

Traditional Jewish Attitudes Toward Poles

by Mark Paul

Mutual prejudices and stereotypes have been harboured by both Poles and Jews, in relation to one another, for long centuries. However, few authors writing about this topic in the West have detected that Jews, no less than Poles, succumbed to a similar view of the other group, and fewer still have analyzed the impact of Jewish attitudes on mutual relations with Poles. A patently obvious yet much overworked theme in studies of Polish-Jewish relations is that of “Otherness,” with its exclusive focus on Polish attitudes toward Jews. In a multi-ethnic setting such as prewar Poland, however, where Poles were themselves in a minority in many towns and areas, in a country that had reemerged after more than a century of foreign, colonial-like rule, that focus is skewed as it provides little understanding of the dynamics of inter-ethnic relations in the context of the dramatic social, political and economic upheavals that befell Poland. The truth of the matter is that all ethnic and religious groups traditionally viewed members of other groups as outsiders and treated them with suspicion, if not hostility.¹ “Otherness” was in fact a mainstay of traditional Judaism, no less than of Christian society, and the separateness of the Jews was accentuated by the claim that they were God’s “Chosen People.” The Jewish community was the repository of longstanding religious-based biases that instilled far greater affinity and solidarity with co-religionists from other regions and even other lands than with their Christian neighbours.²

In Poland, Jews lived in closed, tightly knit, isolated communities largely of their own making. Unlike, the Armenian and Muslim Tatar minorities, who did not shy away from cultural polonization and gained acceptance by Polish society despite their religious differences, Jews wanted to have as few dealings with the outside world as possible, except for those necessary to sustain their economic livelihood. Originally, the basis for separation was dictated by the tenets of their religion. The rise of Jewish nationalism in the late 19th and early part of the 20th century fostered the expression of a distinctive ethnic and national identity, separate from that of the Poles, and thus exacerbated the situation. It was inevitable that the

¹ The jump from viewing “others” as simply “enemies” is often made in recent scholarship in relation to the Poles’ attitude toward Jews, but not the converse, even though theoretically that approach should be equally valid for all inter-group relations. See, for example, Katherine R. Jolluck, “Gender and Antisemitism in Wartime Soviet Exile,” in Robert Blobaum, ed., *Antisemitism and Its Opponents in Modern Poland* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2005), 210–32, where the author suggests that any unfavourable description of Jewish conduct by Poles is imbued with antisemitism, and even attributes to Polish anti-Semitism (sic) the frequently encountered critical statements about Poles made by Jews. It goes without saying, though this is scarcely noticed by those who dwell on conditions in Poland, that similar attitudes prevailed in Western Europe as well. A Dutch rescuer from Amsterdam, a Lutheran, recalled that Catholic and Lutheran children generally played apart, that there was animosity between Catholics and Protestants (his grandmother “detested” Catholics), that Calvinists (even schoolteachers) belittled Lutherans, and that Lutherans harboured resentments toward Calvinists. He also had ill feelings toward Jews and Gypsies. See Pearl M. Oliner, *Saving the Forsaken: Religious Culture and the Rescue of Jews in Nazi Europe* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2004), 104.

² This is not say that Jews, among themselves, were a cohesive entity. On the contrary, even in Poland, there was considerable rivalry and bad faith among various groups, especially the so-called Litvaks. See Edward Gigilewicz, “Litwacy,” in *Encyklopedia “Białych plam”* (Radom: Polskie Wydawnictwo Encyklopedyczne, 2005), vol. 19, 262–

cultural and socioeconomic distinctions of Polish and Jewish society would translate into different political interests. The political agenda of the mainstream Jewish community during the First World War and the early stages of Poland's rebirth was a form of national autonomy. They wanted to live as a separate nation within a nation, among their own kind, with their own language, schools and institutions, and even their own government. Contacts with Poles (Christians) would be kept to a minimum, mainly on the economic plane. However, in addition to exclusivist schools for the Jewish community which were to be funded by the state, Jews wanted to have it both ways: they also demanded full access to Polish schools as a vehicle for their own social advancement. (While such separateness or autonomy was championed for Jews and other minorities, those Poles who espoused similar aspirations for themselves were branded as anti-Semites and xenophobes.) Reluctantly, the Jewish community had to settle for the right to separate schools (some were government run and funded but most were private, though they too often received municipal subsidies³) and maintained a broad range of community institutions. Jews enjoyed an unhampered cultural, social and religious life that flourished in interwar period. They also participated in the country's political life through a host of political parties that won representation both locally and nationally. Nonetheless, separateness was fostered by Jewish community leaders and remained the preferred lifestyle for most Jews. Assimilation into Polish society automatically put one outside the mainstream of the Jewish community, and even led to ostracization. Assimilation on the Western model was vigorously eschewed. Tellingly, during the 1931 census, the Jewish community leaders urged Jews to identify their mother tongue as Hebrew or Yiddish, rather than Polish.⁴

The separateness of the Jews was clearly discernible at every turn. According to one Jewish researcher,

In Poland, ... there was little question: Jews were Jews. With some exception, Jews neither considered themselves nor were they regarded by others as Polish or Polish Jews. As is well known, Jews in Poland were allowed to have their own laws and institutions. They were a nation unto themselves and they maintained their nationhood in Poland. From the time of their arrival and through the centuries, they sought to protect their way of life. They were not merely a separate religion but a tightly-knit community, leading life largely separate from Poles. They had their own customs, culture, dress, schools, courts, community government, and language (in the 1930 census almost 80 percent declared Yiddish as their mother tongue). Menachem Begin's father refused to learn Polish. In a word, the vast majority of Jews were unintegrated socially and culturally in

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³ For example, the Zamość town budget allocated substantial funding for Jewish schools, an old age home, social organizations, and summer colonies for Jewish children. See 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), 283. The same was true in many other localities, such as Wilno. See Jarosław Wołkonowski, *Stosunki polsko-żydowskie w Wilnie i na Wileńszczyźnie 1919–1939* (Białystok: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu w Białymstoku, 2004).

⁴ Sean Martin, *Jewish Life in Cracow, 1918–1939* (London and Portland, Oregon: Vallentine Mitchell, 2004), 14, 50, 84; Wierzbieniec, *Żydzi w województwie lwowskim w okresie międzywojennym*, 41–42.

the fabric of the larger society. They shared little or no national sentiment or common allegiance with the Poles. They and the Poles were almost strangers. They avoided association with the vast majority of the population, the Polish peasantry, not wanting to live like, or with, them.⁵

As late as 1940, Janusz Korczak pointed out:

A certain nationalist told me:

“A Jew, a sincere patriot, is at best a ‘Warszawer’ or ‘Cracower’, but not a Pole.”⁶

According to historian Regina Renz,

Many small country towns ... could be described as shtetls—localities dominated by a Jewish community, organized according to their own rules in their own unique manner. The Jews constituted an integral part of the material and spiritual landscape of small towns.

Poles and Jews living in the same town formed two separate environments. Rose Price recalls: ‘I was born in a small Polish town. In our district, everyone knew everyone else: grandparents, aunts, friends, neighbours, merchants, and craftsmen. The strangers were the non-Jews—the Poles.’ That there was such fundamental closeness and such great psychological alienation is astounding.⁷ Both the Polish and Jewish side harboured grievances and prejudices, although these had different sources and disparate natures. The model of bilateral contacts accepted by both sides was one of peaceful isolation, of a life devoid of conflict, but also of closer friendship. The Jews were an ethnic community with a marked consciousness of their cultural distinctiveness, which had been strengthened through the centuries by their common history, and which manifested itself

⁵ Ralph Slovenko, “On Polish-Jewish Relations,” *The Journal of Psychiatry & Law*, vol. 15 (Winter 1987): 597–687, as quoted in Iwo Cyprian Pogonowski, *Jews in Poland: A Documentary History* (New York: Hippocrene, 1993; Revised edition–1998), 157. Slovenko goes on to state some rather self-evident truths that are often overlooked by those who tend to view Polish-Jewish relations as some exceptional form of ethnic or religious interaction: “The phenomenon is surely not unique. Birds of a feather flock together. That people group with those similar to themselves is one of the most well-established replicable findings in the psychology and biology of human behavior. People of whatever race or religion have always tried to insulate and remove themselves from what is perceived as different behavior, whatever its origins.” George Orwell in his famous “Notes on Nationalism” writes that characteristic for the nationalism of the victim is a reluctance to acknowledge in just measure the sufferings of other peoples, and an inability to admit that the victim can also victimize.

⁶ Janusz Korczak, *The Ghetto Years, 1939–1940* (Tel Aviv: Ghetto Fighters’ House and Hakibbutz Hameuchad Publishing House, 1983), 128.

⁷ In fact, there was nothing unusual in such co-existence either at that time or today, even in the West. In the United States, Blacks and native Indians were segregated from Whites, as were native Indians in Canada. There was an enormous divide between French Canadians and the dominant English-speaking society. Things did not begin to change in North America until the 1960s. A similar situation prevailed in Northern Ireland, between the dominant Protestants and the Catholics, almost to the end of the 20th century, with no apparent resolution of that problem in sight.

in the cult of tradition and religious ties. Apart from tradition and religion, other important factors binding the Jewish community were the Yiddish language, clothing, customs, and communal institutions.⁸

In an article entitled, “Jews and Poles Lived Together for 800 Years But Were Not Integrated,” published in *Forverts* (New York, September 17, 1944), Yiddish author and Nobel laureate Isaac Bashevis Singer wrote under the pen-name Icchok Warszawski:

Rarely did a Jew think it was necessary to learn Polish; rarely was a Jew interested in Polish history or Polish politics. ... Even in the last few years it was still a rare occurrence that a Jew would speak Polish well. Out of three million Jews living in Poland, two-and-a-half million were not able to write a simple letter in Polish and they spoke [Polish] very poorly. There are hundreds of thousands of Jews in Poland to whom Polish was as unfamiliar as Turkish. The undersigned was connected with Poland for generations, but his father did not know more than two words in Polish. And it never even occurred to him that there was something amiss in that.

Bashevis Singer again returned to this theme in the March 20, 1964 issue of *Forverts*: “My mouth could not get accustomed to the soft consonants of that [Polish] language. My forefathers have lived for centuries in Poland but in reality I was a foreigner, with separate language, ideas and religion. I sensed the oddness of this situation and often considered moving to Palestine.”⁹

The degree of alienation of the Jewish community, which was largely self-imposed, cannot be overemphasized. For Orthodox Jews, their Jewishness constituted an absolute and insurmountable obstacle to meaningful relations with the outside world. As sociologist Alina Cała argues, Orthodox Jews manifested no emotional relationship to Polishness or Polish culture, and thus “were virtually precluded from experiencing a sense of Polish nationality or cultural identity.”¹⁰ Marian Milsztajn, who was born in Lublin in 1919, wrote:

Where we lived ... I didn't hear one word of Polish. I didn't know such a language existed. To the extent it existed, I knew it was the language of the goys. Poland? I had no idea. I first encountered the Polish language when I was seven, when I entered my first class on the second floor of Talmud-Tora. The language of instruction was Jewish

⁸ Regina Renz, “Small Towns in Inter-War Poland,” in Antony Polonsky, ed., *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry*, vol. 17: *The Shtetl: Myth and Reality* (Oxford and Portland, Oregon: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2004), 143–51, at 148.

⁹ Cited in Chone Shmeruk, “Isaac Bashevis Singer and Bruno Schultz,” *The Polish Review*, vol. 36, no. 2 (1991): 161–67.

¹⁰ Cited in Alina Cała, “The Social Consciousness of Young Jews in Interwar Poland,” in *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry*, vol. 8: *Jews in Independent Poland, 1918–1939* (London and Washington: The Littman Library of Jewish

(Yiddish). ... We wrote in Jewish, learned some history in Jewish, mathematics, and the Polish language. During the first week of studies, when the teacher spoke in Polish we did not understand a word. And we began to shout: “speak our language, speak our language.” We made such a commotion that the shames arrived. And the shames turned to us: “Children, you must learn Polish because we are in Poland.” ...

In the small towns the Jewish youth did not know Polish at all, but Jewish or Hebrew. ... The youth did not know Polish, and if they did, they knew it like I did—poorly.¹¹

Many Jews who became residents of the reborn Polish state in the aftermath of World War I were in fact opposed to Polish rule and the concept of Polish nationhood. They would only settle for living in Poland under one condition: full autonomy, which meant separation from the “Other”—their Polish neighbours. As historians point out,

Zionists, who dominated the joint committee of East European Jewish delegations at the [Paris] Peace Conference and enjoyed the support of the American Jewish Congress, demanded that Poland ... recognize their Jewish residents as members of a distinct nation, with the right to collective representation at both state and international levels. This would entail the creation of a separate Jewish parliament in Poland, alongside a state parliament representing all the country’s inhabitants, and it would mean the creation of a Jewish seat at the League of Nations.

In demanding formal, corporate, political/diplomatic status for a territorially dispersed nation, as distinct from a state, the Zionists were challenging traditional notions about the indivisibility of state sovereignty ...¹²

It is of profound significance that the memorial books of the Jewish communities destroyed by the Germans during the Second World War are written in Yiddish and (less often) in Hebrew, and although some of them contain English sections virtually none have any Polish-language content. According to French historian Pierre Vidal-Naquet, the Jews of Poland could not properly be regarded as Poles of Jewish faith, as they represented a civilization and culture unto themselves.¹³ The ultimate goal for many, if not most Jews, in interwar Poland was to one day live in a national Jewish state in Palestine, governed by Jews, where Jews would live in conformity with their Jewish religious and cultural traditions.¹⁴ This dream was

Civilization, 1994), 50.

¹¹ Cited in Ewa Kurek, *Poza granicą solidarności: Stosunki polsko-żydowskie 1939–1945* (Kielce: Wyższa Szkoła Umiejętności, 2006), 86.

¹² Aviel Roshwald, *Ethnic Nationalism and the Fall of Empires: Central Europe, Russia and the Middle East, 1914–1923* (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), 165. See also Peter D. Stachura, “National Identity and the Ethnic Minorities in Early Inter-War Poland,” in Peter D. Stachura, ed., *Poland Between the Wars, 1918–1939* (Houndsmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire and London: Macmillan Press, 1998), 67–70, 74–77.

¹³ Cited in Kurek, *Poza granicą solidarności*, 34–35.

¹⁴ Typical of sentiments in Jewish memoirs is the following: “We dreamed of living in Palestine, equal members of

society in our own Jewish state.” See Shalom Yoran, *The Defiant: A True Story* ((New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1996), 120. There was little place in such a state for non-Jews. The following excerpts from a memorial book from a typical shtetl in Eastern Poland, where most Jews were said to be “middle class” and better off economically than their Christian neighbours, are instructive:

The tradition of mutual assistance between peoples existed for many years. ... The Torah commandment: “And your brother shall live among you,” became a prime concept for the Rokitno Jews. ... They showed their love for their fellow Jews and their wish to help each other.

“Hashomer Hatzair” [a leftist-leaning political organization] in Rokitno was built on pure nationalism and Zionism. ... On Polish Independence [sic, Constitution] Day, May 3rd, we were forced to participate in a parade in order to show loyalty to the government.

When construction was completed, most of the Jewish students transferred from public schools to the Hebrew school. More than 90% of the children of the town and its surroundings were educated in the Tarbut School. It is important to point out the great dedication of the parents who willingly gave up the free public school whose building was spacious and well equipped. ... Except for geography, Polish history and language—compulsory subjects taught in Polish, the language of instruction was Hebrew.

There were about 300 children in the Hebrew school in Rokitno in 1927–28, i.e., almost all the children in town. It seems to me that no Jewish children attended the Polish school, or at least very few did.

The members of the [Hebrew-speaking] association kept their vow and spoke Hebrew at home and outside, in spite of the Poles. When they entered a Polish store [the author must mean a government office, because Jews rarely, if ever, patronized Polish stores—*M.P.*] they used sign language or winking and pointing to show the shopkeeper what they wanted.

There was hardly a Jewish child in Rokitno who did not know Hebrew. ... Parents denied themselves food to give their children a Jewish education, so they would grow up knowledgeable and comfortable with their background. ... the children were educated with Jewish values and Hebrew language. When they made Aliyah, they seemed and felt like native-born.

From time to time a wall newspaper was published in the school. ... The richest section was the one with news of Eretz Israel. This was our purpose in life. There were always enthusiastic students standing near that section.

The JNF [Jewish National Fund] served as a cornerstone for the nationalistic education—the value of the land [in Palestine] to the people. The notion: “The land will not be sold for eternity” was well received by the students. Every new purchase of land was received enthusiastically and donations were increased. There was a JNF corner in every classroom and the blue box was the center of the corner and of the life of the class. Every happy event was celebrated with a donation.

Although the Jews of Rokitno had dealings with non-Jews, they did not follow their customs. There was a division between them when it came to matters of faith and opinion. The locals fed calves for alien work and bowed to emptiness while we [Jews] thanked and blessed our G-d for his creation.

See E. Leoni, ed., *Rokitno–Wolyn and Surroundings: Memorial Book and Testimony*, posted on the Internet at: <<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) 45, 65–66, 87–112, 167. Joseph Schupack describes similar conditions in Radzyń Podlaski, where Jewish religious-based nationalism thrived:

My small existence, like that of my friends, centered around my parents’ home, the Hebrew school and the Zionist youth organization, Hashomer-Hazair. There, on the fertile ground of the Diaspora, we were nourished with love for Eretz-Israel. It was unnecessary to teach Zionism; we were born in Zionism and grew up with it. The Polish national holidays of May 3 and November 11 were only pro forma holidays for us; our holidays were Purim and Hanukah. The biblical prophets and Bilaik were our poets. Negev, Judea and Galilee were our provinces. The pictures we drew as children always depicted the sun, palm trees and the Star of David. Our coins went into the Keren-Kayemeth piggy banks. We were always concerned about recent developments in Eretz-Israel. When we

especially strong among residents of the hundreds of traditional shtetls (small towns) strewn throughout Poland, where many Jews couldn't even recognize the Polish flag.¹⁵ For many, committed Zionists as well as others, the Jewish national state was to be a purely Jewish one.¹⁶

The historic separateness of the Polish and Jewish communities, even on a day-to-day level, remained pronounced right up to the Second World War. For many Jews, especially the younger ones, the atmosphere of the traditional shtetl was stifling, if not repressive. True, some inroads had been made in "assimilating" the Jewish population, but that was a rather recent trend and, for the most part, largely superficial. It was more akin to acculturation than to the concept of assimilation. (Assimilation was something that was taken for granted and expected of Jews who settled in the West.) To outside observers the reality of Jewish communal life in Poland was a rather rude awakening.

Arthur L. Goodhart, who came to Poland in the summer of 1920 as counsel to a mission sent by the president of the United States to investigate conditions in Poland, described typical Jewish schools in Warsaw connected with synagogues. These schools were steeped in Jewish history tradition and paid virtually no attention to the non-Jewish community around them:

We then went to the senior class, where the children were thirteen or fourteen years old. These children had just been studying Jewish history, and one of them enthusiastically repeated to me the names of the different kings of Judah. As this was the oldest class, I thought I would ask them some questions. Of the thirty-five children ... Nearly all of them knew that New York was in America. None of them knew who Kosciuszko [Kościuszko] was, and one particularly bright boy was the only one in the class who had

were't speaking Yiddish with each other, Hebrew became our common language. Thus we lived our own lives. I was supposed to go to Palestine and attend the agricultural school of Ben-Shemen, but things turned out differently. There were only a few Jews who were willing to do without the cultural or religious ties to Judaism in order to assimilate into Polish society.

See Joseph Schupack, *The Dead Years* ([New York]: Holocaust Library, 1986), 6. This self-imposed isolation with its negative preconceptions of the "hostile" environment surrounding it appears to have a direct correlation to the holding and disseminating of primitive prejudices against Poles harboured by Jewish society. This memoir is littered with such examples: "Polish children had ingested anti-Semitism along with their mothers' milk" (p. 3); "The Polish anti-Semites, a group largely identical with the ruling the ruling class, thought they should equal or even surpass the Nazis' intense hatred of Jews" (p. 5); "We children had our first amusing moment when [Polish] officers carrying maps ... asked us the way to Rumania" (p. 8); "the power of the Nazis was based partly on the considerable support which anti-Jewish laws received among the Polish population. It was not by chance that Poland was chosen as the place for the extermination of the Jews" (p. 59); "I also think about the Poles who helped my friends and me when we were in grave danger. Although their number is less than in other countries ..." (p. 185); "Without their collaboration, quite possibly every third or fourth Jew in Poland might have remained alive" (p. 186).

¹⁵ Norman Salsitz describes how, in the interwar years, when buildings were obligated to display the flag on national holidays, he made the rounds in his small town of Kolbuszowa to bring to the attention of Jews that they had sewed together the flags incorrectly: "Many people sewed the red segment on top of the white; but that unfortunately was the Czech flag ... In the Polish flag the white area was above the red." See Norman Salsitz, as told to Richard Skolnik, *A Jewish Boyhood in Poland: Remembering Kolbuszowa* (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 1992), 64–65, 70–71, 126.

¹⁶ Candid Jewish authors do not hide this fact. For example, Isaac Deutscher acknowledges that "From the outset Zionism worked towards the creation of a purely Jewish state and was glad to rid the country of its Arab inhabitants." See Isaac Deutscher, *The Non-Jewish Jew and Other Essays* (London and New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), 137.

ever heard of [King John] Sobieski. He thought that Sobieski was a Polish nobleman who had fought against the Russians. I then asked them some questions about languages. Only one boy could talk Polish, although four or five could understand it. ... All the classes in this school were conducted in Yiddish, although the main emphasis was put on teaching the children Hebrew. ...

We visited three or four other Talmud schools during the day. One of the best had some maps on the wall. When I examined them I found that they were detailed charts of Palestine. The children in this class were able to draw excellent plans of the country on the blackboard, filling in the names of all the cities and most of the villages. I asked one of the boys whether he could draw a similar map of Poland, and he said "No." ...

After having visited these schools, we had an interview with the head of the Talmud Torahs. He was opposed to the idea that the Polish Government should inspect these schools and force them to teach [even some] Polish to the children. ... The purpose of his schools was to give the pupils the traditional Jewish education.¹⁷

Many Jews had more affinity for distant, mythical America than for Poland, or even Palestine, despite overwhelming evidence that Jews who immigrated there soon shed everything that made their lives distinctive in Poland.

Citizens of Kolbuszowa, still we were in love with America. Nothing could change that; nothing ever did. To us American could do no wrong. ...

What could happen to people there was common knowledge. The religion of their fathers, the faith of our ancestors, once in America it no longer was the same. Incident after incident reaffirmed this lamentable fact; so did many popular stories. Just look at those who had returned from America to visit us. Beards trimmed or shaved off, *paves* removed, long coats gone. What kind of Jews were these?

It was so. I remember when my brother came for a visit. Saturday arrived, the sacred Sabbath, but he continued to smoke his cigarettes. ... Then he had someone go over to the local Polish store and buy pork sausages. What happened to kosher in America? Excuses—all you heard were excuses. It was too hard. It no longer made sense.¹⁸

Almost overnight, centuries-old traditions were abandoned by most Jews who emigrated from the shtetls of Poland to America. But there was little tolerance for the notion of assimilation within Poland. As Goodhart points out, the so-called Polish-speaking assimilators—"Jews who believe that Judaism is only a question of religion"—were shunned and even despised by the vast majority of Poland's Jews: "Most of the

¹⁷ Arthur L. Goodhart, *Poland and the Minority Races* (New York: Brentano's, 1920), 170–72.

¹⁸ Salsitz, *A Jewish Boyhood in Poland*, 201–202.

prominent Jews in Poland are not leaders of their people as is the case in other countries.”¹⁹ In view of such credible observations (of which there a plethora), unilateral charges accusing Poles of regarding Jews as “others” or rejecting Jewish efforts to be “accepted” are entirely misfocused.

An American Methodist missionary who resided in Warsaw in the interwar period drew a similar picture:

Reared in a small American town, I had never thought, before coming to Poland, of Jews as being different, except in religion, from others in the community. In Poland, where they formed nearly 10 per cent of the population, I found them a separate people with a culture of their own. Their religion, language, customs, and garb were all a part of a tradition guarded with jealous pride and handed down unchanged through generations. Except for doctors, lawyers, and others in the professional class, the Polish Jew saw to it that no one mistook him for anything but a Jew.”²⁰

By far, the most significant factor that set Poles and Jews apart was grounded in economics, and certainly not race, though religion also played a role. As W. D. Rubinstein has argued compellingly,

the demonstrable over-representation of Jews in the economic elites of many continental European countries was itself a potent force for creating and engendering antisemitism, arguably the most important single force which persisted over the generations. ... the fate of other ‘entrepreneurial minorities’ was, often, similar to that of the Jews in continental Europe. ...

Over-representation in the economic elite of a visible ethnic minority of the degree found in Poland or Hungary was certain to cause trouble regardless of the identity of the group ...²¹

¹⁹ Ibid., 25. Goodhart also saw an anti-Polish play in a Jewish theatre in Warsaw, to which the “audience was most enthusiastic. ... The audience consisted chiefly of young people, all of whom were dressed in the modern European style.” According to Goodhart, “In this play a young Jewish widow marries a Pole, who is anxious to get her money. She changes her religion, but in spite of this her drunken husband abuses and ridicules her. Finally, she leaves her home in despair, while her cousin, who has remained true to her faith, marries a young Jew and lives happily ever after.” Ibid., 134.

²⁰ Hania and Gaither Warfield, *Call Us to Witness: A Polish Chronicle* (New York and Chicago: Ziff-Davis Publishing Company, 1945), 49–50.

²¹ W. D. Rubinstein, “Jews in the Economic Elites of Western Nations and Antisemitism,” *The Jewish Journal of Sociology*, vol. 42, nos. 1 and 2 (2000): 5–35, especially at pp. 8–9, 18–19. The overall economic situation of the Jews in Poland belies the claim of “oppression” that is often levelled in popular literature. According to a study by British economist Joseph Marcus, undoubtedly the most extensive analysis of the economic history of interwar Polish Jewry, the Jewish share of the country’s wealth increased both absolutely and relative to the non-Jewish share in the interwar period. The Jews, who represented 10 percent of Poland’s population, held 22.4 percent of the national wealth in 1929 and 21.4 percent in 1938. The average Jews was clearly better off than the average non-Jew: In terms of per capita income, in 1929 the income per caput was 830 zloty for Jews, and 585 zlotys for non-Jews. Although very many Jews lived in poverty (as did non-Jews), Marcus argues that “the Jews in Poland were poor because they lived in a poor, under-developed country. Discrimination added only marginally to their poverty. ... That Jewish poverty was mainly the result of accumulated discrimination against them is a myth and it is time to expose it as such.” See Joseph Marcus,

It was also to be expected that, with the advent of the Great Depression, which hit Poland harder than any other European country, conditions would take a turn for the worse.²²

Unlike Polish attitudes toward Jews, about which there is an extensive and growing literature, the issue of Jewish attitudes toward Poles is a much neglected topic.²³ In fact, the issue is largely shunned as if it provided no clues for understanding the long history of interaction between Poles and Jews. Historically, Polish-Jewish relations were multifaceted and developed in a different setting than that which prevailed in the rest of Europe. (Jews had been expelled from large areas of Europe over the centuries, starting in England followed by Spain, or butchered in large-scale massacres like those in Strasbourg, Prague and Lisbon.) As Eva Hoffman points out, and there were mutual parallels in how the two groups viewed each other:

throughout much of Poland's history, Jews were a highly visible and socially significant presence—a constituency that had to be reckoned with and one that could even pose challenges to the Poles themselves. In this respect, the nature of the Polish-Jewish relationship is exceptional. In contrast with Western European countries, where Jews were usually a tiny minority (below 2 percent of the population in modern Germany) and where, therefore, they were a mostly imaginary Other, in Poland, the Jewish community comprised a genuine ethnic minority, with its own rights, problems, and powers. We have become skilled nowadays in analyzing the imagery of Otherness, that unconscious stratum of preconceptions, fantasies, and projections we bring to our perceptions of strangers. Such subliminal assumptions and archetypes can and do have a very real impact on how we see and treat each other. But in the intergroup relations that were as extended in time and as complex as those between Poles and Jews, the material realities of economic competition and practical loyalties, of policy and political alignments, also played a vital role.²⁴

What of Jewish attitudes toward the Poles? We tend to forget that minority groups are not powerless in the perceptions; that they, too, exercise judgment and gauge the character of others; and that, much as they may be the targets of prejudice, they are not themselves immune to it. That the Jews had their views of the people among whom they lived we cannot doubt, but their ordinary opinions, ideas, and preconceptions are largely

Social and Political History of the Jews in Poland, 1919–1939 (New York: Mouton, 1983), 42 (Table 6), 231, 253–56.

²² Real output in Poland fell by more than 20%, thus exceeding Austria and Germany's drop. The rate of decrease in most other countries was substantially smaller. See Niall Ferguson, *The War of the World: Twentieth-Century Conflict and the Descent of the West* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2006), 234.

²³ Two insightful articles on this topic which depart from the prevalent stereotypical conclusions appeared in *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry*, vol. 8 (1994): Szyja Bronsztejn, "Polish-Jewish Relations as Reflected in Memoirs of the Interwar Period," pp. 66–88, and Annamaria Orla-Bukowska, "Shtetl Communities: Another Image," pp. 89–113.

²⁴ Eva Hoffman, *Shtetl: The Life and Death of a Small Town and the World of Polish Jews* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1997), 8–9.

inaccessible to us, since almost no secular Jewish literature is extant from the early period. We do know, however, that Jews had their exclusionary and monopolistic prescriptions, prohibiting rights of residence to outsiders in their quarters, and strictly guarding certain business practices and “secrets” from non-Jews. ... We can take it for granted, moreover, that fierce religious disapproval traveled both ways. Just as Jews were infidel in Christian eyes, so Jews were convinced that Christians were wrong, deluded, and blasphemous. And from both sides of the divide, the conviction of the other’s wrongness created essential, and increasingly rigid, spiritual barriers. As the Jewish communities in Poland became more settled and began to establish stronger religious institutions, Polish Jews became more rigorously observant. They began to shun intimate contact with Christians, if only on account of the dietary laws.

The Poles, then, were the Jews’ radical Other, just as much as the other way round.²⁵

Although much has been written about “Polish anti-Semitism,” there is very little about the other side of this two-way relationship. Most commentators simply deny its existence or downplay it to the point of insignificance. For some scholars, like Joanna Michlic, “anti-Polish stereotyping” by Jews is essentially a *reactive* and insignificant postwar phenomenon that has little or nothing to do with Jewish attributes. In her estimation, it’s hardly worthy of mention.

this stereotyping basically constitutes a reaction to the negative experience of Jews in modern Poland. This reaction takes on the form of biased and unjustified expressions and overgeneralizations. However, such stereotyping does not constitute an important and irreducible element of Jewish national identity and nationalism ...²⁶

²⁵ Ibid., 44–45.

²⁶ Joanna Beata Michlic, *Poland’s Threatening Other: The Image of the Jew from 1880 to the Present* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2006), 15. Michlic’s study is written from a distinctly Jewish nationalist perspective and often descends to the level of partisan polemics. Her biases are all too pronounced and, as supreme arbiter, views that do not conform to hers are summarily dismissed as being “anti-Semitic.” For example, she is quick to level harsh criticism on respected non-Polish historians, such as Brian Porter and Gunnar Paulsson, who express more moderate and measured views of Polish-Jewish relations. Ibid., 283, 299, 329–30. Michlic is not aware of important developments in historical research such as the ethnic make-up of the leadership of Stalinist security office. Ibid., 204. Compare with Krzysztof Szwagrzyk, ed., *Aparat bezpieczeństwa w Polsce: Kadra kierownicza*, vol. 1: *1944–1956* (Warsaw: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, 2005). A much more balanced study, which largely avoids the extremist premises advanced by Michlic and the relentless pursuit of anti-Semitism as the sole explanation for Polish behaviour, is Theodore R. Weeks’ *From Assimilation to Antisemitism: The “Jewish Question” in Poland, 1850–1914* (DeKalb, Illinois: Northern Illinois University Press, 2006). However, it too is flawed in viewing Jews solely as “passive participants” rather than “actors,” in country where they were a major presence on the urban landscape and formed a powerful force on the economic plane. Weeks also fails to come to terms with the real reason why Poles did not embrace his favoured solution of cultural and national autonomy for Jews, also put forward as a “Polish-Jewish condominium.” Not only was there no model for such autonomy (no European country granted Jews that status at the time, and none does today), but more importantly, the Poles considered Poland to be a national state for the Poles, just as Jews consider Israel a homeland for the Jews and utterly reject the notion of a “Jewish-Palestinian condominium.” Among other shortcomings, Weeks does not draw meaningful comparisons with the situation of Jews in neighbouring countries such as the Czech lands, and fails to reconcile his premise that Polish society as a whole adopted stridently anti-Semitic views by the beginning of the twentieth century with the fact that the anti-Jewish boycott of 1912 was

This approach is ahistorical because it overlooks the historical context in which Polish-Jewish relations developed and hypocritical because it subjects Poles and Jews to two different moral standards. The situation is further compounded when Poland is compared to European countries which had no significant Jewish population, but not to those numerous countries which experienced (and experience) serious ethnic strife between rival ethnic or religious groups who happen not to be Jewish.

There is little, if anything, that is novel about anti-Semitic views voiced by some Poles about Jews. (It is a separate question to what extent these views were shared by Polish society as a whole.) Poles inherited traditional Christian beliefs about and prejudices against Jews from the Church, and imported some of the modern doctrines from Western Europe (primarily France and Germany), where they developed. There is no evidence Poles invented anything original in this regard. As Theodore Weeks notes:

The Poles certainly had no monopoly on antisemitism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. In fact, both “scholarly” and popular expressions of anti-Jewish sentiment were much more pronounced in Germany and France in the last three decades of the nineteenth century. ... It is also clear that much of the rhetoric of Polish antisemites ... was appropriated from German and French sources.

... no prominent Polish writer or scholar of the prewar [i.e. pre-World War One] period chose to publicly denounce the Jews as a threat to the Polish nation. Indeed before 1905 it was a rare Polish intellectual who made a career of denouncing the Jews. Instead, in that period prominent writers such as Bolesław Prus and Aleksander Świętochowski mercilessly mocked and reviled antisemites as hacks, careerists, and benighted fools.²⁷

But the Poles were also saddled with a formidable problem—unknown in most of Europe—of having to cope, on a day-to-day basis, with large numbers of Jews living in their midst as a separate community. Most of these Jews came to Poland because they were expelled from or fled persecution in other parts of Europe. Continuously during Polish history, relations between Poles and Jews were exacerbated by the interference of outsiders: German settlers in the Middle Ages, the Cossack uprisings, the Swedish invasion in the 17th century, the dogmatic pressures of the Vatican, the autocratic rule of Czarist Russia, the Nazi Germany invasion, and the Stalinist occupation, to name the most significant examples.

generally ignored by the peasantry, and indeed the majority of Poles. Ibid., 166, 169. While mentioning incidents such as the harassment of Jews “suspected” of supporting the Russians during the 1863 insurrection, he neglects to mention that Romual Traugutt, the leader of the rebellion, was in fact betrayed by a Jew, a fact that is noted by the very historian he cites (Stefan Kieniewicz). Ibid., 49. Weeks’ notion that, while there is no “direct line,” the Endeks’s ideas “made the [Nazi] murderers’ jobs that much easier,” is not only inflammatory but also empirically baseless. Ibid., 178. The rate of survival, once one subtracts those who managed to flee to another country or were exempt from annihilation (e.g. converts, mixed blood, through marriage) was no higher for Jews in countries like Holland, Norway and the Czech lands than in Poland.

²⁷ Weeks, *From Assimilation to Antisemitism*, 175–76.

Few people, even among Poles, are aware of the nature of the earliest contacts between Jews and Poles: Jews first came to Poland in the 10th century as traders in, among other commodities, Christian slaves,²⁸ which certainly did not augur well for mutual relations. The chasm separating Jews from Polish peasantry, or the common people, was acutely felt well into the 20th century. Jews in Poland occupied a place between the nobility and the peasant serfs. They collected taxes for the nobility and managed their estates. They were known as *pachciarz*, or “commercial agent.” The Jew, on behalf of the nobleman, controlled the life of the village. Having lost legal protection in 1518, when the king ceased to consider their complaints against the nobles, the peasants remained virtually at the mercy of the nobles, who decided on the levies to be imposed upon them in the form of services and the use of monopolies and held jurisdiction over them. The nobles, with the Jews as their agents, often misused their privileges to exploit the peasants subject to their whims. Poland in the 16th and 17th centuries has often been described as “heaven for the Jews, paradise for the nobles, hell for the serfs.”²⁹ The result was inevitable: strong resentment.

The reaction of the Jews caught up in this vicious cycle was to “dehumanize” the Christian peasants, and to view themselves as superior. As Jonathan Krasner points out,

The dehumanization of the peasants was also ‘an instrument for sustaining a social and political order in which the Other is a victim’. In central and eastern Europe, particularly in Poland and Ukraine, the Jews were frequently cast in an exploitative role in relation to the peasants. Although they were often acting as agents of the aristocracy, whether as

²⁸ At the time, the slave trade was monopolized by Iberian Jews known as Radhanites, who transferred the slaves (Slavs) from Central Europe through Western Europe centres such as Mainz, Verdun and Lyons, where they were castrated, to buyers in Muslim Spain and Africa. See Pogonowski, *Jews in Poland*, 257–66; M.M. Postan and Edward Miller, eds., *The Cambridge Economic History of Europe*, vol. 2: *Trade and Industry in the Middle Ages*, Second edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 416–18, 485–87; Roman Jakobson, *Selected Writings*, vol. 6: *Early Slavic Paths and Crossroads*, Part 2: *Medieval Slavic Studies* (Berlin, New York, and Amsterdam: Mouton, 1985), 864; Timothy Reuter, ed., *The New Cambridge Medieval History*, vol. 3: *c.900–c.1024* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 69–70; H.H. Ben-Sasson, ed., *A History of the Jewish People* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1976), 394–98, Plate 31; Joseph Adler, “The Origins of Polish Jewry,” *Midstream*, October 1994: 26–28; Livia Rothkirchen, *The Jews of Bohemia and Moravia: Facing the Holocaust* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, and Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2005), 8. The slave trade was strongly opposed by the Catholic Church and resulted in the banishment in 995 of Adalbert (Vojtěch in Czech, Wojciech in Polish), the bishop of Prague, who condemned the practice in his treatise “*Infelix Aurum*.” Adalbert fled to Poland where he continued to ransom Christians sold into slavery. In this context it is irrelevant that some Christians abetted this activity (just as some Blacks were implicated in the Black slave trade), because Jews were not enslaved, but only “the others.” Put bluntly, Jews taded in Christian slaves; Christians did not trade in Jewish slaves. Suffice it to say that if Poles had been responsible in the past for enslaving Jews, that fact would be forever held against them and would doubtless be a prominent feature of Polish-Jewish relations.

As an Israeli scholar points out, slaveholding—particularly of females of Slavic origin—in Jewish households in the urban centres of the Ottoman Empire was widespread from the 16th to the 19th centuries, and Jews were involved in the slave trade as dealers. Female slaves were forced to cohabit with Jewish men, serving as their concubines and bearing them legitimate children who were raised as Jews. Marriages entered into manumitted slaves who converted to Judaism were also common. Since Ottoman Jews did not possess or trade in Jewish slaves (except to ransom Jewish captives), there is a significant religious dimension to the holding of Christians as slaves. Descendants of Marranos in like circumstances are actively targeted by Jews to this day to return to the Jewish fold. See Yaron Ben-Naeh, “Blond, Tall, With Honey-Colored Eyes: Jewish Ownership of Slaves in the Ottoman Empire,” *Jewish History*, vol. 20, nos. 3–4 (December 2006): 316–32.

²⁹ Pogonowski, *Jews in Poland*, 159; Bernard D. Weinryb, *The Jews of Poland: A Social and Economic History of the Jewish Community in Poland from 1100 to 1800* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1972), 9–10.

estate managers, tax-collectors, or merchant capitalists, the face of the victimizer was Jewish. Peasant outbursts directed at Jews [and also magnates—*M.P.*] in the form of pogroms were more often than not fomented by perceived Jewish exploitation. The Jew could not escape awareness of his position, but rather than question the social and political order, he unconsciously justified that position by labelling the lower classes as subhuman, as animals. The occasional violence on the part of the peasants only served to reinforce this image.³⁰

Social interaction between Christians and Jews was, until the modern period, minimal and superficial. For most Poles and Jews it simply did not exist. Almost all dealings were on the economic level. The non-Jews

were seen by the Jews primarily instrumentally, as the source of *parnose* (livelihood) through everyday economic exchange. However, as with the peasants, their everyday interaction, purely functional as it was, together with their differences in appearance, language, and customs, reinforced rather than diminished the sense of ‘otherness’ felt by the Jews towards their economic partners. Underlying this sense among the Jews of the otherness of the peasants were feelings of scorn and suspicion. But if similar feelings among the peasants towards the Jews were prompted by their perception of the latter as endowed with characteristics beyond their grasp, the Jewish perceptions of peasants were the reverse: they represented the uncivilized and uncultured. The term *goy*, referring generally to non-Jews, was actually used to denote ‘peasant’ in the everyday Yiddish idiom across the Polish territories. It denoted people and things that were backward, ignorant, driven by unrestrained animal instincts and physical aggression—everything that a Jew did not want to and should not be. This value-laden distinction was inculcated in Jewish children from infancy, and their sense of superiority emerged even more forcefully from Jewish religious convictions. Because of their cult of icons, statues, and other ‘graven images’, the Jews held Christians to be idolatrous, especially the rituals observed by the peasantry.³¹

Religion had an enormous impact on how the Jews perceived non-Jews, and vice versa. According to Jewish scholars,

³⁰ Jonathan Krasner, “Constructing Collective Memory: The Re-envisioning of Eastern Europe as Seen Through American Jewish Textbooks,” in *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry*, Vol. 19: *Polish-Jewish Relations in North America*, ed. by Mieczysław M. Biskupski and Antony Polonsky (Oxford and Portland, Oregon: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2007), 229–55, here at 241.

³¹ Ewa Morawska, “Polish-Jewish Relations in America, 1880–1940: Old Elements, New Configurations,” in *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry*, vol. 19 (2007), 75. Morawska goes on to argue that the negative attitude towards peasants was “accompanied by pity for their wretched conditions.” This is an unwarranted generalization for which she presents no persuasive evidence. While this sentiment is sometimes mentioned in Jewish memoirs, it was that of some individuals and could not be said to be widely held or representative of Jewish attitudes.

As Gershon Hundert has put it, ‘the norms of both the Church and the Synagogue were strongly segregationist in intent, and ... each faith taught that the other was spiritually and morally inferior’. The preacher and moralist Tsevi Hirsh Koidonover (d. 1712), in his *Kav hayashar*, argued strongly against any contact with the society of non-Jews, which he saw as ‘full of idolatry, violence, and drunkenness’. Christians, lacking divinely taught ethics, were in the process of sliding steadily into chaos. A Jew could best save his soul by avoiding all contact with them. Historically, Ashkenazi Jewry’s categorization of Christians as idol worshippers had indeed created numerous legal barriers to Christian-Jewish interaction, at least from the Jewish perspective.³²

Based on a study of Hasidic sources, Jewish scholar M. J. Rosman provides the following historical perspective on this topic:

Alongside the belief in the non-Jews’ demonic nature and the fear and mistrust of Gentile society, some of these tales hint at a very different evaluation of the theological-moral standing of the non-Jews. According to Jacob Katz, given the religious rivalry between Judaism and Christianity, the members of each group adopted a double standard of morality towards each other. There was no religious rationale for treating outsiders according to ethical norms. Jews frowned on mistreating or cheating non-Jews not on moral grounds but from enlightened self-interest: such behaviour would bring Jews into disrepute and result in sanctions or even violence being brought to bear against them.³³

Another scholar described Hasidic views in the following rather diplomatic terms:

The views of the Hasidism about Jews and Gentiles were a direct outcome of what Mahler (1985: 16) calls the ‘Weltanschauung of the Cabbalah’. In this view the Jewish people were not simply the chosen, but were the only people of God: ‘Israel and the Torah and the Holy one, blessed be He, are one’ (quoted in Mahler 1985: 16). According to the *Midrash*, the whole world was created only for the sake of the Jews. ...

The positive expression of this attitude was the principle of unconditional solidarity of the Jews and the idea of love of the Jewish people, which became a main theme in the stories and legends of the prominent Hasidic rebbes in the first half of the nineteenth

³² Antony Polonsky, “Introduction,” in *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry*, vol. 15 (Oxford and Portland, Oregon: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2002), 52. See also Edward Fram, *Ideals Face Reality: Jewish Law and Life in Poland, 1550–1655* (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1997), 28.

³³ M. J. Rosman, “A Minority Views the Majority: Jewish Attitudes Towards the Polish Lithuanian Commonwealth and Interaction with Poles,” in *Polin: A Journal of Polish-Jewish Studies*, vol. 4 (Oxford: Basil Blackwell for the Institute for Polish-Jewish Studies, 1989), 37.

century. At the same time, an unavoidable consequence of this position was a negative attitude toward the 'lesser' Gentiles, who were viewed with suspicion and held in contempt. As Rebbe Mendel of Rymanów ... put it, 'A Gentile does not have a heart, although he has an organ that resembles the heart'(quoted in Mahler 1985: 17). The symbol for the Gentile in the consciousness of the Hasidim was the brutal landowner or the enslaved boorish peasant.³⁴

That author continues:

We have seen that the Jews strongly marked themselves off from the Poles. The distinction between Jews (*yidn*) and non-Jews (*goyim*) reflected the Jewish fear of Gentile intrusion, as well as the Jewish disdain for the Gentile world. In communal and personal matters Jews kept strictly to Jews. Any involvement with Poles beyond what was strictly necessary (like work or commerce) was regarded as improper, since this would blur the community boundary and endanger the traditional Jewish way of life."³⁵

Historian Bernard Weinryb makes the point that the negative images Jews held of Christians were based on ideas "about the superiority of [their own] community, the chosenness of the Jews in comparison with the idolatry (paganism) of the others." In ancient times, Jews were required to keep their distance from idol-worshippers. During the Middle Ages, rabbis insisted that those laws be applied to Christian practices even though they recognized differences between the idol-worshippers of ancient Greece and Rome and the Christians of medieval Europe.³⁶ Significantly, 18th century Polish scholarship was well aware of Jewish beliefs and practices, and of the writings of the Jerusalem Talmud which, as we shall see, was replete with ugly and hateful references to Jesus, Christians, and Christian beliefs.³⁷ For God's "Chosen People" the "rival" Polish messianistic movement which developed in the 19th century proved to be particularly unpalatable and met with scorn. Unlike the situation in countries where Jews formed a tiny presence, given their large numbers in Poland they felt little or no compunction to rein in their negative feelings toward the surrounding population.

One can find the same theme of *mutual* religious-based animosity in some memoirs from the interwar period. Leon Berkowicz, the son of a successful timber merchant from Baranowicze, writes:

³⁴ Rosa Lehmann, *Symbiosis and Ambivalence: Poles and Jews in a Small Galician Town* (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2001), 93.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 124.

³⁶ Bernard Weinryb, *The Jews of Poland: A Social and Economic History of the Jewish Community in Poland from 1100 to 1800* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1972), as quoted in Facing History and Ourselves, *The Jews of Poland* (Brookline, Massachusetts: Facing History and Ourselves Foundation, 1998), 40.

³⁷ Judith Kalik, "Polish Attitudes towards Jewish Spirituality in the Eighteenth Century," in *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry*, vol. 15 (2002): 80–81.

The deep intolerance and hatred was caused by the poverty and ignorance which prevailed for centuries, and to no less a degree by the clergymen of all three denominations [i.e., Catholic, Eastern Orthodox and Jewish] who spent more time emphasising the superiority of their own creed and the certainty of preferential treatment by the Almighty than they did in teaching the Ten Commandments or the love and compassion of Jesus Christ.

Many religious practices and traditions associated with Judaism seemed strange to Christians, just as Christian rituals did to Jews. Some Jewish customs became known to Christians, and vice versa.

The practices surrounding Tisha Ba'av were much more to my liking. ... this holiday was a mournful one indeed. Commemorating as it did the destruction of the first and second temples in Jerusalem ... Jews generally observed Tisha Ba'av by denying themselves anything that gave pleasure, by debasing themselves, sitting, for example, not on chairs but on special low boxes, placing ashes in their hair, and not eating or drinking for twenty-four hours. Throughout the entire day my father wore torn clothes specially set aside for this time. Understand this and try to explain why it was that children were allowed to do what they did.

At this time of year [summer] a certain kind of prickly thistle grew abundantly in our region, which we proceeded to collect. In short order these thistles were being used as missiles within the synagogue, children taking aim at the long beards of the congregants and then throwing them. When accurately thrown they became entangled in the beards and were very hard to remove. Here were men absorbed in mournful prayer forced to be on the alert for annoying thistles aimed at them! Women were considered to be off limits, but not young girls. It was also "permitted" to sneak up on a girl and rub a thistle into her hair. Once in, it was not easily removed; at times girls were forced to cut off parts of their hair. ...

You would think such disruption would tax the limits of everyone's patience, but there was more. On Tisha Ba'av in the synagogue, children threw bricks! In the midst of solemn prayers, bricks were sent skidding along the floor! Naturally when things got out of hand people complained bitterly, but never did anyone insist that such doings ought not to be tolerated. It was accepted; it was tradition.

The year-round pieces [of dishes and utensils] remained in our house, but they no longer belonged to us. As was the custom, they were temporarily "sold," together with the *chumetz* food [i.e., food forbidden during Passover], to a non-Jew, a handshake usually

confirming the transaction. With the *chumetz* dishes, utensils, and food no longer ours, the laws of Passover were thus upheld.

So much did matzohs symbolize Passover that we used them as gifts for Polish friends, who considered them treats—ironically enough, given the ancient Christian charge that Jews baked their matzohs with blood from Christian children. I was the one selected by my father to deliver these gift matzohs, usually two or three packed together. It was customary for Jewish children to bring matzohs for their favorite teachers in public school.

All this might have been all right if the town's dentist had not been a woman. That in itself was sufficient to keep all the orthodox Jews away from her door.³⁸

Nonetheless, there as in most places, day-to-day relations between Christians and Jews remained proper and civil.³⁹ At the Polish state-run high school Berkowicz attended,

³⁸ Salsitz, *A Jewish Boyhood in Poland*, 65, 163, 164, 177.

³⁹ Leon Berk's account set out below is by no means an isolated one. Samuel Lipa Tennenbaum, from Złoczów, recalls: "I entered *gimnazjum* in 1920, graduating in 1927 ... The teachers were Poles, except for a single Ukrainian, and a Jew ... grading remained fair and Jewish students were treated equally with Poles. Zloczow [Złoczów] was represented in the Sejm by its mayor, an attorney, Dr. Moszynski [Moszyński]. A liberal who associated with all, he forged good relations between Poles and Jews and between Poles and Ukrainians. ... When we were in *gimnazjum*, my future wife and I associated mostly with gentiles. I played tennis and volleyball and was one of two or three Jews who exercised at the Polish sports association Sokol [Sokół], which ordinarily did not admit Jews." See Samuel Lipa Tennenbaum, *Zloczow Memoir* (New York: Shengold, 1986), 37, 46, 54. The notion that Jews in interwar Poland were incessantly terrorized or harassed by their Polish neighbours has little basis in fact. As one historian who studied Polish-Jewish relations points out, "Recent studies on the issue of coexistence between Jews and Poles conclude that, while it is true that Jews and Poles periodically found themselves in confrontation, most of the time they lived in co-operative symbiosis." See Rosa Lehmann, "Jewish Patrons and Polish Clients: Patronage in a Small Galician Town," in *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry*, vol. 17 (2004): 153–69, at 168. There are many reports attesting to generally correct day-to-day relations between Poles and Jews, particularly in small towns and the countryside where relations were generally amicable.

Rachela Walshaw describes a rather typical small town in central Poland by the name of "Wonchok," probably Wąchock, near Starachowice, (Polish names are typically misspelled in Holocaust literature, especially in memoirs), where Polish-Jewish co-existence was proper, but reserved: "The community was clearly divided between Poles and Jews. There were about 500 Polish families and only about one hundred Jewish ones, but we all lived and worked in relative peace. There were no ghettos then. Jews could live anywhere in town, but generally chose to live together ... among their own kind ... Though I went to school with Christians, my knowledge of the private workings of the Christian world was limited. The Catholic priests who ran our school were strict but fair and excused us from participating in their prayers. On the whole, my gentile classmates were a decent lot with whom we remained distant but friendly. We were not invited to their homes; nor were they invited to ours." Rachela and Sam Walshaw, *From Out of the Firestone: A Memoir of the Holocaust* (New York: Shapolsky Publishers, 1991), 7–8. Barbara Krakowski (now Stimler), the daughter of a small textile shop owner in Aleksandrów Kujawski, relates: "I attended a nursery and private school supervised by Christian nuns, where I was the only Jewish child. I had a large circle of friends, and am still in touch with the few of them who attended my school." See Wendy Whitworth, ed., *Survival: Holocaust Survivors Tell Their Story* (Lound Hall, Bothamsall, Retford, Nottinghamshire: Quill Press in association with The Aegis Institute, 2003), 363. A Jew from Sierpc stated that the Jews lived in peace with their Polish neighbours. When a motion came before the town council in 1929 to change the market day to a Saturday, five Polish councillors voted with the five Jewish councillors to defeat it. See Leon Gongola, "O prawach i ludziach," *Polska* (Warsaw), no. 7 (1971): 170–72. A Jew from the village of Czerwony Bór near Łomża recalled: "we Jews always got along well with the local villagers." He also recalls open displays of solidarity on the part of Christian acquaintances. See Rivka and Israel Teyer, eds., *The Red Forest: As Narrated by Izhak Shumowitz* (Raanana, Israel: Docostory, 2005?), 45, 74. A Jew from Przytoczno, a

small village in Lublin province, does not recall any ethnic-based conflicts between Jews and non-Jews. In elementary school he was not treated any worse in terms of grades and discipline than Polish students, and he remembers warmly many of his teachers and the parish priest as well as the local bishop, all of whom treated Jews with respect. See Michał Rudawski, *Mój obcy kraj?* (Warsaw: TU, 1996), 31–32, 42–43. A Jew from Stróza, a village near Kraśnik (about 50 kilometres from Lublin), recalls: “It must be stressed again that notwithstanding occasional misunderstandings, we lived in peace, often in friendship, with our Polish neighbors. Despite the fact that we were only four Jewish families in Stroza, we never knew of any bitter quarrels.” See Sam Edelman, *Tzadikim in Sodom (Righteous Gentiles): Memoir of a Survivor of World War II* (Toronto: North American Press Limited, 1990), 19. In nearby Izbica, a small town whose population was almost exclusively Jewish, the 3,600 Jewish residents lived in relative harmony with the town’s 200 Christians and those from the surrounding countryside: “We lived peacefully with our Catholic neighbors. True, once in a while anti-Semitic slogans like ‘Jews to Palestine’ and ‘Don’t buy from Jews’ appeared in the post office, but no one took them seriously. Catholic and Jewish schoolchildren kept mainly to themselves. About half of the students were Jewish and half Catholic, for though the town was over 95 percent Jewish, the children from all the outlying villages attended the town’s elementary school. Inside the classroom there was no visible antagonism.” See Thomas Toivi Blatt, *From the Ashes of Sobibor: A Story of Survival* (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1997), 10. In Żółkiewka, another nearby town, according to Itzhak Lichtman relations between Poles and Jews had also been proper before the war: “We didn’t feel anti-Semitism; Jews and Poles enjoyed a friendly relationship.” See Miriam Novtich, ed., *Sobibor: Martyrdom and Revolt* (New York: Holocaust Library, 1980), 80. In Strzyżów near Hrubieszów, the author of a memoir did not recall any outbursts of violence against Jews: “The fact is that in our little town Jews and non-Jews lived side-by-side in a restless peace ... I had numerous friends, both Jews and non-Jews.” See Rose Toren, *A New Beginning* (New York: Shengold Publishers, 1997), 13. For reports from other towns, see Jacob Biber, ed., *The Triumph of the Spirit: Ten Stories of Holocaust Survivors* (San Bernardino, California: The Borgo Press, 1994). One Jew recalls: “I was born in 1917, in Gniwosow [Gniwosów near Radom] ... My home town was a small Jewish shtetl, with a population of approximately 5,000 Poles and 2,500 Jews. Most of the Poles worked in agriculture, and the Jews were artisans and maintained small businesses. ... Although most of the Poles were friendly towards us, there remained a minority who were anti-Semites.” *Ibid.*, 71. Another Jew writes: “I was born in 1922, in Działoszyce [Działoszyce near Kraków] ... Our town was eighty percent Jewish—business people, artisans, and other workers, and mostly Orthodox. ... The Poles in our town had never been anti-Semitic, and even spoke Yiddish with us. We generally lived in friendly cooperation, the Polish people working together with Jews in the various trades.” *Ibid.*, 91. In the small town of Przeclaw near Mielec, “The two people, the Jews and Christians lived together peacefully. For many years it even had a Jewish vice-mayor ... and a few councilors.” See Avraham Spielman, “The Townlet Przeclaw,” in H. Harshoshanim, ed., *Radomysl Rabati ve-ha-seviva: Sefer yizkor* (Tel Aviv: Former Residents of Radomysl and Surroundings in Israel, 1965), posted online in English translation at www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/Radomysl/Radomysl.html. Leon Zalman reminisced about Szczekociny, a predominantly Jewish town of 5,000 people near Częstochowa: “On one side of the Pilica lived the Jews; on the other there was a mixed population and a large church. The Jews had two synagogues. Jews and Christians lived side by side in mutual tolerance. ... Almost all the businesses and taverns surrounding the square were Jewish, with the exception of Kaletta, the large, imposing restaurant. The Jews didn’t usually go there because it wasn’t kosher. When they had something to celebrate ... they preferred their own establishments. ... The teachers liked me ... One Sabbath, to disturb the service and get attention, some young [Jewish] socialists threw a white dove into the synagogue. The rabbis were outraged. ... I had a large circle of friends, among them many non-Jews. ... The young Jews did not feel that the shtetl was a ghetto. We felt no differences between Jews and Christians, except on market day, when perhaps a farmer who always mistrusted Jews felt that he had been overcharged. But that kind of thing could also happen among Christians or among Jews. We did not feel that we were discriminated against; ... In school we associated widely with Polish Christians.” See Leon Zelman, *After Survival: One Man’s Mission in the Cause of Memory* (New York and London: Holmes & Meier, 1998), 2–16. Jewish survivors from Jaśliska, a village near Krosno, uniformly attest to proper relations between the two communities: “One hardly noticed anti-Semitism amongst the people. The relationships between Jews and non-Jews were rather good and the trading contacts were based on mutual trust. Until the outbreak of [World War One] there were no Christian shops in Jaśliska or in the neighbouring villages. Also the officials, priests and teachers from the villages bought in Jewish shops. We did not experience anything like anti-Jewish harassment. The good relationship between Jews and non-Jews gave rise to a steady material prosperity among the Jews. Although there was one cooperative shop run by Christians in which agricultural products were sold, there was no question of [real] competition [for the Jews].” See Rosa Lehmann, *Symbiosis and Ambivalence: Poles and Jews in a Small Galician Town* (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2001), 185–86. Good relations also extended to the village priest: “it is said that father Rapała, the late priest of Jaśliska, was a fluent Yiddish speaker. Among the Polish as well as the Jewish informants, father Rapała, was known to have been on good terms with the Jews. Polish informants mentioned the amicable conversations of the priest with local Jewish residents. The Jewish informant Josko S., for instance, recalled the evening walks of his father with the priest. While walking, both men would discuss all kinds of subjects. Harmonious contacts between the ‘learned’ priest and ‘lay’ Jews were customary in other towns and villages in the region as well. Pearl O. [from the nearby village of Królik Polski] recalled the long walks and discussions of her father with the priest. She also remembered the weekly meetings at her parents’ home, to which all members of the

village elite were invited, among them the priest and teachers of the local primary school.” Ibid., 98. Man Elchahan, 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 Shtetls, Brańsk and Ejszyszki: An Overview of Polish-Jewish Relations in Northeastern Poland during World War II*, Part One (Toronto and Chicago: The Polish Educational Foundation in North America, 1998), 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 Nechama Shmueli-Schmusch, ed., *Zabludow: Dapim mi-tokh yisker-bukh* (Tel Aviv: The Zabludow Community in Israel, 1987), posted on the Internet in English translation at <www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/Zabludow/Zabludow.html>. In the village of Drobin, northeast of Płock, a Jewish survivor who was taught by his father to respect Poles recalls: “My sister was a straight A student ... Her Polish was the best in the class, in which there were only two other Jewish students. ... She was selected by her classmates and her teacher to read a poem for a play ...” See Abraham D. Feffer, *My Shtetl Drobin: A Saga of a Survivor* (Toronto: n.p., 1990), 9. Mendel Berman, the president of the Lomazer Landsmanschaft in America, underscored that, in Łomazy near Biała Podlaska, “A good relationship of coexistence prevailed between Jews and Poles, even if some deplorable incidents occurred [sic] from time to time, but such mishaps used to pass quickly.” See Yitzhak Alperovitz, ed., *The Lomaz Book: A Memorial to the Jewish Community of Lomaz* (Tel Aviv: The Lomaz Society in Israel, and the Lomaz Society in the United States of America, 1994), 68–69. John (Jan) Damski, a Pole who was awarded by Yad Vashem, recalled a telling episode that occurred in his home town of Solec Kujawski, near Bydgoszcz, where there was just one Jewish family, the Dalmans, who had three sons: “All three brothers belonged to our gymnastic organization, the Polish Falcons. ... One day a fellow from the district organization came to our meeting and made a fuss about Jews being in our group. The oldest of the three Dalman brothers stood up and told him that the Jews were just as patriotic as the Poles, they had fought for Poland too, and other such sentiments. It didn’t take very long before the local organization just fell apart. First, all the teachers from our little town who belonged to this club resigned. They didn’t say it was in protest—they were just no longer interested. My brother and I dropped out of the organization, and so did many of our friends; half of the membership resigned. Nobody said, ‘I’m quitting because the district officer made an anti-Semitic speech.’ We just didn’t like what was happening; we simply did not see any difference between us and the Jews.” See “John Damski: Polish Rescuer,” Internet: <www.humboldt.edu/~rescuers/book/damski>. Mala Goldrat Brandsdorfer (née Liss) of Bolesławiec, a small town near Wieluń, recalled: “I remember growing up in Bolesławiec very happy. The town had about 500 families, with about 2500 people. Jews made up about a quarter of the population. There weren’t many of the problems between the Jews and the Christians that there were in the larger cities. We lived and traded together in peace. There were some Poles in our town who were openly anti-Semitic, but very few.” See Mala Brandsdorfer, as told to Louis Brandsdorfer, *The Bleeding Sky: My Mother’s Recollections of the Shoah*, Internet: <<http://www.brandsdorfer.com/podcast/>>, Chapter 2. For additional examples see Annamaria Orla-Bukowska, “Shtetl Communities: Another Image,” in *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry*, vol. 8 (1994): 103–12.

The same held true in Poland’s Eastern Borderlands. In Kopaczówka, a village near Rożyszcze, in Volhynia, “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 Gershon Zik, ed., *Rożyszcze: My Old Home* [Rożyszcze Memorial Book] (Tel Aviv: The Rozhishcher Committee in Israel, 1976), 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.” 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 Ariel Machnes and Rina Klinov, eds., *Darkness and Desolation: In Memory of the Communities of Brasław, Dubene, Jaisi, Jod, Kisłowszczyzna, 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), 615. In Olkieni, 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 Shmuel Spector, ed., *Lost Jewish Worlds: The Communities of Grodno, Lida, Olkieni, Vishay*

(Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1996), 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 Radun to Dowgalishok 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 Aviel, *A Village Named Dowgalishok*, 18–19. In Podwołoczyska, in Tarnopol province, "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." On the other hand, "The relationship with the Ukrainians in the town was non-existent. There certainly were no friendly relations between them." See Dr. Y. Gilson, "Podwołoczyska, Part IV," in *Podwołoczyska and Its Surroundings* (Internet: <www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/Podvolochisk/Podvolocisk.html>), English translation of Zunyu Levinson and Dov Brayer, eds., *Sefer Podwołoczyska ve-ha-sevivah* (Haifa: Podwołoczyska Community in Israel, 1988). Two Jews from Drohobycz, Alfred Schreyer and Abraham Schwartz, attest to very cordial relations between Poles and Jews in that city, as well as with the Polish Catholic clergy. In their state high school, where there were Jewish and Ukrainian teachers as well as Polish ones, Polish and Jewish children got along splendidly: they formed many friendships, played together, and even visited each other's places of worship. See Agata Tuszyńska, "Uczniowie Schulza," *Kultura* (Paris), no. 4 (1993): 33, 39; Wiesław Budzyński, *Miasto Schulza* (Warsaw: Prószyński i S-ka, 200), 352.

Jews and Poles enjoyed good relations in many larger towns (small and medium-sized cities) as well. Christine Damski (née Rozen) from the city of Zamość recalled: "I always knew I was Jewish; our family observed Passover and other holidays. In Zamosc everyone accepted us as equals. Growing up, my girlfriends were both Polish and Jewish. At my Polish high school about ten of the girls in my class were Jewish, but I was the only one in the entire class to get 'Excellent' in Polish language; no Polish girl received that grade. Really, I didn't feel different while I was in high school." See Ellen Land Weber, *To Save a Life: Stories of Holocaust Rescue* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 277–78. Melita Huppert, a Jewish woman from Wadowice, the home town of Pope John Paul II, recalls: "It was a very nice relationship between Jews and Christians. It was a peaceful co-existence." See Laurie Goodstein, "How Boyhood Friend Aided Pope With Israel," *New York Times*, March 29, 1998. Several biographies of the Pontiff detail friendly Polish-Jewish relations in Wadowice, for example, D'Arcy O'Brien, *The Hidden Pope: The Untold Story of a Lifelong Friendship That Is Changing the Relationship between Catholics and Jews* (New York: Daybreak Books/Rodale, 1998), 51–54. According to Felicia Haberfeld, from nearby Oświęcim, where the Germans would later build their infamous concentration and death camp known as Auschwitz, Jews and Gentiles also got along well: "It was a very special town." See Abigail Goldman, "Elderly widow dreams of 'house for humanity,'" *Toronto Star*, April 2, 1998 (reprint from the *Los Angeles Times*). Another resident of Oświęcim agrees with that assessment: "But non-Jews and Jews had a good relationship. You didn't see any graffiti ..." See Jake Geldwert, *From Auschwitz to Ithaca: The Transnational Journey of Jake Geldwert* (Bethesda, Maryland: CDL Press, 2002), 5. Oswald Rufeisen, who grew up in Bielsko-Biała and attended a Polish state high school in Żywiec, did not remember feeling discriminated against or being abused. He was fond of his classmates and thinks they reciprocated in kind. In this school the Jewish and Catholic children were taught religion separately, by a rabbi and a priest. See Nechama Tec, *In the Lion's Den: The Life of Oswald Rufeisen* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 10. Another Jew, whose parents were Jews and atheists, was enrolled in a Catholic high school run by priests where he was exempted from religious teaching. He states that he "was never personally beaten up as a 'dirty Yid.'" 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). Calel Perechodnik who grew up in Otwock near Warsaw, where he belonged to a Zionist organization, claims that before the war he never encountered any manifestations of anti-Semitism. See István Deák, *Essays on Hitler's Europe* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2001), 164. Sol Pluda, a Jew from Pultusk, writes: "We had Polish-Christian neighbors, friends, and customers, and relations between the Jewish and Christian citizens of Pultusk were not strained." See Carole Garbuny Vogel, ed., *We Shall Not Forget!: Memories of the Holocaust*, Second edition (Lexington, Massachusetts: Temple Isaiah, 1995), 376. A memoir from Zduńska Wola, near Łódź, states: "Although my hometown was not paradise, there was mostly peace among Jews, ethnic Germans, and Poles. I don't remember much overt anti-Semitism ... I remember the Polish and German leaders of the town reassuring us that nothing could possibly happen in Zduńska Wola. 'Our people live and work together,' they said. 'Why should things be disturbed? No one would benefit from that.'" See Isaac Neuman with Michael Palencia-Roth, *The Narrow Bridge: Beyond the Holocaust* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 15–17.

True, incidents did occur, especially in the larger centres, but even there they were not the norm in day-to-day

dealings between Poles and Jews. Most Jews who lived in predominantly Polish or mixed neighbourhoods got along well with their Christian neighbours. Manya Reich Mandelbaum, for example, reports “a good relationship between the Poles and Jews in Kraków.” See her testimony in Joseph J. Preil, ed., *Holocaust Testimonies: European Survivors and American Liberators in New Jersey* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2001), 88. For many Jews who lived amidst Poles in Warsaw (and not in Jewish enclaves) relations with non-Jews were no different than in Western European countries or North America at the time. A Jew from Warsaw recalled: “I was transferred to a public school at 68 Nowolipki Street where most of the teachers and students were Jewish because it was located in the Jewish section of the city. ... It became my ambition to become a student of the Marshal Józef Piłsudski School of Graphics in Warsaw. ... It was very difficult to be accepted to this school. ... There were three other Jews in my class besides me ... Sending me to such a school involved great financial sacrifice for my parents. ... In addition, a Polish musician named Bronisław Bykowski, who was very devoted to my father, pawned his and his wife’s wedding rings to help us out. ... the atmosphere at the Marshal Piłsudski School was liberal and tolerant based on ethical and democratic principles. I enjoyed a warm and kind relationship with the director of the school, Stanisław Dąbrowski, and many of the professors and instructors, which included both Poles and some Germans. ... They made no distinction between Christians and Jews. ... My relationships with my classmates were cordial, although we never mixed socially outside school.” See Morris Wyszogrod, *A Brush with Death: An Artist in the Death Camps* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999), 18–20. Bernard Goldstein, a Socialist who worked in a slaughterhouse in Warsaw, recalled: “Jews and Poles worked side by side and the relations between them were good, despite the fact that both were strongly nationalistic, unruly, and impulsive. They had frequent conflicts over working conditions, but they always managed to settle them in comradely fashion. They drank and played cards together, living in friendly harmony.” See Bernard Goldstein, *The Stars Bear Witness* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1950), 8. Another Jew from Warsaw recalled: “When Grandfather Yakov and I came to the village [of Siekierki, just outside the city], we would enter a peasant hut where we were welcomed with respect and genuine warmth. I felt comfortable with the peasants. Grandfather spoke spicy Polish, without any Jewish slang or idiom. ... We lived in a working-class quarter where there weren’t many Jewish families. ... There were few Jewish children my age in the neighborhood, so I played mostly with Gentile children who came to my house. We’d play soccer, go down to the Wisła [Wisła] River and enjoy the fresh air, swim, and row. Later, when I went to the Jewish school, the Gentile children used to tease the Jewish children on their way to and from school, so we would walk in a group and felt safer. We didn’t run away from Gentile hoodlums but fought back with blows and stones. ... [My parents] made their living running a store that sold paint, kerosene, building materials, and haberdashery. Ninety-nine percent of their customers were Poles, who got along well with my parents ... When Mother went into labor, I was sent to fetch the Polish midwife. ... I started my formal schooling in the *heder* ... But I soon quarrelled with the teacher and ran away from the *heder*. The teacher, who felt responsible, sent some children to look for me and bring me back. When they followed me to my street, I sicked my Polish friends on them.” See Simha Rotem (“Kazik”), *Memoirs of a Warsaw Ghetto Fighter* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1994), 2–5. A young woman from a Jewish family who moved to Lwów from Ukraine after the Bolshevik Revolution recalled: “Our first residence was in an ethnically mixed neighborhood where Jews and Gentiles lived side by side without incident or any apparent enmity. ... In the late 1920s, we moved out of the cramped flat on Piekarska Street to take up residence in an apartment building at 51 Zyblikiewicza Street. ... Our new neighborhood, like the one we had moved out of, was ethnically diverse, with Jews and Gentiles, and Poles, Russians, and Ukrainians living together in harmony. ... We got along well enough with the Gentiles, but we didn’t socialize with them. A few polite words of greeting usually marked the extent of our dealings with each other. My parents didn’t socialize with Polish Jews either. There was no friction between Polish and Russian Jews, but little effort was made by either group to get to know the other. My parents kept to their own kind, Russian immigrants who had fled Bolshevik oppression.” See Lala Fishman and Steven Weingartner, *Lala’s Story: A Memoir of the Holocaust* (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1997), 42, 47–48. Uri Lichter, whose family owned a prosperous business in Lwów, recalled: “The Prachtels, the Swirskis, and others, all Polish and Ukrainian professionals, high civil servants, army officers and businessmen, were our steady customers. They liked to do business with Uri Lichter and Family. ... We had all co-existed peacefully with Polish and Ukrainian families, many of them were good customers and gracious acquaintances.” See Uri Lichter, *In the Eye of the Storm: A Memoir of Survival Through the Holocaust* (New York: Holocaust Library, 1987), 24, 38.

At a scholarly conference on this topic held in Radom in December 1998, many examples of peaceful coexistence of Poles and Jews, especially in small towns, were brought to light. Feliks Tych, the director of the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw, expressed the view that on the whole, despite the growing economic competition and social radicalization of the 1930s, Polish-Jewish relations remained proper. The main bone of contention was the economic field. In Rzeszów, for example, where there was good cooperation in the city council under its Polish mayor and Jewish vice-mayor, there was fairly fierce competition (mostly verbal) between the fledgling Polish merchant class and the entrenched Jewish merchant class, who did not wish to yield its domination over the local economy. See Zbigniew K. Wójcik, *Rzeszów w latach drugiej wojny światowej: Okupacja i konspiracja 1939–1944–1945* (Rzeszów and Kraków: Instytut Europejskich Studiów Społecznych w Rzeszowie, and Towarzystwo Sympatyków Historii w Krakowie, 1998), 162. Characteristically, Jews who didn’t personally experience harassment often claim that it happened elsewhere. Felicia Fuksman, who hails from the large industrial city of Łódź, explains her lack of problems to the fact that she “lived in a much bigger town. In the smaller towns those things happened. But I did not experience this.” See the account of

nobody was handicapped because of his origin or his religion. The Jewish boys excelled academically, but if they were usually first in maths and science they were nearly always last in sports. Physical education was a low priority in Jewish upbringing. Somehow, I was an exception and...the sports-master always gave me top marks. ... I was very proud when the captain from the 78th Polish infantry regiment asked me to join their soccer team and play for them in Wilno ... I had two Christian friends at school ... Our relationship was based on mutual respect and understanding. On a few occasions I went to their homes and they came to mine; I had the impression that the parents of both sides raised their eyebrows.⁴⁰

Among more traditional Jews, however, interaction was carefully guarded and openness to non-Jews was rare to the “Other,” as was the case in Kolbuszowa, except for those few Jewish professionals who broke out of the confines of the accepted social norms.

In this small town of ours we lived together while we remained separate and apart. Practical necessities brought us into daily contact, but these encounters were specific and brief and rarely produced mutual understanding or respect. We needed each other, often complemented each other, and so there was reason for tolerance; but there was not much incentive for eliminating the barriers that separated us.

Poles dominated the government and administration of Kulbuszowa; Jews operated nearly all of the businesses. The Jews lived largely in and around the marketplace, the Poles in an area known as New Town. Most Poles were devout Catholics, and we Jews followed in the path of orthodox Judaism. ... In look, in dress, in behavior, there was

Felicia Fuksman, Louisiana Holocaust Survivors, The Southern Institute for Education and Research, posted online at <<http://www.tulane.edu/~so-inst/felicia.html>>. Yet, Eva Galler, who hails from the small town of Oleszyce, where she wasn't afraid to venture out of her home, maintains that the problems occurred in the “bigger cities” but not in her town. See the account of Eva Galler, Louisiana Holocaust Survivors, The Southern Institute for Education and Research, posted online at <<http://www.tulane.edu/~so-inst/eva.html>>.

According to one historian, bonds between Poles and Jews were strongest in small villages where Jews lived among Poles and not in isolation:

Among other things, Jews here forsook the strict Orthodoxy—impractical in rural life—of those in town. ... Less hindered by the social control in town, Jews and Christians in a village were guided by a sense of belonging to it, and by their own needs and those of their local compatriots.

The non-Jewish peasants valued their Jewish equals as good, hard-working people not unlike them; it was only natural that the Jew and non-Jew in Cieszyna would hitch horses and plough their respective fields together. ... Andrzej Burda described the attitude of the peasants to the Jews from the village of Rzeszotary near Kraków as friendly and says that “in the countryside, good will was something quite natural in the common lives of people bound by the land.” ...

See Annamaria Orla-Bukowska, “Maintaining Borders, Crossing Borders: Social Relationships in the Shtetl,” in *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry*, vol. 17 (2004): 171–95, at 189.

⁴⁰ Leon Berk, *Destined to Live: Memoirs of a Doctor with the Russian Partisans* (Melbourne: Paragon Press, 1992), 3–4.

usually no mistaking the Pole and the Jew. Then, too, Poles all spoke Polish, Jews mostly Yiddish. ...

Acquaintances among Poles and Jews were common, indeed nearly inevitable in a town the size of Kolbuszowa; but close friendships were practically nonexistent. Poles married Poles, and Jewish boys sought out Jewish girls. The one or two exceptions proved the point. Though my father had many Polish acquaintances from business, never were any invited to my sisters' weddings. Practically every Jew in town came, but not any Poles, nor was he ever invited to their celebrations. Organizations like the Scouts, the fire department, and the Kolbuszowa soccer team were exclusively Polish. [Later, as we shall see, the author contradicts himself on this point.—*M.P.*]. No Jew in town had ever set foot in the Catholic church of Kolbuszowa; Catholic priests would not look at Jews, much less talk to them. [Later the author contradicts himself on this point—*M.P.*: "It was my father, for example, who supplied Catholic churches in our area with candles and other items used in various church ceremonies." In another book the same author writes: "Most Jews had absolutely no contact with the Catholic Church. Whenever they saw a priest coming down the street, they would cross over to the other side to avoid him. The Church was deeply mistrusted and was looked upon as the spawning ground of anti-Semitism. How many plots against Jews, we wondered, were hatched in the dark halls of the old stone church buildings on the edge of town?"⁴¹] ... Only on the rarest occasions had a Pole been to the Jewish synagogue. Catholics celebrated their holidays throughout the year and Jews theirs, neither group much concerned with what the other was about.

On each side the separateness was seen as desirable. A coming together, a mixing—no one saw any need for it, any point to it. Best to let things stay the way they were. "We could be spoiled"—that's what Jews said would happen if we mixed with Poles. It could be threatening, could challenge the way it had always been. ... Some Jews, not many, did attempt to move in the other direction. These were the modern men, professionals mostly, who wore their Judaism casually, if at all, and sought out friendships among the Poles. Dr. Leon Anderman was a notable exception ...

Anderman and a few other men mingled almost exclusively with Poles, were invited to their social gatherings, seemed to move among them with ease. ...

There were certain times when Poles and Jews came together in Kolbuszowa. When disaster hit, whether fire or flood, the relief committees were organized, both Poles and Jews did what they could to aid in the recovery. Jews ... participated in the celebration of Polish national holidays; a portion of the festivities took place in the synagogue, where the rabbi offered remarks on the occasion before an audience that included local Polish dignitaries. Always in the municipal government a Pole served as mayor and a Jew as

deputy mayor. The municipal council was equally divided between the two. On the Kolbuszowa all-star soccer team were two Jews (from the town Gymnasium) ...⁴²

In September 1939, the Germans ordered that the Polish troops who fell in the battle for Kolbuszowa be buried together in a mass common grave in the Catholic cemetery. This incensed the Jewish community.

The fact that Jewish soldiers had been so interred was deeply offensive to many of us. When Berish Bilfeld and Leib Lampel told the Germans of our distress, the authorities agreed that we could, if we wished, remove the Jewish dead to our cemetery. For two weeks that is precisely what we did, checking *every body* for identification (ID cards often indicated which soldiers were Jewish, as did circumcision). Altogether we reburied about fifty Jewish soldiers in the Jewish cemetery outside of town.⁴³

Rabbi Byron L. Sherwin of Spertus College of Judaica in Chicago expressed the following thoughts on the complex topic of Polish-Jewish relations:

Similarly, it does not seem to occur to some Jews that manifestations of Polish anti-Semitism might be reactions to Jewish clanishness and parochialism. As a character in Isaac Bashevis Singer's novel *The Manor* puts it: 'How can anyone move into someone else's home, live there in total isolation, and expect not to suffer by it? When you despise your host's god as a tin image, shun his wine as forbidden, condemn his daughter as unclean, aren't you asking to be treated as an unwelcome outsider? It's as simple as that.'⁴⁴

On a recent trip to Poland, Rabbi Sherwin describes the reception he received in a Warsaw synagogue where he was accompanied by his host, a Polish Catholic priest: "A young Orthodox Jew from New York interrupts my prayers, points to the priest, and admonishes me for bringing an 'idol worshipper' into the synagogue. The service ends abruptly. I introduce myself to the rabbi. A Gerer Hasid from Israel, he was born in Poland. His tenure had begun only the year before. ... The rabbi says to me in Hebrew, 'After everything that has happened to us here, you see how they still hate us. They are afraid that we might return.'⁴⁵

⁴¹ Norman Salsitz and Amalie Petranker Salsitz, *Against All Odds: A Tale of Two Survivors* (New York: Holocaust Library, 1990), 249–50.

⁴² Salsitz, *A Jewish Boyhood in Poland*, 241–45.

⁴³ Salsitz, *A Jewish Boyhood in Poland*, 260.

⁴⁴ Byron L. Sherwin, *Sparks Amidst the Ashes: The Spiritual Legacy of Polish Jewry* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 131.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 18. This is not a new phenomenon. Ralph Slovenko, who was active in Polish-Jewish dialogue in the 1980s, reported: "When I would make a trip to Poland, my Jewish friends in the United States would say, 'Why do you go to that anti-Semitic country? That is the land of the Holocaust.' Little or nothing would be said when I would go to

The historical complexities of Polish-Jewish relations, however, escape many Western observers, who claim that all Jews ever wanted was to be accepted with open arms by Polish Christians and absorbed into their society, but were cruelly rejected by them. (Such statements abound even though no inclusive Polish society existed even for Christian Poles until well into the twentieth century.) Sociologist Naomi Rosh White is an exponent of this facile but patently false school of thought:

The absence of Polish-Jewish contact was principally the result of a refusal by Poles to accept Jews into their circles. ... Despite the desire of Jews to become integrated into Polish society, Jews were excluded from non-Jewish friendship groups and from participation in Polish political and bureaucratic life.⁴⁶

However, the testimonies recorded in White's study contradict this simplistic portrayal, as most of the Jews she interviewed expressed strongly defined tendencies of separateness.⁴⁷ Among some German Jews, Polish Jews were known for their intensely nationalistic disposition. Walter Tausk, for example, deplored the "super Zionists" among them who he believed gave Jews a bad name.⁴⁸ Influenced by such views such as those expressed by Naomi Rosh White and many others, non-Jewish historians have also endorsed this skewed picture of Jewish-Christian relations. For example, Eugene Davidson writes: "the Christian populations ... were likely to avoid contact with Jews except for practical purposes like trade."⁴⁹ Not an inkling on his part that there may have been a bit more to the story, and that Jews may have displayed the same attitudes toward Christian Poles.

Many commentators adamantly deny the possibility that there ever was any independent animus on the Jewish side. Mark Raphael Baker, a lecturer in modern Jewish history at the University of Melbourne, writes:

Goyim was the generic term for Gentile used by my father and others of his generation. It was not used with hatred, but in a matter of fact way to describe the world out there, beyond his Polish shtetl, outside the confines of his closely-knit network of survivor-
friendship. His Jewish world was a shell which protected him.⁵⁰

Germany, Austria or the Ukraine, though anti-Semitism in ... Poland pales in comparison to that in those places. ... In comparison to the talk about Polish anti-Semitism, no one talks about German, Austrian, Ukrainian, Lithuanian, or Latvian anti-Semitism. ... Though I am a Jew, I have a Ukrainian name and I believe that it has made me privy to attitudes, when at times I would raise the discussion about Jewry, that I would not otherwise have heard." See Pogonowski, *Jews in Poland*, 162.

⁴⁶ Naomi Rosh White, *From Darkness to Light: Surviving the Holocaust* (Melbourne: Collins Dove, 1988), 67.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 80–81.

⁴⁸ Walter Tausk, *Breslauer Tagebuch, 1933–1940* (Frankfurt am Main: Röderberg Verlag, 1977), entry for May 15, 1936.

⁴⁹ Introduction to Lichter, *In the Eye of the Storm*, 9.

⁵⁰ Mark Raphael Baker, *The Fiftieth Gate: A Journey Through Memory* (Sydney: Flamingo/HarperCollins, 1997), 39.

After laying *all* of the blame for the mutual antagonism on Christians, Jewish-American author Anne Roiphe concedes grudgingly, albeit for a rather specious reason: “It is true that Jews in the privacy of their houses have for centuries taken revenge on the anti-Semitism of their neighbors by portraying them as dumb. Jews have long thought of Poles as less intelligent.”⁵¹ That reality is reflected in the realistic fiction of Isaac Bashevis Singer, who “in story after story ... makes it clear that Jews historically regarded themselves as superior to their Slavic neighbors.”⁵² Unfortunately, that legacy was transposed to North America where it also poisoned Polish-Jewish relations.⁵³

Other historians, who had had first-hand experience, are more cautious in their assessment. Zvi Gitelman, for example, writes:

Perhaps there was antecedent Jewish distrust of Poles or contempt for them, but Polish hostility bred a Jewish reaction of distrust and reciprocated hostility ... But there may have been other sources of Jewish negative attitudes toward Poles. Jews may have regarded Poles (and most other east European peoples) as culturally inferior. ... Religious Jews held that Poles believed in a false and pernicious doctrine.⁵⁴

Paradoxically, anti-assimilationist attitudes were promoted in Poland by Jews who had settled in the United States and Western Europe, even though they would never have advocated the same stance there. Lucy Dawidowicz, who paid an extended visit to Wilno before the war, where most Jews spoke Yiddish

⁵¹ Anne Roiphe, *A Season for Healing: Reflections on the Holocaust* (New York: Summit Books, 1988), 117.

⁵² Thomas S. Gladsky, *Princes, Peasants, and Other Polish Selves: Ethnicity in American Literature* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1992), 207. Surprisingly, the stereotype of the “stupid” Pole even surfaced when Poles put their lives at risk to shelter Jews during the war. As could be expected, living in close quarters could lead to occasional flare-ups between the charges and rescuers. Teresa Prekerowa, who was active in the Żegota organization, recalls: “It was often that Jews told Poles, ‘We are more intelligent than you,’ and it made the Poles crazy. It was a very difficult situation.” See Lawrence N. Powell, *Troubled Memory: Anne Levy, The Holocaust, and David Duke’s Louisiana* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 261.

⁵³ Thomas Gladsky presents an excellent survey of the mean-spirited and often crude stereotypes of Poles that permeate many of the works of fiction of well-known and popular Jewish-American authors such as Saul Bellow, Bernard Malamud, Philip Roth, and Leon Uris. Such books doubtless have had a huge impact on how Polish-Jewish relations are perceived in North America. See Gladsky, *Princes, Peasants, and Other Polish Selves*, 163–220. There exists no parallel phenomenon in Polish literature. Another example of this specious brand of literature is Art Spiegelman’s highly popular Holocaust comic book *Maus* which depicts Poles as bad-tempered, unfeeling pigs who go around saluting in Nazi fashion. Although touted as an educational tool, its style is reminiscent of the Nazi propaganda rag *Der Stürmer*: Poles are invariably brutal bigots, blackmailers and murderers. The use of pigs as symbols of Poles is a lesson that cannot be lost upon the youngest of readers, the very word “pig” being universally used as a term of derision. For Jews, and others, by its very nature a pig is an unclean animal. (An Israeli court found a Jewish woman guilty of racism for putting up posters depicting Islam’s Prophet Mohammad as a pig.) Alan M. Dershowitz is another prominent exponent of a style of writing about Poles that must surely be placed in that broad category of what French-Jewish intellectual Pierre Vidal-Naquet refers to as “the sort of primitive anti-Polish sentiments that too often characterize those whom I shall call ‘professional Jews’.” See Pierre Vidal-Naquet, *The Jews: History, Memory, and the Present* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 182.

⁵⁴ Zvi Gitelman, “Collective Memory and Contemporary Polish-Jewish Relations,” 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), 274–75. Gitelman also states: “Of course, the stereotype of Polish antisemitism—which like *all* stereotypes has truth in it except that it becomes overgeneralized and attributed to each Polish person—itsself breeds resentments against Jews.” *Ibid.*, 285. Gitelman thus concedes that Polish stereotypes concerning Jews are not without foundation in fact.

and knew little, if any, Polish, wrote: “Not knowing Polish, I didn’t get to meet many of those Polish-speaking university-educated Jews. That didn’t bother me, for I had somehow come to believe that they weren’t my kind of people and didn’t live in my kind of world. ... The other Polish speakers whom I met, yet barely knew, I labeled as ‘assimilated,’ even ‘assimilationist,’ that is, advocates of assimilation. Those were a Yiddishist’s pejorative words, darkly intimating that to speak Polish instead of Yiddish was a public act of betrayal, an abandonment of one’s people.”⁵⁵

How all this impacted on the day-to-day life of many Jews in Poland, right up to the Second World War, is illustrated by the following candid testimonies. Nechah Hoffman-Shein recalls her childhood formation in the village of Serafińce near Horodenka, in Eastern Galicia:

At home they tried to implant within us elevated feelings. They emphasized morning and evening that we were different—better, more elevated than the *goyim*. What was theirs was non-kosher, disgusting, and despised. ... And in the house meanwhile they would tell me, “Don’t play with the *shiksas*, the non-Jewish girls, with their colored eggs, and don’t taste their giant Easter bread, and don’t go into their homes which are absolutely non-kosher.” ... However, [my mother] added, “When we go by the statue of Jesus, we need to spit three times and say, ‘It is an abhorrence,’ but make sure that the *goyim* don’t see you...”⁵⁶

Leon Weliczker Wells, adviser to the Holocaust Library in New York, who hails from Eastern Galicia, recorded:

Our small town, Stojanow [Stojanów], had about a thousand Jews and an equal number of Poles and Ukrainians. ... We looked down on the small farmer, whom we called *Cham*, which was an old traditional way of saying *Am Haaretz* (people of the earth), which to us meant simpletons. ...

We lived in a self-imposed ghetto without walls. The Jewish religion fostered our living together in groups which separated us from non-Jews. ... All of these [religious] restrictions caused the Jews to live in ghetto-like societies so that they could maintain their Jewish way of life. ... We had virtually no contact with the outside world, surely not social contact, as our interests and responsibilities were completely different from the *goish*’s. ... We young Jewish boys did not take part in any sports as this was considered *goish*. ... We Jews even tried to avoid passing a church, and if that was impossible, we muttered an appropriate curse as we hurried by. ...

⁵⁵ Lucy S. Dawidowicz, *From That Place and Time: A Memoir, 1938–1947* (New York and London: W. W. Norton & Company, 1989), 107.

⁵⁶ Nechah Hoffman-Shein, “Jews and Non-Jews in Serafinitz,” in Sh. Meltzer, ed., *Sefer Horodenka* (Tel Aviv: Former Residents of Horodenka and Vicinity in Israel and the U.S.A., 1963), 265ff., translated into English as *The Book of*

We Jews felt superior to all others, as we were the “chosen people,” chosen by God Himself. We even repeated it in our prayers at least three times a day, morning, afternoon, and evening ... The farmers, who, even considering their low living standards, couldn’t support an entire family, sent their daughters to town to become servants in the Jewish households. I never knew a Jewish girl to be a servant in a Polish household, but the reverse was the norm. The gentile maid was referred to in negative terms as the “shiksa” (Hebrew for “a vermin like a cockroach”). [In Polish, the term had the added etymological connotation of “urine-dripping” girl.—*M.P.*] There was a repertoire of jokes about these girls. For example, there was the joke about how Jewish mothers made sure that the servants were “clean,” because their sons’ first sexual experience was usually with this girl.⁵⁷ ...

We were strangers to the neighboring gentiles because of our religion, language, behavior, dress, and daily values. Poland was the only country where a nation lived within a nation. ... In Poland the Jew dressed completely different from others, had beards and *peyes* (side curls), spoke a different language (Yiddish), went to separate religious schools, and sometimes even to different public schools ... Since every meal on Sabbath and holidays started with the blessing of the wine, there was no possibility of a pious Jew sharing a festive meal with a gentile because the wine, once opened, became nonkosher if a gentile merely looked at it. The laws of kashruth prevented a Jew from eating at a gentile’s nonkosher table. Thus, there was very little social intercourse between Jews and non-Jews. We never spoke Polish at home, only Yiddish. Polish was negatively called *goish*. When we spoke Polish we had a Yiddish accent. The newspapers and books in our homes were in Yiddish. ... We lived in a strictly self-imposed ghetto, and it suited our requirements and wishes. ... 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. I remember when the Jews spoke among themselves about the future under the Nazi regime: “Under the Germans it couldn’t be so bad as the press wants us to believe because they are the leading civilized nation.”⁵⁸

Horodenka and posted on the Internet at: <<http://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/gorodenka/gorodenka.html>>.

⁵⁷ There were also credible Polish reports of Polish servant girls being taken advantage of and sexually abused. See 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), 196.

⁵⁸ Leon Weliczker Wells, *Shattered Faith: A Holocaust Legacy* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1995), 1–10.

The pro-German sentiments mentioned by Weliczker Wells should not be underestimated.⁵⁹ Nor should the bonds of religious and ethnic loyalty and solidarity among Jews. Wolf Mendelsohn (Willy Melson), the son of an industrialist from Stanisławów, shares Weliczker Wells's views:

But I wouldn't say the Jews were completely innocent. They didn't behave like guests, they behaved like a separate nation, with another language, another dress, another culture—completely different. And, really, they looked down on the Poles. If they admired anybody, it was the Germans. And the Poles understood this.⁶⁰

Professor Yacov Talmon, who hails from the Russian partition of Poland, 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.

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

⁵⁹ For a similar testimony from Przemyśl see the account of Fred Wahl in Hartman and Krochmal, eds., *I Remember Every Day...*, 59: "Jewish people in Przemyśl adored German democracy. They wished they could send their kids to Berlin to be educated, to Vienna to be educated. If you spoke German on the streets they called it *hoch* German (high German) and you were considered to be very intelligent. It is sad because they thought the Germans were the nicest people on earth, the most intelligent." As Israeli scholars point out, Jewish philo-Germanism blossomed in the 19th century and continued to grow in the 20th century: "This situation, which endured until the rise of Nazism, made the Jews of eastern Europe strong German sympathizers and contributed to the rise of modern Polish anti-Semitism. Contrary to what Goldhagen has propagated, Jews of eastern Europe, even during World War I, regarded the Germans and the German occupying army as philo-Semitic. They had good reasons for holding this view." See Shahak and Mezvinsky, *Jewish Fundamentalism in Israel*, 167.

⁶⁰ Robert Melson, *False Papers: Deception and Survival in the Holocaust* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 32..

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.⁶¹

Awe of German culture persisted among many Jews, and not just the older generations, in the early period of the German occupation. Adam Adams, who was a schoolboy in Lublin in 1939, recalled:

A German officer was allocated to our house. He was dressed like a god in a beautiful uniform; he was a highly educated man from Vienna. I remember him playing our piano, always beautifully dressed in a fantastic uniform, and I would look at him and admire him.⁶²

Ironically, German Jews generally felt contempt for *Ostjuden*.⁶³ Jews who fled to Poland from Russia after the Bolshevik Revolution mirrored the arrival of the “Litvaks” in the 19th century. Paradoxically, like their predecessors, they were overtly pro-Russian culturally and manifested a negative attitude toward Polish statehood.⁶⁴ Thus inter-ethnic antagonism and conflict had firm roots in tradition and reality, and were not just a display of Polish chauvinism and xenophobia.

Theodore S. Hamerow, who grew up in Warsaw and Otwock, states that

Many Jews regarded the Poles with the same resentment which many Poles displayed toward the Jews. This resentment was partly rooted in religious exclusiveness or intolerance. Pious believers in each community regarded members of the other as infidels, as enemies of the true faith who deserved scorn and reprobation. The refusal of those stubborn believers to recognize divine truth had led to their spiritual decline and moral corruption. Devout Poles often regarded the Jews as devious, cunning, and unprincipled, while devout Jews reciprocated by characterizing the Poles as ignorant, coarse, and dissolute. Hateful stereotypes on each side poisoned relations between them. Forced to live side by side, often dependent on each other economically, they managed as a rule to maintain at least minimal civility in dealing with one another. But inwardly they often shared a profound mutual hostility.

⁶¹ 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.

⁶² Lyn Smith, ed. *Forgotten Voices of the Holocaust* (London: Ebury Press/Random House, 2005), 71.

⁶³ Bryan Mark Rigg, *Hitler's Jewish Soldiers: The Untold Story of Nazi Racial Laws and Men of Jewish Descent in the German Military* (Lawrence, Kansas: University of Kansas Press, 2002), Chapter 1. According to one Jew, “The German Jews, likewise, bore a strong dislike for the eastern Jew, the Hasid. Some blamed the Hasidim for the dismal fate they had suffered, having been rejected as rightful citizens of their beloved Germany.” See William Samelson, “Piotrków Trybunalski: My Ancestral Home,” in Eric J. Sterling, ed. *Life in the Ghettos During the Holocaust* (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 2005), 8.

⁶⁴ Włodzimierz Mędrzecki, *Województwo Wołyńskie 1921–1939: Elementy przemian cywilizacyjnych, społecznych i politycznych* (Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy imienia Ossolińskich, Polska Akademia Nauk, 1988), 182.

Their antagonism was reflected in language even more clearly than in behavior. The Polish word “zyd” [żyd], meaning a Jew, did not simply define a religious identity or affiliation. It also carried connotations of cringing sycophancy and sly dishonesty. Ethnic prejudice could be found just as easily in Yiddish, the everyday language of the Jewish masses. The word “goy,” for example, meant more than a gentile. It carried overtones of ignorance, dissipation, and mindless pugnacity. To describe a Pole who did not conform to this stereotype, some modifying adjective would generally be added. That is, so-and-so was a “decent goy” or an “educated goy” or a “tolerant goy” or sometimes simply a “Christian,” a term which had no serious pejorative overtones.

Similarly, “shikse” had implications extending beyond its literal meaning of a young woman who was not Jewish. It carried a suggestion of immodesty or coarseness, even promiscuity. Thus the term was often applied to Jewish girls who failed to display sufficient diffidence or reserve, who seemed too bold or assertive or mischievous. By the same token, “shegetz” meant more than simply a boy who happened to be gentile. It also had connotations of rudeness, belligerence, and dissipation, so that a young Jew who was insufficiently pious or modest could be described as a “shegetz” as well. Polish-Jewish hostility was thus as common in daily speech as in popular conduct. [In fact, the Hebrew word *shegetz* or *sheketz* which was commonly used to refer to a Christian boy means “abomination.”—*M.P.*]

It could even be found in popular humor, in the jokes and stories which circulated among the Jewish as well as the Polish masses. Those directed against the Jews generally made fun of their greed, servility, and cunning. Those making fun of the Poles focused on their obtuseness or dissoluteness or combativeness. Sometimes the humor was relatively harmless, but more often it revealed a deep underlying antipathy. I remember some of the pupils in my school singing a bitter parody of the opening lines of the Polish national anthem: instead of “Poland is not yet lost,/As long as we live,” a derisive “Poland is not yet lost,/But it soon will be.” ...

And besides, isolation and ghettoization were more than symptoms of oppression; they were also a source of faith, a reinforcement of religious identity. Jews and Poles were so different, so far apart, that the only contacts between them should remain impersonal, confined to economic transactions and governmental affairs. Segregation was not only unavoidable but desirable.

This was the view of only a minority, however, a large and influential minority, but a minority nevertheless.⁶⁵

⁶⁵ Theodore S. Hamerow, *Remembering a Vanished World: A Jewish Childhood in Interwar Poland* (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2001), 135–37. As Hamerow indicates, Jews often viewed Poles as morally lax and accused Polish girls and women of promiscuity. The following account from Działoszyce, a small town near Kraków, paints a realistic picture of conditions in a typical, traditional shtetl (the author was born in 1927): “Young men in their 20s

Ben-Zion Gold, a yeshiva student from Radom, writes:

Relations between Poles and religious Jews were burdened by prejudices on both sides. Just as our self-image was shaped by our religious tradition, so was our view of Poles. We were the descendants of Jacob, who, according to tradition, studied Torah and lived by its commandments. Poles, on the other hand, were the descendants of Esau, with all of the vile characteristics that our tradition ascribed to him: a depraved being, a murderer, a rapist, and an inveterate enemy of Jacob. This image of Esau, which developed two thousand years ago in reaction to the oppressive domination of the Romans, was transferred onto Christians ...

Traditional Jews responded with contempt for both the people and their religion. We viewed Catholicism as idolatry. Poles were stereotyped as lechers and drunkards, given to brawling and wife-beating. I remember a popular Yiddish folk song about Jacob, the Jews, who rises in the morning and goes to the Beit HaMidrash to study and pray, and Esau, a Pole, who goes to the tavern. The refrain exclaims: "Oy! Shiker is a goy, a goy is drunk! And he must drink because he is a goy." ...

Religious Jews looked on assimilationists with a mixture of pity and contempt. We felt that they lost their self-respect as Jews and were still treated by Poles with contempt. We used to say, "Pol Zydem I pol Polakiem jest calym lajdakiem" [Pól Żydem i pól Polakiem jest całym łajdakiem] ("Half a Jew and half a Pole is a whole scoundrel").⁶⁶

The portrayal of Poles, which applied not only to peasants but also extended to the entire Polish society, sometimes took on very extreme forms. Coupled with the stereotype of the mythical Endek (a member or supporter of the National Democratic party), a mindset steeped in the abhorrence of Esau (Jews commonly referred to Christendom as the realm of "Esau") concocted the following allegorical account of Polish atavism—passed off as fact. An anonymous Jewish boy, a hunchback, is lured to a gathering of Poles by his neighbour, a Polish officer—"a confirmed anti-Semite, and one of the leaders of the Endeks"—and subjected to string relentless humiliations and physical abuse culminating in a mock crucifixion of this hapless victim. The account, however, reveals more about the would-be victim than his cruel—but fictitious—tormentors.

would pay me, too, but for a different service. They were too embarrassed to buy their own condoms, so for two groszy per visit, I would do the purchasing for them. I learned all about the different types and brands. ... I once counted several unmarried pregnant girls in our modest and very religious town." See Joseph E. Tenenbaum, *Legacy and Redemption: A Life Renewed* (Washington, D.C.: The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum and The Holocaust Survivors' Memoirs Project, 2005), 79, 81.

⁶⁶ Ben-Zion Gold, *The Life of Jews in Poland before the Holocaust* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2007), 76, 79, 80. Gold goes on to state: "However, it would be grossly unfair to give the impression that all Polish people wanted to harm Jews. I knew Poles who defended Jews, who did business and worked with them." *Ibid.*, 80–81.

One day the officer approached me and invited me to a musical evening he was holding at home. He said he had invited several couples, friends of his who were music lovers and who wanted to meet me, having heard that I had a good understanding of music and also knew a lot about literature. ... This was the first time I was to be in enlightened Christian society and I was afraid I might fail. ...

Now I started to take in the whole parlor ... Suddenly the doors of all four rooms opened, and dozens of couples burst out gleefully. Very quickly, with refined, elegant movements, they came to the tables and took their places, without honoring me with even the slightest glance. ... I felt lost and miserable. I got up, wanting only to leave this place.

At that moment a young man who held a soda siphon in his hand approached me and suggested I have a drink. I refused politely. In response, he started spraying me with soda from the siphon, first on my face and then on my clothes. A roar of laughter, wicked and malicious laughter, burst out all around. And the entire company, some forty in all, men and women, charged upon me and surrounded me in a narrow circle, screaming savagely, "Dance a bit, *morda zydzowska* [*morda żydzowska*] (Jewish dog's-face), we've heard you're a good dancer!"

Suddenly Jadwiga's husband came up to me, caught me up in his strong arms, lifted me, and stood me on the large table. With a quick sweep of the hand he knocked my hat off my head, at the same time delivering a hard punch to my forehead. At that moment I understood it all. It was clear to me that I'd been tricked, that a trap had been set for me. In all this uproar a verse from *Koheleth* (9:12) came to me: "As the fishes that are taken in an evil net, and as the birds that are caught in the snare, so are the sons of men snared in an evil time, when it falls upon them suddenly." ... I did not have time to think any more than that. Two strong gentiles grabbed my arm, lowered me from the table, and started throwing me to each other as if I were a ball for them to play with. I struggled to evade them, fighting with all my feeble strength, stubbornly and fiercely. I wanted to escape from this parlor which had become a den of beasts and a torture chamber for me. But they didn't let me slip out of their hands, and there was no way I could free myself.

Finally they got sick of it, or grew tired, and left me. But then Jadwiga's husband picked me up again and stood me up on the table, wounded and bleeding. The whole crowd was delighted to see how I stood there, and they chortled and laughed in glee. Several of these "distinguished" guests picked up bottles of wine and cried jeeringly at me, "Dear Jew, drink a bit! This is *kosher* wine, you're allowed to drink it." I tried once more to break free and flee. But the hands, Esau's hands, held me firmly, binding me as in iron cables, and I was powerless and helpless. I stood there not knowing what to do, beaten, bruised, and shamed, facing this bloodthirsty entertainment-seeking crowd of some forty men and

women who were considered “noble” and “enlightened.” They were “fighting” me, a miserable broken Jew, and they saw themselves as heroes. They rushed upon me, forced my mouth open, and started pouring streams of wine into it. I choked and spluttered until I fainted and fell. They hastily poured water over me to bring me back to consciousness, so they could on tormenting me. When they saw that I had regained consciousness and had opened my eyes and was breathing heavily the air suffused with cigarette smoke and alcohol fumes, they burst out laughing wildly again.

At that moment a thought occurred to me: Look at their “intelligence,” their “nobility,” their “enlightenment” ... No educational framework can cover up their base and primitive urges which find their release in tormenting someone weaker than themselves. Their religion, “the religion of love and mercy,” has not planted these virtues in their hearts. On the contrary, all they desire is atavistic and uncompromising revenge on the Jew, the representative of their “mother-religion,” Judaism. ...

Now they started stripping off my clothes until I stood there completely naked. I gathered up the remnants of my strength and yelled at them, “For all your torturing and tormenting me, God may take revenge on you!” But on hearing this they all burst out shouting wildly. “Dirty little Jew!” You killed our Savior! You killed Jesus! You’re responsible for the crimes of your brothers, all the Jew bastards! You have to pay for the blood of Jesus which your Jewish brothers viciously shed!”

I called on the last remnants of my strength ... I shouted into their faces: “Yes, I’m proud that I’m a Jew! And you all, you should be ashamed that a weak little Jew like me had the strength to kill your Savior!”

There was a sudden silence in the parlor. They seemed shocked, both by the things I had shouted at them and by the very fact that I still had the strength and the daring to open my mouth against them. But they quickly recovered, and as if driven by some blind force, they fell upon me, almost all of them, and started flinging some kind of sticky paste, which they had prepared in advance, over my naked body. With this paste they smeared and plastered my entire body, covering it all except for one exposed part—my hump. On this they painted, so I felt, two lines—a cross. When they had completed this job, they burst into a great cry or laugh of triumph, unaware all the while of how by doing this they were desecrating their own faith, the religion of love and mercy, and even the cross itself, symbol of their faith. Drunk with triumph, they pulled me to the mirror and made me stand there to see how I looked.

Then the “ladies” continued the work. They took me to the wall and “crucified” me, tying my raised hands to hooks in the wall, from which they had taken down the pictures of Schubert and Wagner which had been hanging there. And while I hung there crucified on the wall, my toes barely touching the floor, many of the guests, almost all of them,

came up to me, one by one, and hit me on the head or in the face, and spat at me, and some even “contributed” a kick or two.

During all the time they performed these “acts of Christian grace” upon me, the phonograph kept playing soft. Pleasant “background music” which served as an accompaniment to the “refined” activities of this “noble company.”

Their tormenting me concluded when one of the company picked me up and carried me along the corridor to the door and threw me out onto the landing, naked and bleeding. After me he threw out my wet and torn clothes. Completely exhausted, I crawled to the door opposite and fell, almost dead, into the entrance of our apartment.

I don’t know how long I lay there, half conscious, until I got a little strength back. I was bruised and wounded in many places, and it was not easy for me to wash myself and clean off the sticky Christian paste. All this time, I didn’t stop crying. What I felt at this time is quite impossible to convey in words, and I will not try.

After a long while, when I had managed to calm down a bit and could think about everything that had happened to me at that “party,” I started to understand that I had only now discovered the true nature of these “noble, cultured, and educated” people. A few minutes before, they had been a fine group of handsome young people, merry and healthy, lacking nothing, enjoying themselves at a cultured social party—and then, all at once, they had turned into vicious beasts, wild animals, reveling in tormenting a weak, wretched, and deformed human being. And most of all I thought of the part played in this metamorphosis by anti-Semitism, the old, ancient hatred of Jews.⁶⁷

Confirmation of these sentiments, usually in a much more tempered form, can be found in many Jewish memoirs. As Stanisław Likiernik, who came from a highly assimilated family, points out: “Jews tended to live apart, not so much because of the attitude of Poles but mainly because of their own wish not to mix with gentiles, to be among their own kind.”⁶⁸ Anna Lanota, a psychologist who hails from Łódź, made the following observations: “The [Jewish] community [in which I lived] had a somewhat unfavourable attitude toward other nations—maybe even contemptuous. There prevailed the feeling that we were the chosen people. In school there was that same atmosphere that Jews were the chosen people. We did not pay attention to what others might be saying about us.”⁶⁹

Halina Birenbaum states: “The Poles were ‘goys’ ... who were regarded as pagans, we criticized or ridiculed their tastes, customs, beliefs ... We were not taught mutual sympathy for them. They were different, foreign to us, and we to them, often our open or hidden enemies.” When Birenbaum, who lived in Warsaw, visited her grandparents in a small town she was warned not to venture near a church, because

⁶⁷ Iyov Ha-Giben (pseud.), *Willow Weep For Me* (New York: Bloch Publishing, 1991), 162–71.

⁶⁸ Stanisław Likiernik, *By Devil’s Luck: A Tale of Resistance in Wartime Warsaw* (Edinburgh and London: Mainstream, 2001), 21.

⁶⁹ Barbara Engelking, *Na łące popiołów: Ocaleni z Holocaustu* (Warsaw: Cyklady, 1993), 126.

that was forbidden by the Jewish religion. “I was eight years old then,” she recalled, “and I was taught to fear ‘goys’ and their distinct character. How then was I to look for or anticipate salvation on the ‘Aryan’ side when we were sentenced to annihilation?”⁷⁰

Traditional values permeated the Jewish community, which was generally hostile towards non-Jews. Christian Poles were regarded as “generally an ignorant lot, especially the peasants,” states Michel Mielnicki, who hails from Wasilków and has obvious difficulty in rising above the hostility toward Christians that permeated the community. “But I didn’t spit on the ground at the sight of a Roman Catholic nun, as some Jews did,” Mielnicki makes a point of stating. “And I didn’t think to condemn all Christians for worshipping a false messiah and his mother.”⁷¹

William Samelson, from Piotrków Trybunalski, let it be known that he considered most Poles to be uncouth and unclean, when he remarked: “some Polish (Christian) males from more enlightened homes had also been circumcised.”⁷² Julia Wald recalls turning down an invitation to a Polish wedding, feigning illness: “what could I do there, the only Jewess among a bunch of Catholics and such oafs as well?”⁷³

Abraham Rotfarb describes how his views of Poles developed in the Jewish district of Warsaw where he had spent his childhood:

There are more Jews than *goyim*. Because the janitor, the housemaid, the workman, and other people performing ‘menial tasks’ were *goyim*, I ranked them very low. What do they know, these *goyim*? A *goy* knows nothing, a *goy* does not think, the only thing he knows how to do is beat up Jews. And despite the fact that I considered Christian peasants to be soulless savages, I was still mortally afraid of them. My world was divided into Jews and *goyim*.⁷⁴

Haskell Nordon, from a provincial town in central Poland, recalled:

I came to believe that non-Jews were all pagans, worshippers of idols, statues and paintings in their churches—was it any wonder, then, that they behaved barbarically? They weren’t really responsible before God for their impulsive lives of drunkenness and violence that could sometimes end in murder. I concluded that Christians must be inherently inferior—how else could they believe in a God who has a Father and Mother,

⁷⁰ Halina Birenbaum, “W przyjaźni można sobie wiele wyznać,” *Więź* (Warsaw), October 1999, 142.

⁷¹ John Munro, *Białystok to Birkenau: The Holocaust Journey of Michel Mielnicki* (Vancouver: Ronsdale Press, and Vancouver Holocaust Education Centre, 2000), 59, 67.

⁷² William Samelson, “Piotrków Trybunalski: My Ancestral Home,” in Sterling, ed., *Life in the Ghettos During the Holocaust*, 11.

⁷³ Cited in Alina Cała, in *ibid.*, 45.

⁷⁴ Cited in Alina Cała, “The Social Consciousness of Young Jews in Interwar Poland,” in *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry*, vol. 8 (1994): 45.

when surely there was only one God, the God who revealed Himself to Abraham one star-studded night in the desert, many thousands of years ago?⁷⁵

Samuel Honig, who attended a Jewish high school in Kraków, recalled a question that a fellow student wrote on the blackboard for discussion period which was typical of the mindset of even educated Jews: “Why do we claim that the Jewish religion is the true religion and why is Judaism superior to Christianity?”⁷⁶ Traditional teachings like these translated into full-fledged bigotry when these youngsters grew up.

Purim has been traditionally associated with anti-Christian practices.⁷⁷ In the popular plays staged during the festival of Purim, the arch-villain Haman (who, in the Biblical story of Mordecai and Esther, was hanged on the gallows that he had planned for Mordecai) would often assume the persona of a Catholic priest. A poor Pole was hired to play the part of Haman, represented as a Christian, and would be subjected to shoving, striking and being spat at by the Jewish revellers.⁷⁸ This centuries-old tradition was described by historian Elliott Horowitz:

For centuries it had been customary among the Jews of Central and Eastern Europe to vent their hostility toward the symbols of their powerful adversaries primarily through the dramatic depiction of Haman on the stage. The classic depiction of the Jews’ archenemy in the often raucous *Purimspiels* of the sixteenth through eighteenth centuries featured an ecclesiastical cross worn prominently on his garments. It was also referred to explicitly in the dramatic text itself as an explanation for Mordecai’s refusal to bow before the king’s new prime minister. ...

In the Jewish communities of Poland and Ukraine it was common, in the early eighteenth century, to hire a Christian to play the role of Haman in the annual *Purimspiel*. ... Yet even at the end of the nineteenth century, according to Jewish memoirists, it was still common for Haman to be played by a young or poor Christian, preferably Yiddish-speaking.

As we have seen Haman was associated with Christianity and its adherents for a number of reasons. Not only was his form of death remarkably similar to that of Jesus, but he is repeatedly referred to in the book of Esther as an “Agagite,” linking him genealogically with the Amalekites and ultimately with Esau, the grandfather of Amalek

⁷⁵ Haskell Nordon, *The Education of a Polish Jew: A Physician’s War Memoirs* (New York: D. Grossman Press, 1982), 40.

⁷⁶ Samuel Honig, *Reunions: Echoes of the Holocaust, Pre-War and Post-War Stories* (Windsor, Ontario: Benchmark Publishing & Design Inc., 2000), 51.

⁷⁷ Citing Israeli scholars such as Yisrael Bartal and Rami Rosen, an authoritative source on this topic states: “Rosen included in his long article many well-documented cases of massacres of Christians and mock repetitions of the crucifixion of Jesus on Purim, most of which occurred either in the late ancient period or in the Middle Ages.” See Israel Shahak and Norton Mezvinsky, *Jewish Fundamentalism in Israel*, New edition (London and Ann Arbor, Michigan: Pluto Press, 2004), 116.

through his first-born son, Eliphaz. And “Esau” together with “Edom” became, in the early middle ages, the standard Hebrew term for Christendom.

... These poems, still recited today, served for centuries as “backstage discourse,” allowing the Jews who recited them to conflate in their minds the dramatic downfall of Haman, Amalek, and Christianity—without arousing the ire of their oppressors.⁷⁹

In Poland, these customs lingered into the 20th century. At a costume ball in Zamość, three young men came dressed respectively as a jester, the devil and a Cardinal. To the amusement of the guests, the “jester” and “devil” took turns spitting at a crucifix held by the Cardinal.⁸⁰ As Elliott Horowitz demonstrates, there is a long history of violence among Jews against the cross, which for centuries was commonly referred to as an “abomination.”⁸¹ Even in contemporary Israel, there are frequent attacks upon Christian religious processions and clergymen, especially in Jerusalem.⁸² (It is little known that the burning of the effigy of a pope still occurs in England, where as many as 50,000 Protestants gather on Bonfire Night in Lewes to observe the festivities.⁸³)

In Ejszyski, “Jews never set foot in the Yourzdiki [Juryzdyka] church, even out of curiosity, because ‘they said if you went in a church you were forty days in *herem* [ban or excommunication].’”⁸⁴ Yet Jews recalled that Christians came into the main *shul* [synagogue] on *Kol Nidre* evening at the start of Yom Kippur to marvel at the musical skill of the *chazzan* [cantor] and his choir. “They were giving respect for this night,” one resident said.⁸⁵ Decades later, a Jewish woman insisted that her family’s Polish maid

⁷⁸ Kurek, *Poza granicą solidarności*, 83, 93. Kurek bases herself on accounts collected by Jewish historian Alina Cała.

⁷⁹ Elliott Horowitz, *Reckless Rites: Purim and the Legacy of Jewish Violence* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2006), 86–87. Essentially, Horowitz’s book shows that Jews harboured as much religiously-motivated animosity against Christians as Christians did against Jews. Horowitz discusses Jewish violence against Christians throughout the ages, and how information about it has been suppressed in Jewish historiography. A case in point is the massacre of between 40,000 and 90,000 Christians, for the most part by local Jews, during the Persian conquest of Jerusalem in 614. (The magnitude of this slaughter approximates the Cossack massacre of Jews in the 17th century.) The avoidance of discussion of Jewish violence stems from the tendency to consider Jews as victims and not victimizers. Horowitz comments: “Evenhanded assessments of the reciprocal role of violence in Jewish-Christian relations were to become increasingly rare in post-Holocaust Jewish historiography, both in the land of Israel and in the Diaspora.” *Ibid.*, 235.

⁸⁰ These events, which took place on April 5, 1924, happened to be observed by two police officers and a military gendarme, and consequently, the culprits were charged and convicted under the criminal laws for profaning the Crucifix. Since the Jewish community had tolerated these anti-Catholic antics, the local Endeks reacted by urging a boycott of Jewish shops. It is doubtful, however, that this boycott was respected or sustained for any period. See “Koszerna balanga,” *Nowa Myśl Polska*, December 5, 2004.

⁸¹ Horowitz, *Reckless Rites*, 11, *passim*, especially chapter 6. Horowitz concludes his survey of Jewish attacks on sacred Christian objects by Jews as follows: “we are in a better position to take Christian reports of Jewish cross-desecration seriously rather than dismissing them as anti-Semitic inventions. There is also no paucity of references to such conduct in Jewish sources ...” *Ibid.*, 156.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 10.

⁸³ Sandro Contenta, “Fiery ritual ignites passions: English town clings to ancient practice of burning effigy of pope in its blazing celebration of Bonfire Night,” *Toronto Star*, November 4, 2006.

⁸⁴ Ellen Livingston, *Tradition and Modernism in the Shtetl: Aisheshuk, 1919–1939. An Oral History* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1986), 74.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 97.

poisoned and killed her baby sister, “although common sense simply does not corroborate the details of her story.” When asked for a possible motive for such an act, the woman replied, “Nu? A *shikse!*”⁸⁶

Abraham Lipkunsky, who grew up in the village of Dowgieliszki, a small settlement near Raduń inhabited for the most part by Jewish farmers, recalled a “deep-rooted custom” from his childhood:

At every crossroad and before every village there were crosses protected by little sloping roofs, with icons of Jesus or the Madonna hanging beneath them. For some reason, we children were under the impression that Jews were forbidden even to glance at a cross, but our childish curiosity got the better of us and I would quickly and guiltily snatch a glance at the cross while repeating the short prayer ‘thou shalt utterly detest it, and thou shalt utterly abhor it, for it is a cursed thing’ (Deuteronomy 7: 26), spitting in the direction of the alleged cursed thing, but seeing to it that no one should see me doing so. Heaven forbid! Like the spitting after the saying of the prayer: ‘It is our duty to praise the Lord, since he hath not made us like the nations of different countries, nor placed us like the families of the earth.’⁸⁷

The following account is that of Haya Kreslansky from Dereczyn, in Polesia:

Saturday afternoons, we would take a walk in the fields, passing by the Catholic Church, its crucifix and image of the Christ, from which we would avert our eyes, and asking one another: “Have we passed by yet?!” And while a Jewish child was forbidden to gaze at the image of Jesus, one was tempted to steal a glance in passing ...⁸⁸

Rivka Barlev from the small town of Kosów Lacki, said to have been eighty-five percent Jewish, thought the very existence of a Catholic church in her town as an intolerable abomination:

A Gothic church stood at the end of the street. It looked like a stranger there and was for us children a scary place to run around. ... The church, the statue, the bell-ringing every Sunday morning, was a reminder that no matter how many Jews lived in this town, and no matter how many centuries they had lived here, Kosow was Polish and Catholic and the Jews were outsiders. For the young people the church was the turning point when taking a walk on the main street.⁸⁹

⁸⁶ Ibid., 96.

⁸⁷ Avraham Aviel, *A Village Named Dowgalishok: The Massacre at Radun and Eishishok* (London and Portland, Oregon: Vallentine Mitchell, 2006) 19.

⁸⁸ Haya Kreslansky, “This is How We Lived in Our Town,” in *Dereczyn* (Mahwah, New Jersey: Jacob Solomon Berger, 2000), 158.

⁸⁹ *Kosow Lacki* (San Francisco: Holocaust Center of Northern California, 1992), 19.

The Jewish merchants in that town were united in their contempt for Polish peasants, whom they ridiculed among themselves as unclean animals:

Aria Dovid, Velvel Holder's son, used to cry the news of the great event that was soon to occur: Jozef's [Józef's] Fair. He would do this on a Friday market-day, standing on the bed of a peasant's wagon, calling out in a healthy bass voice: "*Chodźcie panowie jarmark w Kosowie!*"—"Come, ladies and gentlemen, to the fair in Kosow!" And the grain merchants, who could tell just by touching the thick homespun burlap sack what sort of kernels it contained, would mumble under their breath: "*koniami, kurami, jajami, świniami*"—"horses, chickens, eggs, pigs"—by that last word meaning the P... [Polacks] themselves.⁹⁰

Dr. Itzhak Schwartzbart, a resident of Chrzanów, recalled: "Christians—*tsabanes* [i.e., fools] as they were called—lived on that street. For us children, that fact alone was a source of terror."⁹¹ Miles (Shmoil) Lerman stated that, when he was growing up in Tomaszów Lubelski, "We always felt that we are Jewish. ... first of all, we kind of felt that we are intellectually superior."⁹² Samuel Oliner, a Jewish scholar, recalled his childhood days in a village in southern Poland:

Since I was illiterate at seven, my education was not off to a very good start. 'Shmulek will grow up to be a stupid *goy!*' lamented my grandmother. ...

My father put down his pencil and glanced at me. '... The Poles are not the chosen people of God.' ...

One day I rode with Mendel to get farm supplies in Dukla. On the way home he whipped up the horse as we passed the gypsy camp. The frown on his face showed exactly how he felt ...

The presence of a gentile defiled the home of a Jew, and no good was certain to come of it. ... some Jews regarded the Poles with contempt and caution, but we had still been on good terms."⁹³

As we can see, Gypsies too were not immune from negative stereotypical attitudes on the part of Jews. A Jew from a Carpathian village acknowledges: "We even had a few Gypsies who moved in and out of our

⁹⁰ Ibid., 49.

⁹¹ Mordechai Bochner, ed., *Sefer Chrzanow: Lebn un unkum fun a yidish shtetl* (Roslyn Harbor, New York: Solomon Gross, 1989), 1ff., translated (by Jonathan Boyarin) as *Chrzanow: The Life and Destruction of a Jewish Shtetl*, Internet: <<http://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/Chrzanow/Chrzanow.html>>.

⁹² Interview with Miles Lerman, July 17, 2001, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

⁹³ Samuel P. Oliner, *Restless Memories: Recollections of the Holocaust Years* (Berkeley, California: Judah L. Magnes Museum, 1986), 29, 44, 46, 54, 81.

area but never actually settled down. As children we heard stories that the Gypsies kidnapped children, so were a little afraid of them.”⁹⁴

Dora Kacnelson, who lived in Białystok before the war, said: “There are tolerant Jews, like my father for instance, but there are also fanatical ones, holding on tight to old traditions. ... The orthodox Jews considered Christians to be beneath them.”⁹⁵ A Jewish girl who grew up in Nowogródek admits candidly that *all* Poles were considered to be anti-Semites: “since he was a Pole, he must be anti-semitic deep down.” Moreover, her friendship with a Pole was “resented” by her Jewish friends: “I was presented with an ultimatum: either I must drop Eddie or they would drop me.”⁹⁶

A girl from a middle class family from Piotrków Trybunalski, a city in central Poland, recalls:

And what did I know about the other, non-Jewish world? In my home we spoke about goys with a certain irony and aversion which found its strongest expression in my grandmother’s saying ‘Meine shlekhte khulims of ale goims kieps,’ which roughly means ‘May my worse dreams fall on their heads.’ But I do not recall any conflict except for one incident when someone threw a stone into the prayer house on the Feast of Tabernacles during prayers.

Generally, the tenants in our home opened their windows to hear these prayers. My grandfather had a beautiful voice and apparently I wasn’t the only one who enjoyed listening to him. I was warned about hooligans who attacked Jewish children on their way from school, but I do not recall ever having encountered something like that. ...

I don’t think that I ever asked myself before the war whether I was Polish or Jewish. I was Jewish, and that was obvious. My Polishness was accidental since some of my ancestors had settled here, but could just as well have settled elsewhere. ... My father spoke Polish poorly, but my mother spoke it impeccably. My parents spoke Yiddish between themselves but spoke to [the children] in Polish. Neither I nor Ala knew Yiddish. My means of expression was therefore the Polish language, but it didn’t mean anything special to me. ...

Polish literature had no appeal for me nor did it have any impact on my state of mind... I do not recall ever being moved by the partitions of Poland or the country’s loss of independence. That was not part of my history. I knew only too well that none of my ancestors had taken part in any Polish uprising. ...

In my family—and I’m thinking here above all about my grandparents, goys were spoken of with a certain disdain. They were the ones who didn’t know that Christ was not the Messiah. Moreover, just like the pagans, they prayed to pictures. ... the boundary

⁹⁴ Alex Gross, *Yankele: A Holocaust Survivor’s Bittersweet Memoir* (Lanham, New York, and Oxford: University Press of America, 2001), 3.

⁹⁵ Wiesław Magiera, “Żydówka za karmelitankami,” *Głos Polski* (Toronto), October 9, 1993.

⁹⁶ Sulia Wolozhinski Rubin, *Against the Tide: The Story of an Unknown Partisan* (Jerusalem: Posner & Sons, 1980),

between our world and their strange world was laden with an entire system of taboos. I knew that the worst, the most unimaginable sin was to convert. It was not permissible even to assume a kneeling position, even through inadvertence.⁹⁷

According to Lucien Steinberg, “The non-Jews were not wholly responsible for [the] inevitable barrier [between them], even though they might greet any friendly advance with reserve. The Jews themselves distrusted those of their own kind who tried to strike up a relationship with ‘the others,’ and there was always that underlying fear of losing substance.”⁹⁸ A Jew from the city of Konin remarked in retrospect: “You need to look at it both ways. The Jews never mixed with their neighbours. The community tried to separate itself. ... I think the Jews could have mixed more with their neighbours and still kept their identity.” Another testimony from Konin states: “Jewish parents discouraged their children from forming friendships with Polish children. ‘My father would not let me bring *shikses* [a derogatory term for female Christians] into the house,’ one woman remembers, ‘and he would not let me go to their homes in case I ate *treyf* [non-kosher food].’ Socializing between unmarried Jews and Christians of the opposite sex was taboo. ... Thus Jewish apartheid ... persisted not solely as a result of Christian prejudice but through choice.”⁹⁹

A Jewish woman from a village in Volhynia recalled:

At one point the teacher called on my father and asked him to send my brother Yitshak to an art school in a larger town. ... The teacher even said that in such a case the government would provide a stipend, and that he would even request it. However, he could not persuade my father. One, he could not imagine his child so far away from him. Two, who knows, maybe he would fall in, God forbid, among Christians, and be so confused as to forget his Jewish roots?¹⁰⁰

A Jewess from a village near Kołomyja recalled:

At times I would slip out of the house quietly and hurry to the meadow, to play with the shepherds. This was a constant source of worry for my grandparents. Grandpa often said: “What will she grow up into among these Hutzul [highlander] children—a *shikseh*, nothing else.” And he would shake his head sadly as he said it. I did not understand what he was talking about; I couldn’t see how I was different from them.¹⁰¹

47, 49.

⁹⁷ Account of Irena Kisielewska née England in Marian Turski, ed., *Losy żydowskie: Świadectwo żywych*, vol. 1 (Warsaw: Stowarzyszenie Żydów Kombatantów i Poszkodowanych w II Wojnie Światowej, 1996), 8–10.

⁹⁸ Lucien Steinberg, *The Jews Against Hitler: Not as a Lamb* (London: Gordon and Cremonesi, 1978), 168.

⁹⁹ Theo Richmond, *Konin: A Quest* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1995), 58–59, 161.

¹⁰⁰ Account of Rochl Leichter in Berl Kagan, ed., *Luboml: The Memorial Book of a Vanquished Shtetl* (Hoboken, New Jersey: Ktav Publishing House, 1997), 135. We also learn that this woman’s sister became a popular seamstress: “All our Christian neighbors began to bring in orders for dresses, blouses, and children’s items.”

¹⁰¹ Donia Rosen, *The Forest, My Friend* (New York and Tel Aviv: Bergen Belsen Memorial Press, 1971), 6–7.

A Jewish woman, who lived in a tenement in Mińsk Mazowiecki, has similar recollections:

“Our neighbors were the Izbrechts, a Polish family ... The youngest girl was named Józka, and I played with her all the time despite the fact that my grandmother beat me good so that I would not play with her. My grandmother did not allow me to play with Józka Izbrecht because she was Polish and she feared that if I went to her home I would eat something with pork in it. So my grandmother beat me, but I still played with Józka.”¹⁰²

A girl from Skała, in southeastern Poland, recalls:

We knew little about the gentiles; they lived their lives and we lived our lives. ... Business was the main contact between us. ... One of my fellow pupils was the grandson of the manager of the count's estate ... As children, this boy and I played hide-and-seek in the estate's huge and beautiful park ... His family would invite me at Christmas to see the tree ... But typical of our relationship with the gentiles, we never invited them to our home for Chanukah.¹⁰³

Sally Grubman recalled her childhood in the large industrial city of Łódź:

It was one of those integrated areas where Jews clung together and had nothing to do with the gentiles. We never visited our gentile neighbors and they didn't visit us. The children didn't play together. I remember once there was some Easter celebration and the girl next door wanted to show me the beautiful table. She sneaked me in for a moment when no one was looking—just to look—and then I left.¹⁰⁴

Martin Zaidenstadt, from Jedwabne, recalled his father's disapproval of his playing soccer with the Polish boys in town. On one occasion he was whacked thrice with a thick leather strap for the specific misdeed of playing soccer with the *shaitzi* and for missing temple.¹⁰⁵ For Orthodox Jews playing was simply not allowed, especially with Christian children. The following account is from Kulbuszowa:

¹⁰² Testimony of Irit R. 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), 191.

¹⁰³ Fanya Gottesfeld Heller, *Strange and Unexpected Love: A Teenage Girl's Holocaust Memoirs* (Hoboken, New Jersey: Ktav, 1993), 20, 31–32. Adam Neuman, who grew up in Płock, also recalled, “I never felt different from my Catholic friends, and, in fact, I always had an open invitation to their homes at holiday time.” See Adam Neuman-Nowicki, *Struggle for Life During the Nazi Occupation of Poland* (Lewiston, New York; Queenston, Ontario; Lampeter, Ceredigion, Wales: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1998), 4.

¹⁰⁴ Sylvia Rothchild, ed., *Voices from the Holocaust* (New York: Nal Books/New American Library, 1981), 74.

¹⁰⁵ Timothy W. Ryback, *The Last Survivor: In Search of Martin Zaidenstadt* (New York: Pantheon Books/Random House, 1999), 185.

Mostly Polish boys rode bicycles. That doesn't mean that I was not interested. I was, and actually learned to ride one. Unfortunately, someone saw me and promptly reported the incident to my religious school teacher. For that earned yet another suspension from Talmud Torah. When the war came, prohibitions eased and many things changed. I rode about on my own bicycle—unpunished!¹⁰⁶

These memoirs are consistent with Polish recollections. Władysław Bartoszewski, one of the founding members of the wartime Council for Aid to Jews (*Żegota*), recalls that, when he was growing up in a tenement-house in a primarily Jewish area of prewar Warsaw, the mothers of the Jewish children often scolded their children for playing with “that stupid, Polish *goy*.”¹⁰⁷ Stefania Podgórska, who rescued thirteen Jews in Przemyśl, recalled that when she was growing up in a small village, “sometimes the mother of the Jewish children would say to them, ‘Don't play with the *goyim*.’”¹⁰⁸ A Pole from Międzyrzec Podlaski recalled the admonition a Jewish child received from his mother: “If you won't eat, a *goyka* will take you away.”¹⁰⁹

As some Jews admit, even culturally assimilated Jews from the educated classes—generally, professionals—who spoke only Polish generally considered themselves to be Jews, not Poles, and shunned personal contacts with Poles:

People usually think that Jews didn't socialize with Poles because of anti-Semitism, because of the Poles' reluctance. That's a great over-simplification. ... However, anti-Semitism alone cannot account for the barrier between Poles and Jews in those years. Had my parents wanted to establish social ties with the Poles, it would have involved a great deal of effort on their part to bridge the cultural gap. ...

Above all, they [i.e., the interlocutor's parents] were not Poles. Even my mother would not have called herself a pole. A Polish Jew, yes, but not a Pole, despite the fact that she spoke and read only Polish and that she knew Polish literature so well. These paradoxes were typical not only of my mother, but my parents' circle—the liberal, assimilated Jewish intelligentsia—as a whole. It was an entire community, a community of neither Poles nor Jews, but of assimilated Jews! ... Jewish lawyers, doctors, professors, mathematicians. They were secular, educated, spoke only in Polish, and kept together.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁶ Salsitz, *A Jewish Boyhood in Poland*, 137.

¹⁰⁷ “Bartoszewski i Wishner—Twarzą w twarz: Dialog polsko-żydowski,” *Dziennik Związkowy* (Chicago), December 6–8, 1996.

¹⁰⁸ Her testimony is posted online at: <<http://motlc.wiesenthal.com/text/x00/xr0040.html>>.

¹⁰⁹ Cited in Józef Geresz, *Międzyrzec Podlaski: Dzieje miasta i okolic* (Międzyrzec Podlaski: InterGraf, 2001).

¹¹⁰ Joanna Wiszniewicz, *And Yet I Still Have Dreams: A Story of Certain Loneliness* (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 2004), 8, 11.

Even those Jews with Polish acquaintances tended to view the latter as strangers: “Although we had known many Catholics quite well and had lived with the Nowickis [their tenants] for almost a year, they were always seen as strangers, goyim, the people on the other side of the fence.”¹¹¹ To be sure, a similar phenomenon existed among some Poles.¹¹² Jews who emigrated from Poland to the United States often transplanted these attitudes with them, as one Jewish American from Chicago recalled: “Our home and that of our relatives and friends were typical of Americanized ‘shtetl homes,’ where no non-Jew ever tread. We children were not allowed to play with ‘goyim’ (non-Jews), and our lives were as circumscribed in this respect as they had been in Poland.”¹¹³

But societal pressures were especially strong in small towns and villages where Jewish religious leaders endorsed isolation and breaches of traditional norms were treated mercilessly. The rabbi—if he was Orthodox and certainly if he was Hasidic—maintained no contact with Christians. The rabbi of Płock, Yona Mordechai Zlotnik, publicly urged that Jews and Christians be educated separately: Jewish religious education was possible only in schools established exclusively for Jewish children.¹¹⁴ Most Jews seemed to favour this state of affairs, especially in smaller communities, certainly well into the 1920s.

Polish schools were never welcome or fully accepted. In Ostryna, north of Grodno,

When Polish rule was established, a law of compulsory education came into effect. School age children were registered. The language of instruction was Polish. A great outcry arose in the village: ‘Our children are being led to apostasy!’ The Zionist circles rose to action. One Saturday night ... they convened a general meeting. ... On the spot, they chose a committee to organize and activate that night to establish a Jewish school that would be recognized by the Polish authorities. ... The children were taught mathematics in their mother tongue Yiddish while all the rest of the subjects were taught in Hebrew.¹¹⁵

¹¹¹ Yehuda Nir, *The Lost Childhood: A Memoir* (San Diego, New York and London: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1989), 44.

¹¹² A Jewish girl who grew up in a small village near Kraków where there were only five Jewish families, all of them merchants who appeared to have led comfortable and peaceful lives and were “very close” to one another, nonetheless “felt”—though she was not actually told as much—that the villagers looked upon them “as different because of our religion, and their inability to handle our differences set the Jewish inhabitants apart. Their fear of us was so pronounced that any attempts to come close, in any shape or form, always failed. I was keenly aware of this situation but could not understand it, nor could I accept it emotionally.” Since the writer was just a young girl at the time and her assessment goes far beyond her own personal experiences, it is doubtless much embellished by her impressions and by hearsay for which she does not set out a factual basis for the reader to judge. Typically, she is silent about Jewish views of Poles. See Renée Fodor Schwarz, *Renée* (New York: Shengold, 1991), 31.

¹¹³ Anthony Netboy, *A Boy’s Life in the Chicago Ghetto* ([Chicago:] n.p., 1980), 44.

¹¹⁴ Eliyahu Eisenberg, ed., *Plotzk (Płock): A History of an Ancient Jewish Community in Poland* (Tel Aviv: World Committee for the Plotzk Memorial Book and Plotzker Association in Israel, 1967), 37; English translation posted online at <www.zchor.org/plock/yizkor.pdf>.

¹¹⁵ L. Losh, ed., *Sefer zikaron le-kehilot Shtutshin, Vasilishki, Ostrina, Novi Dvor, and Rozanka* (Tel Aviv: Former Residents of Shtutshin, Vasilishki, Ostrina, Novi Dvor, and Rozanka, 1966), 41.

In Naliboki, “Like all old-fashioned Jews, Solomon Rubizhewski wanted some of his sons to become rabbis and didn’t want them to attend Polish schools.”¹¹⁶ In Drohiczyn on the Bug, “It was against the family’s tradition to have a child attend a gentile school, and [my mother] would not even hear of it.”¹¹⁷ In Szydłowiec, “Most of the [Jewish] students in the Polish schools were girls. The Jewish parents did not want their children to spend 4–5 hours a day in a Christian [i.e., public] school, so they would engage a private tutor [sic] to come to their homes and teach the general subjects.”¹¹⁸

Many young Jews—not only from Orthodox but also Zionist backgrounds—were adamant in their support of total segregation from Christians and creeping polonization. A Jewish girl from Kołomyja participated in a boycott of girlfriends who had chosen a Polish instead of a Jewish high school: “We considered them as delinquents and renegades and we did not speak to them or have anything to do with them.” A girl from Kowel describes how she, together with her whole class, put pressure on her girlfriend to break off relations with her Christian friends (“shkuts”) and to stop using the Polish language.

Nojma left primary school and had many friends. It was quite common for her to exchange a few words or to cross the street with a *goy*. This used to antagonize the whole class and later the whole grammar school. Her friends, including myself, used to defend her and we tried hard to persuade her that she should stop doing this. And finally we managed it. It was Nojma who introduced the tradition of speaking Polish into our class. I did not like that at all, because I hated all *goyim* ...

They eventually succeeded in persuading their friend “how terrible her crime was.”¹¹⁹

Traditional Jewish schools were not known for their tolerance of others. Zosia Goldberg, who grew up in a culturally assimilated family in Warsaw, recalled the reception she and her sister experienced when they started to attend a Jewish school:

So father ... put us in a private school, a *gymnasium* that was owned by Jews where the teachers and the students were all Jews. But since I was accustomed to eating ham with matzos and learning from the kids how to say “Jesus, Maria” and so on, the Jewish children were soon calling me a *goy*.

That was no good either. So my father turned to another school where the children were all Jewish and the teachers were mixed, some Gentiles and some Jews, and this school was much better.¹²⁰

¹¹⁶ Rubin, *Against the Tide*, 122.

¹¹⁷ Account of Ahuvah Linchevsky (Ramat Gan), “My Childhood Memories,” in David Shtokfish, ed., *Sefer Drohiczyn* (Tel Aviv: n.p., 1969), 5ff. (English section).

¹¹⁸ Account of Isaac Milstein in Berl Kagan, ed., *Szydłowiec Memorial Book* (New York: Shidlowtzer Benevolent Association in New York, 1989), 61.

¹¹⁹ Cited in Alina Cała, “The Social Consciousness of Young Jews in Interwar Poland,” in *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry*, vol. 8 (1994): 53.

In large cities, even among Jewish children who attended Polish-language state schools, interaction outside the classroom was generally minimal. Marian Małowist, a teacher in interwar Warsaw, recalled a survey that he a Christian teacher conducted among their students. Jewish and Polish students were each asked what Poles or Jews they know, etc. It turned out that the only Pole the Jewish students knew was caretaker of the building in which they lived. It was not better among the Polish students.¹²¹ Regrettably, measures taken to overcome barriers often proved to entrench them. As one Jew from Otwock recalls,

There were other incidents as well, like the annual athletic contests between pupils from the Jewish school and those from the nearby Polish school, contests by which some well-meaning but overoptimistic educators hoped to encourage closer contact between the two. The result was usually the reverse; the competition merely aggravated their mutual dislike and hostility. The young spectators would gather on opposite sides of the running track, the Jews in one group, the Poles in another, each cheering the runners from its own school, each jeering at those from the other. What had intended to foster greater understanding only revealed their underlying mistrust and resentment.

Worse still, the athletic contests sometimes led to displays of hostility more graphic even than cheers and jeers. There were also epithets and insults and occasional blows. I remember how at one of those competitions a little Polish boy made the mistake of standing on the Jewish side of the track. Trying to encourage the runners from his school, he urged them loudly to show those ‘mangy Jews’ who the real athletes were. That had unfortunate consequences for him. On the other side of the racecourse his remark would have gone unnoticed ... But on this side it brought swift reprisal. An older girl who had overheard his exhortation, outraged, berated him angrily, underscoring her disapproval with a sharp blow to the back of his head. The little fellow seemed startled; he was not even aware that he had said anything improper. ... He lowered his head, tears came to his eyes, and sobbing softly he crossed over to the opposite side. There he undoubtedly found a more sympathetic audience.¹²²

¹²⁰ Zosia Goldberg, as told to Hilton Obenzinger, *Running Through Fire: How I Survived the Holocaust* (San Francisco: Mercury House, 2004), 4.

¹²¹ *Res Publica*, no. 7 (1988): 43–52.

¹²² Theodore S. Hamerow, *Remembering a Vanished World: A Jewish Childhood in Interwar Poland* (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2001), 129. It is a well-documented fact that popular sporting events like soccer matches are often a venue for hooliganism and crass or even racist behaviour throughout the world. The Amsterdam soccer team Ajax falsely gained a reputation for being a “Jewish” team in the 1960s; although its own fans adopted this identity as a point of pride, it soon became a source of derision for, and anti-Semitic displays by, fans of opposing teams. To provoke Ajax supporters, rival fans would give the Nazi salute, chant “Hamas, Hamas!”, shout “Jews to the gas!” or simply hiss to simulate the sound of gas escaping. See Craig S. Smith, “A Dutch Soccer Riddle: Jewish Regalia Without Jews,” *The New York Times*, March 28, 2005.

Tolerance and enlightenment were not hallmarks of traditional Jewish schools, as a Jewish village boy learned when he started to attend cheder in a synagogue in the nearby town of Dębica:

Within the sanctuary itself, though, I felt ill at ease. The city boys were mainly Chassidic, their long *payes*—sidelocks—just one visible expression of their faith. I had been raised to observe the Jewish holidays, including the Sabbath as a day of rest; I kept kosher, and I was, after all, studying for my bar mitzvah—but I did not wear sidelocks like most of the other boys, did not dress in the traditionalist black caftan and felt hat, did not practice my religion with anything near their fervor.

“Are you a goy?” they often taunted me, using a Yiddish term for “gentile.” “You dress like a goy!”

“I don’t have to look different to be Jewish,” I would reply, which left me open for the retort, “But you do look different. Different from us, and *we’re* Jewish.”

There would never be a meeting of the minds, it seemed, between us so-called assimilated Jews and the Chassidim.

By the time Friday afternoon came around, I could not wait to get back home.¹²³

A Jewish boy from Działoszyce recalled:

Father, an ultraorthodox Gerer Hasid, did not want his sons going to public school. ... Nobody taught us math, science, or Polish in *heder*. In fact, the rebbe often did not even know Polish.¹²⁴

A Jewish girl from an assimilated family in Grudziądz recalled the cold reception she received when she started to study the Jewish religion: “So, starting in fourth grade, I attend the afternoon classes of Jewish religion at the Wydziałowa [Wydziałowa] School—where the Jewish pupils look at me suspiciously as if I did not belong. ... And I wonder if I belong with these stuck-up Jewish kids who give me a cold shoulder because I missed a year of Jewish religion.”¹²⁵ Writing in prewar Poland’s foremost literary weekly *Wiadomości Literackie* (no. 35, 1924), Antoni Słonimski, a leading Polish poet of Jewish origin, summed it up in the following words: “I know very few Jews who are not convinced of the superiority of the Jewish race. For that reason this nation ... does not neglect even the smallest of reproaches. ... Those Jews who complain about the lack of tolerance of others are the least tolerant ...”

Maintaining close contacts with Christians was also a basis for social sanctions. A popular Yiddish play, *Der Dorfs Jung*, railed out against the evils of marrying a Christian and warned of the fires of hell that such

¹²³ Larry Stillman, *A Match Made in Hell: The Jewish Boy and the Polish Outlaw Who Defied the Nazis. From the Testimony of Morris Goldner* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2003), 16–17.

¹²⁴ Tenenbaum, *Legacy and Redemption*, 31.

¹²⁵ Irene Shapiro, *Revisiting the Shadows: Memoirs from War-torn Poland to the Statue of Liberty* (Elk River,

a vile deed invited.¹²⁶ For many Jews intimate relationships with Christians were anathema. In Baranowicze, Sara Bytenski, the daughter of a pious Jew was spotted one afternoon behind some trees kissing her Christian boyfriend. A group of teenaged Jewish boys spontaneously rallied to her “defence”:

When the man turned his head, our horror turned to outrage. He was a ‘goy’—a Gentile! For us, it was not only sin, it was mortal sin—a Jewish soul was in danger of being lost! We looked at each other, wild-eyed. She had to be saved—it was our sacred duty! There were plenty of stones lying around; collecting pocketfuls of them we stormed forward, valiant saviours, hurling our weapons of destruction at the infamous desecrators ... A few months later we all had a second shock. The poor girl had had no success in convincing her family that her lover was willing to convert to our faith in order to marry her, so she ran away with him. The shame of it was too much for her father, a poor but well-respected tailor. He declared a whole year of mourning, closed his shop and sat, all day long on the floor, wearing a torn black garment praying loudly and begging the Almighty for forgiveness for the daughter, now dead to him, who had brought such shame and humiliation on her parents and her people alike.¹²⁷

Another account states: “How many tears of sorrow and anguish he had brought upon his parents by her visits to his house. ... His parents were furious and enraged when they saw them together. They never tired of reminding him that it was high time he be at *heder* and not mooning about with a non-Jewish girl. Misha was not insensitive to their pain and tried to avoid Lucia as best he could.”¹²⁸ Yet another states: “Morris, then sixteen, had committed an unpardonable sin. He was observed by several Jews holding hands with a *shiksa* in a little park behind the church in Łęczna, where his family lived. On Saturday the rabbi reported the shameful event to the congregation, and Jankel, Morris’s father, was so humiliated that he slapped the youthful offender in front of everyone. That night Morris took whatever money he could find in the house and ran away from home.”¹²⁹

But such attitudes were also common in large centres, even among the educated classes. When a Jewish teenager from Warsaw went out with a Polish Catholic student, a friend of her brother’s, a Jewish couple who passed them on the street exclaimed that it was shameful for a Jew to go out with a *goy*.¹³⁰ A Jew from a well-to-do Orthodox family from Warsaw faced universal ostracism on the part of his family, friends and community for courting a Polish Christian girl from his own neighbourhood. Some of his acquaintances were very frank about the consequences: “‘How can you walk down the street with her?’ he asked. ‘You’ll be ostracized, beaten, ridiculed. Your own people are going to hate you ... What’s going to happen when

Minnesota: DeForest Press, 2004), 41.

¹²⁶ Daniel Kac, *Koncert grany żywym* (Warsaw: Tu, 1998), 66–67.

¹²⁷ Berk, *Destined to Live*, 64–65.

¹²⁸ Isaac Aron, *Fallen Leaves: Stories of the Holocaust and the Partisans* (New York: Shengold Publishers, 1981), 118.

¹²⁹ Henry Orenstein, *I Shall Live: Surviving Against All Odds, 1939–1945* (New York: Beaufort, 1987), 25.

your father finds out? You may give him a heart attack.” To escape the harassment, they frequented one of the better Polish restaurants: “I didn’t have to worry about being heckled for dating a Polish girl. No one paid any attention to us.” Eventually, he “started calling for her at her apartment, and her parents didn’t seem to mind.”¹³¹

Jews who married Gentiles, even if they did not convert, were regarded as renegades by the Jewish community and were usually disowned by their families, as was the case in Wasilków near Białystok and in Włocławek.¹³² The Talmud contains a strict ban on intermarriage and Jews who embraced Christianity were treated with particular aversion. Those who intermarried were completely ostracized by the community. Apostates were considered by all to be dead.¹³³ The mother of a girl who ran off with her Polish tutor and married him in a church service, “burdened by shame, overwhelmed by grief thre herself into one of the town wells and fell to he death. Soon afterward the family disappeared from Kolbuszowa.”¹³⁴

In the town of Ejszyszki near Wilno, “the Jewish community lost no opportunity to express its revulsion toward [Goldke],” who had converted to Catholicism to marry a Catholic man; when Meir Hilke converted to Catholicism in 1921 to marry a Catholic woman, “Not a single Jew was to be found on the streets ... and all the doors and windows were shut against the terrible sight.”¹³⁵ Another Jew from Ejszyszki described the nature of some of the doubtless milder harassment endured by Goldke, who had married a Polish

¹³⁰ André Caussat, *Gutka: Du ghetto de Varsovie à la liberté retrouvée* (Paris: L’Harmattan, 1999), 22.

¹³¹ Maurice Shainberg, *Breaking From the KGB: Warsaw Ghetto Fighter...Intelligence Officer...Defector to the West* (New York: Shapolsky, 1986), 33–40.

¹³² Munro, *Bialystok to Birkenau*, 54; Jakub Gutenbaum and Agnieszka Latała, eds., *The Last Eyewitnesses: Children of the Holocaust Speak*, vol. 2 (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 2005), 319. On the other hand, the Polish family in the latter case did not disown their son for marrying a Jewish woman, even though she did not convert and their child was not baptized.

¹³³ Livingston, *Tradition and Modernism in the Shtetl*, 68. The attitude toward illegitimate offspring was equally unenlightened. When a child was born to a Jewish maid in Kolbuszowa, “The town’s youngsters never tired of taunting the man’s other children with the name of the illegitimate child. See Salsitz, *A Jewish Boyhood in Poland*, 190. Edwin Langberg of Drohobycz described the situation in his own household as follows: “my 75 year-old maternal grandmother Sara Nacht was frail and permanently bedridden. She relied on her nurse Blima for all of her physical needs. Our housekeeper Sophie helped in trading for food and took care of meals. The status of Sophie and Blima was an anachronism, an indirect result of the orthodox interpretation of the Hebrew Old Testament relating to ‘mamzers,’ those born of an illegitimate union. The *Torah* states: ‘No mamzer shall be admitted into the congregation of the Lord; none of his descendants, even in the tenth generation, shall be admitted into the congregation of the Lord’ (23:3). The circumstances of their births tragically precluded Blima and Sophie from any chance of a Jewish marriage and family, or membership in the Jewish congregation in pre-war Poland when Jewish life was to a large extent ruled by Orthodox Judaism. Female mamzers frequently entered into service with Jewish families, usually at a young age. There was no binding agreement but after a year or two, both parties considered the position lifelong. Sophie took care of the children in my uncle Elias’ family, and after my mother’s death, became our housekeeper. Blima took care of my arthritic grandmother for years.” See Edwin Langberg with Julia M. Langberg, *Sara’s Blessing* (Lumberton, New Jersey: Emethas Publishers, 2003), 16–17. This phenomenon probably accounts for the fact that a number of Jewish children were taken in by Catholic orphanages in the interwar period. The traditional charge levelled against the Catholic Church in Poland, in particular its convents, regarding the abduction and forcible conversion of Jewish children and especially young women has been discredited by research conducted by Jewish historians. See ChaeRan Freeze, “When Chava Left Home: Gender, Conversion, and the Jewish Family in Tsarist Russia,” and Rachel Manekin, “The Lost Generation: Education and Female Conversion in *Fin-de-Siècle* Kraków,” in *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry*, vol. 18 (Oxford and Portland, Oregon: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2005), 153–219. For statistics on conversions in the 1930s see Waclaw Wierzbieniec, *Żydzi w województwie lwowskim w okresie międzywojennym: Zagadnienia demograficzne i społeczne* (Rzeszów: Uniwersytet Rzeszowski, 2003), 33–40.

¹³⁴ Salsitz, *A Jewish Boyhood in Poland*, 190.

farmer. Whenever she ventured into town, local Jews taunted her in the streets with calls of “Goldke, the convert! Goldke, the convert!”¹³⁶ According to another account,

Little children pointed their fingers at her and yelled, “There goes Goldke the *Mishumaidisteh!*” when she attended church on Sundays. No one had any tolerance, much less sympathy, for her actions.¹³⁷

A Jewish woman who married a Pole in Naliboki, and secretly converted to Catholicism so as not to incur the wrath of the local Jewish population, received an ominous gift from her own mother (who lived in Lwów): a cake containing broken pieces of glass.¹³⁸ Another Jewish woman from the Wilno area who converted when she married a Pole “had done the most abominable deed that a Jewish child could do to her God-fearing parents.” It was her father’s duty according to Jewish law to “repudiate” her:

Now it was his duty to mourn her as if she were dead. He sat shivah for seven days and cried. Later he attempted to put her out of his mind, as if she had never existed.¹³⁹

One memoir describes the reaction when the daughter of a rabbi fell in love with a Polish policeman in a small town near Lublin and insisted on marrying him after converting to Catholicism:

Her poor parents followed the carriage, crying and screaming and beating their heads to a bloody pulp on the sides of the wagon with their daughter not to go through with this woeful deed. ... After this shameful tragedy, the girl’s family secluded themselves and never went out of the house. Her three sisters never married, neither did their cousins in the nearby town. *No one would marry them.*¹⁴⁰

When a young Jewish woman converted to Catholicism in the village of Jaśliska near Krosno, the Jews nearly rioted. The situation became so precarious that she was escorted by a policeman on her way to the church. According to this woman, “Jews threw stones. ... After this celebration, my father came and pleaded with me to go home. ... But I was already baptised ... Later Jews asked my father why he had not brought an axe or a knife with him and cut my head off ... Because it is a horrible thing for Jews when one

¹³⁵ Eliach, *There Once Was a World*, 399.

¹³⁶ Leon Kahn (as told to Marjorie Morris), *No Time To Mourn: A True Story of a Jewish Partisan Fighter* (Vancouver: Laurelton Press, 1978), 81.

¹³⁷ Livingston, *Tradition and Modernism in the Shtetl*, 68.

¹³⁸ Account of Maria Chilicka, dated February 6, 2005 (in the author’s possession).

¹³⁹ Samuel Bak, *Painted in Words: A Memoir* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press; Boston: Pucker Art Publications, 2001), 243.

¹⁴⁰ Henry Gitelman, *I Am Drenched in the Dew of My Childhood: A Memoir* (No publisher, 1997), 21, as quoted in Zvi Gitelman, “Collective Memory and Contemporary Polish-Jewish Relations,” in Zimmerman, ed., *Contested Memories*, 275.

of them gets baptised.” Jews did not leave her in peace. “They tried to stop her from entering the church and they wanted to ‘kill her and stone her to death’. ... After her baptism, [she] sold her second-hand sewing machine and escaped [from the village], because ‘I knew that the Jews would never leave me in peace.’” The initiative to convert had been entirely this woman’s who had shown a fascination with Catholicism since childhood: “It often happened that the priest would show her the door, because Jewish children were not allowed to participate in religious lessons. It also happened that her father would beat her and lift her up by the hair, because he did not like his daughter to attend Catholic services.”¹⁴¹

A similar situation is recorded in the small town of Stoczek when a young Jewish woman, the daughter of a businessman, married a Polish peasant from a nearby village.

When one changed his faith in Stoczek, it signified to all that he had abandoned the Jewish community and went over to the hostile Poles. ... Despite the period of mourning, the community insisted that they did not recognise the act of conversion because a Jew could never be anything but a Jew. It was inconceivable in Stoczek that a Jew could come to believe in another faith. The Jew who went through conversion was, therefore, considered a *shmadnik*, an apostate and traitor, a low and spiteful character, but he never became a Gentile in the eyes of the community.

When this Jewish woman arrived to be married in church, “almost all Jews, young and old, gathered around the town hall where she was staying and shouted insults at her.”¹⁴²

An account from a professional, largely Polish-speaking milieu in Kraków acknowledges: “Intermarriage had become more common in Poland during the 1930s, but it was still regarded as a tragedy by most orthodox parents. Some disowned their children, while others sat *shivah* for them as though they had died, observing seven days of mourning with slippers on their feet and ashes on their head.”¹⁴³ The daughter of a prominent industrialist in Borysław recalled that when her great-grandmother’s daughter married a Christian, she was “considered an outsider in the family. It was not until the war started, when the family wanted to find her to ask her if she could hide my sick grandfather, that I discovered this family secret. No one knew her married name, so the attempt to locate her did not succeed.”¹⁴⁴

¹⁴¹ Rosa Lehmann, *Symbiosis and Ambivalence: Poles and Jews in a Small Galician Town* (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2001), 116–18. When this woman was seized by the Germans during the occupation together with other Jews and taken to the ghetto in Rzeszów, Jews in the ghetto tried to persuade a tipsy Ukrainian soldier to shoot her: “The Jews told him: ‘She is a convert! She has to be killed and shot!’ They said so in my presence. They didn’t care at all! But the Ukrainian soldier told the Jews that he had not received an order to shoot her. He beat her instead in order to ‘silence’ the Jewish mob.” *Ibid.*, 119.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 126–27.

¹⁴³ Diane Armstrong, *Mosaic: A Chronicle of Five Generations* (Milsons Point, New South Wales: Random House, 1998), 129.

¹⁴⁴ Helene C. Kaplan, *I Never Left Janowska...* (New York: Holocaust Library, 1989), 3.

The Second World War did not alter the situation for many. When a Jewish prisoner-of-war whose life had been rescued by a Polish nurse returned to his home in Warsaw in October 1939 to introduce his new Polish girlfriend to his father, Rabbi Moses Korngold, the reaction was one of shock:

“My son has brought a Christian girl home,” he thought, reflecting deeply. “A Polish girl, Is he going to marry her? That must never happen. Never! Never!” ...

“You have brought a Christian into my house. What a disgrace!” his father scolded him. “You are killing me, Never shall I give my consent while I live.”

He would not allow Leon to say a word, but covered his face with his hands, and walking back and forth in his despair, he continued, “Doesn’t your conscience bother you? Have you no sympathy for your old father?” ...

Moses Korngold interrupted him brusquely, shouting at him, ‘You are a lost soul! Get out of my house!’”¹⁴⁵

In German-occupied Lwów, a Jew who had been given shelter by his Polish girlfriend kept the relationship a secret from his parents for fear of being disowned: “Irka was David’s Gentile girlfriend. Giza had told me she thought David and Irka were secretly married, and I quite understood why David would keep the news from his family. He was even more under his Mother’s thumb than Karol, and I am sure she would rather have seen him dead than married to a non-Jewish girl.”¹⁴⁶

Two Jewish siblings who spent the German occupation moving from home to home in the countryside near Kańczuga were apprehensive about the relationships they struck up with their Polish peers. Faiga Rosenbluth wrote: “Much as it hurt me to tear myself away from Stasiak and this comfortable place, it was time to move on. Besides, I knew I could never marry a goy. My parents would die a second death, if such a thing were possible.” Her brother Luzer recalled his own dilemma: “All that night, I lay awake thinking about Andzia. I was trying to figure out whether it was all right to marry a shiksa if there were no other Jews left in the world. It seemed fair to me, but I wasn’t so sure what our rabbi would say.”¹⁴⁷

Nor is it surprising that assimilationists were generally frowned on by mainstream Jewish society. The creation of ghettos under the German occupation intensified dramatically pre-existing conditions for converts, assimilated Jews, and even Polish-speaking children.¹⁴⁸ For some Jewish leaders, the walled

¹⁴⁵ Roman Grunspan, *The Uprising of the Death Box of Warsaw* (New York: Vantage Press, 1978), 12.

¹⁴⁶ Marian Pretzel, *Portrait of a Young Forger: Marian Pretzel’s Memoirs of His Adventures and Survival in Wartime Europe* (St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1989), 89–90.

¹⁴⁷ Fay Walker and Leo Rosen (with Caren S. Neile), *Hidden: A Sister and Brother in Nazi Poland* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2002), 193, 194.

¹⁴⁸ In his chronicle of the Warsaw ghetto Emanuel Ringelblum notes that Jewish nationalists were delighted that the Jews were finally separated from the Poles, albeit in ghettos, seeing in this the beginnings of a separate Jewish state on Polish territory. Hatred towards Polish Christians grew in the ghetto because it was believed that they were responsible for the economic restrictions that befell the Jews. Moreover, many Jews embarked on a battle against the use of the Polish language in the ghetto, especially in Jewish agencies and education, and were opposed to Jewish converts occupying positions of authority. See Emanuel Ringelblum, *Kronika getta warszawskiego: Wrzesień 1939–styczeń 1943* (Warsaw: Czytelnik, 1983), 118, 214–15, 531ff. Assimilationists and converts were loathed. Jewish memoirists

ghettos were not without their blessings. Jacob Gens, the German-appointed leader of the Wilno ghetto, boasted in a speech delivered on January 15, 1943: “For the first time in the history of Vilna we have achieved a purely Jewish school system.”¹⁴⁹ Moreover, Jewish children who spoke Polish in the ghettos

confirm that some Jewish nationalists did not even permit the use of the Polish language in their homes. See Antoni Marianowicz, *Życie surowo wzbronione* (Warsaw: Czytelnik, 1995), 46; Antoni Marianowicz, *Life Strictly Forbidden* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2004). That author, at p. 47, also attests to the fact that converts were generally detested in the Warsaw ghetto, and, at pp. 66–67 and 190, to the pro-German attitudes of some Jews in the ghetto. Another Jew, a child at the time, recalls being ostracized by Yiddish-speaking children because she did not know that language. Such children were disparaged as “Poles” and “converts” and were even pelted with rocks. See Małgorzata-Maria Acher, *Niewłaściwa twarz: Wspomnienia ocalałej z warszawskiego getta* (Częstochowa: Święty Paweł, 2001), 48. As many accounts confirm, the general sentiment toward Jewish converts to Christianity living inside the ghetto was one of hostility and loathing. Even Jewish atheists openly declared their disdain of converts. See Grace Caporino and Diane Isaacs, “Testimonies from the ‘Aryan’ Side: ‘Jewish Catholics’ in the Warsaw Ghetto,” in John K. Roth and Elisabeth Maxwell, *Remembering for the Future: The Holocaust in an Age of Genocide* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire and New York: Palgrave, 2001), vol. 1, 194. According to one source, there were fewer than 1,600 Christian converts in the Warsaw ghetto. See Yisrael Gutman, *The Jews of Warsaw, 1939–1943: Ghetto, Underground, Revolt* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1982), 59. According to another source there may have been as many as 2,000. See Barbara Engelking and Jacek Leociak, *Getto warszawskie: Przewodnik po nieistniejącym mieście* (Warsaw: IfiS PAN, 2001), 620. They were detested for everything: their betrayal of Judaism, their use of the Polish language, their education and social and economic status, their alleged air of superiority and anti-Semitism, and even the assistance they received from Caritas, a Catholic relief organization. Soon malicious, but false, stories spread that they had taken over the senior positions in the ghetto administration and controlled the Jewish police force. See Havi Ben-Sasson, “Christians in the Ghetto: All Saints’ Church, Birth of the Holy Virgin Mary Church, and the Jews of the Warsaw Ghetto,” in *Yad Vashem Studies*, vol. 31 (2003): 153–73. This was so even though, according to one prominent researcher, most of the converts were opportunistic and continued to consider themselves Jews, few of them sustained any connection with their new religion, and “virtually all continued to donate to Jewish religious charities.” See Joseph Marcus, *Social and Political History of the Jews in Poland, 1919–1939* (Berlin, New York, Amsterdam: Mouton, 1983), 78. See also Marian Małowist, “Assimilationists and Neophytes at the Time of War-Operations and in the Closed Jewish Ghetto,” in Joseph Kermish, ed., *To Live With Honor and Die With Honor!...: Selected Documents from the Warsaw Ghetto Underground Archives “O.S.” [“Oneg Shabbath”]* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1986), 619–34. (The memoir of Halina Gorcewicz, whose father ostensibly converted to Catholicism when he married her mother, illustrates that even Jews who had fully assimilated linguistically and culturally maintained a strong tribal-like attachment to fellow Jews—perhaps an embodiment of the lingering notion of the oneness of “the chosen people” they had inherited from Judaism. See Halina Gorcewicz’s memoir, *Why, Oh God, Why?*, posted online at <<http://www.treko.net.au/~jerry/why/whytoc.html>>.) The blatant hostility and humiliations faced by Christian converts in the Warsaw ghetto are documented by Alceo Valcini, the Warsaw correspondent of the Milan *Corriere della Sera*, whose diary was translated into Polish as *Golgota Warszawy, 1939–1945* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1973). Converts were repeatedly harassed when they left church after mass and, on occasion, even the German police had to intervene to protect them from enraged Orthodox Jews. Converts who did not figure in community lists were denied food rations and material assistance. *Ibid.*, 235–36. Valcini’s portrayal is fully supported by a report filed by a Jewish Gestapo informer: Crowds of Jews would gather in front of the Christian churches on Sundays and Christian holy days to take in the spectacle of converts attending mass. At Easter in 1942, the crowd of onlookers was so large at the church of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary on Leszno Street that the *Ordnungsdienst* (Jewish police) stationed a special squad there to maintain order and protect the converts. Cited in Christopher R. Browning and Israel Gutman, “The Reports of a Jewish ‘Informer’ in the Warsaw Ghetto—Selected Documents,” in *Yad Vashem Studies*, vol. 17 (1986): 263. A Jew who was not a convert describes in her memoirs how Jewish scum in the Warsaw ghetto harassed Jewish Christians who attended church services. See Ruth Altbeker Cyprys, *A Jump For Life: A Survivor’s Journal from Nazi-Occupied Poland* (New York: Continuum, 1997), 32. This is confirmed by another Jew who observed Jewish youths standing outside in the street as converts walked to church services and calling “Good Yontiff!” See Gary A. Keins, *A Journey Through the Valley of Perdition* ([United States]: n.p., 1985), 86. Yet another Jew reported an incident at the Church of All Saints when a large band of Hasids gathered with sticks to beat the Catholic Jews as they left church. The Jewish order police was called in to disperse the Hasids. See Engelking and Leociak, *Getto warszawskie*, 622.

¹⁴⁹ Quoted in Ruzhka Korczak (Reizl Korchak), *Levhahot be-efer*, 3rd edition (Merhavia: Moreshet Sifriat Poalim, 1965), 345. Already in the inaugural issue of the Wilno Jewish newspaper *Vilner Togblat*, dated December 27, 1939, the editorial decried: “we are decidedly opposed to the fact that Jews of Wilno, or Warsaw, or anywhere else, speak in Polish on the streets of Wilno, in cafes or in homes.” At the time, Poles constituted a majority of the city’s population. See 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), 364.

were harassed, ostracized and even beaten by Jewish children.¹⁵⁰ Curiously, even in the ranks of the Communist Party of Poland Jewish nationalism came to the forefront among the remnants of that disbanded party who found themselves in France in the late 1930s. The Jewish members, who were better connected and had more financial resources than their Polish colleagues, scorned the latter and even harassed Jews who spoke only the Polish language.¹⁵¹

Day-to-day relations between Christians and Poles in the interwar period are often portrayed in grim colours and violence directed against Jews has been written about extensively. Historian Celia Heller undermines her doom-and-gloom portrayal of Polish Jewry when she discusses Jews organizing defences against violent attacks by Polish hoodlums and extreme nationalists in the 1930's.¹⁵² Small groups of Jewish men, usually armed with such meager things as clubs and perhaps a few firearms, were often successful in preventing or beating off such attacks. Now, were the attacks anything other than unorganized, uncommon, and small-scale, how could such defenses possibly enjoy success?

As historian Szyja Bronsztejn points out, not all of the conflicts and quarrels between Jews and non-Jews were as a result of national differences or anti-Semitic motives.¹⁵³ In particular, it would be unfair to characterize all, or even most, altercations between Polish and Jewish school boys as anti-Semitic assaults.

‘We played together ... in school and sometimes near the house too. And as it is between youths, fights resulted. That’s how we played near here.’ Later the same man related how the Catholic boys would elbow a Jewish boy between them in school. When asked if the Jewish youth fought back, he replied: ‘Of course! He was no coward! It was normal. Normal youths. Normal like everyone else.’ ... There were fights between the *proste* and *balebatish*, and sometimes between Jews and *goyim*: ‘It would all start with insulting songs and would be returned with insulting songs. Then the fighting began until their parents stopped it.’¹⁵⁴

The following accounts make it clear that ordinary Poles were not the feared, anti-Semitic ruffians that they are often portrayed to be and that many of the incidents were merely the kind of bullying that is commonplace among children everywhere. Jews youngsters could also initiate such incidents and could hold their own, and suffered no consequences on that account.

Two or three meters separated Grandmother’s yard from that of Mr. Zychlinski. Close to the fence grew a big nut tree whose large branches overhung Grandmother’s yard. My

¹⁵⁰ See, for example, Acher, *Niewłaściwa twarz*, 48 (Warsaw); Gustaw Kerszman, *Jak ginąć, to razem* (Montreal: Polish-Jewish Heritage Foundation, 2003), 52 (Białystok).

¹⁵¹ Piotr Gontarczyk, *Polska Partia Robotnicza: Droga do władzy 1941–1944* (Warsaw: Fronda, 2003), 45–46.

¹⁵² Heller, *On the Edge of Destruction* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1977), 286–91.

¹⁵³ Szyja Bronsztejn, “Polish-Jewish Relations as Reflected in Memoirs of the Interwar Period,” in *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry*, vol. 8 (1994): 84.

¹⁵⁴ Cited in Annamaria Orla-Bukowska, “*Shtetl* Communities: Another Image,” in *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry*, vol.

brother Leon and his friends threw stones into the branches trying to knock down the nuts, then the children picked up the nuts from both sides of the fence. One day a stone fell on Mr. Zychlinski's son's head, injuring him. When Mr. Zychlinski complained to my father, Father shook it off saying, "Why does your son walk where stones are being thrown?" Citizen Lajbus Fryde announced, "Your son is fighting with *shkootzim!*" Father's answer was, "Do you want the *shkootzim* to beat up my son?"¹⁵⁵

I was also fiercely protective of my sister. She knew that in spite of my size, I could be tough and dauntless. Once when I overheard a bully at school taunt Gita with cries of "Christ killer," I went after the boy and knocked him down. After I threw the first punch, the boy on the ground cried, "Stop! I take it back!" Reluctantly, I backed off, warning him that I would meet any further comments of that nature with a far stronger response.¹⁵⁶

Norman Salsitz's depiction of his Jewish boyhood in Kolbuszowa, a small town in southern Poland, is equally instructive. As he notes, "We were no community of angels; no one group had a monopoly on mischief."¹⁵⁷ Less-than-innocent pranks and hooligan antics on the part of Jewish youth were frequent occurrences. Their behaviour does not demonstrate a fear of Poles, and had these acts been perpetrated by Polish youth they would doubtless be labeled as "anti-Semitic."

Some of the things we did I certainly can't account for, but the fact remains that they were tolerated, sometimes even encouraged. A week before the High Holy Days of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur came Selichot, an entire night given over to prayer before the arrival of these days of awe. What we children did on this night, however, was something quite different: we stole fruit off the trees and out of the orchards of the townspeople and peasants. Why we did it no one seemed to know. The Poles, of course, knew of this practice and tried their best to protect their property. Dogs were set upon us, and if Poles caught up with us we could expect a beating. But year after year it was the same all over again. Instead of actually taking fruit, too often we just managed to break off the tree limbs and ruin what was on them. ...

Boys were boys and some manner of mischief was to be expected. Most of it was relatively harmless. An opportunity developed each time a wagon driver sped through town. There was one peasant in particular, the proud owner of a pair of uncastrated

8 (1994): 101.

¹⁵⁵ Alexander Szurek, *The Shattered Dream* (Boulder, Colorado: East European Monographs, 1989), 31.

¹⁵⁶ Stillman, *A Match Made in Hell*, 7.

¹⁵⁷ Salsitz, *A Jewish Boyhood in Poland*, 245.

horses ... who was our favourite target. On those occasions when he sped by us we'd go running after him, loudly shouting "Mister! Mister!" Finally catching his attention, we caused him to rein in his horses, assuming that we had something important to tell him. After great effort he finally came to a stop and turned to us for our vital information. "We wanted to let you know," we said, "that your wheels are turning." We laughed heartily, thinking how great a joke it was. Rarely was the peasant amused.

In the summer peasants also stood [in the town market area] selling wild strawberries, blackberries, and raspberries that they brought along in heavy, thick baskets. ... Some berries never were sold but instead were filched by youthful raiders, myself included. My friends and I missed few chances to sneak up to the baskets and run off with a handful of berries. Why did we do it? The berries we enjoyed, of course, but there can be no denying the thrill that stealing the berries brought us, especially when peasants gave chase for a short distance in a vain effort to retrieve what was rightfully theirs. ... Snatching berries didn't bother me as much as the large number we crushed when we made our grab.¹⁵⁸

Young Polish pranksters and ruffians could also expect rough treatment from Jews. Polish children on their way to school in Wielkie Oczy encountered a group of Jews who were upset over a slogan that had been painted on the fence of a Jewish baker: "Jews to Palestine." When one of the children read it aloud the Jews quickly encircled and started to beat the terrified Polish children.¹⁵⁹ In Lwów, a small group of Polish high school students was ganged up on and assaulted by a much larger group of Jewish youth.¹⁶⁰ When a group of Polish ruffians tried to force some Jewish teenage boys off a park bench in Płock, a group of young Jewish men from the Maccabee Sports Club were alerted. "Carrying wooden clubs (designed for exercising), they came over to the park and confronted the gang. The Maccabees beat up these thugs, some of whom were taken to the hospital and the rest to court."¹⁶¹

When a group of young men drafted into the army organized a "bachelor party" in Tomaszów Lubleski, and got drunk and started beating up Jews, "We ... didn't take to kindly to it, so we organized ... defense. And when they started beating up Jews, ... they got their portion, and they stopped it."¹⁶² Another account mentions the exploits of Eliakim, a brawny Jew from Wołkowyż whose occupation was hauling wood:

the gentile draftees used to cheer themselves with a "litle" vodka, and from time to time, they would come into town and fall upon the stalls of the Jewish merchants in the

¹⁵⁸ Salsitz, *A Jewish Boyhood in Poland*, 64–65, 70–71, 126.

¹⁵⁹ Mieczysław Dobrzański, *Gehenna Polaków na Rzeszowszczyźnie w latach 1939–1948* (Wrocław: Nortom, 2002), 93.

¹⁶⁰ Zdzisław Zakrzewski, "Na Politechnice Lwowskiej," *Glaukopis: Pismo społeczno-historyczne*, no. 5–6 (2006): 112–13.

¹⁶¹ Neuman-Nowicki, *Struggle for Life During the Nazi Occupation of Poland*, 6–7.

¹⁶² Interview with Miles Lerman, July 17, 2001, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

marketplace, and at times like these Eliakim would show them the brawn of his arm, and he would inspire the Jews with his display of courage, returning the fight to its perpetrators, and these unruly [drunken soldiers] would be scattered all over.¹⁶³

When “Betar” won the 1938 regional soccer championship against “Junak,” the Polish team in Drohobycz,

The spectators pulled out knives after the match. There were wounded on both sides because we had our own scum too. Such as Fischel, who was built like the wrestler Zbyszko Cyganiewicz and loved to beat anti-Semites.¹⁶⁴

Tuvia Bielski, a volatile man who was prone to violence, recalls his experiences in his village of Stankiewiczze near Lida and in the army:

“We grew up among the [Belorussian] peasants, we knew them. We knew how to fight. ...” [In a confrontation with a neighbour in a dispute over some land:] “When he came closer I reached for my scythe and with it hit his. He lost his balance, landing on his back. When he was on the ground, I began to hit him with my hands. Four farmhands came to look. They stood there amused, laughing at the man’s misfortune.

“That day I gave him such a beating that we did not see him for two weeks. ...”

When a Polish soldier whom Tuvia suspected of being slightly retarded called him a dirty Jew, he grabbed the man by the collar and ordered him to stop. The Pole continued ... and Tuvia reached for a knife. He hit the man over the face with the handle of the knife and let him go only after the soldier, whose face was covered with blood, became silent.

Several soldiers witnessed the scene. ... This incident was followed by several hearings before different superior officers. Each time Tuvia defended himself saying that as a Polish citizen he could not tolerate anti-Semitic abuse. ... the case was dismissed.¹⁶⁵

[Retold, this story goes as follows:] When he asked a cook if he could have a schmeer of chicken fat for his bread, the man responded: “Get out of here, you scabby Jew.” Without a moment’s thought, Tuvia grabbed the man with his right hand and pummeled him with his left. He shoved him against a table and grabbed a large knife—which, despite his

¹⁶³ Yerachmiel Moorstein, ed., *Zelva Memorial Book* (Mahwah, New Jersey: Jacob Solomon Berger, 1992), 101.

¹⁶⁴ Account of Dr. Leopold Lustig in Henryk Grynberg, *Drohobycz, Drohobycz and Other Stories: True Tales from the Holocaust and Life After* (New York: Penguin Books, 2002), 16.

¹⁶⁵ Nechama Tec, *Defiance: The Bielski Partisans* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 8–9.

anger, he refrained from using. Instead, he picked up a chair and smashed it across the cook's face. ...

The incident was subject to a thorough investigation. Tuvia described [with exaggeration] his pride in serving in the army and defending his country. The cook's insult was directed not only at him, he said deftly, but at the Polish Army itself. "I am prepared to protect the honor of my uniform." No action was taken.¹⁶⁶

Ben Shedletzky from a small near Warsaw recalled a similar experience:

When a fellow Polish soldier said, "Jew, clean my rifle," Shedletzky hit him with his own rifle, breaking his collar bone and sending him to hospital for 12 days.

"I didn't know a Jew could hit that hard," the soldier later told a military hearing which cleared Shedletzky of charges.

The Polish soldier became Shedletzky's best friend and later helped save his life.¹⁶⁷

Yosel Epelbaum recalls the following confrontation with a tax collector in the family meat store in Biała Podlaska:

Most of all we dreaded the tax collector. ... Failure to pay [taxes] resulted in the confiscation of your entire stock of goods. A taxman once came into our store and brazenly hauled off a huge slab of beef. This triggered an explosion of rage in Simcha [Yosel's brother], who walked up behind him, hit him on the side of the head with the brass knuckles he often carried, and knocked him out cold. That particular tax collector never bothered us again, and Simcha was never identified as the one who assaulted him.¹⁶⁸

Jews were quite capable of picking fights and defending themselves when confronted, as the following accounts from Kosów Lacki and Częstochowa demonstrate:

The driver who took me to the railroad station the day I left was part of a group of Jewish toughs in our little town who didn't know fear. They loved a fight with *goyim* and

¹⁶⁶ Peter Duffy, *The Bielski Brothers: The True Story of Three Men Who Defied the Nazis, Saved 1,200 Jews, and Built a Village in the Forest* (New York: HaperCollins, 2003), 15–16.

¹⁶⁷ Ben Rose, "Discarded rifle kept family alive during war," *The Canadian Jewish News*, August 24, 1995. One wonders if a Black American could ever expect to see such leniency in the military in interwar America.

¹⁶⁸ Pell and Rosenbaum, *Taking Risks*, 30–31. One wonders if a Black American could ever expect to see such leniency from an official in interwar America.

sometimes even among themselves. (Their filthy language alone could kill.) These drivers prided themselves on their muscles, rudeness and standing up to anybody.¹⁶⁹

They [Endeks] attacked the Jews, and they didn't let themselves. ... When a Jewish team palyed a non-Jewish team, a radical team, they always came a fight broke out. So the Jews always won the fight. Because they have tough guys, good boxers, good fighters, they always could, they beat up any attack.¹⁷⁰

It should be noted that when there were signs of impending violence in towns local authorities and police generally took steps to prevent it,¹⁷¹ and when violence erupted the police contained it and the culprits were prosecuted and punished.¹⁷² When brawls broke out between Poles and Jews at universities, initiated for the most part by Polish nationalist students, the school authorities did not hesitate to take disciplinary action against all those involved in such activities.¹⁷³ Yet despite all these tensions, according to official Polish

¹⁶⁹ Account of Rivka Barlev in *Kosow Lacki*, 14.

¹⁷⁰ Account of Leo Scher, Louisiana Holocaust Survivors, The Southern Institute for Education and Research, posted at <<http://www.tulane.edu/~so-inst/scher.html>>.

¹⁷¹ See, for example, Yehoshya Zilber, "The Revisionist Part," in M. Bakalczuk-Felin, ed., *Commemoration Book Chelm*, Internet: <<http://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/chelm/chelm.html>>; translation of *Yisker-bukh Chelm* (Johannesburg: Former Residents of Chelm, 1954), 213–14 (the local Polish authorities in Chelm alerted the police commander, who sent out patrols to ensure that rumoured violence did not erupt).

¹⁷² Many examples of police interventions, arrests, and criminal trials in Lwów are noted in Grzegorz Mazur, *Życie polityczne polskiego Lwowa 1918–1939* (Kraków: Księgarnia Akademicka, 2007), 219–74. See also "Głowno", in *Pinkas ha-kehilot: Polin*, vol. 1, 81–84 (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1976), translated as *Encyclopedia of Jewish Communities in Poland*, Internet: <http://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/pinkas_poland/pol1_00081.html> (six instigators of riots were put on trial and jailed for 4 to 8 months); "Opatow", in *Pinkas ha-kehilot: Polin*, vol. 7 (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1999), 58–64, translated as *Encyclopedia of Jewish Communities in Poland*, Internet: <http://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/pinkas_poland/pol7_00058.html> (rioters who attacked stores and stalls of Jews in Opatów were arrested, brought to trial, and sentenced); "Radzyn," in *Pinkas ha-kehilot: Polin*, vol. 7, 543–47, translated as *Encyclopedia of Jewish Communities in Poland*, Internet: <http://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/pinkas_poland/pol7_00543.html>; "Sosnowiec," in *Pinkas ha-kehilot: Polin*, vol. 7, 327–38, translated as *Encyclopedia of Jewish Communities in Poland*, Internet: <http://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/pinkas_poland/pol7_00327.html>.

¹⁷³ See, for example, Elias Bialski, *Patrząc prosto w oczy* (Montreal: Polish-Jewish Heritage Foundation, 2002), 24. The author recalls the friendly attitude of his professors at the Main School of Farming (Główna Szkoła Gospodarstwa Wiejskiego) in Warsaw. *Ibid.*, 41. According to Jewish sources, Jewish students comprised 24.6 percent of the entire Polish university population in the 1921–22 academic year, and 20 percent in 1928–29. In 1932–33 their number fell to 18.7 percent, and in 1935–36, to 13.3 percent. By 1936–37 they comprised 11.8 percent of all students, and in 1937–38 only 10 percent (which was slightly higher than their overall share of the country's population). These figures do not include many Poles of Jewish origin among the intelligentsia who had converted to Catholicism. See Raphael Mahler, "Jews in Public Service and the Liberal Professions in Poland, 1918–39," *Jewish Social Studies*, vol. 6, no. 4 (October 1944), 341. 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 students enrolled 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 Lwów. See *Mały rocznik statystyczny 1937* (Warsaw: Główny Urząd Statystyczny, 1937), 312. Even with the admission restrictions imposed in the mid-1930's, Jews continued to be over-represented at some Polish universities, e.g., at the Stefan Batory University in Wilno, in the 1938–39 academic year, 417 of the 3,110 students enrolled were Jewish, or about 13½ percent of the student body. (Other minorities accounted for 432 students, or almost 14 percent.) See Piotr Łossowski, ed., *Likwidacja Uniwersytetu Stefana Batorego przez władze litewskie w grudniu 1939 roku* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Interlibro, 1991), 74.

The *numerus clausus*, or quota, introduced at some Polish universities in the mid-1930s, sought to limit Jewish enrolment to that group's overall share of the country's population (which was a little under 10%) in face of the marked

sources, some 8,400 Jews who had emigrated to Palestine chose to return to Poland in 1926–1938.¹⁷⁴ Quite a few Jews who left for America also returned. In the small town of Kolbuszowa, there were ten such Jewish families—a clear indication that many Jews did not believe that life was unbearable for them in interwar Poland.¹⁷⁵

The 1930s witnessed a marked increase of violence on the part of radicalized elements of society. Ukrainian nationalists embarked on outright terrorism against the Polish State and were also known to

overrepresentation of Jewish students in the early 1920s when they made up about 25 percent of the entire student body. Similar policies were also in place in many European countries such as Hungary, where it was pioneered in the early 1920s, and in Baltic countries of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. 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 (between 1932 and 1938 the percentage of Jews enrolled at Kaunas University fell from 26.5% to 14.7%). Jewish students at the University of Kaunas were required to occupy separate benches in the lecture halls. See Dov Levin’s entry “Lithuania” in Gershon D. Hundert, ed., *The YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe*, forthcoming, Internet: <<http://www.yivo.org/publications>>. Polish interwar quotas appear to have been more generous than the severe restrictions in force at Ivy League and other universities in the United States and Canada at that time. It is not surprising, therefore, that anti-Jewish discourse publicly flourished on American university campuses on the eve of the Holocaust. See Leonard Dinnerstein, *Anti-Semitism in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994); Jerome Karabel, *The Chosen: The Hidden History of Admission and Exclusion at Harvard, Yale and Princeton* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2005). Remarkably such policies, which also excluded Blacks and other minorities, continued well into the 1960s. It is also worth noting that in contemporary Israel, Palestinians are severely disadvantaged in terms of educational opportunities and it is exceedingly rare—approximately one in a thousand—for an Arab Bedouin, a group numbering some 150,000, to reach higher education.

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 Rafael F. Scharf, *Poland, What Have I To Do with Thee...: Essays without Prejudice*, Bilingual edition (Kraków: Fundacja Judaica, 1996), 209. Jewish accounts alleging discrimination tend to grossly exaggerate the situation by suggesting that virtually every Jew who was not admitted to university was the victim of anti-Semitism. The reality was quite different. In his memoirs, one Jew describes how he was one of 500 Jews who applied for 200 places at the Warsaw School of Medicine. Of the 200 students admitted annually, 80 places were reserved for members of the military medical corps, 100 for non-Jewish applicants and the rest, 20 for Jews. The Jewish quota corresponded to the percentage of Jews in the country. However, even if 50 had been admitted, still 90 percent of those Jews who applied would have been rejected for reasons other than anti-Semitism. See Haskell Nordon, *The Education of a Polish Jew: A Physician’s War Memoirs* (New York: D. Grossman Press, 1982), 82–83. Some accounts are even more far-fetched in hurling false accusations. Rosalie Abella Silverman, who sits on the Supreme Court of Canada, has gone out of her way to publicize that her father, who attended Jagiellonian University’s Faculty of Law from 1930 to 1934, was allegedly “one of only four [sic] Jews permitted entry under quotas,” and that Jewish students were assigned special seats in the lecture rooms. See, among others, her Opening Address at the Law Society of Upper Canada’s Benchers’ Retreat, October 14, 1999, Internet: <http://www.ontariocourts.on.ca/court_of_appeal/speeches/professionalism.htm>; and Donna Bailey Nurse, “Just ‘Rosie’,” *University of Toronto Magazine*, Winter 2006, Internet: <<http://www.magazine.utoronto.ca:80/06winter/rosie.asp>>. In fact, there were no quotas or special seats assigned to Jews at that time, and more than 1,000 students who declared themselves to be Jews were enrolled in the Faculty of Law. The following statistics are taken from the authoritative publication, Mariusz Kulczykowski, *Żydzi–studenci Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego w Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej (1919–1939)* (Kraków: Polska Akademia Umiejętności, 2004), 66 (Table 9): in 1928–29, of 2,525 students enrolled, 1,074 were Jews (including 121 females), or 42.54% of all students; in 1929–30, of 2,565 students enrolled, 994 were Jews (119 females), or 38.75%; in 1930–31, of 2,660 students enrolled, 1,084 were Jews (169 females), or 40.75%; in 1931–32, of 3,096 students enrolled, 1,182 were Jews (230 females), or 38.18%; in 1932–33, of 3,049 students enrolled, 1,167 were Jews (246 females), or 38.28%; in 1933–34, of a total enrolment of 2,970, 910 were Jews (191 females), or 30.64%.

¹⁷⁴ *Mały rocznik statystyczny 1939* (Warsaw: Główny Urząd Statystyczny, 1939), 52. For detailed statistics for the Jagiellonian University in Kraków, see Mariusz Kulczykowski, *Żydzi–studenci Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego w Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej (1919–1939)* (Kraków: Polska Akademia Umiejętności, 2004).

¹⁷⁵ Salsitz, *A Jewish Boyhood in Poland*, 220.

attack Jews.¹⁷⁶ The Jews were no exception to these disturbing developments. Violent confrontations were by no means the prerogative of criminal elements, such as the bloody fighting between rival underworld gangs of Litvaks and “locals” in Warsaw and Łódź. As historian Samuel D. Kassow has observed, violence was part and parcel of shtetl life.

Contrary to popular perceptions, the *shtetl* saw its share of violence and chicanery. Chaim Grade’s account in *Tsemakh Atlas* of a local *balebos*’s hiring thugs to destroy a library accords with real-life accounts of violence during *kehillah* elections, disputes over new rabbis and funerals, and arguments over taxes. Grudges and grievances often interrupted Sabbath prayers and even led to fights in the synagogue. Incidents such as that which occurred in Mińsk Mazowiecki in the 1930’s, when the local butchers assaulted a respected Zionist delegate to the *kehillah* after he raised the meat tax to pay for the local Tarbut school, were not uncommon. Bribery to fix elections of new rabbis was rampant, and the disgruntled party often brought in its own candidate, thus leading to serious conflicts that split families and friends.

... An incident in Głębokie on Yom Kippur in 1932 was not atypical. In that case, a conflict arose in the Starosielsker *minyán* over who would lead the *musaf* (additional) prayers. When Rabbi Menakhem-Mendl Kuperstock began to intone “Hineni he-ani,” a fist fight broke out. His opponents, still draped in prayer shawls, ran to adjoining synagogues to rally reinforcements. A mass brawl ensued, and as Polish police arrived *en masse* to quell the fighting, the leader of the pro-Kuperstock faction was seen escaping through a window. Twenty-five Jews, including many of the prominent community leaders, faced a public trial, which ended in suspended sentences. The editor of the local [Jewish] newspaper had pleaded with the opposing parties to settle their differences before the trial began. For a time it seemed that he had succeeded, but as soon as the court session started, charges and countercharges—in a broken Polish that caused waves of laughter from the spectators—began flying back and forth. In Mińsk Mazowiecki, a sharp battle over the rabbi’s position went all the way to the Polish Najwyższy Trybunał Administracyjny (Supreme Administrative Tribunal).¹⁷⁷

Another key source that reflected the changing society of the shtetl was the weekly newspaper. Such publications contain valuable contemporary accounts that serve as a counterpoint to the nostalgic accounts that were published in many of the post-war

¹⁷⁶ Mazur, *Życie polityczne polskiego Lwowa 1918–1939*, 61 (attacks on Jews), 114–39.

¹⁷⁷ Samuel D. Kassow, “Community and Identity in the Interwar Shtetl,” in Yisrael Gutman, Ezra Mendelsohn, Jehuda Reinharz, and Chone Shmeruk, *The Jews of Poland Between Two World Wars* (Hanover, New Hampshire and London: University Press of New England for Brandeis University Press, 1989), 204–205. Kassow goes on to point out: “Quite often these conflicts went to the Polish courts, a point suggesting a higher degree of Jewish-Gentile contact than one would assume from reading the memorial books.”

memorial books (*yizker bikher*). For example, the memorial book of Glebokie [Głębokie] made no mention of grinding poverty. Indeed, it said that most Jews lived well ... But the weekly shtetl newspaper painted a far bleaker picture and ran detailed accounts of riots by desperately poor Jews who demanded more help from the Jewish community. The memorial book depicted an image of a Jewish community that lived in peace and harmony. But in an editorial from October of 1931, the shtetl newspaper bemoaned the fact that on *Shabes Shuva* (the Sabbath between Rosh Hashona and Yom Kippur) fights had broken out in three different synagogues. “Gentiles like to fight in taverns,” the newspaper complained. “We prefer to fight in the synagogue.” On Yom Kippur of 1932 a fight broke out over who would lead a service in the synagogue [and] resulted in a mass brawl that spilled into the street. On this, too, the memorial book was completely silent.

... Elections [to the *kehilles*, the local Jewish community councils] were often intense and hard fought and exposed political rifts in the community. Political parties, coalitions of Hasidim and prayer houses, and personal cliques all contested these elections, which were sometimes made by violence, especially when the Orthodox *Agudat Yisroel* used Polish law to overturn Bundist and Zionist victories. In the shtetl of Sokolow [Sokolów], after the *Aguda* used Article 20 to cancel a *Poalei Tsiyon* (Labor Zionist victory), the *Poalei Tsiyon* invaded the *kehila* building and smashed the furniture.¹⁷⁸

Street brawls and altercations among various student, political, cultural, linguistic, and even religious factions, disrupting each other’s meetings, and ransacking their opponent’s premises—all these were constant features of everyday life in both cities and shtetls.¹⁷⁹ Violence on a purely personal level was also

¹⁷⁸ Samuel Kassow, “The Shtetl in Interwar Poland,” in Steven T. Katz, ed., *The Shtetl: New Evaluations* (New York and London: New York University Press, 2007), 128, 130.

¹⁷⁹ Examples of politically and religiously based turmoil, assaults and even murders are plentiful. It is noteworthy that frequently the Polish police was called on by the Jews themselves to intervene, thus belying the claim that Jews distrusted the Polish police and that the latter were unresponsive to violence directed at Jews. In Brańsk, according to Jewish reports, “‘there was no Saturday or holiday that passed without a fight.’ Party meetings were disrupted by the acolytes of all the other parties, and resulted in ‘bloody fights’ that spilled into the streets.” See Hoffman, *Shtetl*, 180–81. In Ejszyszek, the “library was the ‘bone of contention’ and constant battleground of the two camps: the Hebrews and the Yiddishists. Meetings for the election of the library management often ended in blows. Torn shirts and bloody noses were a frequent result of this language battle.” See Livingston, *Tradition and Modernism in the Shtetl*, 66. See also Yaffa Eliach, *There Once Was a World: A Nine-Hundred-Year Chronicle of the Shtetl of Eishyshok* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1998), 509 (Ejszyszek). In a village near Raduń, “when one of the Zionist parties sent a lecturer to speak on their behalf. Then there was fervent excitement among the younger generation, and not infrequently such a gathering would end in a free-for-all and the meeting would break up in a scramble.” See Aviel, *A Village Named Dowgalishok*, 11. An “ugly incident” occurred in Kolbuszowa “on Simchat Torah, the joyous holiday on which congregants paraded around bearing the sacred Torahs. With the rabbi dancing about, carrying one of the Torahs, a follower of the *dayan* [an assistant and rival to the rabbi] ran up and attempted to snatch it from him. A battle then ensued between the two sides. The fight ended quickly; but the matter was taken to court, where the *dayan*’s supporter was convicted for ‘disturbing religious services’ and received a five-year prison term. Other heated legal issues between the two sides dragged on year after year.” See Salsitz, *A Jewish Boyhood in Poland*, 156–57. In Kraśnik, where the Jews were “overwhelmingly” very religious, traditionalists “fought energetically against the liberationist movement [i.e., secular leftist Jews]. There were organized groups of the Orthodox who, on every Friday evening, would break into the apartments where the Jewish youth congregated to check whether anyone was in violation of the Sabbath.” See Benjamin Zylberberg, “Żydzi w Kraśniku i ... z Kraśnika,” *Kalendarz Żydowski 1993–1994: Almanach*

5754 (Warsaw: Związek Religijny Wyznania Mojżeszowego w Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej, 1993), 35. For accounts from other localities see Marek Jan Chodakiewicz, *Żydzi i Polacy 1918–1955: Współistnienie—Zagłada—komunizm* (Warsaw: Fronda, 2000), 91–96 (various localities); J. Ben-Meir (Treshansky), *Sefer yizkor Goniadz* (Tel Aviv: The Committee of Goniadz Association in the USA and in Israel, 1960), 475–76 (a gang that “held the gentiles around adjacent towns in fear”), 545–46 (a bandit gang from Goniadz composed mostly of young Jews who terrorized both Jews and Christians); Benyamin Shapir-Shisko (Karkoor), “Culture Wars in Volozhin,” in E. Leoni, ed., *Wolozin: The Book of the City and of the Ets Hayyim Yeshiva*, posted on the Internet at <www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/volozhin/volozhin.html>; translation of *Wolozyn: Sefer shel ha-ir ve-shel yeshivat “Ets Hayim”* (Tel Aviv: Former Residents of Wolozin in Israel and the USA, 1970), 440ff. (Wołożyn); David Shtokfish, ed., *Sefer-yizkor Ostrow-Lubelski—Yisker bukh Ostrow-Lubelski* (Israel: Association of Former Residents of Ostrow-Lubelski in Israel, 1987), in particular, the account of Mechi (Mischa) Eckhaus posted on the Internet at <<http://nizkor.org/hweb/places/poland/ostrow/ostrow-04.html>> (Ostrów Lubelski); Mędrzecki, *Województwo Wołyńskie 1921–1939*, 179, n.18 (political gatherings often ended in brawls and religious-based confrontations also occurred in Volhynia); Naftali Dov Fuss, *The Imposter* (Jerusalem: Gefen, 1992), 35–36 (Tarnów); Arkadiusz Kołodziejczyk, “Nożownicy spod znaku KPP,” *Słowo Podlasia*, March 15–18, 1992 (Międzyrzec Podlaski); Jack Pomerantz and Lyric Wallwork Winik, *Run East: Flight from the Holocaust* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1997), 12 (Radzyń Podlaski); Gitel Donath, *My Bones Battle to Survive: A Lonely Battle to Survive German Tyranny* (Montreal: Kaplan Publishing, 1999), (Siedlce); Paweł Machcewicz and Krzysztof Persak, eds., *Wokół Jedwabnego* (Warsaw: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej—Komisja Ścigania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu, 2002), vol. 2, 269 (Radziłów); Stefan Ernest, *O Wojnie wielkich Niemiec z Żydami Warszawy, 1939–1945* (Warsaw: Czytelnik, 2003), 173 (Izrael First, the administrator of the Jewish Academic House in Warsaw’s Praga suburb, was renowned for leading fights with Jewish students with Communist leanings); 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), 27–28 (altercations between Betar and Hashomer supporters and fist fights between Bundists and Zionists in Biała Podlaska); Mariusz Bechta, *Narodowo radykalni: Obrona tradycji i ofensywa narodowa na Podlasiu w latach 1934–1939* (Biała Podlaska: Biblioteczka Bialska and Rekonwista, 2004), 209–10 (Międzyrzec Podlaski, Radzyń Podlaski); Janusz Szczepański, *Spoleczność żydowska Mazowska w XIX–XX wieku* (Pułtusk: Wyższa Szkoła Humanistyczna imienia Aleksandra Gieysztorowa w Pułtusku, 2005), 265 (Długosiodło), 278 (Przasnysz), 284 (Maków), 286 (Mława), 304 (various locations), 305 (Nowy Dwór), 306 (Pułtusk), 315 (various locations), 317 (Wyszogród)—Szczepański’s study mentions many interventions by police; Mosze Snejser, as told to Jakub Rajchman, “Robiłem buty, odmawiałem kadisz,” *Rzeczpospolita*, January 29–30, 2005 (a Communist by the name of Jojne Bocian was killed as a traitor).

As for relations with Poles, it is worth noting that the large pre-World War I pogroms—in Białystok in June 1906 and in Siedlce in September 1906—were not the work of the native Polish population, but of the Russian rulers. Israeli historian Emanuel Melzer notes that: “The anti-Jewish excesses and pogroms in the years 1935–37 had their specific characteristics and dynamics. Usually they resulted from the killing of a Pole by a Jew, either as an act of self-defence or [more often] as a criminal act of an individual committed out of personal revenge. For this killing the entire local Jewish community was held collectively responsible. The pogroms of Grodno (1935), Przytyk (1936), Mińsk Mazowiecki (1936), Brześć nad Bugiem (1937), and Częstochowa (1937) all followed this pattern.” See Emanuel Melzer, “Anti-Semitism in the Last Years of the Second Polish Republic,” in Gutman, et al., eds., *The Jews of Poland Between Two World Wars*, 129. See also Emanuel Melzer, *No Way Out: The Politics of Polish Jewry, 1935–1939* (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1997), 53. Not mentioned is the fact that, although attributing collective responsibility to the other side is a feature interethnic violence, the relatively small number of Polish rioters (a tiny fraction of the numbers involved in U.S. race riots in the latter half of the 20th century, which were frequent and often lasted for days or weeks), as well as the small number of Jewish victims overall, does not support a high degree of popular fury directed at Jews in general. Moreover, such incidents were often grossly exaggerated when, for example, the Jewish press in Warsaw turned an altercation at a football game in Lublin in October 1931, into a pogrom in which more than 30 Jews were allegedly wounded, some seriously. The *Lubliner Tuglat* was astounded by these revelations and rebuked the Warsaw press. See Maurycjusz, “‘Kibole’ minionej epoki,” *Nowa Myśl Polska*, December 5, 2004. For information about violence by Christians directed at Jews, its background, Jewish retaliation, and the reaction of the authorities including the frequent use of police reinforcements, preventative detention and punishment of perpetrators, see: Chodakiewicz, *Żydzi i Polacy 1918–1955*, 78–91; Joanna Żyndul, *Zajścia antyżydowskie w Polsce w latach 1935–1937* (Warsaw: Fundacja im. K. Keles-Krauzy, 1994); Piotr Gontarczyk, *Pogrom?: Zajścia polsko-żydowskie w Przytyku 9 marca 1936 r. Mity, fakty, dokumenty* (Biała Podlaska: Rekonwista, and Pruszków: Rachocki i S-ka, 2000), especially 32–44; Bechta, *Narodowo radykalni*, chapter 4; “Confessions of Zbigniew Romaniuk,” 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 Two, 24–25; Hoffman, *Shtetl*, 196–99; Machcewicz and Persak, eds., *Wokół Jedwabnego*, vol. 1, 112–13. It should be noted that Poles were also assaulted by Jews during this period. In addition to the above sources, see, for example, Witold Sasaki, *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), 21–22 (Polish student Stanisław Waclawski was

stoned to death in Wilno); Wojciech J. Muszyński and Jacek T. Persa, "II Rzeczpospolita korporancka," *Glaukopis* (Warsaw), no. 1 (2003): 7–60, at pp. 58–60 (a group of Polish students was attacked in Lwów which resulted in the death of Jan Grodkowski); Grzegorz Mazur, "Skic z dziejów Stronnictwa Narodowego we Lwowie w latach 30. XX wieku," 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), 105–137, at pp. 109, 112, 116, 119–20.

One of the bones of contention was the fact the Jewish community refused, ostensibly for religious reasons, to provide Jewish cadavers for use in training medical students, but fully expected Jewish students to dissect Christian bodies. Some Polish students called for the segregation of Jewish students at the university in Wilno after a Polish student had been killed by Jews in October 1931, following protests over the fact that only Christian cadavers were used for dissection in anatomy. See Saski, *Crossing Many Bridges*, 21–22. The Jewish religion considered using Jewish cadavers for such purposes to constitute desecration, though Jews had no ethical qualms about using Christian corpses and even made light of that fact. (As one Jewish student recalled, "'Find me a young one, a pretty one,' we would joke ...") Consequently, Polish students pressed the university authorities to require the Jewish community to provide cadavers for the Jewish students. The Jewish Medical Students Association in Warsaw turned to the Central Rabbinic Council for their cooperation, which entailed a ruse involving the "loaning" of death certificates with which to tag Christian female corpses as Jews. When this practice elicited suspicion, various bribes were paid to facilitate this unsavoury charade. The practice spread to the medical faculties in Wilno, Kraków, and Poznań. See Moshe Prywes, as told to Haim Chertok, *Prisoner of Hope* (Hanover and London: Brandeis University Press, 1996), 65–66. Yet this author notes that the resultant campus disturbances did not adversely effect how Jewish students performed and were graded by the professors: "year after year, class after class, graduation after graduation, the outstanding students in the medical school were to be found among the ranks of the bench ghetto." *Ibid.*, 71. Another bone of contention was the ritual slaughter of animals, a practice banned in some Western European countries for humanitarian reasons. Ritual slaughter was an important source of revenue for Jewish communities which licenced those who carried it out and charged a tax for every slaughtered animal. Since the meat processing industry was largely in Jewish hands, Christians in effect also had to pay the tax on kosher meat imposed for the purpose of generating financial support for Jewish community organizations. Thus Polish politicians in the interwar period sought to restrict the practice of ritual slaughter proportionate to the Jewish share of the country's population in order to alleviate the largely impoverished Christian population from bearing this unnecessary financial burden.

Anti-Jewish excesses occurred in most European countries, even those without with a sizeable Jewish population. In Lithuania, for example, disturbances and beatings of Jews were not uncommon in the 1930s, with hundreds of Jews suffering injuries. See Alfonsas Eidintas, *Jews, Lithuanians and the Holocaust* (Vilnius: Versus Aureus, 2003), 82–88. In October 1936, a legal march by the British Union of Fascists, formed in 1932 by the aristocratic adventurer Sir Oswald Mosley, descended on the East End of London, and provoked the so-called Cable Street Riot. East London was the home of a large Jewish population and a seedbed of anti-semitism and racist propaganda in general, even though Jews comprised only 0.7 percent of the country's total population at the time. The British Brothers' League, founded by ex-army officers in 1900, claimed 45,000 members in the East End. Organized on a semi-military footing, it campaigned against "alien" and especially Jewish immigration from Eastern Europe, influencing the passing of the Aliens Restriction Act in 1905. Mosley's East London campaign began in earnest in the summer of 1936 with a big rally in Victoria Park in June. Through endless street-corner meetings, fire-bombing and smashing the windows of Jewish shops, racist abuse and physical attacks, the fascists worked overtime to create an atmosphere of siege. In late September 1936 the League announced its intention to mount a show of strength on the afternoon of Sunday, October 4, designed to intimidate the organized working class and in particular the local Jewish community. Uniformed fascists were to gather in military formation at Royal Mint Street, where they would be reviewed by their führer, before marching in separate contingents to four meetings in East London. Despite urgent appeals and petitions the Home Office refused to intervene to stop the march even though its consequences were plainly apparent. In fact, 10,000 police were brought in from all over London and deployed to protect the marchers from the anti-fascists. According to the *Daily Herald*: "the police precautions enabled the rest of the Fascists to assemble unmolested. They formed in military formation, a column of 3,000 stretching for half a mile, with over 200 black-bloused women in the centre. ... The Blackshirts jeered back at distant booing. 'The Yids, the Yids, we are going to get rid of the Yids', they chanted, or, 'M-0-S-L-E-Y, we want Mosley', to which the crowd shouted back, 'So do we, dead or alive'. New detachments arrived in the steel-protected Fascist vans, behind steel-wire meshing." Only towards the evening were the Blackshirts escorted out of Royal Mint Street by thousands of police and diverted down the Embankment—away from East London. As the fascists skulked off towards the West End, "everyone of Jewish appearance was insulted and in some cases they were spat upon." See Richard Price and Martin Sullivan, "The Battle of Cable Street: Myths and Realities," *Workers News*, March–April 1994. Of course, all of this pales in comparison to what was happening at the time in countries like Germany, the Soviet Union, Italy and Spain. Much less known is the day-to-day harassment experienced by Jews in contemporary Western Europe. A Jewish student from England who spent six months living in Vienna, reported: "The Jews of Austria are constantly blamed by people of other religions for crimes such as muggings, burglaries and shoplifting. The Jewish family I stayed with received regular intimidation in retaliation for crimes supposedly committed by Jews. I also witnessed several incidents where orthodox Jews were attacked by gangs of

youths. The authorities in Vienna take absolutely no notice of this antisemitic behavior, which leads me to believe that they are glad to see our persecution.” See Mervyn S. Feinstein, letter, “Austria,” *Economist*, July 11, 1987, as quoted in Iwo Cyprian Pogonowski, *The Jews of Poland: A Documentary History* (New York: Hippocrene, 1993), 175. In Sweden, in the spring of 2002, a group of about 100 Jews protesting anti-Semitism was attacked by pro-Palestinian demonstrators who burned their signs and posters as police stood by watching. Jewish school children hide their Star of David pendants under their shirts for fear of being attacked and find their school work desecrated with swastikas and are greeted with “Heil Hitler” salutes by their schoolmates, with principals and teachers refusing to intervene. One Jewish student at an elite high school was told it was a shame that Hitler didn’t finish the extermination of all Jews, so they wouldn’t come to Sweden. See Michael Moshe Checinski, *Running the Gauntlet of Anti-Semitism: From Polish Counterintelligence to the German/American Marshall Center* (Jerusalem and New York: Devora, 2004), 302.

The situation for non-Jews is even worse. Non-White minorities especially continue to face hostility and frequent excesses. For example, between 1935 and 1976, 60,000 mentally and physically handicapped women were forcibly sterilized in Sweden; one of the goals of that program was to rid society of “inferior” racial types such as Gypsies and to encourage Aryan features. Similar allegations were levelled with respect to Denmark, Norway, Finland and Switzerland. Mainly in Germany, but also in France, England and elsewhere, violent assaults against immigrants and foreigners became a daily occurrence in the 1990s. In that decade, at least 40 Gypsies were killed in the Czech Republic in racially motivated attacks. See Gwynne Dyer, “Europe’s Gypsies consider their future,” *The Toronto Star*, August 6, 2000. Characteristically, what is branded as a “pogrom” in Eastern Europe becomes merely a “riot” if it occurs in Western countries. In this regard, the recent events in Oldham, England, where East Indians were attacked and dozens injured, are no exception. See, for example, the following media reports: “Race Riot Casts Pall over U.K. Vote,” *The National Post* (Toronto), May 28, 2001; “Right-wing Groups Blamed for British Riots,” *The National Post*, May 29, 2001. In Holland, in November 2004, a bomb was planted in a Muslim school in Eindhoven, an Islamic school in Uden was destroyed after an arson attack, and numerous Muslim houses of worship were vandalized, bombed, and burned in places like Rotterdam, Utrecht, Breda, and Huizen near Amsterdam. Dozens of violent attacks on Muslims were reported. See “Konflikt kultur czy ekstremistów: Kolejne ataki na obiekty muzułmańskie w Holandii po zabójstwie filmowca,” *Nasz Dziennik*, November 9, 2004; Sandro Contenta, “Fear replaces tolerance as racism sweeps Holland,” *Toronto Star*, November 27, 2004. Within days of the London commuter bombings by Muslim extremists, more than 100 revenge attacks—including the beating death of a Pakistani immigrant—were reported across Britain. See Caroline Mallan, “‘He was just another kid,’” *Toronto Star*, July 14, 2005. Mosques were torched in Malmö, Sweden, in October 2005. See Paweł Szczerkowski, “Szwecja: Kolejne podpalenie meczetu w Malmö,” *Gazeta Wyborcza*, October 24, 2005. Racial riots swept France in October and November 2005, with more than 8,000 automobiles and several Catholic churches set on fire. The bloody sectarian warfare witnessed in recent years in countries like Sri Lanka, India, Northern Ireland, the former Yugoslavia, the Occupied Territories, Rwanda, and many others, were by and large avoided during the long centuries that Jews lived on Polish soil in large numbers.

Even highly developed countries like the United States did not escape the scourge of racism. In the first 75 years of the 20th century, the United States experienced 27 major “race riots” occasioning hundreds of deaths and thousands of casualties. In Tulsa, Oklahoma, at the end of May 1921, the city’s whites, incited by the press and by politicians, massacred several hundred innocent Blacks. See István Deák, “Heroes and Victims,” *The New York Review of Books*, May 31, 2001; Brent Staples, “Unearthing a Riot,” *The New York Times*, December 19, 1999. The U.S. government 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; “‘We were treated ... like guinea pigs,’” *The Toronto Star*, May 17, 1997. Even after the Holocaust, 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.

See *Time Capsule 1949: The Year in Review, As Reported in the Pages of Time*. Some 60 Black churches were burned

not uncommon.¹⁸⁰ Breaking out of the traditional constraints of Jewish society was particularly difficult in small shtetls where there was no tradition of tolerance, and often gave rise to conflict, albeit of a milder nature:

to the ground or grievously damaged in the southeastern states in 1995–1996, 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). Racial tensions between Orthodox Jews and Blacks continue to explode periodically. After an Orthodox Jewish motorist killed a 7-year-old Black girl in Crown Heights, Brooklyn, in 1991, three nights of rioting by Black youths ensued and the murder of a yeshiva student member of the Lubavitcher Hasidic movement. After an Orthodox Jewish school teacher was acquitted of assaulting a Black teenager in Lakewood, New Jersey, in the summer of 2007, a group of Orthodox Jews was pelted with eggs by teenagers and, in October, an Orthodox Jewish rabbi was severely beaten by a Black man wielding a baseball bat. According to the FBI more than half of the almost 7,500 reported hate crime incidents in the United States in 2003 were directed at blacks. There were 3,150 black victims, including four who were murdered. See “Racism behind more than half of hate crimes,” *Toronto Star*, November 23, 2004. The Federal Bureau of Investigation reported nearly 10,000 hate crimes committed in 2006, mostly directed against non-Whites, and that figure is considered to be low as such crimes are often not reported by victims and law enforcement agencies. Of these, more than 1,100 were anti-Semitic in nature, including 80 physical attacks on Jews. A worrisome trend is a sharp increase in incidents in which nooses—a symbol of racist lynchings—are hung outside the homes of Blacks.

Apart from the African, Asian, and native American (Indian) population (whom the government either abandoned or attempted to assimilate through coercive measures such as residential schools in Canada), historically Jews probably faced the greatest barriers to advancement in the United States. Open and flagrant discrimination of Jews was part of day-to-day life for Jews in the United States and Canada well into the 1950s. A volume of personal accounts of Jews from small communities recalled all-too-frequent occurrences of beatings at the hands of anti-Semitic youth and being called “dirty Jew.” See Howard Victor Epstein, *Jews in Small Towns: Legends and Legacies* (Santa Rosa, California: Vision Books International, 1997). Like in other large North American cities, in Toronto 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 largely 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. Severely restrictive quotas on the admission of Jews were instituted by many American universities, including the prestigious Ivy League schools, already in the 1920’s. See Leonard Dinnerstein, *Anti-Semitism in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), which describes these and other discriminatory restrictions and practices against Jews that were widespread in the United States. Similar forms of overt racism and religious bigotry prevailed in Canada as well. Blacks and Jews were routinely banned from parks, beaches and community facilities, faced restrictions at universities and in property ownership, and were often the object of hostilities that led to race riots, like the anti-Jewish pogrom at Christie Pits park in Toronto in August 1933. See, for example, “The ugly side of Toronto the Good,” *The Toronto Star*, February 21, 2002. Other immigrant groups, like (Irish) Catholics, faced prejudices and hostilities at the hands of establishment Protestants in Toronto, where Catholics were virtually precluded from municipal employment (including the police force) as late as the 1950s. See Murray Nicolson, “The Irish worker in Victorian Toronto,” *Catholic Insight*, April 1999, 28. Jews were also virtually shut out from municipal. It was probably easier for a Jew to obtain such employment in interwar Poland than in Canada. For example, in the small town of Kolbuszowa, one Jew worked as a revenue official and another as a clerk in the county office. See Salsitz, *A Jewish Boyhood in Poland*, 105–106. Synagogues and Jewish schools have been vandalized and burned to the ground in Canada in recent years, though not as frequently as happens in Australia.

Unfortunately, even modern-day Israel is plagued by its own minority problems, not only in relation to the native Palestinian (Arab) population, but also in relation to the many Christians who have migrated there in recent years from the former Soviet Union. See, for example, Patrick Martin, “Little promise in the promised land”, *The Globe and Mail* (Toronto), February 18, 1995, and the affidavit of Lynda Brayer, in Tadeusz Piotrowski, *Poland’s Holocaust: Ethnic Strife, Collaboration with Occupying Forces and Genocide in the Second Republic, 1918–1947* (Jefferson, North Carolina and London: McFarland, 1998), 270–75, which outline some of the religious-based hostility directed at these non-Jewish immigrants. In another seething development, violent riots erupted in Jerusalem on January 28, 1996 involving Ethiopian Jews protesting against what they perceived as widespread racism. A few months later, on May 24, hundreds of Jewish worshippers went on a rampage in the Old City, attacking Arab bystanders and damaging Arab property; according to Israeli police, this riot was unprovoked. See the *Jerusalem Post* Foreign Service report filed by Bill Hutman, reproduced in *Kielce—July 4, 1946: Background, Context and Events* (Toronto and Chicago: The Polish Educational Foundation in North America, 1996), 151.

¹⁸⁰ One memoirist recalled the reaction of her father when he learned about the verbal “advances” of his teenaged daughter’s male acquaintance: “When my father heard of this incident, he beat the boy till he was black and blue.” See Miriam Brysk, *Amidst the Shadows of Trees* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Yellow Star Press, 2007), 35.

There was some religiously based excitement, but it happened among the Jews themselves. Once a group of young Jews from the city of Zamość arrived unexpectedly in Izbica on the Sabbath—without caps and on bicycles. This was too much for Izbica; they were chased out under a hail of stones by their Orthodox brethren.¹⁸¹

I was born in 1930 in a small town called Narol, a typical Galician town in eastern Poland. The nearest large city was Tomaszow-Lubelski [Tomaszów Lubelski]. The majority of the population was Jewish, and the few Poles who lived there spoke Yiddish.

...

My father was different from the other Jews in town in that he was not religious, only traditional. He agreed that I stop attending heder, and because of that decision, he had a lot of quarrels with the local Jews. The quarrels became worse as time went by. I remember that once, they even denounced us to the Polish authorities, who came to search our home.¹⁸²

As we have seen, Poles could also find themselves on the receiving end of Jewish political violence. In Marcinkańce, a small town north of Grodno, three local Jews lynched a Pole who used his whip to chase off some Jewish youth hanging on to the back of his wagon.¹⁸³ In most towns, Jews were far more at risk from fellow Jews than from the Christian population.¹⁸⁴ Incidents of communal violence and chicaneries, however, were seldom reported to the local police or recorded in the criminal registers,¹⁸⁵ nor were many other crimes.¹⁸⁶ It would be wrong, therefore, to attribute to Poles some particular propensity to violence.

¹⁸¹ Thomas Toivi Blatt, *From the Ashes of Sobibor: A Story of Survival* (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1997), 10.

¹⁸² Testimony of Avraham Hartman in Denise Nevo and Mira Berger, eds., *We Remember: Testimonies of Twenty-four Members of the Kibbutz Megiddo who Survived the Holocaust* (New York: Shengold, 1994), 220.

¹⁸³ Gontarczyk, *Pogrom?*, 34.

¹⁸⁴ During the 19th century partitions of Poland most lands inhabited by Poles came (eventually) under Russian rule. Russia's Jews were confined by and large to the Pale of Settelement, most of which was ethnically Ukrainian or Belorussian, except for the lands west of the Bug and around the city of Wilno (Vilna in Russian). As Jewish scholars note, "Until 1881 in Russia, the number of riots by Jews against other Jews probably exceeded the number of pogroms by non-Jews against Jews." See Shahak and Mezvinsky, *Jewish Fundamentalism in Israel*, 132. The pogroms that occurred in the latter part of the 19th century and early 20th century for the most part bypassed the ethnically Polish lands, and those that did occur there (for example, in Białystok and Siedlce) were perpetrated by the Russians.

¹⁸⁵ Leibush Glomb, from the village of Grabowiec near Zamość, writes that the Jews "enjoyed not only some sort of religious and spiritual autonomy, but could also carry on their business amongst themselves without interference of secular authorities. When they had quarrels, they went to their Rabbi." See Sh. Kanc, ed., *Memorial Book Grabowitz* (Tel Aviv: Grabowiec Society in Israel, 1975), 12–13 (English section). For examples of chicaneries see Szczepański, *Spółeczność żydowska Mazowsza w XIX–XX wieku*, 317.

¹⁸⁶ The son of a well-to-do fur merchant in Radom recalls: "There was always the fear of robberies which occurred from time to time. ... After a burglary, we, like other such victims, would go to a certain tavern in town notorious for its underworld clientele. We would wait until we were approached by one of the regulars who asked us what kind of merchandise we were seeking. We were immediately recognizable because average citizens only went there in situations like this. We then told him what was missing and he would invariably tell us to come back the following day. When we did, we would have a 'discussion' with the thieves' 'representatives' and negotiate a price in exchange for the return of the merchandise. I might mention that when we did get it back, nothing, not even a needle, was ever missing.

The most savage beating of a rabbi in Poland, in recent years, was in fact perpetrated by fellow Jews who attacked Moishe Arye Friedman, an anti-Zionist rabbi from Vienna, on March 11, 2007, while attending commemorations for an 18th century Hassidic rabbi buried in Leżajsk.¹⁸⁷

The generation born after the First World War was highly politicized and Jewish political life became particularly volatile. Various Jewish organizations, as well as the heavily Jewish Communist movement, had their own paramilitary structures, or militias, consisting of hundreds of *shturemers* (“storm troopers”).¹⁸⁸ If the need arose, they could mobilize several thousand armed supporters, including members of trade unions and the criminal underworld which, according to Jewish sources, was dominated by Jews.¹⁸⁹

After all, these were ‘honorable’ thieves who lived up to their code of conduct. Going to the police was a ‘breach of faith,’ and the thieves could no longer negotiate with us.” See Jack Werber with William B. Helmreich, *Saving Children: Diary of a Buchenwald Survivor and Rescuer* (New Brunswick, New Jersey and London: Transaction Publishers, 1996), 8–10.

¹⁸⁷ “Israeli admits beating rabbi for attending Holocaust conference in Iran,” *International Herald Tribune (Europe)*, March 14, 2007. Rabbi Friedman was kicked and punched repeatedly by Orthodox Jews, including some rabbis, before being saved by the intervention of local policemen. Piotr Kadłcik, who heads the Association of Jewish Religious Communities in Poland, justified the assault of an anti-Zionist “extremist,” gratuitously claiming that Poles would have reacted far worse in an analogous situation. See Piotr Zychowicz, “Rabin pobity w Leżajsku,” *Rzeczpospolita*, March 14, 2007. An American historian has recently recalled the 1848 killing—by an Orthodox Jew—of the Reform rabbi of Lwów and his infant daughter by arsenic poisoning, against the backdrop of tensions boiling over between Orthodox and Reform Jews in that city. This scholar noted that the *Encyclopedia Judaica* “deliberately and rather shockingly obfuscates the facts.” See Michael Stanislawski, *A Murder in Lemberg: Politics, Religion, and Violence in Modern Jewish History* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2007).

¹⁸⁸ Leonard Rowe, “Jewish Self-Defense: A Response to Violence,” in Joshua A. Fishman, ed., *Studies on Polish Jewry, 1919–1939* (New York: YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, 1974), 105–149. Rowe argues that the formation of Jewish militias was largely in response to Polish anti-Semitic violence and that they engaged only in “self-defence” or “preventive” actions. Rowe extols their virtues to the heavens: “Their moral values and mode of living were expected to be impeccable, and these expectations were usually met. Indeed, there was insistence on complete honesty, integrity, and ethical purity.” However, the examples he cites, as well as those gathered here, clearly indicate that the various Jewish militias had their own independent *raison d’être* and were more often battling each other (and the Communists), than Polish groups. This was especially so in small towns where Polish-organized Jewish confrontations were rather rare. Jewish sources also confirm that members of the Jewish underworld were also conscripted to repel attacks by “anti-Semites.” See Bernard Goldsein, *The Stars Bear Witness* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1950), 15; Honig, *Reunions*, 49.

¹⁸⁹ This topic has been extensively researched by historian Mordechai Zalkin of Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, whose in-depth studies indicate that until the Second World War, the underworld in Warsaw, Wilno and other large Polish cities was largely in the hands of Jewish syndicates. See Kobi Ben-Simhon, “World of our (god)fathers,” *Haaretz*, October 21, 2004. The Jewish underworld controlled most of the brothels and was particularly successful in luring young women into prostitution, at first mostly Jews, but later a great many Christians. Jewish gangsters also controlled hundreds of brothels in South America (principally in large centres like Buenos Aires and Rio de Janeiro), South Africa, and to a lesser extent in New York City, where they employed thousands of Jewish women often brought from Poland under false pretences. See Edward J. Bristow, *Prostitution and Prejudice: The Jewish Fight Against White Slavery 1870–1939* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982; New York: Schocken Press, 1982); Isabel Vincent, *Bodies and Souls: The Tragic Plight of Three Jewish Women Forced into Prostitution in the Americas* (Toronto: Random House, 2005); Charles van Onselen, *The Fox and the Flies: The World of Joseph Silver, Rackateer and Psychopath* (London: Jonathan Cape/Random House, 2007); Małgorzata Kozerańska and Joanna Podolska, “Piranie czekają na kadiasz,” *Gazeta Wyborcza (Wysokie Obcasy)*, January 22, 2007. Bristow describes (at pp. 58–61) what was probably the largest episode of violence directed against Jews in Warsaw’s history (before the German occupation in World War II), the so-called *Alphonsenpogrom*. In May 1905, gangs of Jewish workers and members of the Jewish underworld associated with illegal prostitution went on a rampage against the Jewish pimps who controlled most of the city’s legal brothels, eliminating most of their legal competitors. Jewish workers looted and destroyed public houses and places frequented by pimps throughout Warsaw, knifing, beating, and defenestrating pimps and prostitutes. Forty brothels were torched, eight people were killed (including one prostitute), and more than 100 injured. Rioting also occurred in Lublin and Łódź. At that time almost all the brothels were operated by Jews, and most of the prostitutes were Jews. Jewish outrage subsided, however, when increasingly young Christian women were lured into Jewish brothels. That this serious social problem would create an unfavourable reaction on the part of the Poles is entirely understandable. German Jewry was greatly concerned about the negative image created by their co-religionists and sent delegations eastward to see if they

The Bund had an impressive militia, as did its youth organization, whose uniformed *Tsukunft-shturem* was modeled after the Austrian *Schutzbund*. Its largest and most violent clashes were with the Communists. Bernard Goldstein, who headed the Bundist militia in Warsaw and escaped an attempt on his life in 1929 after the Communists passed a death sentence on him, recalled:

could curtail the trade in women. In 1910, the United States Congress passed the Mann Act (White-Slave Traffic Act) which made it a felony to procure prostitution across state lines. The Mann Act had been preceded by exposés by journalists like George Kibbe Turner, whose famous essay “The Daughters of the Poor” in *McClure’s Magazine* (no. 34, 1909) described the role played by Jews in prostitution in New York City. By 1912, two years after it was first published, *The House of Bondage*, an American novel about the evil specter of white slavery, was already in its fourteenth printing. In the book, written by Reginald Wright Kaufman, Max Grossman is a pimp and described as “a member of a persistent race.” Despite the efforts of the Polish government, who delegalized all public houses in 1922, the problem persisted. Jews continued to figure prominently among the pimps, but Jewish prostitutes were now in a minority. The Polish government authorities reported to the League of Nations in 1931 that it had a list of almost 600 persons who were engaged in the movement of women destined for prostitution in South America. It is against this background that one has to evaluate August Cardinal Hlond’s pastoral letter of 1936 in which he decried those Jews who took part in various immoral activities, including dealing in prostitution. Cardinal Hlond was promptly decried as an anti-Semite. In this regard, one should note the reaction of the mainstream Canadian media when, in 2005, some members of Black gangs shot a fairly small number of persons in Toronto. There was an outcry about “Black” crime and calls for the Black community to get its house in order, even though more than 99% of Blacks had nothing to do with the criminal activities of a small number of young Black men.

As the Krynki memorial book demonstrates, the Jewish underworld was also active outside the large centres of Jewish settlement: (1) “There were in Krynki [sic] two brothers who were the leaders of all the thieves in the area: They were called the ‘Akhim’ and all the merchants, villagers, landholders, dairy farmers and tenant farmers had to absolutely deal with the ‘Akhim’ and reward them.” (2) “Krynki, like other towns, had its share of dark people, the inferiors of the Jewish community, operators and thieves who would steal anything from a hinge to a horse. The thieves were grouped in gangs, each with its ‘rabbi’ and they never betrayed each other and never took over each other’s ‘living.’ One of the famous ones was Henocho Hillke’s. Once he arrived in Zelwe [Zelwa] for a fair and made good ‘business,’ filling his pockets with the merchandise. In the end people looked around and knew that a Krinker was there at the fair. They immediately chased after him with a couple of good horses and Henocho was brought back to Zelwe to the rabbi. They would not give a Jew over into gentile hands, unless they were absolutely certain that he was the thief. The rabbi ordered a hearing. So he was brought to the synagogue so that he could swaer on a Torah scroll. Henocho went up to Holy Ark, opened the curtains and in a loud voice screamed: ‘Torah! Torah! Defend your honor! People want a hearing for *Reb* Henocho son of Hillke—he is accused of being a thief!’ The people heard it all and they were very frightened and *Reb* Henocho son of Hillel was set free. From then on the name ‘Krinker Thief’ meant smart.” That source also mentions a Jewish police informer named Yankl Kopel, who “would get money from everyone he could and if people did not cough up he would inform on them saying this one is a Communist.” When the Polish government found out about his antics, he was arrested but managed to escape and hide. See 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), 193, 210. That source also mentions Yosel Lieder, a “meat tax” holder who “was worse than the auditors.” He also owned a distillery and “stole the excise taxes, as much as he wanted, and nobody could do anything about it.” *Ibid.*, 195. Jewish criminal gangs of horse thieves also operated in the countryside and, as mentioned elsewhere, perpetrated insurance scams, torching their own insured property or that of other Jews to collect payments.

A prominent underworld figure from Warsaw, Icek Farberowicz, known as Urke-Naczalnik, attempted in vain to organize his colleagues to fight the Germans. He was arrested in Otwock in November 1939 together with two other Jews for illegal possession of weapons and executed. See Wojciech Chmielewski, “Nożownicy z Krochmalnej: Żydowski półświatek Warszawy,” *Nowe Państwo*, April 2004, 38–39. Surprisingly, some Jews deny that there were criminals among the Jews, even among those convicted of crimes. Rabbi Isaac C. Avigdor recalls the efforts of his father, Jacob Avigdor, the chief rabbi of Drohobycz in the interwar period, to help Jewish prisoners: “In Drohobycz stood one of the biggest federal penitentiaries in Poland. ... The penitentiary always had thousands of prisoners, including about 100 Jews, mostly victims of false accusations or mixups in money and tax matters, innocent people locked up together with real criminals—murderers and robbers. These Jews came from all over Poland and included many scholars and pious people. ... In the 20 years of his service in Drohobycz my father, of blessed memory, brought these Jews not only the material assistance provided by the community but also moral encouragement through his personal visits and letters he wrote them. He helped to get dozens of Jewish prisoners released.” See Isaac C. Avigdor, *From Prison to Pulpit: Sermons for All Holidays of the Year and Stories from the Holocaust* (Hartford, Connecticut: Horav Publishing, 1975), 260.

the militia often found it necessary to resist Communist terror. In their campaign to split the labor movement and to destroy the Socialists, the Communists stopped at nothing. They used intimidation freely. They would often send groups armed with revolvers to break up workers' meetings. Once they even attempted to disperse a national convention of the Jewish Transport Workers' Union with gunfire. They did not shrink from a shooting attack of the famous Medem Sanatorium for Children in Myedzeshyn [Miedzeszyn], near Warsaw. The attacks were carried out by toughs who received from the Communists an ideological justification for their own predilection for violence.

The Bundist militia was angry and strong enough to give the Communist attackers a lesson which would have driven from their minds any desire to continue their disruptive activity.¹⁹⁰

Retaliations against radical Polish movements are also noted. After some explosives damaged the Bund headquarters in Warsaw,

Bernard [Goldstein] organized a group of Bundists and Polish Socialists who went to the Falanga headquarters on Bratska [Bracka] Street in the heart of the Polish district and smashed it to bits. Everyone found there was soundly beaten.¹⁹¹

The Zionist Revisionist student movement, by far the largest Jewish student movement in interwar Poland, and especially its militant wing Betar, a Fascist-leaning paramilitary organization that counted more than 40,000 members in 1934, carried out verbal and physical attacks on the fairly small Jewish assimilationist student movement because of its promotion of Polishness, contacts with Christian Poles and loyalty to the Polish State.¹⁹² Zionist student "corporations," like others, were also quite adept at organizing "counterattacks" against Polish students:

Armed with heavy canes, the *Betaria* members under the command of the burly manager of the Student House would make forays into the vicinity of the University [of Warsaw] and partake in defense brawls. One of the counterattacks remained in my memory for a long time. ... Someone in the fraternity thought of a strategy that would teach a lesson to the more aggressive hooligans. Members of the *Betaria* armed with heavy canes waited at the gate of the University and soon engaged a group of students from the anti-Semitic *Endek* organization. At a certain moment the *Betaria* fighters seemed to lose their nerve and started retreating, but at the same time jeering the hooligans who pursued them with a

¹⁹⁰ Goldstein, *The Stars Bear Witness*, 10–11.

¹⁹¹ Goldstein, *The Stars Bear Witness*, 13. Curiously, Goldstein avoided punishment for organizing violent activities, even though he was arrested once. *Ibid.*, 16.

¹⁹² Daniel Pater, "Żydowski Akademicki Ruch Korporacyjny w Polsce w latach 1898–1939," *Dzieje Najnowsze*, no. 3

renewed vigor. The retreating forces managed to lure their pursuers toward a Jewish neighborhood where there was a concentration of tough Jewish teamsters who were used to handling heavy loads. The teamsters who had been alerted to the stratagem waited in the gates of houses and suddenly the situation took a different turn. The retreating *Betaria* boys turned around and with the added force of teamsters faced the pursuers, who only now perceived the trap. The beating the *Endeks* received made them more cautious, and from then on they confined their actions nearer to their own territory.¹⁹³

The level of mutual hatred among these various factions ran high. As one Jew from Warsaw recalled,

You should have been here, in the Jewish district, before the war on May 1: on Gęsia Street, on Franciszkańska Street ... Hashomer Hatzair walked separately, the left and right wings of Poalei Zion walked separately, Hehalutz walked separately. Hashomer carried their slogan: "Down with the Revisionists and Fascists." Bund walked with their banner: "Down with Hashomer Hatzair—Fascists," "Down with Beitar—Fascists," "Down with Hehalutz—Fascists." That's the way it was.¹⁹⁴

It is not surprising therefore to learn that Jewish community leaders, albeit reluctantly, because of pressures by the community to keep such matters out of the hands of the state, even sought the intervention of the Polish authorities when they sensed a serious internal threat to their communal life. In 1933 the rabbi of Szydłów wrote to the *starosta* (county supervisor or district administrative officer) of Stopnica:

On behalf of the complaining parents of the entire Jewish community, I would be greatly obliged if you would kindly put an end to the impudence of the young, and not allow them to enter the Hehaluts [Pioneer] organization, which is undesirable for the Szydłów

(2002): 12–16.

¹⁹³ Nordon, *The Education of a Polish Jew*, 85. For additional examples of "preventive actions," see Chodakiewicz, *Żydzi i Polacy, 1918–1955*, 82–86.

¹⁹⁴ Testimony of Józef Grynblatt cited in Anka Grupańska with Bartek Choroszewski, "O obrazie powstania w getcie, Żydowskim Związku Wojskowym i książce Mariana Apfelbauma," *Tygodnik Powszechny*, June 29, 2003. A Jew who lived in Kaunas described the situation there prior to the war: "The competing fund-raising drives of the various Zionist factions were reaching their peak. ... A great controversy developed. Should the funds be used to acquire more land in Palestine ... or should they be used for the financing of illegal immigration ... At school, the controversy took the form of fist fights resulting from the students grabbing and breaking the collection boxes, while the adults gave their support to various political groups whose conflicting aims and views were disseminated through vituperative articles published in Jewish newspapers. The heated arguments and the violent enmities that ensued often created rifts or even break-ups of family and friendships. ... When my father discovered that I had become a member of the Betar, he beat me severely, after chasing me around the dinner table, and called me 'dirty dog, Nazi!' It was quite common in those days for Jews to call their political opponents Nazis, just as it is today in Israel when 'the Likud accuses Labor of using Stuermer-style Nazi propaganda in its Histadrut [Workers' Union] election campaign.'" See David Ben-Dor, *The Darkest Chapter* (Edinburgh: Canongate, 1996), 27–29.

settlement, as it leads to the corruption of the youth, which is prohibited by our religion.¹⁹⁵

In business dealings too Jews favoured their own and discriminated against Poles by promoting preferential hiring for Jews (rabbis were known to exhort Jewish employers to dismiss Poles and hire Jews in their place), by boycotting Polish businesses, and by resorting to various unfair practices (undercutting prices below cost, intimidation, coercion, refusing to lease commercial premises to Poles, cutting off supplies, and other “sharp” business practices).¹⁹⁶ The slogan pushed by Polish nationalists, “Buy from Poles,” thus had its ingrained counterpart in the way Jews instinctively managed their business affairs for ages.¹⁹⁷ Other minorities, such as the Ukrainians, also set up peasant cooperatives and conducted economic

¹⁹⁵ Regina Renz, “Small Towns in Inter-War Poland,” in *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry*, vol. 17 (2004): 151.

¹⁹⁶ See, for example, Chodakiewicz, *Żydzi i Polacy 1918–1955*, 91–92 (Częstochowa); Gontarczyk, *Pogrom?*, 31–32; Bechta, *Narodowo radykalni*, 179. Such activities occurred already before the First World War. Stanisław Thugutt, a minister in the interwar Polish government, was threatened by Jewish merchants after he opened a food cooperative in Ćmielów in 1903; after the threats proved futile, he was falsely charged with assaulting a Jew, a charge that was thrown out by the court. Nonetheless, the constant harassment exerted by the Jewish community resulted in Thugutt’s departure from the town. See Michał Kurkiewicz and Monika Plutecka, “Zapomniane pogromy,” *Nowe Państwo*, no. 4 (2006). When a group of Poles decided to open a business in Brańsk in 1913, local Jews tried to beat up the pharmacist who initiated the project in order to get him to abandon the idea. See “Confessions of Zbigniew Romaniuk,” interviewed by Wojciech A. Wierzewski, in *The Story of Two Shtetls*, Part One, 22.

¹⁹⁷ The slogan “*Swój do swego*” (“Each to his own”) was launched by the National Democrats after the 1912 election to the Russian Duma in retaliation for Jewish support for a social democrat (of Polish origin) who won in Warsaw, and sat as Russian deputy, over the National Democratic candidate who would have represented the Polish Circle and Polish interests, thus leaving the ancient Polish capital without a Polish voice in the Duma. As Theodore Weeks points out, the boycott it ushered in did not gain broad support and economically was not particularly successful. See Weeks, *From Assimilation to Antisemitism*, 166, 169. The slogan was again popularized by Polish nationalists during the economic crisis in the 1930s. However, it was not a novel or indigenously Polish concept. Historian Livia Rothkirchen writes about its currency in the 19th century the Czech lands where Jews formed a little more than one percent of the population: “With the upsurge of nationalism the growing political pressure soon focused on economy and business: in 1892 a countryside campaign was launched against German and Jewish merchants under the slogan of “each to his own” (*Svůj k svému*); rioting and looting occurred in towns and villages such as Kladno and Kutná Hora. ... Further disturbances occurred in the wake of the 1897 Badeni language ordinances ... Two years later ... new disturbances instigated by Czech nationalists directed against Germans and Jews broke out in many localities both in Bohemia and Moravia. ... The turmoil in 1897 and subsequently in 1899 generated a popular outpouring of anti-Semitism.” See Rothkirchen, *The Jews of Bohemia and Moravia*, 17.

A sweeping, and largely impressionistic charge frequently encountered in Jewish memoirs is that Jews were discriminated against in business and greatly overburdened with taxes in interwar Poland, to the point of near bankruptcy. One memoir by an educated Jew even claims that “hardly anyone paid taxes except for Jews.” See Jehoshua Gertner and Danek Gertner, *Home is No More: The Destruction of the Jews of Kosow and Zabie* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2000), 57. Needless to say, there was no differential tax rate based on criteria such as nationality or religion, rather the taxation system was heavily weighted towards the towns, where an overwhelming majority of Jews lived. See Simon Segal, *The New Poland and the Jews* (New York: Lee Furman, 1938), 141. A recent scholarly study of conditions in the small town of Jaśliska near Krosno is more nuanced and instructive. The author points out that it was the disparity in the Polish and Jewish occupations that affected the contributions to land and income tax paid by both groups, with Jews contributing a disproportionate share of the income tax, and Poles a disproportionate share of the land-tax. The Jewish share of municipal taxes reflected their preponderance (or Poles’ absence) in the local cash economy of the small town. Until the electoral reforms, this also meant considerable overrepresentation on the town’s political scene: “Since the Jews paid the highest taxes, they obtained six of the twelve seats, in spite of their proportionally low numbers [about 26 percent]. The situation changed in 1923 when the number of seats was reduced by one-half. The political status of the Jews, however, remained unimpaired and the people took full account of their opinions.” The author demonstrates that even in the 1930s, the period of economic boycotts, the Poles’ involvement in local trade remained limited. Anti-Jewish propaganda had little effect on the activities and interactions of the Poles and Jews at the community level. On the whole, relations remained proper and many Jewish testimonies refer to them as favorable. As one Jew commented, “One hardly noticed anti-Semitism amongst the people.

boycotts of their own.¹⁹⁸ Needless to say, there was no pervasive boycott of Jewish businesses by the Poles or the Polish state, as otherwise most Jewish businesses would have folded. The boycott was itself largely boycotted in practice, even by the leaders who organized rallies in their support. The following example is not atypical:

To generate support for the peasant leaders' policies huge rallies were organized in the marketplace of Kolbuszowa ... What provided at least some small comfort to us was the fact that the leaders used my father's store as their headquarters on days when rallies were scheduled. Also they continued to purchase boycotted goods from my father for distribution to the peasants, making certain that these transactions were kept secret.¹⁹⁹

The relationships between Jews and non-Jews were rather good and the trading contacts were based on mutual trust. ... We did not experience anything like anti-Jewish harassment. The good relationship between Jews and non-Jews gave rise to a steady material prosperity among the Jews." See Rosa Lehmann, *Symbiosis and Ambivalence: Poles and Jews in a Small Galician Town* (New York and Oxford: Bregahn Books, 2001), 48–49, 75, 82, 185–87. The reality of those times is reflected in candid memoirs such as the following. A Jewish memoir from Kraków also stresses that "it was customary to keep one's financial status secret, mainly from the tax-inspector, but also from a jealous [Jewish] neighbour." See Scharf, *Poland, What Have I To Do with Thee...*, 193. Another Jew who lived in that city concurred in that assessment: "The third group of Jews were newcomers, settlers from the eastern territories. ... They traded among themselves and did not mix with other Jews. ... They controlled the shoe industry, but for the most part they were wholesalers, supplying goods either to local stores or to shops in the many small towns in the countryside. They engaged trained bookkeepers to keep their books for tax purposes, but in addition they all carried in their pockets little notebooks in which their actual accounts were kept, accounts different from those found in the bookkeepers' neat ledgers. The information in those little books was entered in a Hebrew script, legible only to them." See Bruno Shatyn, *A Private War: Surviving in Poland on False Papers, 1941–1945* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1985), 101. The following experience is that of a Hasidic family from a small town in central Poland: "There was, however, at least once year when we made a concerted effort to appear less prosperous. That was when Butzke, the tax inspector, came to Działoszyce [Działoszyce] to assess every business in town. Butzke was from Pinczow [Pińczów], the regional tax department. When we heard rumors that he was coming, we tried to empty our usually packed store of much of its merchandise. We wanted Butzke to see as little as possible so that he would levy a lower tax." As "justification: for this course of action the author adds: "Jews were taxed above the normal rate. We were just trying to protect ourselves from this unfair taxation." See Tenenbaum, *Legacy and Redemption*, 59. There are many such accounts attesting to massive white-collar crime, yet the new generation of Jewish-American historians contend that, unlike Poles, "Jews in reality didn't steal." Robert Blobaum, "Criminalizing the 'Other': Crime, Ethnicity, and Antisemitism in Early Twentieth-Century Poland," Robert Blobaum, ed., *Antisemitism and Its Opponents in Modern Poland* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2005), 100. Despite the abject poverty that many Jews lived in (as did many non-Jews), there was no significant movement on the part of Jews to occupy poorly paid positions as labourers in small industries (often owned by Jews), as caretakers in Jewish tenement buildings, or as domestics in the homes of the more prosperous Jews. Such menial jobs were usually held by Christians. In their traditional strongholds of business and trade, Jews generally maintained ethnic solidarity, which translated into a *de facto* monopoly that adversely affected the interests of Polish farmers and the nascent Polish merchant class. This is demonstrated in the case of Hrubieszów: "with the expansion of the [Jewish-controlled] corn trade bitter rivalries sprang up. ... This state of affairs lasted for several years, until they came to realise that the only person who profited from their disputes was the [Polish] farmer. Several sensible Hrubieszow citizens epitomised the situation thus: 'We are only pouring gold into the farmer's bag'. The Hrubieszow merchants, the bigger and the smaller, got finally together and hit on the only logical solution: partnership in the form of a cooperative body [from which Poles were excluded]. Not all joined immediately; but as the first attempt met with almost immediate success, the movement spread. In later years, Christians, too, tried their hand; but, characteristically enough, Polish farmers remained loyal to the Jewish merchants." See Yeheskel Ader, "Trade between the Two World Wars," in Baruch Kaplinsky, ed., *Pinkas Hrubieszow: Memorial to a Jewish Community in Poland* (Tel Aviv: The Hrubieszow Associations in Israel and U.S.A., 1962), x. The notion that endemic Christian-based anti-Semitism was the overriding factor that set the tone for relations between Poles and Jews must be dismissed as an unfounded generalization—one that does not reflect day-to-day existence and omits other important components of the equation.

¹⁹⁸ Mazur, *Życie polityczne polskiego Lwowa 1918–1939*, 60.

¹⁹⁹ Salsitz, *A Jewish Boyhood in Poland*, 244. For information about the ineffectiveness of the boycott in Mińsk Mazowiecki, see Samuel Kassow, "The Shtetl in Interwar Poland," in Katz, ed., *The Shtetl*, 137–38.

Concrete conditions on the ground also cast matters in a somewhat different light. A resident of the border town of Łunin, in Polesia, where there was a large military base, recalled: “Jewish craftspeople, tradespeople and storekeepers made their income catering to the Polish officers and their families.”²⁰⁰ In Bolesławiec, a small town near the German border: “My father’s business was cap making. ... A lot of the caps were made to order as part of uniforms for fraternal organizations, the military, police and firemen.”²⁰¹ Indeed, many Jewish firms received government contracts.²⁰² Characteristically, pressure was exerted by the Jewish community in Dubno, Volhynia, on a proprietor to renege on the lease of his business premises to a Polish milk co-operative which wanted to operate a store. It was explained to him that business was the exclusive domain of the Jews, and that the community did not welcome Christian intruders in this near monopoly on local trade.²⁰³ One Christian shopkeeper recalled asking a Jewish wholesaler from whom she acquired merchandise for a rebate on the goods he supplied: the Jewish merchant replied categorically that he gives rebates only to Jews.²⁰⁴ Many established business practices followed by Jews were foreign to or disrespectful of Poles, or had a prejudicial impact on them, and this further complicated interaction.²⁰⁵

²⁰⁰ Schulman, *A Partisan’s Memoir*, 26. The author recalled that Polish military officer, a friend of the family, gave her mother 500 złoty, a small fortune in those days, so that she could pay for her daughter’s wedding.

²⁰¹ Brandsdorfer, *The Bleeding Sky*, Chapter 2.

²⁰² See, for example, Teyer, *The Red Forest*, 24 (a successful Jewish bakery in Czerwony Bór near Łomża supplied a nearby army camp).

²⁰³ Janina Stobniak-Smogorzewska, “Osadnicy wojskowi a ludność żydowska na Kresach Wschodnich 1920–1940,” 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), 563.

²⁰⁴ Antoni Zambrowski, “Niczym rozmowa głuchych,” *Antysocjalistyczne Mazowsze*, June 9, 2005, posted at <<http://mazowsze.k-raj.com.pl/111834969449210.shtml>>.

²⁰⁵ Samuel Iwry, who hails from Białystok, described the following bizarre scenario: “My father had a small business, perhaps two dozen people worked for him ... My connection with this business was (and this is very difficult to understand) when we had to pay out every week his workers. There was a need to go to the bank and write out a check, and bring it back to him. ... The reason that I had to do it was that according to Jewish law, a certain Hebrew inscription from the Talmud was necessary to provide on every I.O.U. or transaction like this to the bank, since it is biblically forbidden to take interest [usury] or deal with usersers. The rabbis had learned how to go around it, because in their time commerce was already developed and you wouldn’t do it any other way. So I had to write out the amendment to this law. The amendment says ‘I thereby make the lender or the borrower a partner in my business, for this sum,’ let’s say for 550 złoty. This way, the usury was removed.” See Samuel Iwry, *To Wear the Dust of War: From Białystok to Shanghai to the Promised Land—An Oral History*, edited by L. J. H. Kelley (New York and Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 6. An example of deceitful practices that could lead to trouble in the marketplace can be found in Hanna Krall, *Shielding the Flame: An Intimate Conversation with Dr. Marek Edelman, the Last Surviving Leader of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1986), 11: Jewish fishmongers in Warsaw would paint the gills of stale fish red to make them appear fresh. Tellingly, one Jew blames his father’s lack of success in business on his being “too honest to get rich in business.” See Severin Gabriel, *In the Ruins of Warsaw Streets* (Jerusalem and New York: Gefen, 2005), 62. Getting a *metzviah* (bargain) was valued highly, and unsophisticated farmers were often taken advantage of. Norman Salsitz describes how Jewish traders descended on Polish farmers bringing their produce animals and produce to market: “The mad dash began as soon as a wagon came into view, everyone running toward it, hoping to get on and lay claim to the fattest geese. This was no simple task, since it involved leaping aboard a moving wagon, then simultaneously holding on and thrusting one’s hand into the cages to size up the birds. ... Quite a few people had by now climbed onto the wagon and were standing on the poles that ran along the sides; others were still attempting to. People’s poking around the cages naturally agitates the geese, which begin to screech hysterically. Meanwhile the peasant drive has become quite furious and begins urging his horses on, both to escape those still in pursuit and to shake the grip of the people clinging both to the wagon and the geese. A torrent of curses accomplishes little, so he turns his whip on the unwanted riders, who stubbornly hold their ground. A rising chorus of pounding hooves, abusive shouts, and cackling geese greets onlookers as the wagon careens

Historian Richard Lukas notes that, as they had done for centuries, Jews did business with each other and distrusted Jews who developed relationships with Polish Gentiles.²⁰⁶ A Jew from Kraków recollected:

“It is true that the Poles did have the government on their side, which sometimes made things difficult for us. On the other hand, we had tradition on our side. In the big cities Jews tended to have significant trading advantages for the simple reason that they had been at it longer. ...

“It is also true that though my father was assimilated, all the executives in his factory and ninety percent of his workers were Jewish. I remember once my mother, who was something of an intellectual, challenging him about this, telling him that he was being discriminatory. He said he felt easier working with Jews and that was all there was to it.”²⁰⁷

A well-to-do resident of Stołpce, in northeastern Poland, recalled:

My father’s loyalty to the Jewish community carried over into the way he ran his business. The managers of my father’s factories were always Jews. The workers were drawn from the local Polish population. ... In every one of the factories, there was a little provisions store that sold the basics ... Shopping at this factory store saved them a trip into town, but the prices were high. My father made a considerable profit from these stores. So he was making money on anything and everything. And he paid very little in official taxes. If you had connections with the right Polish officials—and bribed them heavily enough—you were basically taken care of.²⁰⁸

into town with its original cargo and its recently acquired and remarkably persistent passengers, sometimes as many as five or six. Once in the marketplace the wagon comes to a stop, and the situation gradually returns to normal.” Jewish vendors also cursed and fought among themselves in the market; Jewish buyers ganged up on farmers by entering into agreements not to compete and bid up prices. See Salsitz, *A Jewish Boyhood in Poland*, 119–20, 123, 128. Other examples of “sharp” business practices employed by Jews who traded with peasants are described in Pell and Rosenbaum, *Taking Risks*, 11–13. Market place disputes between Jews and Poles thus had little, if anything, to do with “endemic Polish anti-Semitism,” a much overused notion in this and many other contexts of Polish-Jewish relations. One sometimes encounters the charge that Poles did not repay debts owed to Jewish shopkeepers and money-lenders. The frequency of this phenomenon is not known, nor can we gauge to what extent Polish peasants were treated fairly in their dealings with Jewish traders and shopkeepers. Jewish testimonies confirm that loans made to fellow Jews were not always repaid, as the following account from Działoszyce shows: “Father loaned money without interest to people in town. These amounts were 10 zloty [złoty], 20 zloty, 30 zloty, and more. Father had a long list of perhaps 50 people who owed him money at any given time. ... Often, very little of the money loaned was repaid.” See Tenenbaum, *Legacy and Redemption*, 69–70.

²⁰⁶ Richard C. Lukas, *The Forgotten Holocaust: The Poles Under German Occupation, 1939–1944*, Second revised edition (New York: Hippocrene, 1997), 124.

²⁰⁷ Cited in Stewart Steven, *The Poles* (London: Collins/Harvill, 1982), 313–14.

²⁰⁸ Jack Sutin and Rochelle Sutin, *Jack and Rochelle: A Holocaust Story of Love and Resistance* (Saint Paul, Minnesota: Graywolf Press, 1995), 7.

When Christian and Jew did try to break down the barriers that separated them, the outcome was not always a happy one, as Józef Lewandowski relates. Around 1934, his father, an upholsterer in Konin, went into partnership with a Polish upholsterer, his friend Mr. Bogusławski:

“... the worthy gentlemen failed to take account of social considerations. Father became unacceptable to the Orthodox Jews, Bogulawski non-kosher to some of his Catholic customers. Both went beyond the limits imposed by unwritten but harshly binding statutes. Rich folk such as landowners and industrialists could join forces, but not the poor masses. After a few years they split up.”²⁰⁹

Generally, such isolation enjoyed the support of Jewish society, as evident in its press and the attitudes of its communal organizations and rabbis. When a Jewish shopkeeper in Ejszyszki hired a Pole to transport his goods by truck, thus bypassing the more inefficient and costly Jewish wagon drivers, an open “revolt” broke out against this “traitor” which gained the support of the rabbi.

So what was the revolt? They couldn’t force him! On *shabbes*, everybody came to synagogue. They used to block the *aron kodesh* [the “Holy Ark” where the Torah scrolls are kept in the synagogue—*M.P.*] and they wouldn’t let you take out the Torah to read the Torah. And right away they came up on the *bimbah* [pulpit] and said: “We are not going to let you read the Torah because this, this, this and this. We have a family to support! I worked for him three, four, five, ten years. I have four, five kids to support. All of a sudden he hires a *goy*? That’s not right!”

So then the rabbi was mixed up in it, and he’d talk to them, you know: “That’s not right, you shouldn’t do it, he has a point” ... And that was the problem solved.²¹⁰

On the economic front, a network of free loan societies (*gmiles khesed kases*) sprang up all over Poland, developed by the Joint Distribution Committee and supported by Jewish communities in America. Interest-free loans were made available to “just about anyone who needed money to get through a particularly difficult time. Hundreds of loans ... were made at one time or another to tailors, cobblers, carpenters, butchers, peddlers, farmers, labourers, and especially storekeepers.”²¹¹ To everyone, as long as they weren’t Jews that is. In the assessment of one historian, these free loan societies, which were to be found in practically every Jewish settlement in Poland, “had an impact far out of proportion to the small loans they were able to give.”²¹² They more than compensated for any any ill-effects suffered by Polish boycotts. But there was more. The Jewish Economic Committee in the province of Lublin urged Jewish bankers not to

²⁰⁹ Richmond, *Konin*, 162.

²¹⁰ Livingston, *Tradition and Modernism in the Shtetl*, 52–53.

²¹¹ Salsitz, *A Jewish Boyhood in Poland*, 207.

²¹² Samuel Kassow, “The Shtetl in Interwar Poland,” Katz, ed., *The Shtetl*, 132–33.

extend credit to Polish businesses, Jewish property owners to refuse to lease premises to Christian merchants, and Jewish employers to hire Jews first and foremost and to lay off Polish workers.²¹³

Mark Verstandig wrote about another widespread phenomenon: avoiding the military draft.

Jews had a negative attitude to military service in the Polish army ... To get out of military service, many 21-year-olds underwent a regime of self-inflicted torture. For months they hardly slept or ate, so that when they stood before the commission they were “skin and bone”. The morning before the call-up they drank several cups of freshly roasted coffee, specially brewed at four to five times the normal strength, so that when they appeared before the doctor their hearts were pounding as if they had been running a marathon. With their emaciated appearance, their abnormal heartbeat gave them a chance of being excused from military service, especially if an intermediary had previously slipped the doctor one or two hundred US dollars. ... Conscription indicated that the family had insufficient means to pay for exemption. In our circles it also attracted general censure because the army was regarded as a rough, corrupting environment.²¹⁴

This phenomenon is referred to in numerous memoirs:

In 1937 I was called up. Many Jews dodged service at that time, but I went. It was what my father wanted, too. He said I would learn to fight, and that could prove useful later on in Palestine.²¹⁵

To understand this properly, it should be pointed out that, before the war, Jews had an unwilling relationship with weapons. They all made efforts not to be drafted—they paid bribes, underwent special diets, in order to dodge military service.²¹⁶

The three-month period leading up to the mobilization of our town’s young men into the Polish army was called the “period of torment” in local slang. ... And you realized [the young Jewish men] were determined to go from 150 pounds down to 100 in order to escape serving in the Polish army. ... release from conscription was not necessarily won

²¹³ Waldemar Kozyra, *Urząd Wojewódzki w Lublinie w latach 1919–1939* (Lublin: Wydawnictwo UMCS, 1999), 193–94. For additional examples see: Chodakiewicz, *Żydzi i Polacy 1918–1955*, 91–92 (Częstochowa); Gontarczyk, *Pogrom?*, 31–32; Bechta, *Narodowo radykalni*, 179. Large Jewish-owned factories which operated on a six-day work week sometimes did not hire Jews because of their unavailability for work on Saturday. Occasionally, Jewish factory owners were also reluctant to hire Jewish workers because of their reputation for pro-Communist agitation. See Jakub Bukowski, *Opowieść o życiu* (Warsaw: Żydowski Instytut Historyczny, 2002), 15.

²¹⁴ Mark Verstandig, *I Rest My Case* (Melbourne: Saga Press, 1995), 9–11.

²¹⁵ Testimony of Mieczysław Weinryb, December 2003–January 2004, Internet: <<http://www.centropa.org>>.

²¹⁶ Jacob Shepetinski, *Jacob’s Ladder* (London: Minerva Press, 1996), 50.

by those who had tormented themselves, but by the young men whose parents had paid off the official conscription committee's doctor.²¹⁷

When it came to enlisting in the Polish army, however, it was a different matter. Some of the eligible youth would starve and exhaust themselves in an effort to lose weight and escape recruitment.²¹⁸

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.²¹⁹

... when Art was called up for his army service. He stopped eating regular food and consumed almost nothing but pumpkin seeds. To lose weight, he jogged for miles every day and stopped sleeping at night, so that in addition to looking emaciated, he would look anemic. Art did whatever he could to get a rejection. Before Art went to Pinczow [Pińczów], my father went to the Gerer Rebbe to pray that Art would not be accepted. ... Luckily for Art, he was rejected.²²⁰

While some Jews joined the Polish Army, most did their best to avoid it. ... Many who faced the draft ... sought all kinds of devices to avoid military service. Some found ways to lose weight, others put sand in their eyes. I also had no interest in serving in the Polish Army. Already somewhat overweight, I asked our doctor for advice. He suggested increasing my daily intake of food and recommended a certain diet. In addition, I went to a vacation resort known for helping people gain weight and it worked. When the army doctors examined me I was excused and told to come back in a year. When I returned, I

²¹⁷ Berl Kagan, ed., *Luboml: The Memorial Book of a Vanished Shtetl* (Hoboken, New Jersey: Ktav Publishing House, 1997), 166–67.

²¹⁸ Account of Arieh Henkin, “Dokshitz [Dokszycze] Memories,” Internet: <http://www.shtetlinks.jewishgen.org/dokshitz/Dok_Arieh.html>.

²¹⁹ Michael Goldberg, *Memories of a Generation* (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives, typescript, April 1998), 15.

²²⁰ Tenenbaum, *Legacy and Redemption*, 49.

had gained even more weight, so I was placed in the category known as “to be drafted only in case of war.”²²¹

There were many more such cases: some Jews even maimed themselves to avoid being drafted.²²² The practice of attempting to bribe officials sitting on draft boards became widespread.²²³ Moshe Weisbrot, a well-to-do resident of Lublin, “devoted his time to getting Jewish boys out of the army. He bribed the Draft Board, ordered to disable the young man in some way, and collected fees.”²²⁴ Jacob Avigdor, a medical doctor and chief rabbi of Drohobycz, prided himself on his accomplishments in helping young Jews avoid their military service or—as he put it—“ransoming of captives.” The rabbi’s son recalled:

Being a chaplain with the rank of Major in the Polish Army, my father had many acquaintances among the Polish officers. ...

I remember yeshiva students and Rabbis’ sons coming to Drohobycz for pre-conscription medical examinations. As the time approached, they would fast and resort to all sorts of devices to lose weight in order to be rejected as physically unfit. By using his connections, my father, of blessed memory, helped hundreds of young men to get out.²²⁵

Many young Jews simply left Poland rather than serve in the army.²²⁶ It is surprising to learn how effective these efforts were. Although there may well have been demographic factors at play as well accounting for part of the shortfall, according to information gathered by official sources, in 1930 Jews accounted for a mere 3.2% of all military conscripts, whereas their share of the population stood at almost ten percent. In the latter part of the decade their participation in the military increased to 5.95% in 1936, 6.54% in 1937, and 6.07% in 1938.²²⁷ Avoiding the draft continued in the immediate postwar years, as a number of Polish Jews have confirmed.²²⁸

²²¹ Werber, *Saving Children*, 20.

²²² Additional confirmation can be found in the following sources: 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 Lezajsk in Israel, 1970), 96ff., translated as *Memorial Book of the Martyrs of Lezajsk Who Perished in the Holocaust*, Internet: <<http://www2.jewishgen.org/Yizkor/Lezajsk/Lezajsk.html>>; Jehoschua Gertner and Danek Gertner, *Home Is No More: The Destruction of the Jews of Kosow and Zabie* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2000), 26; Tenenbaum, *Legacy and Redemption*, 107 (the author’s father had difficulty walking: “Before the war, Father had intentionally injured his leg to avoid being drafted into the Polish army. Religious people often inflicted such wounds to avoid serving in an army without *Shabes* and dietary laws”).

²²³ Szczepański, *Spoleczność żydowska Mazowsza w XIX–XX wieku*, 238.

²²⁴ Shiye Goldberg (Shie Chehever), *The Undefeated* (Tel Aviv: H. Leivick Publishing House, 1985), 67.

²²⁵ Avigdor, *From Prison to Pulpit*, 260.

²²⁶ Bernard Goldstein, *The Stars Bear Witness* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1950), 1, where Leonard Shatzkin writes: “My father left Poland at the end of the First World War to avoid military service against the young revolutionary regime in Russia.” Shatzkin’s father was a Socialist, not a Communist, but harboured pro-Soviet sympathies. Another example: Two of Miriam Brysk’s uncles left for America when they were both barely twenty to avoid serving in the Polish army. See Brysk, *Amidst the Shadows of Trees*, 23.

²²⁷ Tadeusz Antoni Kowalski, *Mniejszości narodowe w siłach zbrojnych Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej Polski (1918–1939)* (Toruń: Adam Marszałek, 1997), 120. Thus official statistics show that the Jewish component was in all certainty substantially less than the usual claim found in Jewish sources that Jews accounted for ten percent of the armed forces

As for the motives, a Jew who hadn't felt anti-Semitism in his native Wilno and was conscripted in early 1939 stated vehemently: "First, I didn't 'join' the Polish Army. Why join the Polish Army? I hated Poles and wouldn't join. I was drafted. I was twenty-one and physically okay so they drafted me into the Polish Army."²²⁹ Another Jew from Wilno, then a Marxist in decline but after the war a writer and researcher for the BBC and Reuters (specializing in, and educating Westerners about, Eastern European affairs!), was even more vocal about his abhorrence of the prospect of serving in the Polish army, invoking multiple layers of prejudice and all the venom he could muster to support his "enlightened" views:

... even if Poland were to fight against Germany, I had no wish to join her army and serve under anti-Semitic, sword-rattling officers and arrogant, semiliterate NCOs. ...

Intellectually, of course, I had realized before that clerical, anti-Semitic, and semifascist Poles could never see Hitler's war in the same light as a Western liberal or a communist would see it. [In this context it is worth recalling that Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union were staunch allies in 1939–41. *M.P.*]...

and military losses in the September 1939 campaign. Military historian Waldemar Rezmer estimates that the actual percentage was likely closer to five. According to his count, 46,645 to 49,100 Jews served in the Polish army during the September 1939 campaign, of whom 3,437 perished. See Zbigniew Karpus and Waldemar Rezmer, eds., *Mniejszości narodowe i wyznaniowe w siłach zbrojnych Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej 1918–1939* (Toruń: Uniwersytet Mikołaja Kopernika, 2001), 110. Over and above obtaining medical dispensations under false pretences, the rate of reporting for service when called was significantly lower for Jews (in 1933 it was 94.48%) than for Slavs (the corresponding figure for Poles, Ukrainians, and Belorussians was 98.56%, 98.76% and 98.5% respectively). See Kowalski, *Mniejszości narodowe w siłach zbrojnych Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej Polski (1918–1939)*, 110. Jews were known to flee to Palestine and the Soviet Union to avoid service in the Polish army. *Ibid.*, 112. To be fair, in the face of war, the Jewish community, for a variety of reasons including social pressures, did not shirk its responsibility and contributed to the National Loan for the defence of Poland (the equivalent of U.S. war bonds). See Szczepański, *Spółeczność żydowska Mazowsza w XIX–XX wieku*, 389–90. In some communities like Puławy, it was said to have been even more generous than the Poles. See 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), 145

²²⁸ See, for example: Anna Bikont, "Ja, Szmul Wasersztajn, ostrzegam," *Gazeta Wyborcza* (Warsaw), July 13–14, 2002; Leon Trachtenberg, interview 03/6588, June 13, 1992 (U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives); Ruth Minsky Sender, *To Life* (New York: Alladin/Simon & Schuster, 2000), 53; Edi Weinstein, *Quenched Steel: The Story of an Escape from Treblinka* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2002), 146; Pell and Rosenbaum, *Taking Risks*, 110, 112 (three Jews avoided the draft with the assistance of a Soviet Jewish official in Równe). Another postwar phenomenon was the ostentatious display by Polish Jewish survivors in Germany of any connection to Poland, although Jews from Hungary, for example, where local collaborators played a pivotal role in their deportation, did not demonstrate such an attitude. According to Irene Shapiro, who lived in Soviet-occupied Poland in 1939–41, "Our Hungarian neighbors are now wearing little Hungarian flags in their lapels, and the Czech girls are wearing their colors, basically to help identify them to their countrymen. The Polish-Jewish girls, however, decide against wearing the red and white flag of our anti-Semitic fatherland. I decide to place a little red flag in my lapel. After all, the Soviet Union was my latest homeland, my parents had Soviet passports, and I have considered myself a 'lefty' to this day. ... There is an agreement between the Polish students that when we need to specify our nationality, we will all claim that we are 'stateless.' There is an ongoing dispute between the Polish and Jewish tables about our obstinate refusal to claim the country of our centuries-old Polish-Jewish heritage." See Shapiro, *Revisiting the Shadows*, 267, 296. Jacob Olejski, a Jewish activist in camp for displaced persons in Germany, delivered a speech in August 1945 in which he stated: "No, we are not Poles, even though we were born in Poland ... We are Jews!" See Ruth Gay, *Safe Among the Germans: Liberated Jews After World War II* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2002), 76.

²²⁹ Account of Shep Zitler, Louisiana Holocaust Survivors, The Southern Institute for Education and Research, posted online at <<http://www.tulane.edu/~so-inst/shep.html>>.

They [the Poles] hated the Germans for their brutalities, of course, but they hated the like people who, having been used to practicing brutalities against others, never dreamed that they might become the victims of similar treatment themselves.

They admire Hitler. He would lose the war, of course, because he did not have the Poles on his side, but he was an elemental force destined to clear Poland of the Jews and Europe of the rotten democracies [i.e., the very ones the Poles had supplied the Enigma machines and codes to in the summer of 1939] and the Communists, both under Jewish influence. ...

I was intent on severing all bonds with the country of my birth; I could not admit for one moment the possibility of fighting in the war alongside Poles, who logically should have been in the same camp as the Nazis.²³⁰

The contemptuous attitude of many Jews toward Polish statehood was even manifested on the eve of the German invasion in September 1939. A Jew from Lwów recalled the defeatist, mocking atmosphere in his affluent home (his father was one of the country's major manufacturers of kilims):

That summer everyone was talking politics, but it was beyond me to comprehend the nature of the news. The names of our own Polish leaders were somewhat familiar ... I had seen the streets full of patriotic slogans. One of them, "Strong, United, and Ready," we joked about at home: "Strong to retreat, united to cheat, and ready to give up."²³¹

Yosel Epelbaum (Joseph Pell), a native of Biała Podlaska, recalled the alienation of the Jewish community and the mood in his family on the eve of the war:

Overriding everything was the fact that we never actually felt Polish ... It was as if we were part of another nation—the Jewish people—that fate had set down in this godforsaken place. Of course we interacted with Poles. We needed them and they needed us for business. But we never truly mixed, certainly not socially. As a youth in Biała Podlaska, I would never think of entering a church or even the home of a Catholic. ...

Although my two older brothers were of draft age, for some reason they were never inducted. I don't know if they would have served. By this time no one in my family felt any loyalty to Poland or placed any trust in the judgment of its leaders.²³²

²³⁰ Reuben Ainsztein, *In Lands Not My Own: A Wartime Journey* (New York: Random House, 2002), 17, 115–16, 155. Not surprisingly, Ainsztein is the author of the most vicious sustained attack on the Polish underground, *Jewish Resistance in Nazi-Occupied Eastern Europe*, which is relied on widely by Western historians to assess wartime Polish-Jewish relations.

²³¹ Yehuda Nir, *The Lost Childhood: A Memoir* (San Diego, New York, and London: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1989), 3.

²³² Pell and Rosenbaum, *Taking Risks*, 29, 33–34.

Another extreme manifestation of the pervasiveness of Jewish anti-Christian bigotry, though certainly not unusual, was recorded by Dr. Abraham Sterzer from Eastern Galicia: “I received the traditional Jewish education in a ‘heder’ (religious school). Our rabbi insisted that we Jewish children spit on the ground and utter curses while passing near a cross, or whenever we encountered a Christian priest or religious procession. Our shopkeepers used to say that ‘it is a Mitzveh (blessed deed) to cheat a Goy (gentile).’”²³³

Christian symbols were detested and to be derided. The sight of Jews spitting when passing a roadside cross or deliberately avoiding a church was common in prewar Poland. A Jew recalled the stern admonition he received as a boy in Częstochowa: “My grandfather admonished me to stay away from the church, promising harsh heavenly punishment in the event I didn’t heed his warning.”²³⁴ Leopold Infeld, born in Kraków, recollected that “He was warned that he would go blind if he gazed at Christian holy images.”²³⁵ Christian processions evoked fright among Jewish children: “we ran away as though from a fire.”²³⁶

The Brzozów Memorial Book records the following testimony:

The oldsters of the former generation had a long account with the Church and always tried to bypass it when in the neighbourhood, turning their heads away so as not to see it. ... so, too, in the matter of the Church, we saw just how right they had been. The very name of the Church aroused not only the fears buried in the sub-conscious and associations ... it also stood for all the evils of the present ... It was not love of man that emanated from it but hatred. Ignorant priests, hoodlums in vestments, used its ‘sacred pulpits’ to preach sermons that incited brutish masses. Possessed by a fathomless hatred of the Jews they could not rest until their dream of a Juden-rein Poland was so monstrously realized before their very eyes. ... The Church—that was the source of this evil, the fountain-head that nourished it all.

However, in that same volume we learn that, when there were plans to invite “the notorious anti-Semite and German collaborator, Father Chechak [Trzeciak], whose name alone struck fear into the hearts of the Jews, to come and lecture in the town,” a Jewish delegation approached Rev. Bielawski, the local pastor, to intervene. “Though this priest was no great lover of Israel, belonging to the anti-semitic [nationalist] party, he was basically a decent man and promised the emissaries that he would not let Chechak appear. Bielawski kept his word and when the hooligans brought their ‘star’, he refused to let them use the ‘Sokol’ hall—the only hall in the town.”²³⁷

²³³ Abraham Sterzer, “We Fought For Ukraine!” *The Ukrainian Quarterly*, vol. 20, no. 1 (1964): 38.

²³⁴ Benjamin Bender, *Glimpses Through Holocaust and Liberation* (Berkeley, California: North Atlantic Books, 1995), 7.

²³⁵ Richmond, *Konin*, 105.

²³⁶ Richmond, *Konin*, 161.

²³⁷ Avraham Levite, ed., *A Memorial to the Brzozow Community* (Tel Aviv: The Survivors of Brzozow, 1984), 32, 64, 95–96. Of course, Rev. Stanisław Trzeciak, reputedly interwar Poland’s worst anti-Semite, was no German

A Jew from Volhynia recalled, “Although the Jews of Rokitno had dealings with non-Jews, they did not follow their customs. There was a division between them when it came to matters of faith and opinion. The locals fed calves for alien work and bowed to emptiness while we [Jews] thanked and blessed our G-d for his creation.”²³⁸ In a similar vein, another Jew recalled what it was like growing up among Christians in the Chełm region and his education in a yeshiva:

Our relations with the non-Jewish population were never very good ... There were the Polish-speaking Gentiles who were Roman Catholics, some more pious than others. We were most afraid of them. We considered them idol worshippers. My parents were proud to point out to me that they taught their children to consider the images on their walls as gods. There was not a home without at least three images: one of Jesus, with His heart showing; one of the *matka boska*, the “mother of God”; and one of Joseph, the husband of Mary. The priest would come to the village at times and bring the “transubstantiated” wafer, which they believed became the flesh and blood of the Messiah. But at that time the priest’s coming only hardened our hearts. We knew we worshiped the only true God, and not priests and images. ...

In these early years I had few contacts of any sort with Christianity. At about this time I learned the stories of Jesus from the Jewish point of view. They are given in the infamous book of legends composed in the Middle Ages and entitled *Toledot Yeshu (The History of Jesus)*. Some of the material is already embodied in the Talmud: that Jesus was born an illegitimate child and He forced Mary His mother to admit it; how He learned sorcery in Egypt; how He made Himself fly up into the sky by sewing the ineffable name of Jehovah into the skin of his leg, but a famous rabbi did the same and brought Jesus down!
...²³⁹

Thus in the yeshiva, the Talmud reigned supreme. The Old Testament Bible could be used only for reference and there were no secular studies whatsoever.

collaborator. For an account of his positive attitude toward sheltering Jews during the German occupation see Władysław Bartoszewski and Zofia Lewin, eds., *Righteous Among Nations: How Poles Helped the Jews, 1939–1945* (London: Earsclout Publications, 1969), 360–62. According to a statement by Stanisław Kornacki, Rev. Trzeciak helped two Jewish brothers who subsequently emigrated to Israel to survive the war. (The statement, dated February 1, 1994, is in the author’s possession.) We also learn, from the testimony of a Jew from Brzozów who served in the Polish army and was captured by the Germans in the September 1939 campaign, that Polish nuns in Rzeszów brought food and encouragement to both Polish and Jewish prisoners-of-war.

²³⁸ Haim Shteinman, “The Jews of Rokitno,” in E. [Eliezer] Leoni, ed., *Rokitno–Wolyn and Surroundings: Memorial Book and Testimony*, posted on the Internet at: <<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), 167. A Yom Kippur ritual was described as follows (at p. 179): “An unforgettable event etched in my memory was the ceremony of the punishment by lashing—forty less one. This was an ancient custom for those who repent. I watched with great interest as my father took off his shoes, lay down on a straw mattress and received his lashes willingly and with love.”

²³⁹ This nefarious volume appears to have been a staple in yeshivas throughout Poland. A 19th century memoir from Kamieniec Litewski in Polesia also records its availability. See David Assaf, ed., *Journey to a Nineteenth-Century Shtetl: The Memoirs of Yekhezkel Kotik* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, published in cooperation with The

I had no contacts with Christianity at all. On the way to school we passed a Roman Catholic church and a Russian Orthodox church, and we spat, pronouncing the words found in Deuteronomy 7:26, "... thou shalt utterly detest it, and thou shalt utterly abhor it; for it is a cursed thing." I said it halfheartedly because of my previous favorable contact with Christianity and because some questions were beginning to creep into my mind. Why should we say such horrible words? The people looked pious. They came from surrounding villages to worship, and they never bothered us.

As I continued studying the Talmud, I came to a passage that told of a cruel punishment for that Sinner of Israel, meaning Jesus. For one sin of deriding the rabbis, He was punished forever and ever with cruelty as to be "judged in boiling excrement." I did not like this story at all. Did it really mean what it said? Could I possibly be in full agreement with this? Did not I also have doubts about the rabbis' claims that their teachings were given to Moses on Mount Sinai? What then would *my* punishment be? It was many years before I dared to proclaim these doubts openly.²⁴⁰

Christians had always been regarded as "idol worshipers." As far back as 1582, Rabbi Solomon ben Judah Leybush bemoaned that Jews in Chełm lived among "non-Jews, our wicked neighbors and our enemies" while "in other holy communities 'it [Israel] is a nation that dwells alone' (Num. 23.9) and no foreigner mixes among them 9cf. Job 15.19)"²⁴¹

Jews also displayed a myriad of superstitions and peculiarities in their day-to-day life that undoubtedly struck their Christian neighbours as odd. A Jew from Działoszyce described some of these:

Działoszyce was a *shtetl* and, as such, its inhabitants often had a folk view of the universe. Many people wore red *bintl* (ribbons or strings) to ward off the evil eye. My own mother was superstitious. I remember an occasion when Chawzie Lazniaz visited our store. ... When Chawzie left, my mother started feeling nauseous and opined, "It could only be the evil eye."

The folk culture of the *shtetl* sometimes extended to medicine as well. Leibish Seniawski, nicknamed the *felsher* (folk healer), worked as a family practitioner. ... Another folk remedy was a little harder for us children to take. If any of us had croup or got a really bad cough, we were taken to Uncle Aron Yasny's stable. Urine was collected from his mare and my parents made us drink it. This was supposed to cure us. ...

The logic of the *shtetl* sometimes approached the logic of Chelm, a topsy-turvy *shtetl* where twisted reasoning was a purported commonplace and, as such, the subject of humorous folktales. I recall one incident involving the same Lazniaz family. ... Itchele

Diaspora Research Institute, Tel Aviv University, 2002), 323.

²⁴⁰ Rachmiel Frydland, *When Being Jewish Was a Crime* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1978), 17, 51, 54–55.

was pleased to find a pair of rubber galoshes that fit his diminutive foot. On the way out of the store after having made the purchase, [his wife] Chawzie noticed in the window display a large pair of size 11 galoshes marked for sale at two zloty [złoty]. Chawzie commented, “Look, Itchele, the price for the larger galoshes is the same as for the ones you bought. For the same money, take the larger ones!” ... Itchele, as usual, was defenseless in the face of his wife’s overbearing “logic.”

... When I was about six years old, Chane Delesete died. ... I followed the funeral procession on its way to the cemetery. On the corner of Dziekanowice Street, between the marketplace and the cemetery, a woman came out of her house, wailing, whenever a funeral passed by. People carrying and following Chane’s coffin cried too, but as they neared the cemetery, this woman—who was a professional crier—started an earnest rendition of her act. She was given a few groszy as she kept on crying, bringing the others to tears. She repeatedly proclaimed, “Such a nice person, and to die so young.” Afterward, I overheard her asking, “Who died? What did he die of?”²⁴²

Jewish attitudes and superstitions reflect ancient religious traditions and are as tenacious, and could be as objectionable, as any equivalent Christian-held belief or bias.²⁴³ In the late summer of 1989, vandals damaged the remains of a 13th century Carmelite convent in northern Israel following threats from Jewish religious extremists directed at nuns carrying out an archaeological dig.²⁴⁴ During Holy Week of 1990, a large contingent of Jewish settlers, bankrolled by the Israeli government and egged on by rabbis and prominent Jewish leaders, illegally occupied St. John Hostel in the Christian Quarter of Old Jerusalem. When the Greek Orthodox Patriarch Diodoros I went to the site to protest, he was teargassed and mistreated by Israeli soldiers. “I went to protest peacefully,” the shaken patriarch said. “I was hit by a teargas can, knocked to the ground, my religious medallion was smashed and my robes were torn. This, in the holiest week of the year.”²⁴⁵ Such sentiments resurfaced again during Pope John Paul II’s visit to Israel in 2000, when anti-Christian graffiti were widespread and even a cursing ceremony, known as the *pulsa de nura* curse, was performed.²⁴⁶ On December 25, 2001, *The Jerusalem Times* reported that a New Testament was publicly burned at a school in Beit Shemesh (30 km from Jerusalem) with the approval of the principal, a rabbi.²⁴⁷

²⁴¹ Fram, *Ideals Face Reality*, 23.

²⁴² Tenenbaum, *Legacy and Redemption*, 9–10.

²⁴³ For a discussion of Jewish communal zealotry and comments of contemporary fundamentalist rabbis on Jewish superiority over Gentiles, see Israel Shahak and Norton Mezvinsky, *Jewish Fundamentalism in Israel* (London: Pluto Press, 1999), 57ff., 129–34, 143–47.

²⁴⁴ “Carmelite convent in Israel vandalized,” *Toronto Star*, September 27, 1989.

²⁴⁵ Gordon Barthos, “Tensions mar Holy Week celebrations in Israel,” *Toronto Star*, April 14, 1990; Gordon Barthos, “Jewish settlement bankrolled by government,” *Toronto Star*, April 23, 1990.

²⁴⁶ “Cursing of Pope lands journalist under five-day house arrest,” *The National Post* (Toronto), March 26, 2000.

²⁴⁷ “Kronika religijna: Biblia na stosie,” *Więź* (Warsaw), February 2002, 123. Christian churches have been frequently vandalized in Israel, yet reports of such incidents rarely find their way into the mainstream western media.

The activities of yeshiva students, who have a long history of harassing the Catholic clergy in Israel, came to the attention of the media in October 2004, when a yeshiva student spat at a 17th century cross being carried by the Armenian archbishop during a procession near the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem's Old City. The student from an elite Orthodox yeshiva explained that he was raised to see Christianity as idol worship, which is forbidden by the Torah. At subsequent government-sponsored meetings it came to light that the problem was widespread and such incidents were generally not reported to the police. Vandalism of Christian churches (spray-painting, dumping garbage on church property) and desecration of Christian cemeteries are also frequent occurrences. Significantly, there were an increased number of incidents such as this during the Purim holiday, when some Christians lock themselves indoors to avoid assaults. Most of the instigators were reportedly yeshiva students who view the Christian religion with disdain. A former adviser to the mayor of Jerusalem on Christian affairs, Shmuel Evyatar, commented that "in practice, rabbis of yeshivas ignore or even encourage" such activities.²⁴⁸ When Israeli politicians considered returning some of the Occupied Territories in the West Bank and Gaza Strip hundreds of rabbis denounced this move. "We speak on behalf of the Jewish people—past, present and future. It is forbidden to give the land away," Shalom Gold told a conference called by the Rabbis' Union for the People and Land of Israel.²⁴⁹ Devout Jewish settlers in outposts like Sa'Nur in the northern reaches of the West Bank posted a Hebrew sign at the front gate that reads: "No Arabs, no dogs."²⁵⁰ Sometimes the objects of intolerance are fellow Jews. Jerusalem introduced special buses for the Haredi, an ultra-conservative branch of Judaism, in which women are forced to travel in the back or face harassment and even violence. The Haredi have also taken to patrolling parts of the city and engage in activities such as spraying people with bleach because their clothes are not considered modest enough and threatening and even setting fire to stores whose clothing displays are considered too racy.²⁵¹

Controversies have also erupted in the United States where they rarely get any mainstream media attention. Rabbi Saadya Grama, a graduate of the Beth Medrash Govoha yeshiva in Lakewood, New Jersey, published a book, arguing that gentiles are "completely evil" and Jews constitute a separate, genetically superior species. The book included endorsements from several of the top rabbis of the yeshiva, to which the U.S. Congress allocated \$500,000. Surprisingly, even after the book was exposed, Agudath Israel of America, a leading ultra-Orthodox organization, refused to condemn the book and others came to its defence.²⁵² Some of the statements contained in this book (under the Hebrew title of *Romemut Yisrael Ufarashat Hagalut*) and its endorsements included the following:

²⁴⁸ Amiram Barkat, "Christians in Jerusalem want Jews to stop spitting on them," *Haaretz*, October 12, 2004; Amiram Barkat, "Jerusalem yeshiva student apologizes to Armenian archbishop for spitting," *Haaretz*, October 18, 2004.

²⁴⁹ "Land giveaway 'forbidden': Rabbis oppose handover of captured territory," *Toronto Star*, June 24, 2003.

²⁵⁰ "Stalingrad of Samaria," *Toronto Star*, June 19, 2005.

²⁵¹ Carolynne Wheeler, "Women taking a stand to sit up front: Canadian joins group bringing segregation on buses to court in Israel," *The Globe and Mail* (Toronto), February 3, 2007.

²⁵² Steven I. Weiss, "Congress to Aid Lakewood Yeshiva," *Forward*, December 19, 2003; Allan Nadler, "Charedi Rabbis Rush to Disavow Anti-Gentile Book," *Forward*, December 19, 2003; Steven I. Weiss, "Ultra-Orthodox Officials Go To Bat for Anti-Gentile Book," *Forward*, January 16, 2004.

Gamma has written “on the subjects of the Exile, the Election of Israel and her exaltation above and superiority to all of the other nations, all in accordance with the viewpoint of the Torah, based on the solid instruction he has received from his teachers.”

“The difference between the people of Israel and the nations of the world is an essential one. The Jew by his source and in his very essence is entirely good. The *goy*, by his source and in his very essence is completely evil. This is not simply a matter of religious distinction, but rather of two completely different species.”

Israel Shahak, an Israeli human rights activist, explored the origins of Jewish-Christian animosity in a broader context in his seminal study, *Jewish History, Jewish Religion: The Weight of Three Thousand Years*, where he wrote: “Judaism is imbued with a very deep hatred towards Christianity [manifested most prominently in the Talmud and Talmudic literature], combined with ignorance about it. This attitude was clearly aggravated by the Christian persecutions of the Jews, but is largely independent of them. In fact, it dates from the time when Christianity was still weak and persecuted (not least by the Jews), and it was shared by Jews who had never been persecuted by Christians or who were even helped by them.”²⁵³ Thus Jewish attitudes towards Christians predated their arrival in Poland and predated the attitudes attributed to Poles *vis-à-vis* the Jews by virtue of their Christian indoctrination.

In the aforementioned book, Israel Shahak described various traditional manifestations of Jewish attitudes toward non-Jews.

Let us begin with the text of some common prayers. In one of the first sections of the daily morning prayer, every devout Jew blesses God for not making him a Gentile. ... In the most important section of the weekday prayer—the ‘eighteen blessings’—there is a special curse, originally directed against Christians, Jewish converts to Christianity and other Jewish heretics: ‘And may the apostates have no hope, and all the Christians perish instantly’. This formula dates from the end of the 1st century, when Christianity was still a small persecuted sect. ...

Apart from the fixed daily prayers, a devout Jew must utter special short blessings on various occasions ... Some of these occasional prayers serve to inculcate hatred and scorn for all Gentiles. ... [such as] the rule according to which a pious Jew must utter curse when passing near a Gentile cemetery ... while seeing a large Gentile population he must utter a curse. Nor are buildings exempt: the Talmud lays down that a Jew who passes near an inhabited non-Jewish dwelling he must ask God to destroy it ... Under the conditions of classical Judaism, however, [this rule] became impracticable and was

²⁵³ Israel Shahak, *Jewish History, Jewish Religion: The Weight of Three Thousand Years* (London and Boulder, Colorado: Pluto Press, 1994), 97.

therefore confined to churches and places of worship of other religions (except Islam). In this connection, the rule was further embroidered by custom: it became customary to spit (usually three times) upon seeing a church or crucifix, as an embellishment to the obligatory formula of regret. Sometimes insulting biblical verses were also added.²⁵⁴

Jewish animosity toward Christianity ran deep and was enduring. Moreover, some of its manifestations were undoubtedly palpable to the Poles. The cross was particularly loathed as an evil omen. A Jew from Nowy Sącz recalled how mischievous Jewish children from religious schools (*heders*) would beset pious, elderly Jews, show them two crossed fingers, and taunt them by calling out, “a tsailim” (Hebrew for “crucifix”). The enraged, elderly Jews would respond with dire warnings, the traditional spitting, chasing, and even rock throwing.²⁵⁵ In a similar vein, Roman Polański recalls how, during the German occupation, he and other children chased after and taunted a Hasidic boy (there were few Hasidic families in the Kraków ghetto), pulling his *peyes* (side curls) and calling him names. One of the Jewish rascals even inquired how holy water is made because he wanted to “baptize” the Hasidic boy.²⁵⁶ A Jew who attended a Jewish high school in Lublin recalled the mocking and jostling a new Hasidic student had to endure from his fellow students. That student eventually discarded his traditional garb and mannerisms in order to fit in.²⁵⁷ There were, of course, Jews who tried to shake off this legacy. One witness recalls his father telling him and his siblings “to respect Gentiles, especially good Christians. [He] did not want us to refer to them in the derisive word ‘goy’, but that it should rather be ‘Krist’ for a man and ‘Kristen’ for a woman.”²⁵⁸

²⁵⁴ Ibid., 92–93.

²⁵⁵ Albin (Tobiasz) Kac, *Nowy Sącz: Miasto mojej młodości* (Kraków: Khoker-Dapas, 1997), 59–60.

²⁵⁶ Grażyna Lubińska, a conversation with Roman Polański, “Getto: Łatwo wyjść, ale jak przeżyć?” *Gazeta Wyborcza*, March 15–16, 2003.

²⁵⁷ Marek Urban, *Polska... Polska...* (Warsaw: Żydowski Instytut Historyczny IN-B, 1998), 52.

²⁵⁸ (Rabbi) Abraham D. Feffer, *My Shtetl Drobin: A Saga of a Survivor* (Toronto: n.p., 1990), 13. Jewish accounts mention rabbis who were well respected by Jews and Christians alike: “As it turned out, the father had been the rebbe in the Galician shtetl where the *Kapo* [who was a Polish prisoner in Auschwitz] had lived. He had been greatly respected by the entire population, even by the Christians. He had been called ‘the Holy Father,’ and many Poles had gone to him when they needed advice. ... The *Kapo* had recognized him and his son in Block 16, the death block ... and brought them directly over to his *Kommando*. ... The *Kapo* supplied the rebbe and his son with food so that they would not have to eat the blood sausage and the nonkosher soup from the pot.” See Konrad Chermatz, *Nightmares: Memoirs of the Years of Horror under Nazi Rule in Europe, 1939–1945* (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 2003), 101–102. One can also find many favourable references to the Catholic clergy in Jewish memoirs and accounts regarding the interwar period. See, for example: J. Ben-Meir (Treshansky), *Sefer yizkor Goniadz* (Tel Aviv: The Committee of Goniadz Association in the USA and in Israel, 1960), 475–76, translated as *Our Hometown Goniadz*, Internet: <<http://www.jewishgen.org.yizkor/goniadz/goniadz.html>>; I.M. Lask, ed., *The Kalish Book* (Tel Aviv: Societies of Former Residents of Kalish and the Vicinity in Israel and U.S.A., 1968), 88–89 (on two occasions the priest in Błaszki calmed agitated crowds of Poles); David Shtokfish, ed., *Sefer Drohiczyn* (Tel Aviv: n.p., 1969), 5ff. (English section) (a priest in Drohiczyn); Helen Silving, “Six Million Martyrs,” in Damian S. Wandycz, ed., *Studies in Polish Civilization: Selected Papers Presented at the First Congress at the Polish Institute of Arts & Sciences in America, November 25, 26, 27, 1966 in New York* (New York: Institute on East Central Europe, Columbia University; and The Polish Institute of Arts & Sciences in America, 1970), 391 (Rev. Wontorek, a priest in a *gymnasium* in a small town); Haskell Nordon, *The Education of a Polish Jew: A Physician’s War Memoirs* (New York: D. Grossman Press, 1982), 90–91 (a priest who taught religion in a provincial high school in central Poland; although 90 percent of the students were Polish Catholics, the author states at pp. 65 and 76: “I sensed no enmity from most of my classmates, and I don’t remember any slurs or anti-Semitic insults directed at me by them.” When a Jewish student was expelled it was for theft of another Jewish student’s books, and he was reported by the author. “The only other mildly political rumbling that I recall disturbing the relatively apolitical tranquility of our *gymnasium* was thanks to a

Ukrainian boy named Bohun, the son of a government official transferred to our town from a far-off, heavily Ukrainian district of Galicia. Young Bohun was an ardent and outspoken Ukrainian nationalist.”); Eugeniusz Fąfara, *Gehenna ludności żydowskiej* (Warszawa: Ludowa Spółdzielnia Wydawnicza, 1983), 335 (Rev. Stanisław Mateuszczuk of Nowa Słupia); Bruno Shatyn, *A Private War: Surviving in Poland on False Papers, 1941–1945* (Detroit: Wayne State University, 1985), xx–xxi, 62–64 (Rev. Szypuła, a religious instructor at a high school in Jarosław); Samuil Manski, *With God’s Help* (Madison, Wisconsin: Charles F. Manski, 1990), 26 (the rector of the Piarist high school in Lida); Rachela and Sam Walshaw, *From out of the Firestone: A Memoir of the Holocaust* (New York: Shapolsky Publishers, 1991), 7–8 (priests in Wąchock; the author states: “The Catholic priests who ran our school were strict but fair and excused us from participating in their prayers. On the whole, my gentile classmates were a decent lot with whom we remained distant but friendly.”); Eva Feldenkreis-Grinbal, ed., *Eth Ezkera—W whenever I Remember: Memorial Book of the Jewish Community in Tzoyzmir (Sandomierz)* (Tel Aviv: Association of Tzoyzmir Jews and Moreshet Publishing, 1993), 542 (Rev. Adam Szymański, the rector of the diocesan seminary); Agata Tuszyńska, “Uczniowie Schulza,” *Kultura* (Paris), no. 4 (1993): 39 (priests in Drohobycz); Interview with Felix Horn, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, dated July 19, 1994, 3 (the author attended a largely Catholic high school in Lublin: “Well, my days in high school were extremely happy. They were the best years of my life. I never felt I’m different. ... I was respected by my teachers, professors, by the priests, you know, by everyone”); Alina Cała, “The Social Consciousness of Young Jews in Interwar Poland,” in *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry*, vol. 8 (1994): 48 (a priest in Krasne, a teacher of religion “who kept the pupils’ antisemitic outbursts under control by speaking up against them in a decisive way”); Szyja Bronsztejn, “Polish-Jewish Relations as Reflected in Memoirs of the Interwar Period,” in *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry*, vol. 8 (1994): 78–79 (Rev. Józef Niemczyński of Kraków); Sam Halpern, *Darkness and Hope* (New York: Shengold Publishers, 1996), 31 (priests in the vicinity of Chorostków); Samuel Honig, *From Poland to Russia and Back, 1939–1946: Surviving the Holocaust in the Soviet Union* Windsor, Ontario: Black Moss Press, 1996), 233 (a priest in the Dębniaki district of Kraków); Michał Rudawski, *Mój obcy kraj?* (Warsaw: TU, 1996), 32 (Rev. Zaremba of Przytoczno near Kock); Darcy O’Brien, *The Hidden Pope: The Untold Story of a Lifelong Friendship That Is Changing the Relationship between Catholics and Jews. The Personal Journey of John Paul II and Jerzy Kluger* (New York: Daybreak Books/Rodale Books, 1998), 53, 72 (the canon Rev. Leonard Prochownik of Wadowice); Marek Urban, *Polska... Polska...* (Warsaw: Żydowski Instytut Historyczny IN-B, 1998), 20–23 (Rev. Błaszczuk, who taught religion in the public school in Lubartów), 30–31 (Rev. Borowski, who taught religion in a public school in Lublin); Entry for “Szczębrzeszyn” in *Pinkas ha-kehilot: Polin [Encyclopedia of Jewish Communities in Poland]*, vol. 7 (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem Martyrs’ and Heroes’ Remembrance Authority, 1999), 577–80 (Rev. Grabowski); Naomi Samson, *Hide: A Child’s View of the Holocaust* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2000), 45–46, 147 (a priest in Goraj); *Dereczin* (Matwah, New Jersey: Jacob Solomon Berger, 2000), 325 (the local Catholic priest in Dereczyn, “who was known to be a liberal-minded individual, and who also had friendly relations with the Jews”); Marcus David Leuchter, “Reflections on the Holocaust,” *The Sarmatian Review* (Houston, Texas), vol. 20, no. 3 (September 2000) (a village priest near Tarnów); George Lucius Salton, *The 23rd Psalm: A Holocaust Memoir* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2002), 7 (a priest in Tyczyn near Rzeszów); Mariusz Bechta, *Narodowo radykalni: Obrona tradycji i ofensywa narodowa na Podlasiu w latach 1918–1939* (Biała Podlaska: Biblioteczka Bialska and Rekonkwista, 2004), 182, 184 (Rev. Tadeusz Osiński of Radzyń Podlaski and Rev. Stanisław Nowek of Międzyrzec Podlaski, both of whom intervened to diffuse Polish-Jewish tensions); Barbara Petrozolin-Skowrońska, ed., *Nieświeskie wspomnienia: Ciąg dalszy...* (Warsaw: Łośgraf, 2004), 430 (Rev. Jan Grodis, the director of the high school in Nieśwież); Janusz Szczepański, *Spółczesność żydowska Mazowska w XIX–XX wieku* (Pułtusk: Wyższa Szkoła Humanistyczna imienia Aleksandra Gieysztor w Pułtusku, 2005), 375 (Rev. Jan Gęsty of Pułtusk was remembered for his acts of charity to the Jews, especially during World War I, and many Jews took part in his funeral in 1928); Mila Sandberg-Mesner, *Light From the Shadows* (Montreal: Polish-Jewish Heritage Foundation of Canada, 2005), 30 (Rev. Józef Adamski of Zaleszczyki). In Zdzięcioł, Polesia: “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.” See Interview with Sonia Heidocovsky Zissman, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, May 25, 1995, 2. Grzegorz Pustkowiak, “W służbie Boga i człowiekowi,” *Mysł Polska* (Warsaw), February 6, 2005, describes the caring attitude of the Franciscan Melchior Fordon of Grodno, whose funeral brought together people of all faiths, both Christians and Jews. Faye Schulman, *A Partisan’s Memoir: Woman of the Holocaust* (Toronto: Second Story Press, 1995), 24, describes a celebration in Łunin that brought the residents of that small town in Polesia together: “I remember the whole town, Christians and Jews alike, celebrating the priest’s fiftieth anniversary of service to the church in our town. The Jewish community honoured him by presenting him with a book bound in gold covers.” Rosa Lehmann, *Symbiosis and Ambivalence: Poles and Jews in a Small Galician Town* (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2001), 98, mentions Rev. Walerian Rapała of Jaśliska and Rev. Paweł Smoczeński of Królik Polski, two villages near Krosno, and describes the pastoral visit of the bishop of Przemyśl, which united both Poles and Jews in welcoming him to Jaśliska and receiving his blessing. A Jewish resident spoke of the event as a special occasion during which the Jewish and Polish religious elite met in public, and which was remembered by the Jewish community long after the event had taken place. *Ibid.*, 103, 112. Ryszard Majus recalls the welcome given when a tzadik or bishop visited his small town of Wielkie Oczy: The tzadik was greeted by the mayor and local Catholic pastor together with well-to-do farmers. Similarly, the Jews would carry Torah scrolls to the edge of the town where the bishop would

As could be expected, there was also an infusion of racist stereotyping on the part of the Jews which accentuated, beyond all proportion, certain negative qualities found in Polish society. Historian Celia Heller states: "It was considered repulsive and un-Jewish for a man to get drunk. Of anyone who did, it was said, 'He drinks like a gentile.'"²⁵⁹ British-Jewish intellectual Rafael F. Scharf recalls a popular Jewish folk song from his youth, spent in Kraków, that "ran something like this: *Shiker is a goy—Shiker is er—trinken miz er—weil er is a goy* (A goy is a drunkard—but drink he must—because he is a goy.)"²⁶⁰ Many Poles would have undoubtedly been aware of the way they were viewed by Jews, as Yiddish was comprehensible to people who knew German and some Poles even learned Yiddish. Scharf also underscores the sense of self-imposed separateness and isolation that, on the whole, historically divided the Polish and Jewish communities:

... many Jews, if they spoke Polish at all, spoke with a funny accent. ...

descend from his litter and kiss it. See the account of Ryszard Majus in Krzysztof Dawid Majus, *Wielkie Oczy* (Tel Aviv: n.p., 2002); this account is also posted online at <<http://wielkieoczy.itgo.com/Memories/RM.htm>>. Michał Rudawski's memoir *Mój obcy kraj?* (Warsaw: TU, 1996), at p. 43, contains a moving tribute to the friendly attitude of Bishop Henryk Przeździecki of Siedlce toward the Jewish community of Łysobyki. During his pastoral visit to that village, the bishop was greeted ceremoniously by a Jewish delegation, extended his blessing to the Jewish community, and quoted the Torah in Hebrew in his address to the gathering. *The Jewish Chronicle* of August 26, 1935 reported a warm speech by the Bishop of Łuck, Adolf Szelażek, who, while on a pastoral visit to the village of Klewań, in response to a welcoming speech by a rabbi, said: "We are all creatures of the same God." His speech was reported as having left a deep impression on the Jewish community. See Leo Cooper, *In the Shadow of the Polish Eagle: The Poles, the Holocaust and Beyond* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave, 2000), 63. Bishop Marian Leon Fulman of Lublin engaged Alexander Bronowski, a Jewish lawyer, to represent the Lublin diocese in legal matters despite the vociferous protests of the nationalist press. In fact, the bishop dispatched a priest "to apologize in the name of Bishop Fulman for the unpleasantness I had been caused. He assured me that I would be asked to continue to litigate on behalf of the see [diocese]. This I did until the outbreak of the war in 1939." See Alexander Bronowski, *They Were Few* (New York: Peter Lang, 1991), 3. Rev. Michał Piaszczyński, the vice rector of the Higher Seminary in Łomża, was known before the war for his openness toward the Jews and even invited rabbis to the seminary. See "Biogramy 108 męczenników," *Głos Polski* (Toronto), May 18–24, 1999. On the attitude of the Roman Catholic Church towards the Jews during the interwar period, a historian writes: "Without ignoring the activities of individual priests, linked for the most part with the Nationalist camp, directed against Jews (though one should add that, generally speaking, they were the result of associating Jews with communism), we should bear in mind the overall correctness of attitudes and relations where the official Church was concerned. We do not then find aggressive, anti-Jewish comments in the pastoral letters of individual bishops, and, on the evidence of situation reports from local churches, as well as those appearing in the Catholic press, we come across the frequent participation by Jewish communities, often headed by the rabbi, in welcoming a visiting bishop. The Church's attitude towards the Jewish community is best characterized by a statement of Bishop [Henryk] Przeździecki [of Siedlce], set out in one of his pastoral letters: 'If we are real followers of Christ, then we should cherish the Jews.'" See Jacek M. Majchrowski, "Some Observations on the Situation of the Jewish Minority in Poland during the years 1918–1939," in *Polin: A Journal of Polish-Jewish Studies*, vol. 3 (Oxford: Basil Blackwell for the Institute for Jewish-Polish Studies, 1988), 306. In that same pastoral letter issued in September 1938, Bishop Przeździecki beseeched the faithful to "love [their] fellow citizens ... even if they are of a different nationality, not to harm them ... To love one's nation does not mean to bear hatred for other nations." He admonished them that their "greatest enemies are your fellow countrymen who instil in you hatred toward other nations." About the Jews he wrote: "And are they [i.e., the Jews] not our neighbours? They are! If we are true followers of Christ, then we should love the Jews! And that is why when one of them is living in poverty we should help that person." See Henryk Przeździecki, *Listy pasterskie i przemówienia, 1928–1938*, vol. 2 (Siedlce: Kuria Diecezjalna Siedlecka czyli Podlaska, 1938), 373–74. The author is unaware of similar pronouncements and exhortations issued by rabbis in the interwar period.

²⁵⁹ Heller, *On the Edge of Destruction*, 150.

²⁶⁰ Scharf, *Poland, What Have I To Do with Thee...*, 197. For further confirmation see 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), 119 n.35.

Even in a small place like Cracow, where Kazimierz, the Jewish quarter, existed cheek by jowl with the non-Jewish, the lives of those neighbouring communities were, in many important senses, separate. It was possible for a Jew to grow up in a family circle, study, or prepare for a trade yet not cross the border dividing the Polish and Jewish communities. A great many Jews, in the district of Nalewki in Warsaw, in the hundreds of “shtetlach”, besides a sporadic contact with a supplier or a client lived thus—not together, but next to each other, on parallel lines, in a natural, contented isolation. During my whole life in Cracow, till my departure before the war, I was never inside a truly Polish home, whose smell, caught in passing, was somehow different, strange. I did not miss it, considered this division natural. I also do not remember whether in our home, always full of people, guests, visitors, passers-by, friends of my parents, my brother’s and mine, there ever was a non-Jew, except for one neighbour and the caretaker who would come to collect his tips, and, of course, the maid who inhabited the kitchen.²⁶¹

Traditional values were also passed down and imbued through Jewish schools. In the heder in Drohiczyn, as Rabbi Shalom-Shahne Poley (Polakewich) recalled, “At the beginning of the school year, Reb Nachshon would divide his students into two groups: the bright ones and the slow ones. Sitting himself at the head of the table, he placed on one side, the bright pupils, and on the opposite side, the ‘thick heads.’ ... Usually this test [on Thursday] took the form of oral recitation. First the more intelligent would be called on to recite their lessons. After this group finished, our master would turn to the other half of the class and sighingly would remark: ‘Now we shall have to turn to the *goyish* section.’ (The term *goyish*, meaning Gentiles’, also means the ignorant and slow learners.)”²⁶² Isaac Bashevis Singer also went on record to criticize the cheders, Jewish religious schools, for instilling in young Jews the notion that Poles were inferior and deserving of contempt.²⁶³

In short, there are many testimonies attesting to the fact that Jews displayed a broad range of attitudes and emotions concerning the Poles, as undoubtedly Poles did toward the Jews, and, because of their traditional upbringing, often these were very negative. As historian Richard Lukas correctly points out, “Life in Jewish communities had a self-perpetuating quality that made Jews dependent on traditional norms. Inevitably Polish Christians were outsiders, whom Jews often regarded suspiciously, if not contemptuously.”²⁶⁴ To this he adds: “The more that is said about Polish anti-Semitism, the less understanding we have about the subject. Conversely, we hear or read virtually nothing about Jewish antipathies toward the Poles, a topic that needs to be explored to bring much-needed balance into the discussion of Polish-Jewish relations.”²⁶⁵

²⁶¹ Ibid., 195, 205.

²⁶² D. Shtokfish, ed., *Sefer Drohiczyn* (Tel Aviv: n.p., 1969), 15ff.

²⁶³ Antoni Arkuszewski, “Co nie jest antysemityzmem,” *Słowo-Dziennik Katolicki*, August 9, 1995.

²⁶⁴ Richard C. Lukas, “A Response,” *Slavic Review*, Fall/Winter 1987: 584.

²⁶⁵ Richard C. Lukas, *Out of the Inferno: Poles Remember the Holocaust* (Lexington, Kentucky: The University Press

Lukas expanded on these remarks in an important polemic with Jewish historian David Engel about the wartime era:

It is quite clear that no amount of evidence suggesting that Jewish nationalism was a major factor in explaining Polish-Jewish tensions...will be accepted by Engel [here we can readily substitute a litany of names of Jewish historians—*M.P.*] because of his obvious preference for a monocausal explanation—namely, Polish anti-Semitism. Throughout his polemic, Engel clearly reveals his acceptance of the conventional stereotype about the Poles, which obviously does not allow for other factors in understanding Polish-Jewish wartime relations. It is very troubling that Engel and others like him are unwilling to analyze Jewish conduct before and during the war in the same critical terms in which they discuss the conduct of Poles. It is even more disturbing to me how such a one-sided interpretation could attain the degree of academic respectability it obviously has. If historians in any other field of study offered a monocausal explanation of a complex historical situation, they would be laughed out of the profession. David Engel's sad and desperate display confirms the criticism about the state of historiography on Polish-Jewish relations that I voiced in my book [*The Forgotten Holocaust*]:

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 history.²⁶⁶

The portrayal of Polish-Jewish relations, especially those during the Second World War, that has been disseminated by Jews in North American and Western Europe is almost uniformly negative. According to historian Max Dimont, "Poland's action was the most shameful. Without a protest she handed over 2,800,000 of her 3,300,000 Jews to the Germans."²⁶⁷ (The Germans, of course, did not rely on the Poles to carry out the "Final Solution" in Poland.) Historian Nora Levin writes: "The Nazis were well aware that Jews in Poland lived precariously in the midst of widespread popular anti-Semitism. Their laboratory of Jewish destruction could not have succeeded anywhere in Europe as successfully as in Poland. Here began the experiments in ghettoization; here were established hundreds of forced labor camps; and here were established all of the extermination camps."²⁶⁸

of Kentucky, 1989), 9. See also his other books: *The Forgotten Holocaust: The Poles Under German Occupation, 1939–1944*, Second revised edition (New York: Hippocrene, 1997), 124–25, 144; and *Did the Children Cry?: Hitler's War Against Jewish and Polish Children, 1939–1945* (New York: Hippocrene, 1994), 152–53.

²⁶⁶ Richard C. Lukas, "A Response," *Slavic Review*, Fall/Winter 1987: 589–90.

²⁶⁷ Max I. Dimont, *Jews, God and History* (New York: New American Library, 1962), 387.

²⁶⁸ Nora Levin, *The Holocaust: The Destruction of European Jewry, 1933–1945* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell

Historian Helen Fine stated: “Among populations with a strong anti-Semitic tradition or movement, there was little need for distancing. Extermination camps’ odors wafted into the Polish countryside, yet guards could be recruited and killers enlisted. ... Jewish victimization can be adequately accounted for only be [sic] relating it to the success of prewar anti-Semitism.”²⁶⁹ (Poles, it should be noted, were the first victims of Auschwitz and many other Nazi camps and did *not* serve as guards in these camps; the Holocaust was implemented as thoroughly in Holland and Norway as it was in Poland.) Historian John Weiss postulates that “it seems likely that without the alliance with the West and the murderous policies of the Nazis toward the Poles, a majority [sic] of Poles would have been willing participants and not simply indifferent bystanders during the Holocaust.”²⁷⁰

Popular writing echoes these same sentiments. Elie Wiesel has long been on record for holding Poles co-responsible for the Nazi death camps. “As for the Poles,” he wrote in 1968, “it was not by accident that the worst concentration camps were set up in Poland, worse than anywhere else.”²⁷¹ Elsewhere, this Nobel Peace Prize laureate wrote:

You may at times, be seized by rage. We had so many enemies! ... the Poles betrayed them. True, here and there a “good” citizen was found whose cooperation could be bought [sic] 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.”²⁷²

The teachings of these historians and moral authorities are not lost on the younger generations of Jews. Film director Steven Spielberg, who had a typical Jewish upbringing, stated in an interview published in the December 12, 1993 issue of the *Philadelphia Inquirer*:

As a Jew growing up, I learned this in Hebrew School, in Saturday School. It was always in my mind that the Jews were both the chosen people and the persecuted people. The Poles had been persecuting the Jews long before Hitler came into power, centuries

Company, 1968; reissued by Schocken Books, New York, 1973), 165.

²⁶⁹ Introduction to Vladka Meed, *On Both Sides of the Wall: Memoirs from the Warsaw Ghetto* (New York: Holocaust Library, 1979), 3–4.

²⁷⁰ John Weiss, *The Politics of Hate: Anti-Semitism, History, and the Holocaust in Modern Europe* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2003), 192.

²⁷¹ Elie Wiesel, *Legends of Our Time* (New York: Rhinehart and Winston, 1968), 163.

²⁷² Helen Fine, *Accounting for Genocide: National Responses and Jewish Victimization during the Holocaust* (New York: Macmillan, 1979), 90–91.

before. The Jews had to build ghettos around themselves to protect themselves from the Polish population, so that they would have their own Jewishness, their own culture.²⁷³

Jerome Ostrov, a member of the American Jewish Committee, described his views of Poland and the Poles, which are typical of those of many North American Jews, as follows:

I had spent a lifetime developing negative views of Poland. My prejudices were very clear, well defined and unequivocal—probably, identical to most of you who are reading

²⁷³ Doubtless Spielberg's impressions were coloured by his own experiences as a Jewish child growing up in affluent upper middle-class America where open anti-Semitism was the norm at that time (see Bernard Weinraub, "For Spielberg, an Anniversary Full of Urgency," *New York Times*, March 9, 2004):

"Anti-Semitism affected me deeply; it made me feel I wasn't safe outside my own door." ... Discussing the taunts and ugly incidents of his childhood, Mr. Spielberg, 57, said: "It happened in affluent neighborhoods in Arizona and California, where I was one of the few Jewish students. I didn't experience it in more lower-middle-class environments in New Jersey and Ohio."

Once, in a silent study hall of 100 students, several of them pitched pennies around his desk to taunt him, Mr. Spielberg said quietly. "I have vivid memories of that," he said. The hallways, too, could be an ordeal: "A lot of kids coughed the word 'Jew' in their hands as they walked by me between classes."

Anti-Semitism was also a feature of "WASP" (White Anglo-Saxon Protestant) upper-middle-class Canadian society well into the 1950s. According to Michael Valpy, a prominent journalist who grew up in an affluent neighbourhood in Vancouver (see Michael Valpy, "Painful Memories of a Childhood Immersed in Anti-Semitism," *The Globe and Mail*, March 26, 2005),

I began unearthing from my memory the portrait of myself as a teenager and the gang of boys I hung out with. Our jokes about lampshades and melting our Jewish classmates into bars of soap, and screaming "Jew!" (or "Ki-Ki-Ki-Kike") down the hallways of Point Grey and Magee High School. ...

Here is what Michael Levy, Harold Groberman and Joel Wener talked about ... the golf clubs like Shaughnessy that barred their fathers, the private schools like Crofton House and St. George's that they and their sisters and cousins could not attend, the restrictive covenants prohibiting property sales to Jews, the slurs, the hostility, the sports games.

The high-school games got dirty, says Joel Wener. "But it wasn't just that. You'd start hearing 'Jew-boy,' then the punches would fly. ..." ...

My gang, behind Harold's back, said terrible things about him we thought hilarious. Because he was a Jew. ... Our fathers were professional men; they were business executives. ...

On Oct. 29 [1943], the minutes of a Queen's University senate meeting report: "Jewish students in arts ... are admitted only on an academic standing of 75 per cent or over. Other students are admitted on a standing of 60 per cent or over." "This regulation," the minutes go on, "is widely known and seems to operate without any friction." ...

In November, 1948, ... Maclean's [magazine] publishes Pierre Berton's devastating investigative exposé of anti-Semitism in Canada, detailing what occurs when people with Jewish names and non-Jewish names [i.e., British-sounding names] apply for the same jobs, try to make reservations at the same vacation resorts, ask to join the same clubs, and even try to sign up for postwar vocational training at the same government-operated schools."

Similar (or even worse) attitudes prevailed in relation to Catholics and people of Southern and Eastern European origin, not to mention native Indians, Blacks, and Asians. Reassuringly, in North America, such prejudice is attributed to "snobbery" rather than the dislike of "the other." Moreover, the notion that Jews were forced into ghettos in Poland and that this happened against their will has been amply discredited. What contemporary commentators neglect to take into account is that in even North America many Jews, especially Orthodox ones, choose to live in close-knit communities of their own (sometimes walled ones, as in California) and tend not to interact with non-Jews. In Toronto, for example, Jews comprise as much as 70 per cent of the residents of certain areas, making them the most "segregated" neighbourhoods in the city. As one rabbi explains, living in such enclaves with limited interaction with the outside world lessens the pressure on children to assimilate. See Prithi Yelaja and Nicholas Keung, "A little piece of the Punjab," *Toronto Star*, June 25, 2005.

this article. As I saw it, Poland was the monster nation of World War II, perhaps, even more so than Germany. Why? Poland was where the extermination camps were located. Poland once proudly boasted the largest population in Jewish Europe and its loss still remains unbearable in the Jewish psyche. Finally, Poland had a history of pogroms and of segregating its Jews, and, as I saw it, the Nazi atrocities perpetrated on Polish soil would have been impossible without Polish complicity.

Strangely, my contempt for Poland even exceeded the harsh place in my mind reserved for Germany.²⁷⁴

A recent survey of Jewish history textbooks used to educate young Jews in North America confirms that the stereotype of the crude Polish peasant was a staple of that genre: Jewish textbooks relentlessly portrayed the Poles in a negative light and depicted Polish history in lurid colours. Christian peasants—that much maligned “Other”—were “dehumanized,” often described as bestial, employing epithets like “refuse,” “pestilence,” “wild animals,” “ruthless,” “bloody,” and “cruel savage.” After the Second World War the situation was compounded as frequent charges of collaboration and collusion in the Holocaust became commonplace. From the outset Poles were conspicuously omitted from any specific accounts of “righteous Gentiles” who saved Jews during the war, even though they represented the largest group of rescuers.²⁷⁵ What is remarkable is that the deepest anti-Polish biases are held and disseminated by Jewish academics, especially non-historians, but also those in Holocaust-related fields.²⁷⁶

Journalists of Jewish origin, who are both numerous and influential, generally disseminate this same negative picture of Poles in the North American media. Michael Coren, a Canadian journalist and broadcaster, repeats matter-of-factly what has become a staple of Jewish folklore (even though there is no basis in fact for this claim) in the February 21, 2004 issue of the *Toronto Sun*:

Easter was always a dangerous time for my great grandparents. Drunk on cheap vodka and on the tales of Christ’s suffering, local mobs would raid Jewish villages in Poland ... and kill as many Jews as they could.

A similar message is reinforced by Anna Morgan, a Jewish columnist in the *Toronto Star* who is proud of the lesson and family “wisdom” she handed down to her 11-year-old daughter:

²⁷⁴ Jerome Ostrov’s article, “After a Trip to Poland,” is posted at <http://polish-jewish-heritage.org/eng/06-02_Jerome_Ostrov-After_a_trip_to_Poland.html>.

²⁷⁵ Jonathan Krasner, “Constructing Collective Memory: The Re-envisioning of Eastern Europe as Seen Through American Jewish Textbooks,” in *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry*, vol. 19 (2007), 229–55.

²⁷⁶ Robert Cherry, “Contentious History: A Survey on Perceptions of Polish-Jewish Relations during the Holocaust,” in *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry*, vol. 19 (2007), 338.

My father used to quip that Jewish children in his hometown couldn't celebrate the same holidays as their non-Jewish neighbours. They were too busy hiding in cellars.²⁷⁷

Jerome Ostrov, of the American Jewish Committee, suggested that "Israelis, as true of myself, viewed Poland as evil incarnate, even more so than Germany."²⁷⁸ Confirming that impression, Israeli historian Moshe Zimmerman, writing in *Süddeutsche Zeitung* ("Land der Täter und Verräter: Junge Israelis identifizieren Polen mit den Nazi-Verbrechen," April 3, 2007), remarked with bewilderment that young Israelis are increasingly blaming Poles for the Holocaust.

The most common term for Poland you hear from travellers from the 'Holy Land' is 'accursed, impure land,' because it's 'the biggest Jewish cemetery in the world' and where the concentration camps are located. This relationship to the Polish territory leads to an over-simplified attitude to 'the' Pole, and to a lack of distinction between past and present. Now we hear that the Polish army capitulated without a fight, while the Jews fought back against the Nazis. What else should an Israeli soldier imagine, if there's no mention of the Polish Uprising of autumn 1944 in the short history of Warsaw that's been prepared for his benefit?

Unfortunately, among the most harmful purveyors of malicious anti-Polish biases and stereotypes in recent years have been Israeli statesmen and rabbis. Former Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin, interviewed on Dutch television in 1979, proclaimed:

What concerns the Jews, the Poles were collaborating with the Germans. Of the thirty-five million of Poles [actually, there were only about 24 million ethnic Poles at that time—*M.P.*], only at most one hundred people have been helping Jews. Between ten and twenty thousand Polish priests did not save even one Jewish life. All these death camps were (therefore) established on Polish soil.

Stewart Stevens, himself a British Jew, described this outburst as "a disgraceful statement in which Begin disgraced himself and dishonored his own people."²⁷⁹ The Western media—which is ever so vigilant about any alleged Polish anti-Semitism—remain characteristically silent about such ethnic and religious slurs and few Jews share Stewart's indignation or take those who make such statements to task.

Similar sentiments were echoed by another (former) Israeli Prime Minister, Yitzhak Shamir, who stated that Poles "suck in anti-Semitism with their mother's milk." Shamir's statement, made during the height of

²⁷⁷ Anna Morgan, "Jewish kids embracing Halloween," *Toronto Star*, October 28, 2007.

²⁷⁸ Jerome Ostrov, "After a Trip to Poland," Internet: <http://polish-jewish-heritage.org/eng/06-02_Jerome_Ostrov-After_a_trip_to_Poland.html>.

²⁷⁹ Stewart Stevens, *The Poles* (London: Collins/Harvill, 1982), 317.

the controversy over the Carmelite convent in Auschwitz in August 1989, unlike Begin's earlier remark, *did* receive almost immediate critical reaction from some embarrassed Jewish circles.²⁸⁰ However, Shamir's outburst also struck a responsive chord, particularly popular in North America. Jewish-American journalist Joe Bobker, for example, writes:

The Polish remnants of survivors whether they are in Sydney or in New York or in South America or in Israel are unanimous in their instinctive feelings toward Poles and Poland. ... They agree with Shamir's statement that each Pole imbibes Jew hatred with his mother's milk. ... They come from the School of Thought that says each Pole is an anti-Semite until proven otherwise."²⁸¹

In a similar vein, using as a pretext the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz, a camp built originally for Poles (about half of the 150,000 Poles interned there perished), German Jewish spokesman Michel Friedman unleashed a vehement attack on Poles: "I have to wonder if the Christians in Auschwitz were the murderers or the victims."²⁸² Yoram Sheftel, one of Israel's most prominent lawyers, lashed out at Poles and Catholic teaching in an all-too-typical tone in his memoir of the Demjanjuk trial: "It was not for nothing that the Nazis built their death camps in Poland. They did it because there is no other nation so riddled with anti-Semitism as the Poles. Only your church's hatred of the Jews can compete with the people's."²⁸³

Rabbinical pronouncements vilifying Poles are legion and harken back to those voiced already at the beginning of the German occupation. In his diary Chaim Kaplan, a rabbi, educator and author from Warsaw, who had opposed Polish acculturation, wrote on September 1, 1939:

This war will indeed bring destruction upon human civilization. But this is a civilization which merits annihilation and destruction. ... now the Poles themselves will receive our revenge through the hands of our cruel enemy. ...

²⁸⁰ A belated retraction of sorts came from Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, during his state visit to Poland to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Warsaw ghetto uprising. On April 20, 1993, while in Warsaw, Rabin stated: "I do not like to comment on statements made in Israel from abroad, but I would have preferred that this statement had not been made." See "Gore Congratulates Poland on Its Democracy," *The New York Times*, April 21, 1993. Rabin was also reported to have said later at Auschwitz: "In the first place—and it is always necessary to remember this—Auschwitz was a German death camp, built by German criminals on Polish soil. Whoever cannot make a distinction between these two things and links the camp at Auschwitz with Poland, commits a cardinal error." When a delegation of the Polish Sejm (Parliament), headed by its Marshall Józef Oleksy, visited Jerusalem's Yad Vashem Institute on December 7, 1994, Avner Shalev, the director of the Institute, stated: "We do not accuse Poles in any way of taking part in the Holocaust of the Jews. We do not concur with the views which are sometimes expressed that Poles were responsible for the death camps that were built on Polish soil. That does not mean that there weren't individuals and small groups who collaborated with the Germans." See "Oleksy: Polacy nie byli winni," *Gazeta* (Toronto), December 8, 1994.

²⁸¹ "Bobker Replies: More On 'The Polish Question,'" *B'nai B'rith Messenger* (Los Angeles), June 7, 1991.

²⁸² "War of words heats up over Auschwitz ceremonies," *The Globe and Mail* (Toronto), January 24, 1995.

²⁸³ Yoram Sheftel, *The Demjanjuk Affair: The Rise and Fall of a Show-Trial* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1994), 290.

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.²⁸⁴

A similar attitude was demonstrated by Rabbi Kalonymos Kalmish Shapira, a prominent Hasidic leader, who explained the Jewish suffering he witnessed in the Warsaw ghetto thus: “The Jewish people have often had to endure calamities whose sole purpose was the destruction of wicked Gentiles. At such times, Jews are imperiled through no fault of their own.”²⁸⁵ The enormous suffering endured by Polish Christians are not worthy of note.

In the adaptation of a Dvar Torah on Arutz 7, Yisrael Meir Lau, the Chief Ashkenazi Rabbi of Israel, wrote:

... a great many Poles cooperated with the Nazis in the annihilation ... of the Jewish people. The six largest extermination camps were located on Polish territory. They knew that with the loss of the Jews they would suffer dearly. But it did not deter them ...²⁸⁶

Not to be outdone, Rabbi Sholom Klass used the editorial page of *The Jewish Press*, one of the largest circulation Jewish newspapers in the United States, to remind his readers: “three million Polish Jews died under the hands of the Nazis with the active or silent help of many Poles, including Catholic priests.”²⁸⁷

In a tone reminiscent of Rabbi Lau, Rabbi Ely Rosenzweig, spiritual leader of a prominent synagogue in Stamford, Connecticut, commenting on the experiences of a Christian Pole who survived over three years in Auschwitz, stated:

there is no doubt, and all authentic records of history support this, that anti-Semitism was rife in Poland in World War II, and it explains ... why so many death camps and crematoria were established in the heartland of Poland.²⁸⁸

²⁸⁴ Abraham I. Katsh, ed., *Scroll of Agony: The Warsaw Diary of Chaim A. Kaplan* (New York: Macmillan; and London: Collier-Macmillan, 1965), 19–21. Kaplan peppered his wartime diary with anti-Christian remarks directed at Poles. *Ibid.*, 47, 133.

²⁸⁵ Rabbi Kalonymos Kalmish Shapira, *Sacred Fire: Torah from the Years of Fury 1939–1942* (Northvale, New Jersey and Jerusalem: Jason Aronson, 2000), 294.

²⁸⁶ Published in the *The Jewish Press* (Brooklyn), August 13, 1993.

²⁸⁷ Rabbi Sholom Klass, “Polish Anti-Semitism Raises Its Ugly Head Again,” *The Jewish Press* (Brooklyn), June 30, 1995.

²⁸⁸ Dan Mangan, “Hell on earth: ‘You never believe it, you can survive,’” *The Advocate* (Stamford, Connecticut), April 10, 1995.

Writing in *The Canadian Jewish News* (Toronto), Rabbi Reuven P. Bulka of Ottawa, a March of the Living student chaperon, asked rhetorically: "... how can one go to Poland, to the country so steeped in anti-Semitism that it eagerly cooperated with the Nazis in the cold-blooded murder of the Jews?"²⁸⁹ Similar charges were renewed by Rabbi Andrew Baker, the American Jewish Committee's Director of International Jewish Affairs, in the *New York Post* on the 60th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz, who rebuked Poles for pretending to be "victims with no role" in the extermination of the Jews.²⁹⁰

Such views and remarks have a long and undying tradition. Rabbi Bernard Rekas of St. Paul, Minnesota, in his capacity as member of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Council, in 1981 urged the following unsavoury connection: "One might also philosophically reflect as to why it was that the Germans selected Poland as the site of the Auschwitz-Birkenau death complex."²⁹¹ Rabbi Arthur Hertzberg, vice-president of the World Jewish Congress, wrote in a similar vein in his article, "I Can't Go to Warsaw," published in *The New York Times* on April 9, 1983. Rabbi Zev K. Nelson wrote in the Boston *Jewish Advocate* on November 4, 1982: "The Poles were ready and willing to join the Nazis in the annihilation of three million Jews in their land."

Even anti-Zionist Orthodox rabbis, such as Reb Moshe Shonfeld, have been especially outspoken in this regard:

The Jews in Poland had an expression: if a Pole meets me on the wayside and doesn't kill me, it is only from laziness. ... The Poles ... were all fanatical Catholics, and all had unsatiable [sic] appetites for Jewish blood. Those cruel pythons, the Polish clergy, instigated—*after* the fall of the Nazis—pogroms of those Jews who'd miraculously survived.²⁹²

Rabbi Isaac Suna, an educator at the Yeshiva University High School in New York City, who survived several German slave labour and concentration camps, summed up his feelings thus: "I feel greater animosity toward Poles than to the German people."²⁹³ In a similar vein, one survivor concluded her account, in which she presented many instances of Poles' help, by saying "Now you see why we hate the Polacks." There was no word about hating the Germans.²⁹⁴

Rabbi Arthur Hertzberg, a historian and former chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, used the occasion of the imminent historic visit of the Pope John Paul II to Israel to assail the Pontiff in a speech to an international gathering of Jewish World War II military veterans by dragging up the traditional bogeyman of the wicked Catholic Pole. He urged Israelis not to

²⁸⁹ Rabbi Reuven P. Bulka, "Poles apart," *The Canadian Jewish News* (Toronto), May 11, 1995.

²⁹⁰ Rabbi Andrew Baker, "Poland's Progress," *New York Post*, January 26, 2005.

²⁹¹ Edward T. Linenthal, *Preserving Memory: The Struggle to Create America's Holocaust Museum* (New York: Viking Penguin, 1995), 117.

²⁹² Reb Moshe Shonfeld, *The Holocaust Victims Accuse: Documents and Testimony on Jewish War Criminals*, Part 1 (Brooklyn, New York: Naturei Karta of U.S.A., 1977), 13, 16.

²⁹³ Joseph J. Preil, ed., *Holocaust Testimonies: European Survivors and American Liberators in New Jersey* (New Brunswick, New Jersey and London: Rutgers University Press, 2001), 128.

²⁹⁴ Hoffmann, *Shtetl*, 245.

celebrate the Pope's visit "until he clarifies what he was doing as a priest in Poland during the Second World War, when the Jewish community there was massacred."²⁹⁵

With statements like these being made incessantly in the face of little, if any, peer criticism, and given the near universal lack of introspection within the Jewish community about their own attitudes toward Poles, the prospect for the future is not encouraging. Is it little wonder that Ann Landers (née Esther "Eppie" Lederer), the world's most widely syndicated advice columnist, who often stressed her Jewish roots, called the Pope a "Polack" in a 1995 interview?

Upon arrival in North America, survivors from Poland were expected to conform to certain preconceived stereotypes about Poles in their accounts of their wartime experiences. As one candid survivor describes,

They expected from me accounts of a certain kind. What horrible things the Germans had done, how mean the Poles were toward the Jews, how beautiful Jewish culture was, and what a shame that all that was destroyed by the vile Germans and horrible Poles.

I didn't want to adopt that tone; I rebelled against it inwardly. Earlier, it would not have occurred to me to defend the Poles, but now when I saw that the American Jews wanted me to join in creating a stereotype, to prove American-Jewish superiority on cue, I refused to do it. So I said: "There were all kinds of Poles. Some are like this, others like that. It's difficult to generalize." They were very disappointed.²⁹⁶

It is not surprising, therefore, that a scholarly survey of Jewish Holocaust survivors indicates that Poles have been particularly tarred and that Polish Jews have a particular, but not exclusive, penchant for anti-Polish and anti-Catholic sentiments. Among Polish Jews the perception that anti-Semitism in the surrounding society was a "very important" factor in the execution of the Holocaust was shared by many more respondents than was the case among non-Polish Jews, even though the role of many other nations, such as the French, the Dutch, the Norwegians, not to mention the Balts, the Ukrainians, and the Romanians, in implementing the Holocaust has been demonstrably proven. Similarly, among Polish Jews, the perception that non-Jews "cooperated and supported" the Nazi extermination of the Jewish people was much more characteristic (frequent) than among their non-Polish counterparts. (Characteristically, almost all of the survivors identified the Catholic Church as the religious denomination most hostile to Jews, even though the Catholic clergy provided far more assistance to the Jews than did the Protestant clergy, and the largest share of survivor respondents—34 percent—appeared to agree with the John Cornwell assessment—that Pope Pius XII was personally anti-Semitic and not really opposed to Nazi policies toward Jews.) When asked to give reasons why assistance may not have been given to Jews by non-Jews during the Holocaust, most Polish survivors attributed it to anti-Semitism, even though Poland was the only country where the Germans routinely and systematically executed anyone suspected of providing any form

²⁹⁵ "Pope begins pilgrimage in Egypt," *National Post* (Toronto), February 25, 2000.

²⁹⁶ Wiszniewicz, *And Yet I Still Have Dreams*, 117–18.

of assistance to Jews. Among non-Polish survivors, that opinion was much less common, with a larger balance of more benign motives attributed to Gentiles such as “indifference,” “fear of the Nazis,” and “lack of information.”²⁹⁷

Most alarmingly, and irrationally, Polish Jews appear to assign more blame to the Poles than the Germans, as illustrated by their ranking Poles as the most anti-Semitic of nations in the context of the Holocaust, ahead of the Germans and (often dramatically ahead of) various other nationalities who played a significant role in the annihilation of the Jewish population: Ukrainians, Austrians, Lithuanians, Latvians, Croatians, Dutch, and Norwegians. In fact, Polish Jews were almost twice as likely to attribute anti-Semitic attitudes to Poles as to Germans. Among Jewish respondents from Poland, 72 percent characterized prevalent public opinion in that country as cooperative with and supportive of the Nazi Final Solution policy; 25 percent viewed prevalent Polish opinion as passively accepting of the Final Solution.²⁹⁸

Fortunately, from time to time, we hear the voices of righteous Jews, among them rabbis, who go out of their way to remember not only the bad deeds, but also the good, though often little, deeds that would otherwise be swept away. Rabbi Abraham Feffer, who grew up in a household that shunned traditional Jewish views of their Christian neighbours, recollects his experiences (the correlation between the former and latter is both significant and remarkable):

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” [a *chatka* is a peasant cottage] to share with us warm soup, bread and potatoes.²⁹⁹

And another moving example by a person of humble origin:

We must remind [sic] all those people, not Jews, who gave their hand to save many of our town when they escaped from the Nazi murderers. ... The villagers who disperse pieces of bread and turnip on the ways, for the caravans of hungry people, who went under the watching of the S.S. The villagers who gave their shoes to barefooted and

²⁹⁷ Alexander J. Groth, *Holocaust Voices: An Attitudinal Survey of Survivors* (Amherst, New York: Humanity Books/Prometheus Books, 2003), 35–36, 154, 157.

²⁹⁸ Groth, *Holocaust Voices*, 158–59, 164. The author, Alexander J. Groth, himself a survivor from Poland, also succumbs to the most primitive biases about Polish conduct during the war and the Poles’ alleged support for the Final Solution. *Ibid.*, 162–63. Yet, Zofia Kossak-Szczucka, the author of the famous appeal “The Protest” issued during the mass deportations from the Warsaw ghetto in summer of 1942, has been accused of anti-Semitism for taking note of the fact that many Jews “hate us more than they hate the Germans, and ... make us responsible for their misfortune.”

²⁹⁹ Feffer, *My Shtetl Drobin*, 22.

weak. How can we forget the villagers who refused to give food [to] the watchers of the women-caravans who were transported from work-camp.³⁰⁰

A perceptive survivor painted the following complex picture of a wartime Polish anti-Semite:

In all respects I was well off in Zakopane. My employer was a really good, obliging woman while my landlady, Mrs. Zosia, one of the kindest and most pleasant creatures I have know. I took to her very much indeed. Her one grave fault was that she hated Jews and would talk about them at every opportunity. She would constantly mock Jewish expressions, ridiculing Jewish customs and practices. In my opinion she had an unhealthy obsession with the subject. Since I was unable to have a heart-to-heart talk with her, I could never understand where this ill-will towards the Jews came from, and what its real cause was. Being a kind-hearted woman she would always speak with sympathy about the deaths of her Jewish acquaintances. She was of the opinion that killing people was too brutal and cruel a means of getting rid of them, yet she was glad that even by these inhuman methods, the Jewish question in Poland was settled once and for all.

To this day I cannot understand how a person who in all other respects was so aware, kind and gentle could be so wrong. Notwithstanding this she would never actually harm Jews. Several people from warsaw settled in our villa and among them was the widow of a doctor with her daughter. Mrs. Zosia suspected that they were Jewish, which I did too, though I did not admit it. Landlady and tenant often quarrelled about the use of kitchen and money and Mrs. Zosia bitterly complained about ‘the Jewesses’. When somebody suggested giving them notice, however, Mrs. Zosia to my surprise replied: ‘God be with them. Be it as it may, I would not wish to make their lives more difficult.’ And as a matter of fact she tried hard to make their lives easier.³⁰¹

A contemporary rabbi who has been outspoken in espousing fairness for the treatment of Poles is David Lincoln, a senior rabbi of Park Avenue Syngague in New York. His inspiring article “Poland As Victim, Not Victimizer” which appeared in the *New York Jewish Week* (June 17, 2005) applauded long overdue changes to the March of the Living youth trips to Poland.

The admissions of Jews rescued by Poles are particularly illuminating. When pressed on this point, some Jews have stated candidly that they are not sure that they would risk their own lives to save Poles, and are quite certain that they would not endanger their children.³⁰² Yet this is the standard by which Poles, and

³⁰⁰ Z. Tzurnamal, ed., *Lask: Sefer zikaron* [Memorial Book of Łask] (Tel Aviv: Association of Former Residents of Lask in Israel, 1968), 124–25.

³⁰¹ Cyprys, *A Jump For Life*, 220–21.

³⁰² See, for example, Irene Tomaszewski and Tecia Werbowski, *Zegota: The Rescue of Jews in Wartime Poland* (Montreal: Price-Patterson, 1994), 159, and the second revised edition: *Zegota: The Council for Aid to Jews in Occupied Poland, 1942–1945* (Montreal: Price-Patterson, 1999), 147; Hoffman, *Shtetl*, 247; Piotr Szczepański

only Poles—several thousand of whom lost their lives helping Jews,³⁰³ are judged. Historian Szymon Datner recorded the following statement by a Jewish woman whom he values highly for her honesty and courage: “I am not at all sure that I would give a bowl of food to a Pole if it could mean death for me and my daughter.”³⁰⁴ Janka Altman, a survivor of the Janowska concentration camp in Lwów who was sheltered, among other places, in an orphanage in Poronin near Zakopane, together with other Jewish children, wrote in 1978:

Today with the perspective of time, I am full of admiration for the courage and dedication ... of all those Poles who in those times, day in, day out, put their lives on the line. I do not know if we Jews, in the face of the tragedy of another nation, would be equally capable of this kind of sacrifice.³⁰⁵

Hanna Wehr, who survived in Warsaw with the help of Poles, wrote:

(Zbigniew Romaniuk), “Pogromy, mordy i pogromiki,” *Kurier Poranny*, April 12, 1996 (edition AB).

³⁰³ In total, several 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: Philip Friedman, *Their Brothers’ Keepers* (New York: Holocaust Library, 1978), 184–85; Waław Zajęzkowski, *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 in Richard C. Lukas, *The Forgotten Holocaust: The Poles Under German Occupation, 1939–1944*, Second revised edition (New York: Hippocrene, 1997), and an extensive list of Polish victims also appears in Tadeusz Piotrowski, *Poland’s Holocaust: Ethnic Strife, Collaboration with Occupying Forces and Genocide in the Second Republic, 1918–1947* (Jefferson, North Carolina and London: McFarland, 1998), 119–23. 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 on which Dawidowicz relies 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. Although the death penalty was also found on the books in other jurisdictions such as Norway and the Czech Protectorate, there too it was rarely used. See Nechama Tec, *When Light Pierced the Darkness: Christian Rescue of Jews in Nazi-Occupied Poland* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986) 215–16; Zajęzkowski, *Martyrs of Charity*, Part One, 111–18, 284–86, 294, 295. Such laxity was virtually unheard of in occupied Poland, where the death penalty was meted out with utmost rigour. Several Norwegian resistance fighters were executed for helping Jews to escape to Sweden, and a number of others imprisoned. See Mordecai Paldiel, *The Path of the Righteous: Gentile Rescuers of Jews During the Holocaust* (Hoboken, New Jersey: KTAV Publishing House; New York: The Jewish Foundation for Christian Rescuers, 1993), 366. Several dozen individuals in the Czech Protectorate were charged by Nazi special courts and sentenced to death. See Livia Rothkirchen, *The Jews of Bohemia and Moravia: Facing the Holocaust* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, and Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2005), 218–27, 303–304. Rescuers were also put to death in other occupied countries such as Lithuania. See Alfonsas Eidintas, *Jews, Lithuanians and the Holocaust* (Vilnius: Versus Aureus, 2003), 326–27.

³⁰⁴ Małgorzata Niezabitowska, *Remnants: The Last Jews of Poland* (New York: Friendly Press, 1986), 249.

³⁰⁵ Marek Arczyński and Wiesław Balcerak, *Kryptonim “Żegota”: Z dziejów pomocy Żydom w Polsce 1939–1945*, 2nd revised and expanded edition (Warsaw: Czytelnik, 1983), 264.

Everyone who states the view that helping Jews was during those times a reality, a duty and nothing more should think long and hard how he himself would behave in that situation. I admit that that I am not sure that I could summon up enough courage in the conditions of raging Nazi terror.³⁰⁶

A Polish Jew who often asked this question of Jewish survivors recalled: “The answer was always the same and it is mine too. I do not know if I would have endangered my life to save a Christian.”³⁰⁷ These replies should not come as a surprise. Heroes are few and far between and no people should be condemned for not producing them in great abundance. Moreover, as Eva Hoffman succinctly points out, “Before the war, most Poles *and Jews* did not include each other within the sphere of mutual and natural obligations.”³⁰⁸

³⁰⁶ Hanna Wehr, *Ze wspomnień* (Montreal: Polish-Jewish Heritage Foundation of Canada, 2001).

³⁰⁷ Cited in Marc Hillel, *Le massacre des survivants: En Pologne après l'holocauste (1945–1947)* (Paris: Plon, 1985),

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³⁰⁸ Hoffman, *Shtetl*, 247.