

Polish History from 17

family to the wagon, through rows of uniformed men. It was the last road for the Warsaw Jews. The wagons would go to Treblinka. The person with no historical orientation watching this movie will pay no attention that the uniforms of the men staying close to the wagons are not German uniforms, nor Polish, but Jewish. This historical memory of the pianist Wladyslaw Szpilman supports the notes of the Warsaw ghetto chronicler, Emanuel Ringelblum, who wrote about the extermination of 300,000 Jews: "Why only 50 of the SS-men (some witnesses say that even less) with the support of 200 Ukrainians, and about the same number of Latvians, were able to exterminate the Jews so easily? The Jewish police had a very bad reputation even before the displacement of the Jews. But the bottom of their evilness was reached during the displacement. There was not even one word of protest against their despicable function, to provide their brothers with death. The other Jewish organizations and groups (except the police) had switched to the displacement action of their own free will. The leading place in this sense belonged to the Emergency Support Service. Except for them, the Jewish community authorities were supporting the actions of the Jews moving."²²

One of the most shocking Jewish historical sources about the Holocaust are the little-known poems of Icchak Kacnelson. With poet's susceptibility, he shows the nightmare of the crime committed on the Jews, by the Jews. In his poem "About my pain" there are these lines:

I am the one who had seen this, who had observed it from very close

And my hands are broken from a shy, from shy and shame

By the hands of the Jews were killed the Jews – disarmed Jews

On the side the German with a sly smile had watched on them.

The German had stood far aside and watched – he did not interfere.

He kills my Jews by the Jewish hands!"²³

There is no doubt about the cooperation of the Jewish administration in the process of Jewish extermination, as is shown in Jewish historical sources. We must mention again, the Jewish Senator Adam Czerniaków. He was not the only one oriented in the direction of the German policy. But when Czerniaków learned that the Jewish autonomy he had created in Warsaw, with the support of the Germans, was a trap, he committed suicide!

To return to Hannah Arendt's words, about the problem of the Jews' participation in the extermination, "The issue I had worked over was the cooperation of Jewish authorities with the committers of the "Final Solution." It was a very uncomfortable issue because it was not possible to say that those persons were traitors (they were the traitors as well, but it is not significant).

The cooperation of the Polish Jews with the Germans – from the Jewish point of view – was not a betrayal but the realization of Jewish political plans. The Poles did not give autonomy to the Polish Jews in 1918-1939, and that was why the Jews had used the first political opportunity and had built ghettos on Polish lands in 1939-1940-1941. From that point of view the authorities of the Jewish autonomies, cooperating with the Germans, might not be called traitors. They cooperated with the Germans for what they saw as a benefit for their Jewish people.

The Polish Jews did not foresee a dramatic end of the Jewish autonomy. But the Holocaust was not foreseen by anybody. In any civilized peoples' imagination (Jews, Poles and Americans) until the horrors of World War II, no one could imagine the industry of death: gas chambers, crematoriums etc.

Of one thing we are absolutely sure: the establishment, in May 1941 of the Jewish ghettos in Warsaw, and the other Jewish autonomies on the Polish lands (Łódź, Cracow, Lublin, etc.) is the key element for the understanding of the Polish Jews' Holocaust, and for a full understanding of Polish-Jewish relations during 1939-1945. And, surprisingly, even now! The sooner that the whole world understands what is documented in the Jewish historical sources that Jewish ghettos were in reality on Polish

lands, the quicker the truth is known about the history of the Jews and the Poles during the World War II. It is vital that we all come to a clear understanding of all these facts and work toward erasing old rumors and lies.

Taking into account the information from Jewish historical sources during WWII, the Jewish ghettos in Poland were in reality the "Selbständige Autonomie," and Polish-Jewish relations in that time should be further researched. But at this time things can be explained as follows:

1. The Jewish "Selbständige Autonomie" were political, administrative and ethnic units not connected with Polish society. In these units the Polish Jews in 1939-1942 had their own social structure. The Poles had no influence on the social life of Polish Jews.

2. In 1939-1942, when the Polish Jews were creating the "Selbständige Autonomie", the Poles were absorbed into a creation of the Polish Underground State, where the Polish Jews had no influence.

3. When the Germans started the Holocaust of the Jewish people in 1942 there was no connection between the "Selbständige Autonomie" and the Polish Underground State.

4. The connection and cooperation between the Jews and Poles emerged at the end of 1942, during the Holocaust, and the highest form of this was "Żegota," supported by the Polish Underground State, actions created to rescue Polish Jews. The scale of "Żegota" actions and of all other similar actions was severely limited by the Germans who imposed the death penalty on any Poles who even attempted to rescue Jews.

Publisher's note: Last month our columnist Justyna Ball wrote about Professor Ewa Kurek's new book, *Beyond the boundary of Solidarity – Polish-Jewish relations 1939-1945*. It has received a lot of response from our readers so we thought we'd ask Professor Kurek to give us some further insights on the subject. We feel it is a very important topic for the awareness of all Polish-Americans.

Much that has been written about Polish-Jewish relations in WWII is confusing, biased, based on rumor or politics, or carefully-crafted disinformation. History and truth are not necessarily synonymous. Getting one's ideas or opinions in print does not make one's history a truthful version.

In recent years we have read too much that is obviously untrue, and often filled with malice and hatred. Scholars, journalists and other so-called experts must be held accountable and corrected when the facts become available. Sometimes this takes many years, if not decades. Too often our current history books are created by whomever gets into print first. But time is a useful corrective when enough good people discover the truth and disseminate it for all to re-evaluate. Truth is not always pleasant or balanced, or politically polite.

Ewa Kurek has presented a very compelling case for what she has discovered in her relentless research. There may be more facts about WWII to come.

WWII was a terrible time for Poland, and everyone who lived and died there. Poles deserve a truthful representation in what we call history!!!

1. H. Arendt, Reichmann w Jerozolimie, Kraków 1987., p.394
2. H. Arendt, op.cit., p.394.
3. Ibidem, Vol. II, p.572.
4. M. Balaban, Dzieje żydów w Krakowie i na Kazimierzu 1304-1868, Kraków 1912,p. XVIII-XIX
5. A. Żbikowski, op.cit., p.53
6. M. Balaban, Dzieje Żydów w Galicji, Lwów 1914, p.3
7. Ibidem, p. 121.
8. „Materiały w sprawie żydowskiej w Polsce”, red. I. Grunbaum, vol. I, Warszawa 1919, p. 6-7; „Hajnt”, Nr 198 from 27 October 1918, p. 3.
9. Sprawozdania stenograficzne Sejmu Ustawodawczego, pos. 37, 13 Maj 1919, t. 5-6; in: Archive of Polish Parliament.
10. Sprawozdania stenograficzne Sejmu Ustawodawczego, pos. 37, 13 Maj 1919, t. 66; in: Archive of Polish Parliament.
11. W. Bartoszewski, Warto być przyzwoitym [It Pays to Be Decent], Editions spotkania, Paryż 1986, p. 25.

Justyna Ball from 2

"Alles gute, viel Glück in Amerika!" Now when I think about it, as much as they gave us, we gave them something too. A sense of rehabilitation.

I liked that international connection, in the form of relations that cement us rather than divide us.

Dividing Poles has become the Polish government's domain.

Their newest idea is to remove all the monuments built by the Soviets. If you ask people on the streets, 99% will say that the monuments don't bother them. Instead of spending money on the removal, why not organize summer programs for unprivileged children? The monuments dedicated to the Red Army, whether we like it or not, are part of history, just like the Palace of Culture in downtown Warsaw. Why not place a plaque explaining that the monument was erected by Soviet occupying forces though most people don't care if they live on a street named after them. They actually think that changing it will cause more problems and surely more bureaucracy. Don't they have better things to do?

The average person always seem to possess more common sense than that government.

The year was still 1986, the refugee camp in Germany, which was an old athletic complex with dormitory like buildings and orchard and asparagus fields nearby. Immigrants awaiting medical exams, beginning the process of assimilation, paperwork, for a week or two. It was the place where you get assigned the apartment and given permission to travel in a designed zone.

In the cafeteria, there were two lines to the kitchen counter. One was for people like us who ate pork and the other one stood under the sign, "beef only." Most of the people in line were men, different ages, and mostly Muslim. Each meal came with a piece of fruit. I remember those men seeing me with a little kid, without being able to converse in any common language, they gave me their fruit. I did not know them, and they did not know who we were and where we came from. They just saw a child. That's how I like to judge people, by their good deeds rather than their backgrounds. Isn't that how you would want to be judged by as well? □

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12. A. Hertz, Żydzi w polskiej kulturze [The Jews in Polish Culture], warszawa 1988, p. 83-87.
13. D. Warszawski [Konstanty Gebert], Siła odrzuconych, in: „Wprost” from 20 October 2002.
14. A. Czerniaków, Adama Czerniakowa dziennik getta warszawskiego, Warszawa 1983.
15. E. Ringelblum, Kronika getta warszawskiego, Warszawa 1983.
16. Leon Hurwitz, Pamiętniki [The Memoirs], in: Kronika getta łódzkiego [The Łódź Ghetto Chronicles], Łódź 1965, p. XIII.
17. L. Dobroszycki, Kronika getta łódzkiego [The Łódź Ghetto Chronicles], Łódź 1965, p. XXI.
18. E. Ringelblum, Kronika getta warszawskiego, Warszawa 1983.
19. A. Czerniaków, Adama Czerniakowa dziennik getta warszawskiego, Warszawa 1983.
20. H. Makower, Pamiętnik getta warszawskiego [The Diaries from Warsaw Ghetto], Wrocław 1987, p. 13.
21. A. Marianowicz, Życie surowo wzbrowione [The Diaries from Warsaw Ghetto], Warszawa 1995, p. 48-49.
22. E. Ringelblum, Kronika getta warszawskiego, Warszawa 1983, p. 404, 407, 410, 426-428.
23. I. Kacnelson, Pieśń o zamordowanym żydowskim narodzie, Warszawa 1982, p. 23.

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of our future, of the future of the whole world." He concluded by articulating an astonishingly correct vision of Poland's future: "... I believe that this historic tragedy will give birth to Poland. I don't know if my fate will allow me to see this Poland, but I deeply believe that for you and for your children the country will be a source of pride and joy." Exactly one week later, Paderewski died in New York City and was buried at the Arlington National Cemetery. It was only after the independent Poland emerged from the ruins of the Communist regime in 1989 that Paderewski's remains were returned for burial in Warsaw.

To have the Paderewski Monument stand at one of the most prestigious universities in America is undoubtedly a magnificent tribute to the achievements of one of Poland's greatest sons. University of Southern California already has recognized Paderewski's immense and noble deeds with the greatest honor it could bestow upon him. Today, the initiative to preserve that legacy must come from Polish-Americans. Financial contributions for the Monument from all over the United States would indeed be a proper expression of gratitude to the memory of this extraordinary artist and patriot to whom all of us owe so much. As of April 1, 2007, we have raised 25% of the total funds needed for construction costs of the Monument. Please consider sending your donation in recognition of Paderewski's achievements on Poland's behalf to the Paderewski Monument Fund Drive that is coordinated by Polish-American Historical Association, California Chapter. Your checks should be made out to "PAHA, California Chapter" and sent to:

Polish-American Credit Union
589 North Larchmont Boulevard
Los Angeles, CA 90004

The Paderewski Fund Drive is a 501 C3 registered not-for-profit organization, and your contribution is tax deductible to the extent allowable by state and federal laws. Please share this appeal with all your relatives and friends. Each and every one of us can feel proud to support this unique and magnificent project. On behalf of all the organizers of this effort - the Polish Music Center at USC, the Consulate-General of the Republic of Poland in Los Angeles, the Polish-American Congress, and the Polish-American Historical Association - a heartfelt thank you for your understanding and generosity. God bless! □

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Investments from 3

2. Mortgage Banking News, "Resets Helping Drive Refi Volume," Dec. 2006.
 3. Business Week, "Don't Be Thrown by the Yield Curve," January 16, 2006; http://www.businessweek.com/magazine/content/06_03/b3967082.htm.
 4. <http://www.smartmoney.com/onebond/index.cfm?story=yieldcurve>.
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