospolitej: Wspomnienia z osad wojskowych 1921–1940*, Second expanded edition (London: Ognisko Osadników Kresowych, 1998), 152.

¹⁰⁸⁹ Account of Stanisław Skibiński in Karłowicz, *Śladami ludobójstwa na Wołyniu*, 485.

Our transport travelled almost a full month before we arrived at the place designated as our place of exile in Siberia. This was Kopytovo near Kotlas in the district of Archangel [Arkhangelsk].¹⁰⁹⁰

Another resident of Volhynia recalled:

On a memorable night of February 10th, 1940, a police officer with the NKVD accompanied by Jews and Ukrainians came to our house. We were escorted to a train station and shoved into railcars. After a month-long journey, enduring hunger and the freezing temperatures, we arrived in a Siberian state of Wologda [Vologda], county of Tocimsk and Cholm village. We were deported to forced labor in the forest—condemned to starvation, leaving all our possessions in Wołyn [Wołyń]. We worked here until August of 1941, when a Majski-Sikorski act granted amnesty to the Poles.¹⁰⁹¹

Fortune smiled on a Polish family in **Rożyszcze**, in Volhynia, who were warned by some friendly Jews that they would soon be deported to the Soviet interior. They were also told the name of the Jew who had seen to it that they were placed on the list of deportees.¹⁰⁹²

In **Gwoździec**, a small town near Kołomyja:

Then came the unusually snowy and harsh winter of 1939–1940, and with it the tragic dawn of February 10, 1940, when entire Polish families, including children and the elderly, were loaded into cattle cars. Order was maintained by local Jews and Ukrainians who not so long ago constituted, or so it seemed, a friendly contingent of our township community.¹⁰⁹³

A long list of the Polish families affected by the deportation follows.

In **Horodenka**, also in Stanisławów voivodship, from which more than 220 Poles—mostly women and children—were deported in February 1940, local Ukrainians and Jews continued to denounce Polish officers and policemen who remained in hiding. One of them was a former police commissioner by the name of Bryl, who perished in Siberia.¹⁰⁹⁴ On February 10, Poles from the colony of **Terpin** near the village of Dmytrów, in the county of Radziechów, Tarnopol voivodship, were rounded up by NKVD soldiers, who were assisted by local Ukrainians. The Poles were forced to leave behind most of their possessions. They were transported by sled to Cholojów, where they were packed onto freight trains. When passing through Cholojów, Jews with red armbands mocked them openly for the benefit of the soldiers who led the convoy of Poles. Forty-two persons were packed into one overcrowded, unheated wagon.¹⁰⁹⁵

In **Bogdanówka** near Zborów, the list of deportees was compiled by local Communist officials, all of them apparently recent converts to the cause, from among the tiny group of some ten Jews who lived in this Polish-Ukrainian village. Basia Szapiro headed the Communist Party, her son-in-law by the name of Lipszyc became the secretary of the township, the horse trader Jozs Pinkas assumed the position of the Red

¹⁰⁹⁰ Jeśmanowa, *Stalin's Ethnic Cleansing in Eastern Poland*, 199–200.

¹⁰⁹¹ Jan Kupriańczyk, "History of My Family," in Carolan, *The Mass Deportation of Poles to Siberia*, 188.

¹⁰⁹² Account of Krystyna Buholec, "I chwalcę czerwoną armię . . .," *Nasza Polska*, September 8, 1999.

¹⁰⁹³ J. Rokicka, "Było sobie takie miasteczko na Pokucie," *Semper Fidelis*, no. 5 (22) September-October 1994: 31. Despite the conduct of local Jews during the Soviet occupation, Poles did not refrain from rendering assistance to the Jews during the subsequent German occupation. "Among them was Stefania Krasnodębska, my mother," states J. Rokicka, "as well as Janina and Karol Krzeszowicz. They hid five Jews under their stable: Mendel, Moszek and Frydel Bergman together with Preszel and Stella. Aniela and Piotr Nosal hid a Jewish family named Neubarger, who also survived the war and emigrated to the United States." The Krzeszowicz and Nosal families are now numbered among the "Righteous Among the Nations." Ibid., 32.

¹⁰⁹⁴ *Na Rubieży* (Wrocław), no. 29 (1998): 13.

¹⁰⁹⁵ Maria Jańczak and Stanisław Lasek, "Wspomnienia Kresowiaków-Sybiraków," *Goniec* (Mississauga), May 29-June 4, 2009. In the fall of 1939, the Poles who lived in colonies near Dmytrów were subjected to attacks and robberies by Ukrainians. Two Polish residents of the colony of Strachów were killed by Ukrainians in November 1939.

militia within days of the Soviet entry, and two other Jews rounded out the new organs of authority. On February 10, 1940, three Russian soldiers accompanied by Józef Pinkas, the armed militiaman, descended on the homes of the Świrski and Gierc families, well-to-do farmers, and arrested the eight members of these two Polish families. The Świrski family, consisting of parents and two teenage sons, was awoken at three o'clock in the morning and given a half hour to pack. When asked what the charges were, a document was produced and read: Mr. Świrski had fought in General Józef Haller's Army and against Soviet Russia in 1920, Mrs. Świrska was active in the community as a women's organizer, and the sons had committed political transgressions of their own. In brief, these trumped up charges could only have been concocted by local people who were quite familiar with their neighbours' affairs. When asked where they were being sent, Pinkas replied: "To polar bear country." The two Polish families were driven by cattle-drawn carriages to the train station in Jezierna, some five kilometres away. In total, some 92 Poles from surrounding villages were loaded into a cattle car that left the station late that night. By the time it arrived at its destination in Komi on March 29, six of the passengers had died.¹⁰⁹⁶

In *Hermanów* near Biłka Szlachecka, not far from Lwów, Maria Karpa recalled how she and her family were driven from their home:

On the tenth of February [1940], a Saturday, at five thirty in the morning, there came seven Soviets armed with rifles, two men from the Ukrainian militia and five Jews, who were also armed. There were six of us in our family, and they were fifteen armed men. One of the seven Soviets read an official order which was like a death sentence. We were given fifteen minutes to get ourselves and our children together. We didn't have enough time to get ready and were fearful of what would happen to us, so we were only half dressed. We were not allowed to take anything at all. It was only about a kilometre to our train station, yet they took us to the station in Winniki, fourteen kilometres away. We stood all day inside freight wagons—it was like [being] in a shed because they were not heated. At night they transported us to Lwów where we stayed for another whole day. When our family found out that we were taken from our home under guard without being allowed to take anything with us, they brought us some food. The Soviets and Jews did not want to allow our parents to come close to the wagons, so we started screaming and crying and jumped out of the wagons not paying attention to the guards because it didn't matter to us any more. We only wanted to get some food for our children. The next night they left Lwów with us. There were 58 people in this wagon.¹⁰⁹⁷

Emilia Kot Chojnacka recalled the deportation of her family from the village of *Miejsce Piastowe* near Lwów:

It was early in the morning on a Saturday, February 10, 1940, when we heard a knock on the door. We opened it and there stood a Russian soldier pointing his gun at us, ordering us to pack. He was accompanied by a local Polish Jew.¹⁰⁹⁸

That same day several Jews burst into the home of eight-year-old Jerzy Biesiadowski in *Lwów* and gave the family ten minutes to pack.

I put on my coat and fur hat, but only managed to put on one shoe when I was kicked by a Jew. As I slid across the floor on my stomach I grabbed the other shoe, but the Jew tore it out of my hand and threw it in a

¹⁰⁹⁶ Account of Władysław Świrski (in the author's possession). This account, the subject of memoirs in progress, takes on a few ironic twists. The Gierc's new house was occupied by Józef Pinkas but he did not enjoy it for long. Word got back to the Soviets that Pinkas had been a horse trader before the war and his new bourgeois lifestyle only reinforced the charges that he was a capitalist. He was arrested, convicted and deported to Siberia. However, unlike the other Jews who stayed behind and later perished under Nazi rule at the hands of the Ukrainian police, Pinkas survived the war and returned to Poland, at least temporarily, after the war. The reason for seizing the large landholdings was to parcel them out to poor Ukrainian peasants as an incentive to join the Communist Party. However, when the Germans arrived the Ukrainian police set on and murdered these Ukrainian "Communists" along with the local Jews who had been heavily implicated in the Soviet regime. Shortly before her execution, Basia Szapiro took her niece to Katarzyna Olender, the grandmother of Władysław Świrski, the very family she was instrumental in deporting to the Gulag, and pleaded with Mrs. Olender to shelter her. Mrs. Olender successfully hid the niece for the duration of the war and she (the niece) later settled in Toronto.

¹⁰⁹⁷ Gross and Grudzińska-Gross, *W czterdziestym nas Matko na Sybir zesłali...*, 307.

¹⁰⁹⁸ Wojciechowska, *Waiting To Be Heard*, 133.

corner. I was thus forced, wearing one slipper, out into the snow with my mother. We were packed into cattle cars for deportation in –40°C weather. Many people froze. The guards opened the doors and asked, “Who croaked?”¹⁰⁹⁹

The Syss family lived in *Naroty*, a small farming settlement for Polish veterans of the Polish-Soviet War of 1920. The head of the family, Stanisław Syss, a non-commissioned officer, had been called up for military service at the beginning of September 1939, leaving behind his wife, Irena, and four children on their farm. In January 1940, some local Jews came to their house and demanded that they leave. The Jews told them they were not welcome and if they stayed, they would have the Soviets execute them. Irena Syss asked, “Where are we supposed to go?” She was told, “We don’t care. Why don’t you ask your God if there is space for you in His heaven.” The Syss family packed some things and travelled to Stanisław’s parents’ house about 20 kilometres away. They stayed there for about three weeks before getting word that it was safe to return home. When they returned, they found that most of their belongings had been stolen by the local Jews. Then, early the next morning, three men—a Soviet soldier, a Jewish neighbour and another man—forced their way into their house. They were ordered to stand against the wall. The Jewish neighbour wanted to know where Stanisław Syss’s pistol was. Mrs. Syss denied knowing anything about it. He threatened to shoot her if she did not tell, saying, “I heard you firing it!” She thought that if she admitted to it, the entire family would be killed. The intruders searched the house but didn’t find the pistol. In fact, Mrs. Syss had buried it in the garden under a rose bush. The Syss family was ordered to pack. One of the children managed to escape and started running away through the fields. He was called back by the Jew, who warned him that unless he came back, his mother would be shot. He returned. Mrs. Syss was pleading to know where they were going to be taken. The Jew simply said, “To meet your God.” The Soviet soldier, who seemed to be more compassionate than the Jew, replied, “Pack warm clothes because you are going to Siberia.” They were escorted by another local Jew to the railway station in *Smorgonie* where hundreds of other Poles were gathered. The large Jewish community in Smorgonie stood around and mocked the Poles. The Poles were packed onto cattle trains with no toilets, just a hole in the floor of the train. The temperature was freezing. The dead were thrown out of the train. The passengers had no idea where they were going and rumours were rife. The train would stop now and then and people were taken off. The journey lasted a few weeks. The Syss family and a few others were the last people to leave the train when it arrived near the Mongolian border. A long ride by horse took them to their “new home” at Rudnik Kommunar in Krasnoyarsk Krai.¹¹⁰⁰

The owners of an estate in *Hurnowicze* near Mołodeczno were deported to Siberia by the NKVD in 1940 and 1941. The NKVD was assisted by a Jew by the name of Sejzer, who had leased a mill belonging to this Polish family.¹¹⁰¹ In *Nieśwież* county, “Some Jews put red armbands on their sleeves and, having been assimilated into the NKVD, denounced Polish patriots to the Soviets.”¹¹⁰² After compiling lists of settlers and an inventory of their property and possessions, on February 10, 1940, local communists—Jews and Belorussians—in the company of the NKVD descended on the homes of Polish settlers in *Kuchczyce*, robbed them of their valuables, and gave them two hours to pack what they could carry. Under guard, in minus twenty degree temperature, entire families were taken to the nearest train station from where they were deported to labour camps Arkhangelsk.

Arrests began from the first day of the Red Army’s invasion. From the second half of September [1939] until February 1940 the main road Brest [Brześć]-Moscow was crowded with folk going in both directions. To Brest came empty Soviet lorries which were loaded up for their return journey. The Russians were stealing everything: furniture, machinery, church bells, building materials, arts objects, horses, pigs, sheep and cattle. In short they stripped their ‘liberated’ country naked.

¹⁰⁹⁹ Grażyna Dziedzińska, “Jerzy Biesiadowski—wytrwały,” *Nasza Polska*, June 9, 1999.

¹¹⁰⁰ Account of Richard Sys, dated May 2013 (in the author’s possession).

¹¹⁰¹ Account of Maria Antonowicz (née Romanowski), “Polacy na Kresach w latach 1939–1941,” *Nasza Polska*, September 8, 1999; also quoted in Nowak, *Przemilczane zbrodnie*, 76.

¹¹⁰² Account of Waław Wierzbicki in Łappo, *Z Kresów Wschodnich RP na wygnanie*, 582–83, and Jeśmanowa, *Stalin’s Ethnic Cleansing in Eastern Poland*, 654–55.

In the controlled general election which followed, the people of the Borderland had to express agreement for the annexation of their land by the Soviet Union. Then in the late autumn after the ‘election’ the NKVD helped by the local communists prepared an A-Z list of settlers’ names, their possessions, livestock and farm equipment. I’ve no doubt that deportation was already being planned.

When at four in the morning of 10 February 1940 NKVD officials with the aid of local communists burst into settlers’ homes the men of the families were not allowed to move: a soldier with a rifle closely covered each one. During these raids the NKVD gangsters simply [sic] stole—they tore clocks from walls and turned everything over in their search for gold and any other articles of value. They suggested that provisions for a week should be packed but no more than each individual could carry. They informed us that it was on Stalin’s personal orders that we were to be resettled in the depths of Russia but, as to the exact location, they themselves had no idea.

Large families with children were allowed to take a horse as a means of carrying personal possessions as far as the nearest railway station. ...

When we reached the station [in Rejtanów] we were loaded onto wagons ... Before being loaded onto the wagons people were ‘encouraged’ to sign a document stating that they were voluntarily leaving for the Soviet Union. Of course my father refused to sign.

In Baranowicze we were shifted across to the wide-gauged wagons. As you’d expect they were goods vans fitted out with bunk beds but with no arrangements for sanitation and as many as people as possible were squeezed into each one. In the middle of the large wagon was a stove meant for heating but this was little more than useless since we rarely had wood for fuel so it remained appallingly cold. We were given no water but sometimes, if he was a kindly sole, our guard would scoop up a bucketful of snow from the side of the track. Salter herrings were doled out as food. Our dead were thrown from the moving train onto the snow.

At the beginning of March we steamed into the railway station at Velsk in Archangel [Arkhangelsk] Province. Only small children, the sick and our belongings were loaded onto sledges. I had to walk the 50 kilometres to posiolek [settlement] Piudla where a few barrack huts stood in the forest. Three to five families were herded into each room.

During the first week they gave us nothing to eat but the NKVD prepared lists of families which indicated which individuals were or were not able to be put to work. Bread coupons were issued to the families allowing those working to buy 800 grams, and 200 grams for each child and the unemployed. When the bread was only half-baked dividing it between everybody was very difficult. We supplemented our diet with frozen mushrooms (there were thousands of them) which we found buried beneath the snow and by simply boiling grass.

For 10–12 hours per day, six days a week and sometimes on Sundays as well, we worked in the forest felling trees.¹¹⁰³

The Gieniewski family was expelled from their home in a village near **Holszany**, in the county of Oszmiana, in the dead of winter with the help of local militia:

The winter of 1939–1940 was severe in eastern Poland: temperatures dropped to 35 degrees below zero Celsius at night. Such was the night of February 10, 1940. We were suddenly awakened at six o’clock in the morning by a strong pounding on the front door.

“Otvieray!” [“Open!”] voices ordered. Our frightened parents jumped up in their pajamas. “Who is there?” our father asked.

“Open the door!” the voice said. “We are the militia from Holszany (8 kilometers away). Your house is surrounded by Russian soldiers!”

My father Józef looked through a small unfrozen area in the window and saw a soldier with a long bayonet on his rifle. He opened the door and two armed Jews from the local militia entered the house followed by two plain-clothed Russian *politrooks* [politruks], or political officers.

Our mother [Jadwiga] immediately fainted and fell to the floor. My two siblings—brother Benedykt at age 14 and sister Genowefa at 9—and I [Czesław] just sat in our beds. One of the Jewish militiamen poured cold water over our mother’s face. She slowly regained consciousness. Our father’s face was stone white. He was certain that he would be taken away, but he did not think that they came for the whole family.

The soldiers ordered us to stay put. The militiamen and the Russian *politrooks* carried out a house search. Only God knows for what they looked. The older *politrook* pulled a piece of paper from his pocket.

“You are undesirable people and you will be resettled to a different province,” he read.

“Why don’t you say that you are deporting us to Siberia?” I cried. “Are you deporting us just because we are patriotic Poles?”

He did not answer my questions. Instead, he ordered us to be ready for a long journey in 20 minutes.

“Take only the food and clothing that you can put onto yourselves,” he said. “Everything else remains.”

He left the house. The first things our mother reached for were a crucifix and a small icon of Saint Mary. One of the Jewish militiamen grabbed the items from my mother’s hands and threw them on the floor.

¹¹⁰³ Ibid.

“You will not need those rotten things,” he said.

Our parents were in a terrible state of shock, could hardly speak, their hands were shaking. The 20-minute time limit was hardly enough to dress for the severe weather conditions even under normal circumstances. Where was the time for gathering the food? My parents had worked hard for 20 years building their home and their sorrow at it being taken away was heavy. But it had to be brushed aside for the sake of survival.

First, they made sure that all of us dressed in our warmest clothing and packed the available food. About 25 minutes later, the older *politrook* was back with a man driving a horse and sleighs. The two Jewish militiamen and the younger *politrook* sat behind us in the horse-driven sleighs.

Both of my maternal and paternal ancestors were deported to Siberia after the unsuccessful uprising against Russian occupation in 1863 ... My family and I believed we were the only family to be deported. Until we got to the small railroad station called Bogdanow [Bogdanów], about 8 kilometers away. To our surprise, hundreds of families were at the station, droves that were herded into the cattle wagons of a long train—a process that continued all day long.

The boxcars had chimneys sticking out through the roofs. Each car had only two small windows per side. Father recognized many of his colleagues from the Piłsudski Army that fought for the independence of Poland against the Bolsheviks in 1920. ...

We were packed into cattle cars with 5 to 10 families in each (about 30–40 people) and taken to Bogdanow, in the province of Nowogródek and then driven to a bigger station, Molodeczno [Mołodeczno]. Many more Polish families there were added and the next day the mile-long train arrived in Minsk. ...

Shortly after, the train sped eastward in the direction of Smolensk, and after that to Tula and Riazan. ...

Late in the evening the train sped further east towards Saransk and kept on going, day and night through Ulyanovsk, Ufa, Cheylabinsk, Petropavlovsk, Omsk and Novosibirsk. ... The whole “journey” lasted 23 days.

In the middle of the night on March 3, 1940, fewer than ten railcars of us were shoved onto a sidetrack in the station of Zamzor and we were ordered to walk out *z vieszchami*, with all our belongings. Horse drawn sleighs were waiting for us. This was the end of our deportation by train.

... On horse-driven sleighs, the Russians took us under armed escort through taiga forest about 12 kilometers north of the Trans-Siberian railroad. Before sunrise we were brought to our final destination: camp No. 12 near Zamzor, Nizneudensk County, Irkutsk Province. ...

The 52 families, including mine, were “accommodated” in three long, bedbug infested wooden barracks.¹¹⁰⁴

The family of Michał Scigała was expelled from their farm in the village of *Pilatowicze* near Nowa Mysz.

On the night of February 10, 1940, we went to sleep as usual. Our dog barked, awakening us. Father suspected that wolves were sneaking up on the farm. But before he could put on his shoes, a gunshot sounded and Mucek began to howl. Someone was banging on the door.

“Open up!” a man shouted.

My father calmly went towards the door.

“Who is it?”

“Militia, open up!”

My father opened the door.

“Hands up, surrender your weapon!” the soldier said.

My father explained that he had already given back his service weapon. “I have the documentation to prove it,” he said.

The soldiers stared blankly at him, their demeanors unchanged. Two Jewish acquaintances, now militiamen, came into the front room. An NKVD agent followed with his pistol down and a Red Army soldier entered with a bayoneted rifle. The men crammed into our small front room.

They searched our cupboards and closets, under the beds, and came up empty-handed. The commander holstered his pistol, took a piece of paper from his bag.

“You Polish bloodsuckers,” he read from the paper. “Enemies of the Soviet nation. You shall be killed.”

He grinned and continued. “Only ‘Uncle Stalin’ does not want your death; he wishes you the best in the Soviet Union.”

The soldier looked up from the paper to make certain we were listening. “Take your things,” he said. “You will not need much; everything will be provided. You have one half hour to gather your belongings.”

Outside in the cold night air, a horse-drawn sleigh awaited. The NKVD agent ordered my mother and my sister up onto the sleigh. He told my father, my cousin Thaddeus and me to walk behind. Thaddeus was running from the Germans and had been staying with us. The agent warned that if we made any attempt to escape, he would kill us.

Our coachman, a Belorussian local, began to move the sleigh slowly. We followed behind single file, alternately crunching through snow and sliding across ice. We arrived at the train station in Baranowicze

¹¹⁰⁴ Czesław Gieniewski, *Do Monte Cassino poprzez Sybir i Środkowy Wschód* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Library of Congress, 1995), as cited in Carolan, *The Mass Deportation of Poles to Siberia*, 99–102.

where our belongings were thrown down by the tracks. We were exhausted. Families were sitting on the side of the tracks with their baggage.

The Russians considered Poles as an “unwanted element” and removed thousands upon thousands from their homes that night. We saw many families with little children, the elderly, and the sick.

People wrapped themselves in whatever clothing they owned, shielding themselves from the biting morning cold. They clung to their luggage. Friends and curious townspeople gathered to see the unusual event. You could hear people crying and pleading in protest as their families were taken from them.

After two hours of waiting, freight cars arrived at the station. The agents were ordered to load 65 people in each railcar. Cold and frightened, we threw what few items we had taken from our home into dirty cattle cars.

Inside was a small iron stove for heat, behind which was a hole ripped open in the floorboards to serve as a toilet. The marks in our car made it clear that it had been used heavily. Two small, grated windows with no glass functioned as the main source of light.

On the railcar, deportees under close watch threw two buckets of coal and a piece of wood in the stove. Next, two volunteers with blankets were called forth from the car and were sent to get provisions.

Our captors gave us 17 loaves of black, frozen bread and a pack of salted fish—all meant for 65 people on a two-day journey. The men gave us three buckets of boiled water as an added perk. The new guard said that any attempt to escape would be punished by death.

The agents closed the door, tied it close with wire. Then, there was a clatter of bumpers and a sudden jerk. The train was headed out, carrying us into the unknown.¹¹⁰⁵

In *Sopoćkinie* near Grodno, during the day local Jews “were invited to come to the N.K.V.D. (secret police).” That night, February 10, 1940, they accompanied Soviet soldiers to the homes of the villagers to announce “their forced exile deep into central Russia. Hundreds of peasant families were led to their banishment in bitter cold together with their infants.”¹¹⁰⁶

The Prończuk family lived in *Kucharówka*, a small settlement near Zabłudów for veterans of the Polish-Bolshevik war of 1919–1920. Their daughter Anna Wróblewska recalled the family’s fate.

On that unforgettable freezing night of February 10, 1940, there was knocking on the door: “Open up.” It sounded like a blow to the heart. Two Jews came in with a young Red Army man. Mother was told to wake up the children and there were five of us ...

They told us not take anything with us, as there would be everything where they are taking us. They hitched a horse to a small sled used to carry milk. We fit into it together with what we were allowed to take. A journey to the unknown began. ... When we arrived in Zacisze at dawn, no one was there, only cattle bellowing and dogs barking. ... we travelled farther in the direction of the railway station in Żednia. There we were loaded into a wagon which held all of the inhabitants of Zacisze. ...

After three days I saw that my mother’s hair had turned white as snow. In horrible conditions, after one month, we reached Taishet in the the Irkutsk district of Siberia. From there, we were transported by trucks to the settlement of Topole 56 kilometres from Taishet.¹¹⁰⁷

Jan Koniecko, of the village of *Netta Folwark* near Augustów, recalled how, on February 10, 1940, a Jewish policeman with an armband, whom his family knew well because they had traded with him before the war, brought some Soviets to his home. They struck his father in the back with the butt of a rifle and made him kneel with his arms raised. His mother and sister frantically packed a few things together and the family was deported to Irkutsk. Other Jews whom they knew went to other Polish houses.¹¹⁰⁸

In *Brańsk*, deportations were dependent on lists drawn up with the assistance of local collaborators and communists, mainly Jews. The “crimes” of those slated for deportation had to be “confirmed” by two residents. Eighty-five percent of those deported were ethnic Poles despite the fact that they constituted just

¹¹⁰⁵ Henryk Ścigała, “You Survived, What More Do You Want?” in Carolan, *The Mass Deportation of Poles to Siberia*, 313–15.

¹¹⁰⁶ Manor, *Sopotkin*, Chapter 6: “Under the Russian Boot.”

¹¹⁰⁷ Leończuk, *Wspomnienia budzą mnie po nocach...*, 79–80.

¹¹⁰⁸ Michał Mońko, “Nóż w plecy,” *Tygodnik Solidarność*, September 16, 2005.

half of the town's population.¹¹⁰⁹ Arrests were carried out by local policemen, who were all Jews except for one Belorussian.¹¹¹⁰

The first deportation of Poles to Siberia took place on February 10, 1940. There were three more transports. In total 114 persons, mostly Poles, were deported. A dozen or so Jews and members of other nationalities were also exiled. The fate of some of those who got arrested is still unknown. While in Israel, I was told of the tragic case of a Jewish policeman who came with the Soviets to take his own brother and participated in his deportation to Siberia. Not a single case is known of a Jew standing up for, or in any way helping a Pole by warning him or keeping him hidden from capture. On the contrary, some of them even participated in deporting the elderly, women, and children to Siberia. Cultural differences and earlier economic discords let themselves be felt. After the war, only 50 from among the 114 exiled to Siberia and Kazakhstan returned to Brańsk.¹¹¹¹

The entire family of a forester from *Miastkowo* near Łomża was arrested by the NKVD on February 10, 1940. A local Jew accompanied the Soviet police to the forester's home.¹¹¹²

Many eyewitnesses from *Jedwabne* near Łomża, both Jews and Poles, attest to particularly reprehensible behaviour on the part of local Jews.¹¹¹³ Arrests started soon after the Soviet entry. Pro-Soviet Jews not only fingered and denounced Poles, but also eagerly participated in their arrest, round-up and deportation to the Gulag. Rev. Marian Szumowski, the Catholic pastor, was arrested by a local Jew in the service of the NKVD and was sent to prison in Minsk, Belorussia, where he was sentenced to death on January 27, 1941.¹¹¹⁴ In total, several hundred Poles, and perhaps a dozen Jews, were deported to the Soviet interior from Jedwabne and its surroundings.

Meir Grajewski (later Ronen), a native of Jedwabne, has identified five "louts"—otherwise rather ordinary members of the town's Jewish community—who denounced their Polish neighbours and, occasionally, fellow Jews.

During the Soviet occupation there were five Jewish louts lording it over (the town).

The first, Eli [Eliasz] Krawiecki ... had a shoemaker's workshop ... He was the smartest of them ... Under the Soviets he had no official function, but he led everything from behind the wings. Poles later killed him [after the Soviets had fled in June 1941] ...

¹¹⁰⁹ Romaniuk, "Twenty-One Months of Soviet Rule in Brańsk," in *The Story of Two Shtetls*, Part One, 61–63, 67–70.

¹¹¹⁰ Testimony of Janina Woińska, Polish Witnesses to the Holocaust Project, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Internet: <https://collections.ushmm.org/oh_findingaids/RG-50.488.0052_trs_en.pdf>.

¹¹¹¹ "Confessions of Zbigniew Romaniuk," in *ibid.*, 26. Yet, despite this, there were no retaliations against Jews when the Germans arrived in Brańsk in June 1941. In fact, all three Catholic priests in the town came to the assistance of the Jews. The local pastor, Rev. Bolesław Czarkowski, a prewar National Democrat ("Endek"), openly called on his congregation to assist Jews. His assistant, Rev. Józef Chwalko, sought out shelters for escaping Jews among Polish farmers. Several local Poles were murdered for the "crime" of helping Jews including the curate, Rev. Henryk Opatowski. *Ibid.*, 15–16, 79, 80, 109, 111; Eva Hoffman, *Shtetl: The Life and Death of a Small Town and the World of Polish Jews* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1997), 205–206, 208, 224, 232.

¹¹¹² Account of Alexander J. Opaliński (concerning his mother), dated February 8, 2002 (in the author's possession).

¹¹¹³ Gabriela Szczęśna, "Jedwabna krew," *Kontakty* (Łomża), May 4, 2000. Typically, Rabbis Julius L. Baker and Jacob L. Baker, who compiled the Jedwabne memorial book, *Jedwabne: History and Memorial Book* (Jerusalem and New York: Yedwabne Societies in Israel and the United States of America, 1980) manage to overlook Jewish misconduct toward Poles during the Soviet occupation. Just *one* account in the former book mentions, in passing, that "Jews were employed in various positions and institutions. ... the situation was quiescent." *Ibid.*, 92. Jan Gross also skirts around this topic.

¹¹¹⁴ "Mord w Jedwabnem: Wyrok bez procesu i poznania prawdy," Katolicka Agencja Informacyjna (Warsaw), February 23, 2001. Rev. Szumowski was active in the Polish anti-Soviet underground.

Chaim Kosacki, whose father was a butcher, but he was a bum ... When the Germans arrived, some Poles delivered Kosacki to them and they shot him that same day.

Abraham Dawid Kubrzański later died in the barn.

Szajn Binsztejn was in the “Czerwoniak” jail for three years before the war for raping a [Jewish] girl. He was a real outlaw. In the synagogue, he was only allowed to stand behind the stove, and only when there was no one left, they would take him when they needed ten to make a minyan for prayer service.

Mechajkał Wajnsztajn was the only one of the five to survive the war.

They ruled the town in the first weeks before the Soviet authorities established themselves. Their boss was a true Communist, the Pole [Czesław] Krystowczyk. Krystowczyk the town’s council chairman, and Binsztejn police commander.

... It is true that they informed on Poles. ...

The Soviets began to draw up lists and arrest people. They arrested mostly Poles.¹¹¹⁵

Meir Grajewski’s father, Symcha Grajewski, who had been a Polish legionnaire and fought for Poland in the Polish-Soviet War of 1919–1920, was arrested on December 10, 1939. He was imprisoned in Łomża and never heard from again. In March 1940, Meir, then 14 years old, and his mother were deported to Kazakhstan together with four Polish families from Jedwabne, after being denounced by Mechajkał Wajnsztajn (or possibly another Jew).¹¹¹⁶ According to Jewish nationalist narrative, however, as Rabbi Jacob Baker, the author of the Jedwabne Memorial Book, asserts: “How can they say that Jews collaborated with the Soviets? In Jedwabne not one Jew was a Communist.”¹¹¹⁷

There are numerous credible testimonies recorded by Poles that describe other local “louts”—the Chilewski brothers Berek and Lejba, the Lewinowicz brothers Socher and Szmul, Berek Czapnicki, Ajzyk Jedwabiński and his sons, Lejb Guzowski, Jakow (Jankiel) Kac—and expand on the consequences of their misdeeds for the Polish population.

The Jews greeted the Soviets with flowers. ... The Jews formed a citizens’ militia and many of them were employed by the NKVD. After the Soviet authority was fully organized the Jews drew up lists of Poles to be deported to Siberia. ... At first they arrested a number of people from the intelligentsia, that is, teachers, officials, merchants, wealthier farmers and Rev. Marian Szumowski. ... When the NKVD called on their homes several people were away ... These individuals started to hide and organized a resistance movement. After a while the Jews tracked them down and the NKVD arrested them. All traces of them vanished. Only Dr. Jerzy Kowalczyk returned.¹¹¹⁸

The Red Army was welcomed by the Jews, who erected gates for them. The former authorities were replaced with local Jews and Communists. The police and teachers were arrested. ... Searches took place at the homes of the wealthier farmers. They seized their furniture, clothing and valuables, and in a few days they came to arrest them at night.¹¹¹⁹

As soon as the Soviet army arrived a town committee sprang up spontaneously ... its members were Jews. The militia was also composed of Jewish Communists. There were no repressions at first because they [the

¹¹¹⁵ Bikont, *My z Jedwabnego*, 168–69; Bikont, *The Crime and the Silence*, 250–51.

¹¹¹⁶ Bikont, *My z Jedwabnego*, 166–71; Bikont, *The Crime and the Silence*, 251, 255.

¹¹¹⁷ Bikont, *The Crime and the Silence*, 345.

¹¹¹⁸ Account of Jan Sokołowski, dated May 12, 2000 (in the author’s possession).

¹¹¹⁹ Account of Józef Rybicki (no. 8356), Archives of the Polish Ministry of Information and Documentation, Hoover Institution on War, Revolution and Peace. The accounts from the Hoover Institution are cited in Tomasz Strzembosz, “Premilczana kolaboracja,” *Rzeczpospolita*, January 27, 2001; some of these accounts are posted on the Internet, as indicated below.

Soviets] did not know the population. Arrests started only after local Communists had made their denunciations. Searches [for weapons] were carried out by local militiamen ...¹¹²⁰

The Soviet authorities set up a militia which consisted mostly of Jewish Communists. They started to arrest ... those whom the police laid complaints against. ... The local [Polish] population for the most part boycotted the voting [on October 22, 1939]. Throughout the entire day the militia, brandishing their rifles, compelled them to come to the polling station. The sick were bought by force. Soon after the elections they staged a raid and arrested entire families who were deported to the Soviet Union.¹¹²¹

When the Russians came into Jedwabne, the Jews handed over lists of all the Polish intellectuals. The Russians rounded them up, took them to Russia, and executed them.¹¹²²

When the Russians entered they did not have to seek out trouble-making Poles. [The Jews] handed over many people to the NKVD who were then shipped to Siberia. The Jews informed them who lived where and what they did. My father was also denounced, and I know exactly who did it. My father worked in a sawmill owned by a Jew. The Russians came looking for weapons. My father had one, so they arrested him and shipped him to Russia, to Arkhangelsk. I never saw him again.¹¹²³

On October 20, 1939, a Soviet and three Jewish neighbours—Janowicz (their baker), Chlewicki, and a third Jew whose name is not known—came for Franciszek Ksawery Wąsowski, a retired police officer. They arrived in a motor vehicle, arrested Wąsowski, and took him to the jail in Łomża. After officials came to register the remaining members of the Wąsowski family in March 1940, they received a warning from a Jewish woman, who had heard (likely from other Jews in the service of the Soviets) that the families who had been recorded would be deported to Siberia. Mrs. Wąsowska and her daughter Jadwiga hid out for over a year in outlying villages and thus avoided arrest. Mr. Wąsowski was never seen again.¹¹²⁴

At the end of April 1940 a local Jew arrived at our home in the uniform of a Russian militiaman and told my father to report to the NKVD. ... my mother followed that policeman to check who else he went for because there were more than a dozen names written on his list.¹¹²⁵

At the beginning of the war a cousin, the wife of a policeman [Matulewicz] from Krynki, was staying with my husband's family together with her 12-year-old son [Wiesław]. When the Russians arrived they went from house to house to look for Poles to deport to Siberia. When they asked who the boy was, my husband's

¹¹²⁰ Account of Tadeusz Kielczewski (no. 10708), Archives of the Polish Ministry of Information and Documentation, Hoover Institution on War, Revolution and Peace, posted on the Internet at: <www.sfpol.com/zarchiwhoovera.html>.

¹¹²¹ Account of Kazimierz Sokołowski (no. 1559), Archives of the Polish Ministry of Information and Documentation, Hoover Institution on War, Revolution, and Peace.

¹¹²² Account of Jerzy Ramotowski, as cited in Ryback, *The Last Survivor*, 154. See also Ramotowski's and Eugeniusz Zyskowski's accounts in Tomasz Strzembosz, "Uroczysko Kobieleno: Z dziejów konspiracji i partyzantki nad Biebrzą 1939–1940," *Karta* (Warsaw), no. 5 (May-July 1991): 8, 9, and 25 n. 23.

¹¹²³ Alicja Zielińska, "W cieniu zbrodni," *Magazyn Poranny, Kurier Poranny* (Białystok), December 1, 2000.

¹¹²⁴ Account of Jadwiga Kordas née Wąsowska, as cited in Małgorzata Rutkowska, "I z nami tak będzie," *Nasz Dziennik* (Warsaw), March 24–25, 2001. See also Jerzy Danilewicz, "Prawdy nie można zasypać," *Super Express* (Warsaw), May 25, 2000; and Strzembosz, "Panu Prof. Gutmanowi do sztambucha," *Więź* (Warsaw), June 2001: 96. Wąsowski had retired from active service in the police force about ten years prior and had served at some distance from Jedwabne.

¹¹²⁵ Account of Kazimierz Odyniec, as cited in Strzembosz, "Przemilczana kolaboracja," *Rzeczpospolita*, January 27, 2001.

brother said that it was his son. At this their Jewish neighbour, Chilewski, (whose brother ran around the square with a red flag), spoke out: "Take him away, he's the son of a [Polish] policeman."¹¹²⁶

Before the war when the police arrested the four sons of Zelman Lewinowicz, their father begged my grandfather and father to vouch for them that they were not Communists. And so they did [unwittingly make a false statement—*M.P.*]. And in return, under the Soviet occupation when Poles were being shipped out to Siberia, Lewinowicz's wife told my father: "Don't be afraid, Bronek, we won't take you." Why did she say that? Because Jews accompanied the Russians to capture Poles. They were armed with rifles and looked for Poles in the villages.¹¹²⁷

Franciszek Karwowski ... witnessed a chase after his acquaintance Szymborski who was fleeing from Jedwabne. He was pursued by two Jews from Jedwabne on horses. They wore red armbands and had rifles in their hands. They put their weapons to good use.¹¹²⁸

After the Red Army entered ... many people were arrested at the instigation of Jewish Communists ... The day of the election, on March 31, 1940, at Easter time, the NKVD was in action. We were not allowed to go to church until we cast our votes. They called out our names as we walked by and we were handed a marked ballot to throw in the box. The agitators and denouncers were local Jews. Patrols armed with rifles walked about the streets. The population remained passive in the face of this threat. So ended the elections of the deputies. ...

Searches took place at the larger farms and furniture, clothing and valuables were confiscated. People were taken to meetings by force. ... The committees were composed of military men, Jews and local Communists.¹¹²⁹

The Jews armed themselves and entered the NKVD en masse. Arrests and deportations of the Polish population to Siberia ensued. The first transport left in December 1939. Among those arrested were priests, soldiers, and the well-to-do, who were called 'kulaks'—the Polish bourgeoisie. The temperature fell to minus 40°C. In this frost people were put on sleighs and driven to the train in Łomża. There they were loaded into freight wagons like cattle. The Jews began to hit them with the butts of their rifles to hurry up the cargo because they were cold. ... An old Jewish woman by the name of [Chaja] Kuropatwa came to our home and reported that the Jewish Communists were helping the NKVD ship Polish families off to Siberia. The

¹¹²⁶ Statement of Helena Kozłowska, as cited in Krzysztof Różycki, "Sąsiad twój wróg," *Angora* (Łódź), September 17, 2000. According to another witness: "in June 1941, after the Matulewicz family went into hiding, a Jewish family is alleged to have revealed to the NKVD the whereabouts of the nine-year-old Wiesław Matulewicz. After the Soviet police seized the boy, his mother turned herself in. They were both deported to the Gulag but they survived." See Marek Jan Chodakiewicz, *The Massacre in Jedwabne, July 10, 1941: Before, During, and After* (Boulder, Colorado: East European Monographs; and New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 56. Another account refers to Barbara Napart, the wife of the commander of the Polish police in Krynki who was handed over to the Bolsheviks by local Jews in September 1939. See Piotr Wiśniewski, "Jak Żydzi w Radziłowie przyczynili się do wywózki Polaków na Syberię 1941," *Pamiętnik* (1988–1989), Internet: <<http://www.awans.net/strony/historia/wisniewski/wisniewski1.html>>.

¹¹²⁷ Statement of Janina Biedrzycka, as cited in Krzysztof Różycki, "Sąsiad twój wróg," *Angora* (Łódź), September 17, 2000.

¹¹²⁸ Strzembosz, "Panu Prof. Gutmanowi do sztambucha," *Więź* (Warsaw), June 2001: 96. Karwowski was of the Poles who had hidden Szmul Wasersztajn, the protagonist of Jan T. Gross's book *Neighbors*, before he took refuge with the Wyrzykowski family.

¹¹²⁹ Account of Marian Łojewski (no. 8455), Archives of the Polish Ministry of Information and Documentation, Hoover Institute on War, Revolution and Peace, posted on the Internet at: <www.sfpol.com/zarchiwahoovera.html>.

daughters of Mrs. Kuropatwa, Pesa and Chaja, stood and cried at that terrible sight of the savagery into which Jews and the NKVD had fallen. ... The Poles lived in fear.¹¹³⁰

The vileness of these deeds was readily apparent to everyone. The bodies of children who froze on the way to the railway station in Łomża were strewn on the road.¹¹³¹ But the deportations continued unabated.

I remember when the Poles were being carted off to Siberia. On each wagon there was a Jew with a rifle. Mothers, wives and children were kneeling down before the wagons begging for mercy and help. The last such transport left the 21st of June 1941.¹¹³²

According to Soviet sources, as of June 10, 1941, the jail in Łomża held 2,128 prisoners, virtually all of them ethnic Poles, waiting to be dealt with.¹¹³³

The wife of the local Polish police commander Waclaw Wawernia, upon returning to Jedwabne with her two daughters after the Soviet entry, found their home and possessions taken over by a Jewish family who threatened to have them arrested if they did not leave. They were eventually deported to the Gulag on June 20, 1941, having been denounced as enemies of the people by local Jews.¹¹³⁴

The Żelazny family was also among the last Polish families to be deported. Genowefa Malczyńska (née Żelazna) recalled the arrival of the NKVD on June 20, 1941 and her family's ordeal: "They knocked on our house at one thirty at night. Two NKVD officials and two Jews from Jedwabne [the Jews stood on guard outside the house]. My mother got up and opened the door, and they took out a long list and said: 'Get ready, hostess.' They told my grandfather to fetch the horse from the meadow and harness him. I and my sisters started to cry." Genowefa's mother, who knew Russian, asked the NKVD official where he was from. When he replied "from near Moscow" she asked him how was it that he had such detailed information. The NKVD official answered: "Your own Jews denounced you." The Żelazny family was transported to the market square where they waited until noon in a wagon guarded by a Jew with a rifle. Wagons full of Poles arrived from neighbouring villages and once assembled, they set out for Łomża, under the guard of NKVD officials and a Jew armed with a rifle, another of their neighbours from Jedwabne.

¹¹³⁰ Account of Teodor Eugeniusz Lusiński, dated March 20, 1995, in the archives of the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw. (A copy of this account is in the author's possession.) According to another report by Janina Biedrzycka (in the author's possession), Michał Kuropatwa provided civilian clothes to a Polish soldier on the run in September 1939 and may even have sheltered him for a short period; when the Soviets arrived in Jedwabne, he was denounced by fellow Jews for this display of Polish patriotism. The Jedwabne memorial book notes, but makes no connection between the fact that Michał Kuropatwa had saved the life of a Polish pilot who was escaping the Russians and his son, Pinchas, being "taken away" by the Russians. See Baker, *Jedwabne*, 103, 116. Another Pole who states her family received a warning from her Jewish neighbour of their impending deportation—something that should have been a tightly guarded secret, yet apparently known to Jews—was Lucja Chojnowska (née Chołowińska). She and her sister, Jadwiga Laudańska, fled from the town in time, with Jadwiga's 4-year-old daughter. See Strzembosz, "Przemilczana kolaboracja," *Rzeczpospolita*, January 27, 2001. Local Jews also denounced the (Jewish) Grajewski family, who mocked the Communists before the war; and Mrs. Cytrynowicz allegedly denounced her own husband, who had converted to Catholicism. (According to the Jedwabne memorial book, Israel Grondowski, a Jew who had converted to Catholicism, disclosed the hiding place of about 125 Jews during the massacre of July 1941. See *Jedwabne*, 103. This allegation is highly questionable.)

¹¹³¹ Gross, "Wywózki do Rosji." *Aneks* (London), no. 51–52 (1988): 79–80.

¹¹³² Account of Jan Kazimierz S., as cited in Danuta and Aleksander Wroniszewski, "...aby żyć," *Kontakty-Łomżyński Tygodnik Społeczny*, July 10, 1988.

¹¹³³ Jan Skórzyński, "Z jednej okupacji pod drugą.: Kresy przed i po 22 czerwca 1941 roku—Dyskusja historyków," *Rzeczpospolita*, June 23, 2001.

¹¹³⁴ Irena Nocoń, "Za co mam przepraszać," *Nasz Dziennik* (Warsaw), May 10, 2001.

Cattle cars awaited them there. The Żelazny family returned to Poland five years later, in 1946, without the grandfather and Genowefa's brother, both of whom had died in exile of disease and starvation.¹¹³⁵

Similar conditions prevailed throughout the region. According to a report from vicinity of Jedwabne,

Before every arrest [in the outlying village of Makowskie], which took place only at night, there arrived a few soldiers and the local militia, composed mostly of our own Jews. They surrounded the house of the person they came to arrest. A few of them entered the home and ordered him to lie on the floor. One of them held a gun to his head and the remaining carried out a thorough search, taking all documents, photographs and papers bearing seals.¹¹³⁶

An eyewitness from **Radziłów**, a nearby village, reported a similar state of affairs. There too the Jews came out in large numbers to greet the Soviet invaders for whom they had erected two triumphal gates. Apart from two Soviet commandants, the entire militia and administration was in the hands of local Jews.¹¹³⁷ The one Pole who joined the militia soon left when its Jewish members expressed the view the Soviet rule was "theirs."¹¹³⁸ Local collaborators drew up lists of "enemies of the people" and Jewish militiamen, armed with rifles, carried out the deportations together with Soviet officials. Entire Polish families were transported to nearby railway stations in the middle of winter 1940.¹¹³⁹ When a Pole tried to rescue two Polish women from deportation in April 1940, a young local Jewish collaborator named Dora Dorogoj and a Jewish functionary from the NKVD named Milberg prevented their escape and had the Poles arrested.¹¹⁴⁰ When, in December 1939, Piotr Wisniewski protested against the onerous taxes imposed on him, a Jewish militiaman brought him before a committee consisting of five people, a Soviet soldier and four local Jews. He was threatened with deportation and went into hiding for the duration of the Soviet occupation. His wife, Jadwiga, and his children were arrested by two armed Jewish militiamen on June 19, 1941 and deported to the Soviet interior.¹¹⁴¹

The second large wave of deportations came on April 13, 1940, and again affected mostly Poles. In the early morning hours, teams composed of NKVD functionaries, NKVD convoy soldiers, and members of the local militia swarmed through **Lwów** seizing more than 7,000 people whose names had been carefully put on lists prepared in advance of this sweep. The deportees were given a short time to pack whatever belongings they could carry before being loaded on trucks and dispatched to train stations where they were locked up in freight wagons. Family members who tried to bring food and clothing to the wagons were brutally chased away. During the searches of the deportees' homes valuables were often stolen by the

¹¹³⁵ Małgorzata Rutkowska, "I z nami tak będzie," *Nasz Dziennik* (Warsaw), March 24–25, 2001; "Mord w Jedwabnem: Wyrok bez procesu i poznania prawdy," *Katolicka Agencja Informacyjna* (Warsaw), February 23, 2001; Strzembosz, "Panu Prof. Gutmanowi do sztabucha," *Więź* (Warsaw), June 2001: 96. Strzembosz points out that Genowefa Malczyńska related these incidents to Agnieszka Arnold, who produced a film about the Jedwabne massacre, but they were edited out of the film.

¹¹³⁶ Account of Antoni Śledziwski (no. 9990), Archives of the Polish Ministry of Information and Documentation, Hoover Institute on War, Revolution and Peace, posted on the Internet at: <www.sfpol.com/zarchiwiovera.html>.

¹¹³⁷ Account of Waław Bagiński (in the author's possession).

¹¹³⁸ Piotr Wiśniewski, "Jak Żydzi w Radziłowie przyczynili się do wywózki Polaków na Syberię 1941," *Pamiętnik* (1988–1989), Internet: <<http://www.awans.net/strony/historia/wisniewski/wisniewski1.html>>.

¹¹³⁹ Account of Waław Bagiński (in the author's possession).

¹¹⁴⁰ The Pole in question, Antoni Kosmaczewski, was released from Soviet prison when the Germans arrived in June 1941, and sought out and killed Dora Dorogoj in revenge for her misdeeds. Kosmaczewski stood trial for his actions in 1948–49. See Machcewicz and Persak, *Wokół Jedwabnego*, vol. 1, 235–36.

¹¹⁴¹ Piotr Wiśniewski, "Jak Żydzi w Radziłowie przyczynili się do wywózki Polaków na Syberię 1941," *Pamiętnik* (1988–1989), Internet: <<http://www.awans.net/strony/historia/wisniewski/wisniewski1.html>>.

NKVD personnel and militiamen. What remained was auctioned off for a pittance to state officials and clerks.¹¹⁴²

A typical account from Lwów reads:

Unexpectedly, the night of April 13, 1940, intruders came into our home: a member of the NKVD dressed in a black uniform, a young Red Army soldier, and a policeman—a Polish Jew who was the worst of the lot because he began to steal at once. After a search of our home we were evacuated. In the course of 15 minutes we lost everything: our own house, fine furniture, a piano, a wonderful library. Valuable leather-bound books with gold lettering were thrown on the floor and stepped on and kicked about by our executioners who deported us unlawfully into the depths of the Soviet Union.¹¹⁴³

The wife and three young children of Stanisław Pawulski, a Polish officer who was imprisoned in Starobelsk, were also deported that night (April 13, 1940) from their apartment on Ziemiałkowskiego Street in Lwów. During the half hour that they were given to pack one of the eight pro-Soviet Jewish refugees from Łódź, who had taken over part of their home, “helped” the distraught Mrs. Pawulska to pack by appropriating belongings she (the Jewish woman) decided the Pawulskis no longer needed: carpets, boots, pots, food supplies, etc. The Jewish woman also “apologized” to Mrs. Pawulska for having denounced her to the authorities as the wife of a Polish officer who probably had weapons concealed in her home. Of course, a search of the premises revealed no hidden weapons, but false denunciations of this kind which were rampant were enough to seal the fate of this and many other Polish families.¹¹⁴⁴

The family of Mieczysław Hampel was also rounded up in Lwów for deportation after midnight. Two Soviet soldiers arrived together with three armed Jews who, typically, were more brutal toward the Polish family than the Soviet occupiers.¹¹⁴⁵

In *Uściliug*, in the early morning of April 13, 1940, a Soviet NKVD officer and two soldiers armed with rifles came for the family of Captain Jan Piotrowski, a Polish officer captured by the Germans, consisting of his wife and three children. They were accompanied by a Ukrainian and a Jew, local residents known to them, who took the belongings the family had to leave behind. The Jew told them that they were going on an excursion. At the train station Soviet soldiers struck women who were in tears with the butts of their rifles to hurry them into the sixty wagons that were waiting to transport them to their exile in Kazachstan.¹¹⁴⁶

In *Kopyczyńce*, in the early morning of April 13, 1940, a Soviet officer and two soldiers, accompanied by Krampf, one of a number of local Jews who assisted the Soviet occupiers, arrived at the home of Chichłowski family, who were given one hour to pack for their 21-day journey to Siberia.¹¹⁴⁷

The morning of April 13, 1940, Soviet soldiers accompanied by a young Jew with a red armband descended on the home of Maryla Ławrowska in *Buczacz* and seized her relatives and house guests, Kazimiera Jarosławska and her two children. Colonel Leon Jarosławski, Kazimiera’s husband, had been arrested by the NKVD in September 1939. (He was later murdered in Katyn.) The Jarosławski family was

¹¹⁴² Hryciuk, *Polacy we Lwowie 1939–1944*, 38–40.

¹¹⁴³ Stanisława W. Lubuska, “Byłam zesłana na Syberię,” letter, *Ojczyzna*, no. 22 (80) (December 1, 1994): 13, as cited in Wysocki, *Żydzi w Trzeciej Rzeczypospolitej*, 9–10.

¹¹⁴⁴ Account of Maria Rasiej née Pawulska (in the author’s possession).

¹¹⁴⁵ Account of Mieczysław Hampel in *Lwów i Kresy: Biuletyn Kola Lwowian* (London), no. 88 (December 2000), 26.

¹¹⁴⁶ Interview with Barbara Piotrowska-Dubik by Piotr Czartoryski-Sziler, “Dzieliliśmy się ze sobą każdym kawałkiem chleba,” *Nasz Dziennik*, October 4–5, 2008. Barbara Piotrowska-Dubik’s memoir were published as *Kwiaty na stepie: Pamiętnik z zesłania*, 3rd revised and expanded edition (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo im. Stefana Kadyna Wyszyńskiego “Soli Deo”, 2007).

¹¹⁴⁷ Account of Juliusz Chichłowski, quoted in Szewczyński, *Nasze Kopyczyńce*, 47, 115.

deported to the Soviet interior.¹¹⁴⁸

The Walląg family, whose head was arrested by the Soviets in September 1939 as a Polish officer and disappeared, was deported from their home in *Tarnopol*:

On April 13, 1940, between three and four o'clock in the morning, we heard a persistent, loud knocking at our door. My terrified, always vigilant mother opened it. The children did not hear the stirring, they were deeply and calmly asleep.

We opened our eyes and spotted a few NKVD agents with bayonet rifles. They were in the company of a local Jewish resident with a red band on his arm. It was he who led the officers to their victims. (To make it more difficult ... the NKVD officers threw everything out of the closets, chests, and shelves ...) From a pile of belongings scattered on the floor, the disoriented mother of four was forced to choose, within an hour or two, the essential and most valuable belongings for our future destination—what would perhaps be years in Siberian exile.

It was clearly a raid of our home. The intruders counted the things that would be left behind and took them for themselves. They tried to reassure us that we were being relocated to Stanisławów.

Suddenly my mother summoned up her courage and said: "The Soviet Union should be proud that it sent so many NKVD agents to arrest a mother with four children."

"Silence, you dog," huffed one of the "brave" officers.

Nevertheless, the frail yet truly courageous woman stood up to the task in this tragic moment. She hastily wrapped as many of our belongings as she could in blankets, and tore our finest tapestries off the wall to wrap more necessities.

An hour later, with bundles on our backs, we were each outside to where cars were prepared for our departure. There was an unusual rush on the street for this early in the day. The exiled families were loaded onto the trucks, which were queued in front of their homes.

Five to ten families were taken from neighboring homes to the station where cattle trains awaited us. We were packed into one of them—dirty, reeking. Seventy to eighty detainees boarded each railcar. ... Only two boys from our railcar were permitted to return home. They were of Jewish descent.¹¹⁴⁹

The family of Sergeant Józef Ungar, the deceased prewar commander of the Polish state police in *Śniatyn*, was among the many Poles denounced by local Jews. At three o'clock in the morning on April 13th, Maria Ungar and her two daughters, Jadwiga and Maria, were seized from their home by a NKVD member, two Red Army soldiers and a local Jew and deported to the Gulag.¹¹⁵⁰

In *Kołomyja*, the family of a Polish industrialist was one of the many victims of the second round of deportations of civilians from that city.

The first transport was deported from Kołomyja in February 1940. We were exiled on April 13, 1940. At two o'clock at night we were awakened by the banging of a rifle butt on our door. The previous night my father [Karol Biskupski] and brother had been arrested without being given any reason. On April 12 Krzysia and I had gone to the jail but they would not take our package or allow us to see those who had been arrested. ... So when we heard the banging we knew that our turn had come.

Four politruks with rifles entered and one militiaman, a Jew, who acted as an interpreter. We were given fifteen minutes to pack. We were told that we were being sent to another republic. On the list was my mother, [younger sister] Krzysia, I and my [eighty-year-old] grandmother. [Uncle] Rev. Leopold [Dallinger], who lived with us, was not on the list. ...

After fifteen minutes we were told to get on a dirty rack wagon. ... Romek [an orphan who was cared for by the family] and the militiamen helped us pack. My grandmother went in what she had on because we did not understand until the last moment that there would be no reprieve for an old woman.

We drove through the main streets of Kołomyja. My uncle, the priest, walked behind the carriage. On the way to the train station we passed our [family's] factory. We were amazed to see that almost all of the workers had turned out in front of the factory. Some of their faces were horror-stricken, others wiped away

¹¹⁴⁸ Piotr Szubarczyk, "A my śnimy sobie przyszłość Polski—dzieci...", *Biuletyn Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej*, nos. 5–6 (May-June 2005): 181–86, at 183.

¹¹⁴⁹ Józefa Renata Dąmbaska-Gedroyć and Tadeusz Józef Walląg and, *Journey Through Siberia* (Warsaw: n.p., 2001), 26–27; translation of Tadeusz Walląg and Józefa Renata Dąmbaska-Gedroyć, *Drogą przez Sybir* (Warsaw: Muzeum Niepodległości, 1998), as cited in Carolan, *The Mass Deportation of Poles to Siberia*, 353–54.

¹¹⁵⁰ Marek Jan Chodakiewicz, "Taki polski Kowalski: Wspomnienie o Tadeuszu Ungarze," *Glaukopis* (Warsaw), no. 4 (2006): 239; Jadwiga Ungar, "Straszne dla Polaków," letter, *Rzeczpospolita* (Warsaw), February 3, 2001.

tears with the palm of their hands. As if on orders they took off their hats. They probably thought that we were being sent to our execution.

There was already a crowd of people in front of the train station and the wagons that brought them. We got out of the carriage and waited for someone to carry our bundles to the cattle cars. The militiaman blasted us, “The Polish *Pans* have come to an end. You bloodsuckers have to carry your own things!” On the sly he began to help us to carry our things to the wagons and whispered to my mother, “When you return please remember that Goldberg helped.”

My grandmother had difficulty getting into the wagon [of the train] so the politruk gave her a shove. Without giving it much thought I spat at his uniform. At first he drew his revolver, but they probably were under orders not to cause a disturbance, so after he collected himself he said, “We’ll settle scores when you get there.” Meanwhile my uncle who had not been on the list entered the wagon behind the [rest of the] people.

There were fifty of us in the wagon of this long freight train. The doors were bolted shut and we started to move. The trip lasted three weeks. Once a day we were given thick soup. That’s all. We shared the food that we had taken with us from home. ... We did not know where we were going. ... After a number of days of travelling we crossed the Urals.¹¹⁵¹

Another Pole recalled his deportation from *Kuty* near the prewar Romanian border:

On the night of the 12 to 13 of April 1940, a threesome arrived to expel my mother and me to Kazakhstan where we would spend six years. The threesome consisted of a Russian NKVD member, Konstantinov, and two local militiamen: the Jew Benek Szerl and the Ukrainian Hryhorii Kushernuk. I have to be fair to the Russian—he was the most courteous toward us and even advised my mother what to take in the permitted ten kilograms of personal effects. On the other hand, Szerl and Kushernuk, without any shame and in front of our eyes, stole for themselves our most valuable belongings: my mother’s fur coat, my father’s clothing, a silver fox, a rug made out of wolf skins, a box of gold jewelry, etc. They shoved these things under the beds, not listing them in the register of belongings. Thus, after our departure, the threesome must have divided the prize booty among themselves.¹¹⁵²

A Polish woman recalled how her mother and younger brother and sister, the remnants of a family previously decimated by NKVD arrests, were deported from their home in *Krzemieniec*, in Volhynia, with the active assistance of her neighbours:

On April 13, 1940, a Ukrainian and Jew, both neighbours, burst through the Sulkowski [Sułkowski] door with a Soviet soldier in tow. My family was given just thirty minutes to pack and were in a state of shock—where does one start? Similar scenes were taking place all over the town as soldiers and militia dragged families into requisitioned wagons with the aid of dogs and bayonets. Screams and tears filled the night ...

My brother Czesław [Czesław] quickly began packing items into a suitcase and showed my mother and sister how to make up bundles of clothing. The Soviet soldier followed him everywhere and refused to let him take an axe as it could be used as a weapon. Meanwhile the Ukrainian and the Jew looked for plunder. ... most of our property was stolen or sold at low prices at an NKVD auction. ... From Siberia, my mother would try to contact her Jewish friends but as far as they were concerned, the Sulkowski Family and all their things had been liquidated—family photos would be thrown into the flames by those who wanted the frames ...

My family was loaded into wagons and driven to the train station where other wagons were disgorging their human cargo to the shouts of “*Bystrei!*” [Faster!] while soldiers and the local Jewish and Ukrainian militia brutally kept back frantic relatives. People, mostly women and children, were crammed 60 and more into an unheated cattle car with no facilities or water, and only a tiny window. The train sat sealed in Krzemieniec for another day and night before setting out for a destination that filled all Poles with dread. ...

The train picked up many more victims along the way and would number over a hundred wagons when it finally left Poland. The trip took two weeks under such brutal conditions that the seasoned Soviet train

¹¹⁵¹ Account of Irena Hradyska in Irena Kostrowicka et al., *Pamiętniki emigrantów: Zesłańczym szlakiem—Fragmenty pamiętników emigrantów nadesłanych na konkurs IGS SGH* (Warsaw: Instytut Gospodarstwa Społecznego SGH [Szkoly Głównej Handlowej], 1994), 41–42. Employing the analytical methodology of Martin Dean, whose scholarship is discussed later, one would have to conclude that Jewish behaviour was doubtless hampered to a considerable degree by the prospect of retribution should the Soviet regime be removed (cf. Dean, *Collaboration in the Holocaust*, 38).

¹¹⁵² Account of Stanisław Szuwart, quoted in Nowak, *Przemilczane zbrodnie*, 133.

commandant (who expresses sadness over the fate of Polish children) committed suicide under the wheels of a locomotive when the transport finally arrived in Kazakhstan.¹¹⁵³

The state of mind of this woman's younger sister is recorded in her own memoirs:

The culmination of our tragedy was the night of April 13 [in 1940] when, during the night, they came for our entire family. There were two civilians among them: a Jew and a Ukrainian. They brought a Soviet soldier who carried a rifle and ordered us to pack. I was in a state of shock. My God, why are they chasing us out of our home? What will become of us? I was stupefied and didn't know what to pack. My mother also lost her head and just stood there crying.¹¹⁵⁴

Another Pole, whose family had been moving around to avoid detection, was taken from Krzemieniec that same day along with many other Poles.

Around three o'clock at night we heard loud knocking on the back door not far from our room. We jumped out of our beds ... We heard Mrs. Basińska's name being called out. She was told to pack by a militiaman who came with a Ukrainian guide. We no longer thought of sleeping but started to pack ... Half an hour later there was more banging. This time they came for us ... In the team that took us away was Danilov from the NKVD, two soldiers and a [Jewish] guide, Szmul Beniaminowicz Bezpojeśnik. ...

Apart from two peasant carts, there was a wagon waiting for us. ... The entire way Bezpojeśnik sang quietly in Russian "vehement, mighty" ["kipuchaya, moguchaya"—an allusion to a Polish army slogan, "siłni, zwarci, gotowi"] mocking that our deportation was a tit for tat for wanting to send Jews from Poland to Palestine [a theoretical plan that the Zionists discussed with the prewar Polish government]. ... It was already becoming light. Many other carts moved slowly along the road toward the train station loaded with dejected expellees and their belongings. Passers-by on the street looked with sympathy on this procession except for young Jews who cheerfully clapped [their hands] at the sight of us.¹¹⁵⁵

In *Luck*, in Volhynia, where the local militia was composed "for the most part" of Jews and Ukrainians, a young boy vividly recalled the deportation of his family:

After the first mass deportations to Russia in February 1940, when with 30°C below zero the military colonists and their families were deported in unheated freight cars, all the Poles expected the same thing sooner or later. And on Apr. 13 an "N.K.V.D." officer appeared in our lodgings in the company of two armed militiamen and one civilian agent, who was supposed to be a "witness" to our deportation, so that this act of violence at least had the appearance of legality. It was 4 o'clock in the morning. A Bolshevik locked the door, directed the search, after which he declared that "the Soviet government was moving us to Dnepropetrovsk," where we would join my father, obtain identity cards, and will lead the peaceful carefree lives of Soviet citizens. ... A few hours later a truck came to take us to the station. ... Cattle cars were all ready at the station platform and rang with the weeping and clamor of the people locked inside. They crowded us into one of the cars where there were already 40 people and their baggage. For three days the train stayed on a siding and horse and foot militia helped by the army kept people away from the cars who wanted to give something to their relatives or at least see them for the last time. During those three days they only let us out twice to get water from the town. We walked in the middle of the road surrounded by guards (with fixed bayonets) and on the sides a crowd surged with excited despairing people. Total strangers sometimes gave us money or bread, but the militia immediately confiscated it. On the fourth day the train finally set out and our journey began.¹¹⁵⁶

¹¹⁵³ "A Gulag and Holocaust Memoir of Janina Sulkowska-Gładun," in Gładun, *Poland's Holocaust: A Family Chronicle of Soviet and Nazi Terror*.

¹¹⁵⁴ Wanda Sulkowska-Myśliwiec, "Szkolne czasy w Krzemieńcu w 1939–1940 roku," *Niepodległość i pamięć* (Warsaw), no. 1 (1999): 129; and also in *Wołyn bliżej* (Janów Lubelski), no. 4 (November 1996), 31. See also Gładun, *Poland's Holocaust: A Family Chronicle of Soviet and Nazi Terror*.

¹¹⁵⁵ Zdzisław Jagodziński, "W Krzemieńcu pod sowiecką okupacją (oczami ucznia)," *Życie Krzemienieckie* (Poznań), no. 18 (May 1999): 48–49.

¹¹⁵⁶ Account of Witold T. in Grudzińska-Gross and Gross, *War Through Children's Eyes*, 196.

In *Prużana*, in Polesia,

In February 1940, many people on the outskirts of Pruzana disappeared. Those were all small land owners. The rumors persisted that the Communists had sent them to Siberia. Since we didn't own any land, we thought that deportation will not affect us; but in the first week of March, in the middle of the night, the NKWD [NKVD] (the Russian Secret Service) arrested my father [a Polish social worker decorated by the Polish government; he received a sentence of ten years of hard labour in Siberia—*M.P.*]. On the same night they arrested most of the Polish government workers, shop owners, and other well-to-do people. ...

On April 13, 1940 ... At 2 A.M., I was awakened by a loud and continuous knocking at the door. As soon as I unlocked the door the Russian soldiers pushed their way in. Some of them entered our home and ordered us to get out of beds, get dressed, and go into one room.

A local Jewish student, a school friend, turned avowed Communist, was with them; he knew us very well and identified us [the author's mother and three siblings—*M.P.*]. By this action he condemned us to deportation. The others searched the house for anything of value, including arms. They confiscated our family albums, missals, some documents, then inventorized furniture and household goods.

Finishing the search, they ordered us to pack a few things and leave the house. ...

It was early morning, but by the time they loaded us on an open truck, the whole town was awakened and witnessed our deportation. ... Under the strict control of the NKWD and soldiers the truck moved slowly through the central street out of town. I looked around and the only faces I saw were blank and empty of emotion. My mother and grandmother shut their eyes, keeping tears in check. They were more experienced in life and knew there will be no return.

The closest railroad station, Oranzyce [Orańczyce], was twelve kilometers away, where the train with box cars awaited us. ... Throughout the next day people were brought to the train and the NKWD put them into the cars, fifty people in each. Barbed wire surrounded the whole train. ... The Communists deported my maternal grandmother, Agnieszka, with us.¹¹⁵⁷

The family of Klara Rogalska, then a young girl, consisting of her parents, her sister and her two brothers, were awoken the night of April 13, 1940, by five men who burst into their home in a village not far from the small town of *Skidel* near Grodno. Three of the intruders were soldiers dressed in military uniforms; the other two were Jews, who were members of the local militia and wore red armbands. Pointing their rifles the soldiers forced her father and brothers up against the wall. One of the NKVD men announced the verdict banishing her father to eight years in a concentration camp and the family's deportation to Kazakhstan. They were given fifteen minutes to pack. Her mother took two framed pictures depicting Jesus and Mary, wrapped them in an embroidered shawl, and laid them down on a chair. One of the Jews noticed this, went up to chair and knocked the package on the floor. He glanced at the revered pictures with disdain and then smashed the frames and glass energetically with his heel. Early the next morning a long column of carriages carrying families of Polish deportees wound its way to the train station in Skidel 18 kilometres away under the guard of soldiers. There they were loaded into freight cars holding more than forty people each.¹¹⁵⁸

In the village of *Lyntupy* north of Wilno, a Polish school teacher and her children were startled by the barking of the family dog at four o'clock in the morning. Through the window she spotted three Soviet soldiers and a Jew in civilian clothes, the local commissar, who shouted that he had come with an official document. The commissar, who spoke coarsely in Russian, reminded her of a Jewish shopkeeper from Święciany who had declared himself to be a Communist as soon as the Soviets entered. The soldiers roughed the Polish family up and gave them thirty minutes to pack their belongings. The commissar demanded money from her and warned that he knew how to teach respect to "Polish bitches" like her. He pressed the soldiers not to delay once the time limit had expired. He stood on watch at the train station to ensure that all of the Polish deportees were loaded into the wagons. Many of the Poles were struck by the soldiers and civilians who took part in this exercise.¹¹⁵⁹

The family of the former Polish police commander in *Szarkowszczyzna* had already been expelled from their home on February 10, 1940. Their neighbour, "Comrade" Shloma, who had become proficient in Russian, came that day and, with a smile on his face, handed over "an order from Minsk" informing them

¹¹⁵⁷ Eugene Lachocki, *No Return* (New Smyrna Beach, Florida: Luthers, 1996), 25–27.

¹¹⁵⁸ Marcin Górnikiiewicz, "Kres normalności," *Magazyn Wileński* (Vilnius), no. 2 (2002): 32–33.

¹¹⁵⁹ Kazimierz Kaz-Ostaszewicz, *Długie drogi Syberii* (London: Oficyna Poetów i Malarzy, 1984), 16–21.

that their home had been requisitioned by the Soviet authorities. The following morning local militiamen arrived to ensure that order had been complied with. The family was rounded up together with the remnants of the local Polish intelligentsia and kulaks on April 12, 1940 and deported to the Gulag from the local train station.¹¹⁶⁰

The third wave of deportations ensued in June 1940, and encompassed large numbers of Jewish refugees from the German zone. A Polish refugee from the German zone described the situation in **Złoczów**, where the local militia was comprised mostly of Jews and Ukrainians, as follows:

As the date of June 29 [1940] approached, not just the so-called refugees from Western and Central Poland, but all of the residents of Złoczów became more and more uneasy. In the afternoon of that day [June 28] our host, a doctor, came and told us that on the hill near the castle which served as a prison a large number of carts had been assembled. They had been brought in from almost the entire county. Our host counselled us not to sleep in our home ... He tried to persuade me that that night something would happen because too many communists had been brought into the town, which was a sure sign of some NKVD operation. ... we decided, the three of us, to wait. ...

... Our host's fourteen-year-old son, acting as a liaison, kept bringing new information from town. ... Around 1:30 o'clock at night we could clearly hear military detachments and the NKVD passing on the road and, from time to time, the banging of their rifles on the doors of homes. We heard these sounds distinctly coming from the neighbouring home. Around 2:15 o'clock they began to bang on the door of our house. The host decided not to open the door. The banging became louder and louder until the door was broken down and some people came up the staircase. I was almost certain that they were coming to our room and I waited with determination.

In fact two members of the NKVD entered in the company of four Soviet soldiers and two civilians. I soon found out that these civilians were residents of Złoczów, local communists who helped out in these shameful deeds. The NKVD representative came into our room and asked for my name. After I provided my name, he instructed us to get dressed ... The men then started to search the premises, which lasted a very brief time. ... After packing our things we waited for the truck to come which was to take us away. Since the trucks were occupied, some carriage was brought into which we were loaded. We were driven in the direction of the train station ...

At the train station—at that time it was almost light—stood a long train consisting of freight cars. Many of our friends peered from out of the wagons. We all wondered where we were being sent. ... We were crowded into a wagon which was already full of people. Normally the wagon could have held no more than thirty people, but was packed with sixty-four people. Almost the entire wagon was occupied by Jews from various parts of the country [i.e., refugees from the German zone—*M.P.*].¹¹⁶¹

Another Pole recalled how he and his family were seized from their home in the countryside near **Pohost Zahorodzki** in Polesia:

On the 20th of June, 1940, I had intended to take a small boat out on a lake ... I was awakened by loud knocking, first at the door, then the window. Looking out, I saw a local Jew whom I knew and next to him an officer and a soldier of the NKVD. I knew the significance of this situation at once. They had come to arrest us and send us to Siberia.

The officer ordered me to open the door. When he entered he read out an order as follows: "By decree of the Supreme Soviet you are sentenced to exile into the interior of the Soviet Union for five years as untrustworthy citizens towards the Soviet government."

He announced that they would search the house and all our possessions. There were four of us there—my mother, my little sister who was only six years old, and my mother's father. My father was already in a Soviet lager, having been caught while trying to cross the border between the Soviet Union and Poland in 1940.

Frightened by what was happening, my sister sobbed bitterly. Having carried out the search, the officer also had tears in his eyes as he whispered quietly in Russian: "There are beggars in Russia who have more possessions than you." The communist propaganda which was drummed into them about the wealth of Polish "gentlemen" and bourgeoisie could not be reconciled with what he saw there. He told us that we had half an hour in which to pack. ...

We were living from day to day and had no reserves of food. We packed a bit of clothing and bedding, whatever we could, in sacks. ... A cart came and our things were loaded on it. ...

¹¹⁶⁰ Zdzisława-Krystyna Kawecka, *Do Anglii przez Syberię* (Wrocław: Polskie Towarzystwo Ludoznawcze, 1994), 39–40, 54.

¹¹⁶¹ Kwapiński, *1939–1945*, 14–16.

We were placed on the cart together with the driver and soldier, while the officer and the Jew followed on foot ... It was only a short distance to the little town of Pohost-Zahorodzki where waited two Soviet trucks, already partly filled with others also sentenced to exile. I was surprised to find a number of Jewish families among them—some whom I knew....¹¹⁶²

The family of Zelman Drezner, Jewish refugees from Ostrołęka who had relocated to *Lida*, was rounded up in June 1940 by a patrol headed by a Jewish officer who arrived at their home at night. They were taken to the train station where they were loaded into freight wagons packed with Jews and Poles and dispatched to Arkhangelsk.¹¹⁶³

A Jewish refugee from Warsaw who had obtained employment in *Białystok* as a technical engineer was demoted after refusing to accept a Soviet passport. His attempt to hide, together with his wife, at a friend's home ended in failure when the NKVD arrived and apprehended all of the residents. Since he did not have a passport he and his wife were taken to the train station under the guard of a young armed Jew with a red armband. On the way, they stopped at their home to gather up a few belongings which were loaded on a carriage driven by another young Jew.¹¹⁶⁴

Maria Wanda Ciuman together with her husband Eustachy Stanisław Ciuman, both teachers, and her sister Aleksandra Żywicka were three of five Poles arrested by the NKVD from their home on Bułgarska Street in *Lwów*, late in the night on June 29, 1940 and loaded on freight trains. Their wagon held 52 people. Most of the passengers were Jewish refugees from central Poland who had registered to return to the German zone earlier that year. Among them were two young Jewish men from Warsaw with pro-Communist sympathies who had signed up for work in the Donbas mines in October 1939, but had returned to Lwów quite disillusioned with life in the Soviet Union. Some of the Jews who were petty merchants or tradesmen, rather than focus on their tangible enemies—the Germans and the Soviets, continued to manifest their anti-Polish sentiments at that late date by directing at the Polish passengers of a train destined for the Gulag insults like “Your Pans’ Poland Has Ended.”¹¹⁶⁵

The fourth and final wave of deportations was carried out in June of the following year (1941), on the eve of the German invasion. The spectacle witnessed in *Wilno* was typical. On June 13, 1941, Jews mounted Soviet trucks where they stood and directed the drivers to the homes of Poles whose names had been put on the lists for deportation. Entire Polish families along with small children and the elderly were unceremoniously hauled out of their homes and loaded on trucks. The trucks carted them off to the train station and then returned for more human cargo.¹¹⁶⁶

In *Nowe Święciany*, to the north of Wilno, a 12-year-old boy recalled how on June 12, 1941, at six o'clock in the morning, just after his mother had returned from work, their house was surrounded by Bolsheviks.

A Jew by the name of Szerman entered the house accompanied by five NKVD members. We were told to sit on a couch. After searching the premises, they ordered us to pack. We were told we were being relocated

¹¹⁶² Account of Jerzy Wróblewski in Nina and Janusz Smenda, eds., *Unforgettable Memories: Memoirs of Polish Exiles in the Soviet Union, 1940–1942* (Perth, Western Australia: Polish Siberian Group (WA), 1996), 121–22; also cited in Tadeusz Piotrowski, *The Polish Deportees of World War II: Recollections of Removal to the Soviet Union and Dispersal Throughout the World* (Jefferson, North Carolina and London: McFarland, 2004), 27.

¹¹⁶³ Janusz Gołota, “Losy Żydów ostrołęckich w czasie II wojny światowej,” *Biuletyn Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego*, no. 187 (1998): 30.

¹¹⁶⁴ Leon Rzendowski, “Wspomnienia z okresu 1939–1941,” *Biuletyn Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego*, no. 185–186 (1998): 120–21. Curiously, Rzendowski reports that during his official rounds he used to stay at a small hotel in Czyżewo which continued to be owned by a Jew who ran a brothel on the side.

¹¹⁶⁵ Wanda Ciuman, “Sześć lat Syberii,” in Aleksandra Szemioth, et al., eds., *Tak było ... Sybiracy*, vol. 9: *W tundrze w tajdze i na stepach* (Kraków: Związek Sybiraków Oddział w Krakowie, 2003), 105–110.

¹¹⁶⁶ Brzozowski, *Litwa—Wilno 1910–1945*, 56. The author witnessed similar scenes in Kaunas, the capital of Lithuania, where he lived at the time. *Ibid.*, 55. The Wilno region had been handed over to Lithuania by the Soviet Union in October 1939, only to be seized later, together with all of Lithuania, in June 1940.

because Bolshevik soldiers were to move into our house. After a little while some wagons came by and took us to the train station. There I saw a string of 70 wagons. The windows were grated. I understood at once that we had been fooled. ... We were packed into a wagon ... There were about 60 people in the wagon altogether. It was very hot. We didn't have water for three days. The elderly and children were fainting from the heat. At the larger stations we were given one bucket of water which was grabbed by everyone. After two weeks of such tedious travel we arrived in the city of Novosibirsk.¹¹⁶⁷

Yitzhak Arad (Rudnicki), a historian at the Yad Vashem Institute, describes conditions he witnessed in the nearby town of *Święciany*:

During the night of June 14, 1941, the town was shocked when NKVD and militia members took hundreds of people from their houses and placed them under arrest. Most of the arrested had been officials of the Polish government, landowners, officers in the Polish army—men who had been wealthy or active in political parties (excluding the Communist party). That night similar raids took place throughout Lithuania; close to 30,000 people, entire families among them, were arrested and deported to Siberia and Kazakhstan. ...

This action engendered fear in all circles of the population and rumors spread that additional waves of expulsion were to come. Among the majority of the Lithuanian population, the expulsions only intensified their distaste for the Soviet regime. But the expulsions also brought about increased anti-Semitism, because although there were thousands of Jews among the exiles, Jews played a relatively large role in the Communist party apparatus that was behind the action.¹¹⁶⁸

In *Ejszyski*, Jewish sources confirm Polish reports that, as elsewhere, the lists of deportees were compiled with “considerable help” from local Jews.

Deportation to Siberia was another threat issued to the well-to-do, and to whoever else was thought to “pose a danger to Communism.” ... Within Eishyshok itself, the shtetl Communists had prepared a list of people to be deported, but as a personal favor to Moshe Sonenson, Luba Ginunski removed the names of the Sonenson family as well as those of their friends the Kiuchefskis, for Moshe had helped the Ginunski family through some hard times.¹¹⁶⁹

That historian, however, fails to notice that among the victims of the deportations conducted in Ejszyski on June 12, 1941, there were many Poles, especially the families of former Polish police officers.¹¹⁷⁰

A similar situation prevailed in *Szczuczyn* near Łomża. There too the lists of deportees had been drawn up with the assistance of local Communists, for the most part Jews.

Suddenly, at one in the morning [in June 1941], the N.K.V.D. arrived with search warrants, according to an official list from the Communist Civilian Committee. ... After a thorough search the N.K.V.D. men ordered us in a sharp tone: “We give you 15 minutes to get dressed and pack your things. You will be sent out to Siberia. Cars are already waiting.” ...

From the entire area they were bringing people to the train station [in Grajewo] in order to send them to Siberia. People were stuffed into wagon cars like packed herring. There were many Polish people as well. Altogether there were 72 wagons for approximately 300 of us. Before placing us in the cars the N.K.V.D. frisked everyone over again and surveyed the lists of names.¹¹⁷¹

In *Orla*, a small town near Bielsk Podlaski, Tadeusz Wróblewski was denounced at a public meeting by a former student of his, a Jew. This young man addressed his remarks to a uniformed Soviet functionary extolling his Polish teacher's participation in the Polish-Soviet War of 1919–1920 and his prewar patriotic activities. Wróblewski was promptly arrested on June 20, 1941, and taken to the jail in Białystok. His wife,

¹¹⁶⁷ Account of Jan A. in Gross and Grudzińska-Gross, *W czterdziestym nas Matko na Sybir zesłali...*, 82–83.

¹¹⁶⁸ Arad, *The Partisan*, 26–27.

¹¹⁶⁹ Eliach, *There Once Was a World*, 572.

¹¹⁷⁰ Witold Andruszkiewicz, memoirs (typescript), (no date), 30–31.

¹¹⁷¹ Account of Moyshe Farbarovits in *Hurban kehilat Shtutsin*.

daughter, son and mother-in-law were seized and deported to Siberia. The train wagon that left Bielsk Podlaski with them contained more than forty Poles. When they reached Altay, their remote destination, they were quartered in a building used to raise cattle.¹¹⁷²

Maria Niwińska was seized from her home in **Białystok** the night of June 20 to 21 together with her family by a group of policeman consisting of Jews and one Russian. The Jews searched her husband and took him away. The Russian helped them pack some belongings. The rest of the family were taken to a train station in the industrial area and packed on a freight wagon. Their train did not leave until the following day. The passengers became even more terrified when the Germans started to drop bombs on the retreating Soviets.¹¹⁷³

Some from among the last batch seized for deportation did not make it to the Gulag because of the intervening German attack on the Soviet Union. A Pole who resided with his parents in **Grodno** recalled:

On the night of June 20 to 21, 1941, at one o'clock at night, we were awoken by sudden and brutal knocking on the door. My mother opens the door. Into the home come four people: two NKVD soldiers with rifles, an NKVD officer and a local Jew whom we recognized. The officer says to us in Russian: "On orders of the Soviet government you are being resettled ... You have an hour to pack ...". My mother asks: "Are we being sent to Russia?" The officer replies: "Yes. There's a truck on the street outside the window. That's where you'll be loaded on." ...

After being loaded on, the Soviets close and seal our home ... But we do not go far. After about twenty to thirty metres the vehicle stops and some of the Soviets get out. After a while they return with Mrs. Gawrońska and her daughter Maura, whom we know. Maura is my friend. They carry their bundles and packages. They're also being deported. We help them load their baggage into the bin on the truck. ... The vehicle continues on driving through the city which is still empty even though it's morning.¹¹⁷⁴

In **Łomża**, the Jews and Soviets reportedly delighted in the spectacle of Poles being rounded up on June 20th and 21st and hauled off to the train station. They shouted threats that soon all the Poles would be deported.¹¹⁷⁵ The largely Jewish militia who played a key role in the final deportation of Poles in nearby **Kolno** partied late and boisterously the evening of June 21st to celebrate the success of their task. They were caught by surprise when the Nazi entered the town the next morning.¹¹⁷⁶ In **Siemiatycze**, even Nazi officials joined in the merry-making:

The night before the German attack on Soviet Russia on June 20, 1941, there was a ball in Siemiatych. It was attended, as always in recent days, by the German border patrol from the other side.¹¹⁷⁷

For many Jews who faced the same fate as the Poles, the circumstances of their own deportation constituted a rude awakening:

¹¹⁷² Account of Wiesław Wróblewski in *Sybiracy Podkarpacia* (Krosno: KaBe, 1998), 243–45.

¹¹⁷³ Maria Niwińska, *Bezdomne ptaki* (Białystok, 1995), 37, cited in Adam Dobroński, "Los mieszkańców Białegostoku na przełomie czerwca i lipca 1941 roku," in Jan Jerzy Milewski and Anna Pyżewska, eds., *Początek wojny niemiecko-sowieckiej i losy ludności cywilnej* (Warsaw: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej–Komisja Ścigania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu, 2003), 94.

¹¹⁷⁴ Henryk Dzierżek, "Przerwana deportacja," *Sybirak: Pismo Związku Sybiraków*, no. 7 (1992): 26.

¹¹⁷⁵ Based on the chronicle of the Benedictine Sisters in Łomża (published in 1995), as cited in Strzembosz, "Przemilczana kolaboracja," *Rzeczpospolita*, January 27, 2001.

¹¹⁷⁶ Antoni Nadara, "Skończyć z oszczerstwami!" *Nasza Polska*, March 13, 2001.

¹¹⁷⁷ Eliezer Tash (Tur-Shalom), ed., *The Community of Siemiatych* [Siemiatycze Memorial Book] (Tel Aviv: Association of Former Residents of Siemiatych in Israel and the Diaspora, 1965), ii–iii.

On Friday, in the night, we were woken up by NKVD men. They would not let us pack anything, but the Jewish militiaman who was with them allowed us to take a few things.¹¹⁷⁸

Another Jewish testimony states:

One day an NKVD official, a Jew, appeared at our house and asked to see our papers. Then NKVD men came in the night with the same official, who this time refused to speak Yiddish to us, and we were taken to the station.¹¹⁷⁹

A Jew from *Wolożyn* recalled:

On a springtime evening in March 1940 ... We heard knocking at the door. It was opened. An NKVD agent with two local citizens entered. The three searched all closets, wardrobes and chests. The policemen ordered my father to dress. ... went out into the dark, escorted by the three of them. It was the last time we saw and heard of our father [the owner of a flour mill]. He was forty-two years old.

Mother went from door to door. She begged for help from the new elite to free our father. One of the suddenly powerful promised, a second claimed that he could not help, and the third answered mockingly. ...

On Friday morning April 13, 1940 ... they appeared: the NKVD agent with his two local aides. In front of us, the agent read the official document: As individuals not reliable to the Soviet government, we should be expelled from the border country and transferred to resettle in the central regions of the Soviet Union. ... We were driven in this [horse-drawn] cart to the Horod'k [Gródek] rail station.¹¹⁸⁰

When they arrived to their place of exile, the deportees often encountered Jews in their camps, not only fellow prisoners, but also in the role of commanders. Shmuel Kaninovitc recalled:

I was sent to Kolyma, above the Arctic Circle where the temperature falls to fifty degrees below zero. They gave us the job of mining for gold at a depth of 20 meters below ground, on meager rations and under conditions so difficult that they were unbearable. ...

The camp commandants, Iosif Bobrov, Kovalevsky, Tchlitzky, and Shaklirsky were Jewish.¹¹⁸¹

In anticipation of the German invasion in June 1941, the Soviets focused their attention again on real and perceived political opponents and liquidated thousands of prisoners, often with unspeakable, sadistic cruelty, in Łomża, Oszmiana, Pińsk, and many others places.¹¹⁸² In thirteen prisons located in the former southeastern voivodships of Lwów, Tarnopol and Stanisławów, there were 15,364 prisoners on June 22–23, 1941. A portion of the inmates were evacuated, and several thousand were freed or escaped. At least 5,387 of prisoners were killed: 2,464 in Lwów and Złoczów, 1101 in Sambor and Stryj, more than 1,000 in Stanisławów, 560 in Tarnopol, 174 in Brzeżany and 88 in Czortków.¹¹⁸³ Although there were some Jews among the prisoners, the prisoners were disproportionately non-Jews. In Busk, for example, none of the 35

¹¹⁷⁸ Grynberg, *Children of Zion*, 72.

¹¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁸⁰ M. Perlman, "The Russians Are Coming," in E. Leoni, ed., *Wolozin: The Book of the City and of the Etz Hayyim Yeshiva*, posted on the Internet at: <www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/volozhin/volozhin.html>.

¹¹⁸¹ Moorstein, *Zelva Memorial Book*, 80.

¹¹⁸² A number of these massacres are being investigated by the Commission for the Investigation of Crimes against the Polish Nation of Poland's Institute of National Remembrance: Białystok sygnatura akt S 28/04/Zk (Łomża), Gdańsk sygnatura akt S 106/01/Zk (Oszmiana), Poznań sygnatura akt S 4/03/Zk (Pińsk).

¹¹⁸³ Grzegorz Hryciuk, "Przemiany demograficzne w Galicji Wschodniej w latach 1939–1941," in Chmielowiec, *Okupacja sowiecka ziem polskich (1939–1941)*, 123.

prisoners who were murdered just before the Soviet evacuation were Jews.¹¹⁸⁴ In addition, hundreds of prisoners were also killed in frantic operations in the countryside during evacuations of prisons.¹¹⁸⁵

There are many authentic reports of local Jews in the service of the Soviets taking part in the mass executions of prisoners carried out by the Soviet security forces.¹¹⁸⁶ Mykhailo Rosliak, a Ukrainian lawyer and activist from Czortków, was apprehended on a street in **Lwów** on June 22, 1941, after being spotted by Jonas Buchberg, a Jewish NKVD officer from his hometown. Buchberg ordered Rosliak's arrest in Russian and had him taken to the jail on Jachowicz Street. The next day Rosliak was transferred to the notorious prison known as Brygidki, where he witnessed the execution of scores of political prisoners before the NKVD fled from Lwów on June 28th.¹¹⁸⁷

On June 23, 1941, just hours before the Soviet retreat, the NKVD stationed in Zabłudów received orders to kill prisoners. Fifteen Polish prisoners from Brańsk and Ciechanowiec, who had been arrested by Jewish policemen, were executed near the village of **Folwarki Tylwickie** near Zabłudów. The prisoners from Brańsk were marched there under the escort of two Jewish policemen, Berko Brojde and the son-in-law of Nisel Łowszyc. The victims included Stanisław Akacki, Tomasz Godlewski, Czesław Koc, Jan Koc, Jan Krasowski, Aleksander Kwiatkowski, Bolesław Maksimczuk, Zofia Marcinkowska (age 19), Jan Niemyjski, Ignacy Płoński (a neighbour of the two Jewish policemen from Brańsk), Marian Stolarczyk, Józef Wierciński, Stanisław Wójcik, and Helena Zaziemska (a schoolteacher from Spieszyn).¹¹⁸⁸

Many Poles and Ukrainians imprisoned in **Tarnopol** were executed shortly before the Soviet retreat. "Three Jews from Trembowla—the cab-driver Kramer, Dawid Kümel and Dawid Rosenberg—took part in the murder of prisoners in the jail in Tarnopol."¹¹⁸⁹

According to the few Ukrainian prisoners who survived the bloodbath in the prison in **Łuck**, "with more or less serious injuries, the Jews again played a decisive part in the arrests and shootings."¹¹⁹⁰ Some 2,000

¹¹⁸⁴ Antoni Adamiuk, "Wspomnienia," *Forum Duszpasterskie: Biuletyn Pastoralny*, vol. 6, no. 23 (1996): 4–18; Internet: <<http://www.busk.pl/BuskTomkiewicz/rozdzial3.html>>.

¹¹⁸⁵ Ibid. (Chmielowiec). See also the following articles in Milewski and Pyżewska, *Początek wojny niemiecko-sowieckiej i losy ludności cywilnej*: Zbigniew Romaniuk, "Zbrodnia w Folwarkach Tylwickich na tle wydarzeń w regionie w połowie 1941 roku" (pp. 78–80); Kazimierz Litwiejko, "Zbrodnie sowieckie w powiecie sokolskim w czerwcu 1941 roku" (pp. 81–84); and Tadeusz Krahel, "Los duchowieństwa archidiecezji wileńskiej na przełomie dwóch okupantów" (pp. 85–90).

¹¹⁸⁶ See, for example, *Zbrodnia ewakuacja więźniów i aresztów NKWD na Kresach Wschodnich II Rzeczypospolitej w czerwcu–lipcu 1941 roku*, 82 (in Łuck), 102–103 (in Oszmiana—Karp, Krelensztejn, Mohylow; in Wołożyn—Szloma Szlut), 118 (in Łuck—Blumenkranz, Spigł). The account of Maria Antonowicz, quoted in Nowak, *Przemilczane zbrodnie*, 64–65, mentions Jews serving in the jail in Berezwecz.

¹¹⁸⁷ Milena Rudnytska, ed., *Zakhidnia Ukraina pid bolshevykami, IX. 1939–VI. 1941: Zbirnyk* (New York: Shevchenko Scientific Society in the USA, 1958), 441–44.

¹¹⁸⁸ Romaniuk, "Twenty-One Months of Soviet Rule in Brańsk," in *The Story of Two Shtetls*, Part One, 66; "Confessions of Zbigniew Romaniuk," in *ibid.*, 26; Zbigniew Romaniuk, "Zbrodnia w Folwarkach Tylwickich na tle wydarzeń w regionie w połowie 1941 roku," in Milewski and Pyżewska, *Początek wojny niemiecko-sowieckiej i losy ludności cywilnej*, 78–80; Mirosław Reczko and Zbigniew Romaniuk, *Zbrodnia sowiecka pod Zabłudowem 23 czerwca 1941 roku* (Ciechanowiec and Sobolewo: Buk, 2016); Testimony of Janina Woińska, Polish Witnesses to the Holocaust Project, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Internet: <https://collections.ushmm.org/oh_findingaids/RG-50.488.0052_trs_en.pdf>. It appears that Ignacy Płoński was denounced by Jews because he had been a business competitor of theirs before the war.

¹¹⁸⁹ Szetelnicki, *Trembowla*, 213.

¹¹⁹⁰ Operational Situation Report USSR No. 24, dated July 16, 1941, in Yitzhak Arad, Shmuel Krakowski, and Shmuel Spector, eds., *The Einsatzgruppen Reports: Selections from the Dispatches of the Nazi Death Squads' Campaign Against the Jews, July 1941–1943* (New York: Holocaust Library, 1989), 32.

prisoners are believed to have been murdered there. It is estimated that of the 5,500 prisoners held in Volhynian jails on the eve of the German invasion, the majority of whom by then were Ukrainians, at least 2,500 were killed by the Soviets.¹¹⁹¹

The prison in **Dubno** was overseen by NKVD Major Khaim Vinokur, a Jew. His deputy and private secretary was a Jewish woman by the name of Bronstein. The head of the prison's administration was Rakhil Geifler, also a Jew. At its peak, the prison held as many as 3,000 prisoners. After three large transports to the Soviet interior, some 600 prisoners remained on the eve of the German invasion, among them only a handful of Jews. The night of June 24–25th Major Vinokur and his two assistants

raced from cell to cell spraying the prisoners with bullets. Teresa Trautman, Bronek Rumel, Jerzy Bronikowski, Tadeusz Majewski, Ryszard Kasprzycki and many other friends and underground members were murdered by Vinokur and his henchmen. Most were young students with their whole lives ahead of them.¹¹⁹²

Two Jewish NKVD members pierced victims thought to be still alive with their bayonets. Polish accounts from Dubno are confirmed by Ukrainian prisoners who survived the bloodbath and provided detailed testimonies of their ordeal.¹¹⁹³

The situation in **Czortków** was particularly tragic. Local Jews in the service of the NKVD—among them Ignacy Blum and Klemens Nusbaum, respectively, a future General and Colonel in Communist Poland's army—are believed to have played a key role in the horrific execution of eight Dominican clergymen on the eve of the German entry.¹¹⁹⁴

The situation of the [Dominican] monastery changed drastically on the 22nd of June 1941 when the Soviet-German war broke out. The rapid advance of the German armies eastward gave rise to universal panic. As was the custom in the Stalinist system, above all they rushed to liquidate real and suspected enemies of the Communist government. Included among that group were members of the clergy. The security forces, together with a military unit directed [to Czortków], suddenly arrived and dragged out of the monastery three barely dressed monks, Father Justyn Spyrlak, the prior, Father Jacek Misiuta and Father Anatol Znamirowski, as well as Brother Andrzej Bojakowski. They were driven to the banks of the river in Stary Czortków, to a dam known as Berda, where they were killed by bullet shots in the back of the head. The executioners were Jews who served in the NKVD, which is confirmed by the testimonies of residents of Czortków ...

News of the deaths of the Dominicans spread quickly through the town and surroundings. Crowds converged on the spot where the murdered monks lay. People were in tears. Some knelt and, with the greatest reverence, dipped their handkerchiefs in the blood; others gathered the blood-stained soil in dishes and kissed the places where the bodies lay.

Despite requests the Soviet authorities would not allow the monks to be buried in the monastic vault in the cemetery. They were buried where they were found. They were to be buried by two o'clock in the afternoon on July 2nd or else their bodies would be thrown into the river nearby. ...

¹¹⁹¹ Grzegorz Hryciuk, "Zmiany liczebności Wołynia podczas okupacji radzieckiej w latach 1939–1941," in Konopka and Boćkowski, *Polska i jej wschodni sąsiedzi w XX wieku*, 378–79; Hryciuk, *Przemiany narodowościowe i ludnościowe w Galicji Wschodniej i na Wołyniu w latach 1931–1948*, 197.

¹¹⁹² "A Gulag and Holocaust Memoir of Janina Sulkowska-Gladun," in Gladun, *Poland's Holocaust: A Family Chronicle of Soviet and Nazi Terror*. See also Marco Carynnyk, "The Palace on the Ikva—Dubne, September 18th, 1939 and June 24th, 1941," in Barkan, Cole, and Struve, *Shared History, Divided Memory*.

¹¹⁹³ "Dubno—drugi Katyń," *Nasza Polska* (Warsaw), 17 July 2001. Reproduced there are German report about the atrocities and the testimonies of Totar Chirva, Petro Morosiuk, and Valentyna Łepieszkiewicz, all from the Heinrich Himmler collection archived at Fort Alexandria, in the United States.

¹¹⁹⁴ Zygmunt Mazur, "Prawda o zbrodni w Czortkowie," *W Drodze*, no. 11–12 (1989): 50–59; Zygmunt Mazur, "Męczeński klasztor dominikanów w Czortkowie," *Gazeta* (Toronto), no. 45 (April 1992); Account of Augustyna Moroz, *Studia Rzeszowskie*, vol. 10 (2003); Aleksander Szumański, "Żydowski mord na duchownych," *Gazeta Warszawska*, February 15, 2013; P; Stanisław M. Jankowski, "Polskie powstanie przeciw Sowietom," *Historia Do Rzeczy*, January 2014, 84–87, here at 87. Several persons have identified one of the executioners as a local Jew named Nusbaum, a member of the NKVD, who also shot a suspected witness to the crime. See Andrzej Bazaliński, "Zbrodniczy czyn w Czortkowie," *My, Sybiracy*, no. 2 (1992): 92–95.

Nothing could be found out about the remaining monks because the army guarded the entrance to the monastery and the church remained shut. Despite these obstacles one student was able to get into the church and from there into the cells on the main floor. What he saw was horrifying. In their beds lay the murdered Brothers Reginald Czerwonka and Metody Iwaniszczew, and the tertiary Józef Wincetowicz. All of them had been shot in the head. Information was still lacking about the fate of Father Hieronim Longawa, who lived on the second floor and could not be reached.

The Soviet security forces also plundered the church, destroying in a barbaric manner objects of devotion and profaning the Blessed Sacrament, which was spilled out of containers and deliberately trampled. The entire church was a picture of deliberate devastation. In an attempt to cover up the signs of their crimes, on July 4th the army set fire to the monastery. ...

On Sunday morning, July 6th, German forces entered Czortków. Only now was it possible to bury the murdered monks in the monastic tomb and to say a mass of mourning. In preparation for the funeral of these additional victims, the door to the room on the second floor of the monastery was broken open. It appeared that Father Longawa had been killed at the same time as the other brothers. The bed on which he lay was probably deliberately set on fire and burned together with his body. Only a few pieces of bones were left to be gathered.

The funeral of Father Hieronim Longawa and the murdered brothers took place on July 6th, at two o'clock in the afternoon. It was attended by a large throng of people. The church bells rang for the first time during the war. A formal mass of mourning was celebrated on July 8th. On Sunday, July 12th, after the high mass, a procession wound its way to the grave of the priests. A wreath of thorns adorned with purple flowers was carried as a symbol of their tragic deaths. ...

This crime, perpetrated just before the cowardly escape of the Soviets in advance of the approaching German army, was not the only one to affect this small town. In the last few days before leaving Czortków, hundreds of people, Ukrainians and Poles, were murdered in the jail.¹¹⁹⁵

On June 30, 1941, a group of Soviet soldiers led by a local Jew came to the monastery of the Marian Fathers in *Druja* and seized three priests, among them the prior Rev. Eugeniusz Kulesza. Two of the priests were later released but Rev. Kulesza was taken across the Dźwina River to Latvia, where he was executed after being beaten mercilessly by a Red Army soldier and a Jew.¹¹⁹⁶ Rev. Czesław Matusiewicz, the pastor of nearby *Prozoroki*, avoided this fate by fleeing from the town after local Jews falsely accused him of shooting at Soviet soldiers. Soviet militiamen came looking for him at the rectory several times without success.¹¹⁹⁷ After planting three rifles on the church pulpit, Jews in *Korycin* near Sokółka falsely accused the local priests of starting up an anti-Soviet partisan group. The priests managed to flee in time. However, one of the priests, who dressed as a shepherd, was betrayed by Jews, but by mistake the Soviets arrested another shepherd and killed him.¹¹⁹⁸

In the face of such atrocities, is it surprising that many people regarded the arrival of the Germans as a reprieve from further bloodbaths and imminent deportation to the Gulag—at least a temporary one? Is it surprising that those who survived wanted to seek revenge when the Germans threw open the jails crammed with putrefying bodies sometimes mangled beyond recognition? Yet, contrary to what is claimed in Jewish sources discussed later on, the departure of the Soviets did not usher in a period of mass reprisals by the Poles directed at the Jews.

The extent of Jewish complicity in Soviet atrocities can be gauged, to some degree, by considering the number and composition of the local authorities who fled along with the retreating Soviet army in June 1941. Of the 2,926 persons who left five counties in the former Polish province of Stanisławów, 2,438—or about 85 percent—were Jews.¹¹⁹⁹ According to a Jewish source, some 7,000–8,000 Jews from the city of

¹¹⁹⁵ Mazur, "Męczeński klasztor dominikanów w Czortkowie," *Gazeta* (Toronto), no. 45 (April 1992). Some of the names of the murdered priests and monks have been corrected.

¹¹⁹⁶ Krahel, *Doświadczeni zniewoleniem*, 73–75.

¹¹⁹⁷ Krahel, *Doświadczeni zniewoleniem*, 84–85; Krahel, *Archidiecezja wileńska w latach II wojny światowej*, 95.

¹¹⁹⁸ Krahel, *Doświadczeni zniewoleniem*, 200–1.

¹¹⁹⁹ Mazur, *Pokucie w latach drugiej wojny światowej*, 62.

Wilno, most of whom were active supporters of the Soviet regime, fled with the Red Army in June 1941.¹²⁰⁰ Ordinary Jewish civilians rarely took the initiative to leave at that time, and if they did, they were frequently turned back by the Soviets.¹²⁰¹ Since the survival rate of those who fled to the Soviet Union was very high, and given their complicity in the Soviet occupation of 1939–1941, it is not surprising that many of them were to resurface in “People’s Poland” as Communist functionaries.¹²⁰²

¹²⁰⁰ Józef Krajewski, “Bestialstwa w ponarskim lesie,” *Trybuna* (Warsaw), July 9, 1999. The source of this information is Eugenija Biber, of the Gaon Jewish Museum in Vilnius. A Polish historian gives the figure of 7,000 Jews who left with the Soviets. See Lewandowska, *Życie codzienne Wilna w latach II wojny światowej*, 163. At least 3,000 Jews, many of them active in the Workers’ Guard and similar groupings, had left with the Soviets before October 28, 1939 when the town was originally handed over to Lithuania in return for her neutrality. See Levin, *The Lesser of Two Evils*, 181; Levin, “The Jews of Vilna under Soviet Rule, 19 September–28 October 1939,” in *Polin*, vol. 9 (1996): 131. It was after this earlier departure that riots broke out in the city in retaliation for the numerous atrocities committed by Jewish collaborators. *Ibid.*, 109.

¹²⁰¹ Dean, *Collaboration in the Holocaust*, 22; Aryeh Wilner, “Mon retour de l’URSS,” and Yehuda Bauer, “Kurzeniec —A Jewish Shtetl in the Holocaust,” *Yalkut Moreshet: Holocaust Documentation and Research*, no. 1 (Winter 2003): 90, 138–39.

¹²⁰² For example, during a postwar visit to Będzin in his new capacity as a captain of the state security county office in Katowice, Guttman, who originally hailed from Będzin, was recognized as a functionary involved in the arrests and executions of Poles in Volhynia in 1940–1941. See *Zrzeszenie “Wolność i Niezawilność” w dokumentach*, vol. 1: *Wrzesień 1945–czerwiec 1946* (Wrocław: Zarząd Główny WiN, 1997), 508.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

Polemics: Holocaust Historiography

Over the years, Holocaust historians have painted a distinctly different picture of Jewish-Polish relations in Poland's Eastern Borderlands from that outlined above. (The notable exception here is Israeli historian Ben-Cion Pinchuk.) Jews are portrayed uniformly as loyal citizens of Poland whose conduct was beyond reproach. Little, if anything, is mentioned about their mistreatment of Poles at the time of the Soviet invasion. Occasionally, one hears that a handful of Jewish Communists "disarmed" some Polish soldiers and police, however, there is scant detail given when describing those events. On the other hand, the Polish army is accused of wantonly attacking Jews—according to Dov Levin, they "savaged" any Jews they encountered. Local Poles, all of them allegedly anti-Semites by nature, are said to have perpetrated unprovoked pogroms. How much of these charges is based on fact, and how much is steeped in bigotry? In fact, there are numerous Jewish testimonies that belie those claims. Jewish refugees who recorded their recollections during the war in particular present a radically different story from Levin's.

During the German advance, thousands of Jews fled cities and towns to the countryside and were taken in by Polish villagers. When the Germans bombarded the town of Kiernozia north of Łowicz on September 15, 1939, most of the residents, including more than 200 Jews, fled to the nearby villages for safety.¹²⁰³ Thousands of Jewish refugees who decided to flee eastward eastward marched alongside Polish soldiers and officers in uniform without incident. According to Daniel Fligelman, who worked at the Oneg Shabat archive in Warsaw, "very often they [i.e., Polish soldiers] extended their help to us, even though they knew that we were Jews."¹²⁰⁴ Although fitting the classic profile of a radicalized youth, and thus apparently a prime target for Polish retaliation in Levin's estimation, the experiences of a 22-year-old young man who fled Warsaw belie the mendacious charge that, despite the chaos around them, Polish soldiers took the time to "savage" Jews.

We set off in the direction of Biała Podlaska. ... The town is in a flurry. One can hear machine gunfire. They say the front is 7 km past Biała. We move on, we want to reach Brześć. Routed army units move along with us. The attitude of the soldiers toward us is very good, they share their food with us. ...

[Closer to Brześć:] Polish soldiers took cover in the forest from German airplanes ... In the Polish detachment we are offered coffee made from cubes, which revived us somewhat. ... Our group now consists of 11 persons, as five had left it. ...

In the evening another terrible experience: the highway is under fire from wandering guerrillas and army units. We approach a small burning bridge where a column of military vehicles is waiting, as it cannot cross. ... On the way we pass the building of a Polish elementary school which is full of people. The principal opens the door and shows us that the main building is packed. ... The principal leads us to the village and makes a villager open his barn for us. [The villagers in Polesia were not Poles, whose friendly attitude toward the Jews is mentioned several times in this account in contrast to the attitude of non-Poles.] ...

In the morning we march on toward Kobryń. On the way we are stopped by a well-organized Polish military unit. They control all the travellers and check their documents. Single persons are detained. ... We return to Kowel by a circular route. In the orchards we take fruit for free. Polish soldiers treated us in a friendly manner, without any sign of anti-Semitism. They point out the road and tell us: "Go and take some." ...

We walk in the direction of Dywin, far from the highway and railroad. ... [The Jewish inhabitants] urge us to remain in the town, [as] the Polish authorities and police outpost are still there. All of a sudden we encounter an unpleasant surprise. Wanting to clear the place of shirkers and various infiltrators and deserters, the commander detains us as well and takes us to a holding centre outside the town. ... We are given more food than we need so we give some back. We ask what they want from us and why we were locked up. No one can answer us. The guards are also newcomers and, honestly speaking, they don't know what's

¹²⁰³ 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, Part A, 963.

¹²⁰⁴ Ruta Sakowska, "Relacje Daniela Fligelmana—członka Oneg Szabat," *Biuletyn Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego*, mos. 1–2 (1986): 167–193. See also Icchak Carmi, "Powrót do przeszłości," in Jerzy Jacek Bojarski, ed., *Ścieżki pamięci: Żydowskie miasto w Lublinie—losy, miejsca, historia* (Lublin and Rishon LeZion: Norbertinum, Ośrodek "Brama Grodzka—Teatr NN," Towarzystwo Przyjaźni Polsko-Izraelskiej w Lublinie, Stowarzyszenie Środkowoeuropejskie "Dziedzictwo i Współczesność," 2002), 88; Siekiński and Tych, *Widziałem anioła śmierci*, 339.

happening. In the morning we are given bread and coffee and are set free. ...

[The town of Ratno] was still in Polish hands. Polish units ride through fully armed and in an orderly fashion, which makes a good impression. The officers are recruiting for the legion that is forming in Romania. ... This does not last long as signs of anarchy and chaos become visible. The police stations demand that people surrender their weapons and threaten to shoot for disobedience. ... People who came from Kowel tell that Kowel and Brześć are already occupied by the Russians. In Ratno a militia is formed consisting of villagers, Ukrainians and Belorussians, and Jewish activists, who disarm Polish policemen of their rifles. A mixed revkom (revolutionary committee) is formed consisting of villagers and Jews. They greet the Russian army and build a [triumphal] gate. The [Polish] commander flees. The town is decorated with red flags made out of Polish flags from which the white part was ripped away. We lived through a terrible night.

There were still regular Polish detachments in Kamień Koszyrski, 40 km from Ratno. In the evening, they sent out a scouting patrol which took over the police outpost at the edge of the town. The [new] militia greeted them with shots and arrested them ... To everyone's surprise a large detachment of several thousand soldiers soon approached. All night various armed formations marched through, including heavy artillery. The captives were freed, and four Ukrainian militiamen were killed. The shooting lasted all night. The command announced that they would set off through Włodawa in the direction of Warsaw to relieve the beleaguered capital. Fate did not allow them to reach Warsaw. In the morning they were bombed by the Red airforce. Soon after a light Soviet tank appeared in the outskirts and drove through the streets of the town. This was a sign that the Red army was approaching. The people [i.e., non-Poles] gathered near the highway to greet them.¹²⁰⁵

One of a group of six Jewish men who fled Warsaw provided a similar description of conditions in Eastern Poland—free of “savage” Polish soldiers and frenzied Polish mobs—before the arrival of the Soviets:

In this way we arrived in Chełm and here we hit a dead end: we weren't allowed in. Luckily we accidentally ran into a lieutenant we knew who suggested that we complete our journey on an evacuation train. ... however, it soon turned out that ... the train was bombed ...

In Kowel our group grew by one more companion, an officer of the Polish army who proved to be very useful and resourceful: he somehow managed to obtain a country wagon with a horse ...

About 20 km from Luck (the evening of September 17th), we were unexpectedly shot at from a brush by a group of Ukrainians ... Fortunately behind us was an army transport and supply column and their commanders allowed us to join it, which we eagerly took advantage of. Around 12 midnight, about 5 km from Luck, we were unexpectedly illuminated by reflectors. Soviet tanks. The first thing we were questioned about was weapons, which we were told to give up immediately. ...

After our arrival in Luck we were searched several times by the Citizens' Militia, created *ad hoc*, which was recruited for the most part from Jews and armed with weapons taken from Polish soldiers. They took from my military companions their belts and ammunition pouches and ordered their officer's badges be pulled off. The rest of that night ... we spent on the floor of a cinema ...

The following morning we ascertained to our surprise that there was no Soviet army in the city at all, and that only the post office, railway station, provincial offices and other important buildings were taken over by them, and beyond that guard was kept by the Citizens' Militia which consisted of elements of the town's proletariat, with a distinct preponderance of Jews. It was only on the 19th of September in the morning that the first transports of Soviet infantry arrived by vehicle. They were greeted with flowers and raised fists, and

¹²⁰⁵ Żbikowski, *Archiwum Ringelbluma*, vol. 3, 254–57. The memorial book of the town of Ratno presents these events differently, and is silent about the disarming of the Polish police and the massacre of a Polish teacher and some soldiers, which is described later in the text. According to one Jewish account it was not the revolutionary committee, but allegedly the city council, who “prepared a splendid welcome for the Red Army.” That account goes on to state: “A gate of honor decorated with many flowers was set up. Red flags fluttered for show atop all the houses. The residents tore off the white section of the red-white flags of Poland that they owned, and the entire city was decked in red. ... Representatives of the city hall waited on the road to greet the Soviet soldiers. The vigil lasted for two days, for they did not know the exact time that the army would arrive. In the meantime, an entire division of Polish soldiers passed through the town on their way to Zabolottya [Zablocie]. On the route of their retreat, they passed the place where the enthusiastic devotees of the Soviet regime were waiting, waving their red flags and hurrying to settle scores with them.” Another Jewish eyewitness states: “Along with all the children of Ratno, I ran to welcome the soldiers of the Red Army. ... It was not long before delegates of the Soviet regime, along with several local Ukrainian collaborators and several Jews who were known for their Communist inclinations, came to us and began to impose order in the town.” See Nachman Tamir, ed., *Ratno: Sipura shel kehila yehudit she-hushmeda* (Tel Aviv: Ratno Society in Israel, 1983), 162 (Shlomo Perlmutter, “Embers of a Broomwood Fire”), 164 (Pearl Vernik, “In the Days of Soviet Rule”); translated as *Ratno: Story of a Destroyed Jewish Community*, Internet: <<http://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/Ratno/ratno.html>>.

here and there people were even singing the Internationale. Within an hour all the streets were full of small groups of people who gathered around individual soldiers and spoke with them animatedly, often even in Yiddish.¹²⁰⁶

A young woman member of another group of Jews who headed eastward recalled:

we came upon a Polish military patrol which included a few Jewish soldiers. They informed us that the area was unsafe and advised us to head for Rudawa. ...

We set out by foot in the direction of Tomaszów [Tomaszów] Lubelski. On the way, we came across many burnt-out villages. The peasants received us very kindly, although they knew we were Jews. They gave us food, drink, places to sleep in their stables, and did not ask for money.

We reached Tomaszów Lubelski before the curfew. It was dark night. ... We asked several Jews to let us stay with them just for one night. We pointed out to them that it was close to curfew, that we were strangers and refugees. But no Jew would let us in. ...

We set out for a nearby village. The peasants there also treated us very kindly. They gave us food and drink, and allowed us to sleep in a stable, and refused to take any money. We stayed there for about two days. On the third day, our peasant told us that he was afraid to keep us any longer because German patrols were constantly passing by and moving about in the area.¹²⁰⁷

Herman Kruk, an erstwhile Communist and later Bundist, also paints a strikingly different picture of conditions than that painted by Dov Levin:

... another guest stands in the door—our [Jewish] friend Staszek Broder, a partner in a big boardinghouse in Otwock. ... He stands before us in a military uniform—he is a sergeant.

Joyous at meeting everyone, Staszek Broder tells his story:

He is coming from German captivity. He fell into German hands near Praszynice, was there four hours and escaped. He went with a horse and wagon for three days and three nights. He traveled with a priest and two soldiers, who escaped with him. Here [in Kowel] they parted from one another. But he keeps the Christian with the wagon. It is a wagon with two horses, which he got at a farm. ...

Albert Kozik, the non-commissioned officer, reports to us that he is putting some of his soldiers at the disposal of the city headquarters. We remain with only him and two of his Christian fellow soldiers.

Thus we again have a wagon with two horses. Our camp is thus: there are 6 of us who have traveled from Warsaw, our friend the silk merchant Dovid Sadowski, the officer Albert and his 2 colleagues, and Sergeant Broder. With the driver, this is a group of 12 people. ...

At sundown we leave Kowel for Sarny. ...

At 7 in the evening [September 17th], we arrive in Mielnica.

In the outskirts of the town, a young man meets us and asks if we want to eat. He takes us to a house ... The house is full of refugees. Refugees are eating there, Jews and Christians, policemen, soldiers. Everyone is grateful and touched by the hospitality. They don't take money from anyone. The host and hostess in the house are busy, they cook soup, they serve. People come and go.

Later we found in that town, the Jews do miracles. For a whole week they have been cooking, baking bread, taking care of lodging—they do that for everyone with no distinction of Jew or Christian. ...

Early in the morning [September 18th], our non-commissioned officer learned that a colonel called a meeting of officers. ... The order given at the meeting was: the Bolsheviks are taking the entire region; more precise details are not yet known and therefore, for the time being, the orders are as follows:

Not to mount any resistance and even to let oneself be disarmed—but all soldiers had to leave for Łuck to join the entire Polish garrison of the Volhynia province.

Once again a turmoil. We don't understand what is going on there. All of us go out to the highway ... We decide to go to Kowel. ... We turn around and take the road to Łuck.

The highway becomes fuller from one minute to the next. ... A military truck rushes by ... For kilometers we drive ... On a side, on the right, stands a long line of cars. The soldiers are distributing underwear, uniforms, and shoes to everyone without exception.

A colonel and his officers stand on the side there and watch the soldiers rule. Soldiers, police, farmers, Jews—everyone gets what they want and there is an abundance for everyone. ...

We look around. Kozik stands fraternally with yesterday's chief of the Świętokrzysk [Świętokrzyski] prison—he is there, too, and persuades my friend to take:

“Should it fall into the hands of foreigners? Better your own people should enjoy it ...”

¹²⁰⁶ Żbikowski, *Archiwum Ringelbluma*, vol. 3, 685–86.

¹²⁰⁷ Huberland, *Kiddush Hashem*, 337, 339, 340.

... The highway is full as usual with police, soldiers, farmers, escaping Jews, etc. Hordes of cyclists are rushing by as if they want to get home as fast as possible.

We stop again, we stop people to talk with them, and we learn:

The Bolsheviks entered Łuck; they disarmed and released all Polish soldiers and sent them home.

Ten of thousands of people are now running from Łuck; hardly hundreds are now going toward Łuck.

About 10 kilometers outside Łuck, we learn that the [Ukrainian] peasants all around are attacking the Polish soldiers and disarming them. Suddenly we hear violent rifle shots, Everyone runs into the woods and stretches out on the ground. The first ones who run are the soldiers who were passing by.

I am also very frightened:

"We've already had such a difficult trip. We've already overcome such horrible bombings and suddenly, here, to die from a saboteur's rifle bullet?"

Fortunately, things calmed down around us. On the highway a mixed group gathered: soldiers and civilians are standing together there and everyone is consulting about what to do next.

An officer explains:

"The [Ukrainian] peasants are attacking us—we absolutely must get into Łuck because here the peasants can slaughter us. I will give rifles to everyone who can shoot; we must absolutely get into the city!"

Many civilians get rifles, others only cartridges. Armed against any attack, we get into a long convoy of soldiers and civilians. Some of us direct our rifles to the left side of the highway, others to the right side.

It is late in the evening when we see the first column of Soviet tanks in front of us. They are drawn up in the field on both sides of the highway. ...

In Łuck, we came across a new wave of people. ...

The day after the entry of the Bolsheviks, groups of the new militia [as we know from other sources it composed largely of Jews—*M.P.*] disarmed Polish soldiers. A Jewish fellow stopped a high profile Polish officer and challenged him to give him his weapon. The officer gave his revolver, which he carried on his belt. Finally, the young militiaman began removing the medals from the officer. The officer complained that he couldn't take them from him. The fellow threatened him with the rifle. The officer then took another revolver out of a holster and shot the militiaman on the spot. The officer was arrested. [The Polish officer was undoubtedly executed summarily by the Soviets. *M.P.*]¹²⁰⁸

There are many more such accounts.¹²⁰⁹

Jewish-Lithuanian historian Sarunas Liekis offers another—rather perverse—interpretation of what transpired in the Eastern Borderlands. He relativizes, and in effect denies, the murder of several thousand Poles by their non-Polish neighbours by advancing the claim that this was simply an inter-ethnic struggle in which all groups were equally targeted:

Polish citizens of all backgrounds—Poles, Ukrainians, Belarusians, Jews—fought against each other in the last hours of the Second Polish Republic. These encounters, which were often bloody, contributed to the atmosphere of chaos and lawlessness.

Only the Soviet advance averted full-scale civil war. The average citizen most probably preferred foreign occupation to battles, robbery, and the settling of local scores ...¹²¹⁰

According to Liekis, "the Polish army, joined by Polish civilians, turned against unsympathetic locals on numerous occasions," seemingly for no particular reason. He gives no credence to reports of Jews attacking, denouncing or even harassing Poles: it was the Poles who attacked Jews, the traditional, but blameless, "scapegoats." Indeed, Liekis reproaches Polish scholarship for shifting the blame for the

¹²⁰⁸ Kruk, *The Last Days of the Jerusalem of Lithuania*, 17–22. For another testimony attesting to a favourable attitude toward see the account of Dr. Maurycy Brandwajn in Janusz Roszkowski, ed., *Żydzi w walce 1939–1945: Opór i walka z faszyzmem w latach 1939–1945* (Warsaw: Żydowski Instytut Historyczny im. E. Ringelbluma and Stowarzyszenie Żydów Kombatantów i Poszkodowanych w II Wojnie Światowej, 2015), vol. 4, 175–76.

¹²⁰⁹ Binem Motyl and his group, who were fleeing Warsaw, were freed by Polish soldiers after being caught by Germans. Having decided to return to Warsaw, Motyl experienced frequent hospitality from the Polish population. See the diary of Binem Motyl, Archive of the Jewish Historical Institute (Warsaw), record group 302, number 206. Mojsze Ajzenberg and his group also received help from Polish peasants and soldiers while fleeing eastward. See the diary of Mojsze Ajzenberg, Archive of the Jewish Historical Institute (Warsaw), record group 302, number 6.

¹²¹⁰ Sarunas Liekis, "Jewish-Polish Relations and the Lithuanian Authorities in Vilna," in *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry*, vol. 19: *Polish-Jewish Relations in North America* (Oxford and Portland, Oregon: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2007), 521–36, here at 523–24.

collapse of the Polish state onto the minorities, but cites no historian who supposedly has advanced this preposterous theory. He also suggests that a better focus for academic inquiry would be “the [Polish] army’s so-called ‘betrayal’ of its fellow citizens or the inadequacy and disarray of the Polish state apparatus.” Liekis has thus placed himself beyond the pale of rationale discourse on these matters.

The Jews who greeted the Soviets, Jewish historiography holds, did so only out of gratitude for being saved from the Germans and, to a lesser extent, from local anti-Semites. According to Jan T. Gross the Jews “had a very clear awareness as to what might have happened had the Soviets not arrived.”¹²¹¹ Elsewhere, however, he concedes that there was also a lot of “confusion” as to what was happening when the Soviets entered Poland: it was not at all clear that they came as protectors of the Polish state. Poles are chastized for blowing out of all proportion the fact that “a few” Jews served in the Soviet militia and later using this as a pretext for reinforcing their long-standing hatred of the Jews. In fact, we’re told, there was no collaboration on the part of the Jews to speak of. The local militias that sprang up were, at first, merely self-defence groups set up to stave off pogromists. There is no truth to the claim that Jews played any significant role in the Soviet administration or that they were privileged in any way or treated more favourably. According to both Gross and Martin Dean, that was just a perception that riled anti-Semitic Poles.

Gross contends that it was the Jews who most openly manifested their opposition to Communism—a claim that is amply discredited by countless Jewish testimonies. Jews were never engaged in any organized or intentional opposition to Soviet rule to speak of. Jewish refugee from central Poland who registered to return to their homes in the German occupation zone, as a resident of Borysław candidly recalled, “never suspected that this alone could be used by the Russians as an excuse for their deportation.”¹²¹² As Yehuda Bauer has pointed out,

a rich ethnic and religious tradition, which had developed into a distinct culture over many centuries, collapsed like a house of cards within a few weeks of the establishment of totalitarian rule. There was not even token civil resistance; there was very little opposition—basically, only a small minority of teenagers and very elderly people put up a fight—and there were no (public) complaints. Only some synagogues remained open, and they were frequented by older people, for the most part, not young people. The Soviets did not have to use coercion because the communities and communal organizations folded.¹²¹³

Gross also contends that it was the Jews who suffered the most at the hands of the Soviet regime—a

¹²¹¹ Gross, “A Tangled Web: Confronting Stereotypes Concerning Relations between Poles, Germans, Jews, and Communists,” in Deák, *The Politics of Retribution in Europe*, 94.

¹²¹² Helene C. Kaplan, *I Never Left Janowska ...* (New York: Holocaust Library, 1989), 32. Kaplan recalled how refugees from central and western Poland became disgruntled with the political and economic situation in the Soviet zone” People fought for food when packages from friends in Poland arrived.” Ibid.

¹²¹³ Bauer, *The Death of the Shtetl*, 43.

claim that does not stand up to scrutiny.¹²¹⁴ As pointed out, initially the Polish and Jewish elites—landowners, industrialists, and well-to-do merchants—bore the brunt of the expropriation. On the other hand, Jewish shopkeepers, petty merchants and craftsmen found employment in warehouses and local artisans, whereas professionals were employed in technical positions and in the bureaucracy. While merchants and artisans were forced to close their businesses, which were mostly very small enterprises, by that time their stock had been sold off or hidden away, so little or no confiscation of goods took place. After the initial assault on the upper classes, the next to be hit hard were the 250,000 Polish civilians who were deported to the Gulag: they lost their property and most of their possessions. Of the 70,000 Jewish deportees, more than 60 percent were refugees from the German zone and thus had few material goods to lose. Contemporary observers such as Professor Maurycy Allerhand, a renowned jurist and erstwhile president of the Jewish community in Lwów, had no difficulty in discerning the true state of affairs in his wartime diary where he recorded in July 1941: “Poles suffered the most, then the Jews, and the Ukrainians the least.”¹²¹⁵

A typical memoir (penned in 1944) of a small Jewish businessman, whose family owned a liquor store in Kamionka Strumiłowa near Lwów, does not complain of any particular economic hardship under Soviet rule. On the contrary, the author, Moty Stromer, was elated with the new order: food supply was plentiful and now, freed of business responsibilities, there was ample leisure time.

After the Red Army marched in, many people were afraid of communism, especially the very rich people—the proprietors of mills and sawmills, the owners of small factories and the big store-owners.

I was not afraid, quite the opposite: I was overjoyed, because in the years before the war, life was already difficult for the Polish Jewish middle class. The Polish government was antisemitic. There were antisemitic incidents everywhere ...

In particular we, the Jewish Polish small businessmen, complained about being suffocated by the Polish tax system. I do not want to write too much about these matters. However, I must say one thing: the Soviet government turned many Jews into human beings. Personally I had worked hard all my life. I did not, as the saying goes, have a Shabbos or a holiday. It was always business and then more business.

When the Russians first came in they didn’t order anyone around. Gradually they organized cooperatives. We joined one right away and met in the old beer salon. We were all working—my father, my brother and I—when I realized that I no longer had to stay in the store all day and half the night. I became an employee instead of an owner. Every day they gave me merchandise and I would sell it within a few hours. After that I was free. I could wash up, dress up and go for a walk, read a newspaper, or listen to the radio. I was not interested in taxes or patents. I was a free spirit. ...

After a time, we—my brother [Meyer] and I—went to a military restaurant and found work. ... I got five hundred rubles a month and all I could eat and drink. My brother got only 250 rubles a month, plus food and drink. If I wanted to, I could live in the barracks. I washed my clothes in the military laundry and we were given a bathroom at our disposal. We made a living ...

¹²¹⁴ In recent years Gross has resorted to untenable claims in his increasingly strident, and often poorly researched, writings about Polish-Jewish relations. He has written: “one could even justifiably contend that Jews suffered *more* than other ethnic groups as a result of sovietization of southeastern Poland and that they uniquely and overtly manifested hostility toward the Soviet regime. ... I do not know any systematic body of evidence that would support claims of massive Jewish participation in the Soviet administration.” See his essay, “The Jewish Community in the Soviet-Annexed Territories on the Eve of the Holocaust: A Social Scientist’s View,” in Dobroszycki, *The Holocaust in the Soviet Union*, 155–71, especially 156, 160. And to the same effect, see also his essay, “A Tangled Web: Confronting Stereotypes Concerning Relations between Poles, Germans, Jews, and Communists,” in Deák, *The Politics of Retribution in Europe*, 92–104, especially 92. The same theme, albeit with some qualifiers, was picked up in Levin, *The Lesser of Two Evils*, 88. Polish historian Andrzej Paczkowski has challenged the claim of Jewish primacy with regard to Soviet repression, as do many of the accounts cited in this work. If the Jewish upper and middle classes were dispossessed of their belongings, so too were Poles in this category, especially the large and medium-sized landholders. Although stripped of their ownership, Jews frequently became directors of their nationalized firms and shops and Jewish craftsmen received lucrative positions in the many artels (cooperatives) that sprung up. A fuller rebuttal to the claim of some exceptional level of political activism on the part of the Jews is found in footnote 31 and in the discussion about the motives of the Jewish deportees who opted to return to the German zone. Tellingly, at times Poles passed themselves off as Ukrainians, Belorussians or Jews to escape their harsh treatment at the hands of the Soviets. See Musiał, “Stosunki polsko-żydowskie na Kresach Wschodnich R.P. pod okupacją sowiecką (1939–1941),” *Biuletyn Kwartalny Radomskiego Towarzystwa Naukowego*, vol. 34, no. 1 (1999): 111.

¹²¹⁵ Maurycy Allerhand and Leszek Allerhand, *Zapiski z tamtego świata* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Edukacyjne, 2003), 35.

[Eventually] we rented a space and opened a [general] store for military personnel, where Father [Shaul Stromer] was our night watchman. All the military wives would come in to buy foodstuffs and household items. The soldier who worked with us always told me about the better items he bought, so that I was able to get the best quality and most attractive foods for the buffets we prepared and was also able to bring home the best of everything. ...

Whenever my mother wanted to visit my sister Zlateh in Lemberg [Lwów], I would get a light car to take her there in just under one hour. My colonel's wife, my employer, or my colonel's wife's sister would travel with her. As it happened, the two women were Jewish ... The Colonel's wife and her sister knew how to read and write Yiddish and loved to visit my sister on Fridays to eat fish and challah and then return home.¹²¹⁶

What is more, Jewish historiography even accuses the Poles of insensitivity to the fate of the downtrodden Jews under Soviet occupation. Such views can be found in popular writings and some authors go even further in demonizing the Poles. Basing himself on hearsay conveyed by his father, one influential American journalist—Max Frankel, the executive editor of *The New York Times* from 1986 to 1994—went so far as to charge the Poles of becoming eager pawns in the Soviet designs (which take a strange twist in that author's mind). Allegedly, it was the Poles who rushed to denounce Jews and benefit from their misfortune.

When the Russians closed down private businesses as decadent relics of another era, many Poles tried to save their own possessions by turning in Jews as the preeminent "capitalists." The Soviets gratefully accepted their confiscatory assistance, but they were not primarily interested in planting Marxism or spreading revolution. They wanted half of Poland as a buffer to secure their hold on the Ukraine and the recently seized territories

¹²¹⁶ Moty Stromer, *Memoirs of an Unfortunate Person: The Diary of Moty Stromer* (New York and Jerusalem: Yad Vashem and The Holocaust Survivors' Memoirs Project, 2008), 29–32. The introduction to this book portrays a rather different picture of the state of the family business in the interwar years: "Relations with the local non-Jewish population were good and a plentiful harvest brought happy customers to the liquor store. ... The store was located near a church ... customers would congregate at the tavern after funerals, weddings and christenings. ... Every day, Gittel worked with Shaul and baked delicious yeast cakes that were served with the customers' drinks. ... Though the work was hard, there was apparently time and money for annual vacations at the nearby spa of Krynica and for ample dowries for the Stromer girls." *Ibid.*, 16.

Thus, most Holocaust historians seem singularly reluctant to come to terms with problematic aspects of Jewish conduct vis-à-vis Poles or to view the conduct of Poles as governed by anything other than an endemic, irrational anti-Semitism divorced from Jewish provocation. The fact that many Jews were actively involved in the persecution of Poles, and not vice versa, is dismissed out of hand as being either untrue or thoroughly exaggerated and, in any event, inconsequential. These attempts to explain away Jewish conduct are unpersuasive. The story of a uniform, weighed and tempered reaction (on the part of the Jews) that fully anticipated future events (German genocidal plans) is no more convincing than a historical approach that treats Jews not as actors in their own right but as a passive monolith. Furthermore, as Jan Gross has observed, it is impossible to dispute the reality of autonomous dynamics in the relationships between Poles and Jews within the constraints imposed by the occupiers.

Were there, in fact, only “a few” Jews who took part in activities directed against the Polish state, Polish officials and soldiers, and Poles in general? And where these Jews mostly “persecuted” prewar Communists who had little, if anything, to do with the Jewish community? The copious accounts gathered here show that even in the smallest community at least a score of activists, from various political backgrounds, could be readily found among the Jewish population to organize a welcome for the Soviets and to take over the local administration and militia. Some of them were prewar Communists, or had Communist leanings, but certainly not all. This groundwork facilitated the installation of the new regime on the local level and the

¹²¹⁷ Max Frankel, *The Times of My Life: And My Life with the Times* (New York: Random House, 1999), 70. The author's father, who was expelled from Germany to Poland in 1938, eventually made his way to Lwów before being arrested by the NKVD in March 1940 as a stateless “merchant” and deported to the Soviet interior. Tellingly, the author takes note of various categories of deportees, except for Poles, the first and largest group. While in Lwów, the author's father tried to secure the assistance of a Yiddish-speaking Soviet official to get an exit permit, which never came through despite assurances right up to the moment of his arrest, and was equally unsuccessful in obtaining assistance from his “closest friend from Germany, Hermann Birnbach, [who] ran a thriving business smuggling people from Lwów to Romania.” This friend, who was “now consumed with envy” of his father's American visa, “coldly ignored” his father's importunings. Ibid. However, his father's fortune took an upward turn when he “feigned exhaustion” in a labor camp in the Gorki region and was taken to a hospital headed by a Jew from Odessa: “In a leap of ethnic faith, the instinct by which Yiddish-speaking Jews the world over exchanged extraordinary favor, Pop revealed his ruse to Boris Abramovich. And the doctor returned his trust by employing Yakov Isakovich Frenkel in a most delicate assignment: collecting the valuables that arriving prisoners had kept hidden so that they could be sold to the NKVD for more generous rations. . . . And instead of returning Pop to hard labor after six weeks, as required, the doctor arranged for his permanent employ at the hospital. He would be a sanitaire, or male nurse, for ten rubles a month—and a jewel procurer for nothing.” Ibid., 72. Frankel's parents' background may be instructive: They were both born in Eastern Galicia but had migrated with their families to Germany before World War I. “My parent's passports were Polish, not German, although neither spoke Polish and had not lived in Poland since early childhood. Actually, they had never lived in ‘Poland’ at all; when Papa and Mutti were born, in 1902 and 1904, Poland had undergone one of its periodic dismemberments. . . . They thought of themselves as born in Austria-Hungary and only perversely branded Polish; they felt like Jews and lived like Germans.” Ibid., 3–4. When conditions in Germany deteriorated after Hitler's rise to power, economically backward Poland did not become for them a destination of choice: “Our relatives there wrote that they would welcome a Hitler for a time, that subsisting on welfare in the German manner was probably preferable to a normal Polish existence. Our rejection of Poland felt good, too, because it preserved the illusion that we had a choice of destinations.” Ibid., 10. When they were eventually rounded up by the Germans in October 1938 and taken to the Polish border, they “discovered that only two men in our crowd of 200 ‘Poles’ could speak any Polish.” Ibid., 18. The family settled in Kraków without apparent difficulty, but when stories about Kristallnacht and concentration camps made their way to Poland, “Mom and pop had trouble believing them. They could credit any slur against Poles, whom they didn't really know, but they tended to hold out for evidence against Germans.” Ibid., 24. They persevered in their attempts to obtain American visa and finally met with success, underscoring repeatedly that they had “no connection” with Poland. Ibid., 32. Living in New York, Max Frankel, then a teenager, confronted a reality he never experienced in Kraków: He had to avoid belligerent gangs of Irish youths who “called us Christ killers, and they carried ingenious weapons to avenge their Lord. Every Halloween they would invade our turf, swinging cotton stockings filled with pebbles and powdered chalk. . . . When passage through their turf was unavoidable. . . . I felt relieved if I absorbed just a few bare-knuckled blows. What really stung, for days, was a fist grasping the metal handle of an ash can, even if you ran fast and took the blow to the arm instead of the head. And then came zip guns: homemade wooden revolvers that fired metal bottle caps or sharp-edged bullets of linoleum with the force of a thick band stretched along the top of the barrel. . . . But neither diplomacy nor authority could rescue me from a disastrous encounter with a knife-wielding gang of blacks near [my] school [at the edge of the Negro neighborhood]. In my very first days there, I became their daily prey. . . . Two pummelings by a gang of toughs were all that I would endure. . . . I understood that by benefiting from America's wealth and values, I had also inherited its debts and sins.” Ibid., 54–55.

carrying out of the necessary orders and arrests of targeted Poles.

What is more, the Jewish activists could garner significant support, both active and passive, from the entire spectrum of the Jewish community. Some of this support was undoubtedly attributable to anti-Polish rather than pro-Communist or pro-Soviet sentiments. The notion that this was the work of socially marginal elements within Jewish society who were alienated from the Jewish community is simply not tenable. In many cases, ties were severed only in a superficial manner. As Yehuda Bauer observed, “respect for parents was such that convinced Marxist youths would go to the synagogue because their parents did.”¹²¹⁸ A young Jew from a well-off family in Czortków vividly recalled the lecture he received from his father, a dental technician and prewar Communist party member: “Son, you can be proud that you belong to the chosen people, chosen by God.”¹²¹⁹ A young Jew from the large village of Kortelisy, in Volhynia, recalled how rather effortlessly accommodations were made when the new reality set in:

The Russians came to Kortelisy [Kortelisy] and the general opinion was that ‘it was good for the Jews,’ despite the fact that the Russians were now allies of the Germans. ...

Uncle Yerachmiel, who possessed some skill in communications, was soon tipped by the Soviets for an important administrative position in a big city, which he gladly assumed. ...

Owing to his education, even though it was in the field of science, Uncle Shmilke became the official administrator, a kind of commissar, of the village of Kortelisy. ... For my uncle, who was always a religious man, this theoretically meant that he had to formally renounce his religion and become a member of the Communist Party.

No such formal renunciation ever took place, however, but my uncle received his job with the tacit agreement that he would be a staunch and loyal party member. He had to curb his openly-religious activities, but at home he continued to observe. Every morning before going to work, he would say his prayers and carefully remove the telltale signs of the tefillin (phylacteries) from his left arm. Because religious articles were impossible to obtain, and in order to atone for his feeling of guilt about having to hide his Jewish activity, he meticulously copied, in his beautiful handwriting, the contents of a prayer book and spent much time secretly fixing the frayed pages of others. ...

Uncle Bentse became the principal of the local school.¹²²⁰

Thus, being a Communist or pro-Soviet did not mean one stopped regarding oneself as Jewish. Israel Eldad, a member of the Betar movement, rejects the common exculpatory notion that Jews in Communism were some kind of marginal or extremist phenomenon. He comments,

A Jewish youth, revolutionary and extra-territorial in character, was ready to join either an extra-territorial world revolution or a revolution to territorialize the Hebrew people. ... As it was, the best of the Communist movement was Jewish, but if not for these trials [of Trotskyites in the USSR], the boredom and frustration within the Jewish community would have pushed many more thousands into this foreigner’s revolution. Betar became the alternative for the revolutionary, dynamic spirit of the youth, and Betar grew tremendously in the mid-1930s.¹²²¹

According to Jaff Schatz, in the 1930s there were between 6,200 and 10,000 Jewish Communists in Poland. Jews dominated the Communist Party, especially in small towns, and made up two thirds of the members in Warsaw. Although membership in the Communist Party, only a small portion of Jewish Communists had been imprisoned by the Polish authorities. The Communist Party of Poland, it should be noted, was a subversive organization sponsored by the Soviet Union and did not recognize Polish

¹²¹⁸ Yehuda Bauer, “Sarny and Rokitno in the Holocaust: A Case Study of Two Townships in Wolyn (Volhynia),” in Katz, *The Shtetl*, 255.

¹²¹⁹ Account of Tadeusz Iger in Gutenbaum and Latała, *The Last Eyewitness*, vol. 2, 89.

¹²²⁰ Laizer Blitt, *No Strength to Forget: Survival in the Ukraine, 1941–1944* (London and Portland, Oregon: Vallentine Mitchell, 2007), 26–28.

¹²²¹ Eldad, *The First Tithe*, 29.

sovereignty over the Eastern Borderlands.¹²²² Popular support for Communism among Jews ran much deeper, as did admiration for the Soviet Union. For example, Yakov Honiksmán who was born in Lublin in 1922, recalled:

On 1st September 1939 World War II began. Hitler attacked Poland. Of course, we understood that it was inevitable. We read the newspapers and knew about the tension, Hitler coming to power and his attitude toward Jews. All poor people had big hopes for the Soviet Union and so did poor Jewish people. Polish newspapers wrote about Stalin's terror and the famine in 1933, but we believed it was bourgeois propaganda intending to blacken the Soviet reality. We only believed what the Communist Party said. All poor people

¹²²² Jaff Schatz's important study, *The Generation: The Rise and Fall of the Jewish Communists of Poland* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991) is discussed in Piotrowski, *Poland's Holocaust*, 36–37. See also Strzembosz, *Rzeczpospolita podziemna*, 90 n.2 for somewhat higher estimates. According to Strzembosz, in the years 1935–1936, there were approximately 17,000 members of Communist organizations, and an additional 19,500 youth members. But as one historian points out, “Perhaps the most significant characteristic of the [Communist] party's social composition, however, was the great percentage of Jews among its members and officials. ... Current communist and Western estimates put the number of Jews in the party at about 22 to 26 percent throughout the 1930s with a particularly strong concentration—exceeding 50 percent of the membership—in the urban areas of central Poland. Yet, if a precise proportion of Jews within the party remains clouded in uncertainty, there has never been any doubt as to their political and organizational importance. The Jewish revolutionaries had played a very important role in the creation and the development of radical movements in Poland. They provided the intellectual leadership to the SDKPiL and the PPS-Left. Subsequently, the Jewish communists assumed a pivotal position in the leadership of the KPRP and the KPP, occupying most of the seats in their Central Committees. Suffice it to say that with the exception of Kostrzewa all principal leaders of the party, such as Warski, Walecki, Domski, Lenski and Henrykowski, were of Jewish origin.” See Jan B. de Weydenthal, *The Communists of Poland: An Historical Outline* (Stanford, California: Hoover Institution Press, 1978), 26–27. According to another historian, in 1936 Jews comprised a little more than 40 percent of leadership of the Communist Party of Poland, 53 percent of the headquarter activists, and 75 percent of the publishing apparatus. Their representation in the youth wing was even higher. See Leszek Olejnik, *Polityka narodowościowa Polski w latach 1944–1960* (Łódź: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, 2003), 357 n.58. See also Paweł Borek, “Udział Żydów w antypaństwowej działalności Wydziałów Wojskowych KPRP/KPP w latach 1918–1939,” in Tomasz Domański and Edyta Majcher-Ociesa, eds., *Żydzi i wojsko polskie w XIX i XX wieku* (Kielce and Warsaw: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej–Komisja Ścigania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu, 2020), 182–98. Of course, within the Jewish community Communist Party members were a tiny minority, however their influence and attraction was disproportionately strong. See, for example, Tomasz Kowalik, “Żydowskie partie i organizacje społeczne w Puławach okresu międzywojennego,” in Filip Jaroszyński, ed., *Historia i kultura Żydów Janowca nad Wisłą, Kazimierza Dolnego i Puław: Fenomenon kulturowy miasteczka—sztetl. Materiały z sesji naukowej “V Janowieckie Spotkania Historyczne”, Janowiec nad Wisłą 29 czerwca 2003* (Janowiec nad Wisłą: Towarzystwo Przyjaciół Janowca nad Wisłą, 2003), 131, 132, 135–37. In 1937, there were 806 Jewish and 409 Polish members of the Communist Party in Warsaw. See Piotr Wróbel, “Wokół problemu rezydentury NKWD w getcie warszawskim,” *Pamięć i Sprawiedliwość*, no. 8 (2005): 201–202; Piotr Wróbel, “An NKVD Residencia (Residency) in the Warsaw Ghetto, 1941–42,” in David Bankier, ed., *Secret Intelligence and the Holocaust: Collected Essays from the Colloquium at the City University of New York Graduate Center* (New York: Enigma Books; Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2006), 245–72. Their numbers were also not insignificant in small towns. For example, in Bełchatów near Łódź, “there were 10 active Jewish communist cells/branches (approximately 60 members). Their members came from previous members of the Poalei Zion-Left and from members of the Combund. Under the influence of the Jewish members of the KKP—Komunistyczna Partia Polski [Polish Communist Party]—a cell/branch of hand-workers was established alongside the general union of textile workers, almost all of its members being Jewish.” See “Bełchatów” in Danuta Dąbrowska and Abraham Wein, eds., *Pinkas hakehillot Polin*, vol. 1 (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1976), 70–77; translated as *Encyclopedia of Jewish Communities in Poland*, Internet: <https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/pinkas_poland/pol1_00070.html>. In Połaniec, a small community of about 300 Jewish families near Staszów, “A destructive factor for the local Zionists were the Communists. In 1932, there was a group from these Communist circles that stole across the border into Russia ... Altogether 12.” See Dovid Schnipper, “My Town, Plontch,” in *The Staszów Book*, Internet: <<http://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/staszow/staszow.html>>, translated from Elhanan Erlich, ed., *Sefer Staszów* (Tel Aviv: Former Residents of Staszów in Israel and in the Diaspora, 1962), 633 ff. In Chmielnik, Jewish Communists were also very active, leading to arrests by the Polish authorities and prison sentences. Interestingly, when three former members of the Communist Party returned to Chmielnik in 1933 from the Soviet Union, they complained about the restrictions they faced there to agitate for Communism, and in turn, in Chmielnik, were dubbed traitors of the proletariat and counterrevolutionaries. See Marek Maciągowski and Piotr Krawczyk, *The Story of Jewish Chmielnik* (Kielce: XYZ and Town and Municipality Office in Chmielnik, 2007), 108–109.

believed that the Soviet Union was paradise on Earth. My friends and I attended underground party meetings and distributed communist flyers and newspapers.¹²²³

These tendencies have been marginalized as phenomena on the fringes of Judaism and associated with Communist Party membership. The Jewish involvement in Communism is commonly, but incorrectly, marginalized as membership in Communist parties. According to David Fishman, after 1905, the Bund championed a version of Yiddishism that was staunchly secularist and Marxist.¹²²⁴ Historian Ezra Mendelsohn concurs in the view that the anti-Zionist, Yiddishist Bund was Marxist. Among Zionist organizations, the Poale Zion was Marxist, increasingly flirting with outright Communism, openly backing the USSR in the 1920 Polish-Soviet War, and adopting a Communist Palestinian position. Even after the split within this organization over Communism, in which the Poale Zion Left remained unmistakably pro-Communist, the so-called Poale Zion Right was itself Marxist. The Hashomer Hatsair (Hashomer Hatzair), a Scouting-like Zionist organization modeled after the Shomer in Palestine, was God-rejecting secularist and eventually Marxist. In time, the Shomer became Palestinian Marxist. Yitshak (Yitzhak) Nissenbaum quit the general Zionist Federation, in part because, as he wrote them in 1927, “the Russian Revolution greatly influenced your youths...”¹²²⁵

Historian Bernard Wasserstein points out that Jewish Communists had varying degrees of affiliations with Judaism. Not only the Communist Party itself, but also mainstream Jewish political parties were infected with Communism to a significant extent. Among Zionists, the Left Poalei Zion joined the Comintern, and, according to Wasserstein, walked a fine line between Communism and democratic socialism. The Jewish youth movement, Hashomer Hatsair (Hatzair) was, in Wasserstein’s words, Marxist-Zionist. As for the anti-Zionist Bund, the author comments, “Rejecting integration into the Polish Socialist Party, the Bund sought cultural autonomy for the Jews in Poland, and in particular, separate schools and the right to use Yiddish in official business.” Considering the large size of the Bund, it is astonishing to learn that, in the 1930’s, fully 40% of the membership of the Bund, in the words of Wasserstein, “was in constant danger of being sliced off by the Communists.”¹²²⁶

As historian Peter D. Stachura points out,

Only a small percentage of the Jewish community had been members of the Communist Party of Poland (KPP) during the inter-war era, though they had occupied an influential and conspicuous place in the party’s leadership and in the rank and file in major centres, such as Warsaw, Łódź and Lwów. But a far greater number of younger Jews, often through the pro-Marxist *Bund* (General Jewish Workers’ Union) or some Zionist groups, had possessed an underlying sympathy for Communism and an affinity with Soviet Russia, both of which had been, of course, prime enemies of the Polish Second Republic. For these Jews

¹²²³ Interview with Yakov Honiksmán, Centropa, 2002, Internet: <<http://www.centropa.org/biography/yakov-honiksmán>>.

¹²²⁴ David E. Fishman, *The Rise of Modern Yiddish Culture* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2005), 60. Although “Marxism” and “socialism” are amorphous terms, it is obvious that these terms, at least as used by Fishman, are essentially indistinguishable from the main features of Communism: “As Marxists, they [the Bund] supported the struggle of the proletariat (including the Jewish proletariat) against their economic exploiters and believed that they would lead the battle to overthrow tsarism and replace it with socialism.” Ibid., 64. The author characterizes the Yiddishist Tsisho (Tsysho/Cysho) schools, in interwar Poland, as controlled by two parties—the Bund and Poale-Zion-Left—both of which are identified as Marxist. Ibid., 91. Fishman adds, “Moreover, the Yiddish schools in particular were harassed and persecuted by the Polish authorities, who considered them to be nests of Communism. ... Finally, the overtly partisan nature of the Tsisho schools narrowed their constituency to the children of Socialist parents.” Ibid., 92.

¹²²⁵ Ezra Mendelsohn, *Zionism in Poland: The Formative Years* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1981), 24, 31, 55, 83, 85, 136, 140, 148, 156, 172, 202, 292–94, 322. As Natan Wiktor Margulis, later Stanisław Sierpiński, candidly admits in his memoirs, the Hashomer Hatzair to which he belonged as a youth was “a school for Communism,” and its “best” became full-fledged members of the Communist Party. See his memoirs, Jewish Historical Institute (Warsaw), no. 302/332.

¹²²⁶ Bernard Wasserstein, *On the Eve: The Jews of Europe Before the Second World War* (New York and London: Simon & Schuster, 2012), 59, 63, 69, 70, 317, 332.

Communism had an almost messianic appeal, while the Soviet Union was regarded as their natural homeland. As a result of these ideological, political and anti-Polish factors they found it easy after 1939 to join the Soviet bandwagon in Eastern Poland, and soon occupied prominent positions in industry, schools, local government, police and other Soviet-installed institutions. They went about their business with revolutionary zeal and an [sic] consuming hatred for all things Polish. As Soviet-Bolshevik commissars, they were the most fanatical. Hence, the argument that their frenzied participation in the new Soviet administration was motivated by gratitude for being saved from the Nazis is patently unconvincing. For their part, the Poles could not help but be bitterly aware of the Jews' attitudes and conduct, as Jan Karski vividly reported to the exiled Polish government in London, and as General Stefan Grot-Rowecki, Commander of the Home Army, acknowledged in 1941. It is certain that this adversely affected Polish attitudes towards the Jews until the end of the war and beyond.¹²²⁷

The accounts cited in this study fully bear out that pro-Soviet sentiments were not restricted to Communists and Communist sympathizers, but even extended to many in the Zionist movement.¹²²⁸ In light of this evidence, it is difficult to quarrel with one authoritative wartime estimate that perhaps thirty percent of the Jewish population of the Eastern Borderlands identified with the new regime.¹²²⁹

Dov Levin advances the following explanation for the clashes between the Poles and Jews at the time of the Soviet entry in September 1939:

Polish antisemites found this an opportune time to settle scores with the Jews. As vestigial units of the Polish army fled into Romania, they savaged any Jews who happened to be in the way, especially after they discovered that the Soviet forces were closing in from the east. The pretext for this behavior was their association of Jews with the Bolsheviks and their belief that the Jews had "stabbed Poland in the back."¹²³⁰

While it is true that turbulence and lawlessness soared as the Polish state was collapsing and the resultant power vacuum provided criminal elements, mostly non-Poles, with an opportunity to rob, vandalize and set fire to Polish estates and Jewish shops,¹²³¹ the testimonies gathered in this volume shed an entirely different light on this period. There were no random or unprovoked attacks of any significance carried out by Poles, whether soldiers or civilians, on the Jewish, Ukrainian or Belorussian population. On the contrary, there are scores of credible reports of Ukrainian, Belorussian, and Jewish snipers firing at Polish soldiers. Armed

¹²²⁷ Stachura, *Poland in the Twentieth Century*, 102–3.

¹²²⁸ As Dov Levin points out, even the underground youth movements, most of which were Zionist in orientation, "did not regard themselves as enemies of the [Soviet] regime, instead hoping that the regime would change its policies regarding Judaism and Zionism. They believed that the 'tragic misunderstanding' between Zionism and Communism would eventually vanish." Levin, *The Lesser of Two Evils*, 255.

¹²²⁹ Prime Minister General Władysław Sikorski's statement is cited in Piotrowski, *Poland's Holocaust*, 53.

¹²³⁰ Levin, *The Lesser of Two Evils*, 32.

¹²³¹ There are frequent references to such assaults in Jewish sources. For example, in Włodzimierz Wołyński, "Ukrainian nationalists with pro-Nazi sentiments wasted no time organizing a local militia to loot Jewish stores and homes." See Bardach and Gleeson, *Man Is Wolf to Man*, 14. Of course, Jews on the run also stole from peasants in this area, as the author inadvertently concedes when he writes that his colleague, Wladek, "was already digging beets and potatoes from the field. I ate some cabbage and dirt-crust potatoes and was ready to move on. 'Wladek,' I said, stop digging. We're not harvesting the field. Let's get out of here before we get caught by peasants." Ibid., 20.

bands of Ukrainian nationalists, who often had ties to the Nazi Abwehr,¹²³² and Belorussian peasants, who were often incited by Communists, in particular, were known to attack small groups of Polish soldiers. Reports of these events reached the West already in September 1939:

Berezki, Poland (on the Hungarian Frontier), Sept. 21 (AP).—Ukrainian bands enforced a wild rule of law over a small section of Poland at the base of the Carpathian Mountains today as German and Soviet Russian troops drew closer to the Hungarian frontier.

Accounts received here told of fighting between the Ukrainians and Polish police: of Poles and Jews alike being killed. Destruction started by German air raiders was said to have been completed with entire villages looted and burned.

This sudden burst of pent-up hate and violence added a new and tragic chapter to the three weeks of war in Poland.

Young Ukrainian terrorists roaming the countryside were said to have apparently picked up their arms and ammunition from thin air, with guns and cartridges in plentiful supply from mysterious sources.

Polish officers fleeing across the border into Hungary told of escaping from converging German and Soviet troops only to find themselves in small villages which fairly “dripped in blood” from the activities of these bands.

A young Polish reserve cavalry officer, speaking English, gave a vivid picture of what he and his comrades encountered.

“We fled small villages east of Lwow [Lwów] only two hours before the Russians arrived,” he said. “Between Lwow and Stryj, to the south, we found the entrance to the village of Mikolajow [Mikołajów] barred by an enormous sign reading: ‘Heil Hitler! Hail Ukrainian Republic!’

“In this village we found savage butchers of racial Poles and Jews—men, women and children alike.

“We found the proprietor of the hotel with his throat cut.

“We restored order as best we could, shooting all terrorists we could find before continuing on. It was a terrible scene of death and destruction.

“During that night as we rode south we passed several flaming villages, obviously fired by the

¹²³² According to German sources, on the eve of the war, 4,000 Ukrainian nationalists from Eastern Galicia had been recruited, armed and trained in sabotage and diversion by the Abwehr. These and other Ukrainian nationalists incited the Ukrainian minority, and participated in numerous acts of violence against the Poles, especially the Polish army. Polish intelligence was aware of this development and, as a preventative measure, in early September 1939, the Polish authorities arrested several thousand Ukrainians tied to the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN), a terrorist organization, and other nationalist groups suspected of potential involvement in subversive activities. See Andrzej Szefer, “Dyweryjno-sabatażowa działalność wrocławskiej Abwehry na ziemiach polskich w przededniu agresji hitlerowskiej w 1939 r.,” *Biuletyn Głównej Komisji Badania Zbrodni Hitlerowskich w Polsce*, no. 32 (1987): 27, 281–82, 317; Tomasz Chinciński, *Forpoczta Hitlera: Niemiecka dywersja w Polsce w 1939 roku* (Gdańsk: Muzeum II Wojny Światowej w Gdańsku; Warsaw: Scholar, 2010), 96–97; 348–49, n18. Of course, the Polish authorities could not have apprehended all the subversive elements and may well have detained some persons who were believed to be with the nationalists. However, this was clearly not an attempt to strike at the entire or even a large part of the Ukrainian population (which numbered over 5 million), in a manner practiced by the Canadian and American authorities, at the start of the war with Japan, when all persons of Japanese origin were arrested and put in camps in the interior, and their property was seized and sold. American historian Alexander Prusin claims, unpersuasively, that Ukrainians were arrested “randomly” based simply on their “Ukrainian descent” and included “many innocent individuals.” According to Prusin, it was their incarceration and subsequent liberation by the Red Army that “would play a crucial role in their subsequent behaviour.” See Prusin, *The Lands Between*, 128. This claim is skewed. The Polish measures were not aimed at ordinary Ukrainians, nor did they radicalize the Ukrainian nationalists. The agenda of the OUN, including their subversive activities and plans for an armed insurrection, was set well before the German attack on Poland. See Kulińska, *Działalność terrorystyczna i sabatażowa nacjonalistycznych organizacji ukraińskich w Polsce w latach 1922–1939*, 298–302.

terrorists.”¹²³³

The bodies of hundreds of Polish soldiers murdered by their fellow citizens and often stripped of their clothing lay strewn throughout the Eastern Borderlands.¹²³⁴ After his small unit was attacked by Ukrainians on September 24, 1939 (one of the assailants, a deserter from the Polish army, was then shot), on entering the town of Ratno near Kowel (what transpired there is also described earlier in a Jewish testimony), Jerzy Krakus encountered the following grisly murder scene: the disfigured bodies of several Polish soldiers who had been stripped of their uniforms and that of Marta Stępień, a school teacher, who was hung on a fence upside down with a gash from her crotch to her neck.¹²³⁵ According to Jewish testimonies from Bohorodczany near Tłumacz,

groups of Ukrainian farmers streamed into the city on the days of 16–18 September 1939 in order to attack the Jews. They were armed with sticks and axes, and called out anti-Semitic proclamations. They also perpetrated hostilities against the retreating Polish soldiers, and attempted to capture their arms.¹²³⁶

In many localities, the minorities seized control of the administration, disarmed Polish policemen, arrested Polish officials and even attacked Polish civilians. A Jew who served in the Polish army recalled that, after falling into the hands of the invading Soviet army, “many young Bialorussian [Belorussian] men and women were offering help as guides, or as civilian enforcers in detaining Polish soldiers, policemen, clerks, and others. We were handed over to a bunch of these young Bialorussians and led to the

¹²³³ “Murderous Bands of Ukrainian Terrorists Slay Polish Refugees: Roving Groups Enforce Rule of Death Over Section of Stricken Poland—Villages Burned and Looted and Inhabitants Slain,” *Daily Colonist* (Victoria, British Columbia), September 22, 1939. Karol Estreicher, a professor at the Jagiellonian University in Kraków, witnessed many attacks and murders perpetrated by Ukrainian nationalists on Polish soldiers in September 1939; he published his memoir describing those attacks already in 1940, using a *nom de plume* to protect his family in Poland. See Dominik Wegierski, *September 1939* (London: Minerva, 1940), 113–14 (in the vicinity of Busk), 115 (Krasne), 126–27 (Jaryczów), 129 (near Mikołajów), 132 (a village near the Dniestr River), 133 (Urycz). See also the following sources for additional examples of attacks on the Polish army and individual soldiers by Ukrainians: Ludwik Głowacki, *Działania wojenne na Lubelszczyźnie w roku 1939* (Lublin: Wydawnictwo Lubelskie, 1976), 174 (Pnikut, a village near Mościska), 174 (Łastówka, a village southeast of Borysław), 178 (Werba in Volhynia); Władysław Pobóg-Malinowski, *Najnowsza historia polityczna Polski, 1864–1945: Okres 1939–1945*, vol. 3, 4th edition (London: Gryf, 1986), 59–60; Ryszard Torzecki, “Ukraińcy we wrześniu 1939 roku,” *Zuстріchi*, no. 1 (1990): 25, 28, 109, 111; Szawłowski, *Wojna polsko-sowiecka 1939* (1997), vol. 1, 351–443; Bechta, *Revolucja, mit, bandytyzm*, 32–35; Eugeniusz Buczyński, *Smutny wrzesień: Wspomnienia* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1985), 131, 172–73; Karol Skrzypek, *Podkarpackim szlakiem września: Wspomnienia żołnierza Armii “Karpacy”* (Katowice: Śląsk, 1986), 89, 110; Betty Lauer, *Hiding in Plain Sight: The Incredible True Story of a German-Jewish Teenager’s Struggle to Survive in Nazi-Occupied Poland* (Hanover, New Hampshire: Smith and Kraus, 2004), 53 (Ustrzyki), 72; Siekierski and Tych, *Widziałem anioła śmierci*, 328 (near Radziechów); Romanek, *Kolaboracja z Sowietami na terenie województwa lubelskiego we wrześniu i październiku 1939 r.*, 54–62, 73–80, 96, 100, 102–3, 112, 122, 128, 132–35, 144. Poland’s Institute of National Remembrance is investigating some of these occurrences, such as the murder of several Polish officers in the vicinity of Rajsk and Chraboty near Bielsk Podlaski. See Białystok Regional Committee of the Commission for the Investigation of Crimes against the Polish Nation, sygnatura akt 46/03/Zk. Ukrainian sources also acknowledge that nationalist gangs attacked and captured Polish soldiers in many places. See, for example, Petro Mirchuk, *Narys istorii Orhanizatsii Ukrainskykh Natsionalistiv*, vol. 1 (1920–1939) (Munich, London and New York: Ukrainke Vydavnytstvo, 1968), 586–87; Roman Wysocki, *Organizacja Ukraińskich Nacjonalistów w Polsce w latach 1929–1939: Geneza, struktura, program, ideologia* (Lublin: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej, 2003), 355–56; Andrii Rukkas, “Antypolski zbrojny wystup na Volyni (veresen 1939 r.),” in Iaroslav Isaievych, ed., *Volyn i Kholmshchyna 1938–1947 rr.: Polsko-ukrainske protystoiannia ta ioho vidlunnia. Doslidzhennia, dokumenty, spohady* (Lviv: Natsionalna akademiia nauk Ukrainy, Instytut ukrainoznavstva im. I. Krypiakievycha, 2003), 119–39.

¹²³⁴ See, for example, Tarmon, *Memorial Book*, 367 (Gródek near Maniewiczze).

¹²³⁵ Jerzy Krakus, “Wrzesień 1939—na Pinie,” *Nasze Sygnały* (London), no. 158 (1986).

¹²³⁶ “Bohorodczany” in Danuta Dabrowska, Abraham Wein, and Aharon Weiss, eds., *Pinkas hakehillot Polin*, vol. 2 (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1980), 71–72; translated as *Encyclopedia of Jewish Communities in Poland*, Internet: <https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/pinkas_poland/pol2_00071.html>.

unknown.”¹²³⁷ Although such incidents were reported in the international press at the time they have eluded the attention of Western historians.

The Stepań memorial book confirms that such attacks took place, but offers a somewhat selective description of the armed rebellion staged by local Ukrainians and Jews in that Volhynian town on the eve of the Soviet invasion. While attempting to exonerate the Jewish participants and stressing the retaliation of the Polish forces, it nonetheless concedes that the Polish response was neither sweeping nor wanton, but rather targeted those believed to be responsible for the assault. Moreover, it was tempered by the local Polish population, who were quite capable of distinguishing between fifth columnists and ordinary Jews and Ukrainians. Indeed, a delegation led by the Catholic priest convinced the Polish military officials to let most of those seized go free. The description of the Poles’ reaction to the treachery in Stepań penned by a Jewish eyewitness is therefore hardly a damning portrayal:

The Ukrainians in our town and in the nearby surroundings raised their heads with their great hatred for the Poles, they took arms and rebelled. They took over the police station, the government buildings, and the whole town very quickly. When they heard that the Russians were approaching, they raised red flags, even though their real intention was nationalistic. It turned out that the Polish guard force [*Korpus Ochrony Pogranicza*], which guarded the Russian-Polish border, retreated from the Russian border in the west direction, and had to go through our town. The Ukrainians, who did not have a great amount of weapons, organized themselves on the hills near the river on one side of the bridge, and came toward the Polish army, who retreated with gunshots.

A night of terror fell upon the people of the town, and I remember how the bullets whistled by us. ... until sunrise, the time the shooting stopped and the Polish army retreated to the town. ... The Polish soldiers roamed the streets of the town in search of rebels ... They approached the door of our apartment, and ordered all the tenants of the house to go outside. ... with our hands above our heads ... we walked to the Market Square under heavy guard. There we joined a group of Jews and Ukrainians who were organized in a long line in which there were on both sides of them rows of soldiers with rifles ... They aimed the rifles at the Communist traitors. ...

We stood there ... there appeared a high officer accompanied by a Pole from Stepan, the son of Roman Hakolbasnik. He was the one who sorted out the guilty and the innocent. Because he knew us well, he said we were innocent, as he decided for most of the Jews, except a few young Jews. ... The few Ukrainians and Jews that were not freed were chained and led outside of the city to be brought to trial for rebellion and treason. Their end was of course death.

Immediately after the evacuation of the army, the distinguished people of the town met: Poles, Ukrainians, and Jews. They thought how to save those who were taken who really had no part in the uprising. Then it was decided to send a delegation of Polish teachers and at their head the Catholic priest, in search of the army that had retreated, in order to convince the generals. ... This delegation was successful in releasing all the Jewish boys and even the Ukrainians. A number of Ukrainians were tortured and killed by shooting. ... When the Soviets entered, the Ukrainians took revenge on the son of Roman Hakolbasnik and informed on him and expelled him and his family ... to Siberia. This was in spite of the fact that many had much sympathy for him as he saved many from death.” [According to Polish sources, Bolesław Roman, the Pole who identified the armed rebels, was later denounced by Ukrainians, arrested and executed.]

Within a day or two after the Polish Army left the town, ... a rumor spread in the morning that the “Bolsheviks” were coming. We, the children, pushed our way to the head of a large group of Ukrainians and Jews toward the bridge to see the “Bolsheviks”. ...

A delegation of the honorable people of the town walked toward them and received them with bread and salt ... The crowd received them with cheers and clapping of hands. ...

Several days after the entrance of the Army, people of the civilian regime came and began to organize the town. The “small-Soviet” was formed. This was the town council whose real leaders were the craftsmen—the proletarians amongst the Jews. A militia was formed which was headed by a Soviet police officer.¹²³⁸

There was no marked antagonism between Poles and Jews under the Soviet occupation. The author of the

¹²³⁷ Morris Sorid, *One More Miracle: The Memoirs of Morris Sorid* ([United States]: Jonathan Sorid, 2007), 7. The author states that Belorussian peasants murdered a Polish school principal in Czachec near Prużana, in September 1939. Ibid., 25.

¹²³⁸ Account of J. (Yeshayahu) Peri (Preshkolnik) in Yitzhak Ganuz, ed., *Our Town Stepan*, Internet: <<http://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/stepan/Stepan.html>>, translation of *Ayaratenu Stepan* (Tel Aviv: Stepan Society, 1977), 213–18. On the fate of Bolesław Roman see Siemaszko and Siemaszko, *Ludobójstwo dokonane przez nacjonalistów ukraińskich na ludności polskiej Wołynia 1939–1945*, vol. 1, 298.

above account recalled that his father was able to switch Saturday for Sunday at work and attend synagogue, "since the head of the office was not a confirmed communist, but a local Pole, an acquaintance of my father from before the war." Moreover, there was no Polish revenge at the time of the German invasion in June 1941.

Throughout Eastern Poland, Polish soldiers and officials, landlords and settlers were attacked by Ukrainians, Belorussians, and Jews. Polish (and Jewish) refugees fleeing from the Germans were frequently set upon by groups of Communists, nationalist gangs and robbers. Thousands of Poles (no fewer than 4,000 and as many as 15,000 according to some estimates) fell victim to these widespread assaults at the hands of their non-Polish neighbours. Polish settlements and estates were attacked and looting and

killing were widespread.¹²³⁹ Dmitri Shalikashvili, a Georgian serving in the Polish Army, described the hostility his unit felt in territory populated by Ukrainians:

From now on we had to be extremely careful in everything, as being on territory with [a] Ukrainian population was almost as dangerous as being on enemy territory. Cases of sabotage kept being reported. Later on, after the final catastrophe of the Polish Army, the hostility of the Ukrainians took even more open and

¹²³⁹ Polish eyewitnesses have recorded a large number of such occurrences in September 1939. See, for example, the numerous references in the periodical *Na Rubieży* (Wrocław), which chronicles the fate of the Polish population in the southeastern Borderlands: Domamorycz (no. 4, 1993: 14; no. 26, 1998: 21), Zabójki (no. 4, 1993: 14), Dobrowody (no. 5, 1993: 15), Nosów (no. 5, 1993: 18), Szumlany (no. 5, 1993: 19–20), Sławentyn (no. 5, 1993: 19; no. 17, 1996: 25; no. 48, 2000: 50), Szwajcaria (no. 5, 1993: 20), Czyżów (no. 10, 1994: 10; no. 54, 2001: 49), Bazar (no. 10, 1994: 22; no. 15, 1996: 8), Barysz (no. 14, 1995: 6, 8), Leszczańce (no. 14, 1995: 16), Potok Złoty (no. 14, 1995: 25), Bazar (no. 15, 1996: 8), Kołędziany (no. 15, 1996: 14), Brzeżany (no. 16, 1996: 12), Byszki (no. 16, 1996: 14–15), Dryszczów (no. 16, 1996: 15; no. 45, 2000: 46), Gaik (no. 16, 1996: 16; no. 53, 2001: 36), Glinne (no. 16, 1996: 17), Hinowice (no. 16, 1996: 17; no. 45, 2000: 46), Jakubowce (no. 16, 1996: 19), Kotów (no. 16, 1996: 19), Kozowa (no. 16, 1996: 19), Kozówka (no. 16, 1996: 20), Leśniki (no. 16, 1996: 21), Mieczyszców (no. 16, 1996: 21), Narajów (no. 16, 1996: 21–22), Płauca Mała and Płauca Wielka (no. 16, 1996: 22; no. 53, 2001: 39–41), Poruczyn (no. 16, 1996: 25), Rybniki (no. 16, 1996: 27), Tróścianiec (no. 16, 1996: 27; no. 56, 2001: 39), Uwsie (no. 16, 1996: 28), Zapust Lwowski (no. 16, 1996: 28), Boków (no. 17, 1996: 22–23), Miłno (no. 19, 1996: 31), Słobódka Strusowska (no. 25, 1997: 31), Zadniszówka (no. 26, 1998: 15), Zabójki (no. 26, 1998: 32), Taurów (no. 26, 1998: 35; no. 44, 2000: 25), Soroki (no. 27, 1998: 7), Zubrzec (no. 27, 1998: 8), Borysław (no. 38, 1999: 18; no. 77, 2005: 44), Jasienica Solna (no. 38, 1999: 21; no. 77, 2005: 46), Majdan (no. 38, 1999: 22), Polchowa (no. 39, 1999: 40), Rozdół (no. 42, 2000: 15–17), Kadłubiska (no. 45, 2000: 40), Kuropatniki (no. 45, 2000: 46), Łapszyn (no. 45, 2000: 48), Bartatów (no. 46, 2000: 10; no. 71, 2004: 3), Drohomysł (no. 46, 2000: 12), Litwinów (no. 50, 2001: 38), Telacze (no. 50, 2001: 39), Nowosiółka Biskupia (no. 50, 2001: 39), Koniuchy (no. 53, 2001: 47–48), Żuków (no. 53, 2001: 52), Kutry (no. 54, 2001: 42), Nowosiółki Liskie (no. 58, 2002: 23), Denysów (no. 58, 2002: 51), Podkamień Rohatyński (no. 60, 2002: 38), Michalce (no. 63, 2002: 20), Kruhel Wielki (no. 64, 2002: 46), Dołha Wojniłowska (no. 66, 2003: 50), Kołki (no. 67, 2003: 15), Nieświcz (no. 67, 2003: 18–19), Horodziec (no. 67, 2003: 48), Dąbrowica (no. 71, 2004: 40), Żupanie (no. 79, 2005: 44), Nizankowice (no. 84, 2006: 46), Urycz (no. 86, 2006: 41–43), Dub (no. 92, 2007: 39), Nowosiółki (no. 92, 2007: 50), Radków (no. 92, 2007: 54), Sahryn (no. 133, 2014: 38). The massacre of some 60 Poles in the vicinity of Koniuchy is confirmed by the testimony of a Ukrainian priest: Pavlo Oliinyk, *Zoshyty* (Kiev: Natsionalna akademiia nauk Ukrainy, Instytut ukrainskoi arkhieohrafiï ta dzhereloznavstva im. M.S. Hrushevs'koho, 1995), 66. The events in Volhynia, where more than 1,000 Polish casualties have been documented in the month of September 1939, are described in the following studies: Józef Turowski and Władysław Siemaszko, *Zbrodnie nacjonalistów ukraińskich dokonane na ludności polskiej na Wołyniu 1939–1945* (Warsaw: Główna Komisja Badania Zbrodni Hitlerowskich w Polsce–Instytut Pamięci Narodowej and Środowisko Żołnierzy 27 Wołyńskiej Dywizji Armii Krajowej, 1990), 11–13; Władysław Siemaszko and Ewa Siemaszko, *Ludobójstwo dokonane przez nacjonalistów ukraińskich na ludności polskiej Wołynia 1939–1945* (Warsaw: von borowiecky, 2000), 74, 76, 78, 95, 98, 113, 138, 175, 181, 195, 228–30, 232, 295, 298, 303, 317, 320–21, 330, 333, 365–67, 370, 372–74, 382, 386, 389, 402, 404, 409, 434, 443, 449, 477, 481, 502, 523–28, 531, 545, 564, 569, 570, 576, 579, 583, 587, 592, 596, 602, 605, 606, 609, 613–14, 634, 636, 647, 648, 650, 654–57, 661, 676, 719, 723, 726, 737, 745, 751, 752, 763, 764, 771, 774, 809–10, 822, 831, 839, 847, 858, 861, 878, 896, 916, 924, 928, 933, 947, 950–51, 958, 973, 985, 989, 991, 993, 997, 1034–36, 1038, 1040, 1140–41. Recent estimates of the number of Poles killed in the Eastern Borderlands in September 1939—soldiers, policemen, officials, landowners, colonists, refugees, and others—at the hands of their non-Polish neighbours, mostly by Ukrainians and Belorussians, run as high as 15,000, though the count is probably closer to 5,000. See Ryszard Szawłowski, “Antypolskie wystąpienia na Kresach Wschodnich (1939–41),” in *Encyklopedia “Białych Plam”* (Radom: Polskie Wydawnictwo Encyklopedyczne, 2000), vol. 1, 165–69. In addition to the previously cited sources describing assaults on Polish soldiers, the following publications also detail wide-scale violence directed against the Polish civilian population: Ryszard Szawłowski, *Wojna polsko-sowiecka 1939: Tło polityczne, prawnomiedzynarodowe i psychologiczne; Agresja sowiecka i polska obrona; Sowieckie zbrodnie wojenne i przeciw ludzkości oraz zbrodnie ukraińskie i białoruskie*, Third expanded and revised edition (Warsaw: Antyk–Marcin Dybowski, 1997), vol. 1, 351–443; Łappo, *Z Kresów Wschodnich RP na wygnanie*, 172 (Szczurzyn, Volhynia), and Henryka Łappo, et al., eds., *Z Kresów Wschodnich Rzeczypospolitej: Wspomnienia z osad wojskowych 1921–1940*, Second expanded edition (London: Ognisko Osadników Kresowych, 1998), translated as Teresa Jeśmanowa, ed., *Stalin's Ethnic in Eastern Poland: Tales of the Deported, 1940–1946* (London: Association of the Families of the Borderland Settlers, 2000; London: Veritas Foundation, 2008), 433 (Szczurzyn near Łuck), 731–32 (Budowla and Lerypol near Skidel); Antoni Tomczyk, *Abyśmy mogli wybaczyć* (Warsaw: Stowarzyszenie Rodzin Osadników Wojskowych i Cywilnych Kresów Wschodnich; Sandomierz: Wydawnictwo Diecezjalne, 2001), 27, 58 (Budowla and Lerypol near Skidel); Andrzej Leon Sowa, *Stosunki polsko-ukraińskie 1939–1947: Zarys problematyki* (Kraków: Towarzystwo Sympatyków Historii, 1998), 84–88; Marek Wierzbicki, *Polacy i Białorusini w zaborze sowieckim: Stosunki polsko-białoruskie na ziemiach północno-wschodnich II Rzeczypospolitej pod okupacją sowiecką 1939–1941* (Warsaw: Volumen, 2000), passim; Marek Wierzbicki, *Polacy i Żydzi w zaborze sowieckim: Stosunki polsko-żydowskie na ziemiach północno-wschodnich II RP*

drastic forms. The Ukrainians became extremely aggressive and collaborated with the Russians. They were looking for groups of Polish soldiers who were hiding in the woods and kept delivering them to the Russians. They were also burning Polish estates and killing their owners.¹²⁴⁰

According to the data collected by the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists, from August 29 until September 23, 1939, 7,729 supporters of that organization took part in armed subversive activities directed at the Polish authorities in 183 localities, capturing 3,610 Poles, killing 796, and wounding 37. (They reported their own losses as 160 killed and 53 wounded.)¹²⁴¹

It was to this reality that Poles had to respond. In reply to apologists who argue that these anti-Polish groups were an insignificant and marginal component of their respective communities, historian Tomasz Strzembosz has pointed out quite perceptively that even if only one thousand armed Jews had taken part in such activities that would have been a significant number. After all, it exceeded the number of Jews who took up arms in the Warsaw ghetto in 1943—a struggle that is regarded as a symbol of the heroism of Warsaw's half-million Jews.¹²⁴²

Conditions for Poles in September 1939 resembled the descriptions—often encountered in Jewish historiography—of the treatment of the Jewish population by the local population on the German entry in June and July 1941. There is one notable difference, however. While the national minorities turned on the Poles in September 1939, and took part in anti-Polish manifestations and mock funerals of Poland, a large part of the atrocities against Poles had already occurred *before* the Soviet army arrived. A typical account of the fate of the Jews in the early summer months of 1941, with the Polish analogy interspersed, goes like this:

Therefore, whether the nationalist groups temporarily controlled the situation, or acted under the Nazi [Soviet] 'supervision', anti-Jewish [anti-Polish] violence was organized and took place under the spectre of national statehood, giving it the appearance of native initiative. ...

National purification, therefore, began with the ritual of violence that heralded the dawn of a new order. After the Soviet retreat [entry] large crowds participated in political demonstrations celebrating the end of the 'Jewish Bolshevik' [Polish] regime. ...

The 'Jedwabne state' environment thus enabled the assailants, regardless of their ethnicity, to act with a modicum of confidence that anti-Jewish actions were sanctioned, while acting in groups reduced any moral or psychological restraints. ...

Peasants were among the most active participants, arriving at the sites of pogroms in horse-drawn carts into which they loaded the loot from Jewish [Polish] houses, apartments, and stores.¹²⁴³

Thus, by and large the conflict arose because of the open collaboration on the part of members of the ethnic minorities, among them many Jews, with the Soviet invaders at a time when the Polish army was still fighting the Germans. Many, but certainly not all or even most of these actors were Communists—many were simply pro-Soviet or anti-Polish. However, that was not necessarily the norm for the behaviour of Jews and other minorities. In a few towns, such as Gwoździec and Zabłudów, Jews served in defence committees formed by the Polish municipal authorities to maintain order after the departure of the Polish military and police.¹²⁴⁴ In the small town of Krasne near Mołodeczno, on the prewar Polish-Soviet border, one of the last acts of a local Jew was to deliver to a Polish army commander a suitcase with a large sum of

¹²⁴⁰ Dmitri Shalikashvili, "World War Two: Polish Campaign of September 1939," Hoover Institution Archives (Stanford, California), Dmitri Shalikashvili Writings, 1920–1960, b.3, f.3, p.9.

¹²⁴¹ Motyka, *Ukraińska partyzantka 1942–1960*, 72–73.

¹²⁴² Tomasz Strzembosz, "To nie była nieliczna grupa," *Więź* (Warsaw), February 2002, 93.

¹²⁴³ Prusin, *The Lands Between*, 156–59.

¹²⁴⁴ Terpin, *Przegrani zwycięzcy*, 11; Shmueli-Schusch, *Zabłudów*.

money donated by Jews for Poland's National Defence Fund.¹²⁴⁵

The contrast was particularly striking in *Wasilków*, located in the predominantly Polish province of Białystok. Local Poles and Jews formed a committee with representatives of both groups to prevent chaos during the period between the collapse of Polish civil authority and the arrival of the Germans. At that time its members reportedly wore a white armband to indicate their "neutrality," but no one greeted or collaborated with the German invaders. The Germans arrested a number of Jewish and Polish onlookers and looted shops in the town before they left, but the Poles were not implicated in these abuses. However, when the Russians arrived soon after, the mood changed and the paths of the two communities—Poles and Jews—diverged radically:

Mordechai Yurowietzki the tinsmith's son, raised a red flag on top of the fire station tower.

Leaflets dropped by an aeroplane proclaimed "brothers and sisters of West Byelo-Russia. On Comrade Stalin's instructions, the Red Army is coming to your assistance ..."

A militia was quickly established by the left wing elements in the town. The streets were full of people [Jews and some Belorussians] laughing and chattering in holiday mood. No one wanted to go home in the evening for fear of an opportunity to welcome the Red Army. Only late in the evening, did a black limousine slowly drive into town. It stopped and one of the men inside asked in Russian for directions to the house of Pan Wasilkowski. Wasilkowski worked as a machinist in a tannery factory owned by the Barasch brothers. The NKVD had a strange way of dealing with their agents.

The next morning, the army arrived. The troops were quartered on the town. Each morning, they would march through the streets to their field kitchens singing heartily. Youngsters would follow after them and sing along when they could. These songs became very popular, especially "Katiusha". ...

Cultural life was regulated by an official seconded from Minsk. This was a middle aged Jewish woman ... when the Russians decided to turn the main synagogue into a club ... we protested to the cultural official who was Jewish. She insisted that she could do nothing and suggested that we approach the political commissar. He had a Jewish sounding name. He bragged that it was he who had suggested the conversion of the synagogue but he finally relented and left it untouched.¹²⁴⁶

Chaim Mielnicki, whose exploits are referred to extensively in an earlier chapter, was another prominent NKVD agent who prepared lists of Poles for arrest and deportation to the Gulag.

There is simply no evidence to support Dov Levin's claim that the Polish army, in which thousands of Jews also served, seized the opportunity to "savage" every Jew they encountered. Although individual army deserters and other undisciplined elements may well have engaged sporadically in criminal activities—primarily robberies and looting—once the Polish army began to disintegrate and the local Polish authorities collapsed or fled in the face of an imminent foreign takeover, certainly not all or even a large number of the soldiers took part in such excesses which, in any event, affected various groups including Poles.¹²⁴⁷

A far more plausible description of the circumstances surrounding the clashes that ensued in various locations in Eastern Poland is provided in a 1988 study by Jan Tomasz Gross. Even before the arrival of the Soviet army Poles were attacked and killed by Ukrainians and Belorussians. The Soviets incited this state of affairs by dropping anti-Polish leaflets, and once they arrived, the Soviets frequently delivered speeches that further incited the minorities. The attacks on Poles continued unabated, and the Soviets ignored the victims' pleas for protection, as well as the excesses that they witnessed. In fact, the Soviet army joined in

¹²⁴⁵ Grzelak, *Wrzesień 1939 na Kresach w relacjach*, 100. Since the Polish forces were in frantic disarray by that time, the funds were not accepted.

¹²⁴⁶ Mendelewicz, *The Wasilkower Memorial Book*, 91–95. Earlier on we learn that the "leader of the Wasilkow Jewish communists was Moszkowski, the principal of the Bundist school. ... His mates were the Rabbi's son, Asher Halpern and Dovid Katz. The communists fought the Bundists for the souls of the school pupils. Of the first lot who completed the seventh grades [sic], nearly all joined the communists. Future communist leaders were; Boruch Katz, Velvl Shapiro, Boruch Farber, Chaika Loszyeki, Faiga Sivovitch and others. ... They had no contact with Polish communists who numbered very few. Only two of them were known." Ibid., 71. Other Jewish Communists are mentioned later on: Velvl Kagan, Chona Perlstein. Ibid., 126.

¹²⁴⁷ In Zakrzówek, in Lublin province, a Jew credits the Polish army with putting a halt to violence and looting by a band of Poles incensed by the fact that "a part of the Jewish youth ... displayed sympathy toward the Russian authorities"; the only fatality was a Pole who came to the assistance of the Jews. See the testimony of Gedala Erenberg, Yad Vashem Archives, M–1/E–1563.

by rounding up Polish soldiers and killing Polish officers.¹²⁴⁸ As Gross points out, the actions of “the so-called ethnic minorities—Ukrainians and Belorussians in particular—who reportedly ambushed small groups of Polish soldiers ... and who assaulted local Polish communities and functionaries of the now defunct state administration” provoked a backlash against these hostile elements before the entry of the Soviet army.¹²⁴⁹ Indeed, Polish accounts confirm that attacks on Poles, and even open insurrections, were frequent during that period. As could be expected, Polish soldiers—as would any army under siege—retaliated because of attacks and acts of sabotage by executing fifth columnists captured with arms, returning fire when shot at, and, occasionally, setting fire to farms and villages (villagers were rarely harmed) where snipers and armed bands were active, and where atrocities had been committed against Polish soldiers.¹²⁵⁰ In wartime, measures like these could be considered legitimate forms of self-defence aimed at containing the spread of subversive activities.

Jewish participation in such events, however, is avoided or downplayed by Gross. Moreover, some of his conclusions about Jewish conduct are tenuous at best. For example, he contends that “the triumphal arches and peasant militias were not meant to spite or challenge the old regime, but rather to welcome or ingratiate

¹²⁴⁸ Gross, *Revolution from Aboard*, 35–45.

¹²⁴⁹ Gross, *Revolution from Aboard*, 18–21.

¹²⁵⁰ In a village near Horochów, Volhynia, where Polish soldiers were shot at, after entering the village they discovered the gruesome site of three mutilated soldiers, with their tongues torn out and their eyes gouged out, hanging from a beam in a barn. They soldiers retaliated by setting fire to the village. See Romanek, *Kolaboracja z Sowietami na terenie województwa lubelskiego we wrześniu i październiku 1939 r.*, 58. A small unit of Polish soldiers was shot at in the Ukrainian village of Pakość near Mościska, and several soldiers were wounded. In retaliation, 5 Ukrainians were executed and about a dozen farm buildings were set on fire. See Siekierka, Komański, and Bulzacki, *Ludobójstwo dokonane przez nacjonalistów ukraińskich na Polakach w województwie lwowskim 1939–1947*, 675. While marching through the Ukrainian village of Orów near Drohobycz, a group of Polish soldiers was shot at by Ukrainians. Most of the soldiers managed to escape only because they set some buildings and haystacks on fire. See Siekierka, Komański, and Bulzacki, *Ludobójstwo dokonane przez nacjonalistów ukraińskich na Polakach w województwie lwowskim 1939–1947*, 195.

For additional examples of retaliations see: Wegierski, *September 1939*, 131 (a village near the Dniestr River); Pobóg-Malinowski, *Najnowsza historia polityczna Polski, 1864–1945*, vol. 3, 59–60 (Piaseczno, Nadiatycze near Mikołajów); Petro Mirchuk, *Narys istorii Orhanizatsii Ukraïnskykh Natsionalistiv*, vol. 1 (1920–1939) (Munich, London and New York: Ukrainske Vydavnytstvo, 1968), 586–87; Yitzhak Sternberg, *Under Assumed Identity* (Israel: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, and Ghetto Fighters’ House, 1986), 26; Czesław K. Grzelak, *Kresy w czerwieni 1939: Agresja Związku Sowieckiego na Polskę w 1939 r.* (Warsaw: Wojskowy Instytut Historyczny Akademii Obrony Narodowej and Neriton, 1998), 194; Alfred Jasiński, “Borysławska apokalipsa,” *Karta*, no. 4 (1991): 102; *Na Rubieży* (Wrocław), no. 35 (1999): 37 (Korczunek near Stryj); *Na Rubieży* (Wrocław), no. 40 (1999): 38 (Pakość near Mościska); Siemaszko and Siemaszko, *Ludobójstwo dokonane przez nacjonalistów ukraińskich na ludności polskiej Wołynia 1939–1945*, vol. 1, 98 (Podzamcze), vol. 2, 1141 (Piaseczno); Wierzbicki, *Polacy i Białorusini w zaborze sowieckim*, 164, 167–68 (Stukały, Króle); Wysocki, *Kapelani wrześniowi*, 731 (Niesuchoiże and Świąteż in Volhynia); Wysocki, *Organizacja Ukraińskich Nacjonalistów w Polsce w latach 1929–1939*, 356; Komański and Siekierka, *Ludobójstwo dokonane przez nacjonalistów ukraińskich na Polakach w województwie tarnopolskim 1939–1946*, 113 (Kuropatniki), 140 (Barysz), 147–49 (Buczacz, Czechów), 152 (Jazłowiec), 163 (Nowostawce, Buczacz), 173 (Słobódka Górna), 179 (Zubrzec), 185 (Byczkowce), 192–93 (Połowce), 194 (Skorodyńce), 198 (Wyganaka), 265 (Nowosiółka-Bekerów), 266 (Panowice), 271 (Szumlany), 276 (Zawadówka), 277 (Zawałów), 317 (Niemiłów), 332 (Chmieliska), 340 (Leżanówka), 347 (Poznanica Hetmańska), 361 (Borki Wielkie), 383 (Szlachcińce), 403–4 (Laskowce), 406 (Mogielnica), 420 (Wierzbowice), 443 (Torskie), 445 (Uhryńkowce), 514–15 (Zazule-Kozaki), 821–22 (Leżanówka), 871–72, 877 (Laskowce); Siekierka, Komański, and Bulzacki, *Ludobójstwo dokonane przez nacjonalistów ukraińskich na Polakach w województwie lwowskim 1939–1947*, 192–93, 195 (Orów near Drohobycz), 344 (Kobylnica Wołoska near Jaworów), 612 (Winniki), 675 (Pakość); Tadeusz Chinciński, “Niemiecka dywersja w Polsce w 1939 r. w świetle dokumentów policyjnych i wojskowych II Rzeczypospolitej oraz służb specjalnych III Rzeszy, część 2 (sierpień–wrzesień 1939 r.),” *Pamięć i Sprawiedliwość*, no. 1 (2006): 191–93; Motyka, *Ukraińska partyzantka*, 71 (Piaseczno and elsewhere); Żbikowski, *U genezy Jedwabnego*, 69 (Kaszówka near Kowel—tellingly, since the Jews who had taken refuge in that village did not shoot at the Polish army, they were spared).

with the new.”¹²⁵¹ Clearly, they served both functions. The welcome extended to the Soviets was usually accompanied by anti-Polish rhetoric and spontaneous arrests of Polish officials and military personnel by local collaborators. For that reason, and for the reasons delineated by Polish historian Teresa Prekerowa later in the text, one must also dismiss David Engel’s thesis that the Jews simply welcomed the Soviets “as a liberating rather than conquering force,” and that their reaction can be attributed entirely to the apprehended threat to their physical safety represented by the Germans.¹²⁵² The copious testimonies gathered in this study point to other, often more significant, factors at play.

As for the claim that the Jews formed self-defence units merely to stave off pogroms directed at the Jewish population, it has already been pointed out that the attacks (mostly robberies and looting) were perpetrated by various factions, mainly criminal and mostly non-Polish. They occurred during a time of strife and growing anarchy, when Poland’s civil authorities and police were rapidly disintegrating in the

¹²⁵¹ Gross, *Revolution from Aboard*, 20–21. More recently, Gross has also argued that it was “the perspective of emancipation from Jewishness as much as emancipation of the Jews [by the Soviets] that drew youngsters into the streets to cheer the Red Army and later to work on behalf of the Soviet occupiers.” See Gross, “A Tangled Web: Confronting Stereotypes Concerning Relations between Poles, Germans, Jews, and Communists,” in Deak, *The Politics of Retribution in Europe*, 103.

¹²⁵² David Engel made this claim when he berated American historian Richard C. Lukas for raising the issue of Jewish behaviour toward Poles under the Soviet occupation in his pivotal study, *The Forgotten Holocaust: The Poles under German Occupation, 1939–1944* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1986), alluding to an alleged “consensus of scholarly opinion” on this point. Lukas replied that, if such a consensus exists, it is limited to Jewish circles. See David Engel, “Poles, Jews and Historical Objectivity,” *Slavic Review*, no. 3–4 (Fall/Winter 1997): 575, and Richard C. Lukas, “A Response,” *Slavic Review*, *ibid.*, 586–87. While constituting a marked improvement on the calibre and tone of discourse on Polish-Jewish relations, and even considered as a “breakthrough” by some, Michael C. Steinlauf’s much lauded study *Bondage to the Dead: Poland and the Memory of the Holocaust* (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 1997), at 33–37, does not stray from familiar patterns when dealing with the Jewish response to the Soviet occupation. Furthermore, he virtually ignores the topic of Jewish behaviour towards Poles and, by extension, the selective memory of the Jews in that regard. (This is in stark contrast to the detail with which he describes Polish conduct under the German occupation and the specificity of the charges levelled against the Poles.) Steinlauf speaks of Belorussian and Ukrainian peasants being “incited to take violent revenge against their Polish landlords,” and of Jewish “resentment against Polish rule” and their viewing Soviet rule as preferable to German rule, and of the participation of the minorities in “greeting the Red Army with flowers and cheers,” with Jews being “particularly conspicuous for kissing Soviet tanks.” While conceding that “some [Jews] even joined the Soviet security apparatus,” he does not specify what exactly they, and others, did, for example, by citing Jan Karski’s well-known report. He then goes on to say that “all this was carefully noted by the beleaguered Poles” and that “conflicting Jewish interests ... were filtered through [Polish] anti-Semitic fantasies to create a myth of Jewish vengeance.” To this he adds that “rumors about the Soviet occupation of the east inundated the Generalgouvernement. These rumors typically embellished upon the theme of ‘what *they* [the Jews] did to us on the other side of the Bug.’” Finally, Steinlauf points out how much the Jews also suffered under Soviet rule and how disenchanted they became with that system. All of this leaves the unsuspecting reader wondering just what exactly did these “anti-Semitic” Poles have to gripe about anyway. For a book that dwells obsessively on “memory,” this is quite a whitewash. To top it off, Steinlauf takes Richard Lukas to task for “seriously underestimat[ing] Polish antisemitism, and tend[ing] to blur the distinction between Nazi policies toward Jews and Poles.” Nor does Steinlauf shy away from directing a broadside at Norman Davies, who is allegedly guilty—which is demonstrably untrue—of “fail[ing] to grasp the crucial distinction between the fate of Jews and Poles during the war.” *Ibid.*, 153. Little wonder that Polish-Jewish dialogue is, in the view of many Poles, at an impasse.

face of invasion from all sides, and targeted Poles as well as Jews.¹²⁵³ Nor does Gross tackle the issue of the numerous anti-Polish excesses that the Jewish militia all too frequently engaged in on their own initiative even before the arrival of Soviet troops.

A great deal of the social unrest on the part of the ethnic minorities in the Eastern Borderlands was the direct result of Soviet propaganda and agitation. Thousands of leaflets were air-dropped and distributed urging Ukrainian and Belorussian peasants to take up “arms, scythes, pitchforks and axes” against their “age-old enemies—the Polish *Pans*.”¹²⁵⁴ Thus there was a clear signal from the Soviet invaders that Poles could be attacked with impunity. An eyewitness from Łuck, Volhynia, reported:

We soon discovered that the rumors about Bolsheviks coming to aid us were false. Even before entering the city the Soviet planes dropped leaflets (which I saw with my own eyes) inciting peasants to occupy the estates of landowners, to beat them up, etc. We stayed in our homes as the peasantry, agitated, went out looting. The Bolsheviks established order as soon as they entered.¹²⁵⁵

After consolidating their power, in order to distance themselves from these acts, the Soviet authorities issued a proclamation denouncing the activities of “Ukrainian nationalists” who, as “enemies of Soviet authority,” carried out “pogroms” against the Jews and Poles. The “enemies,” the proclamation reiterated,

¹²⁵³ Conditions in Wielkie Kruhowicze, near Lunin, in Polesia, were described by a former resident as follows: “The civil servants from the county had fled, as had the police ... Lawlessness was rampant in the village. A shoemaker by the name of Kupajczyk, a criminal who had been sentenced before the war to five years’ imprisonment and interned in Bereza Kartuska ... announced throughout the village that he was in charge. He gathered around him more of the same kind of people who before the war thought only of robbery ... and they became the authorities. They made the rounds to the estates abandoned by the wealthier people and took away whatever there was: food, furniture, clothing, Dutch cheese, etc. ... Weeks went by and some sort of authority was put in place. The authorities consisted of these same thieves, criminals and bandits. That was the authority of the Soviet Socialist Republic.” See Władysław Różycki, “Moje tragiczne życie,” in Benedykt Heydenkorn, ed., *Pamiętniki imigrantów polskich w Kanadzie*, vol. 3 (Toronto: Canadian-Polish Research Institute, 1978), 117. Another Pole recalled the situation in Nieśwież county: “During the first days after the Bolshevik invasion, some Ukrainians and some Jews were threatening the Poles, and even assaults and robberies took place.” See Grudzińska-Gross and Gross, *War Through Children’s Eyes*, 91; also noted in Gross, “The Jewish Community in the Soviet-Annexed Territories on the Eve of the Holocaust: A Social Scientist’s View,” in Dobroszycki, *The Holocaust in the Soviet Union*, 168 n.12.

¹²⁵⁴ Ryszard Szawłowski, “Antypolskie wystąpienia na Kresach Wschodnich (1939–41),” in *Encyklopedia “Białych Plam”*, vol. 1, 166. The leaflet in question is reproduced in Szawłowski, *Wojna polsko-sowiecka 1939* (1997), vol. 2, 437 (in Ukrainian); the Polish translation appears at 203. (The word “*był*” in Ukrainian was understood to mean “kill” as well as “fight.”) The role of non-Soviet instigation should not be overlooked either. According to German sources, on the eve of the war 4,000 Ukrainian Nationalists agents trained in sabotage and diversion by the Abwehr infiltrated Galicia, incited the Ukrainian population, and participated in acts of violence against the Poles. See Piotrowski, *Poland’s Holocaust*, 205.

¹²⁵⁵ Grudzińska-Gross and Gross, *War Through Children’s Eyes*, 184. There are many accounts about leaflets dropped on roads urging the local population to kill Polish *Pans*, estate owners and officers with scythes, pitchforks and other weapons. See, for example, Władysław Dymitrowski, *Nasza Polska* (Warsaw), September 1, 1999; Maria Antonowicz, “Polacy na Kresach w latach 1939–1941,” *Nasza Polska*, September 9, 1999 (Mołodeczno); Poszwiński, *Spod Łowicza do Londynu*, 112 (Zdzieciół); the account of Ewaryst Leopold H. in Gross and Grudzińska-Gross, *W czterdziestym nas Matko na Sybir zesłali...*, 292 (Dmytrów).

were “landowners and capitalists ... of all nations.”¹²⁵⁶ However, Polish settlers continued to be vilified as cruel exploiters of Ukrainian and Belorussian peasants (whom they allegedly beat unconscious or simply killed) in the National Assembly of Western Ukraine and the People’s Assembly of Western Belorussia, where Ukrainian and Belorussian deputies urged that the settlers be deported.¹²⁵⁷

In his recent study *The Death of the Shtetl*,¹²⁵⁸ Yehuda Bauer reiterates the basic findings of historians Ben-Cion Pinchuk and Dov Levin and some of the characteristic formulations found in Jewish historiography, while at the same modifying some of them. *The Death of the Shtetl* is a very uneven book and Bauer’s research leaves much to be desired. On the one hand, Bauer acknowledges that Jews were prominent in the transition to Soviet rule and that the workers’ committees and militias that formed in early stages of the Soviet occupation had a largely Jewish make-up. Furthermore, they oppressed former Polish state officials.

Jewish communists, though few in number, became prominent in the transition to Soviet rule. The Soviet authorities set up workers’ committees, on which there were many Jews, to establish control over towns and villages. ... Jews joined or set up militias (local police) before or immediately following the Soviet occupation. In some Galician and Volhynian localities Jews accounted for up to 70 percent of the militia membership. These militias confiscated major enterprises and arrested many Polish officials.¹²⁵⁹

However, he does not allow such facts to inform his assessment of Jewish behaviour or the impact that it may have had on Polish attitudes. What is more, he scrupulously avoids evidence, cited below, of the role workers’ committees and militias played in provoking retaliations by the Polish army.

While acknowledging that “Soviet troops that came to occupy the region were welcomed, in many cases enthusiastically, by the Jews,” Bauer then attempts to neutralize this fact by stating that others did likewise, and stresses repeatedly that “many Poles” also welcomed the Soviets.¹²⁶⁰ As pointed out, any such welcome was restricted to border towns where Poles initially believed the Soviet claim that they had come to defend Poland from the Germans. Moreover, it was short-lived and was not accompanied by anti-Polish and pro-Soviet slogans. But why complicate one’s line of defence with such “fine” distinctions? Like other historians of his ilk, those who disagree with his highly defensive interpretation of these events are dismissed as “Polish nationalists.” (Foremost among these strident historians is Joanna Michlic, who is constantly battling Polish “ethno-nationalists” who disagree with her views. Michlic advocates the extremist view that any unfavourable comment about the behaviour of Jews is a display of anti-Semitism.) Bauer also justifies displays of disloyalty by Jewish citizens on the grounds that they had been mistreated in Poland so they owed no loyalty to their state.

Polish politicians and ideologues later accused the Jews of the kresy—and, by association, all Jews—of betraying Poland in its hour of need, of identifying with the Soviet oppressors. This became the main ideological line of Polish nationalists toward the Jews during World War II both in Poland itself and in the

¹²⁵⁶ The proclamation in question is reproduced in Szawłowski, *Wojna polsko-sowiecka 1939* (1995, 1997), vol. 2, 202 (in Ukrainian); the Polish translation appears at 438. The reference to Polish victims of pogroms was, apparently, an exercise in “political correctness.” Nothing is known of actions undertaken by the Soviet authorities to punish those who had engaged in violence against Poles. On the other hand, assaults on Jews were punished severely. For the murder of three Jews in the village of Koniuchy near Brzeżany, three Ukrainians were hanged in Tarnopol and 14 others were sentenced to 10 years of hard labour. However, the murder of more than 60 Poles in this area by Ukrainian nationalists went unpunished. See Pavlo Oliinyk, *Zoshyty* (Kiev: Natsionalna akademiia nauk Ukrainy, Instytut ukrainskoi arkhieohrafii ta dzhereloznavstva im. M.S. Hrushevskoho, 1995), 66–67. On these and other murders of hundreds of Poles, both civilians and military, in the county of Brzeżany, province of Tarnopol, see also *Na Rubieży* (Wrocław), no. 16 (1996): 14–29.

¹²⁵⁷ Ciesielski, Hryciuk, and Srebrakowski, *Masowe deportacje ludności w Związku Radzieckim*, 210–11.

¹²⁵⁸ Yehuda Bauer, *The Death of the Shtetl* (New Haven, Connecticut and London: Yale University Press, 2009).

¹²⁵⁹ Bauer, *The Death of the Shtetl*, 38–39.

¹²⁶⁰ Bauer, *The Death of the Shtetl*, 35–37.

Polish government-in-exile in London; it is repeated in Polish historiography, journalism, and literature to this day. The problem with this argument is that from the perspective of most Jews, interwar Poland was an oppressive regime and could hardly demand loyalty from its badly treated Jewish population.¹²⁶¹

Unlike other Jewish historians, Bauer acknowledges that Jews also took part in looting, for which there is ample evidence, although none of it is cited by Bauer. As for the reaction of the Polish army to armed revolts in the Eastern Borderlands, Bauer tempers somewhat Dov Levin's claim that they "savaged" any Jew they encountered; rather, they allegedly organized unprovoked "pogroms" which local authorities did not usually contain, and sometimes encouraged.

Polish troops, frustrated and furious at the defeat of their country, also occasionally robbed Jews and killed them. Whether anti-Jewish pogroms were permitted to happen depended on the local leadership. ... In Grodno, ... about thirty Jews were killed in a pogrom before the Soviets entered. ... In Dereczin [Dereczyn], ... Poles—it is unclear whether the Polish army or local police—tried to organize a pogrom, but the local, presumably Catholic priest prevented this from happening.¹²⁶²

Bauer's ignorance and *a priori* dismissal of Polish sources as well as his selective use of Jewish sources seriously compromise his scholarship. The events in Grodno, which were described earlier in great detail, were hardly a pogrom. As for Dereczin, Jewish testimonies, found in the same memorial book that Bauer cites from, describe the events leading up to the Polish army's "frustrations" and the alleged "pogrom" quite differently:

The temporary authorities detained the Polish officers, beat them up, confiscated their autos, and arrested them. In town, an uproar and panic ensued: the contingent of Polish army was expected any minute, and the Poles [surely] would take out their displeasure at the arrest of the officers on us, the Jews. Many Jews fled the town, and hid out among Christians and in the fields.

In the early morning, the Rabbi was summoned to the local priest [Rev. Poczubutt-Odlanicki]. There it was demanded of him that he should try to influence the young people, and obtain the release of the Polish officers from jail, because of the impending danger attending the arrival of the Polish army contingent who might wreck all of Dereczin [Dereczyn]. Only after expending considerable energy, did the Rabbi and the priest obtain the keys to the jail, and release the officers.

A group of young people, responsible to no one, but intoxicated with communist doctrine, attempted to 'seize control' in Dereczin before the arrival of the Soviet army. They detained several Polish officers who were retreating. Following these officers, who were a vanguard for a much larger retreating Polish force, the Polish soldiers arrived ... My father put his life on the line, and went out to the inflamed Polish soldiers, and promised to locate their officers. By exerting great energy, he was able to persuade these young people to release these Polish officers. The retreating Poles were in a hurry to flee as fast as possible from the enemy ...

During those frightful days without a regime in place in Dereczin, another incident occurred: a notification went out all over town that the left wing youth, both Jews and [some Belorussian] Christians alike, were planning to shoot the local Catholic priest, who was known to be a liberal-minded individual, and who also had friendly relations with the Jews. On the prior day, the local priest in Zelva [Zelwa] had indeed been hung, whom the inflamed young people had accused of being sharply anti-communist.

When my father learned of the danger that awaited the priest of Dereczin, he resolved to do something to defuse the murder plot, for which the Jews would, ultimately, God forbid, pay dearly. My father went to the priest in the middle of the night, and surreptitiously brought him to our house. The following morning, large groups of young people surrounded our house, demanding that the priest be handed over to them. My father stood himself in the doorway and told them that only over his dead body would they be able to break into our house.

In the middle of this conversation between my father and this gathered crowd, the first vanguard of Soviet officials arrived in town. Seeing a large crowd in front of our house, they asked what was going on. When they found out about the issue with the priest, one of the Soviet officials asked my mother for a small table. He stood on the table and declared to the crowd that 'the Soviet regime does everything according to the rule of law, and nobody has a right to try and sentence anyone out of this process.' The young people were disarmed, and the Soviet military expressed their thanks to my father for his proper and sober position.¹²⁶³

¹²⁶¹ Bauer, *The Death of the Shtetl*, 37.

¹²⁶² Bauer, *The Death of the Shtetl*, 33.

¹²⁶³ *Dereczin* (Mahwah, New Jersey: Jacob Solomon Berger, 2000), 206, 324–25.

So who perpetrated a “pogrom” in Dereczyn? Was it the Poles who wanted to lynch the rabbi or was it the Jews who wanted to lynch the priest? Under the circumstances, *any* army would have retaliated. The fallout of this narrative can be seen in the subsequent works of other historians. Citing Bauer as irrefutable proof of pogroms perpetrated by “Polish Jew-haters,” German historian Christian Gerlach writes: “In September 1939, the month of the Polish defeat, some lethal pogroms took place in a number of northeastern Polish towns.”¹²⁶⁴ Characteristically, not a word from Gerlach about the context and Jewish violence directed against Poles.

While alleging that the Germans “committed atrocities in Luboml during the brief period before they handed the town over to the Soviets,” a charge which the town’s Jewish memorial book disputes, Bauer neglects to mention that a joint Jewish-Ukrainian revolutionary committee took control of the town after the initial departure of the Polish army. The newly formed armed militia arrested the county supervisor, public prosecutor and members of the town administration in anticipation of the arrival of the Soviets. When the Germans arrived instead of the Soviets, the Jewish-Ukrainian militia apprehended and disarmed Polish soldiers and handed them over to the Germans. The Jewish memorial book confirms that, when the Germans entered Luboml for “a few days,” “a militia composed of Jews and Ukrainians was formed whose job it was to keep order in the town”; “Jewish young men were appointed to the town militia by the temporary Jewish-Ukrainian City Council,” which worked hand in glove with the German military authorities. “During their presence in our town, the Germans behaved like normal occupying authorities. They did no ill to the Jews.” After the Germans departed, in anticipation of the arrival of the Soviet army, local Bolshevik sympathizers erected a “triumphal arch” at the main entrance to the town “with red flags and other decorations and slogans in honor of the Red army,” “which had come to free our citizens from Polish enslavement.” “Comrades” armed “with guns, having taken power into their own hands,” gathered at the quarters of the “self-defense organization,” i.e., the militia, and “walked around arrogantly, with heads held high, and it seemed as if there were none equal to them.” When, unexpectedly, the Polish army re-entered Luboml, they destroyed the “triumphal arch” and “rounded up the pro-Soviet youths.” “Comrade” Veyner, who would “ride around with a revolver in his hand on a big thoroughbred horse” and “acted like the former police officer of the shtetl,” was the first to be shot.¹²⁶⁵ But again, why complicate matters by providing ammunition for the “ideological line of Polish nationalists”? It is much simpler to call it a “pogrom” perpetrated by Polish “anti-Semites.” No questions asked, none allowed—and those who do question, can be dismissed as “Polish nationalists.”

To his credit, Bauer recognizes that, in the initial stages, “the whole weight of the Soviet terror fell primarily on Poles.” And again: “Without doubt, the Soviets saw the Poles as the main enemy and, initially at least, instituted a regime of utmost terror against them, much harsher than their treatment of Jews, Ukrainians, or Belorussians.”¹²⁶⁶ But then he turns around and claims that the “Soviet authorities preferred Poles to Jews, provided they showed real or pretended pro-Soviet sympathies.”¹²⁶⁷ The evidence he presents to prove his point is rather selective and simply unpersuasive. Bauer also claims that “the number of deported Jews was proportionately much higher than the proportionate number of deported Poles.” However, this is simply not borne out by Soviet archival materials. Although Poles constituted about a third of the prewar population of the Eastern Borderlands, their share of the civilian deportations was approximately 70 percent, that is, about 250,000 out of 350,000 deportees. The Jewish share was 70,000, or approximately 20 percent, while their proportion of the overall population was slightly higher than ten percent. Soviet statistics also belie the claim that most of the Jewish refugees from central Poland were deported, as Bauer alleges. The problem is that Bauer has only a passing acquaintance with Soviet sources, even though they have been available for more than a decade, yet finds them to be “not convincing” for

¹²⁶⁴ Christian Gerlach, *The Extermination of the European Jews* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 343.

¹²⁶⁵ Berl Kagan, ed., *Luboml: The Memorial Book of a Vanished Shtetl* (Hoboken, New Jersey: Ktav Publishing House, 1997), xix, 230–36, 240–43, 261, 290, 343

¹²⁶⁶ Bauer, *The Death of the Shtetl*, 34, 48.

¹²⁶⁷ Bauer, *The Death of the Shtetl*, 40.

reasons he does not elaborate on.¹²⁶⁸ The lack of in-depth or any knowledge of sources other than Jewish testimonies, in particular Soviet and Polish ones, and only occasional references to the works of German historians, is a significant shortcoming in Bauer's scholarship.

The pattern of inciting violence and then restoring order as "protectors" of the population was one used by both the Soviets and Nazis in September 1939 and again in June and July 1941. In the German occupation zone, German authorities also initiated and encouraged lawlessness in the early days of the occupation. A Jew from Majdan Kolbuszewski reported as follows:

When the war broke out and German planes appeared that dropped a few bombs, the village was panic-stricken. Fortunately bombs fell in the fields and they didn't damage anything in the village. Nevertheless, people were leaving the village in a state of panic, moving to other places. After a few days, Germans arrived. Jews hid away. They ran to neighboring villages looking for hiding places with peasants they knew. The majority of Jews indeed found shelter in the villages ... We stayed there for a few days ... Seeing that the situation is prolonging, we decided to return home at night. At home we found the doors to be open and a looted apartment. Germans took our radio, a new wardrobe, and best clothing, and they turned the whole apartment upside down.

During those few days that we spent in the countryside, Germans did things in Majdan their own way. Some most respected Jews and Poles they led out of town, and they tormented the rest of the population, dragging them to work and beating them without mercy.¹²⁶⁹

In the village of Zakrzówek looters ransacked both Jewish and Polish property in September 1939, but the Polish army put a stop to it.¹²⁷⁰ This reaction would have doubtless been far more widespread had the Polish army gained the upper hand over the invaders.

In Szczepieszyn, a town southeast of Lublin that passed hands several times, the German authorities actively incited the local riff-raff to take part in the looting of shops and homes. Zygmunt Klukowski described these events in his diary as follows:

[September 20, 1939]: Yesterday, a general destruction and looting of the stores took place, Polish and Jewish. But since there are more Jewish establishments than Polish, the common statement was, "They are plundering the Jews."

The usual routine went like this. A few German soldiers would enter the open stores and, after taking some items for themselves, start throwing everything else out into the street. There some people waited to grab whatever they could. These people are from the city and also neighboring villages. Then they would take their loot home, and the soldiers would move on to the next store. If the doors were locked, the German soldiers broke in and the destruction went even faster.

Some private apartments [for the most part vacated, according to the Polish original—*M.P.*] were robbed also. The Germans would especially look for good liquor, tobacco, cigarettes, and silverware. From the pharmacy they took morphine and other narcotics.

[September 23]: In the city looting is taking place everywhere. ... The German military police, instead of trying to prevent these crimes, seem to be on the side of the robbers and looters.¹²⁷¹

¹²⁶⁸ Bauer, *The Death of the Shtetl*, 48, 53, 54, 180 (endnotes 77 and 78).

¹²⁶⁹ Grudzińska-Gross and Gross, *War Through Children's Eyes*, 221.

¹²⁷⁰ Marek Jan Chodakiewicz, *Between Nazis and Soviets: Occupation Politics in Poland, 1939–1947* (Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 2004), 177. There are many reports of looting of properties belonging to Christian Poles in September 1939. See, for example, Sebastian Piątkowski, "Badytyzm i inne formy przestępczości kryminalnej na obszarach wiejskich Generalnego Gubernatorstwa w początkach okupacji niemieckiej (październik 1939–czerwiec 1941 r.)," in Marek Gałęzowski, et al., eds., *Polska pod okupacją 1939–1945*, vol. 1 (Warsaw: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej–Komisja Ścigania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu, 2015), 73 (Pionki near Radom).

¹²⁷¹ See Klukowski, *Diary from the Years of Occupation, 1939–44*, 28–29, 30, 32, 33. In his essay, "War and Revolution," in Norman Naimark and Leonid Gibianskii, eds., *The Establishment of Communist Regimes in Eastern Europe, 1944–1945* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press/Harper Collins, 1997), at 26, Jan Gross gives the impression that the looting described by Klukowski was initiated by Polish, rather than German soldiers.

With the arrival of the Soviets in Szczeczeszyn on September 27 and 28, 1939, the focus of the robberies shifted: the targets were now Polish soldiers who, as we have seen, were robbed by local Communists (mainly Jews), and the large Polish estates. (The notion that the Germans allowed the Poles to appropriate Jewish businesses and to take over their role in commerce has no basis in fact.¹²⁷²) According to the Brześć memorial book Jews took measures against Poles—but not against Germans—who looted:

... the Germans managed to steal much merchandise from the Jewish stores. In this task they were assisted by a lot of the local Poles, who looted the Jewish stores under German protection. A self-defence group was organized immediately to guard against the Polish looters. When they were on duty, they managed to retrieve the stolen goods, breaking some Polish bones in the process. This was effective in stopping the Polish bandits ...¹²⁷³

Looting by the invading armies, both German and Soviet, was pervasive. The Germans especially targeted Jewish businesses and homes. As a Soviet lieutenant noted, both Soviet soldiers and officers engaged in extensive looting.¹²⁷⁴ In the ensuing disarray, civilians also started to loot. One should not jump to the conclusion, however, that looting was the exclusive domain of non-Jews. Numerous examples of Jews engaging in such activities in the Soviet zone have already been provided. Jews also looted in German-occupied Poland. They looted Jewish homes and properties from which Jews had fled or had been expelled temporarily.¹²⁷⁵ In Sokołów Podlaski, the merchant Herszel Fiszer sent two Jews to steal the goods of a wealthy merchant, Symcha Sender, who had fled to the Soviet zone. Sender returned soon after and learned of the theft. When confronted, Fiszer warned him not to say anything to the German authorities as he would accuse Sender of taking goods illegally into the Soviet zone. A Jewish eyewitness recalls that, in September 1939, Jews stole property belonging to foreign firms in Lublin:

Even the rich came in their carriages and drove away with the hogs inside. I went up to Shlomo Biderman: "What has come over you?" I demanded. "You, the richest Jew in Lublin, grabbing hogs and selling them!" ... "You," he said in reply, "are a fool."¹²⁷⁶

Jews in Kałuszyn pillaged and then traded in foodstuffs and clothing stolen from a Polish military train at the Mrozy railway station.¹²⁷⁷ In Przemyśl, Ukrainian nationalists and Jews joined together to erect a

¹²⁷² Władysław Bartoszewski and Zofia Lewin, eds., *Righteous Among Nations: How Poles Helped the Jews, 1939–1945* (London: Earls Court Publications, 1969), 653.

¹²⁷³ "The Entrance of the German Army into Brest," in E. Steinman, ed., *Brisk de-Lita* (Jerusalem: The Encyclopedia of the Jewish Diaspora, 1958), vol. 2, 583, translated as *Brest Lit(owsk)*, Internet: <<http://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/Brest2/Brest2.html>>.

¹²⁷⁴ Mark von Hagen, "Soviet Soldiers and Officers on the Eve of the German Invasion: Toward a Description of Social Psychology and Political Attitudes," in Robert W. Thurston and Bernd Bonwetsch, eds., *The People's War: Responses to World War II in the Soviet Union* (Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 192.

¹²⁷⁵ Bańkowska, *Archiwum Ringelbluma*, vol. 6, 560 (Grodzisk), 650 (Pustelnik).

Testimony of Jozek Kopyto, Archive of the Jewish Historical Institute (Warsaw), record group 301, number 4085.

¹²⁷⁶ Shiye Goldberg (Shie Chehever), *The Undeclared* (Tel Aviv: H. Leivick Publishing House, 1985), 79–80. For conditions in the vicinity of Tarnów see Andrzej Żbikowski, ed., *Archiwum Ringelbluma: Konspiracyjne Archiwum Getta Warszawskiego*, vol. 3: *Relacje z Kresów* (Warsaw: Żydowski Instytut Historyczny IN-B, 2000), 327.

¹²⁷⁷ Alter Zaydman, "Children in the Midst of Ruins," in A. Shamri and Sh. Soroka, eds., *Sefer Kaluszyn: Geheylt der khorev gevorener kehile* (Tel Aviv: Former Residents of Kaluszyn in Israel, 1961), 367 ff., translated as *The Memorial Book of Kaluszyn*, Internet: <<http://jewishgen.org/yizkor/kaluszyn/Kaluszyn.html>>.

triumphal arch for the German invaders and participated in looting Polish military buildings.¹²⁷⁸ Emanuel Ringelblum recorded that Polish Jews were quick to seize valuables discarded by deported German Jews, who were afraid that possessing them might lead to serious repercussions at the hands of the Germans.¹²⁷⁹ Jewish soldiers, turned stragglers after the defeat of the Polish army, stole from Poles on their way home.

We went to an abandoned small house and decided to lodge there for the night. Chickens were wandering about outside, and my friend promised me a regal repast for the evening consisting of roasted chicken. By looking, he also found eggs. Potatoes were growing in the garden, which the owners had not yet dug up. ... In the cellar, we found a cask of apple juice and completed our feast with that.

We decided to remain here for a couple of days ... we bumped into the corpses of dead soldiers, the carcasses of dead horses, and broken up military wagons. We also found plundered supplies. We sorted through this treasure, and took part of it with us.¹²⁸⁰

Jewish testimonies confirm that Jews also participated in looting of Polish property during the German conquest of Poland.¹²⁸¹ When Mary Berg and her companions fled eastward they came across a bullet-ridden house containing a dead Polish peasant. They then looted his house, as she describes (October 10, 1939): “The kettle which we ‘inherited’ from this murdered peasant became our faithful companion on the long road to Warsaw.”¹²⁸² A young woman who traversed Poland with a group of Jews recalled that her companions took potatoes, cabbage, and other vegetables from farmers’ fields, and that when they “came upon empty estates and yards, which had been [temporarily] abandoned by their landlords and owners. There we found all sorts of ‘goodies’.”¹²⁸³ Another Jewish testimony describes how Jews fleeing eastward stole poultry from Polish farmers.¹²⁸⁴

Much has been written, in recent years, on such Polish conduct as looting Jews, denouncing Jews for financial gain, housing fugitive Jews only as long as they could pay, etc. Regarding Jewish behaviour Josef Zelkowicz, a resident of Łódź, comments, “Major felonies were committed in the ghetto, where accepted human rules did not apply. ... Furthermore, we know, things are no different among the Jews than among the Gentiles...”¹²⁸⁵ Consider the matter of Polish “greed” in the acquisition of Jewish properties, including previously respectable and not-greatly-needy Poles engaging in this conduct. Zelkowicz describes the same among Jews, as he writes,

Grave crimes were committed in the ghetto. The gravest of them was the transformation of people who had worked for decades to maintain their culture and ways, the fruits of millennia of effort, into predatory beasts after half a year of life under inhuman conditions. Overnight they were stripped of every sense of morality and shame. Ghetto inhabitants pilfered and stole at every opportunity, whether they needed the booty or not.

¹²⁷⁸ Eugeniusz Buczyński, *Smutny wrzesień: Wspomnienia* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1985), 132.

¹²⁷⁹ Ringelblum, *Kronika getta warszawskiego*, 69.

¹²⁸⁰ Ephraim Farber, “In German Captivity,” in Dov Shuval, ed., *The Szczepreszyn Memorial Book* (Mahwah, New Jersey: Jacob Solomon Berger, 2005), 111.

¹²⁸¹ See, for example, Żbikowski, *Archiwum Ringelbluma*, vol. 3, 327, which describes conditions in the vicinity of Tarnów.

¹²⁸² Mary Berg and S. L. Shneiderman, ed., *Warsaw Ghetto: A Diary* (New York: L. B. Fischer, 1945), 14.

¹²⁸³ Huberband, *Kiddush Hashem*, 336; see also 338.

¹²⁸⁴ Epsztein, Majewska, and Bańkowska, *Archiwum Ringelbluma*, vol. 15, 108. The refugees also took items from an abandoned bus.

¹²⁸⁵ Zelkowicz, *In Those Terrible Days*, 132.

...
They stole from the community chest, of all places. They stole from the stocks of food for which people had paid in toil, blood and sweat—from the food warehouses that were supposed to feed, equally, all the inmates of this concentration camp that they call a ghetto.¹²⁸⁶

Non-Jewish sources attest to the massive scale of looting, often directed at Soviet storehouses, on the Soviet retreat in June 1941 by members of all nationalities.¹²⁸⁷ Occasionally, we find glimpses of the true extent of this phenomenon in Jewish sources, though Jewish memoirs are on the whole reluctant to speak of such activities by co-religionists without, at the same time, justifying them.

Bielsk Podlaski: When the Russians fled the town they left, in their great haste, storehouses filled with merchandise and foodstuffs. The Jews took from these stores various items for the hard times we all knew would come, and anyway, had we not taken these abandoned goods, they would have been looted by peasants or thieves.¹²⁸⁸

Bielsk Podlaski: Jewish policemen, however, all non-locals, reported on and turned in Jews ... Jewish policemen took the Nazis to the hiding places of foodgoods, which had been taken from the abandoned Soviet storehouses and hidden in the ghetto. The goods were confiscated, and the Jews in whose houses they were found, were beaten.¹²⁸⁹

Sokoły: There also were Jews who carried leftovers from the [Soviet] officers' empty houses.¹²⁹⁰

Kobryń: The day the Russians left, the people, Jews and non-Jews, burst open all the Russian warehouses and took all the goods and the food from there while the Germans watched.¹²⁹¹

Ślonim: ... the rabble, composed of Belorussian, Jewish and Polish dregs, rushed to rob the stores and storehouses, which was interrupted by the arrival of the German soldiers. ... They robbed everything they could, and in the horrible tumult one could make out entire caravans of robbers with stolen bundles.¹²⁹²

Nowogródek: Before the arrival of the Germans, ... there was looting of former Soviet stores, also by Jews.¹²⁹³

¹²⁸⁶ Żelkowicz, *In Those Terrible Days*, 131.

¹²⁸⁷ See, for example, Kazimierz Leszczyński, "Dziennik wojenny Batalionu Policji 322 (Opracowanie i tłumaczenie dokumentu)," *Biuletyn Głównej Komisji Badania Zbrodni Hitlerowskich w Polsce*, no. 17 (1967): 219, which describes conditions in Białystok.

¹²⁸⁸ Meir Peker, "In the Bielsk Ghetto & the Camps," in Haim Rabin, ed., *Bielsk-Podlask: Book in the Holy Memory of the Bielsk Podlask Jews Whose Lives Were Taken During the Holocaust Between 1939 and 1941* (Tel Aviv: Bielsk Immigrants' Association of Israel and the United States of America, 1975), 29.

¹²⁸⁹ "Bielsk" in Shmuel Spector and Bracha Freundlich, eds., *Pinkas hakehillot Polin*, vol. 8 (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2005), 170–75; translated as *Encyclopedia of Jewish Communities in Poland*, Internet: <https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/pinkas_poland/pol8_11170.html>.

¹²⁹⁰ Maik, *Deliverance*, 20.

¹²⁹¹ G. Beil, "The Holocaust (The Shoah)," in Shwartz, *The Book of Kobrin*, 382.

¹²⁹² Żbikowski, *Archiwum Ringelbluma*, vol. 3, 172, 202; Wierzbicki, *Polacy i Żydzi w zaborze sowieckim*, 218.

¹²⁹³ Testimony of Yakov Berman, Shoah Foundation Institute Visual History Archive, University of Southern California, Interview code 26244, as cited in Yehuda Bauer, "Nowogródek—The Story of a *Shtetl*," *Yad Vashem Studies*, vol. 35, no. 2 (2007): 35–70, at 44.

Złoczów: I saw a motley mob, perhaps a hundred people, rushing in and out of the government stores across the street. These were looters. There was a bearded Jew in the crowd ...

A German military vehicle drove up; two noncommissioned officers jumped out, and without a word of warning one of them pulled out a revolver and started shooting at the crowd.¹²⁹⁴

There are similar reports from many other places. Looting is not at all unusual during wartime and periods of civil strife. Looting by Allied forces began even before the German frontier was crossed in 1945. American reports confirmed that pillage of Belgian civilian property by U.S. troops did in fact take place on a considerable scale. Once in Germany looting became a full-blown epidemic.¹²⁹⁵ In wartime Britain, as Norman Davies points out, the problem became critical despite the fact that there was no occupation or breakdown of state apparatus.

Looting occurred as soon as the bombs of the Blitz began to fall. Bombed houses were raided. Valuables disappeared. Carpets and lead pipes were ripped out. In the first prosecutions in November 1940, it was members of the ARP and of the AFS who faced the charges. The blackout created ideal conditions for burglars, pickpockets and rapists. Offences proliferated as the rate of police successes dropped.

Fraudulent claims provided another problem. People who had lost their home were entitled to a £500 advance on post-war compensation up to £20,000. People who took in evacuees or service personnel were entitled to payment of 10s. 6d. per week. The National Assistance Office was swamped with claimants, and found it easier to pay than to verify.

A British MP called black-marketeering 'treason of the worst kind'. But, with food, fuel and clothes rationing in force, illegal trade of all sorts flourished. In Glasgow, many people died from drinking home-brewed 'hooch'.

Murders in England and Wales increased by 22 per cent. The increase was partly due to the ready supply of firearms, and partly to opportunism. Bombed-out ruins provided good cover for murderers, who sought to disguise their prey as Blitz victims.

During the racial strife that continues to erupt cyclically in the United States looting invariably takes on massive dimensions.

As for the allegation found in Holocaust literature that looting of abandoned Jewish property (mostly by the poor rabble) is irrefutable proof of criminal anti-Semitism, Ludwik Hirszfeld offers a different perspective based on his wartime experiences:

The Varsovians who had to hide out in the countryside after the [failed 1944] uprising experienced a similar [fate]. The pillage of possessions by the Polish rabble was widespread. Only during one period were its sole victims Jews. That this anti-humanitarian attitude was facilitated by a certain philosophy of life is clear, but one should not lay the blame for it on [Polish] society. ... Polish anti-Semitism is not the culprit, rather the German authorities.¹²⁹⁶

Numerous episodes cited in this text point to striking similarities between conditions in Soviet-occupied Eastern Poland and those prevailing in the German zone of occupation. In many ways, the role of local collaborators with the Soviets mirrored that of the German fifth column. A book published early in the war for the Polish Ministry of Information, titled *The German Fifth Column in Poland*,¹²⁹⁷ documents

¹²⁹⁴ Tennenbaum, *Złoczów Memoir*, 167–68.

¹²⁹⁵ Antony Beevor, *The Fall of Berlin 1945* (New York: Penguin/Viking, 2002), 192–93.

Norman Davies, *Europe at War, 1939–1945: No Simple Victory* (London, Basingstoke and Oxford: Macmillan, 2006), 382.

¹²⁹⁶ Ludwik Hirszfeld, *Historia jednego życia* (Warszawa: Czytelnik, 1949), 337–38, translated as *The Story of One Life* (Rochester: Rochester University Press, 2010).

¹²⁹⁷ *The German Fifth Column in Poland* (London and Melbourne: Hutchinson & Co., 1941). The citations are found at 42–43, 45, 47, 48, 50–51, 53, 59, 114, 117, 130, 131–32, 132, 133.

analogous forms of conduct by members of Poland's German minority:

It is striking that preparations for sabotage and diversionist activities were carried out everywhere in an identical manner and according to a single plan. In was so in Bydgoszcz [cf. Grodno], and also at Lodz [Łódź], where, as soon as they had news of the approach of the German troops, the diversionist agents assembled in the forests of Tomaszow [Tomaszów] and fired on the Polish soldiers. The same thing occurred in Silesia and in many other localities throughout Poland.

But there was also the active contribution which the army of spies made to the Germans in this unequal struggle. These Polish citizens of German nationality were active all over the Polish territory...

Of course, not all Germans in Poland participated in these subversive activities, but practically all the German organizations, except for certain Catholic and Socialist groups, were dominated by elements with a traitorous attitude to the Polish State.

This treachery was all the easier, since the German colonists scattered over the country were not only organized in various legal societies and bodies, but were to be found in every sphere of social life.

It is sufficient to state that in September, 1939, a certain relatively small number of Germans were shot in execution of sentences of courts martial. Those sentenced to death were not "innocent members of the German minority," as the official Nazi propaganda thesis would have it. They were spies, saboteurs, and diversionists, caught red-handed.

Thus the Polish soldiers had to fight against the invader not only on the battle-front. Wherever Germans were to be found, ... whether in large or small numbers, they fired at the Polish soldiers at night, they burned down the buildings in which the troops were quartered, they cut the telephone wires.

German diversionists organized a rising in Bydgoszcz [cf. Grodno] ... this attempt was partly suppressed the same day in the centre of the town.

The first deposition comes from an English lady, Miss Baker-Beall, who was living at Bydgoszcz at the beginning of the war. ...

"Evidently large quantities of arms, rifles, and machine-guns had been smuggled across the frontier and concealed in the town or its environs, for from this day on the Germans in large numbers began sniping from the windows of German houses and flats, and continued it day and night till the entry of the German forces; from the third day on they also did machine-gunning from the roofs, and fired upon everything, men, women, horses (fortunately children were seldom in the streets). ...

"After this the civilian guards arrested all Germans whom they found with arms in their possession and they were shot out of hand."

"Immediately after their entry [i.e., of German troops into Bydgoszcz], the massacres of the Polish population commenced. Without trial, and often in a revolting manner, the Germans shot a great number of the most prominent citizens of the town, among them several women and priests, as well as the members of the civic guard organized by the population after the retreat of the Polish troops."

"In the localities of Izabelow [Izabelów] and Annopol (close to Zdunska [Zduńska] Wola) shots were fired by the German civilian populations against detachments of the 10th Division."

"Also in districts behind the front we were fired on at night, and always where there were German colonies, even in the neighbourhood of Warsaw."

All these police officials, Germans who had passed themselves off as Poles, assisted the occupation authorities in the work of "cleansing" the territory of undesirable elements by denouncing Poles living in the area.

Another deposition mentions the names of Germans who were outstanding in this regard at Koscian [Kościan].

"Among the Germans of particular 'merit' must be mentioned the Gestapo detachment, the magistrate Lize, Burgomaster Schreiter, the former Burgomaster Heinze, who was afterwards appointed school inspector, the landowner Lorenty, the official Ischdonat.

"The German population of the district took an active part in all the persecutions. One person who particularly distinguished herself was Frau von Hofmannswaldau of Koszanowo, near Smigiel [Śmigiel], who was continually importuning the Gestapo and the magistrate with demands to proceed to further executions."

Such examples could be added to without end. They testify to the fact that the German minority in Poland did not cease its treacherous activities when the German troops occupied Poland. Besides openly organizing themselves into the structure of the Third Reich, they proceeded to help in the extermination of the Polish

population, exposing them to terrible atrocities and to the bestialities of the Gestapo.

This procedure is still going on. Though many months have passed since Germany's treacherous aggression against Poland, aided by the treachery of the German minority within Poland, not a day passes undisturbed by the groans of Poles martyred and condemned to terrible suffering by the Reich's spies and informers, citizens of the Polish State.

Since the German occupation of Poland the Reich authorities have been brutally deporting the Polish elements from their age-old homes in the "incorporated" territories. At night the Gestapo agents drive thousands of Polish families from their houses and dwellings, allowing them to take only a small suitcase and fifty marks per person. Everything else: land, house, dwellings and all the furniture, clothing, linen, ready money, and even family keepsakes, are pillaged without compensation. The evicted people are carried in cattle trucks to the "General Gouvernement," where they are turned out at a wayside station without food, without money, and with no roof over their heads. Frequently this journey lasted several days or more; during the hard winter of 1939-40 thousands of people, especially women and children, were frozen to death on such journeys.

Throughout all occupied Poland there have been terrible massacres of innocent people, while tens of thousands of people are being tortured in prisons and concentration camps.

All Polish cultural life has been completely suppressed. The Polish universities and high schools have been closed; the Polish libraries, museums, art galleries and scientific laboratories have been stripped, and their more valuable possessions carried off to Germany. Polish national and religious monuments have been destroyed. In the "incorporated" areas all Polish inscriptions have been removed. Both Catholic and Protestant churches have to endure terrible persecution. Hundreds of clergy have been shot or tortured to death in prisons and concentration camps.

This book also contains two photographs with captions that could, *mutatis mutandis*, be found in a book dealing with Soviet collaborators:

Leaders of the German minority in Poland decorated by Hitler with gold medals for their fifth column activities.

Death faces the Polish policeman who is being pointed out to a Nazi soldier by a member of the German minority in Poland.

Collaborators were much more necessary for the Soviets than the Germans (who could rely on the Fifth Column composed of Germans), since the Soviets came in the guise of "liberators" of the local population from Polish oppression and needed visible support in the field, whereas the Germans did not need or seek the approval of the local population to justify their policies. Thus under Soviet rule local collaborators assumed not only a significant propaganda value in addition to facilitating the immediate strike against enemies of the Soviet regime, but also they helped foster an atmosphere that precipitated the mass deportations that ensued.

Some historians have attempted to advance the theory that the reason that the Poles became incensed at Jews is not so much because of the conduct and activities of the many Jews in the service of the Soviet invaders, but simply because some Jews were given positions that previously were (allegedly) denied to them. While playing down Jewish involvement in the Soviet takeover to a minimum, Martin Dean, a research scholar at the Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies, at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C., writes repeatedly:

For many it was particularly surprising *to see* Jews serving as policemen on the streets. For some Poles, who had lost their former pre-eminence, this was a particular provocation and added fuel to the latent anti-Semitism of the interwar period.

Nevertheless, it was precisely the *sight of a few* Jews in the police and administration which rankled amongst Poles, Ukrainians and Belorussians, for whom this was previously unthinkable.

For many Poles the *perception* of some Jews taking their places as administrators and even policemen was a particular affront. They chose to overlook the fact that Soviet repression affected Jewish businesses,

organizations and refugees as harshly as the Poles.¹²⁹⁸ (Emphases added.)

Similar views have been advanced in recent years by Jan T. Gross, for whom *alleged* Jewish collaboration is simply a misperception on the part of the Poles, reinforced by conventions and stereotypes:

Jews were not involved, except sporadically, in the Soviet-sponsored apparatus of administration in the villages (i.e., where the vast majority of the local population lived at the time). ... there *were* Jews in the Soviet administrative apparatus, in the economic bureaucracy, or in the local militia ... But that they were remembered so vividly and with such scorn does not tell us that Jews were massively involved in collaboration, but rather of how unseemly, how jarring, how offensive it was to see a Jew in *any* position of authority—as an engineer, a foreman, an accountant, a civil servant, a teacher, or a militiaman.¹²⁹⁹

As we have seen in the contemporary records cited in the text, many Jewish eyewitnesses, whose testimony is difficult to dismiss as biased, also succumbed to this same false “perception.” Moreover, these scholars do not appear to realize that Jews were well represented in local governments in the interwar period and occupied important positions, civic and others, in all of the towns in Eastern Poland. For example, according to the Szczuczyn memorial book, Jews occupied 16 out of 24 seats in the town council. It is true, however, that few of them served as policemen and municipal clerks, but they were present there as they were in the courthouses and on the staff of schools and hospitals. In Przemyśl, for example, Jews who had held positions in the Polish government apparatus were dismissed from the municipal

¹²⁹⁸ Dean, *Collaboration in the Holocaust*, 4, 13, 163. While giving examples of misconduct on the part of Slavs who collaborated with the Germans, Dean shies away from providing examples of Jewish misconduct toward Poles under either the Soviet or German occupation. His treatment of relations between Polish partisans and Jewish-Soviet partisans in northeastern Poland is particularly shoddy. Although Dean lists Tadeusz Piotrowski's *Poland's Holocaust* in his bibliography, he fails to notice Soviet and Polish sources cited therein which confirm that Soviet partisans, in which many Jews served, undertook unilateral and unprovoked attacks against Polish partisan units and massacred entire villages such as Naliboki and Koniuchy. For more on this topic see Mark Paul, “Anti-Semitic Pogrom in Ejszyski? An Overview of Polish-Jewish Relations in Wartime Northeastern Poland,” in *The Story of Two Shtetls*, Part Two, 38–65. Unfortunately, this is not the first time that scholars associated with the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum have tampered with the facts to push untenable theories. Michael Berenbaum, a former director of the museum's Research Institute, who now heads Steven Spielberg's Shoah Foundation, claimed, contrary to all reliable evidence, that after the events in Kielce on July 4, 1946, “The church was silent ... The only priest in the town who protested the pogrom was removed from his pulpit within the week.” See Michael Berenbaum, *The World Must Know: The History of the Holocaust As Told in the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1993), 207. For a rebuttal to this and other unfounded charges about the reaction of the Catholic Church, see Mark Paul, “The Catholic Church and the Kielce Tragedy,” in *Kielce—July 4, 1946: Background, Context and Events*, A Collective Work (Toronto and Chicago: The Polish Educational Foundation in North America, 1996), 105–115. As *L'Osservatore Romano* quite astutely pointed out, the Polish bishops could not but condemn the excesses directed at Jews (which they did), however they could not be expected to get embroiled in the political struggle by favouring one group of victims of the civil strife over another, which would in turn be used by the regime to redouble their strike at the latter. See Krystyna Kersten, “Pogrom kielecki—znaki zapytania,” in Ewa Grześkowiak-Luczyk, ed., *Polska, Polacy, mniejszości narodowe* (Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1992), 164. Moreover, it is difficult to quarrel with Iwo Cyprian Pogonowski's contention that the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum has espoused a partisan political agenda in its portrayal of Polish-Jewish relations by focusing on the events in Kielce in 1946, a period that is clearly outside its mandated scope, in its exhibits and publications. See Iwo Cyprian Pogonowski, *Jews in Poland: A Documentary History*, Second revised edition (New York: Hippocrene, 1998), 421–23.

¹²⁹⁹ Gross, “A Tangled Web: Confronting Stereotypes Concerning Relations between Poles, Germans, Jews, and Communists,” in Deák, *The Politics of Retribution in Europe*, 99.

administration by the Soviets along with Poles.¹³⁰⁰ Jews were especially prominent in the professions and owned most of the prosperous private businesses.¹³⁰¹ They were not invisible or lacking in prominence.

The town of Krzemieniec, Volhynia, for example, was typical in this regard:

During the reign of the Czar, Jews were not permitted to own land, or to live in villages. Now that this edict was rescinded, some of the Kremenets Jews purchased farms (like the bothers Blit and others) and some leased them. The grain business, for local [sale] and export, was entirely in the hands of the Jews until 1933, when Polish cooperatives were established to sell agricultural products... Jews were involved in utilizing the natural resources of the forests. Most forests in the area belonged to the Lyceum (college), in which many Jews were employed as experts, business managers, and lumber salesmen. The same was true of forests that were in private ownership; in them, too, many Jews were involved in utilizing parts of the forests and as owners or leasers of lumber mills...

Most of the leather and linen business was in Jewish hands, as were the industrial plants, most of which employed Jewish laborers: The flourmills in the area were leased by Jews, including the two in town..., the plant for production of peat, Khayim Grinberg's chalk factory, Vaysman's brick factory, Frishberg's and Greenberg's two large plants for manufacturing shoes, confections factory, printing presses, etc. Some of the factories employed tens of workers. Quite a few were building contractors, some very large and prominent. Most of the crafts were in Jewish hands: carpentry, metal smiths, tinsmiths, tailoring, shoe repairs, teamsters, barbers, and confectionaries. Those, too, used hired employees. Most of the hotels were in Jewish hands, as well as transportation in all its modes, in the town and between towns: carters, teamsters, drivers, porters, and water-carriers, like it used to be in the old days. As a result of the increased numbers of laborers and hired workers in industry, crafts, and commerce, trade guilds were formed, as was a municipal committee that developed wide professional and cultural activities and even established its own sports club. The trade guilds were mostly under the influence of the Communist party, but the "Khalutz", too, tried to establish its influence among them.¹³⁰²

During this period [i.e., interwar Polish rule] twelve Jews from various factions served on the town council. ... In the seven member town administration under Polish rule served:

1. Ezriel Kremenetski
2. Shlomo Fingerhut

The various parties formed a Jewish coalition voting en bloc except on matters of particular parochial importance, when the delegates of the Jewish vocational parties sometimes voted with the Polish and Ukrainian factions against the other Jewish parties.

Jewish officers were not appointed in town under the Poles, other than one Jewish tax collector and the town power plant where Jews served as engineers, fee collectors and specialized workmen... Jews did serve the town as suppliers and middlemen. Also the town had no choice in that several special services could only be provided by Jews: dyers, tinsmiths, builders, plumbers, electricians, locksmiths, carpenters, coachmen, and even street repairers. ...

The town allocated set sums for Jewish public institutions like the old age home, the Jewish hospital, the ORT school, the bathhouse, the orphanage and others...¹³⁰³

¹³⁰⁰ Levin, *The Lesser of Two Evils*, 75.

¹³⁰¹ This can be verified by referring to municipal, regional, and business directories from the interwar period. Those for the province of Stanisławów were culled for Kamil Barański's study, *Przeminęli, zagończycy, chliborobi, chasydzi...: Rzecz o ziemi stanisławowsko-kołomyjsko-stryjskiej* (London: Panda Press, 1988). Writing in the Przemyśl memorial book, Dr. M. Shatner estimated that ninety percent of the shops and factories in that large city were owned by Jews. See Menczer, *Sefer Przemyśl*, 375. In the large industrial centre of Białystok, in 1921, 93% of the businessmen were Jewish, and 89% of the industrial plants were Jewish owned. (Later on the proportion dropped, but Jews still predominated.) See "Białystok," in *Encyclopaedia Judaica* (Jerusalem: Macmillan, 1971), vol. 4, column 807. On the other hand, Jan T. Gross contends, without providing any sources, that the Jews had never occupied a dominant position in Poland's economy. See Gross, "A Tangled Web: Confronting Stereotypes Concerning Relations between Poles, Germans, Jews, and Communists," in Deák, *The Politics of Retribution in Europe*, 83.

¹³⁰² Leon Hokhberg and Zev Shumski, "The Economic Situation Between the Two World Wars," in Stein, *Pinkas Kremenits*, 93.

¹³⁰³ Zev Shumski, "The Jews in the Town," in *ibid.*, 84–85.

There are many Jewish accounts from Eastern Poland attesting to the fact that, for the most part, interaction between Poles and Jews was quite uneventful, even distantly cordial.¹³⁰⁴ Relations between Poles and Jews were not on the verge of exploding in the prewar period, nor did they in September 1939 when the Soviets invaded Eastern Poland: Poles did not use either the entry of the Germans or the Soviets to strike at Jews.

¹³⁰⁴ The case of Kopaczówka, a village near Rożyszcze, Volhynia, was cited earlier: “The relations between the Jews and the local Gentile population, which was mostly Polish, had been very good until the outbreak of the war.” See Zik, *Rożyszcze*, 45. For a similar account from Kołki, a small town near Łuck, also in Volhynia, see Daniel Kac, *Koncert grany żywym* (Warsaw: Tu, 1998), 153: “Jews, Poles, and Ukrainians lived alongside each other peaceably, without conflict. When Jews celebrated their holy days, the Polish and Ukrainian streets felt and respected that.” In Powursk, Volhynia, “The relations between the Jews, the Poles and the Ukrainians were correct, even friendly.” See Alexander Agas, “Powursk: The Town’s Jews,” in Yehuda Merin, ed., *Memorial Book: The Jewish Communities of Manyevitz, Horodok, Lishnivka, Troyanivka, Povursk and Kolki (Wołyn Region)* (Tel Aviv: Shlomo Levy, 2004), 418. Sara Najter from Ostróg, in Volhynia, recalled that relations with their Christian neighbours were cordial and that everyone helped one another when in need. See her account in Michał Grynberg and Maria Kotowska, comp. and eds., *Życie i zagłada Żydów polskich 1939–1945: Relacje świadków* (Warsaw: Oficyna Naukowa, 2003), 592. In Łunin (Lenin), in predominantly Belorussian Polesia, a Jewish memoir stresses: “Jews and gentiles lived in harmony with their neighbours. ... there was an acceptance and understanding between Jew and Christian, at least on a personal level.” See Faye Schulman, *A Partisan’s Memoir: Woman of the Holocaust* (Toronto: Second Story Press, 1995), 24. In Brasław, a mixed Polish-Belorussian area in the northeast corner of Poland: “On the whole relations between the Brasław Jews and the peasants were normal, even friendly.” See Machnes, *Darkness and Desolation*, 615. In Olkieniki, in the Wilno region, where many Jews played on the local soccer team, “Relations between the Jews and their non-Jewish neighbors were generally correct. Friendly relations developed with some of the peasants in the nearby villages.” See Spector, *Lost Jewish Worlds*, 232. In Marcinkańce, a small town near the Lithuanian border, which was inhabited mostly by Poles and Jews, “By and large, the economic life of the Jews was prosperous. ... The attitude of the Christian population towards their Jewish neighbors was friendly.” See L. Koniuchowsky, “The Liquidation of the Jews of Marcinkonis: A Collective Report,” *YIVO Annual of Jewish Social Science* 8 (1953): 206, 208. In Oszmiana, “Jewish farms and villages were scattered like tiny islands in the sea of the native peasants. Yet between the two communities there were good neighbourly relations, there was even friendliness towards each other.” See Moshea Becker (Ra’Anana), “Jewish Farmers in Oshmana”, in M. Gelbart, ed., *Sefer Zikaron le-kehilat Oshmana* (Tel Aviv: Oshmaner Organization and the Oshmaner Society in the U.S.A., 1969), 22 (English translation posted on the Internet at: www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/Oshmyany/Oshmyany.html). In Dowgieliszki, a small rural community near Raduń inhabited mostly by Jews: “The road from Raduń to Dowgalishok [Dowgieliszki] ran through villages and estates owned by Poles. Normally the way was peaceful, and when I was alone with my brother, there was almost no antagonism towards us. ... the people were not hostile. Sometimes we would get a lift from a farmer with a wagon going towards Dowgalishok and back. Many farmers of the neighborhood knew us as the children of the blacksmith, and they would invite us to join them on their wagons.” See Avraham Aviel, *A Village Named Dowgalishok: The Massacre at Raduń and Eishishok* (London and Portland, Oregon: Vallentine Mitchell, 2006), 18–19. In Zdzieciół, “we were living mixed with them [Christians]. And we were always, always friendly and so did they. ... In our little town, I would say [there was no anti-Semitism] because we had actions [dealings] with the Polish priest. He was very, very good to us ... he never let anything to with the anti-semitism or whatever. Sure there was, you know, but basically as a whole we had none. I didn’t feel it.” See Interview with Sonia Heidocovsky Zissman, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, May 25, 1995, 2. A resident of Dołhinów, in the Wilno area, stated: “We did not feel anti-Semitism on the part of the Christian population.” See the testimony of Jofe Gerszon, June 20, 1959, Yad Vashem Archives, 03/1293. Aharon Arlazoroff, who lived in a mixed neighbourhood of Wilno, stated that in their building Jews and non-Jews lived in relative harmony and did not recall any anti-Semitic incidents. See the testimony of Aharon Arlazoroff, Internet: <http://www.sztetl.org.pl>. Man Elchanan, president of the Committee of Expatriates from Brańsk in Israel, writes of the “harmonious life of Jews and their Polish neighbors,” in the interwar period. See *The Story of Two Shtetls*, Part One, 43. In the nearby town of Zabłudów, “the relationship was cordial with mutual respect and a greeting of the traditional raising of the hat. There were mutual congratulations in times of holidays and business relationships were out of necessity. They also worked together in leather factories that were owned by Jews. Full cooperation existed also in times of crisis the town faced like natural disasters, fires, etc. ... I can’t remember any anti-Jewish fights, with serious violence, except small fights when they [the villagers] were drunk. In those rare occasions Jews had the upper hand and they [the villagers] remembered the results for a long time. Our Polish neighbors from the town stood aside and didn’t intervene, and in most occasions they encouraged the Jews by saying that the villagers became obnoxious and that they have to learn a lesson. Here and there, there were reserved friendships between the Jewish and Polish youth. Usually it was during sport meets on the field, or at coed dances.” See the account of Eliyahu Ben Moshe-Baruch and Bluma Zesler in Shmueli-Schmush, *Zabłudów*. Dovid Rabin provides the following assessment of conditions in Krynki near Białystok: “the relationship of the Jews and Christians, among them the Poles who were now the ruling and privileged state-forming ethnic group, was usually fair until the Nazi period, and it was not affected by the open and even official anti-Semitic agitation, which intensified during the 1930s.” Another former resident, Abraham Soyfer, recalled the

A typical case is Podwołoczyska, near the Soviet border, described in that town's memorial book as follows:

The Jews of the town lived harmoniously with their Polish neighbors. There were no quarrels or fights between them or public outbursts of anti-Semitism. ...

The Jewish population was divided into three levels. About 15% were wealthy, about 40% were middle-class, and the remaining 45% became impoverished due to the inflation and difficult conditions of the years before World War II. ...

For a long time Dr. Rosensweig was the railroad doctor for the town. Her husband, Dr. Leon Rosensweig and Dr. Bruno Perchip, a reserve army Captain, and Dr. Gabriel Friedman served the Jewish and Polish populations of the town ...

Jews and Poles would meet on the town tennis court. Dr. Perchip and his wife would meet the town officers from the border town for a game of tennis.

At the municipal courthouse ... Jewish and Polish judges and clerks worked side by side. Among them were the Jews Fogel and Ashkenazi. The Jewish notary public Landsberg was the only notary in town qualified as a court supervisor. The "Palestra" [bar] was comprised almost exclusively of Jewish attorneys: Dr. Orbach, Dr. Cohen, Dr. Gabriel Finkelstein, and Dr. Sbalter ...

The town was run by the Polish mayor Bordavcik and the vice-mayor, Dr. Leon Rosensweig. Members of the town council were democratically elected by the residents relative to their numbers. Among the Jewish clerks were Shlomo Wallach ...

The commander of the joint Russian-Polish patrol abroad, from the Polish side, was the Jewish Captain Shenkel ...

Most of the middle-class [Jewish] families were fairly well off. They did not own cars or carriages, but they owned a nice sized home and made a living. Most of the wealthy families dealt in trade. ...

Rabbi Babad was one of Poland's three chief rabbis. ... When he walked on the street, even the Poles would clear the way out of respect for him.¹³⁰⁵

The daughter of a prominent and respected industrialist in Borysław, an oil producing town south of Lwów, shared similar experiences:

My parents' closest friends, who attended our "jours", as we called the days when bridge was played at our home or elsewhere, were mostly but not exclusively Jews. They were owners of oil wells, lawyers and physicians. There were also some mixed marriage couples among my parents' friends but not too many. ... In high school my closest friends were Jewish and Ukrainian, but it was a matter of coincidence that many of my sister's best friends were Polish Christians. All of the people we knew dated Jewish and non-Jewish boys, often equally.¹³⁰⁶

It was not, therefore, the fact that some Jews occupied some administrative positions under Soviet rule that caused resentment, but rather because Jews along with other minorities had immediately flocked to occupy virtually all of the positions from which Poles were systemically removed. Moreover, they often used their newly acquired positions to the detriment of the Poles.¹³⁰⁷ In particular, Poles were incensed by the harassment and persecution meted out to them all too frequently by Jews serving in the militia and other state offices, as well as by the anti-Polish agitation in which many Jews openly engaged. Finally, it was the legions of denouncers among the Jews that left a lethal mark on many Poles and on Polish public opinion. As one Jewish black marketeer explained to a Polish officer who found himself in the Wilno region soon

¹³⁰⁵ Dr. Y. Gilson, "Podwołoczyska, Part IV," in *Podwołoczyska and Its Surroundings*.

¹³⁰⁶ Kaplan, *I Never Left Janowska* ..., 18.

¹³⁰⁷ Typical in this regard were the towns of Tuczyń and Hoszcza near Równe, in Volhynia. See, respectively, Karłowicz, *Śladami ludobójstwa na Wołyniu*, 285; and Grzelak, *Wrzesień 1939 na Kresach w relacjach*, 319. For several weeks the town council of Huszcza was led by Leon Chajn, a Communist lawyer from Warsaw. See Paweł Siergiejczyk, "Chajn Leon," in *Encyklopedia "Białych Plam"* (Radom: Polskie Wydawnictwo Encyklopedyczne, 2000), vol. 4, 50. That this state of affairs did not last permanently was not the doing of these minorities. Polish historians Kazimierz Jasiewicz, Tadeusz Strzembosz, and Marek Wierzbicki stress the role of Jews and other minorities in the "depolonization" of Eastern Poland and their privileged status in many fields: educational, administrative, political and cultural. See the introduction to Strzembosz, *Okupacja sowiecka (1939–1941) w świetle tajnych dokumentów*, 21. For another similar opinion, see Piotr Żaroń, *Ludność polska w Związku Radzieckim w czasie II wojny światowej* (Warsaw: Polskie Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1990), 99–101.

after Poland's collapse,

"They don't like Jews on the Soviet side [of the border]. They are unclean there. They denounced many Poles to the communists, a lot of Jews are now militiamen, and even reeves. The state offices are full of them."¹³⁰⁸

After what the Poles had experienced at the hands of the Soviets and their local collaborators is it little wonder that many of them were initially prepared to welcome the Germans in June 1941 (though *not* in September 1939) as the lesser evil, and therefore as "liberators" from those who would ship them off to the Gulag? At that time people living in the Soviet zone had little knowledge of what was going on in the German zone since the Soviet media did not report on their Nazi ally's misdeeds. The Holocaust was yet to get underway, while the last round of deportations to the Gulag and large-scale executions of political prisoners had just taken place in the Soviet zone. Many Jews—like Poles—simply did not anticipate the level of atrocities that later ensued, but rather expected conditions, albeit harsh, to resemble those they had witnessed under the German occupation during World War I. The following Jewish testimonies attest to sentiments shared by many Jews in September 1939 as well as in June 1941, before the arrival of the Germans:

Besides, the majority of the town's Jews, including the Galician Jews, in general, did not think of running. Many of those who ran in the First World War were still alive and did not try now to do it again. Neither did the rich and well-to-do who, for much money, could still have obtained transportation. Only the older people remembered the Germans from the First World War when they were "allies" of the Austrians.

Nobody in Strzyżów [Strzyżów] read the book "Mein Kampf," and the hearsay about the mistreatment of the Jews in Germany, Austria, Czechoslovakia, did not sufficiently disturb the Jews from Galician cities. Although a few of the German Jewish refugees who settled in Strzyżów had warned against the Germans of today, they themselves remained. The Jews were ready to suffer from the Nazis but they were not willing to live the life of wanderers, especially after they had seen the suffering of the women and children refugees who passed Strzyżów. Such Satanic thoughts that the Nazis would annihilate men, women and children were incomprehensible. The rumors were that they were sending young people to forced labor camps. Because of all the above mentioned reasons, only a few families and single men left on foot. Among those who left were the Rabbi, Kehillah leaders, community activists, several young men, and a few wealthy people who feared being taken hostage.¹³⁰⁹

On the first days, there were no killings in Vilna [Wilno], as opposed to other places. We did not know what to expect. It should be understood—the contact between Lithuania and other areas under Nazi conquest was very weak. We knew that the Germans have established in Poland, ghettos, and labor camps. We heard about the restrictions imposed on Jews, we knew that the Germans are "trouble makers", but we didn't imagine that it would be a mass massacre. ...

We thought of the Germans as a civilized law abiding people. It can be said that, until the war, we felt sympathy towards Germany. It never occurred to us that they are capable of such atrocities, things that a human mind cannot bear.¹³¹⁰

However, for those Jewish memoirists who seek to justify Jewish behaviour at every turn and suffer from amnesia regarding conditions for Poles in the Soviet zone (and the role played by Jewish collaborators), it is the Poles who are accused of, and lectured about, opportunism or, worse still, a propensity for collaboration with their Fascist enemies. Jacob Gerstenfeld-Maltiel from Lwów is one such memoirist, another is Mordechai Schmulevich from Mołczadz:

The population greeted the marching [German] soldiers with cries and applause and even threw flowers to

¹³⁰⁸ Jerzy Stypułowski, *Droga do wojska* (London: Polska Fundacja Kulturalna, 1967), 46.

¹³⁰⁹ Itzhok Berglass, "The Second World War and the Holocaust," in J. Berglas and Sh. Yahalomi (Diamant), eds., *Sefer Strizhuv ve-ha-sevivah* (Tel Aviv: Former Residents of Strzyżów in Israel and Diaspora, 1969), 233 ff., Internet: <<http://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/Strzyzow/strzyzow.html>>.

¹³¹⁰ Litman Mor, *The War For Life*, Internet <<http://davidhorodok.netfirms.com/Mor/TOC.htm>>, chapter 6. Translated from the Hebrew, *Ha-Milhamah 'al ha-hayim: Zikhronot mi-sho'ah umi-tekumah* (Tel Aviv: n.p., 2005). The author states that he was in Kaunas in May 1940, when the Soviets occupied Lithuania (actually it was in June), where he "witnessed the welcoming of the Red Army. Kovna Jews joyfully welcomed the Red Army with flower bouquets." Ibid.

them. These were not only Ukrainians. Most of the people on the streets were in fact Poles; the Ukrainians, a minority in Lvov, were lost in the crowds. It is strange how men can manage to forget so quickly, or shall we put the blame on the unconscious? National consciousness is very strong in Poles, but opportunism prefers to be on the side of the strong and to forget dreams of being a major power. The majority was opportunistic and listened to its perhaps not honourable, but surely more convenient promptings.¹³¹¹

Many Poles welcomed the Germans with open arms, like long-lost friends instead of a conquering army.¹³¹²

These ruminations ring hollow. The Soviet invasion of Eastern Poland in September 1939 and the German invasion of that same territory in June 1941 (to seize it from their erstwhile partner in crime) were hardly equivalent acts. The invasion of September 1939 was directed at the very existence of the Polish state and, at the very least, its citizens should have remained neutral when it soon became apparent that the Soviets had entered Poland not to defend the country and her citizens from German aggression, but to enslave Poland and eradicate its officials and military. If, later on, large cross-sections of the Jewish population who initially greeted the Soviets had a change of heart, it was only because they too, unexpectedly, fell victim to Soviet persecution.

On the other hand, in June 1941 Poles had every right to prefer one occupier over another, given their experiences under Soviet rule. Politically, the outbreak of a Soviet-German war was a *sine qua non* for the ultimate liberation of Poland, which remained the Poles' common and unrelenting goal. It did not take a particularly astute observer to realize that the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact had sealed Poland's fate, and that the German invasion of the Soviet Union now reopened it. Moreover, the Poles did not regard as permanent overlords and their "welcome" was purely reactive and not tainted ideologically. There was no display of swastikas or pro-Nazi demonstrations by Poles similar to the profusion of red armbands and political rallies that accompanied the Soviet invasion in September 1939. Moreover, the Germans fully appreciated the true basis for their "welcome." A July 8, 1941 memorandum from the 87th Infantry Division set that out in the clearest of terms:

The basic principle regarding personal behavior toward the population is that the Pole is not to be seen as our friend, but as our enemy. German soldiers are met with happiness by the Polish population only as a result of the repression and expropriation of the bolshevik ruler. This should, however, not conceal that the Poles are ruled by a strong nationalism and that they wait for the moment to fall upon the German army from behind as they did in 1918.¹³¹³

Besides, as Jan Gross himself argues, "one should hardly expect local youth, in some godforsaken backwater, to quietly sit at home when an army goes by their little hamlet and does not kill or rob anybody!"¹³¹⁴

By that time, as a number of testimonies show, many Jews had had enough of the Bolshevik regime,

¹³¹¹ Jacob Gerstenfeld-Maltiel, *My Private War: One Man's Struggle to Survive the Soviets and the Nazis* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 1993), 53.

¹³¹² Martin Small and Vic Shayne, *Remember Us: My Journey from the Shtetl Through the Holocaust* (New York: Skyhorse Publishing, 2009), 95.

¹³¹³ Waitman Wade Beorn, *Marching Into Darkness: The Wehrmacht and the Holocaust in Belarus* (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London: Harvard University Press, 2014), 224.

¹³¹⁴ Gross, "A Tangled Web: Confronting Stereotypes Concerning Relations between Poles, Germans, Jews, and Communists," in Deák, *The Politics of Retribution in Europe*, 93. On the other hand, in *Sąsiedzi* Gross comes to an interpretation that is diametrically opposed to this author's and, as a (crass) generalization, simply untenable historically, when he writes at 104–105: "It is not known what was so exceptional about Jewish collaboration with the Soviets during the period 1939–1941. On the other hand, there is no doubt that the local population (with the exception of Jews) greeted the Wehrmacht troops entering in 1941 enthusiastically and collaborated with the Germans, including taking part in the process of the annihilation of the Jews." Gross is correct, however, in pointing out that the topic of collective memory about these events on the part of the various players lends itself to closer scrutiny by social psychologists.

which was uniformly despised by Poles,¹³¹⁵ and hardly anyone anticipated the Holocaust, although many had heard of German atrocities in the *Generalgouvernement*. A Jewish woman from Uhnów recalled:

All these restrictions so depressed the economy that they made life [under the Soviets] unbearable. Ironically, the Jewish community pinned their hopes on the Germans, because until 1941, no one knew that they—the Germans—were even worse than the Russians. Until 1941, no one was aware that the Germans were executing Jews.¹³¹⁶

Another Jewish woman offered a different perspective on the degree of knowledge of German atrocities:

There was a constant uninterrupted flow of accurate information from the General Government. The cases of the fifty-three persons killed at Nalewki [in Warsaw, on November 23, 1939] and other such places were known with great accuracy. The reports were received with great interest, especially among the refugees.¹³¹⁷

The wife of a Jewish lawyer in Przemyśl was heard to say: “Oh, what good luck that those primitives (the Soviets) are gone, now we have *Kulturträger* [culture carrier]; they can’t do us any harm. Perhaps things won’t be all that good, but at least we’ll be dealing with people of culture.”¹³¹⁸ A Jewish woman from Lwów “was saying we would get along better with the Germans than with the Soviets because the Germans were a cultured people. She was upset because they had taken away her status as a wealthy woman, and had ordered her to leave Lemberg [Lwów].”¹³¹⁹ Another Jewish woman from Lwów thought that that German rule would be an improvement for her middle class family.¹³²⁰ The son of a well-to-do family in Lwów recalled:

My parents’ sad experience during the past two years caused them to think differently. They were happy at the sight of the Soviet retreat. Of course, they had heard about the Nazis and their antisemitism. ... But in their minds the Germans were a civilized nation. ...

The German Army reached Lwow on June 28th, and on June 29th the town was theirs. They marched in singing and smiling. They were greeted with enthusiasm by an elated Ukrainian population. Girls in traditional Ukrainian dresses embraced the soldiers and showered them with flowers. After looking at the celebrations through the window for a while, my brother and I went down to the street, for a better view. A number of youths spotted us, recognized us as Jews, and greeted us with curses and stones. We retreated back home.¹³²¹

In Iwie (Iwje), a young Communist activist, who recalled the Stalinist period with fondness, was shocked to find that prewar Jewish merchants and businessmen “were happy about the defeat of the Red Army.”

¹³¹⁵ See, for example, Hryciuk, *Polacy we Lwowie 1939–1944*, 145.

¹³¹⁶ *Hivniv (Uhnov): Memorial Book to a Community* (Tel Aviv: The Uhnov Organization of Israel, 1981), 21.

¹³¹⁷ Hubernand, *Kiddush Hashem*, 415.

¹³¹⁸ Account of Maria Orwid (née Pfeiffer) in Gutenbaum and Latała, *The Last Eyewitnesses*, vol. 2, 148. The woman who spoke those words later perished in Auschwitz.

¹³¹⁹ Moty, *Memoirs of an Unfortunate Person*, 33.

¹³²⁰ Testimony of Wanda Mehr, February 20, 1997, Shoah Foundation Institute Visual History Archive, University of Southern California, Interview code 26609.

¹³²¹ Weissberg, *I Remember...*, 60–61.

Moreover, “the poor people truly believed nothing would happen to them, that they would manage.”¹³²² According to a Jew from Stolpce, “My father was in such despair over the Russians that he actually believed that things would be better if the Germans invaded eastern Poland and drove the Communists out.”¹³²³ In Pohost Zahorodny (or Pohost Zahorodzki) in Polesia,

There was the long-established stereotype of the Russians as a backward, anti-Semitic country, with rioting mobs, unruly Cossacks and government-instigated *pogroms*. Germany stood for the civilized West and the rule of law. ... Particularly among the older members of the population, the stereotypes persisted and convinced many to stay. The rich even hoped the Germans would restore their wealth and property, end the food shortages, confiscation of property and arbitrary arrests. Many looked forward to the withdrawal of the Soviets. ...

Most Jews understood they would suffer under German rule, but they never considered it could mean complete annihilation.¹³²⁴

According to an account from Rokitno, in Volhynia,

A terrible panic erupted. The Soviet government clerks packed their belongings and fled. Some Jews followed them. Unfortunately, many refused to run away since they thought their life would be better under the Germans than under the Soviets.¹³²⁵

In Tłumacz, “Jews whispered that, with the help of the Almighty, the Germans would come and deal the ‘foniye’ (Russian) an overwhelming blow.”¹³²⁶ A Jewish doctor in Tłuste recalled that two Jewish doctors, refugees from Kraków, who had obtained good positions, continually tried to return to their homes in German-occupied Poland. According to him, “more than one person who had initially been a great enthusiast of the Soviets now thanked God that the German-Soviet war had broken out.”¹³²⁷ Leon Weliczker Wells wrote: “Others even thought that the changeover to German domination was for the better.”¹³²⁸ In Skała Podolska,

¹³²² Account of Shimon Zimmerman in A. Meyerowitz, ed., *The Scroll of Kurzeniac* (Internet: <http://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/kurenets/kurenets.html>); translation of *Megilat Kurenits: Ayara be-hayeha u-ve-mota* (Tel Aviv: Former Residents of Kurzeniec in Israel and the U.S.A., 1956). Even though Zimmerman saw the Red Army taking groups of prisoners from the prison in Wilejka with their hands tied with barbed wire and whose family members chased after them, he was not deterred: “I dug a hole in the ground and made a mental note of where it was and put my party membership and professional cards in the hole hoping to retrieve them one day.” According to other testimonies in that memorial book, the Christian townspeople, who were also fearful of looting by Belorussian peasants during the hiatus between the Soviet retreat and the German entry, organized patrols of Christians and Jews to protect the town. See the accounts of Shimon Zimmerman, Zalman Uri Gurevitz and Yitzhak Zimerman in *ibid*.

¹³²³ Sutin, *Jack and Rochelle*, 32. According to Rochelle Schleiff Sutin, “When Lazar [Schleiff] thought of Germany, he thought of World War I, when his father was still alive and was able to do business with the kaiser’s army. ‘With the Communists you can’t do anything,’ my father would say to us in private. ‘But if the Germans come, I’ll get back to producing turpentine and tar. They’ll need it to build roads. With money I’ll be able to bribe them and avoid any problems.’”

¹³²⁴ Paper, *Voices from the Forest*, 41.

¹³²⁵ Avraham Kek, “Missed Opportunities for Rescue,” in Leoni, *Rokitno–Wolyn and Surroundings*, 247.

¹³²⁶ Account of Ephraim Schreier in Blond, *Memorial Book of Tłumacz*, cxxi.

¹³²⁷ Milch, *Testament*, 100.

¹³²⁸ Leon Weliczker Wells, *The Janowska Road* (New York: Macmillan, 1963), 34.

[Alter] Sommer seemed to think that life under the Germans would be better than under the Russians. His opinion was somewhat biased, as the Russians had liquidated his business, and therefore he hoped that under German rule he would be able to regain his property and money.¹³²⁹

A Jewish woman from a well-off family balked at the idea of leaving when the Soviets retreated from Drohobycz:

“With these bandits you want to escape? With those thieves? At least the Germans are cultured people,” Grandma Pesia reasoned. The train was standing at the railway station, and I knew we should be fleeing, and Father wanted to, but Pesia: “What? With this rabble? With this stench?!” And she convinced my mother, and the train left.¹³³⁰

The reaction of the Jews to the arrival of the Germans in many localities is equally surprising. Jan Gross claims adamantly that only “the local non-Jewish population enthusiastically greeted entering Wehrmacht units in 1941.”¹³³¹ That was not quite the case. In many towns, the Jews, like other inhabitants, went to see the German invaders—sometimes out of curiosity, as was the case in Kurzeniec.

Some Jews observed the arrival of the German soldiers, and I was among them. The fact that they crossed town and didn’t strike anyone encouraged us. Someone said: “They passed and didn’t cause us any harm; maybe the monster is not so bad.”¹³³²

In Nowogródek,

Our elders stayed inside, but my brothers and cousins and I, out of curiosity, ventured out to get a glimpse of the Germans. At the beginning, they acted humane, but as soon as they found out that we were Jews, they hit us and cursed us, so we ran home and stayed out of their way.¹³³³

However, in many cases Jews joined with those openly welcoming the German invaders, much to the latter’s surprise and indignation. A German soldier reported that his unit had been welcomed not only by villagers offering them milk, butter and eggs but also by Jews, who, he remarked, “haven’t yet realized that their hour has come.”¹³³⁴ In Boremel, in Volhynia, a group of Jews gathered alongside the Ukrainians who had erected an *arc de triomphe* to greet the invading Germans in June 1941, only to be driven away by the Ukrainians and Germans.¹³³⁵ The Germans were bewildered and angered when Jews came out to welcome them when they entered Międzyrzecz Korecki. German officers kicked and struck the Jewish elders on their

¹³²⁹ Tracy, *To Speak For the Silenced*, 34.

¹³³⁰ Account of Dr. Leopold Lustig in Grynberg, *Drohobycz, Drohobycz and Other Stories*, 21.

¹³³¹ Gross, *Neighbors*, 155. In the Polish version of this book, Gross writes: “It is not known what was so exceptional about Jewish collaboration with the Soviets during the period 1939–1941. On the other hand, there is no doubt that the local population (with the exception of Jews) greeted the Wehrmacht troops entering in 1941 enthusiastically and collaborated with the Germans, including taking part in the process of the annihilation of the Jews.” See Jan Tomasz Gross, *Sąsiedzi: Historia zagłady żydowskiego miasteczka* (Sejny: Fundacja “Pogranicze,” 2000), 104–105.

¹³³² Nachum Alperovich, “Thus It Began: Chapters from the Underground,” in Meyerowitz, *The Scroll of Kurzeniac*, 321 ff.

¹³³³ George Lubow, *Escape: Against All Odds. A Survivor’s Story* (New York: iUniverse, 2004), 12.

¹³³⁴ Kleo Pleyer, *Volk im Feld* (Hamburg, 1943), 169, 184, as cited in Evans, *The Third Reich at War, 1939–1945*, 221.

¹³³⁵ Kiesz, *Od Boremla do Chicago*, 39, 69.

faces. After overtuning the tables with food the Jews had prepared for them, the Jews scattered in fear.¹³³⁶ A rabbi was among the crowd of Ukrainians who greeted the Germans as they marched into the Volhynian town of Maciejów:

Noike [Leon Ginsburg] ran to the main street when the German Army entered the town. They made a big show ... parading down the street in their fine military gear ... Onlookers gawked at the men, unsure whether to admire or fear the impressive military force.

Ukrainian women from the neighboring villages arrived in traditional dress and offered flower garlands to the soldiers. The soldiers placed the garlands around their necks, smiling as they waved and thanked their supporters. ...

One of Maciejów's [Maciejów's] senior rabbis was also at the procession. He was an elderly man with a long, gray beard wearing a black hat and a *kapote*, a traditional black robe that brushed the ground. He had set up a small wooden table with bread and salt, the customary way to welcome visitors. The rabbi was extending his long, bony hand, offering a piece of bread and salt, when one soldier stepped out of the line, turned over the table, and shouted at the rabbi: "Get out of here!" Terrified, the rabbi hurried away, leaving his table and gifts behind.¹³³⁷

Jews also joined the Christians who welcomed the Germans in Lubieszów, in Polesia, but the Germans chased them away.¹³³⁸

In Janów Poleski, a Jewish woman was part of the greeting party when the Germans arrived.¹³³⁹ Jews who welcomed the Germans in Drohiczyn Poleski were shot by retreating Soviet soldiers:

Only a few people fled—those who were specifically connected to the Soviet authorities and the NKVD... These included the teacher Yachas (born in Svislotch [Świsłocz]), the photographer Yisrael Schwartz (son of Moshe Schwartz), the chairman of the shoemakers' workshop, Rubinstein, the printer Orliansky and Ukrainetz, and finally the daughter of Yeshayahu the Tailor. ...

The first Jewish victims [of the German assault on the Soviets] fell by nightfall, even before the Germans were in full control. R. Yaakov Vermus (brother-in-law of Rabbi Eliyahu Velvel Altvarg) and his eldest son died on Wednesday [June 25, 1941] night in a tragic error. A group of retreating Soviet soldiers shot them in their home as they greeted the Germans [sic] advance team, calling out "Communists are kaput!"¹³⁴⁰

In Kamionka, a small town in Eastern Galicia, a Jewish delegation handed the following note to a visiting German dignitary, Friedrich Theodor Prince zu Sayn und Wittgenstein, in the late summer of 1941:

We, the old, established residents of the town of Kamenka [Kamionka], in the name of the Jewish population, welcome your arrival, Serene Highness and heir to your ancestors, in whose shadow the Jews, our ancestors and we, have lived in the greatest welfare. We wish you, too, long life and happiness. We hope that also in the future the Jewish population shall live on your estate in peace and quiet under your protection, considering the sympathy which the Jewish population has always extended to your most distinguished family.

Historian Raul Hilberg notes that the prince was unmoved. The Jews, he said, were a "great evil." Although he had no authority to impose any solutions upon his greeters, he instructed the local mayor to mark the

¹³³⁶ Julian Jamróz, "Wspomnienia z Wołynia," *Na Rubieży* (Wrocław), no. 123 (2012): 50–54, here at 52.

¹³³⁷ Suzanne Ginsburg, *Noike: A Memoir of Leon Ginsburg* (San Francisco: Avenger Books, 2012), 11–12. See also Jane Marks, *The Hidden Children: The Secret Survivors of the Holocaust* (New York: Fawcett Columbine, 1993), 66–67.

¹³³⁸ Wiktoria (Wiatr) Sawarska, *Archiwum Wschodnie*, Warsaw, AW II/1820/J.

¹³³⁹ Lewis Reznik, *A Boy's Holocaust* (Indianapolis, Indiana: Dog Ear Publishing, 2010), 17.

¹³⁴⁰ Account of Shmuel Appelbaum in Dov B. Warshawsky, ed., *Drohiczyn: Five Hundred Years of Jewish Life*, posted on the Internet at <<http://www.jewishgen.or/yizkor/Drohiczyn/Drogichin.html>>; translation of *Drohitchin: Fünf hundert yor yidish lebn* (Chicago: Book Committee Drohichyn, 1958), 287–89. Apparently, it was a Polish neighbour of Vermus' who actually greeted the tank crew. Ibid. The Germans also carried out reprisals against those who had served in the Polish government and Soviet regime: ten Christians and eight Jews were arrested and executed. Ibid., 317–18.

Jews with a star and to employ them without pay in hard labour.¹³⁴¹

Another example of the distortions that abound in Jewish historiography can be found in the writings of many authors (such as Jan Gross and Andrzej Żbikowski) who, on the one hand, purge key passages that present Jews in an unfavourable light from Jan Karski's famous report (reproduced above), written after his visit to Lwów in the final months of 1939, and essentially attempt to whitewash Jewish conduct. On the other hand, they latch on to *speculation* offered up by Karski about possible future revenge by Poles—a “repayment in blood”¹³⁴²—not as a figurative, and justified, barometer of the sense of outrage at the “very frequent” acts of betrayal Karski reported, but as a certainty and theme by which to gauge Polish conduct under the German occupation that followed. However, contrary to what some historians allege,¹³⁴³ no wide-scale Polish “revenge” occurred in southeastern Poland and most of the Soviet occupation zone, however, despite German incitement, even though the Poles had ample opportunity to strike at the Jews when the Soviets fled. Most Poles simply did not view or turn on Jews *en bloc* as Soviet collaborators. Waclaw Śledziński, a Polish observer from Warsaw, recalls the following scene that took place in Lwów in July 1941:

The day after my arrival at Lwow [Lwów] a bomb burst. That is to say, the Germans announced that in Brygidki Prison they had found the bodies of thousands of murdered Poles and Ukrainians, buried in layers upon the prison yard. They also said they had found some cells walled up, with bodies inside. The news ran through the town like wildfire. But that wasn't enough for the Germans. They declared that it was the Jews

¹³⁴¹ Raul Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews*, Third edition (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2003), vol. 1, 324–25.

¹³⁴² In his often exaggerated and dramatic style Karski wrote in his report: “In principle, however, and in their mass, the Jews have created here a situation in which the Poles regard them as devoted to the Bolsheviks and—one can safely say—wait for the moment when they will be able simply to take revenge upon the Jews. Virtually all Poles are bitter and disappointed in relation to the Jews; the overwhelming majority (first among them of course the youth) literally look forward to an opportunity for ‘repayment in blood.’” See Davies and Polonsky, *Jews in Eastern Poland and the USSR, 1939–46*, 267. Of course, Karski should not be read literally, despite his posturing. Karski's impressions were not supported by any statements let alone plans along those lines, moreover, they never materialized. Gross, who consistently refrains from citing Karski's specific references to Jewish misconduct vis-à-vis Poles, also latches on to this and another similar citation from an anonymous source (attributed without proof to the son of General Marian Januszajtis) about which he comments: “As a description, we know, these words [relating to Jewish conduct] were flawed, but they were, unfortunately, accurate as a prediction [of revenge].” Gross goes on to add for good measure, but contrary to what in fact transpired (with the few exceptions dealt with later on): “When Hitler invaded Russia in the summer of 1941 the *Einsatzgruppen*, special SS detachments entrusted with the task of killing the Jews, had little trouble inciting the local population [including Poles] to stage bloody pogroms all over the area.” See Gross, “A Tangled Web: Confronting Stereotypes Concerning Relations between Poles, Germans, Jews, and Communists,” in Deák, *The Politics of Retribution in Europe*, 104. Rather than Karski, who was an interloper in southeastern Poland for a brief period in December 1939, one could cite with much more justification the opinion of someone like Elias Bialski, who spent the entire Soviet occupation there: “In the spring of 1941 alarming rumours started to circulate in Lwów and its surroundings. These were ghastly stories about impending Ukrainian revenge on the Jews and Poles on the entry of the Germans. ... In the streetcars and line-ups in front of stores that were growing longer from day to day one could hear ever more frequently remarks made joyfully, but not yet all that loudly, by Ukrainian teenagers that soon the liberators of Ukraine would arrive and take care of the Jews before long.” See Bialski, *Patrzę prosto w oczy*, 71–72. Neither Bialski nor other Jews from Lwów who kept diaries sensed any Polish revenge directed at the Jewish population. See, for example, Maurycy Allerhand and Leszek Allerhand, *Zapiski z tamtego świata* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Edukacyjne, 2003). Interestingly, Edmund Kessler, a survivor from Lwów, wrote a poem while he was being sheltered by a Polish family calling for retribution in blood: “When Freedom Bell rings, When the call of revenge is heard, There will be terrible consequences, The enemy's blood will flow in streams.” See Kessler, *The Wartime Diary of Edmund Kessler*, 85.

¹³⁴³ For example, Alexander Prusin writes about an alleged “truce” between Poles and Ukrainians in Eastern Galicia in order to strike at Jews: “Galicia, where Ukrainians and Poles, two-long term rivals, whose antipathies were especially highlighted during the Soviet occupation, joined in anti-Jewish violence. The pogroms signaled a temporary truce, grounded in a convergence of the culture of anti-Semitism, psychological stress, and common economic interests achieved at the expense of Jews.” See Prusin, *The Lands Between*, 158. Any participation of Poles in anti-Jewish violence in Eastern Galicia and Volhynia in the summer of 1941 was so miniscule, and unrepresentative of the Polish population, that such stereotypes pushed by Prusin and other like-minded historians must be dismissed as perverse.

who had instigated the murders, and the Jews who must bear the responsibility for them.

Accordingly, Jew-hunts commenced the very next morning. Large numbers of Germans and Ukrainians with fire-arms, iron crowbars, knuckle-dusters and truncheons proceeded to call the Jews to bloody account. Every quarter of the city became the scene of massacre. Thousands of Jews were beaten to death. Many were thrown from high windows, many were hanged on trees or lamp-posts. Meanwhile the Germans threw open the gates of the Brygidki Prison, that all who desired might come and see for themselves what had been done. Those who went reported that the Germans were employing Jews only to exhume the corpses, and that they had to do it with their bare hands, without spades or shovels, while their German guards beat their backs—wearing gas-masks themselves because of the frightful stench. Jews who fainted were drenched with water, and if they fainted repeatedly, were shot.

I asked whether the Jews had really rendered services to the Bolsheviks.

‘Yes,’ one of my friends told me. ‘Many worked for the N.K.W.D. But one cannot generalize. There were other Jews who did not forget that they were Poles.’¹³⁴⁴

Nor do the Polish accounts found in the Hoover Institution support the often encountered allegation of racial stereotyping and hatred of the Jews that are attributed universally to all Poles. Moreover, there is

¹³⁴⁴ Sledzinski, *Governor Frank's Dark Harvest*, 136–37.

ample evidence that the Poles, as a whole, did not view the new situation as an opportunity to even scores with the Jews for their conduct under Soviet rule.¹³⁴⁵

The first wave of retaliations that occurred in the first two weeks after the retreat of the Soviets was carried out by tiny groups of “activists” who took matters into their own hands. This was a marginal phenomenon that generally occurred in localities where the local Polish leadership had been wiped out. There is no evidence that the Polish anti-Soviet underground was behind any of the measures taken by

¹³⁴⁵ In *Fugitives of the Forest*, at 14–15, Levine reads Karski’s report as confirmation that, simply because of the Poles’ irrational and endemic anti-Semitism, and not because of any alleged misconduct on the part of the Jews (a possibility that is dismissed out of hand), Jews were falsely perceived as “traitors to the Polish cause, pure and simple—and they would pay the price in the future.” There are copious examples, however, that show that during the three-year German occupation that followed, Poles provided extensive assistance to the Jews in the Eastern Borderlands. Jacob Gerstenfeld-Maltiel described the displays of Polish solidarity he witnessed in Lwów soon after the German entry: “The problem of telling Jews from Poles was solved by introducing the requirement for Jews and the people of Jewish descent down to the third generation to wear on the right arm a white armband with a Star of David. ... In the first days after the order was published [July 15, 1941] I saw a priest with a Star of David armband. But after some days, this sort of thing disappeared and only the accursed wore the armbands. The Polish population during the first period of this harassment displayed a certain measure of sympathy for the Jews ... the Germans demanded a ‘contribution’ from the Jewish population totalling 20 million rubles to be paid in ten days. ... The Judenrat [Jewish Council] published an appeal to the Jewish population and asked for their cooperation. ... I knew personally some members of the Polish intelligentsia, who paid appreciable sums to help with the contribution. ... These signs of sympathy from Polish society incited the Jews to even greater generosity than they had shown till then.” See his memoirs, *My Private War*, 56–57, 62–63. When a staggering fine was imposed on the Jews in Żółkiew in July 1941, the Catholic priest contributed a large sum of money. See Friedman, *Their Brothers’ Keepers*, 125. Jewish historians Tatiana Berenstein and Adam Rutkowski list several examples of help extended by entire rural communities: In Kretowce near Zbaraż, Tarnopol voivodship, “several dozen Jews were able to move about almost freely because the whole village shielded them from the Nazis.” In Woronówka near Ludwipól, Volhynia, “the collusion of the peasants was cemented by blood ties: every villager was either a Kuriata or a Torgoń. The peasants in Kościejów, in the vicinity of which ran the railway line leading to the extermination camp at Bełżec, tended to Jews who jumped out of the ‘death trains.’ They not only brought them food and clothing but also sent word to Jews in the nearby village of Kulików to come and fetch the heavily injured immediately; the rest were taken by the peasants themselves to Kulików under cover of darkness. In Bar [near Gródek Jagielloński] villagers supplied a group of 18 Jews hiding in the neighbouring woods with food; they came into the village at night for their provisions and thanks to this help were able to hold out until the area was liberated by the Soviet Army.” See Berenstein and Rutkowski, *Assistance to the Jews in Poland 1939–1945*, 27, 45–46; Michał Czajka, Marta Janczewska, and Apolonia Umińska-Keff, eds., *Relacje z czasów Zagłady Inwentarz: Archiwum ŻIH IN-B, zespół 301, Nr. 2001–3000/Holocaust Survivor Testimonies Catalogue: Jewish Historical Institute Archives, Record Group 301, No. 2001–3000* (Warsaw: Żydowski Instytut Historyczny Instytut Naukowo-Badawczy, 2002), vol. 3, 233–34 (Kretowce); Janusz Roszkowski, ed., *Żydzi w walce 1939–1945: Opór i walka z faszyzmem w latach 1939–1945* (Warsaw: Żydowski Instytut Historyczny im. E. Ringelbluma and Stowarzyszenie Żydów Kombatantów i Poszkodowanych w II Wojnie Światowej, 2011), vol. 3, 268–69 (Kretowce). Several Jews were sheltered by Polish villagers in Święty Stanisław near Stanisławów. No one betrayed them. See Israel Gutman and Sara Bender, eds., *The Encyclopedia of the Righteous Among the Nations: Rescuers of Jews during the Holocaust*, vol. 5: *Poland*, Part 2 (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2004), 620; Paweł Knap, ed., “Jak ci się uda uratować, pamiętaj”: *Relacje “Sprawiedliwych” i o “Sprawiedliwych” z województwa zachodniopomorskiego* (Szczecin: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej–Komisja Ścigania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu, Oddział w Szczecinie, 2010), 101–3. One of the rescued Jews praises the “noble attitude of the entire population, without exception, of the Polish village of Bar” (near Gródek Jagielloński), who helped more than twenty people hiding in nearby forests to survive. See Gerszon Taffet, *Zagłada Żydów żółkiewskich* (Łódź: Centralna Żydowska Komisja Historyczna, 1946), 62; Władysław Bartoszewski and Zofia Lewin, eds., *Righteous Among Nations: How Poles Helped the Jews, 1939–1945* (London: Earls Court Publications, 1969), 444; Jolanta Chodorska, ed., *Godni synowie naszej Ojczyzny: Świadectwa nadesłane na apel Radia Maryja* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Sióstr Loretanek, 2002), Part Two, 115–16. In the Polish village of Czukiew near Sambor, a farmer hid 18 Jews, who were not betrayed although most of the village knew about them. See 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, Part A, 825, based on the testimony of Meyer Lamet, dated July 15, 1945, Archive of the Jewish Historical Museum (Warsaw), no. 301/4967. The Polish villagers of Stanisławka near Żółkiew fed and sheltered Jews who moved from place to place without betrayal. See Wiktoria Śliwowska, ed., *The Last Eyewitnesses: Children of the Holocaust Speak* (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1998), vol. 1, 172–74. Almost every Polish family in the hamlet of Zawołocz near Ludwipól, in Volhynia, sheltered or helped Jews. None of the Jews were betrayed. See Jolanta Chodorska, ed., *Godni synowie naszej Ojczyzny: Świadectwa nadesłane na apel Radia Maryja* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Sióstr Loretanek, 2002), Part Two, 77–78. Jews hiding in the forests in the vicinity of Bereżne (Bereżne) near Kostopol, Volhynia, received extensive assistance from Polish villagers and partisans. See the account of Seweryn Dobroszkłanka, Jewish Historical Institute (Warsaw) archive, record group 301, testimony 1222; Wroński and Zwolakowa, *Polacy Żydzi 1939–1945*, 324–25;

individual Poles. It is also important to note that there had been no history of violence when the Germans invaded these same areas in September 1939. According to Nachman Rapp, a resident of Grajewo,

During this time [i.e., September 1939] the non-Jewish population of Grajevo took no part in anti-Semitic actions. To the contrary, there were cases in which German soldiers set fire to Jewish homes, while the Polish neighbors helped quench the flame. In this way the newly-built house of the tailor Isaac Grobgeld was saved, as well as that of Yoske Gurovske (“Yoske the Spinner”).¹³⁴⁶

The reprisals that occurred in June and July 1941 were directed at suspected collaborators regardless of their nationality, and, contrary to the claims of ethno-nationalist historians, did not target Jews indiscriminately.¹³⁴⁷ In fact, the number of Jewish victims was rather small. The local population generally could, and did, differentiate between those Jews who openly supported the Soviet regime and those who did not. Most Poles were not looking for revenge but a reprieve from Soviet oppression. There was no desire to carry out bloody pogroms. When the Germans bombarded *Siemiatycze*, many Jews escaped into countryside and hid with peasants. The Germans immediately ordered the inhabitants to return to their homes, threatening death not only to the Jews but also to the Christians who harboured them.¹³⁴⁸ In the town of *Sokoły*, in the Łomża district,

Before the German “*Amstkommissar*” arrived in Sokoly [Sokoły], a Polish lawyer [and prewar mayor of the town], Manikowski, organized a temporary town committee and militia. They requested that the Jews also participate in service in the militia, but they did not find any volunteers. In matters of economic administration, the Jews cooperated with Manikowski and contributed their share in organizing supplies, mainly in baking bread for the Jewish population, who constituted two-thirds of the town.¹³⁴⁹

Moreover, the vast majority of the Polish population did not succumb to German provocation when attacks against Jews—carried out or orchestrated by the Germans themselves—became widespread. The largest participation of Poles occurred in the Łomża district, where perhaps 1,000 Jews were killed in a

¹³⁴⁶ Nachman Rapp, “History of the Grajevo Ghetto,” in George Gorin, ed., *Grajevo Memorial Book* (New York: United Grajevo Relief Committee, 1950), xxii.

¹³⁴⁷ Paweł Machcewicz, “Wokół Jedwabnego,” in Machcewicz and Persak, *Wokół Jedwabnego*, vol. 1, 42–45.

¹³⁴⁸ Sidney J. Zoltak, *My Silent Pledge: A Journey of Struggle, Survival and Remembrance* (Toronto: MiroLand, 2013), 35.

¹³⁴⁹ Maik, *Deliverance*, 21.

cluster of villages.¹³⁵⁰ The most violent reaction came not from the Poles, the party most aggrieved by the Jews and other local collaborators, but from the Ukrainians, who perpetrated many pogroms, which to some degree did target perceived Soviet collaborators. The largest pogroms occurred in Lwów and Tarnopol, where the Soviets had executed large numbers of prisoners on the eve of their retreat. Very often the excesses were orchestrated or at least instigated by the Germans and their collaborators, the

¹³⁵⁰ The significant exception involves a cluster of small towns in the vicinity of Łomża, an ethnically Polish area near the prewar Polish-East Prussian border—namely, Goniądz, Grajewo, Jedwabne, Kolno, Radziłów, Rajgród, Stawiski, Szczuczyn, Wąsosz, and Wizna—where it is alleged that Poles either took part in massacres of the Jewish population perpetrated by the German military in the early weeks of July 1941 or, in the case of Wąsosz (on July 5th), Radziłów (on July 7th), and Jedwabne (July 10th), where the Jews were burned to death in barns, that Poles carried out large-scale massacres on their own. Jewish estimates of the number of victims run as high as (and, according to some sources, even higher than) 1,200 in Wąsosz, 1,700 in Radziłów, and 1,600 in Jedwabne. However, these figures, which are accepted by Jan Gross without question, are in fact grossly inflated. They are many times higher, in one case in the order of ten, than the actual number of Jewish residents of these towns as recorded in the September 1940 Soviet census: 154 in Wąsosz, around 500 in Radziłów, and 562 in Jedwabne. (Only 1,400 Jews were registered in the entire region of Jedwabne, which also included the communities of Przytuły, Radziłów, Trzcianne, and Wizna.) Nor do they make allowance for the large number of Jews who were conscripted into the Soviet army, who fled with the retreating Soviets in June 1941, or who survived the initial German executions and massacres in July 1941 by hiding in the countryside or by moving to other localities. Between 100 and 125 Jews (possibly more) returned to Jedwabne after the pogrom and resided in an open ghetto (several homes in an area delineated by the Germans). (A ghetto was also set up for the survivors in Radziłów). The residents of the Jedwabne ghetto, as many as several hundred, were transferred to Łomża in November 1942. As late as 1942, many survivors from the towns of Jedwabne, Wąsosz, and Radziłów were still living in the ghettos in localities such as Łomża, Knyszyn, Milewo near Szczuczyn, Sokoły and Dereczyn, and in a camp in the village of Bogusze where several thousand Jews from the area were confined. Thus, as a result of recent scholarly research (and in the case of Jedwabne, a partial exhumation), the estimates of the number of Jedwabne victims run between 150 and 400, and those for Radziłów and Wąsosz at no more than 400 and 120, respectively. The total toll is most probably well under 1,000, and not the 4,500–5,000 claimed in Jewish sources. Otherwise, Poles would have accomplished what even the most ardent Germans did not dream possible: killing each Jew several times over. See Tuvia Ivri (Yevraiski), “The Destruction of Goniądz,” Part 22, in J. Ben-Meir (Treshansky) and A.L. Fayans, eds., *Our Hometown Goniądz* (Tel Aviv: The Committee of Goniądz Association in U.S.A. and in Israel, 1960), Internet: <www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/goniadz/Goniadz.html>; Baker and Baker, *Jedwabne*, 92, 101; Zdzisław Sędziak, “Napiętnowani znakiem śmierci,” *Ziemia Łomżyńska* (Towarzystwo Przyjaciół Ziemi Łomżyńskiej, Wydział Kultury i Sztuki Urzędu Wojewódzkiego w Łomży), vol. 2 (1986), 185–97; “Łomża,” *Encyclopaedia of Jewish Communities Poland*, vol. 4 (*Warsaw and Its Region*), Internet: <<http://hashkedim.com/lomza>>; translated from Abraham Wein, ed., *Pinkas hakehillot Polin*, vol. 4 (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1989), 249–62 (the ghetto included residents of Jedwabne); Gnatowski, *W radzieckich okowach*, 140; Krzysztof Jasiewicz, “Sąsiedzi niezbadani,” *Gazeta Wyborcza* (Warsaw), December 8, 2000; Jan Jerzy Milewski, “Zagłada Żydów w Wąsoszu w świetle sprawy karnej Mariana Rydzewskiego,” *Biuletyn Historii Pogranicza*, no. 3 (2002): 87–112; Machcewicz and Persak, *Wokół Jedwabnego*, vol. 2, 261; Ryszard Tyndorf, “Ocaleni: Żydzi po masakrze w Jedwabnem,” *Glaukopis*, no. 1 (2003): 284–83; Ryszard Tyndorf, “Ocaleni: Żydzi po masakrze w Jedwabnem—uzupełnienie,” *Glaukopis*, no. 5–6 (2006): 238–41; 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, Part A, 900, 918–19, 957 (one report in the latter source states that the Jedwabne refugees increased the Łomża ghetto population by 1,000, a figure that is likely too high but indicative nonetheless that the number of Jedwabne residents in the Łomża ghetto was considerable). Even the necrology for the town of Jedwabne found in the Hebrew portion of the Jedwabne memorial book, and posted on the Internet at <www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/jedwabne/yed075.html>, counts no more than about 600 victims who were allegedly killed in that town, yet we know that this list contains names of people who did not perish at that time. (This computation hinges on assigning an average of three children whenever the number of children of a particular family is unspecified.) Speculation by Jan Gross and historian Marcin Urynowicz that the population of Jedwabne mushroomed because of an influx of refugees from the German-occupied zone has no evidentiary basis in fact. See Marcin Urynowicz, “Ludność żydowska w Jedwabnem: Zmiany demograficzne od końca XIX wieku do 1941 na tle regionu łomżyńskiego,” in Machcewicz and Persak, *Wokół Jedwabnego*, vol. 1, 100. By the middle of 1940 the Soviets had resettled the refugees from the German zone further east, in accordance with a decree forbidding them to live within 100 kilometres of the Polish-Soviet frontier. See, for example, Harold Zissman, *The Warriors: My Life As a Jewish Soviet Partisan* (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 2005), 27–31. Harold Zissman (Hersh Cukierman), a resident of Ostrołęka, crossed the Soviet border with his extended family and settled in Jedwabne in the fall of 1939, only to be resettled in Dereczyn early the following year. In a stunning reversal of his once adamant position on the 1,600 Jedwabne toll (with only a handful of survivors), Jan Gross belatedly acknowledged in a 2008 encyclopedia entry that the toll was likely considerably smaller. However, he maintains that the Germans were mere onlookers and had no hand in organizing the events, contrary to what the Institute of National Memory found, and he continues to propagate the hoax that the German-appointed “mayor” and other German

Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists.¹³⁵¹ Extremist formations played a similar role in the Baltic

¹³⁵¹ See Ainsztein, *Jewish Resistance in Nazi-Occupied Europe*, 878 n.13; Markus Willbach, "Skupisko żydowskie w Obertynie podczas drugiej wojny światowej," *Biuletyn Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego*, no. 35 (1960): 108–110 (which describes the fate of the Jews from the villages of Niezwiska, Harasymów, Łuka, Uniż, Podwierbce, Woronów, and Zabokruki, near the town of Obertyn); Martin Gilbert, *The Holocaust: The Jewish Tragedy* (Glasgow: William Collins, 1986), 154–79; Arad, *The Einsatzgruppen Reports*, 12, 19, 20, 31–39; Andrzej Żbikowski, "Lokalne pogromy Żydów w czerwcu i lipcu 1941 roku na wschodnich rubieżach II Rzeczypospolitej," *Biuletyn Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego w Polsce*, no. 162–163 (1992): 3–18, and the abridged English version, "Local Anti-Jewish Pogroms in the Occupied Territories of Eastern Poland, June–July 1941," in Dobroszycki and Gurock, *The Holocaust in the Soviet Union*, 173–79; Shmuel Spector, *The Holocaust of Volhynian Jews, 1941–1944* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem and The Federation of Volhynian Jews, 1990), 64–67; Cholawsky, *The Jews of Bielorrussia during World War II*, 271–73; Mazur, *Pokucie w latach drugiej wojny światowej*, 62–63; Dieter Pohl, *Nationalsozialistische Judenverfolgung in Ostgalizien 1941–1944: Organisation und Durchführung eines staatlichen Massenverbrechens* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1996), 54–71; Thomas Sandkühler, "Endlösung" in Galizien: Der Judenmord in Ostpolen und die Rettungsinitiativen von Berthold Beitz 1941–1944 (Bonn: Dietz, 1996), 114–22; Dieter Pohl, "Anti-Jewish Pogroms in Western Ukraine: A Research Agenda," in Elazar Barkan, Elizabeth A. Cole, and Kai Struve, eds., *Shared History, Divided Memory: Jews and Others in Soviet-Occupied Poland, 1939–1941* (Leipzig: Leipziger Universitätsverlag, 2007), 305–14; Peter Longerich, *Holocaust: The Nazi Persecution and Murder of the Jews* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 192–95; Wiktor Poliszczuk, Dowody zbrodni OUN i UPA, vol. 2 of *Integralny nacjonalizm ukraiński jako odmiana faszyzmu: Działalność ukraińskich struktur nacjonalistycznych w latach 1920–1999* (Toronto: n.p., 2000), 217–38; Bogdan Musiał, *Konterrevolutionäre Elemente sind zu erschießen: Die Brutalisierung des deutsch-sowjetischen Krieges im Sommer 1941* (Berlin: Propyläen, 2000), 172–199; Delphine Bechtel, "De Jedwabne à Zolotchiv: Pogromes locaux en Galicie, juin–juillet 1941," *Cultures d'Europe centrale*, vol. 5: *La destruction des confins* (Paris: CIRCE, 2005), 69–92 (the author points out that Poles are only rarely mentioned in Jewish testimonies regarding the pogroms in Eastern Galicia perpetrated by Ukrainians); Vladimir Melamed, "Organized and Unsolicited Collaboration in the Holocaust: The Multifaceted Ukrainian Context," *East European Jewish Affairs*, no. 2 (2007): 217–48; Yitzhak Arad, *The Holocaust in the Soviet Union* (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press; Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2009), 87–91; Wendy Lower, "Pogroms, Mob Violence and Genocide in Western Ukraine, Summer 1941: Varied Histories, Explanations and Comparisons," *Journal of Genocide Research*, vol. 13, no. 3 (September 2011): 217–46; Witold Mędykowski, *W cieniu gigantów: Pogromy 1941 r. w byłej sowieckiej strefie okupacyjnej: Kontekst historyczny, społeczny i kulturalny* (Warsaw: Instytut Studiów Politycznych Polskiej Akademii Nauk, 2012), 241–86; Struve, *Deutsche Herrschaft, ukrainischer Nationalismus, antijüdische Gewalt*, passim. According to a Jewish eyewitness, many Jews were killed and mistreated by Ukrainians in Remenów near Lwów, until the German military put a stop to it. See Stromer, *Memoirs of an Unfortunate Person*, 34–39. Even apolitical peasants like the Hutsul mountaineers of Jablonica were drawn into a pogrom allegedly incited by a priest. See Gertner and Gertner, *Home Is No More*, 72. Local revenge was not always random but targeted those who had served the Soviets in some capacity. In Otynia, a town in the Stanisławów region, Ukrainian nationalist factions killed a number of Jews whose denunciations had been found in the NKVD premises. See Mazur, *Pokucie w latach drugiej wojny światowej*, 62. Twelve communists, 11 of them Jews, responsible for the murder of Ukrainian (and likely other) prisoners in Stryj were shot. See Arad, *The Einsatzgruppen Reports*, 20–21. In Kopyczyńce, seven Jewish communists were rounded up, "tried," sentenced to death and executed. See Szewczyński, *Nasze Kopyczyńce*, 120. In a recent study, German historian Kai Struve significantly reduces the estimated pogrom toll in Eastern Galicia, giving a credible range of between 7,295 and 11,309 victims, most of whom—between 4,280 and 6,950—were attributable to the Waffen-SS Wiking Division. (Previously, estimates of 24,000 and even as high as 35,000 were given by historians.) Nearly ten percent of the Wiking Division's ideologically committed volunteers, it should be noted, were from the Netherlands, Belgium, Scandinavia and Finland. See Struve, *Deutsche Herrschaft, ukrainischer Nationalismus, antijüdische Gewalt*, 671.

Ukrainian nationalists viewed this as an opportune moment to strike at Poles too, even though they had generally not collaborated with the Soviets, murdering hundreds of them. See the articles by Ryszard Kotarba and Grzegorz Hryciuk in *Polska–Ukraina: Trudne pytania*, vol. 6 (2000): 262, 283; Grzegorz Hryciuk, "Zmiany ludnościowe i narodowościowe w Galicji Wschodniej i na Wołyniu w latach 1939–1948," in Ciesielski, *Przemiany narodowościowe na Kresach Wschodnich II Rzeczypospolitej 1931–1948*, 167–68; Hryciuk, *Przemiany narodowościowe i ludnościowe w Galicji Wschodniej i na Wołyniu w latach 1931–1948*, 200–201. For some examples from Volhynia, see Turowski, *Zbrodnie Nacjonalistów Ukraińskich dokonane na ludności polskiej na Wołyniu 1939–1945*, 14–15; Siemaszko and Siemaszko, *Ludobójstwo dokonane przez nacjonalistów ukraińskich na ludności polskiej Wołynia 1939–1945*, 53 (Boremel), 68 (Targowica), 90 (Młynów), 319 (Kostopol), 356 (Piókwicze), 497 (Truskoty), 497 (Ostrowy), 558 (Swóz), 609–10 (Olganówka), 615 (Zalisce), 657 (Łuck), 722 (Równe), 818 (Dziegciów), 931 (Podrudzie), 1036–38, 1040. As for Eastern Galicia, in the village of Skorodyńce, near Czortków, in the early part of July, in addition to six

States.¹³⁵² The Germans subsequently stepped in to put an end to the violence and to assume the role of “protectors” of the Jewish population—a pattern that was repeated throughout occupied Europe.¹³⁵³ In the meantime, German Einsatzkommandos and police battalions carried out large-scale massacres of Jews on their own. On June 27–28, 1941, as many as 3,000 Jews were shot or burned alive in Białystok. On July 3, some 300 of the Jewish intelligentsia were taken out of town and executed. Further killings of some 4,000 Jewish men from Białystok took place on July 12–13, 1941.¹³⁵⁴ Clearly, the Germans were in control and their enlistment of local collaborators was incidental and peripheral to their larger war aims.

As mentioned, a frequent pretext for the pogroms was the opening by the Germans of the local jails where large numbers of Poles and Ukrainians, as well as some Jews, were massacred on the eve of the Soviet retreat.¹³⁵⁵ The publicity given to the gruesome executions of prisoners incensed the population,¹³⁵⁶ but few Poles took part in the attacks on Jews that ensued. In *Głębokie*, in northeastern Poland, for example, according to Jewish sources, after the Germans revealed recent Soviet atrocities in the prison in nearby Berezwezc (where a few local Jews had also been held), “the provocation was not accepted by the local Christian population” comprised mostly of Poles. The local council spoke out against Jew-baiting and “called upon the population of all faiths and nationalities to unite and make peace among themselves.” The few punitive actions that followed nonetheless were not random but targeted those who had been closely

¹³⁵² Margers Vestermanis, “Local Headquarters Liepaja: Two Months of German Occupation in the Summer of 1941,” in Hannes Heer and Klaus Naumann, eds., *War of Extermination: The German Military in World War II, 1941–1944* (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2004), 219–36; Arad, *The Holocaust in the Soviet Union*, 91–94.

¹³⁵³ As Polish historian Tomasz Szarota points out, the Germans employed local Nazis and anti-Semites to stage anti-Jewish incidents throughout Europe, for example, in Prague, the Hague, Amsterdam, Antwerp, Oslo, Paris, Copenhagen, and Kaunas. The Germans then quelled the “outbursts” belatedly. See Tomasz Szarota, “Anti-Jewish Pogroms and Incidents in the Occupied Europe”, in Daniel Grinberg, ed., *The Holocaust Fifty Years After: 50th Anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising (Papers from the Conference Organized by the Jewish Historical Institute of Warsaw, March 29–31, 1993)* (Warsaw: Jewish Historical Institute of Warsaw, n.d.), 109–123; Tomasz Szarota, *U progu Zagłady: Zajścia antyżydowskie i pogromy w okupowanej Europie* (Warsaw: Sic!, 2000); Tomasz Szarota, *On the Threshold of the Holocaust: Anti-Jewish Riots and Pogroms in Occupied Europe: Warsaw – Paris – The Hague – Amsterdam – Antwerp – Kaunas* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2015); Mordecai Paldiel, *Churches and the Holocaust: Unholy Teaching, Good Samaritans, and Reconciliation* (Jersey City, New Jersey: Ktav Publishing House, 2006), 134. In Antwerp, according to Paldiel, a mob of 200 people, spurred by anti-Semitic and pro-Nazi elements, invaded the Jewish quarter on April 14, 1941, vandalizing Jewish-owned stores and two synagogues, destroying the Torah scrolls and religious artifacts, and ending with the torching of the synagogues. Similar incidents were repeated two days later, until the German authorities finally intervened to put an end to this violence. This did not stop the Flemish lawyers’ association from expelling its Jewish members, and the municipality gladly accepted the task of stamping the identity cards of Jews with a large red-coloured *Jood-Juif* sign, and placing its police at the service of the Germans when the round-up of Jews to the concentration camps began in August 1942. As pointed out by Szarota, Jews formed self-defence groups in Warsaw to fend off local pogromists and killed and injured many of them, which begs the question why such self-defence groups were not organized during the large deportation from the Warsaw ghetto in the summer of 1942. *Ibid.*, 16, 30, 32–35, 37. According to one source, the so-called Easter pogrom of 1940 started after some Jews chased down and killed a Polish boy who had made off an apple from a Jewish street vendor. *Ibid.*, 26.

¹³⁵⁴ Arad, *The Holocaust in the Soviet Union*, 150.

¹³⁵⁵ This topic has been examined recently by Bogdan Musiał in his study *Konterrevolutionäre Elemente sind zu erschießen*, which analyzes how Soviet atrocities escalated the brutalization of the German-Soviet war and their impact on the local violence against Jews. According to that author, the total number of prisoners deported to the Soviet interior was 16,340, and the number of those murdered was close to 10,000. *Ibid.*, 200–210.

¹³⁵⁶ The descriptions of these massacres are truly horrific. “In Bóbrka, many inmates were scalded with boiling water; in Berezwezc, people’s noses, ears and fingers were cut off, and there were also children’s corpses in the prison compound; in Czortków, female prisoners’ breasts were cut off; in Drohobycz, prisoners were fastened together with barbed wire; in Luck, a drum lined with barbed wire stood next to one of three mass graves unearthed in the prison yard; in Przemyślany, victims’ noses, ears, and fingers were cut off and their eyes put out; similarly in Sambor, Stanisławów, Stryj, and Złoczów.” Gross, *Revolution from Abroad*, 181.

connected to the Soviet regime:

At first the Gestapo, with the help of the local police and some other local Christians, began to search for communists and their cohorts who had worked for the Soviet occupation forces, or served them in some capacity. Almost immediately, 42 persons were arrested. ... There were also a few Christians ... All of those arrested, except for the few, above mentioned merchants, had been officials of the Communist regime during the Soviet occupation.¹³⁵⁷

As noted earlier, Jews were also among the prisoners executed by the Soviets in June 1941, though not nearly in proportion to their share of the overall population. In Lwów, for example, some 44 Jews were killed in the Łacki Street prison, or about eight percent of recorded executions, whereas in the Zamarstynowska Street prison 16 Jews were killed, or about 3.5 percent of the total. There is no record of Jews being executed in the prisons in Tarnopol and Czortków.¹³⁵⁸

By and large, the average Pole had no involvement in the persecution or harassment of Jews on the evacuation of the Soviets. In some places there was even short-lived cooperation between the Polish and Jewish communities. After the Soviet authorities left *Suchowola* near Sokółka, the Roman Catholic priest and the rabbi formed a joint Christian-Jewish civil guard to keep order.¹³⁵⁹ When rumors of impending measures set off panic among the Jews of *Slonim*, large numbers of Jews went to stay with their Christian

¹³⁵⁷ See M. and Z. Rajak, *Memorial Book of Gluboke* (Canton, New York, 1994), 27, 37; a translation of *Khurbn Glubok...Koziany* (Buenos Aires: Former Residents' Association in Argentina, 1956). We also learn that the few Jews from Głębokie who had been imprisoned by the Polish authorities before the war were not targeted randomly, but were in fact members of an underground communist cell and thus part of a subversive organization that did not recognize the legitimacy of Polish rule. Ibid., 5. On the whole, the Jewish community had been quite prosperous: "The Jewish Community Executive Committee in Gluboke was a rich one. It owned a lot of land... The Jewish bank, which was held in high esteem, did a colossal volume of business. For both the large and small merchants, the bank would grant aid in the development of their undertakings. In volume, the Jewish bank outdid the local Polish Government Bank. A very important institution, was the 'Free Loan Society'. They would lend out money, for a long term, without charging interest, and the repayment would be made in installments. Hundreds of craftsmen and small shopkeepers were put back on their feet by the Jewish 'Free Loan Society'." Ibid., 3–4. At the beginning of the German occupation, in July 1941, many Christians were arrested for anti-German underground activities and brought in smaller and larger groups to town, only to be executed in the Borek forest. "In the early days this had a horrible effect on the Jews. ... They couldn't reconcile themselves to the fact that people could be taken and shot without any recourse to justice or a trial. The women and children were certainly innocent! Afterwards they became used to it. They became indifferent! They would simply tell about it, passing it on from mouth to mouth, that before dawn so many and so many people were taken into the Borok [sic] to be shot." Ibid., 44. The initial assistance provided to the thousands of Soviet prisoners of war captured by the Germans soon dried up too. "At the beginning, people didn't know that giving a prisoner a piece of bread or a little water to drink, was a crime, and people were bold enough to throw bread, vegetables and other food items to the passing prisoners. Immediately, announcements were posted stating that anyone caught giving bread to a prisoner, would be shot to death! Understandably, such an announcement frightened people off, and so they restrained themselves from helping the prisoners. There were some, whose pity for the wretched prisoners weighed so heavily upon them, that they could not help themselves from secretly throwing them bread, thereby putting their lives in jeopardy. ... Among the prisoners there were also traitors, which made it even more difficult to flee and to receive any help in one form or another. ... Of the 47,000 Red Army prisoners brought to Berezvetch [Berezwecz], almost none were left alive, except for the few who had managed to flee." Ibid., 28–30. The similarities and parallels in behaviour patterns of the various ethnic groups under both the Soviet and German occupation are again striking. Reports from other towns are similar. For example, in Choroszcz only three of the 18 people arrested by the Gestapo in August 1941 and executed as Communists were Jews. See Leszczyński, "Zagłada ludności żydowskiej miasta Choroszczy," *Biuletyn Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego w Polsce*, no. 79 (1971): 54.

¹³⁵⁸ Kalbarczyk, "Żydzi wśród ofiar zbrodni sowieckich w latach 1939–1941," *Pamięć i sprawiedliwość*, no. 40 (1997–1998): 191.

¹³⁵⁹ 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, Part A, 386. On the interaction of Jews and Poles in the early months of the war, see Havi Ben-Sasson, "Polish-Jewish Relations during the Holocaust: A Changing Jewish Viewpoint," in Robert Cherry and Annamaria Orla-Bukowska, eds., *Rethinking Poles and Jews: Troubled Past, Brighter Future* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007), 89–97. As Havi Ben-Sasson shows, the initial objective portrayal of Poles in Holocaust accounts later gave way to negative stereotypes.

acquaintances every night.¹³⁶⁰ Scenes like this were repeated in numerous towns throughout Eastern Poland. Zelig Kalmanovitch, a Jewish scholar from *Wilno*, noted in his wartime diary that Poles extended help to Jews from the time of the entry of the Germans in June 1941:

We expected the arrival of the conquerors. We were prepared for the worst. ... Polish women who were neighbors helped us obtain vegetables and other provisions. ...

On the way the White Russian peasants manifested hostility toward the Jews. Aided by Polish women, Mrs. Z. and a Bialystok [Białystok] Jewish girl arrived in Vilna [Wilno] from Bialystok. ...

Jews were being driven away from the food lines and were forbidden to enter stores. ... To be sure, Gentiles helped us. They purchased food for us and sold it to us in secret. Our gratitude to them. The human attitude of the citizenry was of great aid to us. We should be very thankful for these sentiments.¹³⁶¹

Herman Kruk, the chronicler of the Wilno ghetto, describes the reaction of the largely Polish population of that city to the ghettoization of the Jews in September 1941 and later events:

Today [September 8th], at Ostra Brama [in the chapel located above this ancient gate was the holiest Catholic shrine in Wilno which housed the icon of the revered Madonna of Ostra Brama—*M.P.*], there was a prayer in honor of the martyrdom of the Jews. People say that Jews are now bringing in full bundles, which they got in the city as gifts from Christians in the street.

In the street, at a Maistas [meat cooperative established by the Soviet authorities], masses of Christians brought packages of meat and distributed them to the Jewish workers marching to the ghetto.

The sympathy of the Christian population, more precisely of the Polish population, is extraordinary.

[September 15th] Christians come to the ghetto. People say that Christian friends and acquaintances often come. Today a priest came to me, looking for his Jewish friends.

[May 6, 1942] From Vilna [Wilno] and the whole area, masses of young men are being taken for work in Germany. Yesterday one of those groups was led through Szawelska Street and a lot of Jews saw them. In the street, guarded by Lithuanians, they stormily sang the national battle song [actually, the Polish national anthem—*M.P.*], "Poland Is Not Yet Lost," and as they approached the Jewish ghetto, they shouted slogans: "Long live the Jews! ..."

A mood I only want to note here.¹³⁶²

Historian Nathan Cohen noted that other contemporary diaries reinforced Herman Kruk's observations:

It is possible to find in diaries ... quotes such as "Christians came to help," "Good friends came to give a hand ...," "Christians were helpful, they bought things for us, sold our possessions outside the ghetto (and brought us the money)," "Christians are crying more than Jews," etc. It is significant that these sayings refer to "Christians." Who were these "Christians"? Herman Kruk [the diarist and librarian of the Wilno ghetto] answers this question by saying: "The sympathy shown by the Christian population, to be more precise, by the POLISH population, is excellent." Dr. [Lazar] Epstein expressed himself with almost the same words.¹³⁶³

Unfortunately, the incontrovertible evidence of Jewish collaboration with the Soviets in 1939–1941 is summarily dismissed by many historians as mere "allegations," for which there is very little or no basis in fact. Others argue that the mere presence of some Jews in positions of power was enough to trigger these allegations, while ignoring the fact of the gross overrepresentation of Jews and their harmful activities. In his treatment of the German invasion of the Eastern Borderlands and the Soviet Union in the summer of 1941, historian Kai Struve writes characteristically:

¹³⁶⁰ Żbikowski, *Archiwum Ringelbluma*, vol. 3, 175.

¹³⁶¹ Zelig Kalmanovitch, "A Diary of the Nazi Ghetto in Vilna," *YIVO Annual of Jewish Social Science*, vol. 8 (New York: Yiddish Scientific Institute—YIVO, 1953): 14, 15, 17.

¹³⁶² Kruk, *The Last Days of the Jerusalem of Lithuania*, 109–110, 112, 280–81.

¹³⁶³ Nathan Cohen, "The Attitude of Lithuanians Towards Jews During the Holocaust As Reflected in Diaries," in Emanuelis Zingeris, ed., *The Days of Memory: International Conference in Commemoration of the 50th Anniversary of the Liquidation of the Vilnius Ghetto. October 11–16, 1993* (Vilnius: Baltos Lankos, 1995), 215.

it seems clear that the purported pro-Soviet position attributed to Jews rested on a stereotypical perception of them, a perception which admittedly had some basis in reality, not only because of individual cases of pro-Soviet activity by Jews, but also, because, in the status of hierarchies of the various population groups, Jews experienced a relative rise under the Soviet occupation regime.¹³⁶⁴

While not acknowledging any concrete examples of Jewish behaviour or its extent (for which there is copious evidence), Struve insists that individual behaviour cannot be held against the Jews as a group, and that the Jews were first and foremost the victims of stereotypes harboured by Poles. Yet, Struve has no such reservations when he embarks on a rather crude and profoundly stereotypical “analysis” of Poles, based on the conduct of a miniscule percentage of the Polish population, in a manner that would be objectionable if it were applied to Jews. For example, he perversely endeavours to attribute the sporadic activities of a numerically small group of Poles to the entire Polish “peasantry,” because purportedly:

In the interpretative patterns of Christian folk culture, the murder of Jews could become in a sense part of the cosmic, apocalyptic event through which the divine order that the Jews had violated would be restored.¹³⁶⁵

Despite the apparent scholarly trappings, this is simply a hateful, racist diatribe posing as a profound insight. First of all, it is the antithesis of how many Jews remember Polish villagers. Rabbi Abraham D. Feffer, a Holocaust survivor from Drobin recalls:

Yet many fortunate survivors from my own shtetl, remember well and with great fondness and admiration the help of the brave Christian farmers who lived in nearby villages where we worked on cold winter days. (In Poland, hiding a Jew, or feeding him was punishable by death, usually hanging). We remember how these men and women, at great peril, opened their poor “chatkis” [cottages] to share with us warm soup, bread and potatoes.”¹³⁶⁶

Furthermore, as historian Andrzej Bryk points out, the Polish villagers’ view of the Jews was, essentially, the mirror image of the traditional view Jews held of Poles:

For the average Polish peasant, Jews were an integral part of the landscape, like the things of nature, the sky above, and himself. He might not have liked them, might have maintained only the most superficial trading relations with them, but their disappearance was unimaginable. They were part of God’s universe, even if an inferior part, viewed with suspicion. The complete extermination of his neighbours in a small town or village was for that peasant not only a crime in human terms but a fundamental violation of the universal order, of God’s order. It was such a monstrous and absurd deed, that it could have been possible only through the will of God himself. Had he not, after all, been taught that Jews were guilty for the death of Jesus, the death of God? So, perhaps, this was the sentence for that deed? Hence the fatalism in perceiving the Holocaust, a certain self-defence through rationalisation against the madness of a deed equal only to the anger of God. Of a deed which must have been inspired by some hidden logic. The extermination was so terrible, surpassing human imagination to such an extent, that there had to be some hidden meaning in it.¹³⁶⁷

This “rationalization” had little, if anything, to do with actual malice toward the Jews. Most rabbis at the time also shared the same view. The theological ramifications of accepting the tragedy that befell the Jews as the will of God—something that strikes one as particularly harsh and glaring in retrospect—are explained by Leon Wells, a Jewish survivor from Lwów, from the traditional Judeo-Christian vantage point.

I read the Lubavitch in ’43, ’44—it’s not proper to mention—Soloveitchik and all the others, they said the

¹³⁶⁴ Kai Struve, “Rites of Violence? The Pogroms of Summer 1941,” *Polin: Studies on Polish Jewry*, vol. 24 (Oxford and Portland, Oregon: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2012), 257–74, here at 270.

¹³⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 272–73.

¹³⁶⁶ Rabbi Abraham D. Feffer, *My Shtetl Drobin: A Saga of a Survivor* (Toronto: n.p., 1990), 22.

¹³⁶⁷ Andrzej Bryk, “The Struggles for Poland,” *Polin: A Journal of Polish-Jewish Studies* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell for the Institute for Polish-Jewish Studies, 1989), vol. 4, 378.

Holocaust was sent from heaven and did good because it is the time of the coming of the Messiah. Even the Lubavitch in '43, I have here the document where he said enjoy, enjoy, because the Messiah is coming. And he said that Haman does not come by himself. He's sent by God. I said to a major Jewish theologian recently, "Why are you only condemning the Pope? Or about what Cardinal O'Connor in New York said about the Holocaust?" I said, "Didn't the Lubavitch and others say the same, that it's God's will and we should believe it? It is only cleansing, because of our sins. God threw us out from our land because of our sins." And he said, "Yes, if you are a religious man and if I would be the Pope, I couldn't behave differently because I cannot say it's not God's will because he can stop everything." I said, "Fine. So why don't you as a leading Jewish theologian come out and ask why are we jumping so much about the Pope and all?" He said, "What should I do? It is the people, it is their will. They know what they want to hear and I know what I want." And I said to myself, it is theological, they have no other choice. There is no other choice. If you believe in a God, then it's the will of God. We'd have to change the whole religious outlook in order to see it differently. But as of the moment, we believe in God's will.¹³⁶⁸

Finally, before assessing the acts of vengeance perpetrated on Jews in June and July 1941, one should consider how Jews reacted to collaborators or those perceived to be such under the German occupation. Not only did many Jews enter the NKVD to settle scores after the Soviet "liberation" of Poland, but already during the German occupation they took every opportunity to exact revenge. There are numerous examples of Jews executing those believed to have harmed Jews; in some cases entire families and even entire

¹³⁶⁸ Harry James Cargas, *Voices from the Holocaust* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1993), 91–92.

villages (e.g., Koniuchy), including women, children and the elderly, were massacred.¹³⁶⁹ Moreover, these activities were carried out with virtual impunity. Once the Stalinist regime was installed, Jews had recourse to the legal system and courts to see that those guilty of misdeeds against Jews were punished.

It is important to bear in mind that, as the war was drawing to a close, across Europe people wanted to settle scores with wartime collaborators. In France, at least 8,000 to 9,000 real or alleged collaborators were lynched during the last months of the war, or at the moment of liberation, and as many fell victim to spontaneous or organized eruptions of popular violence in Italy. (According to other reliable sources, the number of victims in France may have reached 40,000.) Tito's partisans killed tens of thousands of people in Yugoslavia, and the victims of the "savage purging" in Bulgaria numbered between 30,000 and 40,000. Courts and tribunals were also overburdened. In France, 350,000 people were investigated, 45,000 were convicted, and 1,500 were executed. In Holland, 120,000 to 150,000 people were arrested, and tens of thousands were fired from their jobs. The courts sentenced 50,000 people, 152 of them to death (40 of these were executed). In Belgium, dossiers were opened on 405,067 individuals accused of collaboration, and

¹³⁶⁹ See some of the many examples culled by Mark Paul in his essay, "Anti-Semitic Pogrom in Ejszyski? An Overview of Jewish-Polish Relations in Wartime Northeastern Poland," in *The Story of Two Shtetls*, 110–22. The descriptions of the massacre of hundreds of Polish villagers in Koniuchy, in the Wilno region, in the spring of 1944 provided by Jewish participants are harrowing:

(1) "One evening a hundred and twenty of the best partisans from all the camps, armed with the best weapons they had, set out in the direction of the village. There were about 50 Jews among them, headed by Yaakov Prenner. At midnight they came to the vicinity of the village and assumed their proper positions. The order was not to leave any one alive. Even livestock was to be killed and all property was to be destroyed. ... The signal was given just before dawn. Within minutes the village was surrounded on three sides. On the fourth side was the river and the only bridge over it was in the hands of the partisans. With torches prepared in advance, the partisans burned down the houses, stables, and granaries, while opening heavy fire on the houses. ... Half-naked peasants jumped out of windows and sought escape. But everywhere fatal bullets awaited them. Many jumped into the river and swam towards the other side, but they too, met the same end. The mission was completed within a short while. Sixty households, numbering about 300 people, were destroyed, with no survivors." See Chaim Lazar, *Destruction and Resistance* (New York: Shengold Publishers, 1985), 174–75.

(2) "Our base commander gave the order that all able-bodied men should be prepared in an hour to leave for an operation. ... When we were closing in on our destination, I saw that partisans were coming from all directions, from various detachments. ... Our detachment got the order to destroy everything that was moving and burn the village down to its roots. At the exact hour and minute all partisans from all four corners of the village started pouring rifle and machine-gun fire, with incendiary bullets, into the village. This caused the straw roofs of the houses to catch fire. The villagers and the small German garrison answered back with heavy fire, but after two hours the village with the fortified shelter was completely destroyed. Our only casualties were two men who were lightly wounded." See Isaac Kowalski, *A Secret Press in Nazi Europe: The Story of a Jewish United Partisan Organization* (New York: Central Guide Publishers, 1969), 333–34; also reproduced in Isaac Kowalski, comp. and ed., *Anthology on Armed Jewish Resistance, 1939–1945*, vol. 4 (Brooklyn, New York: Jewish Combatants Publishers House, 1991), 390–91.

(3) "The partisans—Russians, Lithuanians and Jews—attacked Konyuchi [sic] from the fields, the sun at their backs. There was gunfire from the guard towers. Partisans returned the fire. The peasants ducked into houses. Partisans threw grenades onto roofs and the houses exploded into flame. Other houses were torched. Peasants ran from their front doors and raced down the streets. The partisans chased them, shooting men, women, children. Many peasants ran in the direction of the German garrison, which took them through a cemetery on the edge of town. The partisan commander, anticipating this move, had stationed several men behind the gravestones. When these partisans opened fire, the peasants turned back, only to be met by the soldiers coming up from behind. Caught in a cross fire, hundreds of peasants were killed." See Rich Cohen, *The Avengers* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2000), 145.

(4) "The entire village [of Koniuchy] was laid in ashes and its inhabitants were killed," according to Zalman Wyłożny who served in the "Death to Fascists" detachment. See Janusz Gołota, "Losy Żydów ostrołęckich w czasie II wojny światowej," *Biuletyn Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego*, no. 187 (1998): 32.

After the war Jews also organized death squads that roamed the countryside settling scores with Poles who had allegedly harmed Jews. According to Isadore Hollander, who had joined the Polish army, one such squad operated in the Łódź area: "It was an illegal procedure [but] I had a little bit of power. I wore a [Polish] uniform and I found more Jewish soldiers already in the [Polish] army. I [also] found Jewish soldiers in the Russian army... We went out every night for a little bit pride. We had a list, Poles giving us lists of all those names. ... We went out two, three soldiers at night. ... We did use guns... It was my commitment. ... That's why I enlisted myself. I didn't have to enlist myself to become a volunteer...but I did it because of revenge. I wanted to do it and I did it. ... As it went on, I felt satisfied. We didn't touch...German [civilians]." See Josey G. Fisher, *The Persistence of Youth: Oral Testimonies of the Holocaust* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1991), 117. A comprehensive treatment of this subject is found in Marek Jan Chodakiewicz, *After the Holocaust: Polish-Jewish Conflict in the Wake of World War II* (Boulder, Colorado: East European Monographs, 2003).

57,254 were prosecuted. Of these, 2,940 were sentenced to death (of whom 242 were executed); 2,340 were sentenced to life imprisonment. In Norway, whose population was a mere 3 million, 95,000 people were arrested, 18,000 prison terms were imposed, and 131 Norwegians were sentenced to death (45 of these were executed).¹³⁷⁰ In Denmark, some 40,000 Danes were interned by the end of 1945; the courts convicted some 13,500 Danes for collaboration. Of those convicted, 7,500 were military collaborators. (More Danes fought and died for Nazi Germany than for the Allies. If one were to ask the Danes which occupation they would prefer—the German one they experienced or the Soviet occupation that the Poles were subjected to, there is little doubt that the overwhelming majority of the Danes would chose the Nazis over the Soviets.) Seventy-eight collaborators were sentenced to death, of whom 46 were actually executed. Most prison terms, when they were finally handed down, were fairly short.¹³⁷¹ “In the first two years after the war, in the Czech provinces alone, a total of 132,549 persons were investigated and 37,982 were tried for war crimes, treason, and collaboration. In addition, local tribunals vetted several hundred thousand Czechs for less serious ‘offenses against national honor.’ One Czech parliamentarian estimated that counting family members, over 1.5 million people from a prewar population of around ten million were affected by retribution. ... In spring 1945, when thousands of Germans were murdered, vigilantes executed an unknown number of alleged Czech traitors. ... According to justice ministry tabulations, in the first two years after the war the People’s Courts sentenced 21,848 defendants, of whom 70.3 percent were of German nationality, to prison terms of varying length. An additional 455 Germans and 308 Czechs got life imprisonment. A total of 467 Germans and 253 Czechs were sentenced to death. ... the justice ministry’s definition of ‘German’ nationality encompassed individuals who would have called themselves and were officially Czech before 1938 but who during the war had adopted German identity or acquired Reich citizenship.”¹³⁷²

From a North American perspective we can add another factor, by way of comparison. Even though Japanese immigrants and their descendants posed no real threat and did not agitate on behalf of Japan, the Canadian and United States governments, with the support of the citizenry, uprooted the Japanese populations from the West Coast, confiscated their property and interned them in concentration camps (referred to as internment camps) for the duration of the war. The postwar process of rehabilitation, and obtaining a small measure of redress for their material losses and mistreatment in the most democratic and wealthiest nations on earth, was a tedious and protracted one.

The Twentieth Century was not one known for the tolerance of most of its societies, even Western ones. The American media, popular opinion and, indeed, national memory, recoil at the notion that for Black Americans this was not only a time of state-sanctioned segregation and discrimination but also of ritualistic lynchings (between the years 1882 and 1951, 3,437 Blacks were lynched in the United States according to the Tuskegee Institute)¹³⁷³ and “race riots,” known in Eastern Europe as pogroms. Some of the earliest riots occurred in Wilmington, North Carolina (1898), Atlanta, Georgia (1906), and Springfield, Illinois (1908). Between 1916 and 1921 riots—started by White mobs attacking Blacks—swept the country: 54 in 1916 and 38 in 1917. One of the bloodiest race riots in American history took place in East St. Louis, Illinois. It

¹³⁷⁰ László Karsai, “Crime and Punishment: People’s Courts, Revolutionary Legality, and the Hungarian Holocaust,” *Intermarium*, The First Online Journal of East Central European Postwar History and Politics, vol. 4, no. 1, Internet: <www.columbia.edu/cu/sipa/Regional/ece/intermar.html>; Jacek Bartyzel “Faszyzm,” in *Encyklopedia “Białych Plam”* (Radom: Polskie Wydawnictwo Encyklopedyczne, 2001), vol. 6, 100. The number of victims of spontaneous lynchings in France ranges from 10,522 (according to the minister of justice in 1952) to 110,000 (according to the Socialist minister of internal affairs); Robert Aron, the leading historian on this subject, estimates that 40,000 were killed. See Herbert R. Lottman, *The Purge* (New York: Morrow, 1986).

¹³⁷¹ Hans Kirchhoff, “Die dänische Staatskollaboration,” in Werner Röhr, ed., *Okkupation und Kollaboration (1938–1945): Beiträge zu Konzepten und Praxis in der deutschen Okkupationspolitik* (Berlin: Hühig, 1994), 101–118 (at p. 112).

¹³⁷² Benjamin Frommer, “To Prosecute or to Expel? Czechoslovak Retribution and the ‘Transfer’ of Sudeten Germans,” in Philipp Ther and Ana Siljak, ed., *Redrawing Nations: Ethnic Cleansing in East-Central Europe, 1944–1948* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001), 222–23, 227.

¹³⁷³ See, for example, Guy Lancaster, ed., *Bullets and Fire: Lynching and Authority in Arkansas, 1840–1950* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2018).

was started by White workers who were protesting the hiring of African Americans. Over several days in July 1917, between 40 and 200 people were killed, mostly Blacks. Whites turned on Blacks, indiscriminately stabbing, clubbing, shooting, and hanging them: "Blacks were methodically chased down by white mobs, kicked and battered and then strung up from light poles in acts of unmistakable symbolism. Other were beaten bloody, the, as they lay helpless, summarily shot in the head. Still others were flushed from their homes, as in a rabbit hunt, and shot as they fled the flames."¹³⁷⁴ After cutting the water hoses of the fire department, White rioters burned entire sections of the city and shot inhabitants as they escaped the flames. White neighbours refused to hide Blacks fleeing from their attackers. A carnival-like atmosphere set in as women joined in, including allegedly ten or fifteen young girls about 18 years old, who chased a black woman at the Relay Depot. The girls were brandishing clubs and calling upon the men to kill the woman. Six thousand blacks were driven from their homes and left homeless after their neighbourhood was burned. Virtually no protection was forthcoming from the police. The National Guard was called in to suppress the violence but they were ordered not to shoot at White rioters; instead they focused on disarming Blacks. Some policemen and National Guard troops participated in the riot. During the weeks after the riot, Whites resumed beating Blacks and made several attempts to burn houses formerly occupied by Blacks.

Most white residents appeared to show no remorse, and on the morning following July 2 a "mardi-gras" atmosphere characterized the city. Thousands spent the day downtown, since factories were closed, and the tone of the street crowds was lighthearted, with many persons displaying souvenirs, i.e., pieces of hats, jackets, and shirts taken from corpses. Sightseers toured morgues viewing distorted remains of victims. A soldier exhibited a two foot "cinder," telling the throngs, "There's one nigger who will never do any more harm." The cinder was part of a torso, and, after an ambulance arrived to remove it, a squad of militiamen "saluted...with shouts of merriment." When bodies were pulled from Cahokia Creek and other corpses recovered from smoking ruins which had been homes only the day before, hundreds of men and women stood by and cheered.¹³⁷⁵

President Wilson refused to permit a federal inquiry. While 105 people were indicted on charges related to the riot, only twenty members of the White mob received prison sentences for their roles in perpetrating the extreme violence and killings. In the ensuing trials, Black rioters were punished more severely than their White counterparts. Black activist Marcus Garvey made the following pointed comments in a speech delivered on July 8, 1917:

The whole thing my friends is a bloody farce, and that the police and soldiers did nothing to stem the murder thirst of the mob is a conclusive proof of conspiracy on the part of the civil authorities to condone the acts of the white mob against Negroes. In this report we further read that as the flames of fire would drive a Negro man, wom[a]n or child from a dwelling, their clothes burning, the mob would set up a great shout and rifles and pistols would be fired. So far no Negro was known to escape as the whites had a merciless net about the Negroes, and the cry was "kill 'em all." Negro faces were seen at frames of windows and when they say what happened to those who flew from the burning structures, they dropped back into the fire rather than tempt a similar fate. An example of what the guardsmen encountered, and themselves enjoyed, was the beating of colored women by white girls. This sort of thing was common. It resulted in the death of several Negro women. Six girls, according to the report pursued a colored girl around the main railway station. A mob formed behind the girls who were screaming frantic epithets at the terrified black girl. "Send them back to Africa." "Kill them all." "Lynch them," shouted the young amazons. Suddenly the crowd swept from the trail of the girl. A yell then arose. "There is one." It was a Negro walking on the railroad track. Before he realized his peril he was killed. Half a dozen pistols cracked and the man dropped without a chance to run. Two white girls, neither more than 17 years old, the report said, were cheered when they dragged a colored girl from a street car, removed her slippers and beat senseless with the sharp wooden heels. Some reports said black women were stripped by white women for the amusement of the crowd. The mob and entire white populace [o]f East St. Louis had a Roman holiday. They feasted on the blood of the Negro ...¹³⁷⁶

¹³⁷⁴ Scott Martelle, "The Race Riot That Inspired a Movement," *Los Angeles Times*, July 4, 2008.

¹³⁷⁵ Elliott M. Rudwick, *Race Riot at East St. Louis, July 2, 1917* (Carbondale, Illinois: Southern Illinois University Press, 1964), 67.

¹³⁷⁶ Robert A. Hill, ed., *The Marcus Garvey and Universal Negro Improvement Association Papers*, vol. I: 1826 – August 1919 (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1983), 217.

During the “Red Summer” of 1919 there were 26 race riots in which the White population turned on Black Americans and destroyed their communities, murdering and injuring thousands of Blacks.¹³⁷⁷ The most infamous of these was the Chicago Race Riots, which erupted after a White man struck a Black teenager swimming in Lake Michigan with a stone and caused him to drown. Five days of violence left 28 Blacks dead, 500 injured, and 1000 African American homes burned to the ground. Riots also occurred in Washington, D.C. in July of that year, leaving nine people dead, 30 severely wounded, and 150 beaten. White mobs massacred at least 100 Blacks in Elaine, Arkansas, in September 1919, destroying homes and businesses and attacking anyone in their path. Riots also took place in Charleston, South Carolina; Knoxville and Nashville, Tennessee; Longview, Texas; and Omaha, Nebraska. Most of these incidents are long forgotten. The authorities made little effort to stem this tide. As a report submitted to the Florida Board of Regents on December 22, 1993, reveals,

Racial unrest and violence against African Americans permeated domestic developments in the United States during the post-World War I era. From individual lynchings to massive violence against entire black communities, whites in both the North and the South lashed out against black Americans with a rage that knew few bounds. From Chicago to Tulsa, to Omaha, East St. Louis, and many communities in between, and finally to Rosewood, white mobs pursued what can only be described as a reign of terror against African Americans during the period from 1917 to 1923. In Chicago, Illinois, for example, law and order was suspended for 13 days in July 1919 as white mobs made foray after foray into black neighborhoods, killings and wounding 365 black residents and leaving another 1,000 homeless. In June 1921, the black section of Tulsa, Oklahoma, was almost burned out and thousands were left homeless following racial violence by white residents.¹³⁷⁸

A White mob said to number more than 10,000 attacked the Black district of Tulsa on May 31 and June 1, 1921. More than 800 people were admitted to local hospitals with injuries, an estimated 10,000 were left homeless, 35 city blocks composed of 1,256 residences were destroyed by fire, and there was \$1.8 million in property damage. Twenty-three Blacks and 16 Whites were reported killed, but estimates suggest as many as 300, mostly Blacks, died.¹³⁷⁹ Yet, as Columbia University historian István Deák pointed out in conjunction with the much publicized massacre at Jedwabne:

until recent stories were published, I wonder how many Americans had ever heard of what happened in Tulsa, Oklahoma, at the end of May 1921, when the city’s whites, incited by the press and by politicians, massacred several hundred innocent blacks. Although I am a professional historian, I heard of this atrocity only last year, forty-four years after I arrived in the US. The Tulsa massacre, moreover, took place when the United States was at peace, whereas Jedwabne occurred during a terrible war, under alternating cruel occupations, and in the midst of total administrative and political chaos.¹³⁸⁰

Less than two years later, in January 1923, mobs of White Americans descended on a Black community in Rosewood, Florida, massacring between 40 and 150 people. Houses were torched and looted, and the

¹³⁷⁷ David F. Krugler, *1919, The Year of Racial Violence: How African Americans Fought Back* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015); Cameron McWhirter, *Red Summer: The Summer of 1919 and the Awakening of Black America* (New York: St. Martin’s Griffin, 2012); Robert Whitaker, *On the Laps of Gods: The Red Summer of 1919 and the Struggle for Justice That Remade a Nation* (New York: Crown Publishers, 2008; Broadway Books/Penguin Random House, 2009).

¹³⁷⁸ *Remembering Rosewood*, Internet: <<http://www.displaysforschools.com/history.html>>; Edward González-Tennant, *The Rosewood Massacre: An Archaeology and History of Intersectional Violence* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2018).

¹³⁷⁹ Tim Madigan, *The Burning: Massacre, Destruction, and the Tulsa Race Riot of 1921* (New York: Thomas Dune Books, St. Martin’s Griffin, 2001).

¹³⁸⁰ István Deák, “Heroes and Victims,” *The New York Review of Books*, May 31, 2001. For more about the events in Tulsa, see Brent Staples, “Unearthing a Riot,” *The New York Times*, December 19, 1999.

community was eradicated. Black churches were set on fire throughout the state.¹³⁸¹ For many Whites, the removal of their Black neighbours—a “Florida without Blacks”—was a dream fulfilled. Tellingly, not one person was ever convicted for this heinous crime, because of “insufficient evidence.” A riot in Detroit, Michigan in June 1943, when White mobs attacked Blacks in the downtown area and travelled into Black neighbourhoods by car, resulted in 25 Blacks and nine Whites deaths and over \$2 million in property damage. These events have been essentially erased from American national consciousness. No national memorial has been erected in the United States to mark this shameful legacy, and no apologies are offered by American authorities for the shameful history of conduct of the American people.¹³⁸²

Blacks were not the only ones to be victimized in America. The violence of Irish gangs’ attacks on Jewish businesses and individuals far exceeded that of violent incidents between Jews and Eastern Europeans in the United States. Irish gangs instigated a widespread attack on a Jewish business district in Chicago in the summer of 1916, attacking Jewish shops, smashing windows, and beating merchants and bystanders. About a score of Jews were injured, three of them critically. Although the attack was expected and the Jews had requested police protection, none was forthcoming. Not one single policeman came to investigate until everything was over. The district around Taylor and Cypress Streets “looked like the aftermath of a battle.”¹³⁸³

Violent manifestations of hatred have occurred, and continue to occur, throughout the entire world. The massacre of thousands of Koreans by Japanese mobs in the wake of the 1923 Tokyo earthquake stands out as one of the major peacetime atrocities in the interwar period.¹³⁸⁴ Jewish “freedom fighters” in Palestine annihilated the Arab population of the peaceful village of Deir Yassin in April 1948 because their mere presence was considered to be an obstacle to the political aspirations of Jewish settlers intent on creating a

¹³⁸¹ *Remembering Rosewood*, Internet: <<http://www.displaysforschools.com/history.html>>.

¹³⁸² In the first 75 years of the Twentieth Century, the United States experienced 27 major race riots occasioning hundreds of deaths and thousands of casualties. These continued to occur unabated after World War Two. When Blacks went to use the public swimming pools for the first time in St. Louis, Missouri, on Independence Day in 1949, “Outside the pool fence, a mob of some 200 restless white teen-agers collected. Police arrived in time to escort the Negroes safely from the park. But all that afternoon, fist fights blazed up; Negro boys were chased and beaten by white gangs. In the gathering dusk, one grown-up rabble-rouser spoke out: ‘Want to know how to take care of those niggers?’ he shouted. ‘Get bricks. Smash their heads, the dirty, filthy —.’ Swinging baseball bats, the crowd shuffled in mounting excitement. Then someone called out: ‘There’s some niggers!’ The crowd cornered two terror-stricken Negro boys against a fence. Under a volley of fists, clubs and stones, the boys went down—but not before one of them whipped out a knife and stabbed one of his attackers. In a surge of fury, the nearest whites kicked and pummeled the two prostrate bodies, turned angrily on rescuing police with shouts of ‘Nigger lovers.’ Within an hour the crowd had swollen to number more than 5,000. In the park along bustling Grand Boulevard, busy teen-age gangs hunted down Negroes. Other ones climbed into trucks and circled the park, looking for more targets. ... By 2 a.m., when hard-pressed police finally cleared the streets, ten Negroes and five whites had been hospitalized, one critically injured. Next day Mayor Joseph M. Darst ordered both outdoor pools closed, and ruled that St. Louis’ pools and playgrounds would stay segregated.” *Time Capsule 1949: The Year in Review, As Reported in the Pages of Time*. In 1995–1996, some 60 Black churches were burned to the ground or seriously damaged in the southeastern states, all too reminiscent of the brutal 1960s when the Ku Klux Klan and others burned an estimated 100 churches in Mississippi alone. See David Snyder, “Re-igniting the fires of racism”, *The Toronto Star*, March 31, 1996 (Newhouse News Service). But endemic racism was not only an integral part of the social fabric of mainstream American life for most of the century, it was also part of government policy. In the interwar period the United States authorities subjected Blacks to medical experimentation, known as the Tuskegee Study of Untreated Syphilis in the Negro Male, which only came to an end in 1972 because of a whistle-blowing Public Health Service epidemiologist. See Kathleen Kenna, “U.S. to apologize for experiments on black farmers,” *The Toronto Star*, May 16, 1997, and “‘We were treated ... like guinea pigs,’” *The Toronto Star*, May 17, 1997.

¹³⁸³ John Radzilowski, “Conflict between Poles and Jews in Chicago, 1900–1930,” *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry*, vol. 19 (2007): 129.

¹³⁸⁴ “1923 Great Kanto Earthquake,” *Wikipedia*, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1923_Great_Kanto_earthquake>; Mai Denawa, “Behind the Accounts of the Great Kanto Earthquake of 1923,” Fall 2005, *Brown University Library Center for Digital Initiatives*, Internet: <<http://dl.lib.brown.edu/kanto/denewa.html>>.

Jewish state free of Arabs.¹³⁸⁵ Unprovoked flare-ups have repeatedly ignited that troubled land. According to a *Jerusalem Post* Foreign Service report filed on May 24, 1996,

Jerusalem—Hundreds of Jewish worshippers went on a rampage in the Old City Friday morning, attacking Arab bystanders and damaging Arab property, following all-night prayers for the Shavuot holiday at the Western Wall.

“The rioting was unprovoked, and we still haven’t figured out what motivated it,” Jerusalem Police spokesperson Shmuel Ben-Ruby said.

The rioters broke windows and damaged merchandise at stores just inside Damascus Gate. They also turned over vendors’ stalls and pushed and shoved Arab bystanders. Many merchants quickly closed the shutters on their stores to avoid damage. Ben-Ruby said no injuries were reported.

The Jewish rioters also threw stones at Arab vehicles on Sultan Suleiman Street, outside Damascus Gate. About 25 complaints were filed with police for damage caused by rioting, representing only a small number of the actual instances, Ben-Ruby said.

The unrest caught police by surprise, coming after a quiet all-night study-and-prayer service at the Western Wall, attended by thousands.

The vandalism broke out about 8 a.m., as a crowd of worshippers leaving the Western Wall made its way through the Old City.

Dozens of police were called to the scene and clashed with rioters. There were no arrests.

¹³⁸⁵ In actual fact, a number of civilian massacres were perpetrated in Palestine after the war for which the Jews have yet to account. Among them were: the slaughter of more than 200 Arab villagers in Deir Yassin on April 9, 1948; the murder of more than 80 Arabs in Dueima soon thereafter; and the 1956 massacre of dozens of innocent Arabs in the village of Kfar Kassem, for the crime of failing to observe a curfew of which they were simply ignorant. (The last of these crimes resulted in a court martial with light, symbolic sentences; the previous crimes went unpunished.) Unlike the 50th anniversary of the Kielce pogrom of July 4, 1946, in conjunction with which the Polish authorities organized a large-scale commemoration and issued apologies, on the 50th anniversary of the much larger massacre at Deir Yassin, the Israeli authorities maintained a shameful silence. Many Jews denied that it ever had occurred and others sought to justify it, while the Western media by and large ignored the event. (A notable exception is Patrick Martin, “Memories of Deir Yassin haunts Palestinians,” *The Globe and Mail* [Toronto], April 29, 1998.) The peaceful Palestinian Arab village of Deir Yassin, which lay outside of the area assigned by the United Nations to the Jewish State, was attacked by 130 commandos of the Irgun and Stern gang several weeks before the end of British Mandate rule in Palestine. The massacre of innocent Palestinian children, women and men commenced only after the village was seized and was accompanied by maiming (the stomach of a pregnant dead woman was cut open with a butcher’s knife) and widespread looting (even jewelry was ripped off the dead and dying victims). Some of the Arab survivors of Deir Yassin were loaded onto a truck and paraded through the Jewish quarters of Jerusalem before being executed. Jacques de Reynier, a Swiss doctor working for the International Red Cross, witnessed the aftermath of the massacre and reported the “mopping up” operations in these riveting words: “The first thing I saw were people running everywhere, rushing into and out of houses, carrying stun guns, rifles, pistols, and long ornate knives... They seemed half mad. I saw a beautiful young girl, with criminal eyes, carrying a dagger still covered in blood. She displayed it like a trophy. This was the ‘cleaning up’ team, which was obviously performing its task very conscientiously. ... Here the ‘cleaning up’ had been done with machine guns, then hand grenades. It had been finished off with knives, anyone could see that. The same thing in the next room, but as I was about to leave, I heard something like a sigh. I looked everywhere, turned over all the bodies, and eventually found a little foot, still warm. It was of a little girl of ten, mutilated by a hand grenade, but still alive... everywhere it was the same horrible sight... [The population of the village] had been deliberately massacred in cold blood for, as I observed for myself, this gang was admirably disciplined and only acted under their leaders’ orders.” The village of Deir Yassin was subsequently resettled by Jews, who took over the homes of the Palestinians who had fled for their lives. It was renamed Givat Shaul Bet and the opening ceremony was attended by cabinet ministers and chief rabbis. Streets were named after the Irgun and Sternists who took part in the attack. The cemetery was bulldozed, and like hundreds of other Palestinian villages to follow, Deir Yassin was wiped off the map. There are no markers, no plaques, and no memorials at Deir Yassin. The slaughter took place within sight of the national memorial for Holocaust victims at Yad Vashem. According to Menachem Begin, the leader of the Irgun at the time, this horrific act served the future state of Israel well. In his book *The Revolt*, Begin claimed: “Arabs throughout the country, induced to believe wild tales of ‘Irgun butchery,’ were seized with limitless panic and started to flee for their lives. This mass flight soon developed into a maddened, uncontrollable stampede. The political and economic significance of this development can hardly be overestimated.” The dream of an Israel without Palestinians had been sowed. The Palestinians were driven out of their homes and continue to be dispossessed today. Their rightful claims to restitution are ignored. Special tours of Deir Yassin led by surviving underground fighters are organized on the anniversary of the “battle.” See Daniel A. McGowan and March H. Ellis, eds., *Remembering Deir Yassin: The Future of Israel and Palestine* (New York: Olive Branch Press/Interlink Publishing Group, 1998), *passim*. To paraphrase Holocaust historian Lucy S. Dawidowicz, who has played an important role in forming attitudes about the Poles, “the [Jews] celebrated their independence with pogroms against the [Palestinians].”

Police sources said the rioting was apparently provoked by a group of right-wing Jewish extremists in the crowd of worshippers, who began attacking Arab targets.

Even in prosperous, highly-developed, long-standing democracies not much is needed, seemingly, for racial strife to flare up on a massive scale in the Twenty-first Century, as recent outbursts in Australia show. According to an Agence France-Presse report, in December 2005:

Twenty-five people were injured and 16 were arrested as race riots on a Sydney beach spread overnight to several suburbs, police said today.

Islamic and political leaders condemned the violence, which was launched by mobs of youths who attacked people of Middle Eastern appearance on Cronulla beach in south Sydney yesterday.

More than 5,000 people gathered at the beach after e-mail and mobile phone messages called on local residents to beat-up “Lebs and wogs”—racial slurs for people of Lebanese and Middle Eastern origin.

The move followed assaults a week ago on two volunteer lifeguards at the beach, which is a popular gathering place for Muslims from inner-city suburbs, and allegations that local women were being harassed.

Chanting “No more Lebs” and “Aussie, Aussie, Aussie ... Oi, Oi, Oi,” mobs of drunken young men waving Australian flags attacked anyone suspected of having a Middle Eastern background.

One Muslim woman had her headscarf ripped off and another was chased into a beach kiosk, local media reported.

Six police officers were injured as they tried to quell the violence, and two ambulance officers were also hurt.

Later, a gang of some 60 men reportedly of Middle Eastern appearance launched a series of apparent revenge attacks in nearby suburbs, smashing more than 40 cars with baseball bats and stabbing two youths.

New South Wales state Premier Morris Iemma described the violence at Cronulla beach as “stomach turning.”

“I saw yesterday people trying to hide behind the Australian flag; well they are cowards whose behaviour will not be tolerated,” Mr. Iemma told Channel Nine television.

Mr. Iemma said he planned to bring together community leaders for discussions about how to prevent further violence.

Police Commissioner Ken Moroney said he was disgusted by the violence.¹³⁸⁶

As if the hands of Australians were not full attacking Aborigines and Middle Eastern people, Melbourne and Sydney witnessed a spate of violent attacks on Indian students in first-half of 2009. More than 70 Hindus were beaten, stabbed, slashed or burned, some very seriously, by roving gangs of White Australian youths engaged in “curry bashing”. In one case a petrol bomb was hurled through the window of a home resulting in the occupant sustaining burns to thirty percent of his body.¹³⁸⁷

Had these events occurred in Eastern Europe the Western media would have called them “pogroms” caused by “endemic” racism allegedly prevalent in those “xenophobic” societies, but when such incidents happen in Western democracies they are rarely reported and, when they are, they are called euphemistically “riots” and attributed to “skinheads” or other far-right extremists, and not to society as a whole. Apart from these ugly incidents, Australia has also witnessed a rash of synagogue burnings in recent years, just as scores of Black Christian churches have been torched in the United States.

Unfortunately, systemic forms of discrimination permeate the fabric of almost all nations including Western ones. In Louisiana, 1916 witnessed an assault on the native Cajun culture, when the use of French was banned in all schools and government agencies. Strict quotas for Jews were also introduced at leading American universities after World War I and did not disappear until the 1960s. The exploitation of Blacks and native Americans has continued to this day, as has the mistreatment of the native population in Canada, Australia, and New Zealand.

¹³⁸⁶ “Race riots erupt on Australian beach: Mobs of youths attack people of Mideast origin,” *National Post* (Toronto), December 12, 2005.

¹³⁸⁷ See, for example, Rick Westhead, “India’s media slam ‘racist’ Australia over spate of attacks,” *Toronto Star*, June 17, 2009.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

Summation

Many aspects of the behaviour of a small but dynamic pro-Soviet portion of the Jewish population of Poland's undoubtedly qualify as collaboration with the Soviet aggressors who, together with Nazi Germany, invaded and divided up Poland in September 1939. The examples provided in this compilation can be multiplied to include virtually every town in the Eastern Borderlands. Throughout this region it was the Jews who lashed out at Poles and the Poles were on the defensive. In the words of American sociologist Tadeusz Piotrowski,

Thousands of Polish survivors' testimonies, memoirs, and works of history tell of Jewish celebrations, of Jewish harassment of Poles, of Jewish collaboration (denunciations, manhunts, and roundups of Poles for deportation), of Jewish brutality and cold-blooded executions, of Jewish pro-Soviet citizens' committees and militias, and of the high rates of Jews in the Soviet organs of oppression after the Soviet invasion of 1939. The Poles perceived all of this as ingratitude and betrayal; the Jews saw it as retribution and revolution.¹³⁸⁸

There is no comparable body of literature implicating Poles in anti-Jewish excesses in Soviet-occupied Eastern Poland, despite the fact that a small number of Poles also collaborated with the Soviets, for the most part, under duress. (The fact that there were some Polish collaborators is thus irrelevant in terms of assessing Jewish conduct towards Poles, just as Jewish historiography does not give any consideration to the existence of Jewish collaborators when assessing Polish conduct under German occupation.)

Nor did Poles in German-occupied Poland take matters into their own hands in 1939–1941 to target Jews in this manner, even though they could have done so with impunity. Poles did not participate in rounding up and mistreating Jewish prisoners of war, nor did they vandalize synagogues and Jewish monuments. Already as early as September 6, 1939, the first Pole, a postman from Limanowa by the name of Jan Semik was shot dead by the Germans for trying to stop the execution of a group of Jewish hostages. In October 1940, a Polish woman named Aniela Kozioł was executed in Łańcut for sheltering a Jewish family. The number of such cases increased by the hundreds once the Holocaust got underway in mid-1941 and the

¹³⁸⁸ Piotrowski, *Poland's Holocaust*, 51.

Germans imposed a collective death sentence on the family of anyone who dared to defy German decrees not to help Jews.¹³⁸⁹

Jews did not rush to the aid of their Polish neighbours during the Soviet occupation. There is no record of a Jew putting his or her life on the line for a Pole. Very little is known of Jewish efforts to shelter endangered Poles during this period. Nor were there any significant efforts on the part of the Jewish community and its communal and religious leadership to contain, censure or even dissociate themselves

¹³⁸⁹ In total, at least one thousand Christian Poles—men, women and children, entire families and even whole communities—were tortured to death, summarily executed, or burned alive for rendering assistance to Jews. Hundreds of cases of Poles being put to death for helping Jews have been documented though the list is still far from complete (the author is aware of scores of additional cases). See the following publications on this topic: Friedman, *Their Brothers' Keepers*, 184–85; Waław Zajączkowski, *Martyrs of Charity: Christian and Jewish Response to the Holocaust*, Part One (Washington, D.C.: St. Maximilian Kolbe Foundation, 1987), Part One; Waław Bielawski, *Zbrodnie na Polakach dokonane przez hitlerowców za pomoc udzielaną Żydom* (Warsaw: Główna Komisja Badania Zbrodni Hitlerowskich w Polsce–Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, 1987); The Main Commission for the Investigation of Crimes Against the Polish Nation–The Institute of National Memory and The Polish Society For the Righteous Among Nations, *Those Who Helped: Polish Rescuers of Jews During the Holocaust*, Part One (Warsaw, 1993), Part Two (Warsaw, 1996), and Part Three (Warsaw, 1997). A portion of the last of these publications is reproduced in Appendix B of Richard Lukas's *The Forgotten Holocaust*, Revised edition (1997), and an extensive list of Polish victims also appears in Piotrowski, *Poland's Holocaust*, 119–23. See also “Polish Righteous: Those Who Risked Their Lives,” Internet: <<http://www.savingjews.org/perished/a...z.htm>>. Some Holocaust historians who deprecate Polish rescue efforts, such as Lucy S. Dawidowicz, have attempted to argue that essentially there was no difference in the penalty that the Poles and Western Europeans such as the Dutch faced for helping Jews. See Lucy C. Dawidowicz, *The Holocaust and the Historians* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1981), 166. However, the sources which Dawidowicz cites belie this claim. Raul Hilberg clarifies the situation that prevailed in the Netherlands as follows: “If caught, they did not have to fear an automatic death penalty. Thousands were arrested for hiding Jews or Jewish belongings, but it was German policy to detain such people only for a relatively short time in a camp within the country, and in serious cases to confiscate their property.” See Raul Hilberg, *Perpetrators, Victims, Bystanders: The Jewish Catastrophe, 1933–1945* (New York: Aaron Asher Books/Harper Collins, 1992), 210–11. More recent research shows that the risk was even smaller and that people caught sheltering Jews were often not punished at all. According to a Dutch historian, “usually, if Gentiles who helped Jews were punished, they were punished with short-term Schutzhaft, or protective custody; only severe cases were sent to concentration camps in Germany.” See Marnix Croes, “The Holocaust in the Netherlands and the Rate of Jewish Survival,” *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, vol. 20, no. 3 (Winter 2006): 474–99. Although Dutch rescuers, if caught, could be sent to a concentration camp, this kind of punishment was not often meted out to people who only sheltered Jews: “supporters of Jews on a large scale were usually sent to concentration camps in Germany when caught ... In other cases of help, people were usually sent to Vught concentration camp in the Netherlands, which had a less brutal regime. However, people who only housed Jews in hiding were often not punished at all. Especially in 1943 and 1944 they frequently were left alone and only the *onderduikers* were arrested.” See Marnix Croes and Beate Kosmala, “Facing Deportation in Germany and the Netherlands: Survival in Holland,” in Beate Kosmala and Georgi Verbeeck, eds., *Facing the Catastrophe: Jews and Non-Jews in Europe during World War II* (Oxford and New York: Berg, 2010), 8, 129, 146. In Belgium, a decree of June 1, 1942 warned the local population against sheltering Jews under punishment with “imprisonment and a fine.” See Mordechai Paldiel, *Churches and the Holocaust: Unholy Teaching, Good Samaritans, and Reconciliation* (Jersey City, New Jersey: Ktav Publishing House, 2006), 131–32. In France, there were no specific ordinances or legislation against the hiding of Jews. However, other laws could be invoked to prosecute and imprison those involved, such as providing or using false papers, or illegall crossing the demarcation line. In practice, those caught helping Jews could face three months’ internment. See Bob Moore, *Survivors: Jewish Self-Help and Rescue in Nazi-Occupied Western Europe* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 121. Similarly, helping Jews was not outlawed in Italy. See Silvano Longhi, *Die Juden und der Widerstand gegen den Faschismus in Italien (1943–1945)* (Berlin and Münster: Lit, 2010), 97. In Slovakia, 8,000 Jews were able to avoid deportation in 1942 by simply converting (most often sham conversions) or obtaining baptismal certificates, which enabled them to live openly and out of danger. (In Poland, conversion was made illegal in 1942 and, in any event, even prewar converts were treated like any other Jews.) Until 1944, the penalty for hiding Jews was at most a few months in prison. See Peter Borza, “Righteous Among Nations from Slovakia and the Czech Republic,” in Waław Wierzbieniec and Elżbieta Rączy, eds., *Righteous Among Nations: The Scope and Forms of Help to Jews in East Central Europe During Occupation by the Third Reich* (Jarosław: The Bronisław Markiewicz State Higher School of Technology and Economics, 2014), 97, 100–101. Even in Germany, there was no specific law that prohibited helping Jews. The closest thing was a decree by the Head Office for Reich Security, dated October 24, 1941, that prescribed “on educational grounds” protective custody or up to three months’ imprisonment in a concentration camp to persons of German blood who openly displayed friendly relations to Jews. See Israel Gutman, ed., *The Encyclopedia of the Righteous Among the Nations: Rescuers of Jews during the Holocaust*, vol. 8: *Europe (Part I) and Other Countries* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2007), liii. However, there is no evidence of any death penalty being issued for helping Jews within German borders. While branded “as the abnormal and shameful behavior of deviants,” helping Jews was considered to be less harmful than other offences. As historian Beate Kosmala

from the frequent Jewish excesses directed blindly at elements of the Polish population at large, even though such entreaties were not punishable by law.¹³⁹⁰

This void is striking given the numerous memorial books dedicated to towns in this region that have been published. Yet, those same memorial books, and Holocaust literature in general, often condemn Poles globally for the anti-Jewish activities of a small number of Poles and for the fact that not all Poles were prepared to sacrifice their lives for Jews under the German occupation that followed.¹³⁹¹ Moreover, the evidence shows overwhelmingly that, despite the infinitely greater risk involved, Jews were far more likely to receive assistance from Poles in the German zone, than Poles from Jews in the Soviet zone.

¹³⁹⁰ Only two cases have been recorded, both by Poles, where rabbis were said to have intervened: Rabbi Jakub Awigdor of Drohobycz summoned some Jewish policemen and threatened them with damnation for persecuting prewar Polish officials; some rabbis condemned the activities of local Jews who took part in arresting and deporting Poles and in destroying Polish monuments in Zambrów. See, respectively, Budzyński, *Miasto Schulza*, 426, and Józef Klimaszewski's memoirs (typescript), *W cieniu czerwonego boru*, 10. However, it is not clear whether these were principled objections or simply based on a fear of future reprisals. After the German invasion, it was the Catholic clergy's turn to intervene. The Catholic priest from Szumowo, Rev. Piotr Pianko, incurred the wrath of the Germans by coming to the defence of the now beleaguered Jews and was executed on September 4, 1941 in his liturgical vestments. Ibid., 20. Rev. Aleksander Pęza, who preached openly against cooperating with the Germans and their anti-Semitic provocations, was executed in Grajewo on August 15, 1943. See Gorin, *Graveyard Memorial Book*, xxxii–xxxiii. There are many such examples of Polish priests speaking out publicly against German atrocities directed at Jews and sheltering Jews in the Łomża diocese, e.g., in Hodyszewo, Jabłoń Kościelna, Jedwabne, Łachów, Łapy, Piekuty Nowe, Przytuły, Rutki, and Topczewo. These activities were carried out with the knowledge and approval of Stanisław Łukomski, the bishop of Łomża.

¹³⁹¹ In this regard, one could paraphrase Gerhard L. Weinberg or any one of the countless Jewish observers of Polish attitudes toward the Jews in German-occupied Poland. According to Weinberg, during the Warsaw ghetto uprising, the Jews were allegedly “ignored by the [Polish] population next door” and only “a few” Jews were aided by Poles. See Gerhard L. Weinberg, *A World at War: A Global History of World War II* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 528. One of the most frequently invoked images is that of Poles enjoying themselves on a merry-go-round erected by the Germans near the ghetto wall. From a report of the famed underground courier Jerzy Lerski, as well as others, we know that this is essentially a hoax: the merry-go-round was by no means a popular attraction and it ceased to function when the revolt broke. See Jerzy Lerski, *Emisariusz “Jur”* (London: Polish Cultural Foundation, 1984), 107; Władysław Bartoszewski, “Wierni Krajowi,” *Zeszyty Historyczne* (Paris), vol. 71 (1985): 229; Zbigniew Wolak, “Efektowny symbol literacki—ale fałszywy,” *Życie Warszawy*, May 26, 1993; Ryszard Matuszewski, “Nieruchoma karuzela na placu Krasieńskich,” *Rzeczpospolita*, May 10, 2003. As for the alleged lack of assistance for the Warsaw ghetto, Marek Edelman, the last surviving leader of the revolt, has stated authoritatively that without Polish help, there would have been no uprising in the ghetto. Moreover, the revolt was universally viewed by the Jews themselves as a symbolic and even a suicidal struggle against the Germans, who were then at the peak of their power. (Had they wanted to, the Germans could have crushed the revolt in a matter of days.) According to credible estimates by Emanuel Ringelblum, the chronicler of the ghetto, at least 15,000 Jews who had escaped from the ghetto were living on the “Aryan” side of Warsaw in the autumn of 1943, sheltered with the assistance of some 40,000–60,000 Poles. See Bartoszewski, *The Blood Shed Unites Us*, 222. Yet there is no record of any effort on the part of these Jews to come to the assistance of their fellow Jews fighting in the ghetto. Their goal was to survive the war. However, this does not deter “moral authorities” like Elie Wiesel from writing, to their everlasting shame, that “the Poles betrayed them. True, here and there a ‘good citizen’ was found whose cooperation could be *bought* with Jewish money. But how many good-hearted, upright Poles were to be found at the time in Poland? Very few. And where were the idealists, the universalists, the humanists when the ghetto needed them? Like all of Warsaw they were silent as the ghetto burned. Worse still: Warsaw’s persecution and murder of Jews increased once there was no longer a ghetto. ... Who most earns our outraged anger—the murderers, their accomplices, the *szmalcownicy*—the blackmailers—or the common citizenry pleased in their hearts that Poland will be rid of her Jews ...” See his introduction to Vladka Meed, *On Both Sides of the Wall* (New York: Holocaust Library, 1979), 3–4. With regard to taking money from sheltered Jews, survivor Edwin Langberg has a different perspective: “In helping a Jew, a Pole not only risked his own life, but the life of his entire family. Genuine outside help, whether money exchanged hands or not, was an act of great heroism even if it was commingled with a little greed. Any help without financial initiative was an act of sainthood and God knows there aren’t many saints.” See Edwin Langberg with Julia M. Langberg, *Sara’s Blessing* (Lumberton, New Jersey: Emethas Publishers, 2003), 24.

To be sure, contrary to what some historians contend,¹³⁹² there were fairly frequent cases of Jews—mostly the middle-aged and elderly, but seldom the radicalized youth—warning their grateful Polish neighbours of impending arrests and deportations, intervening on their behalf with Soviet officials, and providing other forms of assistance, sometimes for payment or in gratitude for past favours. Poles made a

¹³⁹² According to Dov Levin, who cites the example of Jews in Rożyszcze helping to free a Pole who had helped Jews from an NKVD prison, “these cases were few and far between; they must be treated as exceptions in the shaky relations between the Jews and their non-Jewish neighbors.” See Levin, *The Lesser of Two Evils*, 62.

point of recording such acts of kindness,¹³⁹³ which refutes the claim that they only noticed negative things about Jews, and that unfavourable comments were merely a projection of this supposed attitude. Poles were

¹³⁹³ The following examples have been culled from an examination of hundreds of testimonies: Jakub Hoffman, *Początki konspiracji na Wołyniu* (Paris: Kultura, 1950), 5 (Osjasz Bidermajer, a Jewish military settler, helped to transfer the wife of an endangered Polish colonel to the German zone of occupation); Gonczyński, *Raj proletariacki*, 14 (the author was assisted several times by a Jewish woman named Dina); Kazimierz Schleyen, *Lwowskie gawędy* (London: Gryf, 1967), 8 (an elderly Jew made a monetary donation to a Polish refugee relief committee in Lwów, via its president, Zygmunt Nowakowski); Franciszek Wysłouch, *Opowiadania poleskie* (London: Polska Fundacja Kulturalna, 1968) (both local Polesian peasants and Jews defended the landlord Antoni Wysłouch when Soviet officials tried to incite them against him in 1939 in the village of Perkowicze/Pirkowicze near Drohiczyn Poleski; Wysłouch was arrested in March 1940 and disappeared in 1940, likely killed; his extensive library was set on fire); Gross and Grudzińska-Gross, *W czterdziestym na Matko na Sybir zesłali...*, 291 (Count Stanisław Badeni was able to escape from Radziechów with the help of Jews and Ukrainians); Rowiński, *Moje zderzenie z bolszewikami we wrześniu 1939 roku*, 38–39 (in Kosmaczów, near Kostopol, a friendly Jewish woman came to assure a Polish forest ranger and some game wardens who had been attacked by Ukrainian bands of her support and offered them some cigarettes), 48 (a senior forest ranger by the name of Adolf Gałęcki from Podlužne, near Kostopol, was, apparently, released from jail after the intervention of some Jews), 118 (a Jewish private from Silesia by the name of Langmann, who had been taken to the Donbas for labour together with Polish military internees, struck a communist agitator who continually maligned Poland for which he was placed in solitary confinement for ten days but secretly received food from Poles), 211 (transportation and lodging was provided near and in Hrubieszów for payment); Liszewski, *Wojna polsko-sowiecka 1939 r.*, 202–203, and Szawłowski, *Wojna polsko-sowiecka 1939* (1995, 1997), vol. 2, 72 (a Jewish doctor cared attentively for wounded Polish soldiers in Grodno), 155 (a Jewish guard who had served in the Polish army secretly brought food to Polish prisoners of war); Dębski and Popek, *Okrutna przestroga*, 242 (in Równe some Jews warned two Poles who were able to hide of their impending arrest); Davies and Polonsky, *Jews in Eastern Poland and the USSR, 1939–46*, 267 (a Jewish lawyer in Lwów warned Poles about dangers that they faced from the GPU [State Political Administration], and his son assisted Polish students with placements in dormitories and stipends); Władysław Chudy, “W sowieckim więzieniu w Brześciu nad Bugiem,” *Zeszyty Historyczne*, no. 61 (1982): 125 (attentive medical care was provided by a Jewish doctor employed in the prison in Brześć on the Bug); Haskell Nordon, *The Education of a Polish Jew: A Physician's War Memoirs* (New York: D. Grossman Press, 1982), 206–210 (delivery of a box of religious articles by an attending physician to a local Catholic church in Równe at the behest of an interned Polish military chaplain); Mieczysław Suwała, “Boże, coś Polskę” w Puszczy Nalibockiej,” in Julian Humeński, ed., *Udział kapelanów wojskowych w drugiej wnie światowej* (Warsaw: Akademia Teologii Katolickiej, 1984), 371–72 (Polish and Jewish villagers protested that arrest of Rev. Paweł Dołżyk, the pastor of Derewno, and secured his release by the local Jewish militia); Danuta Teczarowska [Tęczarowska], *Deportation into the Unknown* (Braunton/Devon: Merlin Books, 1985), 25 (a Jewish doctor at the Lwów Polyclinic repeatedly warned a Polish co-worker of the possibility of deportation); Michał Żółtowski, *Tarcza Rolanda* (Kraków: Znak, 1989), 46 (assistance from Jews in crossing the Soviet-German demarcation line in October 1939); Baczyński, *Ty musisz żyć, aby dać świadectwo prawdzie*, 14–15, 23 (the owner of a small coal warehouse in Drohobycz, who was put in charge of shipping large volumes of coal, employed some needy Polish students and provided coal to a Polish teacher); Stanisław Borkacki, *Prawda o karmelitankach i nasze sumienie*, Second edition, (Bielsko-Biała: Stowarzyszenie Ofiar Wojny, 1991), 15 (two Jews vouched for the author's father and thus facilitated his release from detention in Horynka, near Krzemieniec); Wojciech Wiśniewski, *Pani na Berżenikach: Rozmowy z Heleną z Zanów Stankiewiczową* (London: Polska Fundacja Kulturalna, 1991), 182 (Kazimierz Stankiewicz, a landowner in the Wilno region, was released after a delegation of Jews from Dukszy submitted a petition to an NKVD commissar in Jeziorosy); Reiss, *Z deszczu pod rynnę...*, 51–52 (a Jew in Lwów hid his Polish housekeeper when the police came to deport her); Popek, *Osadnictwo wojskowe na Wołyniu*, 50 (a Jew vouched for a Polish woman in Równe), 69 (Jews warned Poles from the colony of Stasziców, near Katerburg, in Krzemieniec county, of imminent deportations); Andruszkiewicz, memoirs (typescript), 31 (the author was warned by some Jews that his family was to be deported); Łappo, *Z Kresów Wschodnich Rzeczypospolitej*, 274 (local Ukrainians and Jews signed a petition to free an arrested Polish colonist in Krzemieniec county); Łappo, *Z Kresów Wschodnich RP na wygnanie*, 377 (Jews warned Polish settlers in Stasziców, near Katerburg near Krzemieniec, of imminent deportation and shielded them from harm by Ukrainians), 633 (in Turzec, near Stolpce, a Jewish acquaintance gave two gold coins to a Polish family being deported to the Gulag), and Jeśmanowa, *Stalin's Ethnic Cleansing in Eastern Poland*, 425–26, 716; Jasiewicz, *Zagłada polskich Kresów*, 186 (Bohdan Przyłuski, a landowner from the Święciany area, was warned by a Jewish acquaintance of his imminent arrest by the NKVD; members of the aristocratic Radziwiłł family interned in Szepietówka were brought winter clothes by an old Jewish acquaintance from Ołyka); Jasiewicz, *Lista strat ziemiaństwa polskiego 1939–1945*, 271 (some Jews gave shelter to the landowner Stanisław Doliwa-Falkowski, but he was betrayed to the local Red militia and executed); Wierzbicki, *Polacy i Białorusini w zaborze sowieckim*, 114 (the landlord and senator Kazimierz Rdułowski and his wife were assisted and sheltered by several Jews from

known to reciprocate in kind.¹³⁹⁴ However, overall, such cases were the exception, even though the risk that one faced for performing such deeds was, with a few notable exceptions, negligible.¹³⁹⁵ They cannot therefore be equated to the assistance given to Jews by Poles under German occupation, which was not only forbidden but punishable by death. Only rarely was temporary shelter (a much more risky undertaking) provided to Poles who were being hunted down by the Soviet authorities.¹³⁹⁶ Can anyone seriously argue that Jews viewed Poles as being within the Jewish universe of obligation or that the Jews

¹³⁹⁴ When Jonah Friedler's wife was warned of her husband's imminent arrest by an NKVD official he had befriended in Stryj, Friedler hid with a Polish family and thus avoided exile. See Jonah Friedler, "Holocaust Chapters," in Kudish, et al., *Seifer Stryj [Sitri]*, 172 (Chapter 3).

¹³⁹⁵ After a Soviet lieutenant was shot in Choroszcz on June 24, 1941, then under Soviet occupation, Rev. Franciszek Pieściuk was arrested by the Soviets, who claimed, falsely, that the shots were fired from the church tower. Although summarily sentenced to death, Rev. Pieściuk's life was, for some reason, spared by the Soviet soldier assigned to execute him. When Rev. Pieściuk knelt and asked permission to pray, the soldier shot in the air and receded. However, three residents who went to intervene on Rev. Pieściuk's behalf with the Soviet staff—Dr. Izaak Friedman (a Jew) and the orderlies, Jankiel Sidrański (a Jew) and Henryk Klimowicz (a Catholic)—were brutally massacred outside the town, having been stabbed with bayonets, their eyes plucked out and their tongues cut off. The story is unusual, as this is probably the only example of a Jew sacrificing his life in defence of a Pole during the Second World War. Suppressed by the Communist authorities, the memory of this event is now preserved in a monument at the execution site. See Krzysztof Bielawski, "They Gave Their Lives for a Priest," Virtual Shtetl, Internet: <<http://www.sztetl.org.pl/en/cms/story/1175,they-gave-their-lives-for-a-priest/>>. In another exceptional case, a Jew who sheltered a Pole was arrested by the Soviet authorities, tried, and sentenced to 10 years' imprisonment in the Pitma labor camp. He was released in the fall of 1941 and joined General Anders' army; he deserted from the army when it arrived in Palestine. See Tsvi Ahuvi (Lev), "Days of Harship and Suffering," in David Shtokfish, ed., *Sefer Divenishok: Yad vashem le-ayara yehudit* (Israel: Divenishok Societies in Israel and the United States, 1977), 219 ff.; translated as *Devenishki Book: Memorial Book*, Internet: <<https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/dieveniskes/dieveniskes.html>>.

¹³⁹⁶ Kwapiński, *1939–1944*, 7 (a Jewish doctor in Tarnopol provided temporary shelter for about a week to a Polish official); Samira, *Nie byłem tym...kim byłem* (London: n.p., 1994), 7 (a Jewish lawyer named Mark sheltered 14 Polish officer cadets overnight in Rohatyn and obtained civilian clothes for them from some Polish students); Jasiewicz, *Zagłada polskich Kresów*, 186 (Stanisław Falkowski, a former director of the Regional Court in Pińsk, was sheltered in Janów Poleski by Jewish friends in September 1939; Maria Rymśza, a Polish landowner, was hidden by Jews in Kleck); account of Teresa Lisiak in Grzelak, *Wrzesień 1939 na Kresach w relacjach*, 95 (the wife of a sergeant of the Frontier Defence Corps in Wołożyn took shelter in the home of Jewish acquaintances after her husband's arrest on September 18, 1939); Anna Rudzińska, "Wspomnienia lwowskie 1939–1941," *Zeszyty Historyczne*, no. 137 (2001): 133–34 (an elderly Jew in Smorze, near the prewar Hungarian border, took in Bronisław Wojciechowski, a Polish officer overnight and his son-in-law transported the officer to Skole in his hay-wagon the following day; the Polish officer was also assisted in a small border town by the head of the Ukrainian police, whose brother he had met in Lwów); Siekierka, Komański, and Bulzacki, *Ludobójstwo dokonane przez nacjonalistów ukraińskich na Polakach w województwie lwowskim 1939–1947*, 45–46 (a Jew in the village of Knihinicze near Rohatyn sheltered Rev. Roman Dąca for an evening and then took him to Nowosielce); 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), 78 (Julian Edelman, a pharmacist in Lwów, provided shelter to Stanisława Krawczuk and her husband).

lived up to the role of their brothers' keepers vis-à-vis their Polish neighbours?¹³⁹⁷ The theme that Poles excluded Jews from the brotherhood of victims under German occupation has become a hackneyed

¹³⁹⁷ With its short-lived interwar independence, Poland was already divided along ethnic lines before the outbreak of the Second World War. Once the war started, there was a complete breakdown of Poland's society into its constituent elements, with many ethnic groups seeking to be united with members of their groups who lived outside Poland's interwar borders. These various ethnicities pursued their own national agendas in isolation from each other, often riven by mutual hostilities. The ethnic disintegration was particularly pronounced in the Soviet occupation zone. Moreover, both the German and Soviet occupiers saw, and treated, Poland's multi-ethnic society as a miscellany of peoples, each of which was invited to collaborate individually. See Jochen Böhrer and Jacek Andrzej Młynarczyk, "Collaboration and Resistance in Wartime Poland (1939–1945): A Case for Differentiated Occupation Studies," *Journal of Modern European History*, vol. 16 (2018), no. 2: 225–46. Thus, there was no mutual universe of obligation shared by these various ethnic groups, including Jews.

Throughout the war there were strong indications that many Jews, and their leadership, did not cherish connections and relations with Poles and regarded Poland as a *Saisonstaat*. Not only was there mass Jewish participation in anti-Polish manifestations under Soviet rule, but leftist Zionists in the Warsaw ghetto championed the Soviet cause well into 1941. The Zionists abroad put strong pressures on the Polish government in exile to guarantee full *national* autonomy to its Jewish citizens, something no minority enjoyed in any Western democratic state. (While pushing for greater separation of Jews and Poles, and freedom to develop culturally without interference from Poles, Jews branded those Poles who wanted to live in their closed and traditional Catholic-oriented society free from outside influence as rabid nationalists and anti-Semites.) It did not escape the notice of Poles either that once thousands of Jews managed to leave the Soviet Union with the Free Polish Army, they promptly deserted en masse in Palestine. As in the aftermath of World War I, the Jewish leadership, whose political influence and financial resources were infinitely greater than those of the Poles', were prepared to go over the head of the legitimate Polish authorities and ally themselves with Poland's overlords. As soon as the Soviet Union installed their new puppet regime in Lublin in 1947, the Palestine-based Representation of Polish Jewry, the Joint Distribution Committee and the World Jewish Congress readily found a new "partner" with whom to negotiate. For many Poles, the loyalty of their fellow Jewish citizens could not be taken for granted.

leitmotiv in Holocaust writing,¹³⁹⁸ but it is one that can be invoked equally in the context of Soviet-occupied Eastern Poland.

The impression one receives from hundreds of recorded accounts is that members of the non-Jewish minorities (Ukrainians and Belorussians) were more inclined to help or sympathize with the Poles, even

¹³⁹⁸ This theme is also prevalent in “sophisticated” literature and is harped on incessantly by those who are not given to circumspection about Jewish conduct toward Poles, or the conduct of Jews in relation to one another. See, for example, Jan Tomasz Gross, “A Tangled Web: Confronting Stereotypes Concerning Relations between Poles, Germans, Jews, and Communists,” in Deák, *The Politics of Retribution in Europe*, 129. Often one comes across the charge that Poles openly gloated over the tragedy of the Jews as an alleged norm of Polish conduct. Israel Shahak, one of Israel’s leading human rights activists and a survivor of the Warsaw ghetto, attempted to put this charge in its proper perspective: “It is of course true that there was another small group which either helped the Nazis, or expressed, quite loudly too, their satisfaction that the Jews ‘are gone.’ ... But in justice it should be pointed out that on many, perhaps most, of those occasions, there was also a verbal opposition to such a statement ... I had, by the way, many occasions to think about this and similar occasions, when I heard completely similar statements made by Israeli Jews in the summer of 1982, when a minority (but a greater one I am sure than in conquered Poland of 1943) expressed delight in every report of the death of Palestinians and Lebanese. ... I will quote one really typical story which I myself vividly remember: It was on a railway, a short time after a control of personal papers...carried out by some German soldiers. The people in the crowded railway truck...began to converse about the sufferings caused by the occupation...when one person suddenly exclaimed: ‘...after we have our independence I also want to donate money in order to put a golden statue of Hitler in Warsaw for freeing us of Jews.’ There was a short silence and another person exclaimed—and I am translating him literally as his words are branded in my memory: ‘Fear God, Sir! They are human beings too!’ There was then a total, rather long silence ...” See Israel Shahak, “The ‘Life of Death’: An Exchange,” *The New York Review of Books*, January 29, 1987. A similar scene was observed by Szmul Zygielbojm, a respected Jewish member of the Polish National Council in London, who recalled that when he was on his way to Kraków, he heard a Pole sermonizing on the Jews in the presence of other Poles. Finally, one of the Polish peasants who had heard enough of the anti-Semitic diatribe asked the man, “And where did you learn to preach so well in German?” The anti-Semite tried to respond but was drowned out by the laughter of the pro-Jewish Poles. See Lukas, *The Forgotten Holocaust*, 142–43. A Jewish teenager who was part of a group of six Jews being smuggled from Warsaw to the countryside recalled: “We entered into a single train compartment occupied already by the Christian Poles ... We were greeted in a friendly manner, and the man sitting by himself moved over and sat with his four companions. ... The conductor, a Christian Pole, entered the compartment to check the tickets. ... we uncovered our armbands to identify ourselves. I watched the reaction of the Christian Polish passengers with great apprehension. ... But the attitude of the Christian passengers was sympathetic and not at all hostile. They started talking with us, and urged us to throw away our armbands and our Jewish identity. ... Those five people seemed truly to care about my survival, repeating over and over again that I could be saved and survive as a Pole. They persuaded me that all Poles did not hate us, did not wish us to perish.” See Bakowska, *Not All Was Lost*, 142–44. (This attitude contrasted sharply with the attitude of Germans toward Poles, as Bakowska learned when she was later taken for forced labour in Germany: “As we went through the streets leaving and returning to the train station, German children followed us, throwing stones and calling us ‘dirty Poles’ and other insulting names. Nobody tried to stop them.” Ibid., 189.) A Jew passing as a Pole who was part of a transport of Poles shipped to work in Germany recalled that the suggestion of a young Pole to search for Jews hiding among them met with the pointed rebuke of another Pole: “‘You are a stupid peasant, Stephan. We are all in the same boat. The Germans will finish the Jews first, then they will finish us. ... The Jews are Polish citizens and have contributed to the prosperity of Poland ... Together, Jews and Poles, we must fight the Germans or we will perish together. ... We should have compassion for our fellow Polish Jewish citizens and the terrible lot that has befallen them.’ ... His impressive presence silenced Stephan’s zeal for a while. Soon the talk of the crowd turned to more mundane topics on happenings and problems in their respective villages.” See David Makow, *Dangerous Luck: Memories of a Hunted Life* (New York: Shengold Publishers, 2000), 39–41. A Jew who passed as a Pole in Lwów recalled an incident in a streetcar when a passenger admonished a Jew for not wearing a Jewish armband. The abusive passenger did not find any support among those in the streetcar, not even when he was ejected by the Jew. The tram driver remarked loudly: “It serves him right.” See Eliaż Bialski, *Patrząc prosto w oczy* (Montreal: Polish-Jewish Heritage Foundation, 2002), 83. Miriam Peleg-Mariańska, a Jew who worked closely with the Council for Aid to Jews, describes similar incidents: “There were also other [German] posters, both in Warsaw and in Kraków, saying things like ‘Jew—lice—spotted typhus’, with an appropriate illustration an other ignominious slogans ... I did see a large number of Poles who were offended to the depth of their beings by this vile propaganda ... Then a young boy appeared in the tram [in Warsaw] and he was singing a vile little song ... I looked at ‘Teodor’ [Adam Rysiewicz]. I saw him clench his teeth so hard that his jaw turned white. At the next stop he took the young singer by the collar and threw him out of the carriage ... He himself remained inside. I was afraid of what the passengers’ reaction was going to be, but no one said a word.” See Miriam Peleg-Mariańska and Mordecai Peleg, *Witnesses: Life in Occupied Kraków* (London: Routledge, 1991), 151–52. A Jew who passed as a Pole in Warsaw recorded: “On my way home from work in the street car, I listened to the loud discussions amongst the passengers. ‘The ghetto is burning! The Jews are burning, and we will finally be rid of them!’ said one. The majority of passengers

though the Jews were often in a better position to do so.¹³⁹⁹ As we have seen, more than anyone else, the Jews feared collaborators and betrayers from within their own community. So one can imagine the surprise when the Polish courier Tadeusz Chciuk (who went by the name of Marek Celt) was offered a heartfelt apology by an elderly Jewish woman in Lwów for all those Jews, whom she also detested, who were cooperating with the Bolsheviks.¹⁴⁰⁰

The outcome of collaboration with the Soviets—as well as the infamous Gulag—was not an unknown factor. By 1939 many millions of innocent people had fallen victim—in deportations, executions, labour camps and mass starvation—to the most murderous regime of the twentieth century, and indeed of all history. Reports of these atrocities had reached Poland well before the war. On the other hand, Jews who had been imprisoned in Nazi Germany before the outbreak of the war were, for the most part, released and allowed to leave the country. The Germans did not embark on full-scale genocide in the early months of conquest, though there were many smaller executions and some mass executions—mostly of Christian Poles, but also of Jews—in places like Piaśnica and Palmiry.¹⁴⁰¹

That these events have been downplayed, or more often, negated in Jewish historiography is not surprising given the skewed perspective of the Jewish survivors. First, the denunciations targeted Poles disproportionately, and thus few Jewish observers were concerned or moved by them. Secondly, the Jews who were deported to the Gulag mostly survived their ordeal, and thus paradoxically became appreciative, albeit grudgingly in some cases, of their denouncers. Thirdly, the Jewish denouncers also survived the Holocaust by escaping to the Soviet interior and reemerged after the war cloaked in new robes: to the outside world they were not only Holocaust survivors, but often victims of Soviet repression. They were soon reintegrated seamlessly into Jewish society as such, and that community felt little need or obligation to self-assess or to dredge up uncomfortable events that would cast them in an unfavourable light.

In the Soviet zone, the active assistance of local collaborators (from among the non-Polish population) was crucial to the success of the identification, arrest and deportation to the Gulag of hundreds of thousands of victims. These deeds were carried out on the basis of prepared lists and targeted first and foremost large segments of the Polish population. In the German zone many, if not most Jews, were readily distinguishable from Poles (distinctive dress, beards, physical appearance) and Jewish homes bore mezuzahs. The ghettoization and deportation of Jews to death camps in German-occupied Poland, on the other hand, were not dependent on similar forms of collaboration by Poles. These tasks were assigned for the most part to the

¹³⁹⁹ See, for example, the account of Grażyna Strumiłło-Miłosz in Kowalska, *Przeżyć, aby wrócić!*, 85–87, regarding Belorussian peasants; and Lubomirska, *Karmazynowy reportaż*, 12, regarding Ukrainian peasants, which are representative of many such accounts. Józef Kalwa from Nowogródek recalled: “Relations between the Belarus population in our settlement and the Poles were very good ... In fact, some of them sent us parcels after we were deported.” See Wojciechowska, *Waiting To Be Heard*, 175.

¹⁴⁰⁰ Celt, *Biali kurierzy*, 225. That source also confirms that pro-Polish Jews were afraid to voice their sympathies publicly in the face of the pro-Soviet agitation of the Jewish masses. *Ibid.*, 298.

¹⁴⁰¹ One method employed by the Germans already in the early days of the war burning people alive. For example, Jews were burned alive in synagogues and prayer houses in Chmielnik, Będzin and Mielec, on September 4, 8 and 13, 1939, respectively. See Marek Maciągowski and Piotr Krawczyk, *The Story of Jewish Chmielnik* (Kielce: XYZ and Town and Municipality Office in Chmielnik, 2007), 156; Gilbert, *The Holocaust*, 84–108. Eighty Jews were burned alive in Lipsko near the Vistula on September 8, 1939, and a group of Poles and 13 Jews were burned alive in a barn in the village of Cecylówka near Kozienice. See Krzysztof Urbański, *Zagłada Żydów w Dystrykcie Radomskim* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Akademii Pedagogicznej, 2004), 27, 28. On September 10, 1939, the Germans burned alive 22 Poles in a barn in Bądków near Łęczysca. See Krystyna Daszkiewicz, *Niemieckie ludobójstwo na narodzie polskim (1939–1945)*, (Toruń: Adam Marszałek, 2009), 217.

German-appointed Jewish councils (*Judenräte*) and the Jewish ghetto police.¹⁴⁰² The entire action was overseen by the Germans who employed numerous German forces and auxiliaries of various nationalities (Ukrainian, Lithuanian, Latvian, Estonian) brought in for this purpose. The involvement of the Polish

¹⁴⁰² Yehuda Bauer has recently acknowledged that in the larger ghettos, it was the *Judenräte* who provided the Germans with lists and cooperated in the handing over of victims. According to that historian, the Jewish police played a “major role” in the deportation of the Warsaw Jews to Treblinka in the summer of 1942, with similar roles being played by the Jewish police forces in Łódź, Kraków, and elsewhere. See Yehuda Bauer, *Rethinking the Holocaust* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2001), 143–44. Traitors and spies not only plagued the ghetto in Brześć, but no Germans were required to hold the gates: “Jewish police shared watch over the gates with Ukrainian collaborators. ... The Germans could rely on Ukrainian and Jewish policemen to aid them in starving out the Jewish population.” *Ibid.*, 154. The ghetto in Grodno followed a typical pattern: “The *Judenrat* was compelled to prepare lists of names, transfer Jews from one ghetto to another, and declare that the deportees were, supposedly, being sent to places of work. ... Very severe criticism of the Jewish police was lodged by the survivors of the Grodno ghetto for their attempt to save themselves by fulfilling their duties in a most meticulous manner. Only a few policemen refrained from collaborating with the Germans ... even during the February [1942] *Aktion* some policemen uncovered hiding places and turned in Jews to the Germans.” See Spector, *Lost Jewish Worlds*, 161–62. Similarly, during the great deportation of the summer of 1942 in Warsaw, the Jewish police, whose numbers had swollen from 1,600 in December 1941 to nearly 2,200, made itself notorious by its cooperation with the Germans in rounding up Jews. Emanuel Ringelblum wrote in December 1942: “The Jewish police had a bad reputation even before the deportation. Unlike the Polish police, which did not take part in the abduction for the labour camps [from spring 1941], the Jewish police did engage in this dirty work. The police were also notorious for their shocking corruption and demoralization.” See Lewin, *A Cup of Tears*, 17, 19.

“Blue” police was, in the assessment of leading Jewish historians such as Szymon Datner and Raul Hilberg, marginal.¹⁴⁰³

In the cities, Jews by and large self-identified by obeying German orders to move into ghettos before the Holocaust got underway. In the countryside, as one Jew tells us, the task of identifying Jews was especially easy for the Germans and did not require much Polish assistance:

¹⁴⁰³ Szymon Datner, a long-time director of the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw, has stated that the Holocaust “cannot be charged against the Poles. It was German work and it was carried out by German hands. The Polish police were employed in a very marginal way, in what I would call keeping order. I must state with all decisiveness that more than 90% of that terrifying, murderous work was carried out by the Germans, with no Polish participation whatsoever.” See Małgorzata Niezabitowska, *Remnants: The Last Jews of Poland* (New York: Friendly Press, 1986), 247. According to Raul Hilberg, one of the foremost Holocaust historians, “Of all the native police forces in occupied Eastern Europe [and to this we could readily add the French and Dutch police—*M.P.*], those of Poland were least involved in anti-Jewish actions. ... The Germans could not view them as collaborators, for in German eyes they were not even worthy of that role. They in turn could not join the Germans in major operations against Jews or Polish resistors, lest they be considered traitors by virtually every Polish onlooker. Their task in the destruction of the Jews was therefore limited.” See Raul Hilberg, *Perpetrators, Victims, Bystanders*, 92–93. For additional information about the “Blue” police, see Adam Hempel, *Pogrobowcy kłęski: Rzecz o policji “granatowej” w Generalnym Gubernatorstwie 1939–1945* (Warsaw: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1990), 166–80. In Warsaw, as well as other localities such as Opole Lubelskie and Komarówka near Radzyń, the “Blue” police refused to take part in executions of Jews; some of them were even executed by the Germans because of their insubordination. See Zbigniew Zaniewicki, *Pięć groźnych lat (1939–1941)* (London: Polska Fundacja Kulturalna, 1982), 110; “Żydzi zwracali się ku kościołowi,” *Opoka* (London), no. 11 (July 1975): 83 (Opole Lubelskie); Christopher Browning, *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1992), 157; Michał Grynberg, ed., *Words To Outlive Us: Voices from the Warsaw Ghetto* (New York: Metropolitan Books/Henry Holt, 2002), 320 (Warsaw). Mary Berg records in her diary entry of June 3, 1942, that the Polish police were ordered to shoot 110 Jews in the prison on Gęsia Street in Warsaw, but refused. They were forced to watch the execution. “One of the eyewitnesses told me that several Polish policemen wept,” she noted, and “some of them averted their eyes during the execution.” See Mary Berg and ed. by S. L. Shneiderman, ed., *Warsaw Ghetto: A Diary* (New York: L. B. Fischer, 1945), 154. During the revolt in the Warsaw ghetto in April 1943, scores of Polish police failed to report for duty to guard the ghetto wall. See Dariusz Libionka, “ZWZ-AK i Delegatura Rządu RP wobec eksterminacji Żydów polskich,” 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), 90–91. After the failed revolt in the Warsaw ghetto, according to German reports Poles helped to round up Jews only “in a handful of cases” (“in einzelnen Fällen”). See Raul Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews*, vol. 2, 514–15. The extent of German manpower and resources available to implement the Final Solution in occupied Poland is illustrated by the following massive manhunt—on a scale unheard of in any other occupied country—conducted in “Aryan” Warsaw on April 6, 1944: “three thousand Germans were deployed from four in the morning to nine in the evening in a search for Jews in hiding. In all, seventy ‘non-Aryan’ men and thirty-one ‘non-Aryan’ women were seized: all were executed five days later.” See Gilbert, *The Holocaust*, 667. When a group of Jews broke out of Treblinka, the Germans mobilized their troops and conducted a thorough search of the entire area, setting up checkpoints on the roads and combing nearby villages and searching villagers’ homes. See Samuel Willenberg, *Surviving Treblinka* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, in association with the Institute for Polish-Jewish Studies, 1989), 25, 144. As we shall see, in France there were only 3,000 occupation troops stationed in the entire country.

Contrary to what is often claimed, therefore, because of the sheer strength of the German forces and the degree of control they exercised, the objective conditions for rescue in Poland were far less favourable than those prevailing in other countries, particularly Western European ones, where, especially in France, the Netherlands, and Norway, “German manpower was stretched very thin” and “local administrative assistance was essential in registering, arresting, and deporting the Jews and Gypsies.” See Donald Niewyk and Francis Nicosia, *The Columbia Guide to the Holocaust* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 87–88. Regarding Norway, American historian István Deák wrote in *The New York Review of Books* (“Holocaust Heroes,” November 5, 1992): “*Norway’s Response to the Holocaust: A Historical Perspective* [New York: Holocaust Library, 1991], by Samuel Abrahamsen, is a book sponsored by the ‘Thanks to Scandinavia’ Foundation ... but having read this eminently objective account, I wonder why Jews should be particularly thankful, at least in the case of Norway. Nearly half of that country’s minuscule Jewish population of 1,600 (0.05 percent of the total population) was killed during the war and, as Abrahamsen, a professor emeritus at Brooklyn College in New York, points out, none would have died without Norwegian collaboration. Norway had only a few convinced Nazis but enough anti-Semites and law-abiding policemen and bureaucrats to make the Final Solution a near-success. To begin with, the small number of Jews in Norway was the result of a long and, at least to me, astonishing tradition of anti-Semitism combined with an extremely restrictive interwar immigration law that kept out nearly all refugees from Nazi terror. During the war, many Norwegians who would otherwise not have helped the Germans, took part in registering, arresting, and handing over Jews to the German authorities. As for the powerful Norwegian resistance movement, it resembled all the other European resistance movements in caring little about what

Traveling through the Polish countryside in the summer of 1940, the uninformed observer could get the impression that life continued relatively peacefully in those small communities. Most men still wore their Eastern Jewish attire; old Jews, looking like patriarchs out of the Bible were standing dignified in front of their houses, the Star of David on their arms. This picture already belonged to the past in the big cities. It was also pleasing to notice that most Polish peasants treated the Jews in a rather friendly way. They seemed more tolerant than gentiles in the larger centers. Denunciations were exceptional.¹⁴⁰⁴

Moreover, unlike the situation in the Soviet zone, in German-occupied Poland not only were rewards offered for turning in Jews, but also, and more importantly, those who failed to do so exposed themselves, their families, and even their community to the death penalty. There were no such incentives in Soviet-occupied Poland, nor did one risk one's freedom or life for not turning in one's neighbour. There, collaboration was uncoerced and *entirely gratuitous*.

One might paraphrase, in the context of the Soviet occupation of Eastern Poland, the oft-repeated charge levelled against Poles by Holocaust historians such as Lucy Dawidowicz and Mordechai Paldiel:¹⁴⁰⁵ Hunting down Poles (officers, soldiers and officials) became a favourite pastime of the Jews; a similar phenomenon of gratuitous collaboration (with the Soviets) was without parallel in occupied Europe. Or perhaps one might adapt the following charge leveled against Poles—interchanging the words “Jews” and “Poles” and substituting “Soviets” for “Germans”:

Jews expected something different from Poles, which made refusal of help and betrayal all the more painful. The Jews quickly learned that their expectations were totally not in accord with the situation, that they were naive in their expectation that since Poles and Jews faced a common enemy, the past grudges would be forgotten, and both would be on the same side of the barricade. Unfortunately, this did not happen—the Jews were excluded from the civil, neighborly, fraternal, and ultimately human community. This exclusion was effected on various levels by the Germans, Polish authorities, and ordinary Poles, with the last instance being perhaps the clearest, closest, and most direct kind of exclusion. That disloyalty or, bluntly speaking—betrayal—increased the Jews' suffering. ...

This disillusionment with the Jews, even if we think it unfair (for some Poles did help), has its psychological explanation. For evil is more vivid than good, both from the perspective of the psychological experience and from the objective harm it does. Experienced good does not erase experienced evil; help does not counterbalance harm—painful experiences are remembered longer, they have more powerful and important influence on one's conduct as well as on one's self-assessment and identity. A rule of psychology says that many positive experiences can obscure one negative experience, but if the number of pluses and minuses is almost the same, then the negative experiences' influence is stronger than the positives'. This principle, known as positive-negative asymmetry, tells us that people respond to positive and negative information and experiences differently.¹⁴⁰⁶

Or one could even argue, as is done in relation to Poles, “those who are morally tainted by the behavior of a group they belong to, even though they did not participate in this behavior, they are morally responsible” because they were aware of the situation.¹⁴⁰⁷ At the same time it should be recognized that these types of

¹⁴⁰⁴ Gary A. Keins, *A Journey Through the Valley of Perdition* ([United States]: n.p., 1985), 72–73. Another Jewish testimony describes a Jewish wedding in the village of Chorzew near Jędrzejów at the beginning of 1940 which was attended by many Polish guests; young Polish boys, who thought she was the daughter of a rabbi, eagerly asked her to dance. See Sabina Rachel Kałowska, *Uciekać, aby żyć* (Lublin: Norbertinum, 2000), 52.

¹⁴⁰⁵ Lucy S. Dawidowicz, *The Holocaust and the Historians*, 106, speaks of the “widespread Polish sport of bounty hunting”; Mordechai Paldiel, *The Path of the Righteous: Gentile Rescuers of Jews During the Holocaust* (Hoboken, New Jersey: KTAV Publishing House, in association with The Jewish Foundation for Christian Rescuers/ADL, New York, 1993), 182, speaks of a “plague of blackmailers”—a “shameful phenomenon for which there was no parallel (to such an extent) in any other Nazi-occupied country.”

¹⁴⁰⁶ Barbara Engelking, “Murdering and Denouncing Jews in the Polish Countryside, 1942–1945,” *East European Politics and Societies*, vol. 25, no. 3 (August 2011): 433–56, here at 439.

¹⁴⁰⁷ Stephen L. Esquith, “Reframing the Responsibilities of Bystanders through Film,” *Political Theory*, vol. 41(1), 2013, 33–60, here at 37.

pronouncements, which abound in Holocaust literature, add little if anything to our understanding of those complex historical events.¹⁴⁰⁸

¹⁴⁰⁸ To be sure, there were some Poles who betrayed Jews in the German zone, but Jews also turned on one another when the Germans invaded Poland, a phenomenon that is little known and not widely publicized. Soon after the German invasion Jewish shopkeepers hoarded their merchandise to cash in on prices they shrewdly anticipated would skyrocket: “Grunia Achlomov Dobrejcer, who had a philanthropic nature, and made a habit of lending money without interest to several neighbourhood merchants. ... My grandmother’s modest, short-term loans had helped them to survive. But on 2 September, when my grandmother went to buy her daily bread rolls, the storekeeper—a poor woman who had borrowed money from her for years—now seemed to barely recognize her, and refused to sell her anything. Perhaps the storekeeper was ashamed to charge her the new, inflationary price, for she sent my grandmother away with no bread. ... Then [my mother] went to the store herself, put a large sum of money on the counter, and returned home with the fresh rolls for my grandmother.” See Irena Bakowska, *Not All Was Lost: A Young Woman’s Memoir, 1939–1946* (Kingston, Ontario: Karijan, 1998), 12–13. A Jewish eyewitness from Warsaw reports: “The local mob usually guided the Germans to the rich Jewish houses and stores. With the deepest shame I must admit that there were some Jews among the scum. The fact that a Mojsze Zylbersztejn had hidden some cloth, gold or jewels was usually known to another Jew, either his friend or relation. Prompted by greed or vindictiveness they would betray the person to a German who then robbed the victim of everything. Such things were done not only by a professional ‘Muser’ (blackmailer) but, unfortunately, also by an embittered wife or mistress, a quarrelling business partner, dissatisfied employee or competitor in trade. A ‘poem’ was even composed to this effect:

Mummy, Daddy, listen do
With a German the Gestapo came two by two
What shame, what a disgrace
The first was a Pole, the second a Jew!
Mummy, Daddy, listen do
Here come the Gestapo, do you know who?
What a shame, the worst disgrace
The first is a Jew, and the second is too!”

See Cyprys, *A Jump For Life*, 26. Cyprys’s memoirs, which were completed in 1946, are an important and remarkably candid document about the occupation. Like Ludwik Hirsztfeld’s memoirs, *Historia jednego życia* (Warsaw: Czytelnik, 1946), translated as *The Story of One Life* (Rochester: Rochester University Press, 2010), they are not the typical account written long after the events in question that crudely divides Poles into two groups: the vast majority who would betray Jews in an instant; and the tiny minority of “righteous” Poles. Another eyewitness describes conditions in Działoszyce, near Kraków, soon after the Germans arrived: “Some Jews, unfortunately, became collaborators with the Germans. They pointed out where Jews had hidden goods or farm animals, which remained the only source for feeding their families. Initially, these people were given coats the same color as German uniforms, but once all the secrets had been revealed, the coats were taken away and the traitors were shot.” See Selig Schwitzer, *A Triumph of the Spirit: Ten Stories of Holocaust Survivors* (San Bernardino, California: The Borgo Press, 1994), 92. In a small town near Zduńska Wola, “The Germans had ordered the Jews in Łask [Łask] to depart from their gold and money in ‘Valuta’ [currency], their jewels and precious stones ... (The Christian population was not spared either from that decree.) ... There were in Łask, some ‘Jews’ who helped the Germans to check the list [to ensure that] the ‘Robbery’ was done lawfully. Those informers knew how to point [to] many of the rich people in town who were missing from the list of the ‘Robbery’, or had not given enough from their fortune. The informers also pointed at Rabbi Leibel, saying that he had also hidden a part of his fortune and of the holy Kelims of the synagogue.” See Z. Tzurnamal, ed., *Łask: sefer zikaron* [Memorial Book of Łask] (Tel Aviv: Association of Former Residents of Łask in Israel, 1968), 27. Nor was there a shortage of scavengers in temporary holding camps for Jews in 1939–1940. Emanuel Ringelblum recorded how Polish Jews were quick to seize valuables which German Jews had discarded because they were afraid that their possession might lead to serious repercussions at the hands of the Germans. See Emanuel Ringelblum, *Kronika getta warszawskiego: Wrzesień 1939–styczeń 1943* (Warsaw: Czytelnik, 1983), 69.

Once the ghetto in Warsaw was created in October 1940, Ringelblum noted that the situation deteriorated considerably: “In those days, during 1939, 1940, and part of 1941, people would be seized for forced labor almost every day—so the men hid out in the shops, under bench beds, in mezzanines, cubbies, cellars, garrets, etc. ... The Germans knew the location of such hideouts, thanks to their Jewish informers, who accompanied them and pointed out the hiding places. ... During the time when there were blockades, the resettlement period [when several hundred thousand Jews were deported to Treblinka in the summer of 1942—*M.P.*], hideouts assumed a new importance. People took special pains to build good hiding places, because they had become a matter of life and death. Old folks, children, and women hid out there. ... In 90 percent of the cases it was the Jewish police who uncovered the hideouts. First they

As a rule, unlike Polish writings about the war, which generally acknowledge the actions of criminal elements among the Poles who denounced or blackmailed Jews¹⁴⁰⁹ (indeed, the Polish underground authorities punished such actions with death), collaboration with the Soviets of some elements of the Jewish population is mentioned only rarely or is simply glossed over in Holocaust literature. Often there are outright denials that it ever took place or that it targeted Poles. What is more, with few notable exceptions, there is no sense of shame or remorse for these actions even today.¹⁴¹⁰

Even those writings that do acknowledge some aspects of Jewish collaboration with the Soviets tend to explain it away by resorting to unwarranted generalizations and oversimplifications:

As far as the Poles were concerned, they saw that we were enthusiastic about the arrival of their enemy! They resented it. ... They did not understand that we were happy *only* because we did not want the Germans. ... The Jews were not ecstatic about the Russians. Nor were they pleased that Poland ceased to exist. If given a choice, most of us would have preferred Poland to Russia, but we were afraid of the Germans.¹⁴¹¹

Few, if any, knowledgeable observers would subscribe to this view. Jews living under Soviet rule, especially native Jews who were not deported to the Gulag, were far more likely to say what the following Jews wrote to their son in Chicago in September 1940: “We are satisfied with the Soviet regime, which liberated us from Polish enslavement.”¹⁴¹²

As we have seen in countless cases, widespread pro-Soviet sympathies, invariably manifested by a profusion of red armbands, were frequently accompanied by anti-Polish manifestations, but there is no record of anti-German sentiments being expressed openly at that time. A more credible reaction to the fall of Poland is the one recorded in *Kobryn*, in Polesia, where neither clear knowledge of the German atrocities nor uncertain conditions of life under Soviet rule dampened the joy felt by the Jewish masses:

20th of September [1939], in the morning—a Russian tank entered Kobrin from the direction of Bernavitz [Baranowicze]. The tank was followed by more tanks and soldiers. People were ecstatic. *The fascistic Polish kingdom has crumbled*. We sat at night and read the pamphlets the Russians passed around. We were full of hope for a better future. The war had lasted two [sic] weeks. Now that the Russians were here we were not worried about our future.

Fear erupted among us because of our Zionist activities. Books and Zionist brochures were hidden. Our dream to go to Israel had ended because of the Russian occupation. All was destroyed now, the books and mainly the wonderful youth were gone.¹⁴¹³ [emphasis added]

Additional counter-arguments to the Jewish claim that the Jews greeted the Soviets *only* because they feared the Germans have been advanced by knowledgeable observers, and are compelling. Few Jews in Eastern Poland were aware of how the Germans were treating their co-religionists in Western and Central Poland when they welcomed the Soviet invaders en masse in mid-September 1939. Indeed, as we shall see, many memoirs of Holocaust survivors from Eastern Poland professed that same lack of knowledge even as late as the summer of 1941, when the Germans invaded the Soviet Union. Furthermore, very many Jews

¹⁴⁰⁹ Polish wartime memoirs by Zygmunt Klukowski, a member of the National Democratic Party, and S. Żemiński are scathing in their condemnation of those Poles who took part in activities directed against Jews.

¹⁴¹⁰ Yet Holocaust historians have repeatedly rebuked and disparaged Poles for their allegedly faulty memory. For example, Lucy S. Dawidowicz, who simply ignores this (Soviet) chapter of wartime Jewish history, wrote: “memory, a commodity which in Poland seems to be even more elusive than it is in the West”; “the pamphlet [i.e., Edelman’s account of the uprising in the Warsaw ghetto] and the very remembrance of it have disappeared down Poland’s memory hole.” See Lucy S. Dawidowicz, “The Curious Case of Marek Edelman,” *Commentary*, March 1987, 66, 67. Tellingly, the pamphlet she accused Poles of ignoring had had two recent emigré editions, a feat that somehow escaped her attention.

¹⁴¹¹ Cited in Tec, *Defiance*, 15.

¹⁴¹² Cited in Levin, *The Lesser of Two Evils*, 85.

¹⁴¹³ Account of David Ashkenazi in Shwartz and Biltzki, *The Book of Kobrin*, 379.

who had fled to Eastern Poland in advance of the German army were prepared to risk returning to the German-occupied zone once the September 1939 campaign came to a close.

In any event, the standard Jewish stance in no way negates, justifies, or even addresses the fact—borne out by countless eyewitness accounts—of widespread anti-Polish agitation, extensive denunciations and other forms of collaboration with the Soviet authorities, militia and security forces directed against the Polish population. Clearly, no one *had to* betray their Polish neighbours in the Soviet zone to protect himself or herself from the new overlords. This spectacle of collective revenge directed at downtrodden individuals just because they were Poles did not only expose an ugly nationalistic streak, but also was clearly disproportionate to any alleged wrongs experienced by the Jews in interwar Poland. By no stretch of imagination could their treatment be equated to the fate of the Poles who were handed over to the Soviet Gulag.

Obviously, there were other factors at play. Just as most Jews in Eastern Poland did not share in common with the Poles a sense of loss over the disappearance of Poland, as their native land, significantly the Jewish underground did not view as one of its goals the restoration of the Polish state. By and large, with the installation of the Soviet regime Jews saw their destiny as being quite apart from that of the Poles. Why was this so? Teresa Prekerowa, a Polish historian who was decorated by Yad Vashem for her rescue activities on behalf of Jews, addresses many of these issues in her important study, “The Jewish Underground and the Polish Underground.”¹⁴¹⁴ First of all, she notes that “Polish-Jewish relations tend to be treated in a one-sided way, from the standpoint of Poles and their attitude towards the Jews, so that the converse relationship—the attitude of the Jews towards the Poles—has been neglected.” Prekerowa also takes issue with the view, subscribed to by many Holocaust historians, that the sole reason for the favourable reception of the invading Soviet forces was their fear of Nazi Germany. In many cases, this treacherous reaction was motivated by enmity toward the Polish state.

Can the behaviour of the Jews at the beginning of the Soviet occupation really be fully explained by their fear of the Germans? [Shmuel] Krakowski cites a number of German anti-Jewish decrees which testify to the terror from which the Red Army liberated the Jewish population and which makes their joy and gratitude readily comprehensible. However, on 17 September 1939 the Jews could not have predicted that the Germans were going to announce these decrees. Compulsory marks of identification were introduced in September, but only in Kraków: the general decree concerning them was announced by Governor [Hans] Frank only on 23 November. The banning of Jews from travel by train was introduced from January 1940 onwards. The confiscation of Jewish (and indeed Polish) property in September applied only to refugees from the territories which were incorporated into the Reich; this was implemented more widely in the course of the following months in the General Gouvernement region. In the middle of September [1939] no one could foresee the tragic fate that awaited the Jews. People knew about the *Reichskristallnacht* of November 1938 and about the restriction of Jewish rights in Germany, but these events aroused anxiety rather than panic. That is why many Jews who had escaped eastwards from western Poland before the German advance became disillusioned with the Soviet regime and tried before long to return to the territories of the General Gouvernement.¹⁴¹⁵

Although the refugees from German-occupied Poland had informed local Jews about German brutality, according to Yehuda Bauer, “many Jews had a disinclination to believe the horror stories told by the refugees.”¹⁴¹⁶ Moreover, many Jewish refugees who could not adjust or simply became homesick were ready to leave the Soviet zone and return to their homes in the German zone which they had fled in panic only a few months earlier. Part of the NKVD-Gestapo cooperation involved the transfer of peoples between Soviet-occupied eastern Poland and German-occupied Poland. Tens of thousands of Jews besieged the German repatriation commission offices in Lwów, Białystok, Brześć, Przemyśl, Włodzimierz Wołyński and elsewhere, which were established in accordance with the terms of the German-Soviet Boundary and

¹⁴¹⁴ Teresa Prekerowa, “The Jewish Underground and the Polish Underground,” *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry*, vol. 9 (1996): 148–57. This important study was originally published in *Odra* (Wrocław), April 1991, 30–35, under the title “Podziemie żydowskie a podziemie polskie.” The first passage quoted here is found at page 148 of *Polin*, vol. 9.

¹⁴¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 149.

¹⁴¹⁶ Bauer, *The Death of the Shtetl*, 53.

Friendship Treaty.¹⁴¹⁷ The scenes of Jews lining up in throngs in front of German offices staffed by delegations from the Gestapo, often for days at a time, chanting their support for Hitler and begging German officials to be accepted back, border on the surreal. Unbeknownst to these ardent petitioners, NKVD functionaries who assisted the German commission also scrupulously recorded the names of those who sought to return to the German zone for their own purposes.¹⁴¹⁸ Jewish testimonies confirming this state of affairs are plentiful.

In **Brześć**,

Meanwhile, a German committee was set up in Brisk [Brześć], trying to control the stream of people from Soviet Russia to the German-controlled territories in Poland. The committee sat in the train station in Brisk, and the roads leading to it were full of refugees, the majority of whom were Jews. The sight of long rows in front of the German committee was painful. The committee members did not treat them kindly and their sarcastic remark: "Jews, where are you going? Our Führer [Führer] does not like you", made no impression on the Jews. The Russian also did not like the rushed return back to Poland. The refugees from Biala [Biała Podlaska] used all the connections they could to "win" their return home.

The committee finished its work. Only a few were allowed to go back to Biala. The Germans gave the list of the people who applied to return to Poland to the Soviet regime, who soon used it against them.

Those who did not get permission to return, expressed their disappointment. In Minsk, a demonstration was organized with the slogan: "Send us home".¹⁴¹⁹

In **Horochów**, Volhynia,

Several months had passed since the arrival of the Red Army and the Jewish refugees were still in the town. In the course of time they managed to re-establish contact with their families in the German-occupied zone and some of them expressed a desire to return to their homes. With this in mind they applied to the local authorities and notices soon appeared in public places calling on those who wished to return to Poland to register at the police station. Many refugees took advantage of this offer and one night, several weeks later, all the men who had registered were shipped off to forced labour camps.¹⁴²⁰

In **Krzemieniec**,

In the spring of 1940 came an order for all the refugees to register and declare their choice, whether to stay in Russia or return to Naz-held Poland. Many felt the hardship of living under Soviet authority too difficult, and believing that they would be given permission to leave, declared their wish to return. The result was not what they expected. One night, a squadron of the N.K.V.D. took them, and their families, and sent them to work camps in the Urals and Siberia. ... The Jews felt very miserable, but later realized that they were saved, while others were annihilated.¹⁴²¹

The following scene took place in **Lwów**:

The Germans photographed Jews swarming in front of the premises of the repatriation commission and published the photographs in their illustrated publications as proof that the stories about the atrocities of the Nazi regime in the Generalgouvernement were nothing but British *Greuelpropaganda*. Occasionally, among

¹⁴¹⁷ Grudzińska-Gross and Gross, *War Through Children's Eyes*, 19.

¹⁴¹⁸ Kalbarczyk, "Żydzi wśród ofiar zbrodni sowieckich w latach 1939–1941," *Pamięć i sprawiedliwość*, no. 40 (1997–1998): 182.

¹⁴¹⁹ A. Bialer, "Leaving Home," in M.J. Feigenbaum, ed., *Sefer Biala Podlaska* (Tel Aviv: Kupat Gmilut Hased of the Community of Boala Podlaska, 1961), 460, translated as *Book of Biala Podlaska*, Internet: <https://www.jewishgen.org/Yizkor/Biala_Podlaska/Biala_Podlaska.html#TOC470>.

¹⁴²⁰ Berger, "The War," in *Horchiv Memorial Book*, 40–41.

¹⁴²¹ Aizik Hofman, "Twenty-One Months under Soviet Rule," in Stein, *Pinkas Kremenits*, 67.

those seeking to return were communists, tailors from Zgierz and Pabianice, leftist writers, and even former Soviet enthusiasts.¹⁴²²

The situation was the same in *Lesko*, a town near the German-Soviet border. Despite the fact that the Germans had burned the synagogue at Sanok, and this became known to the Jews who had earlier moved to the Soviet zone during the 1939 war, the Jews in the Soviet zone still wanted to return to the Nazi-held Sanok area. The Soviets ended loading them onto cattle cars, but instead of delivering them to the Nazi-held zone, deported them to Siberia.¹⁴²³ Helena Manaster Ramer wrote:

We Jews had heard about the German persecutions but most of us didn't believe it. Many Jews who had come from the west to escape the Germans initially had actually registered with the Russian authorities to go back there in order to reunite with the families. They didn't care for life under the Russians. But before these people could return to the German zone, the Russians sent them to Siberia.¹⁴²⁴

The foregoing examples add to similar testimonies of Jews who—as counterintuitive as it may sound—willingly returned to live under Nazi rule.

The voluntarily return of Jews to Nazi-ruled territory refutes the oft-quoted exculpation that the 1939-1941 Jewish-Soviet collaboration, in conquered Poland, had been driven by gratitude for not falling into Nazi hands. Obviously, had the Jews been mortally afraid of the Nazis at the time, it would have been unthinkable for any of them to choose to return to Nazi-held territory. Instead, many Jews—refugees of the German invasion of western Poland—sought to return there.

Nikita Khrushchev, then Secretary-General of the Communist Party in the Ukraine, recorded in his memoirs the following scene that Ivan Serov, the commissar of the NKVD in Ukraine, described to him:

“There are long lines standing outside the place where people register for permission to return to Polish territory. When I took a closer look, I was shocked to see that most of the people in line were members of the Jewish population. They were bribing the Gestapo agents to let them leave as soon as possible to return to their original homes.”¹⁴²⁵

A Jew who lined up for permission to repatriate to the German zone recalled:

During the registration, after standing in line for several hours, I finally received a card for my departure, which was regarded at that time as a stroke of luck. A German officer turned to the crowd and asked: “Jews, where on earth are you going? We are going to kill you.” ... When German commissions arrived in Lwów, Włodzimierz and Brześć to allow for a return to the other side of the Bug River [i.e., the German zone], masses of Jews by the hundreds and thousands came out to cheer Germany and Hitler. Try to imagine crowds of Jews yelling “Heil Hitler.”¹⁴²⁶

Israeli historian Ben-Cion Pinchuk records the following authentic story:

¹⁴²² Steinhaus, *Wspomnienia i zapiski*, 191. The pro-Communist author Leon Pasternak, a Jew, also wrote about the shock he felt at seeing kilometre-long line-ups of Jews of all backgrounds in front of the German repatriation office in Lwów. See Trznadel, *Kolaboranci*, 323–24. According to another Jewish memoir, the long line-ups in Przemyśl caused considerable consternation among the committed Jewish Communists, who accused those of wanting to register of supporting the fascists. See Wolfshaur-Dinkes, *Échec et mat*, 33.

¹⁴²³ Jafa Wallach, *Bitter Freedom: Memoir of a Holocaust Survivor* (Schuylkill Haven, Pennsylvania: Hermitage Publishers, 2006), 18–20.

¹⁴²⁴ Wallach, *Bitter Freedom*, 177.

¹⁴²⁵ Strobe Talbott, ed., *Khrushchev Remembers* (Boston and Toronto: Little, Brown, 1970), 141.

¹⁴²⁶ Account of Józef Blumenstrauch, as quoted in Gross and Grudzińska-Gross, *W czterdziestym nas Matko na Sybir zesłali...*, 32. A slightly different translation appears in Gross, *Revolution from Abroad*, 206.

At Biala [Biała] Podlaska, the first station on the German side of the border, the train carrying refugees east encountered the train moving west. ‘When Jews coming from Brisk [Brześć] saw Jews going there, they shouted: “You are insane, where are you going?” Those coming from Warsaw answered with equal astonishment: “You are insane, where are you going?”’¹⁴²⁷

At that time Germany and the Soviet Union were steadfast allies and the Soviets also openly operated “repatriation commissions” in German-occupied Poland. Therefore, registering for repatriation was in no sense intended to be a political act: it was entirely legal and invited. The Jews who registered had no idea that they were publicly voicing their dissatisfaction with the Soviet regime, nor did they intend to convey that message to the Soviet authorities. By opting to repatriate to the German zone, and choosing not to accept Soviet citizenship, they could not have foreseen that they would later run afoul of the Soviet authorities. They simply wanted to return to their families and homes in the German zone; they did not view the German regime as a lethal threat to their existence.

Historian Dov Levin makes those same points and adds that, initially, the impugned consequences of not opting for Soviet citizenship were not at all apparent. Once it became so, the Jewish refugees fell in line and complied fully with what was expected of them by the Soviet authorities, whom they had never intended to openly defy.

At this time (in early 1940), only some refugees (by no means a majority) chose to effect their naturalization rights. Most of the refugees, especially those with families on the German side, preferred not to decide, thereby leaving themselves the option of obtaining temporary haven. In part, this was owing to their reservations about accepting the new internal passport with its restrictive clauses. However, there was another crucial factor: by accepting the Soviet passport, they would forfeit not only their previous Polish citizenship but the possibility of ever returning and being reunited with the loved ones whom they had left behind. Some refugees, eschewed Soviet citizenship lest they not be allowed to leave the USSR when it became practical. For the moment, those who turned down Soviet citizenship were not penalized; for example, they could live wherever they wished. ...

After this stage ... All refugees who had not yet exchanged their Polish ID cards for Soviet internal passports were ordered to report to one of the militia stations and declare, voluntarily and under their personal signature, either their acceptance of Soviet citizenship or their desire to return home (to the German-occupied zone). No third option was offered. Not surprisingly, the refugees complied ...¹⁴²⁸

On the other hand, contrary to all evidence, Jan T. Gross argues that “this was undeniably a collective manifestation of defiance and an open, public rejection of the Soviet regime. And it was treated as such.”¹⁴²⁹ Not only was there no conscious choice to defy the Soviet authorities, nor any spirit of defiance on the part of the Jews, but also, as noted earlier, of the 200,000–300,000 Jewish refugees from the German zone, no more than 43,000 were deported to the Soviet interior.¹⁴³⁰ Thus, in any event, the Soviets did not project their suspicions onto the entire unwitting group of Jewish refugees.

Indeed, many of the refugees continued to advance their careers unobstructed, as was the case in *Olyka* near Łuck:

...we all attached red ribbons to our lapels; all the Jews in town were looking forward to greeting the liberating Soviet forces... Since I was still under the influence of the Polish army [in which the author had served since 1937], I wasn’t particularly enthusiastic about the excitement.

As soon as the advance forces of the Soviet army arrived on bicycles, followed by tanks, they were greeted warmly with bouquets of flowers. ... The [Jewish] youth in town, armed with pens and guns, assumed various positions—administrative, police, governmental—in various offices and cooperatives. I chose to

¹⁴²⁷ Pinchuk, *Shtetl Jews under Soviet Rule*, 114.

¹⁴²⁸ Levin, *The Lesser of Two Evils*, 192, 194.

¹⁴²⁹ Gross, “A Tangled Web: Confronting Stereotypes Concerning Relations between Poles, Germans, Jews, and Communists,” in Deák, *The Politics of Retribution in Europe*, 99.

¹⁴³⁰ Out of Lwów’s refugee population of some 54,000 in May 1940, approximately two thirds of whom were Jews, 45,000 registered for repatriation to the German zone. See Hryciuk, *Polacy we Lwowie 1939–1944*, 88. Clearly, nowhere near all of them suffered deportation.

register in an evening high school program, and because I spoke Russian well, I was chosen as an activist in many institutions (there was no shortage of them). I served as the chairman and secretary of *Osoviarmia*, [probably acronym for "Soviet Army Society"] *Mofar*, [probably acronym for "International Organization of Workers Federations"] and the Red Cross, as well as the chairman of the cooperative evaluation committee, and Plotnick was chosen as the chairman of the Worker's Cooperative. What a "pleasure" that was...

Soon enough they started arresting people, including Eliezer Katzavman, Shalom Tsam and others. Jewish refugees arrived from Poland... from Warsaw, Lodz [Łódź] and other large cities. For some reason they approached me and asked me to help them find work in our institution. I saw them as refugees and as outstanding professional who could teach us a lot. Plotnick reacted coldly and angrily, claiming there were no openings for extra workers, and that these people would take away our jobs in no time. His views were disclosed to the Secretary of the Party, Maksimenko, who was the official representative. He informed us that someone speaking that way deserved at least ten years in prison, but that this time he forgave us, so long as we watched our words and actions. We immediately hired four refugees who were industrious and appropriate workers.

Indeed, the refugees didn't sit around with their arms folded. They soon proceeded to investigate each one of us, taking advantage of their skills and craftiness as refugees from big cities such as Warsaw and Lodz, etc. They curried favor with the activists and Party members, and developed relationships with [and] engaged in intrigue. They slowly started gaining control in Olyka. They took the best positions after Aharon Plotnick was sentenced to a year in prison, and his son Chaikel lost 25 percent of his salary for once arriving at work 16 minutes late. ...

At about the same time, Party member, Maksimenko appeared at our house, and wanted to recommend me as chairman of the Workers' Cooperative in place of Plotnick. He promised to help me advance, and to send me to training programs in Moscow. He said eventually I could get very high up. ...

We weren't elected, and the only people elected to the Workers' Cooperative were the refugees who recently arrived and took over the Workers' Cooperative. Afterwards, they took over the whole town. They persecuted many local residents. I remember many occasions such as this. I'll only describe a typical case: one of them, Finkelstein, who was the manager of the restaurant in Vetalsky's building, caught a Jewish woman fattening some geese she was going to sell, and told her to sell them to him for 3 and a half rubles per kilo, which was the official price (the market price was 60 rubles). He threatened to report her to the police, and of course the Jewish woman had no choice but to give him the geese. This is just one of many stories.¹⁴³¹

Numerous memoirs of Jews who lived under the Soviet occupation attest to the fact that they knew little or nothing about the condition of their fellow Jews in German-occupied Poland at the time.¹⁴³² What is more, the stories that did circulate were generally disbelieved; they did not sit well with the awe and

¹⁴³¹ Yitzchak Lapid (Lopata), "And It Was in the Days of the Russians," in Natan Livneh, ed., *Pinkas ha-kehilah Olyka: Sefer yizkor* (Tel Aviv: Olyka Society, 1972), 290–93.

¹⁴³² This topic is discussed in Mordechai Altshuler's essay, "Escape and Evacuation of Soviet Jews at the Time of the Nazi Invasion: Policies and Realities," in Dobroszycki, *The Holocaust in the Soviet Union*, 83–91. A number of examples confirming the lack of knowledge of German atrocities are set out in the text. For additional examples, see Tennenbaum, *Zloczow Memoir*, 179; and Machnes, *Darkness and Desolation*, 612.

admiration with which East European Jews traditionally regarded the Germans.¹⁴³³ Some testimonies state that the older generation of Jews had favourable recollections of the behaviour of the German army during the First World War, although this appears to be overstating the case because other Jewish memoirs clearly

¹⁴³³ One of many confirmations of this state of events is that of Israeli novelist Aharon Appelfeld who hails from Czerniowce, a town that belonged to pre-partition Poland, passed to Austria in the 18th century and then became part of interwar Rumunia before reverting to Ukraine in the postwar period. Michael Posner writes: “Appelfeld was 8 when the Nazis arrived in his home town of Czernowitz, in the Bukovina region of the Ukraine [in the summer of 1941]. The largely German-speaking Jewish community—German because it had belonged for a long period to the Austro-Hungarian Empire’s sphere of influence—was shocked by the invasion. For that community, the Germanic sensibility represented the pinnacle of culture, taste and sophistication. ‘The German language was a religion in my home,’ Appelfeld said in an interview. ‘We worshipped it.’ The notion that Germans could now become barbarians, bent on the physical annihilation of another race, was unthinkable.” See “Interview: ‘I remember in my skin’,” *The Globe and Mail* (Toronto), March 18, 2000. Leon Wells Weliczker, who hails from Stojanów, in Eastern Galicia, writes: “Our parents not only praised that time [i.e., Austrian rule] as being better for the Jews, but spoke with pride about the superiority of German culture and its people compared to the Polish culture. This attitude was very badly received by the Polish people. ... The belief that German culture was superior continued even to the time when Germany occupied Poland in 1939, and in its eastern part in 1941.” See Leon Weliczker Wells, *Shattered Faith: A Holocaust Legacy* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1995), 8–9. The pro-German sentiments mentioned by Weliczker Wells should not be underestimated. Professor Yacov Talmon from the Russian partition of Poland, for example, acknowledged: “... many important factors infused in the Jews a spirit of contempt and hatred towards the Poles. In contrast to the organizational activity and capacity of the Germans, the Jews saw the Poles as failures. The rivals most difficult to Jews, in the economic and professional fields were the Poles, and we must not underrate the closeness of Yiddish to the German language as well. I still remember that during my childhood the name “goy” sounded to me as referring to Catholic Poles and not to Germans; though I did realize that the latter were obviously not Jews, I felt that the Germans in the vicinity were not simply Gentiles. It would be shocking to think of it to-day, but the pre-Hitlerite relations between Jews and Germans in our vicinity were friendly. ... In the twenties, Jews and Germans stood together on election lists. Out of those Germans rose such who, during the German invasion, helped in the acts of repression and extermination as experts, who had the experience and knew the secrets.” See Shimon Kanc, ed., *Sefer Ripin: A Memorial to the Jewish Community of Ripin [Rypin]* (Tel Aviv: Former Residents of Ripin in Israel and in the Diaspora, 1962), 9–10.

recall that the Germans were rather brutal occupiers only twenty years earlier,¹⁴³⁴ and the historical record bears that out. The oppressive colonial exploitation of *Ober-Ost* entailed merciless requisition campaigns of agricultural products and livestock, the confiscations of houses, shops and commercial enterprises, and the despoiling of the forests—the most valuable natural resource. The treatment of the civilian population—characterized by physical abuse, forced labour, arbitrary imprisonment, and executions as routine

¹⁴³⁴ Hirsz Abramowicz, an educated Jew from Wilno, published the following report in 1922 about the German occupation army, when the events were still fresh in his mind:

In order to extract everything possible from the local population, the *Amtsvorsteher* created a separate *Wirtschaftsausschuß*, a commission in charge of everything pertaining to agriculture. ... The procedures for taking farm produce from the peasants varied from time to time. ... If this method failed to yield the stipulated amount, force was used to take much more than had been asked for initially. ...

For a quota delivery of potatoes, peasants received almost seven marks per three poods, when the actual price was twenty or thirty times greater. No money was paid for requisitioned grain. The Germans took advantage of every opportunity to seize whatever a landowner might possess. ...

During the final two years, the authorities were so strict that if a quota of grain was not delivered on the day it was due, the Germans would take a threshing machine to the barns, thresh the grain and take all of it. To prevent the local population from consuming even a single extra bite, millstones were confiscated from all homes. ... All other foodstuffs were brought under rigid control. ...

No one was allowed to have more than one cow. The rest, mercilessly, were seized for meat. Special permission was required to slaughter cattle, sheep, hogs, or fowl. Most calves and young bulls were confiscated for meat. Twice yearly at least two pounds of wool was demanded for every sheep; for every hen, one egg a day. In some towns, permission was granted once a week to slaughter a cow for the residents. No wonder then, that the people lived almost entirely deprived of milk, eggs, butter and meat. The confiscation of the cattle was a genuine hardship. ...

All flax, hemp, and seeds were to be turned in. If the Germans noticed that people were not delivering these products, house-to-house searches were made. Then, everything was confiscated: linen cloth, various metal utensils, woolen goods, food and so on. House searches took place quite frequently and for a variety of reasons ...

The occupation forces saw to it that all raw materials were removed from the country, since Germany and its allies [although much richer countries] were in dire need of them. Even things which at first glance seemed to be of little value were taken. ...

All berries and the fruit from every orchard was the property of the authorities, and their private sale was forbidden.

Horses were frequently requisitioned, causing great hardship. While there was a provision for not confiscating someone's last remaining cow, there was no such consideration when it came to horses. The policy was simply to take every horse that was healthy and could be of use to the military. ... The Germans, however, did not care for delays. The soldiers had clubs and beat the entire family with murderous blows for defending their horses. ...

Once his only horse was gone, the peasant's livelihood was ruined. ... The penalty for not turning over one's horse to the commission was severe and, in the end, the horse would be taken anyway.

[The] Germans took possession of all abandoned estates and began to cultivate them. ... The estates remained without livestock, but this was rectified by the Germans, who devised a simple method for working these fields. They would forcibly assemble the nearby peasants and their horses to plow, harrow, and plant the fields. The pay for an entire day's work—without meals—was at most two marks. Every village was required to supply a number of peasant women to harvest, dig potatoes and pull up weeds. For this labor, the pay (again, without meals) was a nominal thirty pfennigs per day. In fact, even this negligible wage was often not paid. Anyone who did not work efficiently was beaten by the Germans with whips and clubs. ... In addition to the peasants, there was another category of unpaid laborers. These were the families who lived in the war zones and were expelled from their homes. They were truly like the slaves in Egypt. They were housed in abandoned buildings and fed nothing but half a pound of bread and black coffee. Their wives and children were also required to work. They were forbidden to leave the area. These homeless people were required to do the heaviest labor. In addition to working in the fields, they were forced to gather stones, pave the roads, do the laundry for the military, and so on. Little wonder that many of them died of starvation and disease.

Because of all the rationing, the people in cities were literally sentenced to starve to death. The prices of basic items rose astronomically, as much as fifty to sixty times the previous level. Bringing goods to the city for sale was the only way that thousands of people could earn any money and also, indirectly, stave off hunger.

punishment for the failure to deliver agricultural quotas—was not only harsh and cruel, but also in some ways was a prelude to World War II.¹⁴³⁵

For whatever reason, relatively few Jews attempted to leave with the routed Soviet army in June 1941. (As we shall see, some Jews were exultant about the Soviet withdrawal and actually looked forward to the arrival of the Germans.¹⁴³⁶) Those who did flee were, for the most part, implicated in the Soviet regime such as members of the Communist Party and the Komsomol, senior officials in the party apparatus, Interior Ministry, NKVD, and militias, administrators responsible for the implementation of sovietization policies.¹⁴³⁷ Dov Levin concedes that “there is no doubt that the Jews were overrepresented among the evacuees. One reason for this was their high representation in the government and public sectors and miscellaneous enterprises.”¹⁴³⁸ Many ordinary Jews who attempted to flee eastward were turned back when they reached the old Polish-Soviet border.¹⁴³⁹

In *Przemysł*, a border town that switched hands before being divided up between Germany and the Soviet Union,

According to our information, the Germans were “reasonable” during the first two days. The optimists among the Jews saw them at first as cultured people, and therefore believed they need not be feared. ...

Two days before the Russians entered the eastern part of the town [on September 18, 1939], there was a sudden announcement that the Jews must leave [German-controlled] Zasanie within 24 hours. Any Jew found there after that time would be killed. ... The Jews, who despite the bitter experience of the past few days, had not learned from the Germans’ behavior toward them, did not believe that the military governor would actually issue the aforementioned order, and they decided to send a delegation to the governor ...¹⁴⁴⁰

Jews from *Zabludów* near Białystok aver:

The new [Soviet] regime was a puzzle to us, but we felt that we were saved from the Germans, without knowing exactly from what we were saved (that we knew only in the second edition of that world war). ... Jewish refugees started coming into the town from the area conquered by the Germans with horrible stories... It was hard to believe that things like these actually happened, it left us with anxiety, but we thought that maybe those descriptions were exaggerated a bit.¹⁴⁴¹

A Jew from *Nowogródek* recalls:

In 1940–41, Jewish refugees who had escaped from territories held by the Germans ... arrived in Novogrodek. They told tales of German atrocities: arrests, concentration camps, executions and massacres. We heard these accounts, but refused to believe them. The horror stories simply didn’t make sense. We went

¹⁴³⁵ Prusin, *The Lands Between*, 61–62.

¹⁴³⁶ Levin, *The Lesser of Two Evils*, 279, 281.

¹⁴³⁷ Levin, *The Lesser of Two Evils*, 279.

¹⁴³⁸ Levin, *The Lesser of Two Evils*, 292. For example, groups of young men from Łachwa, in Polesia, who had walked around thirty kilometers to the former Polish-Soviet border, found it was closed and the border police would not let anybody cross. “Fifteen young Jewish men from Lahwah [Łachwa] who were members of the Comsomol [Komsomol], the Communist youth movement, were the only ones allowed to cross the border.” See Kolpantizky, *Sentenced to Life*, 32.

¹⁴³⁹ Levin, *The Lesser of Two Evils*, 282–85. Levin concludes that “the prevailing view in pro-Soviet circles at the time—that the Soviet authorities had planned the rescue of the country’s Jewish citizens during World War II—is untenable.” Ibid., 288.

¹⁴⁴⁰ Dr. M. Schattner, “From the Outbreak of WW II until the Liberation,” in Menczer, *Sefer Przemysl*, 372, 374.

¹⁴⁴¹ Account of Eliyahu Ben Moshe-Baruch and Bluma Zesler in Shmueli-Schmusch, *Zabludow*.

on with our lives, deluding ourselves that it was impossible for such murderous atrocities actually to be approved and perpetrated by the authorities. The Germans were considered a civilised nation. Many people remembered the German army of the First World War, which wasn't too terrible.¹⁴⁴²

In *Wolożyn*, the Jews

refused to listen to any of the refugees' tales about the German atrocities and their blood curdling deeds against the Jews. They considered the accounts of horrors as Soviet propaganda. Many Wolożyn inhabitants witnessed the German 1918 invasion. They assumed that the 1941 Germans would not be in any great measure different from those in 1918. ... "It is not reasonable that this cultivated and organized nation could change during one generation. Why would they hurt us now? The people working for the Bolsheviks, and in love with them, they should be afraid now, but not the common Jews." Such were the conversations during those critical days. Few were the Wolożyn inhabitants who chose to escape with the Soviets.¹⁴⁴³

A Jew from *Zablotów* near Kołomyja writes:

At that time no one knew what the Germans were really doing to the Jews. Poles who came to Zoblutow [sic] from Warsaw or Cracow to sell their wares told us that German soldiers were beating up Jews, that German storm troopers with skull-and-crossbones emblems on their caps had been taking Jews away, presumably to forced-labor camps, and that these Jews had not been heard from since. But we refused to believe that such outrages could continue for very long.¹⁴⁴⁴

A memoir from *Thuste*, in Tarnopol province, states:

People said various things about the Germans, but we did not believe the stories about the atrocities, so no one tried to escape to Russia when the war with Germany broke out.¹⁴⁴⁵

In *Horochów*, Volhynia:

Only two young men who worked for the N.K.V.D. withdrew with the retreating Red Army, the rest of the population decided to stay on, in spite of the fact that trucks were put at the disposal of anybody who wanted to leave.¹⁴⁴⁶

In *Stepań*, Volhynia:

A few of the youth who were active in the "Komsomol" left the town and retreated with the Russians to Russia. Most of them remained alive. The clerks of the Russian authority tried to convince the Jews to flee to Russia. But it didn't work and the Jews didn't want to do this. It was difficult to break away from a home, to wander, and to be a refugee.

Amongst the Jews of Stepan, there were a number of refugees who came before from a German controlled area of Poland. Most of them were of the opinion that life was not easy under the German regime, but

¹⁴⁴² Kagan and Cohen, *Surviving the Holocaust with the Russian Jewish Partisans*, 35–36. We also learn that, at the time of the hasty Soviet retreat in June 1941 many young men, "especially the bachelors and those who had been involved with the Soviet regime, left town, heading eastward towards the old [Polish-Soviet] border." However, those who tried to escape "were surprised to discover that the Russian guards wouldn't let them cross the border into Russia. ... Many of those who had run away were forced to return to Novogrodek." Ibid., 37.

¹⁴⁴³ Rachel and Reuven Rogovin, "Under the Soviet Regime," in E. Leoni, ed., *Wolożyn: The Book of the City and of the Etz Hayyim Yeshiva*, posted on the Internet at: <www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/volozhin/volozhin.html>; translation of *Wolożyn: Sefer shel ha-ir ve-shel yeshivat "Ets Hayim"* (Tel Aviv: Former Residents of Wolożyn in Israel and the USA, 1970), 529 ff.

¹⁴⁴⁴ Paul Trepman, *Among Men and Beasts* (New York: A.S. Barnes and Company, 1978), 58–59.

¹⁴⁴⁵ Cited in Maria Hochberg-Mariańska and Noe Grüss, eds., *The Children Accuse* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 1996), 204.

¹⁴⁴⁶ Berger, "The War," in *Horchiv Memorial Book*, 41.

annihilation was not to be expected. Therefore, they told us not to go with the Russians into Russia. This was the excepted [sic] opinion.¹⁴⁴⁷

In *Lwów*:

The previous day she [i.e., the author's mother] had turned down the generous offer of a Soviet air force lieutenant to take us on a truck that had come to evacuate him. ... As Russian soldiers were loading his belongings, the lieutenant repeated his offer:

'This is your last chance, comrade. The Germans will be here in a few hours.'

'They're not cannibals.'

'They may not be cannibals, but they're certainly murderers. Haven't you heard that they're killing Jews?'

'I've stopped believing in all that propaganda.'

'It's not propaganda. It's fact.'

My mother was unmoved ...¹⁴⁴⁸

Lusia's office also started to pack. They proposed that she should leave. She declined explaining that she had a large family whom she couldn't leave behind. After a brief consultation they announced that they were prepared to put at her disposal a truck so that she could take her entire family and their baggage. ...

Our entire family sat up all night discussing the proposition. No one wanted to embark on an escapade into the interior of the Soviet Union. Only Lusia thought that we should take advantage of the opportunity and escape. I didn't quite know what decision to take. All I knew is that we definitely couldn't leave without our parents. They wouldn't manage without us. And that tipped the balance.

The news from Kraków, which had been under German occupation for two years, also influenced our decision. During that time nothing especially threatening had happened. Jews were moved from various neighbourhoods of the city to the ghetto, and they suffered large material losses. ... but people somehow managed, they were employed and weren't starving. ... During this same time we lived through the nightmare of nocturnal visits of the NKVD and the deportations. ... Many people had the opportunity to go eastbound with the Russians. We don't know anyone from our [professional] milieu, however, who escaped with them.¹⁴⁴⁹

In *Czortków* near the prewar Soviet border,

Although the Soviet authorities had made it possible for anyone to leave the town, and join the retreating Red Army, only a few hundred Jews, mostly young men, seized the opportunity and escaped to Soviet Russia.¹⁴⁵⁰

In the village of "Podhoritzin" [*Podhorce?*],

retreating Russian soldiers had warned the villagers to flee with them to Russia. Unfortunately, many Jews did not believe the Russians and refused to leave ...¹⁴⁵¹

The lack of sympathy of the local Jewish population has been commented on in a number of accounts, particularly those from *Białystok* and *Wilno*,¹⁴⁵² as a factor influencing Jews to return to their homes in the

¹⁴⁴⁷ Ganuz, *Our Town Stepan*, 280.

¹⁴⁴⁸ Roman Frister, *The Cap, or the Price of a Life* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1999), 182–83.

¹⁴⁴⁹ Reiss, *Z deszczu pod rynną...*, 68.

¹⁴⁵⁰ Yeshayahu Austri-Dunn, ed., *Memorial Book of Czortkow* (Haifa-Tel Aviv: Irgun Yotzey Czortkow in Israel, 1967), 15.

¹⁴⁵¹ Account of Ruth Weitz, "The Means to Survive," in Brostoff, *Flares of Memory*, 58.

¹⁴⁵² Jakub Bukowski, *Opowieść o życiu* (Warsaw: Żydowski Instytut Historyczny, 2002), 54, 57–58, is one of many testimonies attesting to the antipathy of Białystok Jews towards the refugees and the conflicts that arose between them. See also Żbikowski, *Archiwum Ringelbluma*, vol. 3, 50 (Białystok), 80 (Białystok), 334 (Wilno), 438 (Jewish refugees who spoke Polish faced ostracism).

German zone.

Various testimonies illustrate the attitude of local Jews toward the refugees. Menachem Ravitzky, a refugee from Warsaw, portrayed the attitude as “none too friendly and the word *Biezhienietz* (Russian for ‘refugee’) was frequently used as an insult, an indication of the contempt the Białystok Jews felt for the refugees.” In the same vein, the author Moshe Grossman, also from Warsaw, described how most of the residents of Białystok resented the refugees: “All the refugees have brought us is lice and inflation.” And yet some local Jews did their best to help the refugees, especially their relatives. They had little to show for their efforts, however. Rising prices, unemployment, and the lack of basic commodities created a climate of discontent in which people tended to blame the “outsider” for all their troubles.¹⁴⁵³

A Jewish woman from *Kowel*, in Volhynia, writes that, after June 1940,

My sisters and brother-in-law ... like many refugees, they decided to register to go back to German-occupied Poland. Unfortunately, the Kovel Jews did not show any sympathy or hospitality for the refugees—they were unable to understand or to believe what the Nazi murderers were capable of doing.¹⁴⁵⁴

Soviet censorship had also played a role. The Soviets had systematically blocked all information about German atrocities against Jews from reaching the population. Even Jewish newspapers fell in line by not publishing anything critical about Germany, the Soviet Union’s ally at the time. The Jewish writer, poet and playwright, Moshe Bronderzon from Łódź, who took refuge in Soviet-occupied *Białystok*, complained bitterly (after the fact):

A Jewish newspaper [*Bialystoker Stern*] in a Jewish city, several kilometers from the German murder inferno, refuses to devote one line or even one word to the gruesome experiences of Jews on the other side of the border, in Poland where Jewish blood is being spilled with abandon.¹⁴⁵⁵

Needless to add, the equally cruel fate of their non-Jewish countrymen under German rule also went unreported. Other Jews blame the Jewish refugees from Germany and Austria:

The unwillingness of the general population to flee was due in part to the Jewish refugees from Germany and Austria who calmed the local Jews into believing that there was no danger to their lives, despite the suffering and discrimination. They were blinded by their own unqualified for “western culture.”¹⁴⁵⁶

Turning a blind eye to German atrocities continued to paralyze Jewish communities long after the Soviet retreat. In *Dzisna*, near the prewar Latvian border:

On June 1, 1942, two young boys escaping from the German atrocities in Poland arrived at Dzisna and informed the Judenrat that the Germans were systematically killing all the Jews in every community. They begged everyone to run and hide before it was too late. The Judenrat threatened to turn them over to the Germans if they continued to tell their ‘lies.’ The boys pleaded with the council, trying to convince them that

¹⁴⁵³ Sara Bender, *The Jews of Białystok During World War II and the Holocaust* (Waltham, Massachusetts: Brandeis University Press, 2008), 56.

¹⁴⁵⁴ *Ostrów Lubelski Memorial Book* (Israel: Ostrow-Lubelski Society, 1987), 407 (18). According to the testimony of Mechi (Mischa) Eckhaus, “Living through two world wars,” posted online at <<http://nizkor.org/hweb/places/poland/ostrow/ostrow-04.html>>.

At the beginning of 1940, I managed, after many troubles, to return to Kowel. ... Luckily, they [i.e., my sister-in-law and her husband Getzel] succeeded in obtaining a so-called “dwelling” place with a Polish railroad worker ... Unfortunately, the Kowel Jews did not display much understanding or sympathy for the refugees. Later, when the German army came to Kowel, few of the Jews there fled ...

¹⁴⁵⁵ I. Shmulewitz, *The Bialystoker Memorial Book*, 54.

¹⁴⁵⁶ Account of Shmuel Rosental (Samuel Rosenthal) in I. Kahan (Yisrael Cohen), ed., *Sefer Buczacz: Matsevet zikaron le-kehila kedosha* (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1956), 258 ff.; translated into English as *Book of Buczacz: In Memory of a Martyred Community* (Internet: <<http://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/buchach/buchach.html>>).

they were telling the truth, but the Judenrat refused to believe the stories. Fearing for their own lives, the two boys left Dżisna.¹⁴⁵⁷

Prekerowa continues her analysis of Jewish attitudes as follows:

It appears, then, that it was not fear of the Germans which was the chief reason for the joyous welcome extended to the invading Red Army. The more plausible view, which is now widely accepted, is that an important factor was the level of anti-Polish feelings, the result of the bad relations which had existed during the preceding period, especially the 1930s, which witnessed the negative Jewish policies of the leaders of the Second Republic, antisemitic declarations by the various political parties, and the excesses of the nationalistic thugs. Grudges and resentments produced a situation where among certain sections of the Jewish community the absence of any sense of solidarity with the Polish nation and identification with the Polish state was being demonstratively expressed.¹⁴⁵⁸

Another group who welcomed the Soviets were those who owed taxes to the Polish government.¹⁴⁵⁹

The extent of hostility toward the Polish State should not be underestimated. It cut across a broad spectrum of Jewish society that could hardly be accused of harbouring pro-Communist sympathies. Chaim Kaplan, a rabbi, educator and author from Warsaw, wrote the following entry in his diary on September 1, 1939:

This war will indeed bring destruction upon human civilization. But this is a civilization which merits annihilation and destruction. ...

... well, now the Poles themselves will receive our revenge through the hands of our cruel enemy. ...

My brain is full of the chatterings of the radio from both sides. The German broadcast in the Polish language prates propaganda. Each side accuses the other of every abominable act in the world. Each side considers itself to be righteous and the other murderous, destructive, and bent on plunder. This time, as an exception to the general rule, both speak the truth. Verily it is so—both sides are murderers, destroyers, and plunderers, ready to commit any abomination in the world. If you want to know the character of any nation, ask the Jews. They know the character of every nation.¹⁴⁶⁰

Mocking the Polish war effort, which as Norman Davies has pointed out inflicted more damage on the Germans and was more creditable than that of the Western European countries that collapsed the following year, was a common theme among Jews, as was their praise for the Soviet Union, the country that had collaborated with Nazi Germany to dismember Poland. Again it is important to note that these observations were made not by the uneducated, but by representative members of the mainstream of Jewish society. Although Warsaw did not surrender until September 27 and the Polish army continued to fight bravely still in the early days of October 1939, without Poland's allies lifting a finger in her defence, Chaim Kaplan, both haughty and defeatist, wrote:

You get the impression ... that the Polish army is not an equipped army led by officers trained for warfare, but a flock of sheep. Whoever saw or heard of such a thing in the history of the wars of nations—that a rich country with thirty-five million citizens, with an organized army would become something to be stepped on by the German villain within five days? ...

Never before in history has any people suffered a defeat as shameful as this. And even if a hundred thousand unarmed civilians should give their lives for the capital—would they say it? Only a murderous government could make such a criminal decision. ...

¹⁴⁵⁷ Account of Zalman Katz in Alvin Abram, *The Light After the Dark* (Scarborough, Ontario: Abbeyfield Publishers, 1997), 17.

¹⁴⁵⁸ Teresa Prekerowa, "The Jewish Underground and the Polish Underground," in *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry*, vol. 9 (1996): 149.

¹⁴⁵⁹ Yehuda Bauer, "Sarny and Rokitno in the Holocaust: A Case Study of Two Townships in Wolyn (Volhynia)," in Katz, *The Shtetl*, 260.

¹⁴⁶⁰ Katsh, *Scroll of Agony*, 19–21. Kaplan peppered his wartime diary with anti-Christian remarks directed at Poles and gave credence to German anti-Polish propaganda. *Ibid.*, 47, 133, 161.

One ally—Poland—let down all the other allies. Who ever dreamed of this kind of military catastrophe ... At their first contact with the Germans they melted like wax and proved that their valor was an empty disguise.¹⁴⁶¹

Such sentiments can be found in many Jewish memoirs, even those written in recent years, with the hindsight of later events and reliable historical sources readily at hand. The following was penned by a professionally trained “educator” from Wilno.

The Nazis met no resistance, and they progressed rapidly. ...

Unlike Poland that was caught unprepared for the German attack and offered no resistance, the Soviets fought hard against the Nazi invasion.¹⁴⁶²

In reality, a similar situation prevailed in the Eastern Borderlands (as well as in the German partition) before their restoration to Poland in 1921, and had little to do with Polish attitudes. The Jews in the Eastern Borderlands had little affinity for Poland or her culture and language (many of them were Litvaks, Russian speaking Jews, who had fled Russian persecution), and little use for the reborn Polish State. Polish attitudes in the interwar period, therefore, had only a limited impact on their behaviour in 1939.¹⁴⁶³ The fact that interwar policies were not a determinative factor is further underscored by the fairly frequent cases, mentioned earlier, of Jews coming to the assistance of Poles at risk of Soviet repression.

The key to assessing Jewish conduct in Soviet-occupied Poland lies elsewhere: Many Jews living in Poland at the time regarded themselves as a separate, Yiddish-speaking nation with their own religion and their own national and political aspirations, and had little sense of solidarity with the predominantly

¹⁴⁶¹ Katsh, *Scroll of Agony*, 26, 32.

¹⁴⁶² Mira Kanishtshiker Berger, *We Are at War: Memories of a Holocaust Survivor* (Raanana, Israel: Docostory, 2006), 38, 69.

¹⁴⁶³ It is also worth recalling, when assessing the anti-Polish attitude of a large part of the Jews in Soviet-occupied Eastern Poland, that Poland had accepted several hundred thousand Jewish refugees fleeing from Soviet Russia in 1919–1921, and that they were granted Polish citizenship in 1926.

Catholic Poles and their history, culture and traditions.¹⁴⁶⁴ Moreover, many Jews, though not formally Communists, were under the spell of Communist ideology and propaganda. With regard to the confrontation with the Soviet Union, the Jewish masses simply believed it was Poland's war—not theirs, and had no qualms in aligning themselves with the Soviet Union.

¹⁴⁶⁴ As Yacov Talmon, cited earlier, noted: "It is not surprising, then, that in the mixed loyalties of the time Jewish unity grew stronger and deeper, and consciousness in this direction burned like a flame. ... the actual motherland was not a temporal one, but a heavenly one, a vision and a dream—to the religious it was the coming of the Messiah, to the Zionists it was a Jewish country, to the Communists and their friends it was a world revolution. And the real constitution according to which they lived was the Shulhan Aruch, code of laws, and the established set of virtues, or the theories of Marx, and the rules of Zionism and the building up of a Jewish country." See Kanc, *Sefer Ripin*, 10. This strong detachment from Poland, and simultaneous attachment to a much anticipated Jewish state, later manifested itself in the exodus of deportees from the interior of the Soviet Union. A high proportion of the 4,266 Jews who joined the Polish Army under the command of General Władysław Anders did so purely for opportunistic reasons, namely, to get out of the Soviet Union. Some 3,000 promptly deserted when that army reached Palestine in the summer of 1942, and many of these Jews fought against local Arabs for the establishment of a Jewish state. See Kochanski, *The Eagle Unbowed*, 197–98. Israel Eldad, a member of the Betar movement, tacitly acknowledges that the mass Jewish desertion was, first and foremost, motivated by the lack of Jewish loyalty to Poland. Eldad comments, "Even the hundreds and thousands who deserted from the Polish army not in order to serve the Hebrew nation but just 'because.' Merely to discard uniforms their hearts were not in, merely to be Jewish citizens in Eretz Israel among other Jews, even they were not deserters. Anyone who asked me for advice—to desert or not desert—I unhesitatingly answered: Desert. And I helped many to do so. What have we to do with these Polish uniforms? Throw them away along with the whole Diaspora and the whole Diaspora mentality." As if to rationalize this disloyalty to Poland, Eldad then levels this vile calumny at General Anders' Polish soldiers: "How much more so in the case of General Anders' army, most of whose soldiers and officers would certainly have been participating in the slaughter of Jews had they but remained in Poland." See Eldad, *The First Tithe*, 111–12. Julian Bussgang, a Jew from Lwów who fled to Romania with his family after the Soviet invasion and then moved to Palestine where he attended a high school for Polish refugees, demonstrated a different attitude. Bussgang recalled: "When I graduated from the Polish High School in Tel Aviv, I was only seventeen. ... I certainly could have stayed in Palestine and attended a university, but I wanted to fight in the war. Thus, in January 1943, at 17, I volunteered to become a soldier in this newly-formed Polish Army expected to arrive in Palestine from Iraq. Most of my male classmates, Jews and non-Jews, also signed up. Some 4,000 Jews left the Soviet Union by joining General Anders. Approximately 3,000 of them chose to remain in Palestine when they arrived there. ... While I respected the choice of those who stayed, I was troubled that Jews were leaving the army when I thought they were needed to fight Hitler. After some wait, I was finally inducted in August of 1943. Our army, the Polish Second Corps, was assigned to reinforce the British Eighth Army commanded by General Montgomery. ... After training, I was chosen to enter a brief, accelerated officers' school for artillery. ... The Polish Army in Italy had in it some 1,000 Jewish officers and soldiers. Its military chaplains included the chief military rabbi and, I believe, two others who conducted services for Jewish soldiers. ... By and large, there were no religious issues among the soldiers. We were quite united in our uncompromising determination to fight this war." See Vogel, *We Shall Not Forget!*, 243, 245. The bothers Samuel and Nathan Offen of Kraków, after their liberation from the Gusen I subcamp of Mauthausen by the American army, decided to join General Anders' army, which was based in Italy at the time. They spent almost two years in the Polish army. "We had a very good life in the Polish Army," Samuel Offen recalled. See Testimony of Samuel Offen, December 27, 1981, Voice/Vision Holocaust Survivor Oral History Archive, University of Michigan at Dearborn, Internet: <<http://holocaust.umd.umich.edu/offens/>>. Another Jew who enlisted in General Anders' Army and did not desert in Palestine but continued to fight and perished in the Battle of Monte Cassino is Luka Shapiro from Nowogródek. His kinsmen did not approve of his actions: "You died in a battle in Italy, at Monte Cassino. You fell serving in a foreign army, in a foreign land." See Jack Kagan, comp., *Novogradok: The History of a Shtetl* (London and Portland, Oregon: Vallentine Mitchell, 2006), 254. A Pole who served in Anders' army wrote about the stark contrasts he saw among the Jews who had enlisted to escape from the Soviet Union: "A young private named Szpergel, a student of pharmacy from the Jan Kazimierz University in Lwów, Poland, was assigned to my pharmacy staff. He asked me to help him obtain a new pair of shoes from our quartermaster ... Suspecting nothing wrong, I intervened and, despite the quartermaster's reservations, obtained the shoes. Two days later, Szpergel and his shoes were gone. Similar desertions turned out to be quite common—just under 4,000 of our Polish Jews deserted. ... Among those of our Jewish fellows-in-arms who remained, some lost their lives in the Italian campaign. One of them was Doctor of Medicine Graber, the man who spotted me in the warm sleeping quarters of my friend...in the Totsk hospital and squealed on me. ...our dental surgeon, Szymon Frisner...was drafted by the Russian occupants of Eastern Poland as a dentist and granted the rank of Red Army Captain. When the 'amnesty' to Polish citizens was declared after the Germans' attack on their allies and friends, the Soviets outlawed the acceptance of Polish Jews residing before the war in Eastern Poland into the Polish Army. General Anders took a serious risk disobeying Soviet orders but he accepted thousands of them (including the future prime minister of Israel, Menachem Begin). Szymon Frisner then deserted the Soviet Army and joined us in Totsk.... Eventually, he became a 'war-time' second lieutenant." See Saski, *Crossing Many Bridges*, 79–80, 94.

Prekerowa goes on to describe some of the tangible consequences of that state of affairs. In effect, this is the mirror image of the Jewish historians' (false) contention with respect to Polish-Jewish relations under German occupation.

It must also be emphasized that in many diaries, particularly those of young people, there are frequent expressions of spontaneous joy. This mood has no rational basis. 'Today is the happiest day of my life! We showered the approaching tanks with flowers,' wrote one young girl from Stanisławów in her diary.

These factors induced the Jews, who knew the local scene well and were often in open conflict with non-Jewish segments of the population, to co-operate with the new administration and its apparatus of repression. The Soviets were not disappointed. Many Jews searched out and helped to arrest Polish officers, top prewar officials, and representatives of the intellectual élite, which was hostile to the USSR. ...

The fact that at the same time Jewish cultural, religious, and social institutions—just like Polish ones—were being liquidated, and that Jews were also part of the mass deportations of the population of eastern Poland, did not really alter this situation.¹⁴⁶⁵

American sociologist Tadeusz Piotrowski adds another important dimension to this debate:

But whether or not they [i.e., the Jews] knew, and whether or not they welcomed the Soviets simply to protect themselves from the Germans, are beside the point. Nothing justified the excesses of these Polish citizens, these communist Jews [many were simply pro-Soviet—*M.P.*], against the Polish population. What is worse, one can only speculate as to the reason for the total absence of any condemnation by the Jewish community and leaders, either then or now. (One possible answer is that to condemn is to admit.) To manifest pro-Soviet sympathy was one thing; to betray, deport, abuse, and murder neighbors, schoolmates, clients, and the soldiers of Poland under the guise of "self-protection from the Germans" was quite another. This was not a case of "do or die." There were no penalties for not volunteering.¹⁴⁶⁶

After discounting the extent and impact of Jewish misconduct during the Soviet occupation on Polish-Jewish relations, Jewish historians have attempted to explain the Poles' reaction by pointing to interwar anti-Semitism—political, economic, social and religious—and, in psychological terms, to the trauma of the Soviet invasion. Shimon Redlich, head of the Raab Centre for Holocaust Studies at Ben-Gurion University, writes:

An argument often cited in the literature and in public debate is that Polish hostility toward the Jews was aroused by Jewish support of Soviet occupation. In the Polish collective memory, Soviet occupation of the eastern frontier of Poland in 1939 and German occupation in 1941 were conjoined. Many Poles saw the German occupation as a kind of liberation from the Soviets. [In his book, *Sąsiedzi*, Jan T.] Gross finds no concrete evidence of Jewish "collaborators" working for the Soviet authorities in the district in question.

Indeed, such allegations were based more on conventions and stereotypes than actual fact. For the Poles, Soviet occupation was a trauma and a tragedy. They desperately needed an emotional outlet for their frustration. Venting their anger directly at the Soviets was not sufficient.¹⁴⁶⁷

British historian Norman Davies has pointed out, however, the Polish allegations were not imagined but true (indeed, as we have seen, many Jewish eyewitnesses voiced the same "perceptions"), and cannot be not explained away solely by confining one's examination to Polish attitudes and ignoring the Jewish component and the general flow or dynamics of history. As Davies wrote, with great insight, in 1987:

Generally speaking, there is a gross imbalance between the amount of research devoted to the Nazi occupation of Eastern Europe as opposed to the Soviet occupations; and the field awaits fuller investigation. Polish-Jewish relations deteriorated sharply on each of the three occasions when the Soviet Red Army has invaded Poland—in 1919–1920, in 1939, and in 1944–1945; and it would throw much light on the

¹⁴⁶⁵ Prekerowa, "The Jewish Underground and the Polish Underground," in *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry*, vol. 9 (1996): 149–50.

¹⁴⁶⁶ Piotrowski, *Poland's Holocaust*, 57.

¹⁴⁶⁷ Shimon Redlich's review article, "What happened one day in Jedwabne," appeared in *Ha'aretz* on December 8, 2000.

phenomenon if we could obtain a firm estimate of the dimensions of both Polish and Jewish collaboration.¹⁴⁶⁸

Less than twenty years earlier, when the Bolsheviks invaded Poland in 1920 and came dangerously close to destroying her newly won statehood, scenes similar to those witnessed in 1939 had occurred throughout the Eastern Borderlands and large portions of central Poland. Jews avoided military service and deserted from the Polish army en masse. It was in this context that the short-lived internment camp for some 5,000 Jewish soldiers was set up in Jabłonna. This was not something unique to Poland. It was a phenomenon that was encountered rather frequently, and not only in Europe. Although Canada had no basis to question the loyalty of her yet non-naturalized immigrants from the Austro-Hungarian Empire, they were summarily declared “enemy aliens” without any evidence of wrongdoing, simply because of their national origin. Some 9,000 civilians—mostly Ukrainians, but also some Poles and others—were rounded up and forcibly interned at 24 camps across Canada. The camps were located in the wilderness and surrounded with electrified fences; the prisoners would build roads and railways for no pay.

Another factor that had a significant impact on postwar conditions was the brutalization that occurred during the First World War. From the outset of the war, the armies of Germany, Austro-Hungary and Russia, which marched back and forth over vast expanses of East Central Europe, wreaked untold destruction in their paths and subjected the civilian population to harsh reprisals for mostly imagined crimes or simply to terrorize the population. Many thousands of innocent people were killed, especially by the Russian Army, who staged pogroms of Jews throughout Eastern Galicia already in 1914, but also by the

¹⁴⁶⁸ Abraham Brumberg and Norman Davies, “Poles and Jews: An Exchange,” *The New York Review of Books*, April 9, 1987. Incidents had already occurred at the beginning of the First World War. For example, when the Austrians entered Kraśnik in August 1914, they were greeted enthusiastically by the Jewish population. The Austrians ordered the Polish fire brigade to supply a large quantity of beds and bedding for the military hospital which had to taken from homes, both Christian and Jewish. When the Austrians retreated several weeks later, the Jews accused the Poles of robbing Jewish homes and pointed out to the Russians several prominent Poles as the main “culprits.” These Poles were then executed by the Russians along with a few Jewish accusers. See Robert Przegaliński, *Opowiadania o mieście Kraśnik i okolicach* (Lublin: Spółdzielnia Wydawnicza Placówka Lubelska, 1927). Characteristically, the fact that Poles were among those executed by the Russians is omitted in Jewish historiography, which then accuses the Poles of denouncing Jews. See Konrad Zieliński, “The Shtetl in Poland, 1914–1918,” in Steven T. Katz, ed., *The Shtetl: New Evaluations* (New York and London: New York University Press, 2007). Accusations, and counter-accusations, against the other group were frequent. For example, “Antisemitic fantasies of Jewish treachery prompted Jews to create rumors of their own ... While Russians accused Jews of having secret telephones with which they communicated with the enemy, Jewish versions of the rumor identified the true perpetrators as Poles disguised as Jews.” See Derek J. Penslar, *Jews and the Military: A History* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2013), 157. Jews used a similar foil when accused of shooting at Polish troops. They said the shooters were Russian snipers that were deliberately shooting out of Jewish homes.

Austrian and German forces.¹⁴⁶⁹ Almost all of the civilian massacres and executions targeted non-Germans, non-Austrians and non-Russians, so nationalism undoubtedly played a significant part in the imperialistic designs of these countries. This, in turn, set the tone for later events when the subjugated peoples seized the opportunity created by the defeat of these three powers to assert their right to self-determination. (This nation-building process is often disparaged in recent Western historiography as mere “nationalism” that simply begot violence, a point of view that shows contempt for the legitimate aspirations of these oppressed

¹⁴⁶⁹ The events in Poland should not be considered in isolation, but in light of how invading armies treated the civilian population throughout Europe during the First World War. The German, Russian and Austrian military all perpetrated countless atrocities against the civilian population that make Polish “atrocities” pale in comparison. Already in August 1914, German troops laid waste to two border towns in Russian Poland, Kalisz and Częstochowa. German soldiers shot hundreds of civilians in Polish territories and seized hostages in reprisal for what they took to be civilian resistance. In both cases, material damage was considerable, including widespread looting and the desecration of the icon of the Virgin of Częstochowa, a shrine of national importance to Catholic Poles. On November 16, 1918, the German military executed 44 Poles, both soldiers and civilians, in Międzyrzec Podlaski in retaliation for the disarming of the German garrison. (Only Poles were targeted; Jews were spared by the Germans.) The conduct of the German military in Kalisz and Międzyrzec Podlaski matched the worst of the pogroms later directed against Jews. Numerous atrocities were also committed in Western Europe, particularly in Belgium. See John Horne and Alan Kramer, *German Atrocities, 1914: A History of Denial* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2001), 81; Andrzej Solak, “Zagłada Kalisza,” *Mysł Polska*, January 29, 2006; Józef Geresz, *Międzyrzec Podlaski: Dzieje miasta i okolic* (Międzyrzec Podlaski: Intergraf, 2001). The Germans also plundered Poland of food and anything that could be of use to their war effort: wood, horses, metal, leather. See Jesse Kauffman, *Elusive Alliance: The German Occupation of Poland in World War I* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2015), 55.

The Russian forces inflicted massive violence on civilians wherever they went, especially in Eastern Galicia in the summer and autumn of 1914. A Russian military pogrom in Lwów in September 1914 took the lives of between 20 and 50 Jews, as well as some Christian lives. Russian soldiers also staged pogroms in Buczaczy, Brody, Radziwiłłów, Sokal, Nadwórna, Husiatyn, Zaleszczyki, Delatyn, Przemyśl, Tarnów, and many other cities and villages. Violent acts including many rapes were accompanied by sacrilege such as the desecrating and pillaging of Torah scrolls. These acts were carried out with impunity. During the great Russian retreat from April to October 1915, approximately 100 separate events could be categorized as pogroms. Historian Oleg Budnitskii argues that violence toward the Jewish population “was, for all intents and purposes, ordered from above, and anti-Semitic propaganda clearly indicated who the enemy was.” In 1915, Moscow witnessed a large-scale pogrom against Germans. See Eric Lohr, “The Russian Army and the Jews: Mass Deportation, Hostages and Violence during World War I,” *The Russian Review*, (July 2001): 404–19; Eric Lohr, “1915 and the War Pogrom Paradigm in the Russian Empire,” in Jonathan Dekel-Chen, David Gaunt, Natan M. Meir, and Israel Bartal, eds., *Anti-Jewish Violence: Rethinking the Pogrom in East European History* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2011), 42–45; Peter Holquist, “The Role of Personality in the First (1914–1915) Russian Occupation of Galicia and Bukovina,” in *ibid.*, 54–56; Budnitskii, *Russian Jews Between the Reds and the Whites, 1917–1920*, 236; Tomasz Wiśniewski, “Sytuacja ludności żydowskiej podczas rosyjskiej okupacji Przemyśla i Lwowa w 1914–1915 w świetle pamiętników,” *Kwartalnik Historii Żydów*, no. 4(2013): 635–46; Mick, *Lemberg, Lwów, L'viv, 1914–1947*, 25, 41. Poles were falsely accused by Jews to the Russian authorities of spying for the Austrians. For example, Rev. Bernard Szafranski was imprisoned for a year and sentenced to be executed, but his punishment was commuted to banishment in Siberia for life. See Beata Cichecka-Wronowska and Jan Tomaszewski, “Łopatynscy księża w latach 1920–1945,” Internet: <<http://www.stowarzyszeniełopatyn.pl/index.php/parafia-w-łopatynie/125-łopatynscy-ksieza-w-latach-1920-1945>>.

When the Austrians recaptured Eastern Galicia, they rounded up thousands of civilians in 1914–1917, especially Ukrainian Russophiles, many of them Lemkos, and interned them in concentration camps like Thalerhof near Graz, which held up to 20,000 prisoners in primitive conditions, resulting in well over 1,000 deaths. Hundreds of civilians were hanged publicly as gallows sprung up like mushrooms in order to deter alleged spies and “anti-Austrian” elements. According to Christoph Mick, “Several thousand Ruthenians were summarily hanged on suspicion alone or were sentenced to death by military courts and executed. Others were arrested and detained in camps. In November 1915 some 5,700 Ruthenians were interned under terrible conditions at Camp Talerhof near Graz.” See Mick, *Lemberg, Lwów, L'viv*, 19. The same occurred in other parts of the Austrian Empire. When the Habsburg army invaded Serbia in late August 1914, it went on a rampage through northwestern Serbia in particular, killing 3,000 civilians. See Jonathan E. Gumz, “Losing Control: The Norm of Occupation in Eastern Europe during the First World War,” in Jochen Böhrer, Włodzimierz Borodziej, and Joachim von Puttkamer, eds., *Legacies of Violence: Eastern Europe's First World War* (München: Oldenbourg, 2014), 76–77. In the town of Trebinje in Herzegovina, the Austrians hanged 37 Serbs in the summer of 1914. See Vladimir Dedijer, *The Road to Sarajevo* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1966), 161, 348. Conditions were not much better in Western Europe. The Germans ordered collective executions in Belgium and northern France for the actions of *francs-tireurs*, with more than 1,000 civilians falling victim to German atrocities throughout Belgium alone. After a German officer was shot in the Belgian city of Louvain (Leuven) in August 1914, German troops subjected the city to an “orgy of killing, pillage, and pyromania.” That same month, German forces executed hundreds of civilians in localities in France, such as Nomény and Port-sur-Seille, whose inhabitants showed

peoples.) Unfortunately, violence did occur after the war, but ninety percent of that violence was perpetrated by various Soviet, Russian, and Ukrainian factions on the territory of Ukraine. Moreover, it was inevitable that there would be some conflicts as large areas had an ethnically mixed population and thus there were competing territorial claims at a time when arbitration mechanisms were rather weak and ineffective. However, this did not degenerate into ethnic cleansing and some conflicts (e.g., Lithuanian-Polish and Czech-Polish) had relatively few victims, almost all of which were non-civilians. Contrary to what some historians allege, a holocaust was not looming on the horizon.¹⁴⁷⁰ The genocides and ethnic cleansing that were perpetrated by Europeans before World War I and after (until World War II) were not carried out by the newly formed states of East Central Europe, but by Germany, the Soviet Union, and other states.¹⁴⁷¹

It was not only Communists and Communist-leaning factions that supported the Bolshevik hordes who invaded Poland in 1919–1920. A large portion, perhaps a majority, of the Jewish community, including the Bund, Poalei-Zion and many members of the educated classes, shared those sympathies. Contrary to the picture painted by many Western historians, Jews were not just observers who strived to remain neutral, but

¹⁴⁷⁰ For example, historian Piotr Wróbel speculates, without identifying any particular war scenario, that “It is likely [sic] that if a war had started in Central and Eastern Europe in the 1930s or 1940s without German participation, large-scale anti-Jewish violence would have taken place there anyway. There probably [sic] would have been no ‘Final Solution’ and the survival rate would have been much higher than after the Holocaust; however, some other part of the local Jewry would have been murdered instead.” See Piotr Wróbel, “Foreshadowing the Holocaust: The Wars of 1914–1921 and Anti-Jewish Violence in Central and Eastern Europe,” in Böhler, Borodziej, and von Puttkamer, *Legacies of Violence*, 207–8. The truth is that none of the newly formed states was planning a war of ethnic cleansing directed against a neighbouring country or against any part of its own population.

¹⁴⁷¹ As for earlier genocides and ethnic cleansings, the treatment of the Irish by their English rulers, who exacerbated if not directly caused a famine that took one million lives between 1845 and 1852, was one of darkest chapters of British history. During the conquest of the Caucasus, between 1860 and 1864, the Russians massacred and expelled hundreds of thousands of Adygs (Circassians or Cherkess). The Belgians are said to have systematically murdered millions of Black Congolese between 1880 and 1900 in their quest for rubber. Congolese who refused to harvest the rubber for their Belgian overlords had their hands chopped off, before bleeding to death. Between 1904 and 1911, the Germans exterminated 65,000 out of 80,000 members of the Herero tribe, about 85 percent of the tribe’s population, during the Herero uprising in German South West Africa. (Some estimates mention 100,000 victims from the Herero and 15,000 Namaqua, a smaller ethnic group, in what is today Namibia.) The extermination order was hung around the necks of captive Herero, who were driven into the desert under gunfire to die. Bizarre racial experiments, like those of the Nazi German concentration camps, were performed on prisoners. Thousands of skulls and other body parts flooded German universities, where academics and students conducted “scientific” tests aimed at proving that Africans were anatomically similar to apes. See Ben Shepherd, *War in the Wild East: The German Army and Soviet Partisans* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2004), 42–43; David Olusoga and Casper W. Erichsen, *The Kaiser’s Holocaust: Germany’s Forgotten Genocide and the Colonial Roots of Nazism* (London: Faber and Faber, 2010). During the Balkan Wars of 1912 and 1913, Muslim villages were systematically burned. An estimated 200,000 Muslims lost their lives as a consequence of wilful violence, starvation, and epidemics in the territories of “liberated” from Serbia, Greece, and Bulgaria. See Philipp Ther, “Pre-negotiated Violence: Ethnic Cleansing in the ‘Long’ First World War,” in Böhler, Borodziej, and von Puttkamer, *Legacies of Violence*, 260–61. During the Dublin (Easter) Rising of 1916, the majority of the casualties who numbered in the thousands, both killed and wounded, were civilians. Both sides, British and rebel, shot civilians deliberately on occasion when they refused to obey orders such as to stop at checkpoints. There were two instances of British troops killing civilians out of revenge or frustration, at Portobello Barracks, where six were shot and North King Street, where 15 were killed.

were often actors in the unfolding political struggle.¹⁴⁷² Large numbers of Jews, especially the youth, greeted the invading Bolshevik hordes with great jubilation and fanfare and took part in massive anti-Polish rallies in plain view of their Polish neighbours. (Some Polish workers and landless farmers as well as members of the Polish Socialist Party also collaborated with the Bolsheviks.) The notable exceptions were Orthodox Jews and non-Leftist Zionist elements, which remained loyal to and often made great sacrifices for the Polish state that had taken them in centuries earlier when they fled pogroms and expulsions throughout Europe. (Interestingly, in 1939–1941, the Bundists, having learned their lesson, did not support the Soviets, whereas the Zionists started to flirt with the Communist authorities.)

As Polish historian Janusz Szczepański has chronicled in his authoritative studies on this topic, massive support for Bolshevism among Jews in 1919–1920 was very real. Revolutionary committees and militias composed almost exclusively of Jews sprang up in hundreds of localities. They set about destroying Polish state and religious emblems, denounced Polish policemen, officers and their families, and compiled lists of Polish patriots, including clergymen and loyal Jews, for the Soviet security police. Jewish snipers shot at retreating Polish army units, while other Jews informed the arriving Red Army on the whereabouts of the retreating Polish army. Jewish shopkeepers, who had closed their shops to the Polish army, now reopened them for the Red Army. Jews led the Bolsheviks to Polish establishments, which were pilfered, thus striking a blow at their would-be economic competitors. Some Jews denounced socially prominent Poles to the Soviets. For example, in *Wasilków* near Białystok, Jewish Communists were responsible for the deportation of members of the Polish intelligentsia and abused Polish prisoners of war. In *Różana*, sixteen Poles who had been identified by the Jewish revolutionary committee as “enemies of the people” were arrested and executed (one of the Poles managed to escape). Many young Jews joined the Red Army in their war against Poland, while other Jewish locals performed work for the Soviets. Avoidance of conscription was widespread, as were desertions from the Polish army. Faced with such disloyalty, Polish military officials occasionally interned or expelled Jewish officers and soldiers from the Polish army. Understandably, this state of affairs led to tensions and, at times, confrontations between Poles and Jews.¹⁴⁷³ Such events are not acknowledged in Jewish historiography, which instead prefers to lay the blame for everything on Polish

¹⁴⁷² By way of example, Bernard Goldstein, a Socialist from Warsaw who found himself in Kiev in 1918 “volunteered for the army to defend the infant [Bolshevik] revolution. ... He participated in the seesaw battle between the revolutionaries and the Ukrainian reactionaries [sic] who were allied with the Germans. In Kiev he organized a militia among the Jewish workers which participated actively in the overthrow of the reactionary government of Hetman Skoropadsky.” See Bernard Goldstein, *The Stars Bear Witness* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1950), 6–7. According to another source, “Jews, moreover, concentrated in those sectors of production—the sewing, shoemaking, leatherworking, wood-, food-, and tobacco-producing industries—that emerged as primary bastions of political radicalism following the 1917 revolutions. Revolution and Civil War transformed this mass of artisanal labor into a force for the radical transformation of Jewish political and social life from below. In doing so, these actors transformed the cities and shtetlekh of Belorussia into centers of Jewish experimentation while simultaneously playing a critical role in establishing institutions of Bolshevik rule and Soviet power throughout the region.” See Andrew Sloin, *The Jewish Revolution in Belorussia: Economy, Race, and Bolshevik Power* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2017), 24.

¹⁴⁷³ Janusz Szczepański, *Wojna 1920 roku na Mazowszu i Podlasiu* (Warsaw and Pułtusk: Instytut Historyczny Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 1995), 37–39, 80–86, 120–24, 136, 143–47; Janusz Szczepański, *Wojna 1920 roku w Ostrołęckiem* (Warsaw, Ostrołęka, and Pułtusk: Urząd do Spraw Kombatantów i Osób Represjonowanych, Wyższa Szkoła Humanistyczna w Pułtusku, Ostrołęckie Towarzystwo Naukowe, and Stacja Naukowa MOBN w Pułtusku, 1997), 38–49, 100–109, 118–19, 131–32, 172–90, 226–31, 338–40, 351–55, 368–69. See also Janusz Szczepański, *Spółeczeństwo Polski w walce z najazdem bolszewickim 1920 roku* (Warsaw and Pułtusk: Naczelna Dyrekcja Archiwów Państwowych, and Wyższa Szkoła Humanistyczna; Warsaw: Oficyna Wydawnicza Towarzystwa Opieki nad Zabytkami, 2000), passim; Dariusz Magier, “Kolaboracja z bolszewikami w regionie białkopodlaskim w sierpniu 1920 roku—skala, motywy, konsekwencje,” Internet: <http://www.przemas.art.pl/dima/naw_tzt_03.htm>.

anti-Semitism for “imagined” wrongs.¹⁴⁷⁴ A characteristic report at the time was that of the Jewish-owned London *Daily Telegraph*, which claimed, on January 4, 1919, that the Poles were engaged in “a savage war of extermination against the Jews.”

The fact that Jewish opposition to Polish statehood sometimes took on violent forms in the Eastern Borderlands is borne out by non-Polish sources as well. Members of the Danish diplomatic staff reported witnessing, on April 19, 1919, Jews firing on Polish troops at a railway station during the battle over the predominantly Polish city of Wilno.¹⁴⁷⁵ After taking that town in May 1919, following its brief capture by the Bolsheviks during which time it was under the domination of Jewish, pro-Bolshevik elements, Józef Piłsudski (the interwar dictator of Poland who enjoyed considerable popularity among Jews) recorded in his diary that the Jewish civilian population had fired shots and thrown hand grenades at Polish soldiers from windows and housetops, but he would not permit the Poles to strike back at the Jews.¹⁴⁷⁶ Unfortunately, such occurrences were rather frequent during the Polish-Soviet War of 1919–1920 and

¹⁴⁷⁴ Alexander Prusin is a rather typical example of this phenomenon. In his *The Lands Between*, he eschews any discussion of collaboration by Jews directed against Poles (e.g., at pp. 93–94), which is well documented in Janusz Szczepański’s studies, though he does acknowledge widespread Jewish opposition to Polish statehood in all border areas and pro-German sentiments among Zionists (pp.66–67). This is but one of the many serious gaps in Prusin’s knowledge and treatment of Polish matters which include: the denial of Ukrainian atrocities against Poles in 1918–1919 such as the large massacres in Sokolniki (November 11 and December 29, 1918, about 50 killed), Biłka Szlachecka and Biłka Królewska (November 24, 1918, about 50 killed), Złoczów (March 26–27, 1919, 28 killed), Brzeżany (17 executed), and many other smaller ones (p. 91); Piłsudski’s alleged attempt to expand Poland’s eastern boundary when he marched on Kiev in April 1920 (p. 81)—in fact, Piłsudski and Ukrainian leader Petlura had settled on a boundary along the River Zbrucz, and some 70,000 thousand Russians, Ukrainians, Belorussians, Cossacks and other volunteers fought on the side of Poland against the Bolsheviks—see Zbigniew Karpus, *Wschodni sojusznicy Polski w wojnie 1920 roku: Oddziały wojskowe ukraińskie, rosyjskie, kozackie i białoruskie w Polsce w latach 1919-1920* (Toruń: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Mikołaja Kopernika, 1999); the unfounded claim that 83,500 Red Army soldiers died in Polish captivity and that the Polish army, like the Soviet army, executed captured Soviet prisoners on the spot (p. 91). As for the final charge, as Soviet and Polish scholars have shown, the number of Soviet POWs who died as a result of epidemics and diseases in Polish captivity was between 16,000 and 18,000, and approximately 20,000 Polish POWs died in Soviet and Lithuanian captivity. See V.P. Kozlov, Daria Nałęcz, and N.E. Eliseeva, eds., *Krasnoarmeitsy v polskim plenu 1919–1922 gg.: Sbornik dokumentov i materialov* (Moscow: Letnii Sad, 2004); Zbigniew Karpus, *Russian and Ukrainian Prisoners of War and Internees Kept in Poland in 1918–1924* (Toruń: Adam Marszałek, 2001).

¹⁴⁷⁵ Zdzisław M. Musialik, *Wojna polsko-bolszewicka 1919–1920 a Żydzi* (Częstochowa: n.p., 1995), 34–42. See also C.M.A. Phillips, *The New Poland* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1923), 299; Przemysław Różański, “Wilno, 19–21 kwietnia 1919 roku,” *Kwartalnik Historii Żydów*, no. 1 (2006): 13–34.

¹⁴⁷⁶ Józef Piłsudski, *Pisma zbiorowe* (Warsaw: Instytut Józefa Piłsudskiego, 1937), vol. 5, 80–85, as cited in Piotrowski, *Poland’s Holocaust*, 42.

occasionally led to tragic retaliations (for example, in Lwów, Lida, Pińsk).¹⁴⁷⁷ However, at the same time, it is important to remember that the extent of violence directed at Jews—no more than several hundred Jews perished at Polish hands, according to the report of the American mission led by Henry Morgenthau which

¹⁴⁷⁷ Piotrowski, *Poland's Holocaust*, 41–43; Norman Davies, “Great Britain and the Polish Jews, 1918–20,” *Journal of Contemporary History*, vol. 8, no. 2 (April 1973): 119–42; Jerzy Tomaszewski, “Polskie formacje zbrojne wobec Żydów 1918–1920,” in *Żydzi w obronie Rzeczypospolitej: Materiały konferencji w Warszawie 17 i 18 października 1993 r.* (Warsaw: Cyklady, 1996), 100. The pogrom in Lwów occurred on November 22–24, 1918, after Polish troops liberated this predominantly Polish city from Ukrainian forces. The number of deaths attributable to this pogrom ranges from 44 to 73. The official police report, which is the most detailed and reliable source as it was based on an extensive investigation and hospital records, lists the names of 44 persons killed, including 11 Christians (10 Roman Catholics and one Greek Catholic, probably a Ukrainian), and gives the number of injured as 443. This ethnic breakdown of victims strongly suggests that the riots were of a criminal nature. Based on this report, a Polish government commission stated that there were close to 50 fatalities, both Jews and Christians. According to the British government investigation led by Sir Stuart Samuel there were 52 fatalities; the U.S. Morgenthau Commission (which described the events not as a “pogrom” but as “excesses”) gave a figure of 64. Contemporary Jewish sources claimed that 73 Jews were killed, but their documentation was of a poor quality, particularly as it related to alleged perpetrators whose identities were not known to them. About twenty Jewish policemen perished in the fighting, so the number of Jewish civilians killed was probably no more than 20–30. A rush report prepared for the Polish Foreign Ministry stated that at least 150 Jews were killed, but police reports and subsequent investigations did not confirm that inflated estimate provided by a Jewish representative. Moreover, it is most unlikely that the subsequent British and American investigations would have undercounted the number of deaths to that extent. (An earlier Russian military pogrom in Lwów on September 27, 1914, which has attracted little attention among historians, took the lives of between 30 and 50 Jews.) Once in control of the situation, the Polish authorities (unlike the Russians in 1914) acted promptly and carried out a thorough investigation of the events. Some 2,900 suspected rioters and looters were arrested on November 22 and 23, including 400 soldiers, and several culprits were executed. (The 2019 study by Leszek Kania cited below refers to much smaller number of pogromists, many of them ordinary criminals.) By February 20, 1919, 80 persons (55 Roman Catholics, 20 Greek Catholics, 3 Jews, 1 Protestant, and one person whose religion was not established) had been brought to trial and found guilty of various crimes. Most of those convicted were from the lower social stratum or marginalized persons with a criminal history. Investigations continued until the summer of 1919, and 164 persons, including 10 Jews, received prison sentences. The pogrom was preceded by murders of Polish POWs by Ukrainian forces on November 14–15, 1918, with the participation of Jewish policemen. The Jewish police fought alongside the Ukrainian forces during the siege of Lwów, thereby violating the undertaking of neutrality in the Polish-Ukrainian conflict given by Jewish community leaders. (Jewish support of the Ukrainians in the battle for Przemyśl, in violation of their undertaking of neutrality, also led to Polish-Jewish conflict in that city.) As they retreated from the city on November 22, 1918, the Ukrainians opened the prisons and released many hardened criminals. (According to other sources, it was the Austrian forces who released the criminals from prisons before withdrawing from the town.) The rioters included mostly criminal elements, rogue soldiers, and even escaped psychiatric patients. Representatives of all ethnic groups, including Ukrainians and Jews, were involved in the rioting and looting. Christian stores were also looted. The Polish authorities paid out compensation to those who sustained losses, and many Jews seeking compensation submitted fraudulent claims. See Czesław Mączyński, *Boje lwowskie. Część I: Oswobodzenie Lwowa (1–24 listopada 1918 roku)* (Warsaw: Rzeczpospolita, 1921); Jerzy Tomaszewski, “Lwów—22 listopada 1918,” *Przegląd Historyczny*, vol. 75, no. 2 (1984): 279–85; Leszek Tomaszewski, “Lwów—Listopad 1918: Niezwykłe losy pewnego dokumentu,” *Dzieje Najnowsze*, vol. 25, no. 4 (1993): 163–73; Leszek Podhorodecki, *Dzieje Lwowa* (Warsaw: Volumen, 1993), 153–72; Grzegorz Łukomski, Czesław Partacz, and Bogusław Polak, *Wojna polsko-ukraińska 1918–1919: Działania bojowe—aspekty polityczne—kalendarium* (Koszalin: Wydawnictwo Uczelniane Wyższej Szkoły Inżynierskiej w Koszalinie; and Warsaw: Adiutor, 1994), 80–84; Włodzimierz Bonusiak and Józef Buszko, eds., *Galicja i jej dziedzictwo* (Rzeszów: Wydawnictwo Wyższej Szkoły Pedagogicznej w Rzeszowie, 1994), vol. 1, 83–115; Maciej Kozłowski, *Zapomniana wojna: Walki o Lwów i Galicję Wschodnią 1918–1919*, Second edition (Bydgoszcz: Instytut Wydawniczy Świadectwo, 1999); Czesław Madajczyk, “Zajścia antyżydowskie we Lwowie w 1918 roku,” *Przegląd*, November 12, 2002; David Engel, “Lwów, 1918: The Transmutation of a Symbol and Its Legacy in the Holocaust,” in Joshua D. Zimmerman, ed., *Contested Memories: Poles and Jews during the Holocaust and Its Aftermath* (New Brunswick, New Jersey and London: Rutgers University Press, 2003), 32–44; Przemysław Różański, “Pogrom lwowski 22 listopada 1918 roku w świetle zeznań Organizacji Syjonistycznej złożonych przed Komisją Morgenthaua,” *Kwartalnik Historii Żydów*, no. 3 (2004): 347–58; David Engel, “Lwów, November 1918: The Report of the Official Polish Governmental Investigating Commission,” *Kwartalnik Historii Żydów*, no. 3 (2004): 387–95; “Żydowski Komitet Bezpieczeństwa Publicznego,” *Encyklopedia Białych Plam*, vol. 18 (Radom: Polskie Wydawnictwo Encyklopedyczne, 2006), 310–13; Grzegorz Mazur, *Życie polityczne polskiego Lwowa 1918–1939* (Kraków: Księgarnia Akademicka, 2007), 50–54; Leszek Kania, *W cieniu Orłąt Lwowskich: Polskie sądy wojskowe, kontrwywiad i służby policyjne w bitwie o Lwów 1918–1919* (Zielona Góra: Uniwersytet Zielonogórski, 2008), 95–103, 116–62, 194–99, 276–79, 282–91, 332–35—see

was sent to Poland to investigate the situation¹⁴⁷⁸—paled in comparison to the widescale massacres they endured at the hands of Ukrainian, Russian, and Belorussian factions, both nationalist and Communist

¹⁴⁷⁸ In June 1919, a mission consisting of Henry Morgenthau, Brigadier General Edgar Jadwin, and Homer H. Johnson was appointed by the American Commission to Negotiate Peace to investigate Jewish matters in Poland. In the report published in October 1919, Morgenthau wrote: “Just as the Jews would resent being condemned as a race for the action of a few of their undesirable co-religionists, so it would be correspondingly unfair to condemn the Polish nation as a whole for the violence committed by uncontrolled troops or local mobs. These excesses were apparently not premeditated, for if they had been part of a preconceived plan, the number of killed would have run into the thousands instead of amounting to about 280.” See “Mission of The United States to Poland, Henry Morgenthau, Sr. Report,” *Wikipedia*, Internet: <http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Mission_of_The_United_States_to_Poland,_Henry_Morgenthau,_Sr._Report>. (By way of comparison, as of August 5, 2014, Israel’s assault on Gaza in July–August 2014 took the lives of more than 1,600 civilians including 460 children, and an additional 7,000 civilians were wounded including more than 2,000 children.) While Polish-Americans welcomed outside investigation of the pogrom allegations, Jewish-Americans were opposed. According to Morgenthau, some Jewish-American leaders opposed him because they were “afraid of the truth” and only wanted to establish a case, not to determine the facts. The Polish authorities gave the Morgenthau-led commission a free hand and made no efforts to restrict access to Jewish representatives and witnesses. The investigative reports were almost completely ignored by the Jewish press, which otherwise called Morgenthau a traitor to the Jewish cause. Hugh Gibson, the American ambassador in Warsaw, was attacked as an anti-Semite or Jew-baiter, with allegations that his WASP (white Anglo-Saxon Protestant) background animated his prejudices. Gibson responded: “I find that most of these people are over wrought and have reached that stage where they unconsciously want to believe every exaggerated yarn about excesses against the Jews. They take it as prejudice if you question any story no matter whether they know where it comes from or not, as long as it makes out a case against the Poles and shows that the Jews are suffering.” All this time, Gibson never absolved Poles and concluded that Polish-Jewish problems can only be solved by goodwill from both sides, including American Jews “who could face facts honestly.” See Kapiszewski, *Conflicts Across the Atlantic*, 71, 76, 84–85, 89–95, 99.

Some post-modern historians have reinterpreted these events, in particular the pogrom in Lwów, in an attempt to turn them into a mini-Holocaust and precursor of the Holocaust itself. See, for example, the William Hagen, “The Moral Economy of Popular Violence: The Pogrom in Lwów, November 1918,” in Robert Blobaum, ed., *Antisemitism and Its Opponents in Modern Poland* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2005), 124–47, an ideologically charged article that does not begin to explain how the Lwów pogrom of 1918 was worse than the Russian pogrom in that city in 1914, which claimed at least 40 Jewish lives and went unpunished by the Russian authorities, and countless other wartime atrocities, save for the nationality of the victims. See also William W. Hagen, *Anti-Jewish Violence in Poland, 1914–1920* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), where the author, at p. 109, refers to the alleged “nationalist symbolism in pogromists’ actions: plundering Jews they recovered their motherland and assuaged their grief,” and claims, at p. 164, that “[o]n pogroms’ margins ... there stalked, in many minds and perhaps in wide social consciousness, phantasms of mass murder,” which allegedly rose to an apocalyptic level (p. 168): “Such deathly theater was prologue to imagined aggressions’ last act against Jews, portending banishment or even systematic murder.” The events in Lwów did not come close to the level of anti-Serb rhetoric and atrocities committed by the Austrian military (slogans like “all Serbs must die” and “Serbia must die” permeated Vienna) or, for that matter, the 1948 massacre in Deir Yassin, which led to the massive and calculated flight of Palestinians. (On Austrian anti-Serb violence see Cathie Carmichael, *Genocide before the Holocaust* (New Haven, Connecticut and London: Yale University Press, 2009), 23–26.) Russian historian Oleg Budnitskii demonstrates that comparisons of these years (1917–1920) to the Nazi Holocaust are misguided. Such backshadowing obscures the important fact that Jews not only were victims of the various armed forces involved in the conflict, as were others, but also can be counted among their combatants, financiers, supporters, and ideologues. See Budnitskii, *Russian Jews Between the Reds and the Whites, 1917–1920*. Neither the Polish authorities nor the Polish population harboured genocidal designs, yet genocides were becoming commonplace at the time. As German historian Christian Gerlach has pointed out, “The idea that masses of people had to die, or entire peoples be extinguished in the process of developing an area even where this was not desired, was not new. The phenomenon was known from the colonial context and the cases of the indigenous peoples of North America, Australia, New Zealand and Africa had been discussed internationally since the eighteenth century. These were seldom merely hypothetical considerations. In many colonial areas—Central America and the Caribbean, North America, Patagonia, Australia and New Zealand, Bengal, Ceylon, Algeria, Congo, Ivory Coast, Sudan, Tahiti and New Caledonia—the majority of the population perished as a result of colonial conquest and transformation. ... population losses in German Southwest Africa and German East Africa in the period 1904–08 had also been enormous. Some of the other cases also dated back just a few decades.” See Gerlach, *The Extermination of the European Jews*, 177–78. Characterizing the Lwów pogrom as a “social ritual,” which implies a practice or pattern of behaviour regularly performed in a set manner, is particularly perverse as there is no evidence that there was such an established practice

(including the Red Army), who are believed to have killed at least 100,000 Jews.¹⁴⁷⁹ Violence, military and non-military, was an all-round occurrence that affected non-Jews as well. Besides murder and robbery of ordinary Poles, the invading Bolsheviks murdered priests and POWs and conducted its share of crimes against Jews. (Earlier, Jews had experienced widespread pogroms in 1903–1905, and the forced evacuation of civilians from Russia’s western territories in 1914–1915 were also accompanied by pogroms.) While revenge for Jewish-Soviet collaboration was a motive, it was not the only motive for the acts committed by Poles against Jews. There was overall indiscipline and demoralization in the retreating Polish army that led to some of its members committing crimes not only against Jews, but also against Poles. After the tide had permanently turned, there was an additional wave of popular lawlessness, especially plundering and robberies carried out by the poorer classes,¹⁴⁸⁰ in the wake of the Red Army’s retreat, facilitated by the abundance of Soviet-abandoned weaponry. Tens of Jews were later shot by Polish authorities for Bolshevik collaboration. Poles also faced criminal penalties, including the death penalty, for acts directed against Jews, just as they faced the same for such acts against fellow Poles.

Jews were active players in these events, as much as anyone else, and were not just passive, “neutral” bystanders. In the *Minsk* area, the Bund, Poale-Zion, Labor Zionists, and various politically unaffiliated Jewish workers, all formed armed units that fought on the side of the Red Army against Polish forces that took that city in August 1919.¹⁴⁸¹ Under the spell of the Bolshevik Revolution, the left wing of the Bund transformed itself into the Combund (the Communist Bund Party), and afterwards its members joined the Communist Party. A revolt against the Polish government in *Zamość* on December 28–30, 1918 was suppressed by the Polish military. They threw their support behind the Bolsheviks once again when the Red Army seized control of the city in 1920. As one observer notes,

The truth be said, there was a portion of the Jewish populace who was sympathetic to the advance of the Red military. ...

As the Bolshevik army drew near to Zamość in the year 1920, the so-called ‘Red Revolution’ took place by us. A great number of the Jewish elements who were radical sympathizers were drawn into it. ...

The activity of the *Bund* in the professional organization diminishes. The communists obtain influence in a whole array of professional trade unions. In the course of a few years up to 1923, the influence of the *Bund* in most unions is entirely eliminated. The leadership, in particular, is in the hands of younger people, radicalized, after the victory of the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia.¹⁴⁸²

Pro-Bolshevik factions, like those in *Radzyń Podlaski*, sprung up in virtually every shtetl, proclaiming the anticipated defeat of Poland with the help of the Jews: “Denikin has been smashed, the Bolsheviks will smash the Poles. We young Jews of draft age ... should organize and overcome the Poles. ... when the

¹⁴⁷⁹ Lidia B. Miliakova, ed., *Kniga pogromov: Pogromy na Ukraine, v Belorussii i evropeiskoi chasti Rossii v period Grazhdanskoi voiny 1918–1922 gg.: Sbornik dokumentov* (Moscow: ROSSP-EN, 2007), passim, for statistics see pp. xii–xiv (the figure of 2.6% for victims attributed to Poles has no foundation in fact; a careful tally of Jewish losses indicates that the number of such victims did not exceed several hundred, as was reported by the American mission sent to investigate the situation in Poland). According to a comprehensive Jewish study, the number of Jews killed during the pogroms in the Ukraine in 1918–1921 was 31,071, of whom 16,706 were killed by Petliura’s army (Ukrainian), 5,235 by Denikin’s army (Russian), 3,271 by Grigoriev’s army (Russian), 725 by the Soviet army, 134 (or 0.4%) by the Polish army, 149 by Balakhovich’s army (Belorussian), and 4,615 by various bands and insurgents. See Nahum Gergel, “The Pogroms in the Ukraine 1918–21,” in *YIVO Annual of Jewish Social Science*, vol. 6 (1951), at p. 248.

¹⁴⁸⁰ Jan Slomka, *From Serfdom to Self-Government: Memoirs of a Polish Village Mayor, 1842–1927* (London: Minerva Publishing Co., 1941), 254–56. This book describes conditions in the Tarnobrzeg area in 1919 including widespread plundering and robberies of manors, well-to-do farms and Jewish shops. Troops of militia were sent in to try to control the situation.

¹⁴⁸¹ Elissa Bemporad, *Becoming Soviet Jews: The Bolshevik Experiment in Minsk* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2013), 27.

¹⁴⁸² Bernstein, *The Zamosc Memorial Book*, 293, 295, 308.

Bolsheviks enter, we should stand on their side against the Polish state.”¹⁴⁸³ With the assistance of the largely Jewish revolutionary committee, on August 9, 1920 the Bolsheviks murdered a number of prominent Poles in *Suchowola* after they were apprehended by local Jews.¹⁴⁸⁴ The Polish response to this real threat was not motivated by their alleged anti-Semitism but by the behaviour of these factions. Jews who were implicated in these activities dreaded the prospect of the return of the Polish army and many of them fled with the Bolsheviks. The retaliation that followed, as it invariably does in such cases everywhere, was largely contained by the Polish authorities. The excesses that occurred targeted collaborators, for the most part. But it was the Polish retaliations that captured the attention of the media worldwide, not the widespread Jewish collaboration.

The following descriptions, which are rather sparse about the actual activities of the revolutionary committees and the militia, are from Jewish sources:

The Red Army captured Goniondz [*Goniądz* near Łomża] during the Russian-Polish War of 1920. During the second day of occupation, the Russians formed a revolutionary committee with the abbreviated title of “Revkam” [“Revkom”]. Only laborers were members of “Revkam”, primarily Bundists. Josef, the son of Teme-Raizel, was the committee chairman. Hanoch, the son of Itsche the water carrier was the education commissar. Moische-Feivel, the son of Chaya Vitzes, was put in charge of sanitation. He was given the title of “Minister”. Several Christians and Zeidke Rubin constituted the militia. Hanoch used to give talks in conjunction with the Bolshevik commissar.

The “Revkam” had the authority to issue severe sentences and even the death penalty. None of them, however, could read or write Russian. They appointed Eli Dlugolensky as secretary. He exploited the ignorance of “Revkam” and issued documents as he wished. The commissar would sign each and every one.

... The “Revkam” established a cooperative which would give notes to the [Jewish] grain merchants with which to purchase grain. Instead of one hundred thousand pounds of corn, the secretary would give a note for three hundred thousand pounds. The remaining two hundred thousand pounds he would sell in Białystok [Białystok] for three times the price permitted by the cooperative. ...

Yoshua, the tinsmith, who lived in the valley next door to Chayim Kobrinsky (Chayim Polak’s), took the Bolshevik speeches seriously. ... Yoshua went to the “Revkam” and asked their assistance in facilitating this revolutionary justice. ... Yoshua, the tinsmith, was enormously disappointed when the Bolsheviks were defeated. ...

When the Red Army withdrew, all the participants in “Revkam” fled. Hanoch, the son of the water carrier, was captured by the Polish in Kniesin [Knyszyn], and they beat him severely. Thanks to the Jews of Kniesin, who collected a substantial sum of ransom money, he was freed. ...

When the Polish Army returned to Goniondz, the priest blocked their way with crosses. He asked the soldiers not to treat the Jews harshly ... The Jews put up large posters announcing that they were going to distribute bread without cost to the Polish military. The old Polish mayor established a new town council. He included some young Jewish men in the new council, who were with staffs for purposes of guard duty. There were four guards assigned to each street to prevent attacks and robbery. ... the critical transition took place without loss of life.¹⁴⁸⁵

[In *Stawiski* near Łomża:] Many [young Jews] joined up with communism in 1921, when the Bolsheviks invaded Poland, and our town was under their rule for a period. I remember that when they entered our town, the faithful of the revolution, who were mostly Jews, went out to welcome them. Many of the Jewish young people were very proud when Golda the daughter of the teacher Hertzke Kolinski stood at the helm of the “Rebkum” (town council) [“Revkom” (revolutionary committee)]. The Rebkom consisted mainly of young people in their twenties. Golda was a proud and capable girl, and Hertzke, the brother of Chaim Kadish [and son of Rev Avraham Ber], had the characteristics of a leader, sure of himself and quick to make decisions. [Elsewhere he is referred to as the “leader of the local communists”, and when Hertzke Kolinski took control of the government, he is said to have “treated harshly” anyone who appeared to him to be “counter-revolutionary.”—*M.P.*] In the battles that took place between the Red Army and the Polish Army, a general of

¹⁴⁸³ Dariusz Magier, “Komuniści w powiecie radzyńskim w latach 1918–1944,” *Radzyński Rocznik Humanistyczny*, vol. 6 (2008): 166–214, here at 169. Committed Jewish Bolsheviks denounced Jews who supported the Polish cause. *Ibid.*, 171.

¹⁴⁸⁴ Michał Mońko, “Rok 1920 na Podlasiu,” *Gazeta Obywatelska*, August, 19, 2013.

¹⁴⁸⁵ Meirim Rubin, “The First Bolshevik Regime in Goniondz,” in Ben-Meir and Fayans, *Our Hometown Goniondz*, 521–24; posted on the Internet in English translation at: <<http://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/goniadz/Goniadz.html>>.

the Red Army was killed, and the activists of the communist movement in our town made him a state funeral. Golda and Hertzke walked at the front of the procession, with black armbands on their sleeves and red flags in their hands, and the band played revolutionary music. We children followed after the funeral procession until it reached the military cemetery. If my memory serves me correctly, Perlman carried the main red flag. We were children and did not understand anything about the ideology, however we were proud that Jews had reached such greatness. With the retreat of the Red Army, the communist activists fled with the army, went to Russia, and there were lost track of. ...

With the retreat of the Red Army in Poland, the communist enthusiasm dwindled in Stawiski, and most of the Jewish youth became involved the various pioneering movements.¹⁴⁸⁶

[Also in Stawiski:] There was a fear that the Polish army that would come on the heels of the retreating [Red] army would see every Jew as a communist. There would be no shortage of groups among the gentiles who would support this notion, in particular since the city government during the time of the Bolsheviks was almost all Jewish. ...

As the Polish army hesitated to enter the town, lest they find remnants of the Bolshevik army in town, a delegation of Jews went out to inform them that the town was clear of the enemy.

The Polish Army entered the town in the evening, and filled up the entire Market Square. According to an edict from the Jewish guard, all of the stores were opened wide, and the Jews welcomed the arriving army with joy, and gave them some of the goods that they had left. ... We were happy that we were saved from “blood of revenge” in their anger.¹⁴⁸⁷

I found out about the mass meetings in **Kaluszyn**, where Russian officers and Yisroel Manchemer spellbound the listeners, and that some Jews of Kaluszyn welcomed with derision the passing Polish peace delegation. ...

Some comrades from the *Bund* joined the police and the requisitions-commission. ...

The town administration then consisted of: in the *revcom*—Plywaczewski, the gardener, Yisroel Manchemer, Moyshe Goldshtayn, a shoemaker—headed by a Russian officer; in the “workers’ council” (replacing the former town council)—Bendit; in the sanitary commission—Fayge Lis, Fayger Obrontchka, Ruchtche Z., Volovtchik (the deported from France); the commandant of the militia was Oyzer Vozhnyak (a son-in-law of Toporka), a former Siberian cavalryman in the Tsarist army, (among the youth of Kaluszyn he was known as the “educated one”). There was also active a People’s Court and a political committee of the Communist Party—the official authority.¹⁴⁸⁸

When the Red Army occupied **Łosice** during the PolishSoviet War in 1920, we didn’t know how to behave towards the conquering power. Among us there were extremists who worked with the Bolsheviks. During the first day of the occupation one of the extremists brought over a Russian General to where we seated on a bench and proclaimed that we were an example of the Polish working class. A revolutionary committee was organized on the spot. Berl Gutman was appointed the chairman, SzijaFalik Rozal as the head of the militia, and I [Icel Rak, a Bundist] as the appropriation Kommissar. My consul office was in the Town Hall. Among my staff were the dentist, Fokler, and secretaries—Gedalia Lewin, Baila Rozencwajg, and Faige Mermelstein.

For my work during the Bolshevik occupation I was tried by the Polish government. I was freed thanks to the help of the political opposition, the Zionists, of which Herszel Karcz and Barisz Landau were members.¹⁴⁸⁹

[In *Międzyrzec Podlaski*.] When the Polish Army fled the town in 1920 ... Jews quickly went out to the streets to joyously welcome the Red Army. ...

The Bolsheviks were in the town for a total of eight days. Those eight days form an important page in the history of Mezritsh.

The Revolutionary Committee [“Revcom”] was quickly created in the city ... The military leadership, along with young people and one woman from the town, began to seek out people to fill various offices. ...

¹⁴⁸⁶ Tzvi Liberman, “History of Stawiski,” in Rubin, *Stawiski: Sefer yizkor*; posted on the Internet in English translation at: www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/stawiski/.

¹⁴⁸⁷ Chemda Lewinowitz (Lewinowicz), “Pathways in the Dust,” in *ibid*.

¹⁴⁸⁸ Yaakov Palma, “The Turmoil of 1920,” in Shamri and Soroka, *Sefer Kaluszyn*, 60 ff.

¹⁴⁸⁹ Icel Rak, “Łosice During Wars and Revolutions,” in M. Shner, ed., *Loshits: Lezeykher an umgebrachte kehile* (Tel Aviv: Former Residents of Łosice in Israel, 1963), 40–46, translated as *Łosice: In Memory of a Jewish Community Exterminated by Nazi Murderers*, Internet: <<http://www.zchor.org/losice/yizkor.htm>>.

“Black Lyuba,” wearing military fatigues, spoke to the brush workers and invited the most active among them to take various offices, while a revolver lay on the table. The meeting lasted for a few hours. At the end of the meetings, a row of workers was sent to the leadership office.

Every few hours, mass meetings took place under the open skies, where the orators spoke with great fervor. After every speaker, the Jewish firefighters’ orchestra played The Internationale or La Marseillaise.

On the third day, the young people of the town began to speak. Chaim “Gitele’s”—a “*Prikasnik*”, and an employee in a manufacturing workshop, was a young man with a sharp tongue. When the Bolsheviks entered town, he replaced the grey brim of his old hat, with a red one.

There was also Moshele “Zwodner”, a small, thin man, a Jewish Communist. He delivered a speech in the market, and said only the following, “I can tell you, I want to tell you, and I must tell you that Trotsky is a fine man. Music, start playing!”

Those few words almost cost Moshele “Zwodner” his life, for when the Bolsheviks left, the Poles arrested him and put him on trial.

“It was certainly worthwhile,” the people in the town joked.

During the eight days under the Bolsheviks, Mezritsh also had its own aid commissar. This was Shaya Chasid’s son, who was given the name “Zawilow.” ...

When the Red Army fled, the “Warsawer Feldscher” and his wife made the rounds and scratched out their daughter’s name from all the orders of the “Revcom.” ...

When the Bolshevik assault on the front was suddenly broken, and the army retreated to Brisk [Brześć] in great haste on its way back to Russia, a large number of the youth of the city went along with the Bolsheviks to Russia.

The youths born in 1902, who were 18 years old, were the first to flee, for they were to be called up to the army. Following them were the workers and ordinary Jews. The Jewish people in the city were very afraid of the return of the Polish Army.¹⁴⁹⁰

That there were retaliations is not at all surprising. During the civil war in Finland in 1918, some 200 Finnish civilians, men and women, were executed by a Swedish battalion in Western Uusimaa. A division of Swedish volunteers executed 260 Finnish civilians in the Forsaa region in April 1918. In this case 13 of the executed were women and the youngest was only 16-year-old. Most victims were leftist, practically all of them were Finnish.¹⁴⁹¹ At the time of the disintegration of the Hapsburg Empire disintegrated, 80% of the population of Bratislava, then known as Pressburg in German and Pozsony in Hungarian, was German and Hungarian. On January 1, 1919, the Czechoslovak Legion (formed in Italy) took control of the city. On January 6, the Hungarian Elisabeth University was requisitioned and turned into the Slovak Comenius University. The entire teaching staff was arrested on January 28 because they refused to participate in the new Czechoslovakian government’s unification celebrations. When the German and Hungarian population demonstrated against the Czechoslovak occupation on February 12, Czechoslovak troops opened fire, killing 9 people and injuring 23.¹⁴⁹²

But one did not have to live close to the front line or even in a theatre of war to fall victim to the rage of fellow citizens, as Jews in the Czech lands of Bohemia and Moravia learned. Full-fledged pogroms erupted in many places (Holešov/Holleschau, Jindřichův Hradec/Neuhaus, Klatovy/Klattau) in the months after the end of World War I. Although there were few fatalities (two Jews were killed in Holešov), the rioters beat up Jews, plundered their stores and synagogues, and destroyed their property. The Jews were blamed for food shortages, speculation and corruption and were attacked because of their traditional loyalty to Austria

¹⁴⁹⁰ Y. Horn, “Eight Days with the Bolsheviks,” in Yitzchak Ronkin and Bonim Heller, eds., *Sefer Mezritsh le-zecher kedoshe irenu* (Tel Aviv: Mezritsh Societies in Israel and the Diaspora, 1978), 491–93, translated as *Mezritsh Book: In Memory of the Martyrs of Our City*, Internet: <http://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/Miedzyrzec_Podlaski/Miedzyrzec_Podlaski.html>.

¹⁴⁹¹ Tauno Tukkinen, *Teloittajien edessä: Ihmiskohtaloita Karjalohjalla, Sammatissa, Nummella, Pusulassa, Nurmijärvellä, Vihdissä ja Inkoossa 1918* (Omakustanne, 1999); Tauno Tukkinen, *Mäkeen mäkeen vaan. Punaisten henkilötappiot Forssassa, Jokioisissa ja Tammelassa 1918* (Karjalohja, 2001).

¹⁴⁹² Macell Jankovics, *Zwanzig Jahre in Pressburg (1919–1939)* (Karlsruhe: Karpatendeutsches Kulturwerk e.V., 2017).

and German culture.¹⁴⁹³ The Jewish press, however, contrasted bad Poland and good Czechoslovakia. According to historian Livia Rothkirchen,

Anti-Semitic demonstrations and looting took place in Prague and some other localities, occasionally accompanied by bloody attacks. The most severe assault occurred in the Moravian Holešov; the riots in December 1918 were initiated by members of an army unit from Kroměříž, who together with the local mob looted and destroyed Jewish homes and institutions. Among the victims were Hugo Gratzner (aged forty-three) and Heiman Grünbaum (twenty-one); ironically enough, both were assaulted on their return from the front. Police curfew and a special unit brought in from Brno finally put an end to the three-day pogrom.

This was not the last of the rioting. May 1919 saw demonstrations against high prices and profiteering, and Jewish shops and businesses were looted again in greater Prague. After a year of respite more severe disturbances occurred on November 19, 1920: mobs attacked the ancient Jewish Town Hall, which was temporarily sheltering Galician refugees. The mobs destroyed furniture and paintings and vandalized part of the community archives. The rioting became so violent that the American consul in Prague ordered that the American flag be hoisted over the Town Hall in order to protect the community premises. An alarmed Franz Kafka, witnessing the disturbances from the window of his apartment, recorded some of the appalling scenes.¹⁴⁹⁴

Many of the same conditions existed in Poland, where Jews occupied the role of middlemen. As historian Jesse Kauffman points out, “Many people in occupied Poland blamed their misfortunes on ‘speculators,’ a widely accepted code word for Jews.”¹⁴⁹⁵ In fact, commerce was virtually in Jewish hands at the time and speculation was a very real, not imagined, scourge. Later, Kauffman acknowledges—yet downplays—who was benefitting from the wartime economic measures:

This was made worse still by the general perception among Poles under German occupation that the Jews were somehow profiting from the new order and, with the blithe acquiescence of the Germans, were using the occupation to find new ways to exploit the Poles economically. Suspensions were increased by the number of Jewish businesses set up during the war and the number of army contracts given to Jews. This reinforced the popular association of Jews with ‘speculation,’ though it was merely a continuation of the ancient place of Jews in urban commerce in Poland.¹⁴⁹⁶

Yet the impact of these developments cannot be ignored, and should be assessed in light of the economic exploitation and severe material privation that the Germans subjected the Polish lands to.

Poles were also not spared by Czech soldiers. During the Czech invasion and occupation of the predominantly Polish area of Cieszyn in 1919–1920, numerous atrocities were perpetrated against scores of

¹⁴⁹³ Marsha L. Rozenblit, *Reconstructing a National Identity: The Jews of Habsburg Austria during World War I* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 142; Harry Schneiderman, ed., *American Jewish Yearbook 5680: September 25, 1919 to September 12, 1920* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1919), 240–41.

¹⁴⁹⁴ Rothkirchen, *The Jews of Bohemia and Moravia*, 27–28. Rothkirchen also notes the murder of a Jewish family in Slovakia in 1918 by a native soldier. *Ibid.*, 50. According to another source riots also broke out in Prague in November 1920 following reports that a Czech school had been forcibly closed down in Chleb, and both Germans and Jews were attacked. See Niall Ferguson, *The War of the World: Twentieth-Century Conflict and the Descent of the West* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2006), 173. Although laced with anti-Semitism, Czech nationalism, which could be as belligerent and nasty as any other nationalism, had primarily an anti-German focus. When the Sudeten German Social Democrats organized demonstrations in various Bohemian and Moravian cities on March 4, 1919 in favour of the right of self-determination, the Czech military and police killed 54 persons (including women and children) and wounded 84 others in seven cities. See Nancy M. Wingfield, *Flag Wars and Stone Saints: How the Bohemian Lands Became Czech* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2007). The Czech authorities dismissed some 33,000 German officials for linguistic reasons, in addition to German railwaymen from state-owned and private enterprises, and expropriated some 40% of German large landed properties. As under Austrian rule before World War I, Germans and Czechs took turns vandalizing each others’ schools in the new “democratic” Czechoslovakia. *Ibid.*, 161.

¹⁴⁹⁵ Kauffman, *Elusive Alliance*, 62.

¹⁴⁹⁶ Kauffman, *Elusive Alliance*, 119.

Polish POWs and civilians, and several thousand Poles were expelled.¹⁴⁹⁷ Throughout Slovakia, with the encouragement and assistance of recently discharged soldiers who had returned to their homes after the war in 1918, mobs attacked and looted the homes, shops, and factories of Jews, irrespective of their social class. These attacks continued for several weeks and gave rise to the formation of Jewish self-defence groups. Dozens of Jews were killed, executed, and injured.¹⁴⁹⁸ As many Jews were involved in leading the Bolshevik regime that came to power in Hungary in 1919, the situation was even more dramatic. After the short-lived revolution was suppressed, riots and violence against the Jews erupted. Several thousand Jews were killed during the so-called White Terror.¹⁴⁹⁹ The Bolshevik revolution in Hungary spilled over into Slovakia, and the situation of Jews was affected as well. During the disturbances, Jews escaped from the villages or were expelled.¹⁵⁰⁰ Violent clashes between the left and right left thousands of people dead in Germany, among them Jews.¹⁵⁰¹ In Yugoslavia, there were many anti-Jewish incidents in 1918–1919, including attacks on Jewish property, synagogues and graveyards.¹⁵⁰² During the Greek-Turkish conflict of 1918–1922, Jews were attacked and robbed by both sides.¹⁵⁰³

Race riots occurred in both France and Britain during and after the First World War. During the latter years of the war, conflicts between the French and the nonwhite newcomers escalated into a wave of racial violence, ranging from numerous small-scale incidents to a few major riots. From the spring of 1917, African workers were subjected to increasing street-level assaults in France, which culminated in large-scale riots like those in June and August 1917. Crowds of up to 15,000 people attacked North Africans (Moroccans) in Dijon, LeHavre and Brest. Fifteen people were killed in LeHavre and 7 in Brest.¹⁵⁰⁴ Britain witnessed anti-German riots on a wide scale. The government introduced a policy of mass internment of Germans and, by 1919, 28,000 had been deported: one-third of the pre-war population. “Economic racism” continued on an extensive scale immediately after the war, as tens of thousands of colonial and white seamen and soldiers were demobilized and found themselves in competition for housing and employment in the major seaports. From January to August 1919, a series of major riots targeting colonial labourers and demobilized seamen erupted in South Wales (Cardiff, Barry, Newport and Cadoxton), Liverpool, London, Salford, Hull, South Shields, Glasgow, Tyneside, resulting in at least five fatalities, as well as vandalization of their homes and properties. In Cardiff, Liverpool and Glasgow large crowds of up to 2,000 people (some

¹⁴⁹⁷ Michał Wołłejko, “Jak Czesi zrabowali Zaolzie,” *Uważam Rze Historia*, December 20, 2012, 36–38.

¹⁴⁹⁸ Israel Gutman, ed., *The Encyclopedia of the Righteous Among the Nations: Rescuers of Jews during the Holocaust*, vol. 8: *Europe (Part I) and Other Countries* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2007), xciii; “Slovakia,” in *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, Second Edition (Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2007), vol. 18, 683.

¹⁴⁹⁹ According to some sources, 3,000 Jews were killed. See “Hungary,” in *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, Second Edition (Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2007), vol. 9, 611; Robert Gerwarth, “Fighting the Red Beast: Counter-Revolutionary Violence in the defeated States of Central Europe,” in Böhler, Borodziej, and von Pittkammer, *Legacies of Violence*, 225. According to another source, 5,000–6,000 Jews were killed, and there were many cases of torture, rape and castration. See Joseph Rothschild, *East Central Europe Between the Two World Wars* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1974), 153.

¹⁵⁰⁰ “Slovakia,” in *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, Second Edition (Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2007), vol. 18, 683.

¹⁵⁰¹ Robert Gerwarth, “Fighting the Red Beast: Counter-Revolutionary Violence in the defeated States of Central Europe,” in Böhler, Borodziej, and von Pittkammer, *Legacies of Violence*, 218.

¹⁵⁰² Gerlach, *The Extermination of the European Jews*, 342.

¹⁵⁰³ Gerlach, *The Extermination of the European Jews*, 342.

¹⁵⁰⁴ Neil MacMaster, *Racism in Europe: 1870–2000* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave, 2001), 121; Tyler Stovall, “The Color Line behind the Lines: Racial Violence in France during the Great War,” *The American Historical Review*, vol. 103, no. 3 (June 1998): 737–69.

estimates say 10,000), often led by ex-servicemen who deployed military tactics, laid siege to the black dockland ghettos, destroying lodging houses and shops. The rioting in Liverpool lasted three days, from June 8 to June 10, 1919. Three Africans were stabbed in Liverpool on June 8 as mobs of well-organized young men roamed the streets savagely attacking and beating any black they could find. In nearly all cases, white crowds numbering in the hundreds and sometimes thousands made up the aggressors and black men and their families their victims, yet nationally police arrested nearly twice as many black men (155) as white men (80) and women (9). The rioters represented a cross-section of the white working class.¹⁵⁰⁵

Canadian soldiers stationed in England after the war awaiting return to Canada were also involved in lethal rioting. In March 1919, riots erupted at the Kinmel Park military camp in North Wales, believed to have been caused by delays in repatriation and the soldiers' resentment at being used by their British officers as forced labour. Five Canadian soldiers met violent deaths and dozens of others were injured.¹⁵⁰⁶ After the arrest of two Canadian soldiers involved in a pub fight with locals over flirting with their wives, on June 17, 1919, a mob of 400 Canadian soldiers from a nearby military camp rampaged through the town of Epsom, Surrey, and attacked the police station intending to free their comrades. The riot resulted in widespread destruction of property, injuries to 11 police officers and the death of a police sergeant, who was fatally wounded when he was hit on the head with an iron bar. Several soldiers were arrested and stood trial. Relatively short sentences were handed down for rioting, which were commuted after a few weeks.¹⁵⁰⁷

Canada witnessed attacks directed against a number of immigrant groups. In 1916, the 118 Battalion stationed in Kitchener, then Berlin (the name was also changed that year), a city in the province of Ontario with a substantial population of German origin, disturbed by the slow pace of recruitment, and "egged on by anglo politicians," "insulted local men as cowards and traitors, used heavy-handed recruiting tactics that amounted to assault and confinement, vandalized German stores and shops, ransacked Berlin's ethnic clubs and beat up a Lutheran minister who voiced his objections to the war."¹⁵⁰⁸ As historian Nathan Smith points out,

European immigrants and their descendents were decidedly marginalized by their low economic status and prevailing prejudices about them among Anglo-Canadians. Wartime exacerbated racism and whether they were from enemy countries or not, to greater or lesser degrees the relatively small numbers of Italians, Greeks, Dutch, Germans, Slavs from many countries, central European Jews, as well as Chinese, were all targeted as problems.

A number of studies covering this period identify veterans as the most reactionary and violent anti-immigrant activists during a time of heightened nativism, which began with the war and climaxed in the first Red Scare immediately after the war. Explanations of this phenomenon stress the exacerbation of pre-existing prejudices by exaggerated home front anxieties about foreigners as competitors in the labour market, and as unpatriotic slackers or radical agitators.¹⁵⁰⁹

Soldiers returning home from Europe, mostly of British origin, fueled by anti-immigrant sentiment and economic fear, were responsible for a series of attacks on businesses owned by German, Greek and Chinese

¹⁵⁰⁵ MacMaster, *Racism in Europe*, 122–23; Jacqueline Jenkinson, *Black 1919: Riots, Racism and Resistance in Imperial Britain* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2009).

¹⁵⁰⁶ "Kinmel Park," Canadian Great War Project, Internet: <<http://www.canadiangreatwarproject.com/writing/kinmelPark.asp>>.

¹⁵⁰⁷ Martin Knight, *We Are Not Manslaughterers: The Epsom Riot and the Murder of Station Sergeant Thomas Green* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Tonto, 2010).

¹⁵⁰⁸ John Allemang, "Enduring Spirit: The Rejuvenation of Berlin (Ontario)," *The Globe and Mail*, August 27, 2016.

¹⁵⁰⁹ Nathan Smith, *Comrades and Citizens: Great War Veterans in Toronto, 1915–1919*, Ph.D. Thesis, Department of History, University of Toronto, 2012, at pages 10, 145. See also Nathan Smith, "Fighting the Alien Problem in a British Country: Returned Soldiers and Anti-alien Activism in Wartime Canada, 1916–19," in James E. Kitchen, Alisa Miller, and Laura Rowe, eds., Nathan Smith, *Other Combatants, Other Fronts: Competing Histories of the First World War* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars, 2011), 293–318.

minorities in Toronto, Canada's second-largest city at that time. In the spring of 1917, dozens of veterans raided and interrogated German shopkeepers in Toronto's Patkdale district, forcing them to produce immigration papers.¹⁵¹⁰ In August 1918, days of anti-Greek rioting broke out in Toronto. After the ejection of a bellicose veteran from a Greek-run café, thousands of ex-servicemen and ordinary citizens converged on Greek establishments throughout the city, destroying and looting them and attacking Greek immigrants. According to Tom Gallant, a historian at Toronto's York University,

More than 40 Greek businesses were destroyed, the city was put under martial law, troops were brought in and it took days of street fighting to restore order. Resentful of Greece's early absence from World War I (the country did not enter the war until 1917), returning Canadian troops developed a vitriolic animosity toward the Greek merchants and restaurateurs, who at that time were clustered in the downtown area between Yonge and Church Sts. ...

Then on Aug. 1, 1918, a crippled and inebriated Canadian veteran entered the White City Cafe at Yonge and Carlton Sts. and began a dispute with the establishment's Greek waiters. "Well, they beat him up and threw him out of the restaurant, and word gets out to the veterans, who tended to concentrate in the same (downtown) area where the Greeks lived," Gallant says. "And the following night, about 5,000 people led by 1,500 veterans take to the street ... and they destroy every Greek business they come across. I mean they demolish them." Greek residents soon retaliated, Gallant says, and pitched battles around Yonge and Richmond Sts. eventually involved some 10,000 people and took two days to quell.¹⁵¹¹

Several of the men arrested soon had their charges dismissed. A subsequent police inquiry found that the police failed to protect property at the height of the riots.¹⁵¹² On the evening of November 17, 1918, a raucous mob composed mostly of ex-servicemen ran through the streets of Toronto's Chinatown targeting storefronts with Chinese characters, hurling stones and breaking things.¹⁵¹³

Conditions for non-Whites in European colonies, where the Belgians and Germans pioneered genocidal policies, were far worse than anything Europeans—including Jews—could have begun to imagine before the slaughter of the Armenians in Turkey, the massacre of Jews by the warring sides during the Bolshevik Revolution, and the Great Purge in the Soviet Union in the 1930s. The Belgians are said to have systematically murdered millions of Black Congolese between 1880 and 1900 in their quest for rubber. Congolese who refused to harvest the rubber for their Belgian overlords had their hands chopped off, before bleeding to death. Between 1904 and 1911, the Germans exterminated 65,000 out of 80,000 members of the Herero tribe, about 85 percent of the tribe's population, during the Herero uprising in German South West Africa. (Some estimates mention 100,000 victims from the Herero and 15,000 Namaqua, a smaller ethnic group, in what is today Namibia.) The extermination order was hung around the necks of captive Herero, who were driven into the desert under gunfire to die. Bizarre racial experiments, like those of the Nazi German concentration camps, were performed on prisoners. Thousands of skulls and other body parts flooded German universities, where German academics and students conducted "scientific" tests aimed at proving that Africans were anatomically similar to apes.¹⁵¹⁴ The connection between pre-World War I German racial and *Lebensraum* policies and those of the Third Reich are undeniable. It was those policies that were directly responsible for the Holocaust of the Jews and the desire to destroy the Poles as a nation. The Germans required neither the assistance of nor inspiration from anyone

¹⁵¹⁰ Katie Daubs, "The War Was Over, But There Was No Peace in Chinatown," *Toronto Star*, November 16, 2019.

¹⁵¹¹ Joseph Hall, "The Danforth, 2004," *Toronto Star*, August 13, 2004. See also Thomas W. Gallant, Michael Vitopoulos, George Treheles, *The 1918 Anti-Greek Riot in Toronto* (Toronto: Thessalonikeans Society of Metro Toronto and Canadian Hellenic Historical Society, 2005); "1918 Toronto Anti-Greek Riot," *Wikipedia*, Internet: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1918_Toronto_anti-Greek_riot>.

¹⁵¹² "Greek Restaurant Riots," *Toronto Star*, August 2, 2014.

¹⁵¹³ Katie Daubs, "The War Was Over, But There Was No Peace in Chinatown," *Toronto Star*, November 16, 2019.

¹⁵¹⁴ Ben Shepherd, *War in the Wild East: The German Army and Soviet Partisans* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2004), 42–43; David Olusoga and Casper W. Erichsen, *The Kaiser's Holocaust: Germany's Forgotten Genocide and the Colonial Roots of Nazism* (London: Faber and Faber, 2010).

else to carry out their goals. (To this day there is shameful silence and even denial about the tragedy of the Namibian genocide in Germany.)

Genocidal policies were also evident in the increasing use of concentration camps by Western powers at the turn of the 20th century: by the Spanish during the rebellion in Cuba (1896–1897); by the Americans during the Spanish-American War in the Philippines (1898–1901), where Americans perpetrated wanton and unpunished massacres of the civilian population (General Jacob H. Smith issued orders to “kill everyone over the age of ten” and make the island “a howling wilderness”; perhaps 50,000 civilians perished); and by the British during the Second Boer War (1899–1902), where 116,000 women, children and Boer soldiers—among them 20,000 Blacks—were confined in such camps, of which at least 28,000, mainly women and children, would die of starvation, disease and exposure. The camps in South Africa were used as a tool to crush insurgency against British imperialistic aggression. The prisoners were non-British—mostly civilians whose farms had been destroyed under the “scorched earth” policy. These camps were not new entirely measures. Earlier, the Americans had employed concentration camp during their wars against Native Americans.¹⁵¹⁵ More than anything, it was these imperialist powers—several of them highly developed democracies and touted as the epitome of Western civilization—that provided role models for others to emulate. Strangely, however, it is Poland that has taken the brunt of the charges of post-modernist historians as following an extremist, xenophobic, even racist course with suggestive descriptions attached to her history like *When Nationalism Began to Hate* and *Poland’s Threatening Other*.

Pankaj Mishra has offered the following scathing analysis of the colonial policies of the Western powers and their impact on events in Europe:

Such a history would show that the global racial order in the century preceding 1914 was one in which it was entirely natural for “uncivilised” peoples to be exterminated, terrorised, imprisoned, ostracised or radically re-engineered. Moreover, this entrenched system was not something incidental to the first world war, with no connections to the vicious way it was fought or to the brutalisation that made possible the horrors of the Holocaust. Rather, the extreme, lawless and often gratuitous violence of modern imperialism eventually boomeranged on its originators.

In this new history, Europe’s long peace is revealed as a time of unlimited wars in Asia, Africa and the Americas. These colonies emerge as the crucible where the sinister tactics of Europe’s brutal 20th-century wars—racial extermination, forced population transfers, contempt for civilian lives—were first forged. Contemporary historians of German colonialism (an expanding field of study) try to trace the Holocaust back to the mini-genocides Germans committed in their African colonies in the 1900s, where some key ideologies, such as *Lebensraum*, were also nurtured. But it is too easy to conclude, especially from an Anglo-American perspective, that Germany broke from the norms of civilisation to set a new standard of barbarity, strong-arming the rest of the world into an age of extremes. For there were deep continuities in the imperialist practices and racial assumptions of European and American powers.¹⁵¹⁶

In his important study on the fighting between the Austro-Hungarian and Russian armies in 1914, historian Alexander Watson backdates the inception of ethnic cleansing and racial atrocity on the European continent to the era of the First World War, when the clashing protagonists were empires of the old type, and not the totalitarian states that emerged after the war in Russia (Soviet Union) and Germany. Watson writes:

around and later in the city, the Russian army perpetrated the first ambitious program of ethnic cleansing to befall East-Central Europe. Przemyśl is important because it reveals in microcosm a forgotten prehistory to the later, better-remembered totalitarian horrors. To understand what went wrong in the twentieth century’s most ravaged region, it is not enough to start in 1928 or 1933, with the rise of the dictators, or even with the

¹⁵¹⁵ The 1985 Academy Award-winning documentary *Broken Rainbow* discusses the history of injustice towards the Native American people. The film described The Long Walk of the Navajo, which was the 1864 deportation and attempted ethnic cleansing of the Navajo people by the U.S. government. 8,000 Navajos were forced to walk more than 300 miles at gunpoint from their ancestral homelands in northeastern Arizona and northwestern New Mexico to an internment camp in Bosque Redondo, which was a desolate tract on the Pecos River in eastern New Mexico. Many died along the way. From 1863 to 1868, the U.S. Military persecuted and imprisoned 9,500 Navajo (the Diné) and 500 Mescalero Apache (the N’de). Living under armed guards, in holes in the ground, with extremely scarce rations, more than 3,500 Navajo and Mescalero Apache men, women, and children died while in the concentration camp.

¹⁵¹⁶ Pankaj Mishra, “How Colonial Violence Came Home: The Ugly Truth of the First World War,” *The Guardian*, November 10, 2017.

First World War's revolutionary aftermath. As Przemyśl's ordeal disturbingly shows, the story of East-Central Europe's "Bloodlands" rightly begins in 1914.¹⁵¹⁷

In a review of this study, Christopher Clark points out:

The first non-combatant victims were the Ruthenes, speakers of various Ukrainian dialects who were suspected by the Austro-Hungarian military authorities of favouring the cause of the Russians. On the retreat towards Przemyśl, an infantry regiment of Hungarian *Landsturm* strung up dozens of Ruthenes from trees at the side of the road. Further atrocities took place inside the fortified rings. As one commander reminisced: "There were some [Ruthenian] villages in which the entire population had to be hanged, because they pulled out Russian rifles ... and fired salvos at us."

Once the Russians were in control, a new wave of repressions began. There were attacks on Ukrainian "Greek Catholic" clergy, whose presence offended the incoming Russian Orthodox authorities. The occupation army embarked on a policy of "Russification", whose purpose was to restore the region to its supposedly "primordial" Russian condition. And, as elsewhere in the areas that came under Russian control during the war, the Jews were singled out for special punishment. There were repeated waves of arrests, public whippings and forced labour services performed before crowds of impassive Poles and Ruthenians. Sons were made to hang their fathers, before being hanged in turn; 17,000 Jews were simply deported eastward without charges of any kind.

Watson's handling of these horrors is never gratuitous. In reconstructing in such detail the violence of the war years, he proposes an important rethinking of the history of central Europe in the 20th century. By contrast with Timothy Snyder, whose *Bloodlands* connects the phenomenon of ideological ultraviolence with the conflict between Stalinist Russia and Nazi Germany in the 1930s and 40s, Watson backdates the inception of ethnic cleansing and racial atrocity to the era of the first world war, when the clashing protagonists were not newfangled totalitarian states, but empires of the old type. Once it was broken, the civility of the old Przemyśl, in which diverse communities, for all their squabbling, had rubbed along tolerably well, did not return. ... And when the siege was over, in March 1915, more than 100,000 troops and civilians of Przemyśl made their way into Russian captivity, most of them fetching up deep in Asian Russia, where around a fifth died.¹⁵¹⁸

Comparative histories demonstrate that the most charitable thing one can say about the West's portrayal of and reaction to the events in Poland in 1918–1919, when no more than *several hundred* Jews perished in the context of a brutal war that took the lives of countless thousands of civilians, is that they are indicative of a highly selective morality. Arguably, the prominence given to the events in Poland in the media at the time and subsequently by historians, including convoking international commissions to investigate the plight of Jews in Poland but not elsewhere and the failure to investigate the plight of others, could be interpreted as a politically or ideologically inspired cover-up of one's own nation's far more heinous deeds, rather than as a genuine concern for the plight of the downtrodden. The agenda of Jewish nationalists vis-à-vis Poland fits in nicely with drawing attention away from the misdeeds of the Western nations as well the political agendas of other players such as Germany and Soviet Russia, hence its success. (This should not be construed as a "conspiracy" theory. Disparate players can have their own independent reasons for pursuing a common or complementary course of action.) The level of violence committed by Western countries in the early part of the 20th century is absolutely staggering, even though—apart from Germany—it pales in comparison with the mass murders perpetrated by the Soviets in the 1930s and 1940s. Nothing remotely similar was perpetrated by the Poles, Balts, Hungarians, or Czechs (who enjoyed a very favourable reputation that was largely unwarranted). It is also noteworthy that, unlike the perpetrators of the 1918 Lwów pogrom, who were severely punished by the Polish authorities, those who perpetrated atrocities outside of Poland went unpunished. A survey of contemporary patterns of violence by historian Christian Gerlach lends strong support to these arguments.

Mass destruction of civilians by Germans did claim more than a quarter of a million lives between 1900 and 1933, but few of the victims were Jews. ...

German colonial warfare against anti-colonial insurgencies in Africa and China between 1900 and 1908 resulted in even more victims. From 1904 to 1907, deeply racist German colonial authorities and troops

¹⁵¹⁷ Alexander Watson, *The Fortress: The Siege of Przemyśl and the Making of Europe's Bloodlands* (New York: Basic Books, 2020), 4.

¹⁵¹⁸ Christopher Clark, "The Fortress by Alexander Watson Review—A Marvellous First World War Study," *The Guardian*, December 5, 2019.

murdered or caused the deaths of 70,000–100,000 people in German Southwest Africa (now Namibia). At about the same time, German warfare in German East Africa (now Tanzania) claimed about 100,000 lives ... In the former case, military operations were carried out against warriors and civilians, including women and children; people were chased into the Namib Desert; and men were starved in prison camps that served to subjugate the Herero and Nama peoples ... Although the German military commander pursued a policy of total destruction for some months, the colonial administration and the government in Berlin prevented full-scale extermination because of the need for labor. In German East Africa, ... Most of the dead were victims of a German scorched-earth policy against villages and agriculture.¹⁵¹⁹

German colonial atrocities were among the worst of their time. Again, however, they were not unique. In around 1900, 40,000–50,000 Boers and Africans died in the so-called concentration camps of British South Africa. About 100,000 people perished in the Spanish *reconcentración* during the Cuban war of independence from 1895 to 1898. Hundreds of thousands of Filipinos died as a result of the US military's anti-insurgency measures. Millions fell victim to ruthless Belgian exploitation of the Congo. In the 1920s and 1930s, Italian suppression of resistance in Libya and Ethiopia, claimed many tens of thousands of lives. Finally, millions succumbed to Japanese policies in China. In each case, internment, expulsions, resettlement and hunger, combined with direct violence, took a major toll.¹⁵²⁰ [One should also add several hundred thousand victims of the Spanish Civil War of 1936–1939, in which atrocities were committed by both sides.]

... as many as 30,000 right-wing *Freikorps* fighter may have died in the civil wars in the Baltic countries in 1918–20, and the *Freikorps* caused up to 10,000 deaths among Bolshevik troops and locals, including military deaths. Some of the victims of anti-communist reprisals were Jews. German regulars had already killed about 6,500 civilians in Belgium in 1914 during mass executions for alleged irregular attacks. In addition, tens of thousands of Belgians and Poles (including Jews) were used as forced laborers during World War I.¹⁵²¹

One complex of violence was the civil war between radical leftists and their opponents from 1918 to 1921. Most of the 4,000–5,000 victims ... were workers and suspected leftists killed by rightist *Freikorps* irregulars in Berlin, Munich and the Ruhr area. [There was also a wave of murders of Jewish political leaders such as Rosa Luxemburg, Kurt Eisner, Gustav Landauer, Hugo Haase, and Walther Rathenau and executions following the trials of others.¹⁵²²] The leftist and Nazi uprisings in 1923, and the street fighting between Nazis and communists at the end of the Weimar Republic ... claimed hundreds of lives.¹⁵²³

To tear the events that occurred in Poland from their broader historical context and to read into them, as some would have it, an overriding impetus of Polish anti-Semitism, is a dishonest and harmful aberration that needs to be given short shrift by historians. Similarly, a frequent charge raised in relation to Jews who were killed in Poland in acts of revenge after the Soviet retreat in June 1941 (though not in relation to revenge perpetrated on or by any other ethnic group) is that of sheer racism and hatred on the part of the Poles directed against *all* Jews. Poles, as a collective, are accused of murderous anti-Semitism by those who would ignore, or dismiss as inconsequential, the conduct of the Jews vis-à-vis Poles during the Soviet occupation. Another dishonest and hypocritical aspect of this argument centres on the claim that any consideration of Jewish conduct is by its very nature irrelevant, because the only determinative factor is Polish anti-Semitism, which has a long tradition steeped in the Poles' Catholic religion and history, with particular emphasis being placed on the, at times, volatile interwar period. Rationally, it would make little

¹⁵¹⁹ Gerlach, *The Extermination of the European Jews*, 36–37.

¹⁵²⁰ Gerlach, *The Extermination of the European Jews*, 37–38.

¹⁵²¹ Gerlach, *The Extermination of the European Jews*, 36. On the *Freikorps* see Robert G.L. Waite, *Vanguard of Nazism: The Free Corps Movement in Postwar Germany, 1918–1923* (New York: Norton, 1969 [Harvard University Press, 1952]).

¹⁵²² Gerlach, *The Extermination of the European Jews*, 31.

¹⁵²³ Gerlach, *The Extermination of the European Jews*, 36.

sense that Jews did not also harbour certain feelings and preconceived notions about Poles, just as Poles did about Jews.¹⁵²⁴

¹⁵²⁴ For a discussion of this topic see Mark Paul, "Traditional Jewish Attitudes Toward Poles," by Mark Paul, Internet: <<http://kpk-toronto.org/wp-content/uploads/Jewish-Attitudes-6.doc>> and <http://www.glaukopis.pl/pdf/czytelnia/TraditionalJewishAttitudesTowardPoles_MarkPaul.pdf>.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

A Belated But Reluctant Awareness

During the war, while these incidents were still fresh and looming, Polish political and military leaders were alarmed by the reports from Eastern Poland and voiced strong concerns about the impact of these developments on Polish-Jewish relations.¹⁵²⁵ Moreover, the topic was raised repeatedly in the underground press¹⁵²⁶ and at meetings of Polish and Jewish underground organizations.¹⁵²⁷ Emanuel Ringelblum, the chronicler of the Warsaw ghetto, was well aware of the charges. As historian Samuel Kassow notes,

He doubtless had also read several Jewish accounts, given to the Oneg Shabes archive, that seemed to corroborate some of these Polish claims. In April 1940 Ringelblum mentioned Jewish testimonies, from Białystok and Zamość, that described how Jews had jeered Polish officers and former civil servants. He also described a conversation with a Polish writer who had been friendly to Jews. The writer had returned from Soviet-occupied Poland and had seen how a Russian soldier and a freshly baked Jewish commissar had searched the suitcases of two Polish students. Suddenly the Jew spied a crucifix in the suitcase; it had been given to the student by his mother. The Jewish commissar threw it away, but the soldier retrieved it and gave it back to the student. "You understand," the writer told Ringelblum, "I can understand something like this, but it is a great surprise if an uneducated 17 year old becomes an antisemite? Why must the Jews be more

¹⁵²⁵ See the statements by Home Army leader General Stefan Rowecki ("Grot") and General Nikodem Sulik, district commander of the Home Army Armed Struggle, as cited in Nowak, *Przemilczane zbrodnie*, 5, 237–38. The pro-Jewish Stanisław Kot, minister of the interior in the Polish government-in-exile, also recorded many complaints about Jewish conduct in Eastern Poland. See Stanisław Kot, *Listy z Rosji do Gen. Sikorskiego* (London: Jutro Polski, 1955), 163–64 (also cited in Nowak, *Przemilczane zbrodnie*, 240–41); David Engel, "The Polish Government-in-Exile and the Holocaust: Stanisław Kot's Confrontation with Palestinian Jewry, November 1942–January 1943—Selected Documents," in *Polin: A Journal of Polish-Jewish Studies*, vol. 2 (1987): 284.

¹⁵²⁶ For example, these events were raised when the Polish underground unequivocally condemned the anti-Jewish incidents that occurred in Warsaw in March 1940, and on many other occasions. See Szarota, *U progu Zagłady*, 78–79.

¹⁵²⁷ Joseph Kermish, "The Activities of the Council for Aid to Jews ("Żegota") in Occupied Poland," in Yisrael Gutman and Efraim Zuroff, eds., *Rescue Attempts during the Holocaust: Proceedings of the Second Yad Vashem International Historical Conference, Jerusalem, April 8–11, 1974* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1977), 389.

Catholic than the pope?” Ringelblum noted this without comment or protest, except to add that many Jews were also coming back with similar stories.¹⁵²⁸

General Władysław Sikorski, the leader of the Polish government-in-exile, appealed in vain to Jewish circles to condemn the activities of those Jews who had collaborated with the Soviets and committed crimes against Polish citizens.¹⁵²⁹

The only Jewish group known to have spoken out publicly were the Polish patriots, a tight group of former Polish officers and non-commissioned officers, who formed the little known Jewish Military Union (*Żydowski Związek Wojskowy*–ŻZW) in the Warsaw ghetto. In the April 1942 issue of their underground publication *Żagiew*, they called for accountability by those Jews, and non-Jews, who collaborated with the Soviets in the Eastern Borderlands. The others simply ignored the problem.

At that time, impartial and knowledgeable observers readily acknowledged that Poles had ample cause for resentment in light of what had happened in Eastern Poland. Their feeling of bitterness was not, as many Jews would now have it, just some irrational and unsubstantiated bigotry on the part of Poles. Reports of Jewish behaviour in Soviet-occupied Eastern Poland did not escape the attention of British officials, who

¹⁵²⁸ Ringelblum’s views underwent a radical transformation when the mass extermination of the Jewish population began, and he now dismissed the Polish complaints of Jewish collaboration with the Soviets as exaggerations and “groundless nonsense,” thereby setting the tone on this subject for Holocaust historians. Kassow attempts to justify this by suggesting that the charges were the fanciful product of Poles who were imbued with the notion of *Żydokomuna* (translated by Kassow as “Jewish-Soviet conspiracy”), and had fallen prey to German propaganda. See Samuel Kassow, “Polish-Jewish Relations in the Writings of Emanuel Ringelblum,” in Zimmerman, *Contested Memories*, 152.

As reviewer Jan Peczkis points out, the term *Żydokomuna* has been misrepresented as implying that all or most Jews are Communists, that Communism is some sort of conspiratorial device created and run by Jews to rule the world, or some similar pejorative connotation. Others have gone to the opposite extreme, suggesting that Jewish Communists are simply Communists that happen to be Jewish. Failing that, they say that Jewish Communists are no longer Jewish. Henry Felix Srebrnik demonstrates an implicit, correct understanding of *Żydokomuna*. More accurately, *Żydokomuna* is a redefinition of Judaism in Communist terms. Thus, Srebrnik comments, “Paul Buhle has recounted, ‘a Messianic radicalism among the immigrant Jewish workers ... allowed Communism to appeal to some of the deepest traditions of the community.’ The world of Jewish socialism was a secular one and its discourse radical; even so, its roots lay deep within the Jewish tradition ... such people did not turn to Communism because they were alienated from the Jewish world...This ‘messianic’ aspect of their ideology would also revise the old Judaic idea of a return to the ‘Land of Israel’, by substituting Soviet Russia for Israel as the new ‘promised land’. Such people ‘were imbued with a semi-religious attitude to the USSR’, which had become for them ‘a dreamland of freedom and equality.’” See Henry Felix Srebrnik, *Dreams of Nationhood: American Jewish Communists and the Soviet Birobidzhan Project, 1924–1951* (Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2010), 2. Srebrnik realizes that that Jewish support for Communism was founded on a pervasive state of denial of the true nature of Communism. He quips that, “Even so, and taking into account that they were thousands of miles removed from the utopia in which they had invested all their political hopes, I still cannot understand how so many well-educated people, well aware of the shortcomings of their society, could so completely take leave of their critical faculties and suspend all disbelief when it came to judging the Soviet Union. ... If I were less sympathetic, I might describe theirs as a form of ‘willful blindness’, a term used by lawyers to describe a situation where people intentionally allow themselves to be deceived or deluded.” Ibid., xx. Unlike those who are dismissive of the term *Żydokomuna* (Judeo-Communism), author Henry Abramson realizes that the term has some basis in fact. “Considering again the Communist Party, prominent Jewish figures such as Trotsky and Zinoviev, as well as the participation of Jews in the dreaded *Cheka*, the first Soviet state security organization, lend some credence to the widespread view of the “Judo-Kommuna.”” See Steven T. Katz, ed., *The Shtetl: New Evaluations* (New York and London: New York University Press, 2007), 94.

¹⁵²⁹ Kersten, *Polacy, Żydzi, komunizm*, 32–33. Also cited in Nowak, *Przemilczane zbrodnie*, 5, 7.

Polish underground report, dated May 13, 1942, in Maria Tyszkowa, “Eksterminacja Żydów w latach 1941–1943: Dokumenty Biura Propagandy i Informacji KG AK w zbiorach Biblioteki Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego,” *Biuletyn Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego w Polsce*, no. 162–63 (1992): 59.

did not hesitate to label such conduct as collaboration and aver that the Jews were the mainstay of the Bolshevik regime.¹⁵³⁰

Similar reports were filed by Guido Relli, secretary at the Italian embassy in Moscow, who visited Lwów several times in 1939–1941. Already in November 1939 he commented on the large number of Jewish agents involved in Bolshevik and anti-religious propaganda and the relentless attempts to eradicate the strong Polish element in that city. The sight of mass deportations of Polish civilians in 1940 left an indelible impression on this seasoned observer.¹⁵³¹

In April 1940, officials at the British Embassy to Poland (at that time situated in Angers, France, where the Polish government was exiled) wrote to the British Foreign Office:

As regards the present attitude of the Poles, and especially of those now in foreign countries, towards Jews and the Jewish question we must not forget that in September last the Jewish population in the provinces occupied by the U.S.S.R., notably in Eastern Galicia, with the exception of the wealthy Jews who had much property to lose, sided in the main with the Russian invaders. According to recent reports which have passed through my hands the Jews in those parts of Poland are still the main support of the Bolshevik regime.¹⁵³²

In a similar tone, the British War Office wrote: “The Jews’ behaviour in Poland during the Russian advance must clearly have caused a feeling of animosity in Army circles which I think justified.”¹⁵³³

Because of the preoccupation of historians with other matters, a veil of silence descended on the role of local collaborators in the deportation of hundreds of thousands of Poles to the Gulag. Polish emigré authors had no interest in publicizing these matters in the immediate postwar period since they tended to undermine the hostility of the minorities, and hence Polish claims to these territories.¹⁵³⁴ Since Jews were universally portrayed as the primary victims of the war (which was true with respect to the Nazis), it seemed inconceivable that some of them could also have been among the villains (i.e., in the role of Soviet collaborators). Moreover, given the (belated) anti-Nazi alliance that the West had forged with the Soviet Union, the latter’s role in wartime atrocities was not publicized or, to put it more precisely, was hushed up for political reasons for many decades. Since Stalin, “Uncle Joe,” was portrayed as a staunch anti-Nazi ally—how could cooperating with him be characterized as wartime “collaboration”?

There has been a near universal unwillingness on the part of Jewish historiography to come to terms with this aspect of the dark side of Jewish wartime conduct.¹⁵³⁵ The recent writings of Jan Gross, often heralded as breakthrough for a proper understanding of Polish-Jewish relations, actually mark a regression in this

¹⁵³⁰ Sarner, *General Anders and the Soldiers of the Second Polish Corps*, 4, 5. A Swedish reporter based in Berlin noted that young Jews in particular thronged Soviet offices decorated with portraits of Stalin, Molotov and Voroshilov and Soviet vehicles spouting propaganda. See Christer Jäderlund, “Hakkors möter sovjetstjärna,” in Karl-Olof Hedström, et al., *Stormaktskriget 1939: Polen: Fjärde delningen* (Stockholm: Fritze, 1939), 163, 166.

¹⁵³¹ Krzysztof Strzałka, *Między przyjaźnią a wrogością: Z dziejów stosunków polsko-włoskich (1939–1945)* (Kraków: Arcana 2001), 120–22.

¹⁵³² Report filed by Frank Savery, dated April 25, 1940, as cited in Bernard Wasserstein, *Britain and the Jews of Europe, 1939–1945*, Second edition (London and New York: Leicester University Press, 1999), 109.

¹⁵³³ Report filed on May 6, 1940, as cited in Wasserstein, *Britain and the Jews of Europe, 1939–1945*.

¹⁵³⁴ The following Polish compilations of accounts are representative in this regard: Sylwester Sylwester Mora [Kazimierz Zamorski] and Piotr Zwierniak [Stanisław Starzewski], *Sprawiedliwość sowiecka* (Italy: n.p., 1945); and Anon., *The Dark Side of the Moon* (preface by T.S. Eliot) (London: Faber and Faber, 1946).

¹⁵³⁵ A recent example from the deluge of highly “analytical” but not particularly insightful writing about the alleged sinister conduct of Poles during the war and their singularly defective collective memory (“narrative of denial”) is Joanna Michnic-Coren’s essay, “The Troubling Past: The Polish Collective Memory of the Holocaust,” in *East European Jewish Affairs* 29, no. 1–2 (Summer-Winter 1999): 75–84. That author simply does not fathom the remotest possibility of Jewish misconduct directed at Poles, nor does she realize that the arguments she advances so adamantly to disparage Poles apply equally, if not more so, to Jewish collective memory.

respect. A fuller appreciation of what transpired in Soviet-occupied Eastern Poland has only made inroads among a small number of Jewish historians and intellectuals.

In his essay, "Tabu i niewinność,"¹⁵³⁶ Aleksander Smolar, a Polish-Jewish émigré intellectual, wrote that

the welcome extended to the Bolsheviks was above all a demonstration of a separate identity, of being different from those against whom the Soviets were waging war—from the Poles—a refusal to be identified with the Polish state.

Smolar acknowledged that many Jews, not only Communists, took up positions in the Soviet administration and collaborated with the Soviet security forces in identifying and hunting down targeted Poles. He went on to appraise the resultant conflict that inevitably arose between Polish and Jewish society thus:

In no other country in Europe did the clash of Jewish interests and attitudes with those of the surrounding population reach such dramatic proportions as they did in Poland under the Soviet occupation of 1939–1941. In other occupied countries, the Jews were in conflict with parts of the surrounding population—with local collaborators, for example—but they were united in solidarity with the rest of society. In Poland, under the Soviet occupation, it was the Jews who were regarded as collaborators. This should be borne in mind if one wants to speak honestly about mutual relations between Poles and Jews.

In a similar vein, Adam Schaff, a leading Marxist philosopher in Communist Poland, wrote of

the behaviour of the Jewish population ... in the Eastern Borderlands towards the soldiers of the retreating Polish army during the entry there of the Red Army. I will not recount the details of the shameful incidents that I know of from the accounts of credible eyewitnesses of those events. It was an outburst of hatred ... It was a disgrace and betrayal of Poland, even worse—a display of a lack of connection to Poland. One does not forget that. It is difficult to speak of forgiveness. I personally feel a great shame, as after all I come from that population. What can I do in this situation? Only to say that I am embarrassed and that I am sorry, very sorry.¹⁵³⁷

Moreover, pro-Soviet sympathies were by no means restricted to Communists or to those Jews residing in Eastern Poland. After surveying the underground Jewish press in the Warsaw ghetto, Prekerowa notes in her aforementioned study¹⁵³⁸ that there were strong pro-Soviet sentiments among certain Zionist factions in Poland's capital as well. Leftist Zionists saw their future linked with the Communists (whom the Poles considered an enemy on a par with the Nazis). Well into 1941, Hashomer Hatsa'ir, for example, regarded the Soviet-German Non-Aggression Pact of August 1939 and the consequent partition of Poland to be a "wise and justified" development. Mordechai Anielewicz, the young leader of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising, was the editor of a periodical that openly embraced communism over capitalism and the Soviet Union over Poland. The Polish underground was well aware of these leanings and, understandably, sometimes less than

¹⁵³⁶ Published in *Aneks* (London), no. 41/42 (1986): 89–133. An English version of this essay, occasionally imprecisely translated, is found in *Daedalus: Journal of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences*, spring 1987, 31–73, under the title "Jews as a Polish Problem"—the relevant citations are found at 39 and 40. Many of the points made by Smolar had been put forward by Poles already in the 1950s, for example by Adam Uziembło, whose article "Problem antysemityzmu" was published in the Polish emigré journal *Kultura* (January-February 1957), see especially 65–66. Uziembło also mentions that when the Polish underground conveyed information about the liquidation of the ghetto in Kraków to the Jewish Joint committee they were accused of spreading *Greuelpropaganda*.

¹⁵³⁷ Adam Schaff, *Notatki kłopotnika* (Warsaw: BGW, 1995), 268.

¹⁵³⁸ Prekerowa, "The Jewish Underground and the Polish Underground," in *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry*, vol. 9 (1996): 151. Ringelblum describes similar activities on the part of Szachno Sagan, a great advocate of dispatching Jewish partisans to the forests. See Ringelblum, *Kronika getta warszawskiego*, 530. The duplicity on the part of some of the leadership of the Jewish Fighting Organization in Warsaw in their dealings with the Polish underground authorities continued much longer. See Roman T. Gerlach, "Ani niedźwiedzi, ani lasu ani nic: Tragedia getta warszawskiego," *Zeszyty Historyczne*, no. 150 (1996): 3–21. In Białystok and Wilno, the Jewish underground was not prepared to distance itself from the Soviet Union even when they turned to the Home Army for arms, preferring instead to leave the question of allegiance in the event of a Soviet return to be "decided at some later time." See Prekerowa, "The Jewish Underground and the Polish Underground," in *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry*, vol. 9 (1996): 156; Arad, *Ghetto in Flames*, 248.

enthusiastic when these same groups turned to them for arms and other forms of military assistance. As we know, however, help was not withheld to the Jewish insurgents of Warsaw even though the Home Army's resources were scarce and the Jewish struggle obviously doomed. Jewish historian Marian Fuks has stated: "It is an absolutely certain fact that without help and even active participation of the Polish resistance movement [i.e., the Home Army] it would not have been possible at all to bring about the uprising in the Warsaw Ghetto."¹⁵³⁹ It is also worth noting that unlike commemorations in honour of Poles who risked their lives to assist Jews, which have been marred by incessant recriminations of anti-Semitism levelled against Poles (e.g., the unveiling of the Żegota monument in Warsaw in September 1995), the unveiling (earlier that same year) of a monument in Warsaw to commemorate the Polish citizens deported by the Soviets in 1939–1941, regardless of their faith, was not used by Poles as an occasion to hurl accusations against the Soviets' many collaborators (mostly non-Poles including many Jews) at whose hands the Poles suffered disproportionately.¹⁵⁴⁰

The admissions of Aleksander Smolar are the closest thing to a public reckoning by anyone on the Jewish side for the behaviour of far too many Jews in Soviet-occupied Eastern Poland. Fifteen years later they were seconded by Michael Schudrich, rabbi of Warsaw and Łódź, who stated:

¹⁵³⁹ Marian Fuks, "Pomoc Polaków bojownikom getta warszawskiego," *Biuletyn Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego w Polsce*, no. 149, no. 1 (January–March 1989): 44. Marek Edelman, the last surviving leader of the revolt, has expressed a similar view: "We didn't get adequate help from the Poles, but without their help we couldn't have started the uprising. ... You have to remember that the Poles themselves were short of arms. The guilty party is Nazism, fascism—not the Poles." See Sheldon Kirshner, "Warsaw Ghetto commander forgives tormentor," (an interview with Marek Edelman), *Canadian Jewish News*, November 9, 1989.

¹⁵⁴⁰ On the other hand, there has been a profusion of, often sweeping, apologies in recent years on the part of Poland and the Poles in recent years. While the late Andrzej Zakrzewski, who was appointed by President Lech Wałęsa to maintain dialogue with the Jews and earned the respect of the Jewish community, has characterized this phenomenon as an "inflationary overabundance," many Jewish factions and individuals keep calling for more apologies. One of the first Polish initiatives was the pastoral letter issued by the Polish Catholic bishops and read in all the churches in January 1991. This remarkable document imposes a level of responsibility on Poles that one could never reasonably exact from others and few could ever live up to, such as offering help in life-threatening situations, and extends to crimes committed by non-Poles in Poland over which Poles had absolutely no control. The document reads in part: "In spite of so many heroic examples of help on the part of Polish Christians, there were also people who remained indifferent to this incomprehensible tragedy. We are especially disheartened by those among Catholics who in some way were the cause of the death of Jews. If only one Christian could have helped and did not stretch out a helping hand to a Jew during the time of danger or caused his death, we must ask for forgiveness of our Jewish brothers and sisters. ... We express our sincere regret for all the incidents of anti-Semitism which were committed at any time or by anyone on Polish soil." The litany of apologies goes on and on: President Wałęsa's address to the Israeli Knesset (Parliament) in May 1991; the staging of elaborate commemorations to mark the 50th anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising in April 1993; the official commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the Kielce pogrom in July 1996; the 30th anniversary of the Communist-inspired anti-Jewish purges of 1968 (directed largely against Communist Party members of Jewish origin). There has been no reciprocal movement on the part of the Jews collectively to acknowledge their long-standing historic debt to Poland—historian Barnett Litvinoff, for example, has argued in *The Burning Bush: Anti-Semitism and World History* (London: Collins, 1988), that pre-Partition Poland "saved Jewry from extinction"—or to apologize for the many crimes committed by Jews against Poles in Soviet-occupied Eastern Poland in 1939–1941 and in the postwar Stalinist period. No special memorial has ever been erected in Israel to the memory of the thousands of Poles who perished at the hands of the Nazis for helping Jews. Without honest reflection and a coming to terms with the dark chapters of their past on the part of the Jews, it is difficult to speak of a normalization of Polish-Jewish relations, let alone a reconciliation. This situation contrasts markedly with Polish-German relations where reconciliation was initiated in the 1960's by the Polish Catholic episcopate over the protests of Poland's Communist authorities and was followed by sincere statements and acts of contrition on the German side. Polish-Jewish dialogue has reached an obvious impasse. Indeed, many Poles have begun to question whether there is any point in continuing dialogue and any real prospect of normalization of relations with the Jews. There have been some small signs in recent years on the Jewish side, however, that certain individuals are coming around to an appreciation of these facts. See, for example: Ruta Pragier, *Żydzi czy Polacy* (Warsaw: Rytm, 1992); "Czy Żydzi także przepraszają Polaków?" *Słowo—Dziennik Katolicki* (Warsaw), December 4, 1995; Diana Pinto, "Fifty Years after the Holocaust: Building a New Jewish and Polish Memory," *East European Jewish Affairs*, vol. 26, no. 2 (1996): 79–95; Stanisław Krajewski, "Reflexions of a Polish Polish Jew," *East European Jewish Affairs*, vol. 27, no. 1 (1997): 64–66; Byron L. Sherwin, *Sparks Amidst the Ashes: The Spiritual Legacy of Polish Jewry* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997). After a long spell of silence, this theme of mutual reconciliation was voiced eloquently by Ryszard Praszquier. See Ryszard Praszquier, "Żyd—polski patriota," *Rzeczpospolita — Plus Minus*, May 11, 2013.

We Jews have to acknowledge that there were Jews in the service of the Communists, or even the Nazis, who committed crimes against the Poles, and also against other Jews. However, they never said that they were doing this in the name of the Jewish nation. [As we have seen in Wasilków and elsewhere, this is not quite true—many, if not most, pro-Soviet Jews continued to regard themselves as Jews.] Nevertheless, the time has come for us Jews to feel and understand the Polish pain in order for the Poles to feel and understand our pain.¹⁵⁴¹

The question of whether Jews should apologize for past Jewish support for Communism is an ongoing debate among those Jews who eschew ethno-nationalism. Jeff Schatz, however, scoffs at this notion. Historians Dan Diner and Jonathan Frankel are more thoughtful, seeing the logic behind it, as they ask: “If, for example, the entire Polish people is to be held in some way responsible for the Jedwabne massacre carried out by Polish villagers, does it follow that the Jewish people should share in the guilt incurred by the murderous acts of Jewish NKVD/MVD operatives?”¹⁵⁴²

These events continue to fester on the Polish psyche like a sore wound. Without a candid and open recognition of the dimensions of these tragic events and a collective apology to the Polish nation they will stand as an insurmountable impasse to Polish-Jewish *rapprochement*.

¹⁵⁴¹ “Rabin Schudrich: Nie ma konfliktu ws. ekshumacji,” *Gazeta Wyborcza*, May 23, 2001.

¹⁵⁴² Frankel and Diner, *Dark Times, Dire Decisions*, 10, compare with Schatz at pp. 13, 33 (ibid.). Invoking Karl Jaspers’s important distinction between guilt and shame, Jonathan Frankel offered the following remarkably frank and refreshingly unapologetic commentary:

Solzhenitsyn’s insistence that the Jewish people cannot simply shrug off the Trotskys, Uritskys and Yagodas as “non-Jewish,” as outsiders, is certainly persuasive. If Jews take pride in Heinrich Heine, Felix Mendelssohn, Benjamin Disraeli and Boris Pasternak, who were Jews by birth but were baptized into the Christian faith, can it be logical as distinct from comfortable—to disown the “non-Jewish Jews” who as Bolsheviks participated in destroying Russia’s emergent democracy in 1917; in establishing a brutal (albeit “proletarian”) dictatorship; and in provoking a ferocious civil war across the length and breadth of that vast country?

This point was made by Daniil Pasmanik in the early 1920s when he wrote: “Does the Jewish people [*evreistvo*] bear responsibility for Trotsky? Without a doubt, it does. As a rule, nationally minded Jews choose to include within the fold not only the Einsteins and the Ehrlichs, but also Borne and Heine, who opted for baptism. In that case, though, they do not have the right to dissociate themselves from Trotsky and Zinoviev.”

Jonathan Frankel, “‘Non-Jewish Jews’ Revisited: Solzhenitsyn and the Issue of National Guilt,” in Richard I. Cohen, Jonathan Frankel, and Stefani Hoffman, eds., *Insiders and Outsiders: Dilemmas of East European Jewry* (Oxford and Portland, Oregon: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2010), 185.

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