

# PREFACE

## A NEW PERSPECTIVE

This volume is the first attempt to demonstrate the conditions and mechanisms of actions implemented by the Polish Government-in-Exile towards the Jewish population during World War II. The documents presented, most of which have not been previously published, show the systemic and large-scale nature of efforts made by the Polish diplomatic and consular service to aid and rescue Jews during all stages of the war. They bring together the activities of the President, the Prime Minister, as well as individual ministries and offices, but above all reflect the constant work of the Polish diplomatic and consular posts and the relief agencies of the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare and the Polish Red Cross.

The archival materials included illustrate the entire spectrum of actions undertaken: documenting information (about the situation of the Jews in occupied Poland), propaganda (aimed at mobilising the international community to stop the Holocaust) and legal activities (to file criminal charges against the perpetrators). At the same time, they point out that the extensive aid effort was not incidental but systematic and constituted one of the most important policies of the Polish Government-in-Exile. The actions documented in this volume allow us to put forward a thesis that Polish officials and diplomats organised one of the largest relief actions to help Jews, carried out by the state diplomatic services during World War II.

The exceptional situation in which the Polish Government-in-Exile found itself is also reflected in the documents. Of all the European countries, it was in Poland that the largest group of people of Jewish identity lived: more than three million. Only the Soviet Union, a state which was much larger and more populous than Poland, had a comparable number of Jews. As a result, it was the Polish authorities and diplomatic posts that were asked for assistance by the largest group of people at risk, and therefore the activities of the Polish offices were incomparably more intense than those of the representations of other Allied and neutral countries.

The published collection shows a less-known aspect of Polish-Jewish relations, which allows readers to look at this aspect of the history of World War II from a new perspective. It therefore facilitates new interpretations and in-depth assessments of the relief activities of the Polish Government-in-Exile. The volume also casts new

light on the efforts of a whole number of Polish diplomatic and consular officers, heretofore not widely known. This publication should also provide a stimulus for further research and increase the availability of the demonstrated source base.

## THE BAGGAGE OF THE PAST<sup>1</sup> POLISH-JEWISH RELATIONS IN THE INTERWAR PERIOD

The end of World War I and the simultaneous collapse of the three partitioning powers allowed for the (re)construction of the Polish state. After regaining independence and completing the process of establishing its borders, Poland became a multi-confessional and multi-ethnic state. According to the general census of 1921, Poles represented less than 70% of the country's population, while the Jewish minority comprised more than 2.8 million people, representing about 10.5% of the population. It is estimated that just before the war broke out, the number of Jews living in Poland amounted to around 3.4 million people.<sup>2</sup>

This situation has made Poland a unique country, compared to other European countries in terms of the number of citizens of Jewish origin. Before the war, in Warsaw alone there were more Jews living in the city than in the whole of France, and several Polish cities or towns had a larger Jewish population than some Western European countries.

An additional specificity of the Jewish minority in Poland was the much lower tendency to assimilate into and blend in with the general population than in Western European countries. Around 90 per cent of the Jewish population lived according to their own cultural and religious models, somehow alongside the Polish society, and most Polish Jews did not speak or know Polish at all. The Jewish population in Poland could be clearly distinguished from people of Jewish descent in the countries of Western Europe, who were much more likely to undergo the assimilation process. As a result, during the German occupation, it was much more difficult for Polish Jews to avoid the German apparatus of repression by merging into Polish society, and the lack both of assimilation and strong links with the 'non-Jewish' part of society made it difficult to obtain and provide assistance. An additional trait of the Jewish population in Poland was its intrinsic ideological and political diversity, resulting in a whole spectrum of attitudes of the Jewish

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<sup>1</sup> For a quick outline of the thousand-year history of Jews in Poland, see, among others, R. Szczuchta, *1000 lat historii Żydów polskich. Podróż przez wieki*, Muzeum Historii Żydów Polskich Polin, Warszawa 2015.

<sup>2</sup> See, among others: J. Tomaszewski, *Żydzi w II Rzeczypospolitej*, A. Markowski, S. Rudnicki (eds), IH UW, Wydawnictwo Neriton, Warszawa 2016, p. 13 and following.

population towards the Polish state and actions of the Polish authorities (from combatting Polish statehood or ignoring its existence to cooperating with the Polish state and even abandoning the relationship with the Jewish religion and culture for the sake of a complete assimilation with Polish culture and language).

From the very beginning of the Second Polish Republic, Jewish matters have been an important part of the Polish diplomatic and consular service. In 1919, Poland was forced to sign the so-called Little Treaty of Versailles, guaranteed by the League of Nations, which, in addition to regulating certain economic matters, also imposed on Poland an obligation to protect the rights of minorities. Forcing this solution on Poland was linked to the anti-Jewish pogroms that took place in Polish lands in 1918 and 1919. These incidents were investigated by a US-British mission, led by Henry Morgenthau, established on 30 June 1919, at the request of Prime Minister Ignacy Paderewski. In the final report, dated 3 October 1919, the members of the mission stated that eight antisemitic pogroms took place between November 1918 and September 1919, in which some 200–300 Jews were killed; therefore it proved that the information provided in the Western press on the number of victims was significantly overstated.<sup>3</sup> The report also stated that the Polish authorities tried to prevent such crimes and did not take responsibility for them.<sup>4</sup> In 1919, there was also a British mission in Poland, led by Stuart Samuel; in his report, he confirmed the pogroms and made a number of recommendations on the situation of the Jewish population in Poland (including a twelve-point proposal guaranteeing the rights of the Jewish minority).<sup>5</sup>

The unequal treatment of the participants in the Paris Peace Conference and the imposition of minority obligations on some countries (including Poland), without imposing such obligations on other countries (e.g. Germany), led to critical assessments of the so-called Little Treaty of Versailles in Polish society and the dissatisfaction of the Polish authorities. In 1934, the Polish Minister of Foreign Affairs, Józef Beck, made a declaration in Geneva to suspend the implementation of some of its provisions, denying the League of Nations the right to control

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<sup>3</sup> See: W. Borodziej (ed.), *Prasa zagraniczna o Polsce. Listopad 1918 – Luty 1919*, PISM, Warszawa 2018.

<sup>4</sup> See: S. Dębski, P. Długolecki (ed.), *Polish Documents on Foreign Policy 11 November 1918 – 28 June 1919*, PISM, Warszawa 2017. In his memoirs, Hugh Gibson, the first US Envoy in Warsaw, paid a lot of attention to the situation of the Jewish minority in Poland, see: V. Reed, M.B.B. Biskupski, J.R. Potocki (ed.), *An American in Warsaw: Selected Writings of Hugh S. Gibson, US Minister to Poland, 1919–1924*, Rochester 2018.

<sup>5</sup> See: S. Dębski (ed.), *Polskie Dokumenty Dyplomatyczne 1919 czerwiec-grudzień*, PISM, Warszawa 2019. The Samuel's committee was not unanimous in its assessment of the situation in Poland. One of its members, captain Peter Wright, drew up his own report, more critical of Poland.

minority issues in Poland and at the same time declaring that ‘the real situation of minorities will not be changed.’<sup>6</sup>

The constitution of the Republic of Poland, adopted in March 1921, guaranteed the rights of ethnic minorities in Articles 109 and 110, while subsequent articles provided for the freedom of conscience, religious beliefs and religious worship. The so-called *March Constitution* also referred to the treaty on minorities and introduced the freedom of research and of the organisation of education.<sup>7</sup>

Another legal act regulating the rights of the Jewish minority was the so-called Polish-Jewish settlement of 1925 concluded by the government of Władysław Grabski (supported by the National Democracy) with the Jewish Parliamentary Group.<sup>8</sup> Together with earlier language laws and regulations on education—the so-called *Lex Grabski*—it increased, temporarily and in a limited way, the rights of ethnic minorities in the Second Polish Republic.<sup>9</sup>

A fundamental change took place in 1926, when Józef Piłsudski took power in the country by a coup d’état. The seizure of power by the Piłsudskiite camp was welcomed by most of the Jewish community, and the new authorities took some steps to meet the specific demands of the Jewish minority.<sup>10</sup>

The exacerbation of Polish-Jewish relations, which included economic rivalry, occurred as a result of the global crisis of the years 1929–1933. However, the country’s recovery was not possible without a fundamental reconstruction of its economic structure. The Polish state was thus unable to solve problems such as rural overpopulation and huge unemployment, which contributed the deterioration of relations between individual ethnic groups and resulted in mutual accusations. Nor did the Polish state create a comprehensive programme devoted to the issue of ethnic minorities, including the Jewish one. The attempt to overcome the crisis and improve the situation was seen in the continued support of emigration demands and search for areas that would accept emigrants from Poland, including those of Jewish descent.<sup>11</sup> As a result, the Polish Government supported (and partly

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<sup>6</sup> See: S. Żerko (ed.), P. Długolecki (assist.) *Polskie Dokumenty Dyplomatyczne 1934*, PISM, Warszawa, 2014, doc. 247.

<sup>7</sup> See more in: J. Ogonowski, *Sytuacja prawna Żydów w Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej 1918-1939. Prawa cywilne i polityczne*, Żydowski Instytut Historyczny, Warszawa 2012.

<sup>8</sup> See: J. Tomaszewski, “Polskie dokumenty o ‘ugodzie’ polsko-żydowskiej w 1925 roku”, *Biuletyn Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego*, no. 1 (193), 2000.

<sup>9</sup> J. Tomaszewski, “Władysław Grabski wobec kwestii żydowskiej”, *Biuletyn Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego*, no. 1 (161), 1992.

<sup>10</sup> S. Rudnicki, “Szacunek z wzajemnością. Piłsudski a Żydzi”, *Więź*, no. 5/6 (53), 2010.

<sup>11</sup> As an example, see: the circular (instruction for Polish diplomatic and consular posts) of the Press Department of the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs from 1936, devoted to population issues and discussing general economic issues, published in: S. Żerko (ed.),

financed) the activities of Zionist groups, with a particular focus on the activity of Ze'ev Jabotinsky, who called for the creation of a Jewish state and mass emigration of Jews from Poland to Palestine.<sup>12</sup> The illegal emigration of Jews to Palestine was also backed by the Polish intelligence, which trained the combatants of the Jewish Irgun, an underground military organisation founded on Jabotinsky's initiative to fight for the Jewish state in Palestine.<sup>13</sup>

Despite the deterioration of Polish-Jewish relations in the second half of the 1930s and the rise of nationalist and antisemitic sentiments throughout the world, no antisemitic legislation was in principle introduced in Poland. The exception was the law introduced in 1938 by the Polish authorities on the revocation of citizenship of persons who, during their stay abroad, were acting to the detriment of the Polish state, lost contact with the Polish state (after more than five years of staying abroad) or did not return to the country at the request of the authorities. The genesis of this law was the deteriorating situation in the Third Reich and the return to Poland of the Polish Jews who had emigrated to Germany years earlier. The Polish authorities—which, as already mentioned, supported emigration—introduced the new act in fear of the mass re-emigration of Jews from Germany. The German authorities responded by carrying out the so-called *Polenaktion*—an attempt to implement the decision on the mass expulsion of all Polish Jews from Germany.<sup>14</sup> After the war broke out, the act of 1938 was cancelled by the Polish authorities in exile.

One should also mention the interwar activities of Polish nationalist youth organisations, which sought to introduce legal regulations making it possible to limit (*numerus clausus*) or eliminate entirely (*numerus nullus*) Jewish students from Polish institutions of higher learning, as was done in some other countries. Clashes, riots and attacks on Jewish students took place at Polish universities. In 1937, the authorities of most Polish institutions of higher learning introduced (with the accord of the Minister of Religious Affairs and Public Education) the so-called 'ghetto benches', i.e., separate benches in lecture halls set aside for Jewish students.

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P. Długolecki (assist.) *Polskie Dokumenty Dyplomatyczne 1936*, PISM, Warszawa, 2011, doc. 338.

<sup>12</sup> As an example of Jabotinsky's talks with the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, see: M. Kornat (ed.), P. Długolecki, M. Konopka-Wichrowska, M. Przyłuska (assist.), *Polskie Dokumenty Dyplomatyczne 1938*, PISM, Warszawa, 2007, doc. 173.

<sup>13</sup> A. Patek, "Nielegalna emigracja żydowska z II Rzeczypospolitej do Palestyny", *Zeszyty Naukowe Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego. Prace Historyczne*, vol. 136, 2019.

<sup>14</sup> J. Tomaszewski, *Preludium Zagłady. Wygnanie Żydów polskich z Niemiec w 1938 roku*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warszawa 1998.

All these events made the situation of the Jewish community in interwar Poland complex. On the one hand, Poland was the centre of the social, religious, cultural, political and educational life of the Jewish population in Europe. On the other hand, however, there was often a lack of willingness on all sides regarding Polish-Jewish cooperation, and conflicts and anti-Jewish attitudes were not uncommon.

The picture of Polish-Jewish relations should also be assessed in the international context and in comparison to the situation in other countries. The aforementioned size of the Jewish population and its low level of assimilation and identification with the state were specific to Poland. Another specific feature was the relatively liberal legal situation in Poland, which guaranteed freedom to members of ethnic minorities (not just the Jewish one), especially as compared to their rights in other countries.

The extermination of Jews by the Germans during World War II completely changed this situation and, as assessed by the representatives of B'nai B'rith in talks with Polish communist authorities many years after the war, 'Poland as a traditional and historic Jewish centre ceased to exist'.<sup>15</sup>

## THE GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF POLAND IN EXILE TOWARDS JEWS<sup>16</sup>

### CIRCUMSTANCES

When describing the activity of the Polish Government-in-Exile towards Jews, one should pay attention to several aspects of the phenomenon. The most important factor was the external conditions, namely the policies of the German and Soviet occupation authorities, which changed in tandem with the war. For example, during the initial period of war (until October 1940), it was possible for Jewish people to emigrate from the part of Poland occupied by the Germans (if, of course, they held an entry visa to another country). During this period, the Polish

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<sup>15</sup> P. M. Majewski, *Polskie Dokumenty Dyplomatyczne 1973*, PISM, Warszawa 2006, doc.144.

<sup>16</sup> In the preface, two articles published by the Polish Institute of International Affairs as a kind of announcement of this volume were used: P. Długołęcki, "Praca wielu placówek polskich polega głównie na opiece nad Żydami" – rząd RP na uchodźstwie wobec Holocaustu", *Polski Przegląd Dyplomatyczny*, no. 1 (80), 2020, p. 141–151 and "A więc dlaczego Żydzi uciekali?" – notatka Juliana Hochfelda z 1944 roku o dezercjach z Wojska Polskiego", *Polski Przegląd Dyplomatyczny*, no. 4 (83), 2020, p. 150–165.

authorities sought to obtain residence or transit visas for people who managed to escape from the occupiers. The representatives of the Polish Government tried to acquire consent for emigration in basically all the unoccupied countries, while also attempting to overcome the reluctance of local authorities to accept more refugees. Symptomatic in this respect is the correspondence of the Polish Consulate General in Bogotá, Columbia, from May 1940, in which the following reports were made on the possibilities of emigrating to Colombia: ‘The authorities estimate that no less than 250,000 Jews wander around Europe, keenly seeking an opportunity to emigrate to America. That is why maintaining an “open door” policy could prove overly risky for Colombia’ (doc. 42). Appeals to the British authorities to increase the quota of persons allowed into Palestine were also a constant task at the time (see, *inter alia*, doc. 24). It is, moreover, worth recalling an excerpt of the report by Minister August Zaleski from April 1941: ‘My ministry has recently held a series of talks with the British authorities about our refugees, asking the British Government for help in placing them in the British Empire. In those talks, all territories were considered, that is—the Iberian Peninsula, the Balkan countries, the Far East, as well as the evacuation of the Polish population from the Wilno region within the current possibilities’ (doc. 105).

This period is characterised on the one hand by the reluctance of the countries accommodating refugees and the introduction of various restrictions, and on the other by attempts to place a few groups or even individual families to any possible location, sometimes quite a distant one (e.g. Jamaica). The Polish authorities pointed out the difficulties in obtaining aid (‘The United States have not yet adjusted their legislation to the current exceptional circumstances’) as well as to the moral dilemmas faced by refugees. This was the case when, for example, obtaining asylum in Canada became possible only for children and rescuing the youngest required the decision to separate them from their parents (doc. 57).

The reluctant attitude of the Western countries to receive Jews was already evident during the pre-war period, the most obvious example of which is the lack of concrete results of the Évian Conference held in 1938. A similar restraint, resulting in the inability to adopt solutions to provide real aid, can also be observed during the Bermuda Conference of 1943, which brought nothing more than general appeals to have the neutral countries shelter Jews.

Archival sources, including documents published in this volume, also point to an asymmetry between the Polish Government, representing the state occupied by the Third Reich and the Soviet Union, and its allies: Great Britain, France (until June 1940) and other states to which it directed appeals for aid for Polish Jews. The Polish Government was often placed in the position of a petitioner in wartime conditions, demanding the involvement of administrative resources, time and attention of other countries. Its humanitarian arguments were most often

considered impossible to implement due to costs and prioritisation of the war effort.

The years 1941–1943, the period of mass extermination of Jews, were, in turn, a time of increased information dissemination, publicising the German crimes, and calling for the Holocaust to be stopped and the guilty to be punished. This period includes the publication of the report of 24 November and the note of 9/10 December 1942, the first official documents informing about the Holocaust (doc. 285 and 296), as well as the appeals by the National Council and the Government (doc. 286 and 287). At that time (following the re-establishment of the Polish-Soviet diplomatic relations after the German aggression against the Soviet Union), a Polish welfare system in the USSR was put in place for several months, which made it possible to aid tens of thousands of people in need. At the same time, there was also a Polish-Soviet dispute regarding the so-called ‘passportisation’—the forced granting of Soviet citizenship to Polish citizens mostly of Jewish, Ukrainian and Belarusian nationality—as well as the issue of recruitment of Jewish soldiers to the Polish Army in the USSR. At the same time, the Polish authorities undertook a wide-ranging action to rescue Jewish refugees in France from being deported to the Auschwitz-Birkenau and Sobibór camps.

In the final years of the war, 1944–1945, the efforts of the Polish Government were mainly focused on aiding refugees scattered in many countries around the world. It is also the time of the appeals to stop the extermination of the Hungarian Jews and of the suggestions being made by the Polish side for retaliatory actions. The Polish Government proposed to the British authorities, among others, to threaten the Germans with the execution of German POWs held in British captivity if the crimes of the Holocaust were continued. The Polish Government hoped that making—and carrying out, such threats—would in effect temper Germany’s policy of extermination. The Polish authorities also suggested the intensification of retaliatory bombing and the destruction of access roads to the extermination camps (see, among others, docs. 484, 520, and 521). At the time, the involvement of the Polish Government-in-Exile in the efforts to punish war criminals increased, and there was also a certain rivalry with the puppet communist Polish Government (created by the USSR as the so-called Polish Committee of National Liberation) in terms of participation in the work of the Inter-Allied Commission for War Crimes (doc. 511) and in the aid activities (doc. 512). A circular symptomatic of the Government-in-Exile losing international importance after the Yalta conference, at which it was decided to include Poland within the Soviet sphere of influence, comes from this period. It includes an order to influence the Jewish community so that its representatives, through protests and appeals, ‘would condemn the Crimean provisions, demand justice for Poland and declare their loyalty to the Mr President and the Government’ (doc. 544).



Another aspect that had a fundamental impact on the actions of the Polish Government (also depending on the current war situation) was the 'refugee geography'. The issue of migration and changing possibilities of obtaining refuge has been understudied, unlike the well-known and repeatedly described chronology of the Holocaust. The report by the Ministry of National Defence from 1943, which comprehensively outlined the situation in this area since the beginning of the war ('At the moment the country was occupied by the enemy, thousands of waves of refugees headed for neighbouring countries, Romania, Hungary and Lithuania', doc. 343), is extremely interesting in this respect.

'Refugee geography' was also affected by changes taking place in the network of Polish posts (described later in the preface). The closure of Polish posts in Bucharest and Budapest significantly hampered the care for Polish citizens, while the evacuations of the Embassy in Rome and the Legations in Belgrade and Athens significantly inhibited the use of refugee routes through Italy, Yugoslavia and Greece. The German attack on France and the gradual liquidation of the Polish posts there forced a further exodus of refugees (to Spain, Portugal or Morocco) and made it much more difficult to help those that remained in France.

Another factor that influenced the Polish Government's actions were the various survival strategies adopted by the Jewish population that managed to escape from occupied areas. The most desirable scenario for them was to leave Europe and the most desirable directions of travel included the United States, Palestine and South American countries. The activities of the refugees were to some extent contingent upon, for example, whether they had a family in the country of destination or sufficient financial resources, as well as on whether they had or were able to obtain citizenship of a given country. All this also affected the work of the Polish diplomatic and consular service, which tried to make use of the capabilities of specific individuals. This resulted in a community of interests of officials and refugees: exceeding the standard duties, the former tried to distribute the groups of Polish citizens, while the latter wanted to leave Europe as soon as possible.

An important factor which also influenced the actions of the Polish authorities towards Jews was the service of people of Jewish descent in Polish armed forces. On 30 August 1939, the Polish authorities announced a general mobilisation, imposing obligatory military service on all men of military age. This obligation was binding on all Polish citizens, irrespective of nationality, and evading it was subject to criminal sanction. It also applied to service in Polish military units formed during the war beyond occupied Polish territory.

Poles typically pointed out that Jewish soldiers avoided fighting, which, in their opinion, resulted in collective desertions. The dual attitude of Jews to military service was also emphasised. The unwillingness of people who were already in safe places (not threatened by the Germans) to enlist was pointed out; at the same time,

it was revealed that the Jews joining the Polish Army in the USSR were motivated by the need to improve their situation, especially where it was tantamount to being released from camps and saving one's life. Jews were said to have joined the army not to fight, but to be evacuated to a safe place. Representatives of Jewish communities emphasised the valour of Jewish soldiers and their loyal attitude towards Poland. Jewish organisations accused the Polish authorities of using discriminatory methods during recruitment to the army and accused them of improperly treating Jewish soldiers, which, as they stressed, was said to be the reason for desertions. This issue remains the subject of dispute and conflicting interpretations still today. However, this does not alter the fact that the attitude of the Jewish population towards service in the Polish Army and the attitude of the Polish military to Jewish soldiers both influenced the conduct of the diplomatic and consular service.

Obviously, the nuances in the Polish Government's activities towards Jews in the occupied country were also due to the different treatment of the Jewish population by the German and Soviet authorities. In 1939, after the German and Soviet aggression against Poland, the Polish territory was divided between the occupiers (the USSR took a slightly larger part than Germany). This situation lasted until June 1941, when, as a result of the German aggression against the USSR, Polish lands occupied so far by the Soviet Union came under German occupation. In consequence, between September 1939 and June 1941, the fate of the population in Poland varied significantly, as the policy of the occupying authorities differed. In the case of Jews, the territories occupied by the USSR were far more secure, which does not, of course, mean that the people of Jewish origin were excluded from Soviet repressions. Jewish Poles were, for example, among the victims of the Katyń massacre, or among the Polish citizens deported from the eastern part of Poland deep into the Soviet Union.

### *THE TYPES OF ACTIONS UNDERTAKEN*

When it comes to the activities of the Polish Government-in-Exile, several types can be identified, primarily aid, information and propaganda, as well as legal activities. More specific sorts of assistance, such as forgery or obtaining the necessary documentation, require further explanation.

In the sphere of aid initiatives, a distinction should be drawn between actions addressed to the population in the occupied country—which included parcels to ghettos and cooperation with the Central Welfare Council, a Polish social assistance organisation established with the consent of the Germans in 1940—and measures taken to help refugees. In the latter case, it is also necessary to differentiate between the situation of the refugees in hostile or neutral countries from their position

in allied countries. Obviously, it was one thing to help Jewish refugees in Cuba and another to try to rescue Jews in Hungary.

There were various ways to provide aid, which included sending parcels containing medicines, food, and clothing, as well as attempts to transfer money or deliver necessary (genuine and forged) documents. A separate issue was the evacuation of endangered people: trying to obtain visas or the consent of neutral countries to accept the refugees. It is also worth noting that Polish officials sometimes faced the need to make ethically difficult decisions. When it was not possible to assist all those in need, it was necessary to choose who would be helped in each situation. Such decisions sometimes depended on Polish officials and sometimes also on the policies of other countries, especially with regard to issuing an entry visa or giving consent to host the refugees. The Polish side noted that in some situations 'the momentous endeavour of evacuating our compatriots can only be resolved by individualising the respective groups. Troops, technicians, engineers, clerks, etc., can be summoned to England by name, and the same shall be the case for the families of the servicemen on active duty in England. For the remaining people, the opportunity has not yet arisen to be evacuated because of the inability of refugees to stay at the expense of the Treasury for an incalculable period of time, and finally because of the transfer policy of the British Government' (doc. 57).

People of Jewish descent who were representatives of sought-after professions, those who could count on being provided for by their relatives, or those who were wealthy (as was the case with the so-called 'diamond traders for whom attempts could be made to obtain British visas', doc. 142) had better prospects of receiving the most valuable aid, i.e. the permission for the evacuation. The vast majority of Jewish refugees could not count on complete assistance during evacuation, and as the Polish authorities noted: 'The efforts made by the Polish Government in various countries to obtain entry permits for Polish refugees indicate that the Jewish element among the refugees generally cannot expect any sort of loosening of immigration restrictions regarding collective visas for them' (doc. 58).

Another area of Government action included the dissemination of information and propaganda, which was undertaken primarily by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Information and Documentation. The representatives of the Polish Government sent a number of notes and appeals addressed directly to the authorities of the Allied States and conducted numerous discussions with their counterparts from other countries. Public speeches, radio and press interviews, inspired publications, as well as the editing of document collections, relations, photographs and brochures also comprised this set of activities. These included the bulletins issued by the Polish diplomatic and consular posts and reports published by the institutions established for this purpose, such as the Polish Information Center in the United States.

The activities of the well-known courier Jan Karski should also be mentioned here. He held a number of talks and meetings in Great Britain and the United States, reporting on the situation in the occupied country and discussing the issue of the Holocaust.

The Government's information activities also included the continued campaign against antisemitism accusations concerning both the population in occupied Poland and Polish authorities in exile, relief agencies, military authorities, and soldiers.

An important part of the information policy was the gathering by the posts of any information on the Holocaust obtained from eyewitnesses who managed to escape from occupied areas. These reports were—in addition to the messages sent by the Underground Home Army and the Government Delegation for Poland—the basis for Government information activities, although there is still a dispute among historians about the time the Western powers were notified about Operation Reinhardt, among others. There is an ongoing debate as to whether the Government in London publicised information about the Holocaust immediately upon receiving it.

In the legal sphere, in the initial phase of the war, the most important decision was the repealing of the aforementioned Act of 1938 on the revocation of Polish citizenship. On 2 October 1939, two days after being appointed the Minister of Foreign Affairs, August Zaleski instructed the Polish consulates to suspend its execution (doc. 6). Interestingly, Zaleski had no power to revoke laws; however, he considered, either for humanitarian reasons or perhaps for image-related ones, that it was necessary to block the operation of this type of regulation. The act was formally repealed in November 1941 (doc. 145).

An initiative was also taken to legally regulate the status of the Jewish minority in post-war Poland. This was a permanent feature of statements by representatives of Jewish communities and in the demands formulated by foreign politicians, which in turn forced the Polish authorities to take a position. Documents drawn up throughout the war illustrate the entire spectrum of Polish thinking with regard to the post-war position of the Jewish minority.

Legal activities were also linked to the already mentioned case of punishing war criminals. This purpose was served, among others, by gathering appropriate evidence.

It is important to stress that the legal obligation of each consular service is to assist the citizens of its state. In the case of the actions of the Polish consular service, there are examples of this obligation being fulfilled and aid given also to people of Jewish descent who never held Polish citizenship.

One special form of activity—which, in some respects, went far beyond the standard diplomatic and consular activities—was falsifying or obtaining the necessary documentation for rescuing Jews. Three main areas should be distinguished in this respect. The first is obtaining genuine documents issued by the diplomatic posts of the neutral states; the second is issuing Polish passports to people who were not Polish citizens; the third type of action undertaken includes the manufacturing of documents (e.g. baptism certificates), with the main purpose to hide the Jewish descent of refugees.

As far as documents from neutral countries are concerned, we are talking primarily about passports of South American countries obtained by the Polish Legation in Bern and the RELICO group. Aleksander Ładoś, Konstanty Rokicki, Stefan Ryniewicz and Juliusz Kühl participated in this project on behalf of the Polish post, while the most famous representatives of the RELICO committee included Adolf (Abraham) Silberschein and Chaim Eiss. Obtaining South American passports is sometimes described as falsification, but in fact the documents themselves were genuine, although the people for whom they were issued had nothing to do with the country of their new citizenship.

The action was initially carried out by the Polish Legation in Bern, which did not notify the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in London. The Deputy Secretary-General at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Gustaw Potworowski, addressed Aleksander Ładoś as late as 19 May 1943: ‘The Ministry has recently been informed by Jewish organisations about the alleged possibility of rescuing individual Jews from being murdered by Germans on the basis of passports of South American countries’. Although the Ministry had no knowledge of the measures taken, it fully supported the initiative, and Potworowski stressed: ‘Moments of strictly humanitarian nature induce us to act to the broadest possible extent in these matters. The Ministry asks you for a cable message about the efforts undertaken by you, and their results’ (doc. 354).

When the German authorities became aware of this practice, the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs conducted a wide-ranging action in the South American countries, requesting the Polish diplomatic posts to take all possible measures to have the issued passports recognised by the local authorities. In the circular of 21 December 1943, the Minister of Foreign Affairs Tadeusz Romer requested ‘to take immediate and swift action with all the Governments concerned, so that they send instructions for the legations representing their interests in Berlin that all these passports, which have been issued solely for humanitarian purposes to save people from certain death, and which do not impose any obligations on the governments in question after the war, are to be recognised as valid for the duration of the war’ (doc. 417). The Embassies in Washington and the Holy See also made efforts to obtain the support of the United States and the Vatican on this issue. In another

circular, Romer additionally requested Ambassador Jan Ciechanowski ‘to support this matter at the Department of State, so that instructions are sent to American envoys in Latin America,’ and Ambassador Kazimierz Papée ‘to intervene with the Secretariat of State, so that instructions are sent to the Nuncios in Latin America, so that they can carry out their interventions with the governments concerned on humanitarian grounds’ (doc. 459).

In June 1944, the actions carried out were summarised as follows: ‘The Ministry spares no effort to trigger an effective action that could protect Jews who were provided with courtesy Latin American passports from deportation to Poland and extermination. What makes it difficult is having only residual data on the number of people concerned and the number of passports of individual American republics. Already in March, the Ministry demanded the Jewish organisations in Switzerland to provide as complete data as possible, but it has not yet received it’ (doc. 486).<sup>17</sup>

It is also worth noting that these efforts to convince the authorities of South American countries also addressed the issue of Jews deported from France. In a circular sent to the Polish diplomatic posts in September 1942, Minister Edward Raczyński requested: ‘Following previous instructions regarding the anti-Jewish operation in France, I request that you ask the government to which you are accredited, to grant a certain quota of visas to Polish citizens in France, which may make it easier for us to persuade the French authorities into allowing them to leave and to providing temporary asylum in Switzerland and Portugal’ (doc. 246).

The second way of granting documents to refugees was to issue Polish passports to non-Polish citizens. This was particularly prevalent in France, where many Polish consulates, especially just before the collapse of France, passed on Polish passports to refugees in need. These passports made it easier for the refugees to travel, because, as noted in August 1940, ‘holders of those passports are privileged by the English, Spanish, and Portuguese authorities.’ As a result, the Polish authorities in London received information in 1940 ‘from people who have recently arrived from unoccupied France, that in France, Spain and Portugal, hundreds of people, mostly Jews who do not speak Polish, have foreign passports issued by the Polish Consulate in Toulouse’ (doc. 56).

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<sup>17</sup> Recent research indicates that between 4,000 to 5,000 such documents were issued thanks to the collaboration between the Bern embassy officials and the RELICO aid committee, and that the passport campaign involved approximately 10,000 people. For more, see J. Kumoch, M. Maniewska, J. Uszyński, B. Zygmunt, *Lista Ładosia. Spis osób, na których nazwiska w okresie II wojny światowej zostały wystawione paszporty latinoamerykańskie przez Poselstwo RP i organizacje żydowskie w Szwajcarii*, Instytut Pileckiego, Warszawa 2021.

These reports were confirmed by the Polish Envoy in Lisbon, Karol Dubicz-Penther, who in January 1941, describing the different types of documents held by Jewish refugees, noted: 'After 20 June 1940, the obtainment of passports by Jews of the alleged Polish decent in the consulates of the Republic of Poland in France was relatively simple, as to be granted a passport one only had to present a French or Belgian identification card, with an annotation stating that the holder is "of Polish nationality". All Jews who after 20 June 1940 passed through either Toulouse or Marseille hold such passports, which from a legal standpoint are legitimate and must be accepted, having been issued by the offices of the Republic of Poland operating abroad' (doc. 87). In one of his earlier reports, Dubicz stated in turn that 'these people usually speak no Polish' (doc. 84).

Some of the passports issued by Polish consulates and delegations in France to 'people who do not hold the right to them' were later cancelled by the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, but this was done after Jews fled from France, when these passports had already played their role and allowed them to evacuate (doc. 84).

Granting Polish citizenship to people who were not associated with Poland exacerbated the problem of service in the Polish Army. The men of military age who received Polish passports were automatically obliged by law to serve in the Polish Army, of which they were for obvious reasons not convinced. Their reluctant position naturally caused negative reactions on the Polish side.

The third method of providing Jews with life-saving documents stemmed from the reluctant position of neutral countries towards accepting Jewish refugees. While obtaining a visa for a Polish national was a difficult but feasible task, some restrictions were introduced in the case of people of Jewish descent that made it impossible. In this situation, the Polish posts tried to hide the true nationality of the refugees, and the easiest way to do so was to produce documents confirming the person's 'membership' in the Christian religion. This was the task of the Consul General in Istanbul, Wojciech Rychlewicz, who issued certificates even to people whose names clearly indicated their Jewish origin.<sup>18</sup> Rychlewicz's aid was also a product of instructions sent by the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In December 1940, Foreign Minister August Zaleski requested of Rychlewicz in a cable: 'We are making efforts to obtain entry visas to British territories for Jewish refugees. Barlas sent a telegram to Schwarzbart saying that Jewish refugees were not provided material support by the Consulate. In cooperation with the Ministry of Social Welfare, I request that you provide material assistance for the Jewish refugees who do not have means of their own' (footnote 98 to doc. 79).

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<sup>18</sup> E. Beck, "The Angel from Istanbul", *Israel Hayom*, 11 December 2020.



The Turkish authorities apparently discovered the procedure and introduced certain restrictions. Rychlewicz's successor in Istanbul, Consul Aleksy Wdziękoński, informed in February 1942 about the instructions of the Turkish Ministry of Internal Affairs, which provided that 'only authoritative documents confirming the religion of foreigners are either birth or baptism certificates issued immediately after birth or a few years after birth, but also that they must be attached with a certificate from the parish register accompanied by the signature of a priest, the head of the Parish Office, confirming the authenticity of the certificate' (doc. 165).

The Polish Envoy in Lisbon used slightly subtler methods, trying to choose among the Jewish refugees those who were most likely to be recognised as Slavs. Initially, when seeking permission for emigration to Brazil, the Consulate prepared documents for both Polish and Jewish refugees. However, the way in which the Brazilian Consulate in Lisbon rejected the applications of Jewish refugees made it change the mode of operation. As a result, in the report of January 1941, Dubicz-Penther stated: 'In all the cases when the Polish Jews had the required data and appearances to pass for "Aryan-Slavs" of the Christian religion (Polish first and last name, a photograph not showing Semitic features, baptismal certificates), the Legation of the Republic of Poland prepared dossiers for the Brazilian Consulate, furnishing those persons with confidential certificates of their Aryan descent and Christian religion. That mainly concerned Polish-Jews coming from Poland, and already assimilated members of the intelligentsia. The Legation used that method wishing to facilitate the obtainment of Brazilian visas to the greatest number of Polish citizens' (doc. 85).

Ambassador Kazimierz Papée dealt similarly with the refugees in Italy. The Embassy to the Holy See was formally only operational in the Vatican, with the Ambassador unable to act in Italy outside its jurisdiction. However, Papée tried to bring about a situation in which the refugees, 'instead of an official certificate of their Aryan origin, present a certificate issued by the Church authorities, that is, by the Rector of the Polish Church in Rome, validated by the Vicariate of the City of Rome' (doc. 89).

The three kinds of efforts to obtain documents described above enabled thousands of Jewish refugees to emigrate, which would have been very difficult, if not impossible, without the support of Polish diplomatic posts. It is worth noting that the Polish authorities had already assisted in the illegal emigration of Jews to Palestine during the pre-war period. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Second Department of the General Staff were involved in facilitating all forms of emigration to the Middle East, formally presented as tourist or scientific trips. Extensive passport facilities were used, and the forging



of documents was supported or tolerated.<sup>19</sup> Such pre-war experiences may have been useful in the continuation of similar activities after the outbreak of the war.

*THE MASS AND SYSTEMATIC NATURE  
OF THE ACTIONS UNDERTAKEN*

It is worth emphasising the scale of actions undertaken by the Polish Government. From the beginning of the war, the refugee problem was an enormous one. Almost all posts were facing the challenge of helping tens of thousands of people who were trying to get out of endangered areas. Polish diplomatic posts had to meet this challenge by acting as a representation of the Government of a country occupied by aggressors, with no territory of its own in which it could place the refugees: they could only act as petitioners requesting other countries to provide the refugees with shelter. The tasks of the posts were all the more difficult as the enormous development of aid activities was not accompanied by a reinforcement of the staff. Budget constraints due to war difficulties were also a standard.

The mass nature of the actions was due both to the large number of refugees and to attempts undertaken by them to use all possible escape routes. Jews were fleeing from Europe by several routes. The first one led through Italy, France/Vichy, Spain, Portugal, and further to the United States, South America and North Africa. The second wound through Romania, Hungary, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Greece, Turkey, then towards Palestine and the Middle East, as well as to the countries of South America. Another route was going through the Wilno region, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, the USSR and onward to Japan and the Far East. The northern route, which led through Sweden and further to the United States, was less efficient.

The multitude of routes used and the need to provide support to refugees already on the ground meant that in principle all Polish posts were involved in aid activities. In one of the reports of May 1944 it was even stated that: 'The work of many Polish posts mainly consists of caring for Jews. A common example of this would be our Legation in Cuba, set up, among other reasons, to provide care for Jews who arrived in Jamaica' (doc. 473). Polish officials were faced with the need to solve a huge problem and the constant reluctance of individual states to accept Jewish refugees. They tried at all costs to find destinations for the evacuees. This was all the more important given that the departure of some refugees, for example from Portugal to South America, allowed other refugees from the more endangered

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<sup>19</sup> See, inter alia: A. Patek, *Żydzi w drodze do Palestyny 1934–1944. Szkice z dziejów aliji bet – nielegalnej imigracji żydowskiej*, Wydawnictwo Avalon, Kraków 2009; see also: L. Weinbaum, *A Marriage of Convenience. The New Zionist Organization and the Polish Government 1936–1939*, New York 1993.

territories to be hosted in their place. This was expressed very clearly by the Polish Envoy in Lisbon who, referring to the allegations of stopping the evacuation of Jews, argued: 'The claims of Polish-Jewish citizens—with regard to their alleged tendentious treatment by the Legation to facilitate their further emigration from Portugal—are not so much unfounded as completely ridiculous. After all, it is in the interest of the Legation to unburden Portugal as quickly as possible from our refugees, who—by the fact of staying here—hinder the further obtainment of even transit visas for our citizens attempting to leave France' (doc. 84).

As already mentioned, it would probably not be an exaggeration to state that the Polish diplomatic and consular service took part in one of the largest assistance actions to help Jews carried out during World War II.

### *ACCUSATIONS OF ANTISEMITISM AND ABUSES*

Throughout the war Polish aid actions were accompanied by accusations of antisemitism, intolerance and discrimination against the Jewish population. The allegations were made against both politicians and some ambassadors, envoys and consuls. Many of them concerned the situation in the Polish military units, in the Polish Army in France, the Polish Army in the USSR and in the Middle East, and in the Polish Armed Forces in the West. The complaints were formulated by individuals, Jewish organisations, Western politicians and, above all, by the media. The antisemitic speeches made by some members of the National Council or in publications by the emigré press were also the subject of protests.

Polish authorities rejected the accusations by trying to point out the groundlessness of some, by setting up military commissions for investigating antisemitic behaviour, and by issuing appropriate instructions and orders to counter the manifestations of antisemitism. Public speeches or appeals by key politicians, which sought to assure that there was no discrimination, were also not uncommon. It was pointed out that these types of accusations were inspired by Germany and the USSR, which wanted to discredit the Polish authorities.

When assessing this aspect of the Government's actions, it should be noted that antisemitic behaviour indeed occurred (especially in the army), but its scale was much smaller than was often suggested in the press. Not without significance was the discrepancy between the expectations and needs of refugees and the real capabilities of the Polish state apparatus and the Government based in London, which was often dependent on the British Government in its actions. Any failure to help Jews, often due to objective difficulties, was often perceived as a form of discrimination.

The tensions in Polish-Jewish relations reached its peak in the spring of 1944, when the matter of the Jewish soldiers' desertions from the Polish Armed Forces and attendant accusations of antisemitism became the subject of debates in the House of Commons.<sup>20</sup> However, it should be borne in mind that the difficulties in mutual relations existed in principle since the beginning of the war. It is impossible to find at least one document from that period in which Poles would not criticise the behaviour of the Jewish population in the territories of the Republic of Poland taken over by the USSR in September 1939. These allegations are probably most clearly seen in the statement of the Polish Consulate in Chernivtsi, which described the situation under Soviet occupation in the following words: 'By their own deeds Jews managed to turn many philosemites into fierce antisemites' (doc. 14). The October 1941 conversation between General Władysław Anders, who was forming the Polish Army in the USSR, and the politicians of the Bund, Henryk Erlich and Wiktor Alter (both later murdered by the NKVD), was also symptomatic: Anders, recalling the behaviour of some Jews, judged that 'such things cannot remain without a trace', arguing with his interlocutors, who claimed that 'these were isolated events' (doc. 139). On the other hand, information on the discriminatory treatment of the Jewish minority by the pre-war Polish Government could equally often be found in archival documentation and scientific literature, which allegedly led to Polish Jews' low degree of identification with the Polish state. Many scholars also hold opinions that the positive attitude of the Jewish community to the Red Army in 1939 was due to the fear of German troops that occupied Poland being a much greater threat.<sup>21</sup>

Many emotions and accusations also stemmed from the formation of the Polish Army in the USSR and from the distribution of foreign aid. Complaints that Jews participated very little in the army being formed and that people of Jewish descent were discriminated against in the distribution of medicines, food and clothing were constant elements of bilateral Polish-Jewish relations. They were accompanied by the Polish assurances on the fair distribution of funds, which even mentioned the distribution as being weighted in favour of Jews. The large number of Jews in the Polish Army was also (especially initially) emphasised, which resulted in rude comments about the military consisting of 'sidelocked and bearded "Poles" from Równe and Pińsk' (doc. 155).

It is worth noting that the aid activities, carried out under extremely difficult conditions and sometimes by randomly selected staff of individual delegations,

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<sup>20</sup> See also: T. Gąsowski, *Pod sztandarami Orła Białego: kwestia żydowska w Polskich Siłach Zbrojnych w czasie II wojny światowej*, Księgarnia Akademicka, Kraków 2002.

<sup>21</sup> For example, see: D. Engel, *In the Shadow of Auschwitz. The Polish Government-in-Exile and the Jews, 1939–1942*, The University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, London 1987, p. 12 and following.

failed to avoid errors, dishonesty or simple waste, which were interpreted by the recipients as a continuation of pre-war discriminatory practices. As a result, the operation of the Polish aid apparatus in the USSR was the subject of a study by the Supreme Audit Office under the Polish authorities in exile.<sup>22</sup> Irregularities occurred not only in the USSR: for example, Stanisław Zabiełło, when describing the situation in France, pointed out in October 1941 the consequences of ‘emergence for some time of gangs of forgers and providers of Polish documents’ (doc. 138). It was also pointed out that it was possible for the Jews to obtain Polish passports illegally, for a payment (‘the two Ehrenberg brothers, Zolna and others, claimed that they had paid for passports in the Consulate in Toulouse to make their journey easier’, doc. 56).

Further worth noting is that a number of actions initiated with the authorities and officials of the occupying or neutral countries were, by their very nature, illegal. Giving a bribe in exchange for documents, food, medicines, clothing or travel permission was an action without which it would not be possible to imagine helping. In such a reality, it is easy to blur the line between what is acceptable and necessary and what is unethical and reprehensible.

The evacuation of the Polish Army in the USSR (and its accompanying civilians) to Iran caused even more friction. The complaints of Jewish communities regarding the omission of Jews were once again accompanied by Polish assurances of non-discrimination and of complete inclusion of Jews. It is essential to pay attention to the position of the Soviet authorities, which from 1 December 1941 began to recognise the inhabitants of pre-war Poland of Jewish, Belarusian and Ukrainian origin as citizens of the USSR. This was the so-called ‘passportisation’ of people who stayed on the territories occupied by the USSR during the period 1939–1941 and were regarded as citizens of the Soviet Union. As a result, the Soviet authorities did not agree to the admission of Polish Jews to the army commanded by General Anders and even less so to their mass evacuation to the Middle East. The Polish Ambassador in Kuybyshev, Stanisław Kot, even stated that ‘The Soviets ... have now started to do astonishing things with the Jews, treating even those from Cracow and Warsaw as Soviet citizens; therefore, someone has to immediately shoulder the unofficial burden of information and propaganda related to that issue’ (footnote 48 to doc. 176). The information activities were all the more important given that Jewish communities seemed to fail to comprehend the policy of the Soviet authorities on citizenship, whose main purpose was to undermine Poland’s rights to the eastern territories of the Second Polish Republic.

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<sup>22</sup> See more in: D. Boćkowski, “Działalność ambasady RP w Kujbyszewie oraz jej delegatur i placówek mężów zaufania w świetle raportów NIK Rządu RP w Londynie”, *Studia z Dziejów Rosji i Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej*, vol. 32, 1997, p. 203–222.

Despite the Soviet obstruction, Ambassador Kot pointed out that ‘a number of Jews were smuggled by the Polish authorities’ (doc. 204). Kot also mentioned this issue in his correspondence with Prime Minister Władysław Sikorski, to whom he suggested in anticipation of the planned meeting with Anders: ‘It is necessary for our military bodies in Russia to maintain a demeanour concerning Jewish affairs that is as appropriate as possible. Too often, antisemitism manifests itself in military bodies in relation to Jewish citizens. Regarding the issue of conscription and transportation of troops, the argument that these restrictions were imposed upon us by the Soviet Union against the [wishes of] Polish authorities has not been taken advantage of in contacts with Jews. Consequently, Jews share a common conviction that these limitations resulted from the instructions of the Polish Government’ (doc. 183).

Finally, it is worth emphasising that Polish-Jewish relations belonged to one of the most difficult spheres of activity of the Polish Government-in-Exile. They were subject to historical sentiments, with one of the most brutal crimes in the history of humanity taking place in the background. The smallest incident occurring in the shadow of the Holocaust aroused intense feelings and was seen as an unsolvable problem. Moreover, all actions were taken in the reality of a lack of reliable information, in the constant flood of rumours, gossip, or in contemporary language, fake news, released as part of the propaganda struggle. The refugees whose lives were threatened sometimes placed faith in even the unlikeliest of rumours, and the allegations made were sometimes extremely absurd. It is therefore not strange at all that mutual relations were accompanied by excessive emotions based on the stereotypes described above, and by a lack of understanding. Accusations were also made against Jewish aid organisations, which was raised by, among others, the Polish Consul General in Jerusalem: ‘It should be noted that the Orthodox Jews are treated unfairly for political reasons when aid resources are distributed by official Jewish authorities in Palestine’ (doc. 158).

It is also worth mentioning instances of the opposite situation playing out, i.e. a harmonious cooperation between Poles and Jews. The cooperation of the Polish Legation in Bern with the RELICO committee, described above, is an example of this phenomenon.

Lastly, one should bear in mind that during the war, work was carried out under extremely difficult conditions, including the risk to officials’ own lives, in the situation of a constant shortage of aid resources and in full awareness that it was impossible to rescue all of those who were in danger. In his well-known war novel, *The Night in Lisbon*, Erich Maria Remarque wrote about the fate of people trying to escape from Nazi Germany: ‘As usual in times of war, fear, and affliction, the individual human being had ceased to exist; only one thing counted:

a valid passport.<sup>23</sup> Any activity carried out in such circumstances on the one hand necessarily aroused extreme passions on the part of the person in need of rescue, and on the other hand created a fertile ground for various irregularities.

### *BUREAUCRATIC DIFFICULTIES*

Another permanent feature of the work of the Polish diplomatic and consular service was the need to overcome various bureaucratic difficulties. In the first place, all necessary permits had to be obtained for sending parcels to the occupied country, and all the export formalities dealt with. One of the obstacles was, for example, the ban on the shipment of goods to lands occupied by Germany, the restriction on the export of food from individual neutral countries, as well as the provisions imposed by the USSR that ordered the quarantine of the clothing sent.

Another complication was the need to obtain confirmation that the aid provided was properly used. Donors often expected to be supplied with appropriate certificates that were extremely difficult to obtain, for example when sending parcels to a ghetto. Obtaining specific addresses for orphans, hospitals, monasteries and relief institutions was a true challenge. In this case, assistance to particular posts was sometimes provided by, among others, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which sent the appropriate lists ('The Ministry also encloses a list with names of people, Jews from the country, for the purpose of sending parcels to them', doc. 354). Other ministries also prepared lists for parcel delivery ('Food parcels from Sweden have been and continue to be sent to a "professor list" delivered by the Ministry of Internal Affairs', doc. 356).

Moreover, the transferred or purchased goods had to be controlled, as the companies offering sales of aid products tried to exploit the situation by providing outdated food or worn out, worthless clothing. The distribution of such donations to refugees resulted in another wave of allegations of unfair treatment of those in need. It was necessary to separate the real donors from the various types of intermediaries engaged in fraud and illegal undertakings.

It was crucial to balance the aid provided appropriately so that it could be used as efficiently as possible. It was necessary to know which products were most needed and to make an appropriate selection of the funds raised. Different medicines were needed in Siberia and in the refugee centres in Africa, just as different clothes had to go to soldiers in POW camps and still others to orphanages or children's hospitals.

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<sup>23</sup> E.M. Remarque, *The Night in Lisbon*, translated by R. Manheim, Hutchinson Library Service, London 1972, p. 6.

In view of the shortage of staff, even the ordinary (under normal conditions) official activities such as the handling of correspondence, the issuing of certificates and other documents, as well as the keeping of records were all challenging. The lack of qualified typists or even typewriters meant that it was necessary to draw up handwritten lists, sometimes of thousands of names, together with address data and basic information. The shortage of writing paper and basic office supplies was also problematic.

Nor was the situation facilitated by the animosities inside the Polish civil service: the antagonism between the 'old' officials appointed before the war and the staff appointed by the Government-in-Exile often made it difficult to conduct aid activities.

### *THE ROLE OF THE POSTS*

It is not possible to overestimate how the Polish Government's aid operations benefitted from the network of foreign posts. They had their own mailing addresses and bank accounts, used encrypted communications, could issue passports and other documents and formally intervene with the local state authorities. These obvious attributes of each representative office became crucial during the war. The possibility of sending information quickly sometimes saved lives, while the bank account of an embassy, legation or consulate was used to provide financial resources devoted to aid purposes. The activities of the most important politicians and supreme state authorities would necessarily have been more limited without the ability to exploit the potential of the Polish diplomatic and consular service and the work of many civilian officials.

### GOVERNMENT-IN-EXILE: THE ORGANISATION OF THE MFA AND ITS POSTS

The aggression of Germany and the USSR against Poland and the subsequent evacuation and internment of the Polish authorities in Romania made it necessary to set up a new centre of authority to enable actions outside the reach of the aggressor states. As a result, the offices of President and Prime Minister together with the Council of Ministers were recreated, and a National Council was set up as a quasi-parliamentary body on the territory of allied France. After the collapse of France in the war with Germany, the Polish authorities evacuated to London, where they were active until the end of the war.

During the war, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was headed in turn by August Zaleski, Edward Raczyński (initially in charge of the ministry and then as minister), Tadeusz Romer, and Adam Tarnowski. In the second most important ministry for this volume, the Ministry of Social Welfare, subsequently renamed to the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, the function of the minister was held for almost the entire period of the war by the politician of the Polish Socialist Party, Jan Stańczyk, who developed a network of assistance agencies, most often operating at Polish diplomatic and consular posts. Stańczyk did not form part of the cabinet that Tomasz Arciszewski set up at the end of November 1944, when the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare was headed by the Prime Minister himself.

It is worth mentioning here the Ministry of Information and Documentation (acting until September 1940 as the Centre for Information and Documentation), which dealt with Jewish affairs in the domain of information and propaganda. It was headed by Minister Stanisław Stroński, who was succeeded by Stanisław Kot, who later was replaced by Adam Pragier. The activity of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, led subsequently by Prime Minister Władysław Sikorski, Stanisław Kot, Stanisław Mikołajczyk, Władysław Banaczyk and Zygmunt Berezowski, is also important for this subject.<sup>24</sup>

Other relevant questions included military structures, the evacuation of soldiers, the creation and evacuation of the Polish Armed Forces and the related issue of soldiers of Jewish descent. The activities of the National Council and its efforts concerning, among other, the situation of the population in occupied Poland were also significant.

Upon the outbreak of World War II, Poland had a relatively large network of foreign posts, consisting of 10 embassies, more than 20 legations (with the accreditation of envoys in 20 additional countries) and a broad consular network, composed of around 200 consulates general, consulates and vice-consulates, consular departments at embassies and legations as well as consular agencies and honorary consulates.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> See: M. Hułas, *Goście czy intruzi. Rząd polski na uchodźstwie wrzesień 1939 – lipiec 1943*, Instytut Historii PAN, Warszawa 1996.

<sup>25</sup> See, inter alia: W. Michowicz, "Organizacja polskiego aparatu dyplomatycznego w latach 1918–1939", in: P. Łossowski (ed.), *Historia dyplomacji polskiej*, vol. IV, 1918–1939, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warszawa 1995; K. Szczepanik, *Organizacja polskiej służby zagranicznej 1918–2010*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe Askon, Warszawa 2012, P. Ceranka, K. Szczepanik (ed.), *Urzędy konsularne Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej 1918–1945. Informator Archiwalny*, NDAP, MSZ, Warszawa 2021 and S. Żerko (ed.), *Polskie Dokumenty Dyplomatyczne 1939 styczeń–sierpień*, PISM, Warszawa 2005.



After September 1939, the diplomatic and consular network began to shrink.<sup>26</sup> In the first place, the posts in Germany and the Soviet Union ceased to exist, as was the General Commissariat in the Free City of Danzig and the Legation in Bratislava, followed by the closing of the legations in the Baltic countries.<sup>27</sup>

The German aggression against Denmark and Norway, Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg in the spring of 1940 meant the termination of Polish posts in those countries, with diplomatic relations (apart from Denmark) maintained by representatives to the respective governments-in-exile. The situation in France was somewhat different. After a temporary departure to Madrid, Feliks Frankowski returned to French territory to operate as Chargé d'Affaires at the Polish Embassy in Vichy. Starting in September 1940, after the Vichy Government broke diplomatic relations with Poland, Polish citizens in France were cared for by the Polish Bureaux. In turn, after their liquidation through conversion into the Bureaux of the Administration of Poles in France as part of the French administration, their General Director, Stanisław Zabięło, remained in Vichy as an unofficial representative of the Polish Government; in December 1942, he was arrested by the Gestapo and imprisoned in a concentration camp. Diplomatic ties with France were formally restored in 1943 by the establishment of official relations with the French Committee of National Liberation.

The Embassies in Rome, Bucharest and Budapest were also closed under German pressure, and the Consulates in Kabul and in Harbin were liquidated for financial reasons.<sup>28</sup>

In 1941, as a result of further German invasions, the Legations in Athens and Belgrade as well as the Consulate General in Zagreb were evacuated. The Bulgarian and Finnish authorities, on the other hand, requested the Polish Envoys in Sofia and Helsinki to leave their territories. The Japanese authorities made a similar

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<sup>26</sup> See, inter alia: H. Batowski, *Polska dyplomacja na obczyźnie 1939–1941*, Wydawnictwo Literackie, Kraków 1991 and W. Michowicz, "Organizacja polskiej służby dyplomatycznej w okresie II wojny światowej", in: *idem* (ed.), *Historia dyplomacji polskiej*, vol. V, 1939–1945, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warszawa 1999.

<sup>27</sup> Documents illustrating the liquidation of the posts in Germany and the USSR and in the Baltic countries (as well as materials on repression against the Polish Consuls in Germany) were published in volume W. Rojek (ed.), *Polskie Dokumenty Dyplomatyczne 1939 wrzesień–grudzień* (hereinafter: PDD 1939 wrzesień–grudzień), PISM, Warszawa 2007, *passim*.

<sup>28</sup> See documents (including final reports of liquidated posts) published in M. Hułas (ed.), *Polskie Dokumenty Dyplomatyczne 1940* (hereinafter: PDD 1940), PISM, Warszawa 2010, *passim*. Final report of the Legation in Budapest (which was eventually closed in January 1941), see in J. Tebinka, *Polskie Dokumenty Dyplomatyczne 1941* (hereinafter: PDD 1941), PISM, Warszawa 2013, doc. 17.

decision, withdrawing their recognition of the Polish Ambassador in Tokyo, who was forced to leave the capital of Japan and temporarily move to Shanghai, under occupation by Japanese troops at the time.<sup>29</sup>

A watershed development for the Polish diplomatic network was the German aggression against the USSR and, as a consequence, the signing of the Sikorski–Maisy Agreement, which allowed the re-establishment of the Polish Embassy in Moscow (then transferred to Kuybyshev) and the appointment of delegations and hundreds of assistance institutions throughout the USSR. The USSR broke diplomatic relations with Poland in April 1943 (see doc. 344), although as early as December 1942 the Soviet authorities were, in practice, preventing the Polish aid institutions from carrying out their mission.<sup>30</sup>

The Polish side also took steps to increase the number of posts, sometimes in distant countries, which included the setting up of the Legation in Ottawa and the Consulate in Pretoria, and it opened a number of delegations of the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare and the Polish Red Cross around the world. The success of the Western allies in the later stages of the war allowed for the reappearance of representations in North Africa and in the countries of Western Europe: for example, the Allied takeover of Italy allowed for the temporary re-establishment of the Embassy and Consulate in Rome subordinate to the Polish Government-in-Exile based in London. The so-called Polish ‘settlements’ (refugee camps) were also created in British colonies in Africa and South American countries, as well as in New Zealand and India, where tens of thousands of Polish and Jewish refugees found asylum after being evacuated, mainly from the USSR.<sup>31</sup>

Many Polish posts operated (although not without difficulty) in allied and neutral countries. In the United States, apart from the Embassy in Washington, an important role was played by the Consulate General in New York. There were legations and consulates in South American countries, as well as consulates in Africa and the Middle East, where the most important Polish posts undoubtedly included the Consulates General in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, not to mention the Legation in Tehran. The Consulate General in Bombay, which played a role in the evacuation activities, also deserves mention.

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<sup>29</sup> See: PDD 1941, *passim*.

<sup>30</sup> B. Szubtarska, *Ambasada polska w ZSRR w latach 1941–1943*, Wydawnictwo DiG, Warszawa 2005; see also: M. Hułas, *Polskie Dokumenty Dyplomatyczne 1942* (hereinafter: PDD 1942), PISM, Warszawa (in preparation) and R. Habielski (ed.), *Stosunki polsko-sowieckie od września 1939 r. do kwietnia 1943 r. Zbiór dokumentów*, MSZ, Wydawnictwo Sejmowe, Warszawa 2021.

<sup>31</sup> See, inter alia: J. Wróbel, *Uchodźcy polscy ze Związku Sowieckiego 1942–1950*, IPN, Łódź 2003.

Among Poland's European posts that were continuously operational throughout the war, the most important were the Legations in Bern, Madrid and Lisbon, as well as the Embassy and Consulates General in London and Dublin. The Embassies to the Holy See and in Ankara, as well as the Consulate General in Istanbul, were equally important. The Legation in Stockholm, after the Swedish authorities declared Gustaw Potworowski a *persona non grata*, operated under the direction of Henryk Sokolnicki, acting as the Chargé d'Affaires.<sup>32</sup>

Regarding the structure of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, separate attention must be directed to the Refugee Section set up in 1940, which was headed for almost the entire war period (until 1944) by Józef Marlewski (later replaced by Maciej Załęski). In 1943, a Jewish Section was also created, headed in turn by Karol Kraczkiewicz, Zdzisław Krzywkowski and Jan Wszelaki.<sup>33</sup>

The Nationalities Department headed by Olgierd Górka—which initially operated within the framework of the Ministry of Information and Documentation but was later transferred to the Ministry of Internal Affairs—was to a large extent engaged in relief projects concerning Jews (doc. 553). Another institution to keep in mind is the Council for Rescue of the Jewish Population in Poland (doc. 461).

The Government's central offices (President, Prime Minister, Presidium of the Council of Ministers, National Council, Army, individual departments), the service apparatus as well as a whole array of foreign representations completed the institutional image of the Polish state. This rather extensive (if wartime conditions are considered) and constantly changing structure devoted much attention to providing assistance to refugees dispersed around the world, as well as those in occupied Poland.

## CRITERIA FOR THE SELECTION OF DOCUMENTS AND RESEARCH PROPOSALS

The time frame of this collection corresponds to the years of World War II. The opening document is the circular, on the German invasion of Poland, by Józef Beck, Poland's Minister of Foreign Affairs, dated 1 September 1939. Adopting

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<sup>32</sup> See: PDD 1942, *passim*; see also: J. Tebinka (ed.), *Polskie Dokumenty Dyplomatyczne 1943*, PISM, Warszawa (in preparation). See also: E. Kołodziej, "Rola polskich placówek dyplomatycznych i konsularnych w latach 1939–1945", in: Z. Błazyński (ed.), *Władze RP na obczyźnie podczas II wojny światowej. 1939–1945*, Polskie Towarzystwo Naukowe na Obczyźnie, Londyn 1994 and H. Batowski, *Polska dyplomacja na obczyźnie...*, *op. cit.*

<sup>33</sup> See: P. Ceranka (ed.), *Urząd Ministerstwa Spraw Zagranicznych Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej 1939-1945*, MSZ, NDAP, Warszawa 2021.

such a starting point and including documents concerning the aggression of the Soviet Union and the evacuation of the Polish authorities is not entirely consistent with the title of the work, which refers to the activities of the Polish Government-in-Exile. However, we decided that starting a volume devoted to World War II with documents from 17 or 30 September 1939 would be an artificial operation, disruptive to the narrative.

The volume ends with the note by Ambassador Edward Raczyński of 6 July 1945, addressed to the British authorities, protesting their recognition of the communist-dominated and Soviet-subordinate government in Warsaw. At the same time, Great Britain, France and the United States withdrew their recognition of the Polish Government-in-Exile as the legitimate one. As a result of the implementation of the decisions made at the Tehran and Yalta conferences, Poland lost more than half of its pre-war territory to Soviet Union, receiving some of Germany's eastern territories in return. It also lost its sovereignty by entering the Soviet sphere of influence. Raczyński's note, although not related to Jewish affairs, marks an end to the international diplomatic activities of the Second Polish Republic and an important period in the history of Poland. As such, this document also symbolises the end of the diplomatic efforts of the Government-in-Exile in Jewish matters.

The publication also includes several documents devoted to the most important and breakthrough events, such as the aforementioned German-Soviet aggression against Poland, Germany's attack on France, the outbreak of the German-Soviet war or the breaking of diplomatic relations with Poland by the USSR and the death of General Władysław Sikorski in the Gibraltar plane crash. Including these documents in the account places other records collected here in the relevant context and facilitates their interpretation.

Accounting for the entire period of World War II does not, of course, mean that every year of the war can be represented by the same amount of archival material. The volume contains 554 documents—in addition, several hundred others are cited in full or in part in footnotes—most of which come from the years 1941–1943, i.e. the period of the mass extermination of Jews. The earlier period, referred to in the historiography as that of ghettoisation, as well as the one that followed, which is referred to as the third phase of the Holocaust,<sup>34</sup> were documented by a smaller number of archival materials. Especially in 1939, the Polish authorities were preoccupied with the evacuation and reorganisation of state structures (in

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<sup>34</sup> See, inter alia: D. Libionka, *Zagłada Żydów w Generalnym Gubernatorstwie*, Państwowe Muzeum na Majdanku, Lublin 2017.

exile), while in 1945 the war ended, and thereby the extermination of the Jewish population came to a stop.<sup>35</sup>

The volume contains materials produced by the Polish authorities in exile, initially operating in France (Paris and Angers) and then in Great Britain. As already mentioned, the volume also includes (four) documents from September 1939, which were created before the formal establishment of the Government-in-Exile. However, not included are documents produced at the final stages of the war by the communist organisations formed in the USSR and competing with the Government-in-Exile based in London, such as the Union of Polish Patriots, the Polish Committee of National Liberation, the Provisional Government of the Republic of Poland or the Provisional Government of National Unity, which was formed with the participation of some emigrant politicians.

As a rule, excluded are multilateral documents such as the declaration of allied powers and governments (including the Polish Government) of 17 December 1942, issued in reaction to some of the demands contained in the Polish note of 9/10 December 1942 (referred to as Raczyński's Note). Being a multilateral document, the declaration did not qualify for the publication, but Raczyński's Note and other documents that accompanied its issuance and distribution did.

In selecting the documents, the principle of publishing only materials produced by the Polish side was adopted, which is the general practice in the Polish Diplomatic Documents (PDD) series. This means that British, American, French or Russian archival materials were not included in the volume. Documents produced by Jewish communities and organisations—which often sent various letters, complaints, notes or memoranda to the Polish authorities or the Polish diplomatic and consular posts—had therefore to be excluded, too. However, this does not mean that Jewish voices are not present in this volume. A wide selection of them is included, for example, in the cables from posts providing information on Jewish appeals or in documents showing how to respond to such requests. The cables of the Polish posts used to transmit information received from the Jewish organisations were also illustrative, as such types of cables consisted only of the content of the letter, without any comments or changes made by Polish officials.

In addition, and as an exception, a small number of documents produced by Jewish organisations and groups, both in the country and abroad, were included in this volume. These include, for example, a letter from the Bund of April 1942 describing the Holocaust of Jews in occupied Poland (doc. 181) and a report

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<sup>35</sup> The subsequent years have been illustrated by the following number of documents: 1939 – 18 documents, 1940 – 65, 1941 – 69, 1942 – 155, 1943 – 112, 1944 – 116 and 1945 – 19.

of November 1942 from the Jewish Agency on the evacuation of people of Jewish descent from the USSR (doc. 273).

Nor does the volume include the documents drawn up by Oneg Shabbat, a conspiracy archive run by Emanuel Ringelblum, which collected documentation on the situation of Jews during the occupation. Due to the inclusion of the letter from the Bund, it was decided not to publish the report entitled 'Second stage' prepared by Oneg Shabbat (also in April 1942).<sup>36</sup>

The documents written by Polish politicians, officials, diplomats and soldiers of Jewish descent should be mentioned. The volume includes, among others, materials prepared by members of the Polish National Council, for example, Ignacy Schwarzbart, Szmul Zygielbojm, and Emanuel Szerer. The cables from the Polish Consul General in Tel Aviv, Henryk Rosmarin, or the note written by Julian Hochfeld, a soldier of the Polish Army in the East, should also be noted.

Despite the inclusions mentioned above, the main purpose of this collection is to demonstrate, in a holistic manner, the actions taken by the Government-in-Exile towards Jews, by both central departments and diplomatic or consular posts, as well as by various types of missions, delegations, representations and special emissaries. Although most documents relate to the activities of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and its subordinate posts, the activities of other ministries are illustrated, too, notably the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare as well as the Ministry of Information and Documentation. The work of the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare should be particularly emphasised, as during the war it performed enormous humanitarian efforts through a constantly expanding network of aid agencies. In addition, attempts were made to highlight the activities of the Prime Minister and the Presidium of the Council of Ministers, as well as the efforts of the National Council. Another question was the documentation of Polish citizens of Jewish descent serving in the Polish Army, with particular emphasis on the Polish Army in the USSR and the issue of its evacuation to the Middle East. Polish-Jewish relations in the army, as well as recruitment, desertions, incidents and attempts to combat antisemitic attitudes, are all well-illustrated in this collection.

The attempt to show the actions taken by the Polish Government and its representative offices towards Jews has also resulted in the publication of many consular documents, which generally generate less interest among historians of international relations. Still, political events, visits and discussions are present in this volume only insofar as they concern Jewish affairs.

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<sup>36</sup> A. Bańkowska, T. Epsztein (eds.), *Archiwum Ringelbluma. Konspiracyjne Archiwum Getta Warszawy*, vol. 11, *Ludzie i prace "Oneg Szabat"*, Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, Warszawa 2013, doc. 66.

The adoption of such guidelines and the desire to show primarily the activities of diplomatic and consular posts resulted in the less frequent use of domestically produced materials. The activities of underground groups, such as the Union of Armed Struggle, the Home Army or the Government Delegation for Poland, are not of interest here. The focus was rather on showing the Government's steps to make international use of the information obtained from the occupied country. Documents from occupied Poland were therefore published only incidentally. The reality of the occupied country is shown through testimonies of refugees coming from occupied areas, who reached Polish posts and described the terror reigning in Poland. An example of this type of material is the testimony of the Jewish student about the situation in occupied Poland, submitted to the Polish Embassy to the Holy See<sup>37</sup> (doc. 345) or the report by the Polish Envoy in Madrid, which contains testimonies of witnesses of the liquidation of the ghettos in the General Government (doc. 366).

While giving aid, Polish officials needed to draw up all sorts of lists, records, summaries and registers of refugees or beneficiaries of the aid. Such lists appear several times (also as illustrations of the phenomenon). However, due to the already considerable size of this volume, most registers, sometimes of thousands of names, were not included. For example, the lists of Jewish refugees in Mozambique (doc. 298) or Honduras (doc. 523) are included in the volume, but the list of Jews with passports issued by South American countries (doc. 524) is not published.<sup>38</sup>

It was decided to include several documents showing the fates of particular individuals to illustrate broader aid measures. These documents sometimes narrate the stories of well-known figures, for example Julian Tuwim, a Polish poet of Jewish descent (doc. 51), as well as those of 'ordinary' refugees who needed support or sought assistance for family members (doc. 271, among others).

In summary, the criterion applied was the selection of materials showing the activities of the Polish Government-in-Exile towards Jews located in occupied Poland and in many countries around the world. The focus was on the history of diplomatic and consular activities rather than on the history of the Holocaust itself. The aim of this volume is above all to show the activities of the diplomatic and consular service, not the attitudes of Polish society or the situation of the Jews in occupied Poland. Documents issued in occupied Poland, which demonstrated

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<sup>37</sup> See also: D. Libionka, "Głową w mur. Interwencje Kazimierza Papée, polskiego ambasadora przy Stolicy Apostolskiej, w sprawie zbrodni niemieckich w Polsce, listopad 1942 – styczeń 1943", *Zagłada Żydów. Studia i materiały*, no. 2, 2006.

<sup>38</sup> See: documents gathered in AAN, Instytut Hoovera, Dokumenty Stanisława Mikołajczyka, 41. See also: J. Kumoch, M. Maniewska, J. Uszyński, B. Zygmunt, *Lista Ładosia...*, *op. cit.*

the nature of daily life under occupation, were provided as illustrations of the phenomena or in the context of their further use by the authorities in exile.

Most of the documents in this volume have not been known to the public. However, this does not, of course, mean that the subject matter was presented in all of its dimensions here. Instead, it is hoped that this publication will be an impulse for further research and contributions to the topic.

Nonetheless, one of the research proposals, whose implementation would broaden the current state of knowledge, is the preparation of a publication showing the activities of the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, with particular attention paid to documenting the assistance rendered to refugees scattered around the world. Another topic worth publication is the work of the Polish Red Cross. The PRC delegations operated in the years 1939–1945 in several dozen countries in Europe, Asia, Africa and the Americas, providing all kinds of support. The most important was the medical assistance in clinics and outpatient centres, as well as food aid carried out, among others, through cheap kitchens or canteens.

Another publication could be devoted to the Ministry of Treasury and the methods it used to obtain, transfer and use financial resources. This would be a significant addition to the research on the activities of the Polish Government in the face of the Holocaust.

Still another highly valuable project would be to create a collective portrait of Polish politicians and officials involved in aid activities. Such a biographical dictionary would be a reminder and narrate the lives of these people, highlighting their activities during the war but also showing their pre-war background as well as their post-war fates.

It would also be worth considering publishing a set of documents which, due to their extensiveness or a large number, could not be included in this volume, for example the documents illustrating the general aid measures taken in relation to the Jewish population in the USSR (doc. 381 and 382). These materials, included here only in part, certainly deserve a separate publication of critical and comprehensive nature. Moreover, the cables exchanged between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and diplomatic or consular posts warrant a separate publication as well. These wartime dispatches have been preserved in a relatively good condition and are stored at the Hoover Institution, with the correspondence of particular posts arranged chronologically; they are also available online at [www.szukajwarchiwach.gov.pl](http://www.szukajwarchiwach.gov.pl).<sup>39</sup> A broad edited selection of such documents would show, on the one hand, the systemic nature of actions undertaken by the

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<sup>39</sup> Instytut Hoovera, MSZ, 208–281.



Polish Government towards the Jewish population and, on the other, the mass use of Polish encrypted communications by Jewish organisations or representatives of Jewish communities.

It is also worth considering reissuing some information materials published by the Polish Government during the war. For example, at the beginning of 1942, the Ministry of Information and Documentation in London issued the so-called second 'black book' entitled *The German New Order in Poland*. It consisted of almost 600 pages of reports, testimonies and relations, as well as almost 200 photographs showing German crimes in occupied Poland. A new, critical edition, with particular emphasis on Chapter III entitled *The Persecution of the Jews, and the Ghettoes*, combined with the reissuing of publications such as the brochure titled *The Mass Extermination of Jews in German Occupied Poland*, would increase the availability of publications which are partially forgotten today. It would also be useful to publish a critical edition of the reports conveyed or written by Jan Karski, in which the modifications made to them would be highlighted and the misunderstandings that have surrounded them explained.

Another idea would be to prepare a press volume, i.e. a publication of press articles devoted to Jewish issues, e.g. news, reports, speeches by Polish politicians. This could bring together both the articles of the underground press published in occupied Poland and the materials published in the emigré press.

Another interesting research project would be to publish only those source materials that illustrate the position of Jewish organisations towards the Polish Government (including Polish diplomatic and consular posts). Such a publication could serve as complementary to the archival material presented in this volume. Equally interesting would be a source-based comparison of the actions of different governments-in-exile in relation to Jewish matters.<sup>40</sup> In such a project, however, it would be important to bear in mind the different situations and occupation realities of the compared countries. More Jewish residents were living in Poland before the war than in all the countries with governments-in-exile in London combined. This situation clearly impacted the actions taken by the different governments-in-exile.

Equally valuable is the idea of examining the memories of people of Jewish descent who survived the war, which are preserved by the Yad Vashem, among others. The information on the ways in which these people managed to avoid extermination could cast a new light on the activities of the Polish posts from the perspective of the beneficiaries.

However, the most important research project would be to confront documents produced by Polish posts with materials created in the countries in which they

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<sup>40</sup> See: J. Láníček, J. Jordan (eds), *Governments-in-exile and the Jews during the Second World War*, Vallentine Mitchell, London 2013.

operated. This does not mean primarily the diplomatic documents produced by the foreign ministries of different countries, but rather the police and intelligence materials pointing to the attempts made to put the work of the Polish posts under surveillance. Such a project is particularly important for the documentation of illegal aid activities from the point of view of the country of residence. The Polish officials involved in creating false documents, issuing false certificates and bribing consular officers of other countries have, for obvious reasons, tried not to leave behind any evidence of their illegal activity. Officials manifested similar restraint in documenting their own activities when fabricating documentation allowing to obtain visas for endangered people (certificates attesting to their Catholicism) or when providing assistance to people illegally crossing the border. Such activities were obviously of interest to the host countries, which tried to counteract them, although they sometimes also unofficially tolerated them. As a result, paradoxically, the archives of other countries may contain more complete documentation than Polish archives, thus illustrating one of the most important and interesting manifestations of the Polish diplomatic and consular service during the war. The example of the activities run by the officials of the Polish Legation in Bern, described earlier, is a clear confirmation of this fact.

## THE SOURCE BASE

The source base of this publication are documents selected from eleven Polish and foreign archives, including: The Archives of Modern Records (Archiwum Akt Nowych, Warsaw, Poland), The National Archives at College Park (Maryland, USA), The Hoover Institution (California, USA), The Polish Institute of Arts and Sciences of America (New York, USA), The Józef Piłsudski Institute of America (New York, USA), The National Archives (London, United Kingdom), The Polish Institute and Sikorski Museum (London, UK), the Yad Vashem (Jerusalem, Israel), The Archives of the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Archiwum MSZ, Warsaw, Poland), The Pontifical Institute of Ecclesiastical Studies (Papieski Instytut Studiów Kościelnych, Rome, Italy) and Archivum Helveto-Polonicum (Freiburg, Switzerland).

The research conducted in the Archives of Modern Records covered mainly diplomatic records, i.e. documents produced or received by embassies, legations and consulates (including honorary ones). The files of the foreign posts have been unevenly preserved, and their period of operation during the war varied as well. The most important collections of this sort are undoubtedly the records of the Embassies in Ankara, London and Washington, the Legations in Bern, Buenos Aires and Mexico City, as well as the Consulates in New York, Casablanca and Marseille.

In the Archives of Modern Records, the collection entitled Polish Government Delegation for Poland (*Delegatura Rządu RP na Kraj*) was researched, which included, among others, the files of the Council to Aid Jews ‘Żegota’, as well as the collection Home Army (*Armia Krajowa*), which included the dispatches sent from occupied Poland to London.

At the Hoover Institution, the documents on the [www.szukajwarchiwach.gov.pl](http://www.szukajwarchiwach.gov.pl) website and the materials available only on-site in Palo Alto, California were examined. The records, which were passed in the form of microfilms to the Archives of Modern Records in the 1990s and made available on-line several years ago, were also researched. The collections which proved to be of special importance included the records of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Information and Documentation as well as the papers of Władysław Anders and Stanisław Mikołajczyk. In turn, as part of the research conducted directly at the Hoover Institution, both documents produced by Polish offices or agencies and materials gathered in collections devoted to individuals were analysed. The largest number of documents qualified for publication come from the papers of Jan Karski, Tadeusz Romer, Michał Sokolnicki, and August Zaleski, as well as from institutional collections: Ministry of Congress Works, Ministry of Internal Affairs, National Council, Legations in Belgrade, Helsinki, Lisbon and Consulates in Cape Town, New York and Pretoria.

The papers of Roman Dębicki, Leon Orłowski and Michał Sokolnicki as well as the collection named ‘Poland. Situation in the Country’ (*Polska. Sytuacja w Kraju*), were identified as of the utmost importance during the research conducted at the Józef Piłsudski Institute. In turn, the inquiry at the Polish Institute of Arts and Sciences of America included the files of Embassy in Washington and the Legation in Rio de Janeiro.

The research at The National Archives of the United States and The National Archives of the United Kingdom concentrated on records dedicated to the relations with Poland and was aimed at the search for original diplomatic notes submitted by the Polish authorities regarding the persecution of Jews. For example: one of the most important documents in this volume, namely Raczyński’s Note (doc. 296), has been preserved at The National Archives of the United Kingdom.

The research conducted at the Polish Institute and Sikorski Museum in London was also crucial, as this institution holds the collections of the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs operating in exile, files of diplomatic and consular posts as well as the records of the Presidium of the Council of Ministers, the National Council and other ministries (including particularly relevant documents from the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare).

The files of the Embassy to the Holy See and the papers of Kazimierz Papée are the two most important collections stored at the Pontifical Institute of Ecclesiastical Studies.

The research conducted at the Archivum Helveto-Polonicum was focused on documents that illustrate the fate of refugees in Switzerland and Brazil, including the papers of Tadeusz Skowroński, Polish Envoy in Rio de Janeiro who settled in Freiburg after the war.

The inquiry carried out at the Yad Vashem mainly focused on the papers of Ignacy Schwarzbart (either available in paper or on-line), which includes a number of documents on the persecution of the Jewish population in occupied Poland.

The research conducted at the Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs did not yield any positive results. This institution stores documents created after 1945, but in recent years it has taken over a small collection of documents of the Jewish community who reached Morocco during the war, after escaping from France. During the post-war period, some of the people residing in that country contacted the Consulate of the Polish People's Republic to donate some documents, and the foreign ministry decided to store the documents they submitted. However, these materials are mainly related to passport and visa affairs and did not merit publication in this volume. Nor did the so-called Shanghai Book stored at the same archives, for similar reasons, as it contains a list of people to whom Ambassador Romer rendered visa assistance.

In addition, one of the documents—the protest by Zofia Kossak-Szczucka (doc. 226)—which was distributed in conspiracy during the war in the form of a poster and a leaflet was published on the basis of the original stored by the Polish National Library and available in an on-line database ([www.polona.pl](http://www.polona.pl)).

In the case of doc. 145 (President's decree) and 349 (Prime Minister's speech), the editing was based on the text published in the *Journal of Laws* at the time.

The publication also includes documents submitted by two reviewers of the Polish edition of the volume, Magdalena Hułas and Jacek Tebinka, which they found while conducting research for the purposes of the publication of the *Polish Diplomatic Documents for 1942 and 1943*. Katharina Friedla, apart from reviewing this publication, also contributed by providing selected materials on the activities of the Jewish communities. In turn, thanks to the support of reviewer Adam Puławski, it was possible to publish, among others, the document dated 24 November 1942.

The principle of documenting, first and foremost, the diplomatic and consular activities of the Government entailed that no inquiries were conducted at the Jewish Historical Institute (*Żydowski Instytut Historyczny*) and at the Polish

Underground Movement Study Trust in London (Studium Polski Podziemnej), which mostly store materials on the situation in occupied Poland.

As mentioned earlier, an extensive inquiry was carried out in eleven archives and covered several hundred archival collections, which corresponds to thousands of units and online records. Although the contents of some collections turned out to be disappointing, the scope of the research conducted has allowed for an attempt to present the Jewish issues in the policy of the Polish authorities in exile in a rather comprehensive manner. In addition, while files from the pre-war period were partially destroyed or lost,<sup>41</sup> the documents of the Government-in-Exile have predominantly survived up to this day.<sup>42</sup> In general, there are no formal or legal difficulties in accessing the documents; the only remaining problem is the dispersion of materials among different archives and institutions.

It is worth emphasising that an important feature of the sources are not only their availability and state of preservation, but also the limited possibility of their creation during the discussed period. The liquidation of some of the Polish posts, which was the result of the changing war situation, meant that the official, diplomatic or consular apparatus—which would normally produce a series of reports, dispatches or notes on the subject—ceased to function. The sources of the situation of Jews in the USSR are a clear example of such a gap. The period from 1941 to 1943, when the signing of the Sikorski-Maisky Agreement resulted in the opening of the Embassy and several delegations and assistance institutions in the Soviet Union, is characterised by a significant number of documents produced, a wide selection of which are included in this volume. In turn, the years 1939–1941 and the period after the USSR broke diplomatic relations with the Government-in-Exile—which resulted in the evacuation of the Embassy and the liquidation of the aid apparatus—was the time when, for obvious reasons, the creation of Polish documents illustrating development in the ‘inhuman land’ was very limited. As a result, we are dealing with a situation in which a relatively small group of Jewish refugees, for example in Portugal or Spain, are represented by a large number of documents issued by the Legations in Lisbon and Madrid, which were running virtually uninterrupted, while the fate of thousands of Jewish victims of deportation and refugees in the USSR is not so thoroughly documented.

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<sup>41</sup> See more in: E. Kołodziej (ed.), *Inwentarz akt Ministerstwa Spraw Zagranicznych w Warszawie z lat 1918–1939*, NDAP, AAN, Warszawa 2000.

<sup>42</sup> See, inter alia: W. Milewski, A. Suchcitz, A. Gorczycki (ed.), *Guide to the Archives of the Polish Institute and Sikorski Museum*, vol. 1, London 1985 oraz W. Stępnia, *Archiwalia polskie w zbiorach Instytutu Hoovera Uniwersytetu Stanforda*, NDAP, Warszawa 1997.

## EDITING RULES

The volume is the translation of the Polish-language edition published earlier.<sup>43</sup> It contains all the documents that appeared in the original publication, including those cited in the footnotes. The differences between the Polish and English editions are in the introduction, modified for English-language readers, and in the editing guidelines, described below. In addition, the translation offers a greater number of editorial footnotes with additional information concerning issues with which readers from a country other than Poland might not be familiar.

During the editing process for this volume, the principles applied were, in general, those adopted by the Polish Institute of International Affairs (*Polski Instytut Spraw Międzynarodowych*) for earlier primary source publications of diplomatic documents translated into English. The documents are listed in chronological order, according to the creation date, not by the date of dispatch or receipt by the addressee. This is particularly important in the case of documents produced in occupied Poland and sent by couriers, as it often took them several weeks to reach the Government-in-Exile. The same is true of the reports sent between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs operating in London and the posts in distant countries. Difficulties were also encountered in encrypted communications, where the receipt of cables was subject to delay, while in the case of circulars sent from the MFA, it sometimes happened that recipients did not receive a given document on the same day. Nor was it uncommon that the cable was sent even a few days after it was created.

It was decided to refrain from publishing the so-called paraphrases of cables, i.e. documents containing the content of cables sent to the Prime Minister or to individual ministers or to other people indicated in the distribution list. Such documents differ in the date of formulation (sometimes by a few days) from the original cables, and the paraphrasing of the text made for security reasons (to ensure that the code was not compromised) could often lead to differences of interpretation.

In documents published with attachments, the date of the main document was accepted as the correct one, regardless of the date of the attached materials. In the case of doc. 237 (Report on the liquidation of the Warsaw Ghetto), sent to London together with attachments, it was decided to publish the two of them as separate documents (with a separate date). These include the report by the Home Army intelligence on the death camp in Bełżec (doc. 211) and the account of a policeman depicting the liquidation action in the Warsaw Ghetto (doc. 225). These documents

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<sup>43</sup> P. Długolecki (ed.), *W obliczu Zagłady. Rząd RP na uchodźstwie wobec Żydów 1939–1945*, PISM, Warszawa 2021.

were produced much earlier (on 10 July and 11 August 1942, respectively) than the September report on the liquidation of the ghetto, hence they were placed in chronological order here. Including them as attachments would be arbitrary and reflective of the process of preparing correspondence sent to London, as opposed to the process of creating the documents themselves.

All the aforementioned factors mean that the publication according to the date of the creation of the document is the only possible criteria. Where it was not possible to fix a precise date, an approximate date was given. If only the month of the creation of a document was known, the document in question was placed at the end of the collection of documents from the given month. In addition, apart from the creation date, each document bears a serial number and a heading containing data on the issuer and the recipient as well as a brief indication of the content. In the case of cables sent from diplomatic posts to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the recipient is not included each time. Each document contains the name of the archives and collection, as well as the reference number, which enable the original version of a specific report, note, or cipher cable to be located. In the case of Polish or Polish diaspora archives, names (without translation) were used so as not to make it difficult to find the original document in the archive. The British or American archives, on the other hand, are described with their original English forms. English terms are also given for documents sourced from the Yad Vashem.

The documents written in Polish were created according to the rules of spelling and grammar used at the time, which are today considered archaic. However, to avoid old-fashioned usage, the translation used modern English wherever possible. Similarly, the original use of uppercase and lowercase letters was corrected. The authors of documents used uppercase and lowercase letters in a variety of ways, also in relation to nationality. As a result, the words Jew and Jewish—which, because of the subject matter, are the most frequently used terms describing identity and nationality—were written in Polish documents with both uppercase and lowercase lettering. It is worth recalling that in Polish, the word Jew should be written starting with an uppercase letter when it determines the nationality of a person, and with lowercase when it describes a person belonging to a religious group. It was not without significance that the authors of some documents were born and raised in the former Russian partition and oftentimes used the lower case when indicating nationality, according to the rules of the Russian orthography. However, the English translation uses the correct spelling with an uppercase letter at the beginning, in line with the rules of English orthography, regardless of the way the word is rendered in the Polish original.

Most of the documents were produced in Polish and translated into English. However, some of them were originally prepared by the Polish side in English, for example as a note to be submitted to the British and US counterparts. These

documents were published in their original form; however, it should be noted that their authors used English with varying degrees of proficiency. Yet, it was decided to preserve the original wording and phrasing as much as was possible, with the stylistic inaccuracies neither rectified nor removed, and the text corrected only for punctuation and obvious typographic errors. Information on the publication of a given document in the original English version from the years 1939–1945 is given in the metrics under each such document with the abbreviation ENG.

In addition, documents 301 and 495, as well as enclosures to doc. 32 and 509 had been originally prepared in French, and some Polish-language documents contain extracts and footnotes written in French, too. Such documents, enclosures and elements have also been translated into English, as well as most Russian words that might appear elsewhere. The same rule was applied to an excerpt from a Paraguayan note, originally in Spanish, from doc. 472. In contrast, original German names, terms and citations that appear in some documents, such as Obersturmbannführer or Vernichtungslager, have been left untranslated.

Some documents, and especially those that had been encrypted, reflect by their form and content the chaos and the difficulties faced by the Polish authorities during the war. Parts of the text are often missing, or the documents contain obvious mistakes. It should be borne in mind that such documents were written in the context of the ongoing propaganda war and the deliberate manipulation of facts. Another important aspect was the difficulty to find reliable information on the situation in occupied Poland. For this reason, the statistics given in published reports are often not an exact calculation but an expression of the ability of a given post to obtain information whose accuracy was often difficult to ascertain. In addition, it should also be noted that, for example, the death tolls of World War II or individual extermination camps were being verified for many decades after the war, and even today they are a subject of dispute among historians.

The spelling of the names of people appearing in documents was a major editorial challenge. The material presented includes the names of politicians, diplomats and officials as well as those of ‘ordinary people’—often victims of war, refugees or ordinary soldiers. During the editorial process, it was decided to provide a full record of the names, without making them anonymous, even if (often unverifiable) allegations were made in the documents, for example about their cooperation with the occupying authorities. As many years have passed since the described events, it was considered unnecessary to apply the customary protection of individual personal data. In the case of victims or refugees, it was decided that full names should be kept, in recognition of the numerous family searches and projects commemorating the often-unnamed victims of World War II.

The footnotes of this volume do not contain biographical or other information on individuals whose names are given in the index of personal names. In the



original, names were often recorded in a distorted fashion or were given in their Polonised form, for example Kuehl or Kuhl instead of Kühl. The names of well-known people were recorded in several versions (Ehrlich/Erlich or Schwarzbart/Schwarzbart/Schwarzbard). During the translation of documents into English, the spelling was corrected, and the proper forms were used. In the case of Jewish names, the Polish spelling was used, with an exception made for people whose names are commonly used in their English-language versions; e.g. Włodzimierz Żabotyński and Dawid Bengurion are written as Ze'ev Jabotinsky and David Ben-Gurion. In the case of names written in non-Latin alphabets, their form as transliterated into English was used; e.g. the Deputy People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs of USSR, Andriej J. Wyszynski is written as Andrey Y. Vyshinsky.

It also often happened that in the reports drawn up, particularly those concerning German war criminals, inaccuracies (sometimes significant) occurred in the spelling of names. In specific cases these mistakes were corrected in editorial footnotes; for example, the correct name of the commandant of the Auschwitz concentration camp, Rudolf Höß (Höss), was substituted for Göss.

The question of the spelling of geographical names is a separate issue requiring clarification. The translation retains some commonly used toponymic inaccuracies. For example, if the name England (in the sense of Great Britain) or Russia (in the sense of the Soviet Union) were used in documents, these inaccuracies were not corrected but translated according to the original. In turn, the names of Polish cities and regions that have their English versions have been translated (e.g. Warszawa—Warsaw), but in the case of smaller towns, the names of which do not have their English equivalents, they were usually left in their original form (e.g. Hancewicze, Szczerec, Czyżew or Brzeżany).

In contrast, for the names of Russian, Ukrainian or Belarusian localities, which were originally included in the documents in their transliteration into Polish, the transliteration into English was used in the translation.

The documents originally used a whole array of names describing the Polish and foreign functions and positions of individuals in many countries. The translation mostly uses the nomenclature that is well-established in the English-language literature of the subject. The functions of Ambassador Edward Raczyński in London also had to be clarified. After August Zaleski's resignation from the post of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Raczyński was entrusted with the supervision of the ministry, acting as the 'Head of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs'. In June 1942, the President of the Republic of Poland appointed him as minister (but not Minister of Foreign Affairs). However, the translation uses the term 'Minister of Foreign Affairs' to denote the actual role that was given to Raczyński.

The Polish term *gmina żydowska* is translated in capital letters as Jewish Community to refer to the Jewish Community of Warsaw as well as Communities in

other towns and cities in the religious context (which is treated as self-explanatory in the Polish documents).

The authors of Polish diplomatic documents often used abbreviations and acronyms, which, when translated into English, were mostly replaced with full words, with the assumption that creating an abbreviation from the English translation of a Polish term would be unintelligible to English-language readers. The abbreviations and acronyms that were left in the documents are included in the list of abbreviations and their expansion in editorial footnotes is not repeated.

The vast majority of the 554 documents were published in full. However, in many cases it was decided to publish only extracts. This was most often the case for large, multi-page documents where only a section was relevant to the situation regarding the Jewish population, for example reports showing the situation in occupied Poland as a whole, where only those fragments describing the persecution of Jews were qualified for publication. Another example is the note from Jan Karski's talk with the President of the United States, from which only a small part devoted to Jewish affairs was chosen for publication. The omitted fragments have been marked with a footnote to indicate the nature of their contents. At the same time the principle of informing about all omissions in each document in one summary footnote placed next to the first omitted fragment was applied.

Apart from the documents, the volume also contains more than 750 editorial footnotes, in which archival materials were frequently and extensively cited. This has, on the one hand, allowed the inclusion of more documents in the volume and, on the other hand, demonstrated the genesis or further sequence of a particular case. In addition, the editorial footnotes provide the necessary information on the events described while avoiding interpreting the documents and leaving assessments to the readers. The original footnotes in the documents are indicated by the letters x, xx, etc. and are inserted between editorial footnotes, which are marked with Arabic numerals.

Most of the documents are typescripts; manuscripts (including those cited in full or in fragments in footnotes) are marked with the letters MS after the unit number affixed to each document.

No registry description of the documents was given. Nor are there any copies of the stamps, signs for compliance, information on the number of copies or distribution lists. Information about the possible transmission of a document outside the MFA (or to other posts) is included in the editorial footnotes. Information on any other copies or duplicates of the published document that are stored in other units or archives was not provided, either. As a rule, the publication of covering letters was abandoned, although their content is referred to in footnotes. No indication is given whether the given document is an original or a copy.

The documents included in this book, also in the form of footnotes, have been published based on the originals stored in the archives.<sup>44</sup> Publishing documents only based on earlier editions was judged to be unacceptable, especially based on older publications that appeared in the Polish People's Republic, when censorship was applied, or based on publications that suffered from some editorial errors or mainly served as propaganda.

Most of the documents are published for the first time, but others have already been printed, even several times. These documents were generally published in collections that illustrate the overall political and diplomatic efforts of the Polish Government-in-Exile. The archival materials were also published in thematic collections devoted to Jewish affairs. Some of them were also shown individually as materials published in magazines or collections not related to the subject matter. Information about the previous edition of a document is given in the metric, next to the unit number. However, only major editions containing materials directly linked to wartime diplomacy and Jewish issues were taken into consideration. It was assumed that the use of all information on earlier publications, in disparate locations and often not easily available, would be of no significant use to the readers.

Full bibliographical information on earlier editions is included in the introduction to the Polish-language edition of this publication, in the metrics of the documents. In this English-language version of the volume, only information about the fact of earlier editing is given, without more detailed data. It was considered that for English-language readers, references to earlier Polish editions would be useless, whereas Polish-language readers would use the Polish-language version of the volume where full information was provided.<sup>45</sup>

It is also necessary to explain the ways of dealing with the formal features of the documents, such as handwritten amendments, additional notes or comments and deletions, underlinings or selections in the margins. Given the imperfect encrypted communication in use at the time, we are often dealing with a document that is not fully legible or contains parts that are not fully understandable. Those parts of the original document that may raise doubts have been marked with the word *sic* in brackets. The illegible text, in turn, has been marked by an ellipsis and accompanied by an editorial note. The same method was adopted with respect to illegible handwritten signatures.

Comments, handwritten passages and signatures are put in italics, while the handwritten fragments of the text are reproduced in translation as crossed out text, with the use of the appropriate font.

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<sup>44</sup> The exception are doc. 145 and 349, published on the basis of the Journal of Laws.

<sup>45</sup> P. Długołęcki (ed.), *W obliczu Zagłady... op. cit.*, p. XLIV–XLVII.

THE POLISH DIPLOMATIC SERVICE CONFRONTING THE HOLOCAUST:  
RESEARCH INTERESTS AND ATTEMPTS AT DOCUMENTATION

Researchers describing the Holocaust of the Jewish population on occupied Polish soil usually focused on the fate of the victims or German genocidal plans and crimes. Others paid attention, especially in recent years, to the attitudes and reactions of the Polish population in Polish territory under German occupation. In principle, foreign research has often been dedicated to the study of the policy of individual states towards the Third Reich and their response to the Nazi policy of extermination.

So far, much less attention has been paid to the activities of the Polish Government-in-Exile and, in particular, to the diplomatic and consular posts subordinated to it. A review of the basic literature of the subject is included in the introduction to the Polish edition of the documents presented in this volume.<sup>46</sup> However, it is worth highlighting that we are encountering a certain dearth of publications that would comprehensively document the activities of the Polish diplomatic apparatus with respect to Jewish matters. The Polish Diplomatic Documents series, published since 2005 by the Polish Institute of International Affairs, illustrate only to a certain extent the assistance given by Polish diplomatic and consular posts to Polish citizens of Jewish descent. The series' task is to present Polish foreign policy in its entirety, and, for this reason, Jewish affairs can only be one of the several documented aspects.<sup>47</sup> It is worth mentioning that the

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<sup>46</sup> P. Długolecki (ed.), *W obliczu Zagłady... op. cit.*, p. XLVII–LIII. Publications on subjects most closely related to the issues documented in this volume include, among others, the works of David Engel (D. Engel, *In the Shadow of Auschwitz...*, *op. cit.* and *idem, Facing a Holocaust. The Polish Government-in-Exile and the Jews, 1943–1945*, The University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, London, 1993) and of Adam Puławski (A. Puławski, *W obliczu zagłady. Rząd RP na uchodźstwie, Delegatura Rządu RP na Kraj, ZWZ-AK wobec deportacji Żydów do obozów zagłady (1941–1942)*, Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, Komisja Ścigania Zbrodni Przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu, Oddział w Lublinie, Lublin 2009 and *Wobec „niespotykanego w dziejach mordu”. Rząd RP na uchodźstwie, Delegatura Rządu RP na Kraj, AK a eksterminacja ludności żydowskiej od „wielkiej akcji” do powstania w getcie warszawskim*, Stowarzyszenie Rocznik Chełmski, Chełm 2018). Concerning the publications showing the activity of the occupying authorities from the perspective of particular persons, see, inter alia: D. Stola, *Nadzieja i zagłada. Ignacy Schwarzbart – żydowski przedstawiciel w Radzie Narodowej RP (1940–1945)*, Oficyna Naukowa, Warszawa 1995 or A. Żbikowski, *Karski, Świat Książki*, Warszawa 2011.

<sup>47</sup> So far, three volumes covering the time of World War II have appeared in the Polish Diplomatic Documents series: PDD 1939 wrzesień–grudzień; PDD 1940, PDD 1941; works on the subsequent volumes covering respectively the years 1942 and 1943 are under way.

inspiration for this publication was, however, one of our Polish-language volume, *Polskie Dokumenty Dyplomatyczne 1940* (*Polish Diplomatic Documents 1940*), the main task of which was to lay bare the full spectrum of foreign policy. At that time, the need to show primarily political and diplomatic sources did not allow for the inclusion of a number of consular documents that pointed to the aid rendered by the posts. The inability to include a more extensive selection of such documents in the series initiated the process that led to this publication.

Most publications so far have not focused on the rescue activities carried out by diplomatic and consular posts or some of the numerous assistance agencies. Although this volume contains documents that illustrate the activities of the emigrant authorities in London and the situation of Jews in occupied Poland, its main task is to present a record of the activities of Polish diplomatic and consular posts around the world. Therefore, it tries to illustrate this aspect of the wartime Polish-Jewish relationship, which has yet to receive adequate attention by historians. It should be emphasised once again that this volume does not show the history of the Holocaust or the attitude of the Polish population towards Jews during World War II; it illustrates mainly the activities of the Polish authorities in exile, with particular emphasis on the activities of diplomatic and consular officials.

The attempt to show this issue comprehensively is all the more difficult as the Polish Government itself did not, in due course, secure a comprehensive presentation of its own activities in this field. This is especially odd given that the Council of Ministers and respective departments made efforts, particularly after 1942, to document their wartime activities exhaustively. Extensive plans were also made for future post-war policies on border issues, ethnic issues, the nature of the regime after the war, or agricultural reforms.<sup>48</sup> Shortly after the war, a large, several-hundred page document devoted to the Katyń massacre was prepared, which was handed over to the Allies with the hope that it would be used during the Nuremberg trial.<sup>49</sup> However, as far as aid is concerned, only a few government documents attempted to describe this issue more comprehensively. Examples include the already mentioned Raczyński's Note of December 1942 or the document of May 1944 entitled *Polish Government's Care for Jews*, probably drawn up by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in response to allegations of antisemitism in

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<sup>48</sup> As an example, see: Essays, bulletins, reports, and studies, relating to Poland's boundary disputes following World Wars I and II; events and conditions in Poland under German and Soviet occupations during World War II; Polish-Soviet relations; communism in Poland; and twentieth century Polish agriculture, economy, foreign relations, history, politics, and government, The Hoover Institution, Ministerstwo Prac Kongresowych, boxes 1–13.

<sup>49</sup> Facts and Documents Concerning Polish Prisoners of War Captured by the U.S.S.R. During the 1939 Campaign, 1946, The National Archives, FO 371/56475.

the Polish Army (doc. 473). Attention is also drawn to the study on Jewish refugees-Polish citizens scattered around the world, released by the Ministry of National Defence in April 1943 (doc. 343) or the note by the Head of the Nationalities Department at the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Olgierd Górka, on the policy of the Polish Government-in-Exile towards Jews, already drawn up after the war as an individual attempt to assess a complex issue (doc. 553).

Still, the most significant attempt of this type is probably the material from August 1943 prepared by the former Embassy in Kuybyshev, which illustrates the assistance given to Jews in the USSR between 1941 and 1943. This document, entitled 'Report on the relief accorded to Polish citizens by the Polish Embassy in the U.S.S.R. with special reference to Polish Citizens of Jewish Nationality', provides a solidly prepared—as much as was possible at the time of war—brochure that summarises all aid initiatives (doc. 382, extracts). It was prepared in an English-language version for information and propaganda purposes in connection with emerging accusations of favouritism shown to Poles at the expense of Jews in the assistance campaign and during the evacuation of the Polish Army in the USSR to the Middle East. It used a comprehensive report—over 160 pages of typescript—prepared in Tehran by Zygmunt Sroczyński, a former employee of the Polish Embassy in Kuybyshev (doc. 381, extract). Also prepared in August 1943, Sroczyński's report was entitled *Aid and Care Rendered to the Jewish Population in the USSR* and comprehensively detailed Polish-Jewish relations in the USSR as well as the activities of the Polish delegations operating there. Both documents are dedicated to the situation in the Soviet Union and provide an important albeit partial view of the Polish actions on Jewish affairs. They do not pretend to illustrate the entire policy of the Polish authorities towards Jews.

It seems that the need to prepare such material was recognised by Tadeusz Romer, who, as Minister of Foreign Affairs, requested that all documentation relevant to Jewish affairs be collected. In his instructions to diplomatic posts describing the entire Polish policy, Romer also drew attention to Jewish issues. 'It is particularly necessary to exploit for propaganda purposes all the actions of the Government-in-Exile and of the Polish authorities attesting to their democratic attitude to Jewish problems, and the same goes for all signs of harmonious normal co-existence or cooperation between Poles and Jews, whether in exile, in the army or particularly in the country (aid granted to the Polish population by Poles, cooperation of underground organisations). Our information action in Jewish matters should have a positive character as far as possible and not be limited to rejecting accusations of antisemitism' (doc. 392).

In May 1944, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs sent a circular to the Polish posts, requesting: 'In view of the frequent accusations made in the British press about the unequal treatment of Polish-Jewish citizens and the alleged antisemitism

of certain offices, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs asks for a special report to be sent, stating the quantitative and percentage data regarding Polish-Jewish citizens present on the particular territory, as well as the review of the relations regarding the Polish-Jewish citizens. Notwithstanding the submission of this report, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs should, as far as possible, be informed of any data that might present the source of this action, which is probably inspired by external parties' (doc. 476).

However, despite the instructions being sent, it appears that no substantial attempt was made to draw up a summary report which would show the issue in its entirety. The broad inquiry carried out for this volume did not result in finding a complete, professionally prepared report. Neither the aforementioned documents nor the reports with partial information sent in reply to Romer's recommendation can be treated as such a summary. It is also worth noting that although measures were taken to gather the accounts of former prisoners and deportees, the reports of Polish diplomatic and consular staff have not been collected (which, of course, does not mean any equality between the tragic experiences of the former and the activities of the latter).<sup>50</sup>

The reading of relatively numerous memoirs or diaries written by Polish diplomats generates a similar impression of insufficiency. The issues of Polish-Jewish relations appear rarely and never form the leading theme of the published diplomatic memoirs. In this respect, the correspondence from 1961 between the Ambassador to the Holy See, Kazimierz Papée, and one of the former leaders of the Home Army, Kazimierz Iranek-Osmecki, is also symptomatic. Iranek asked the Ambassador for information on the conduct of the Ambassador to the Holy See with regard to Jewish matters during the war, probably for the purpose of writing about it in a book.<sup>51</sup> In his response Papée explained: 'This action was ... conducted consistently and permanently throughout the war. It was made up of a number of démarches submitted to the Cardinal Secretary of State Maglione and his closest collaborators Monsignors Tardini and Montini. The Embassy's interventions took all accepted forms, i.e. conversations, memorandums, memos, verbal notes, notes'. Then, Papée listed his most important interventions (see doc. 495) and concluded: 'I think that if I were a collector of gratitude and honour, I would have tried already a long time ago to make the activities of our local Embassy in defence of

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<sup>50</sup> See, inter alia: M. Siekierski, F. Tych (ed.), *Widziałem anioła śmierci. Losy deportowanych Żydów polskich w ZSRR w latach II wojny światowej. Świadczenia zebrane przez Ministerstwo Informacji i Dokumentacji Rządu Polskiego na Uchodźstwie w latach 1942-1943*, Rosner & Wspólnicy, Warszawa 2006; see also the relations collected after the war by the Polish Source Institute in Lund, the Hoover Institution, Polski Instytut Źródłowy w Lund, 1.

<sup>51</sup> K. Iranek-Osmecki, *Kto ratuje jedno życie... Polacy i Żydzi 1939-1945*, Studium Polski Podziemnej, ORBIS, London 1968.

Jews, conducted in accordance with the instructions or intentions of the Polish Government, come to the attention of the Government of Israel.<sup>52</sup>

Without analysing the Ambassador's motivation, it is worth concluding that neither the Polish Government nor the Polish diplomats and officials were eager to draw up an appropriate report on their activities concerning Polish-Jewish relations. The purpose of this volume is to fill this gap at least in some part.

*Piotr Długołęcki*

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<sup>52</sup> Letter by Ambassador Kazimierz Papée to Colonel Kazimierz Iranek-Osmecki, 25 September 1961, Papieski Instytut Studiów Kościelnych, Spuścizna Kazimierza Papée, 8/67.