

On Attitudes Toward Poland

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[Comments in brackets and bold print are from my friend and colleague Irene Tomaszewski (IT), and from Dr. David Silberklang [DS], Dr. Efraim Zuroff [EZ], Dr Erica Lehrer [EL], Dr Havi Ben Sasson [HBS] and Shalmi Barmor [SBM]. Also thank you to Professor Frank Bialystok and the late Mr. Dennis Misler for their insightful comments.]



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1. *Introduction*

The issue of Polish-Jewish relations is a very complicated and complex subject which often arouses deeply felt emotions. Frequently, we find ourselves caught in the crossfire between two diametrically opposed positions:

On the one side there are those who feel that Poland has always been a country populated by extreme and irredeemable anti-Semites, a country where the Holocaust was implemented with the willing agreement of the local population, a land where pogroms were commonplace, even after the Holocaust.

On the other side, there are those who point out that Poland was the country with the largest Jewish population in Europe before WWII, a land in which Jewish life thrived for centuries precisely because of the country's favorable climate toward Jews. During the Holocaust, thousands of Poles risked their lives and the lives of their families to save Jews. And those that didn't - well who could blame them, after all they were under the savage rule of the murderous Nazis?

The truth probably lies somewhere in between these two extreme points of view. As Rabbi Michael Schudrich once noted: "The Poles were neither as good they would like the world to believe, nor as bad as many Jews claim".

Put another way, referring to the debate over Jewish life in Poland prior to the Holocaust, the following contradictory yet somehow sensible question/statement has been put forth:

"If things in Poland were so good for the Jews, why were they so bad? And if things in Poland were so bad for the Jews, why were they so good??"

In some cases, personal experience plays a role in the formation of views on this subject. A survivor - and his/her descendants - who was saved by a Polish gentile family during the Holocaust is perhaps more likely than others to harbor more positive feeling about Poles and Poland. A survivor who grew up in a Polish town experiencing great amounts of Anti-Semitism and/or whose family was betrayed by Poles to the Nazis during the Holocaust, will more likely have a more negative view of Poles and Poland. Likewise, children growing up in each of these households would be raised with different views concerning Poland, opinions which they would in all likelihood assimilate into their personal world view.

(Further, even people who have no close connection with Poland often see Poland only through the prism of the Holocaust, a time of unmitigated horror, and discard the centuries-long history of Jewish life in Poland that preceded the Holocaust. Poland's post-war situation under the Soviets distorted the picture even more. [IT])

Most people who hold negative views about Poland do not have personal experience with the country. So it's really the decontextualized circulation and expansion of the views of a few that is of concern. [EL]

Another problem is that many times the late (negative) direct or indirect experience changed and shaped the understanding of the whole period. [HBS]

Others view the Holocaust in Eastern Europe and Poland as the inevitable culmination of years of pogroms, persecution and anti-Semitism. But that is reading history backwards, from the vantage point of knowing the ending before the beginning. The Holocaust in Europe was not inevitable, even given the history of persecution the Jews experienced up to and including the modern era. Many factors contributed to the development and implementation of the Holocaust in Europe, and many other factors might have hindered its completion. It is precisely because the Holocaust in Europe was not inevitable, which partially explains why the majority of Jews were so unprepared to deal with the brutality of the Nazi onslaught. As others have described it so well, the Jews were perhaps guilty of only one main error: "the inability to imagine the unimaginable."

Rabbi Dow Marmur has stated the following:

"Young women and men have often inherited the unreflective way of looking at Poles. These liberal men and women, who regard racism as evil and pride themselves of their open-mindedness, will nevertheless make the most offensive generalizations about Poles and Poland and believe them to be true.

They ignore the truth that the more universal a prejudice, the less factual the reasons for it. (They will say that if Poles are so hated, there must be a reason for it; yet they are aware that a strong anti-Semitic argument is that if Jews have been so universally hated, there must be a reason for it.)"¹

Yet even this viewpoint is not without its qualifications (which I am sure Rabbi Marmur would readily agree to).

Without going into questions of cause and effect, it would be hard to not agree with the statement that, in pre-war Europe, many Poles were prejudiced against Jews and many Jews were prejudiced toward Poles. ²

But the parallels are not equal.

Prejudice against Poland's Jews could involve the following: specific theological statements against the Jews emanating from the Church, restrictions in employment areas, boycotts, segregation in children's schools, university quotas, anti-Jewish legislation, pogroms and other acts of violence, and, during WWII, collaboration (by a minority) with the Nazis in their persecution of Jews, the latter two examples of which resulted in bodily harm and/or death. Jewish prejudice against Poles (or against non-Jews in general), which some times found support in certain Jewish texts, was of a different nature and rarely if ever manifested itself in acts of violence toward Poles (of course at least partly because Jews were by far the weaker minority).

Yet, despite this imbalance, one cannot simply complain about Polish Anti-Semitism and prejudice - no matter how justified the complaint - while at the same time engage in one's own form of sweeping generalizations and unfair stereotyping about the nature of all of Poland and her citizens from the time that Jews first settled in Poland until the present day.

Having said all of the above, there are at least some points of clarity we can try to bring to the issue, which are addressed in the pages to follow.

2. The Inter-War Years Vs. One Thousand Years of Polish-Jewish History

Today, the roots of much the current world Jewish population is Polish, and they may in fact form the largest single segment of Jews today in terms of ancestral origins. How did this come about?

The history of the Jews in Poland dates back over one thousand years. Volumes have been written on the history of Jews in Poland, which was, in the history of the Diaspora, perhaps the most successful exilic Jewish community.

From the latter part of the Middle Ages until its dissolution after the Third Partition in 1795, Poland was considered the most tolerant country in all of Europe. Throughout the centuries, Jews of Ashkenazi and Sephardic origins fled from persecution or emigrated by choice to Poland. By the middle of the sixteenth century, three quarters of all the world's Jews lived in Poland and Warsaw was the city with the biggest Jewish population in the world.

A few salient points in this regard are worth noting: In 1264, the "Statute of Kalish (or "Statute of Jewish Liberties")" was approved by Prince Boleslaw the Pious who took in Jews, fleeing persecution in Western Europe, under his personal protection. The progressive statute served as a basis

for Jewish privileges in Poland and led to creation of a Yiddish-speaking autonomous Jewish "nation within a nation", which lasted until the Third Partition of Poland in 1795. The "Statute of Kalisz" gave exclusive control of Jewish matters to Jewish courts, while creating a separate authority for issues between Christians and Jews. It guaranteed safety and personal liberty for Jews, as well as freedom of religion, trade, and movement. The statute was also approved by later Polish Kings : Casimir III (1334), Casimir IV (1453), and Sigismund I (1539).

For centuries, the centre of Jewish scholarship and religious authority was in Poland because of the long period of statutory religious tolerance granted to the Jews there. In 1580, the Council of Four Lands (*Vaad Arba Artzot*) was created which provided a form of self government for Jews living on the Polish Commonwealth – there was no parallel to this anywhere else in Europe.

During the Kosciuszko Uprising and wars against Tsarist Russia in 1794, Jews fought – and died – in the uprising and even formed a brigade of Jewish volunteers to support their Polish brothers.

With the Third Partition of Poland in 1795, and with the rule of Tsarist Russia extended over much of what used to be Poland, conditions for Jews proved to be much harsher than they were under independent Polish rule.

But for the better part of over 1,000 years, one of the safest place for a Jew to live in the world was Poland. One 17th century Vatican diplomat even described Poland as "Paradisus Iudaeorum" - a Jewish Heaven on earth.

Yet, as has been noted, the country “where Jews received the warmest of welcomes” is also the same country, “where they endured the most heinous of horrors (i.e. the Holocaust.)”³

But too often, Jewish history in Poland is viewed only through the lens of one specific period in the 20th century, and this can very well lead to unwarranted generalizations.

The two decades of Jewish life in Poland before the Shoah, in between the two World Wars, are a case in point.

Historical and political developments in Europe during the 1920s and 1930s led to a marked rise in Anti-Semitism in Poland in the period prior to WWII.

After WWI, Poland expanded to its largest territorial expanse in modern times, and her new borders now included over 10 million members of different minority groups. (These included Germans, Lithuanians, & Belarussuans, who

numbered approx. 1 million each, along with 5 million Ukrainians and 3 million Jews.) The right-wing (led by *Narodowa Demokracja* (National Democracy), also known as *ND* or "*Endecja*") was generally less sympathetic to the aspirations and needs of minority groups. They advocated the rapid Polonization of Poland's minorities, with the possible exception of the Jews who were felt by many on the right to be impossible to assimilate.

The left of centre, led by the Polish Socialist Party (*PPS*) (whose main figure was Marshall Józef Piłsudski), advocated a more multi-cultural view of Poland, and were inclined to be more conciliatory to the minority groups.

In Poland's 1922 elections, the country's first free elections, through complex voting mechanisms, attempts were made to dilute the impact of the minority vote. On December 9, 1922, Gabriel Narutowicz was elected by the Polish parliament (the *Sejm*), to be Poland's first president. His election, supported by leftist, centrist, peasant and national-minority deputies infuriated right-wing deputies, particularly the National Democrats. Narutowicz's assassination a short time later was followed by years of political and economic instability, until the putsch led by Marshall Józef Piłsudski in 1926.

Piłsudski founded *Sanaicj* or *Sanation* (the Latin word for "healing") a quasi political party, composed of a coalition of rightists, leftists and centrists dedicated to the elimination of corruption and the lessening of inflation. From 1926 to his death in 1935, Piłsudski remained the most formidable political force in Poland, regardless of his official titles. As strongman of a generally popular centrist regime, all subsequent governments would first require the unofficial approval of Piłsudski.

Piłsudski's reign from 1926 to 1935 was favorably viewed by many Polish Jews, whose plight improved especially under the Piłsudski-appointed prime minister Kazimierz Bartel. Despite pressure from various quarters, the government did not yield to calls for anti-Semitic measures against the Jews.

After Piłsudski's death in 1935, *Sanation* faced severe internal strife and eventually devolved into three separate movements, representing the left, center and right.

Subsequent to his death, Poland's right wing elements gained more power, while at the same time, Poland turned toward Germany as a political ally to face the potential threat of the Soviet Union to the east.

This combination did not bode well for Poland's Jews. Poland begins to model some of its policies regarding Jews on that of Nazi Germany's Anti-Semitic propaganda and calls for the Jews to emigrate increased as did pogroms in

Poland's towns and villages, riots in the universities and economic measures against Jews.

With the encouragement of the OZN (United National Camp) faction, merchant associations participated in aggressive propaganda campaigns against Jewish businesses under the slogan "*Swoj do swego*" (roughly "to each his own"). On June 6, 1936 Prime Minister Slawoi-Skladkowski made his infamous "*Owszem*" declaration against the Jews. He said: "No one in Poland must be harmed, as a fair landlord does not permit anyone to hurt people in the house; [however] an economic struggle - of course [*"Owszem"*]"^{4 5}

Discriminatory economic measures were followed up by other forms of harassment.

Following Germany's example in 1933, efforts were made to ban kosher slaughter in Poland. Numerus clausus (quota systems aimed at Jewish students) were also introduced in some universities in Poland, and Jewish students were restricted to special seating. So bleak did the situation appear that Jewish youth in Poland referred to themselves as the "*The Generation with No Future.*"

In the wake of these measure, tens of thousands of Polish Jews emigrated to Holland, France, Belgium, and Palestine in the period just before the war.⁶

Because of the above-mentioned factors, besides for the Shoah, the years between 1935-1939 were perhaps among the most difficult period for Jews in their history in Poland. However, one should not ignore the almost 1,000 years of history that took place in Poland *before* the events of the first half of the 20th century that were to shake the very foundations of Jewish life in Poland, and, indeed, throughout Europe.⁷

3. The Nazi Genocide Against the Poles

During WWII, the Nazis executed five to six million people residing in Poland, three million Jews and two to three million non-Jews, which meant that roughly 15-20% of Poland's overall population was murdered. This figure includes a staggering 90% of Polish Jewish population and more than 10% of the Polish non-Jewish population. **[Pre-war Poland had over a million Germans and the largest minority was Ukrainian. The figures cited refer to Poles and Jews, the main targets of German - and Soviet - aggression. IT]** Among the murdered members of the Polish non-Jewish population, there were tens of thousands of landowners, clergymen, and members of the intelligentsia who were deliberately targeted because of their positions of influence in society. Universities, museums,

libraries and other institutions were demolished and all forms of Polish cultural expression were banned. Poland itself as a state and country with geographical boundaries and government institutions ceased to exist. Thus Poland was experiencing its own form of genocide, making it all the more difficult to help Jews. As Professor Frank Bialystok and others have noted, after Sept. 27/39 (the date of Poland's surrender to the Nazis) there simply was no Poland. The Poles were brutally occupied both by the Soviets (for political and ideological reasons⁸) and the Germans. Once the Germans occupied all of Poland, the country was divided again, between the parts that were annexed outright by Germany into the Reich and the remaining parts of occupied Poland which was designated 'The General Government of Poland'.

In short, after the Jews, the Slavic peoples were next in line for Nazi victimization, and Poland became one of Nazi Germany's largest targets of its genocidal policies - because they were Slavs (considered "untermenschen" - subhuman, by the Nazis), and because of their proximity to Nazi Germany, who advocated *Lebensraum* ("living space") as a major platform in their political agenda. As a result Poland suffered the highest loss of civilian population to the Nazis of any country in Europe, with the possible exception of Belarus.⁹

4. Differentiating between General European anti-Semitism and the Nazi Holocaust

We must not confuse the Holocaust, which was initiated and devised by Nazi Germany and implemented by Nazi Germany and her collaborators, with the phenomena of Eastern European Anti-Semitism. The German Nazis created the goal of the "Final Solution," organized the mass murdering death squads called the Einsatzgruppen, built a network of death and near death camps throughout Europe, forced the Jews into ghettos and then transported the Jews to these camps where most of them perished. That is how the vast majority of Jews were murdered during the Holocaust.

The Nazis, of course, had their local collaborators, who, at times, could be as brutal as the Nazis - or, in some cases, even more brutal. (Jedwabne is one of the more infamous examples of the latter.) They also had, for lack of a better word, their local 'cheerleaders', those who took no active role in the murder of the Jews, but were pleased the Nazis were ridding them of their "Jewish problem". (Many of these people promptly helped themselves to Jewish property once the Jews had been expelled.) But these terrible acts, which justifiably give rise to our moral outrage, should not deflect us from assigning the major guilt for the murders in the Holocaust - guilt that rightfully belongs to the record of Nazi Germany.

Much of Eastern Europe and Europe was rife with Anti-Semitism during the time around the Holocaust. But there were even Anti-Semites who saved Jews

during the Holocaust. So one cannot simply blend the terrible events of the Holocaust with the commonplace, and of course, odious occurrence of Anti-Semitism. It is of course, important to distinguish between the various forms of classical Anti-Semitism that existed over the centuries. These types of Anti-Semitism may have been based on theological positions, cultural stereotypes, fear of the other, economic competition, or superstitious beliefs, or combinations of the above. Nazi Anti-Semitism accentuated, heightened, transformed, and dramatically changed this phenomena into a pseudo scientific and quasi-religious belief, which maintained the very redemption of the world relied upon the "extermination" (and only "extermination") of the Jew from the world.

To summarize: Just as one must differentiate between classical anti-Semitism and Nazi Anti-Semitism, one must also differentiate between the Nazi Holocaust that took place during the war years, and other acts of persecution that the Jews suffered at the hands of their host European countries and cultures. Nazi Anti-Semitism and its concomitant racial theories had only one ultimate solution to the Jewish problem - "The Final Solution" - mass death for the entire Jewish people. Classical European Anti-Semitism could lead down many paths - none of which were very appealing - and could include forced conversion, ghettoization, humiliation, quota systems, economic boycotts and other forms of discrimination - and, sometimes but not necessarily - pogroms resulting in many deaths.

When one understands this, one also understands why Dr. Havi Ben Sasson states: **"The Holocaust, it must be stressed, was an external event implanted in Poland by the German foreign occupier."**

5. Victims, Perpetrators, or Bystanders?

Most Poles neither actively helped the Nazis nor helped the Jews during the Holocaust.¹⁰

Those Poles that helped the Nazis were, of course, guilty for the deaths of the Jews in whose murders they were complicit. Space does not permit us to discuss the role of the *Shmalznovkim* (those Poles who blackmailed Jews for the sake of financial gain, threatening to turn them in unless they were bribed) or some members of the Polish resistance movements, who even while they fought the Nazis, also executed Jews, or those who simply betrayed Jews for the sake of quantities of sugar or cigarettes.

Those Poles that assisted the Jews are to be held in the highest esteem, and large numbers of them are rightly honored as Righteous Among the Nations by Yad Vashem. Many of them are not recognized at Yad Vashem, for a variety of reasons, including the fact that their acts of heroism were never reported and/or

were killed during the act. (Over 700 Poles were executed for the “crime” of saving Jews according to the latest research.)

(Poland has the most citizens of any nation to receive the honor of Righteous Among the Nations. However a number of factors, including the fact that Poland had the largest Jewish population in Europe during WWII, contribute to this statistic. Still it must be pointed out that Poland also has largest number of citizens executed for trying to help Jews - there are 704 documented cases in all recorded by the Institute of National Memory (a Polish Government Institution), and perhaps more who may have been executed for the same reason. This didn't happen anywhere else.

Further, Poland was the only country in Eastern Europe that established an underground organization with the specific purpose of rescuing Jews. Zegota (the codename for the Council to Aid the Jews) saved the lives of thousands of Polish Jews during the Holocaust. In Warsaw, for example, Irena Sendlerowa helped smuggle large numbers of Jewish children from the Warsaw Ghetto into safer hands with the intention of returning the children to their parents after the war.)

(That some of the members of Zegota were also avowed anti-Semites, reflects yet again the complexity of this subject and the critical need to distinguish between the Nazi Holocaust and Polish Anti-Semitism, even while we condemn both of these odious realities.)

But as will be elucidated in the points to follow, dividing the world during WWII into three simple categories: **Victims, Perpetrators, or Bystanders** does not do justice to the Poles who are most often relegated to the latter two categories.

6. Judging Indifference

How do we view the large numbers of Poles who did nothing to help the Jews during the Holocaust? The question is a complicated one. Doubtless there were some Poles who were pleased by what the Nazis were doing, or could not care one way or another. They are to be rightfully criticized.

Yet the inaction of other Poles may surely be attributed to fear for their own lives and the safety of their families. How many of us would risk our lives and the lives of our loved ones to save strangers who belonged to another people?¹¹ This is a question we must always ask ourselves before we examine the behavior of others during the Holocaust.

The draconian collective punishment implemented by the Nazis (of which Lidice is but one famous example) was so severe, crushing, brutal and all-encompassing, one cannot over-estimate the level of fear and intimidation that the Polish population must have felt during the war years.

[Five years of non-stop Nazi brutality can deaden the response of some of even the finest people to the plight of others. In the case of Poland, children were often left without parents who were either killed or sent to camps; families were in despair about their children, parents, and siblings. All these factors contributed to depression, despair, a terrible rise in alcoholism and apathy. And, among the youth, a kind of nihilism, or cynicism, making them live for the moment, a moral decadence fueled by alcohol because tomorrow we die. IT]

[Regarding the impact of five years of Nazi rule on Polish indifference to Jews, this attitude is evident from very early in the occupation. By the end of the five-year period, there were almost no Jews left about whom to have an opinion. DS]

7. Comparing Poland's Record with Other European Countries during the Holocaust

The fact that other countries, like Denmark, took a united stand against the Nazis to save their Jewish population cannot be used as evidence of Poland's lack of similar moral character. The Nazis were, for example, far more sympathetic to the Danes - fellow Nordic people - than they were to the Poles, who were of Slavic origin and deemed subhuman by the Nazis. Thus, the penalty in Poland for helping a Jew was death. No such punishment existed in Denmark.

[The Danes did help save the Danish Jews but in the course of World War II deported German Jewish refugees living in Denmark back to Germany and certain death. EZ. Also the help offered by Danes, it should be added, was also often offered at a price - i.e. not out of simple goodwill. EL.] [The occupation of Denmark and Poland is so different that comparing the two is almost senseless. HBS] [Shalmi Barmor adds: Leni Yehil observed that the Danish rescue of Jews came from a sense of the Nazi violation of the rights of the citizens of their democratic state of which all were equal citizens, including Jews. On the other hand, a Dutch citizen who rescued a Jew, did so because of religious or humanistic reasons, not because he/she viewed the Jew as an equal citizen of Holland.]

The Holocaust has a unique history in each country, which often defies easy comparison with other countries. **(In Holland, for example, Anne Frank's**

rescuers, when caught, all survived. In fact, only two men were arrested, one was released because he was in poor health and the other served 18 months in a labor camp. In Poland, every single person in those families would have been killed. Eastern Europe is too often treated as a single block when in fact their records are so varied. Hungary was a German ally, as was Bulgaria. While they were German allies the local Jews were relatively safe. Once Germany occupied Hungary, for instance, then the Jews were deported. Yet in the summer of 1941, Hungary deported many of its foreign Jews: Polish and Russian Jews, refugees from western Europe, as well as Jews who could not readily prove Hungarian citizenship. On August 27 & 28, 1941, detachments of the Einsatzgruppen (mobile killing units) in Kamianets-Podilskyi (a city in western Ukraine, occupied by German forces) carried out mass killings of Jewish deportees from Hungary as well as the local Jewish population. More than 23,600 Jews were murdered, perhaps the first large-scale mass murder in pursuit of the Final Solution. The Bulgarians succeeded in saving Bulgarian Jews, but the Bulgarian police rounded up and deported 11,383 Greek and Yugoslav Jews in Thrace and Macedonia, which Bulgaria had annexed with the assent of the Nazis for being their allies. They all perished in Treblinka. DS & EZ.]

[Italy had a similar record, with the Jews deported only after the Germans took over not while they were allies. Ukraine, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia were quite pro-German (in part because they were anti-Soviet, and because the Germans nurtured their national hopes) and also collaborated a lot in the murder of Jews (the guilt for which is NOT AT ALL lessened by their being anti-Soviet). Yugoslavia has yet a different record. In Western Europe, most people are unaware that the largest SS force (50,000) was the Dutch, and still fewer people are inclined to believe that there was a Scandinavian one. The Norwegians had the original Quisling and considering the small number of Jews and the long border with a neutral state, Sweden, they saved only 50% of their population. The proportion saved in Holland was also very low, and although most of the Dutch Jews were citizens of this country for centuries, over 70% of the Jewish population was annihilated. In Vichy France it was the French police that arrested and rounded up Jews for deportation without any help from the Germans. IT]

[...But it is also true that the French authorities became less enthusiastic to deport Jews as time went on and as information came in regarding the fate of the deportees. The fact that the first deportees were mostly refugees and immigrants eased the French collaboration, just as the fact that the following groups were to be "French" Jews contributed to the decreased enthusiasm to deport them. DS]

[Although Bulgaria originally seemed willing to co-operate with the Nazis and even took active steps to prepare for the deportations, Bulgarian Jewry (with the exception of those in the annexed areas) was ultimately saved thanks to the courageous stance of Dmitri Peshev, a member of the Bulgarian parliament, the opposition of two leading priests and others (including King Boris according to some historians. ER& EZ.]

8. Location of the Major Death Camps

Contrary to an unfortunate and often heard belief, there is no historical evidence that the Nazis located all six of the major death camps in Poland because they knew they could rely on the inherent Anti-Semitism of the Poles to carry out their tasks. In fact, the Nazis located all six of the major death camps in Poland largely because the greatest numbers of Jews lived in Poland and because Poland was at the centre of Europe from a standpoint of transporting Jews to the death camps. **The Nazis purposely did not carry out the murders on their beloved German soil, but rather chose to perpetrate their atrocities in the "unpopulated" "wild" East. Thus the establishment of the camps in (occupied) Poland shows the German contempt and disregard of the Poles. [HBS]**

Further, careless language is often used in describing the six major death camps the Nazis set up in Poland. The correct way of describing the camps is this: "Nazi death camps set up in occupied Poland." It is at best careless and at worst a painful distortion of history to employ the phrase, "Polish death camps". Even if by using that phrase one only means the death camps located in Poland, the usage of the phrase ignores the fact that during the Holocaust Poland simply did not exist, as noted in Point 3 by Dr. Frank Bialystok.

[Auschwitz, for example, was incorporated into the Reich during the war. The Poles were expelled to a 20-30 kilometer belt around the camp which was declared out of bounds and anyone found there shot on sight, and it was, from October 1939 until April 1945, German territory. Until 1942 the vast majority of the prisoners in Auschwitz were Poles. In fact, the camp was originally established by Himmler's order to hold Polish prisoners because there were no longer enough prisons in Poland to hold them all. IT]

(Mr. Dennis Mislner points out that the name Auschwitz was the German name for the town of Oswiecim, but that the town still bears stigma to this day of the name.)

The fact that Majdanek was located so close to Lublin is no indication of the cooperation and/or indifference of the local Poles in the murder of Majdanek's Jews. A commonly heard accusation runs something like this: "The Poles claim they did not know that Jews were being murdered in Majdanek - but look how close they were!! Their homes are practically next to the camps! They knew, and they just didn't care, because it was Jews who were being murdered." The flaw with this argument is this: Of the estimated 80,000 people murdered in Majdanek, besides the Jewish victims, roughly one quarter of the victims were non-Jewish Poles and Russian POWs. The inaction of the local Poles to the murders in Majdanek was, therefore, not due to feigned ignorance and not necessarily due to indifference (though to be sure some were certainly indifferent, if not worse, to the fate of the Jews), but was first and foremost because the Poles were militarily crushed by the Nazis and could not even save their own brothers and sisters, as in the case of Zamosc noted below. (Unlike some Ukrainians, for instance, who volunteered to serve as guards in Nazi concentration camps, Poles never served as guards for the Nazis in any of their concentration camps except in a few working camps at the beginning of the war. See Points 1 & 10.)

[According to some estimates, almost 100,000 of the prisoners in Majdanek were Poles. There was nothing the Poles could do. Lvov to the east was also the site of a terrible prison called the Castle (in the old castle) where hundreds were tortured and executed. Before the Germans arrived there the Soviets used that prison the same way. When the Germans attacked the USSR and the Soviets fled, they murdered all the prisoners. The Germans opened the prison to show the population what the Soviets had done, and they also photographed the scene. Majdanek was just another reminder of their impotence. At one point, after the pacification of Zamosc, a lovely area from where the Germans expelled all the Poles and resettled Germans, the survivors of those massacred were sent to Majdanek or Auschwitz.. This included children of course, some of whom were "considered" as having racial potential and were sent to Germany for re-education and adoption. The Germans actually set up three camps exclusively for Polish children. These were near Lodz (where Jewish doctors treated some of the children). Thousands of children from Zamosc were sent there. The underground found out and some people tried to rescue them when the train stopped briefly in Warsaw. But overall, the Poles could not help these children. In one camp alone, 10,000 of 12,000 children were killed. IT]

9. Who were the Nazis' Co-Conspirators?

One absolutely critical point that is central to any evaluation of the events of the Shoah in Poland is this: **The Nazis did not incorporate the Poles as an integral group/component of the mass murder apparatus.**¹²

Unlike the situation in the Baltics, Belarus and the Ukraine, as well as in Croatia where the local collaborators played an integral and very significant role in the murder of the local Jews, the overwhelming majority of whom were killed locally, and in many if not most cases by the locals themselves; this was not the case in Poland where millions were murdered but not by the Poles (with several exceptions like Jedwabne).

[This decision was not because the Germans thought that the Poles did not want to help kill the Jews but rather because of their negative attitude towards the Poles on racial grounds. The Poles...never had to face the test faced (and failed) by others in Eastern Europe, who to this day have to deal with their own complicity in Holocaust crimes and whose failure to do so will haunt them for generations to come. EZ]

Yet, as some maintain, if the Poles only passed the test because they never had to face the test – since the Nazis didn't **want** them as collaborators - what about the counterfactual question regarding the Jews, i.e How would the Jews have reacted if the Nazis asked them to collaborate in the murder of Poles? Would the Jews have behaved better than the Poles? Would the Jews have had more or less Righteous, more or less collaborators? Would it be fair to say that the only reason the Jews did not participate in the genocide against the Poles is because the Nazis didn't **want** the Jews as collaborators? Plainly not.¹³

However, as Dr. Havi Ben Sasson points out, there was a period of time when Jews *were* put to the test. During a point in 1941, when the Nazis were still in the processing of ghettoizing the Jews, but not deporting them to death camps (which had yet to be completed), the Nazis were deporting non-Jewish Poles to labor camps. Some of the Poles, to escape deportations, donned the Yellow Star, to avoid detection. The Jews invariably did not point them out to the Nazis. However, in similar instances throughout the war, more than a few Poles did fail the test, and did deliver Jews into the hands of the Nazis.

Thus, perhaps one may claim, when faced with a similar set of circumstances, the Jews (at least in the above mentioned period of time) did not collaborate with the Nazis to expose the Poles to them, while, throughout the war, some Poles did hand over Jews to the Nazis. However, we must again refer back to a point made

earlier in the paper, which is: *Most Poles neither hindered nor assisted the Nazis in their efforts to murder the Jews.*

Whether large numbers of Jews (or anyone else for that matter) would have risked their lives (and their lives of their families) to save non-Jewish Poles is a question no-one can possibly answer.^{14 15} Thus, as will be referred to later, instead of condemning the Poles for not producing more “Righteous Among the Nations”¹⁶, it is more appropriate to:

- *honor and revere* those Poles who were among the “Righteous Among the Nations”
- *understand* those who did not intervene, who, while they had compassion for the plight of the Jews, were afraid for their own lives
- *criticize* those who were indifferent to the fate of Polish Jewry
- *criticize severely* those who were positively inclined toward the destruction of Polish Jewry
- *harshly condemn* those who actively collaborated with the Nazis in the murder of Jews.

Let us now return to the classification noted above, **Victims, Perpetrators, or Bystanders**. If we look at the Jewish experience during the Holocaust, without a doubt the word victim would be the most accepted term applied to them. Yes, there were Jews in the Holocaust who rescued others, or who could have helped others and did not, or who actually committed cruel and immoral acts. But these were by far the small minority. Most Jews were simply not in a position to rescue others – and most Jews (whether they survived or not) were victims.

Yet, when we turn to the question of Poland and the Holocaust, all Poles are all too easily placed in the category of bystanders, or even worse, perpetrators. While there of course major differences between the two groups, like the Jews above, most Poles were certainly not perpetrators, or even bystanders, as they were simply not in a position to rescue others – even of their own families. Most Poles like most Jews (whether they survived or not) were victims.

Individual exception aside, the terms perpetrators and bystanders should never be applied to Poles as a whole. Nazi Germany was the perpetrator, and to them alone, as a whole, must this label be assigned. As for the term bystanders, again, individual exception aside, this term should never be applied to Poles as a whole. The term bystander is more fitting for nations like those in the western world who turned a blind eye to the suffering of the Jews of Europe, and who firmly shut their gates to possible Jewish emigration, thus sealing the fate of European Jewry; or to the Russian army who stood by, on the opposite side of the Vistula River, while the Nazis brutally suppressed the 1944 Warsaw Uprising, resulting in the deaths of tens of thousands of Polish fighters and hundreds of thousands of Polish civilians.

The categories of “**Victims, Perpetrators, or Bystanders**” while helpful in some ways is also an oversimplification. In the first place, other categories such as “Rescuers”, “Resisters” and “Collaborators” are missing. Also, there are those who might end up in all three categories. Most importantly, as noted above, the guilt implying category of “Bystander” seems to suggest that all those who did not rescue Jews during the Holocaust were non-empathizing bystanders who simply “stood by” and chose not to help, much as someone might drive by the scene of an accident without stopping to help. But, in Poland, most “bystanders” (during the years of WWII) would have had to risk their very lives and those of their families to save Jews, a condition the word “bystanders” does not necessarily convey.

10. Poland Under Communist Rule

A) The Jew as “Communist” in Poland

For millennia, Jews have been accused of a multitude of sins. In the 20th century, Jews were simultaneously accused of being greedy and rapacious capitalists and godless revolutionary communists.

With regard to relations between Poles and Jews, the charge is often made that “Jews were communists” (Zydokomuna) and co-operated with the Soviet authorities in its brutal crackdown on virtually every aspect of Polish society during and after WWII.¹⁷ This collaboration, in the eyes of the accusers, both justified the negative image of Jews in Poland as well as somehow “explained” or perhaps even legitimized the attacks carried out by Poles on Jews both before, during and after the war.

The response to this argument includes the following points:

Yes, there were Jews who committed unseemly acts during the Soviet occupation. But the number of Jews who collaborated with the Soviets was a small minority (proportionally their numbers were equivalent to the Poles if not less), and their co-operation was based on ideological (i.e. Communist) or opportunistic values rather than any tradition of persecuting Poles. (The same may be said about the few Jews who might have co-operated with the Nazis in the ghettos, but who did so for opportunistic reasons, and not because of any shared ideology or Anti-Semitic feelings.) Also Jews themselves were the second largest group deported by the Soviets, who were especially interested in harassing religious, nationalistic (i.e. Zionist) and/or "capitalistic" Jews. Persecution of Jews by Poles, on the other hand, was certainly more commonly rooted in Anti-Semitic ideas and values prevalent in Poland and Europe, even if there were instances where such persecution stemmed from solely opportunistic motivations.

[Dr. David Silberklang adds: It is important to note that the vast majority of Jews (like most Poles) were not communist; they even feared communism. At the same time, most Jews in Poland recognized the Soviets as the lesser of two evils. That perspective is what led many Jews in these eastern territories to heave a sigh of relief at the Soviet occupation (given the alternative), and that is what led many hundreds of thousands of Poles, in addition to some 300,000 Jews, to flee from the German-occupied areas to the areas under Soviet control.]

While identifiably Jewish individuals from Poland became involved with the Communist party after WWII, they did not do so as "Jews", and, per capita, their numbers were not any higher than others from the same social class in Poland. The contention heard that Jews co-operated with the Soviets against the Poles in the early war years during the Soviet occupation of Poland, thus justifying acts of revenge by local citizens on them after Operation Barbarossa (when Nazi Germany invaded the Soviet Union on June 22, 1941) is groundless for many reasons, not the least of which is that it confuses Jewish Communist involvement post WWII (which as noted above was not "Jewish" and was no higher than others in their class) with war-time events. [HBS]

No doubt, there were Jews involved in the Communist party in Poland - as there were Poles of Christian origin. In the higher ranks of the party, especially in the post-war era, there were significant numbers of Jews in positions of power (or at least individuals of Jewish descent, bearing Jewish names). The number of Jews (at least in name), it has been noted, seemed to increase the higher up one looked in the chain of authority. But, this is only part of the picture, and a misleading part as well.

Let us begin this discussion by asking, in the first place, why would Jews be attracted to Communism?

Certainly, the concept of social justice and equality, a frequent biblical motif, is also a cornerstone of the Communist movement. (The creator of the descriptive phrase “non-Jewish Jew”, Polish born Isaac Deutscher, suggested that Judaism could now disappear since its greatest contribution, the biblical ideal of equality, had already been accepted.)

Further, the lack of equality for Jews in their society, helped spark interest in a movement that offered (or at least claimed to offer) complete equality and universal brotherhood, regardless of one’s race or religious antecedents.¹⁸

Yet the vast majority of Jews never did embrace Communism – and in fact were overwhelmingly hostile to it, for the following reasons:

On a practical level all the observances of a traditional Jew were incompatible with Communism. On a philosophical level the following issues also arose to all but the most unidentified Jew:

- Communism denied a belief in God, which, for most Jews, was a central tenet of the Jewish faith
- Communism opposed the concept of private property. Traditional Judaism, while extolling the virtue of charity, has tremendous respect for private property, and countless treatises deal with this subject in great detail. (A famous Talmudic passage reads: “One who says, ‘*what’s yours is mine and what’s mine is yours*’ is a fool.”)
- The Jewish people have traditionally believed they have been assigned a special place or mission or role in the world. Virtually every stream within the Jewish spectrum of belief and practice advocates a unique or specific purpose for the existence of the Jewish people. Related to this are concepts like that of the Chosen People (which has various interpretations, from the minority, more elitist interpretation, to the majority view, that understands the concept as referring to greater obligations), and the prophetic challenge for the Jewish people to be a “Light unto the Nations”. These concepts are, of course, not consistent with Communist ideology.
- Communism was incompatible with Zionism, a movement that attracted large numbers of Jewish adherents in the first half of the 20th century, from both secular and traditional ranks.

(Certainly some of the above reasons would also apply to Polish Catholics and any other peoples with strong religious or national attachments.)

So, whom did Communism appeal to? To someone who was willing to abandon their Jewish identity (whether Orthodox or less traditional), to someone who was not interested in Zionism, and to someone who was not afraid to embrace a utopian, radical, revolutionary, new ideology that preached universal brotherhood and an end to anti-Semitism. That a minority of some young Jews were attracted to Communism, and that some even rose to positions of authority in this structure, should be no surprise.

But, since the very beginnings of Communism, the vast majority Jews have always and firmly rejected Communism. Poland is no exception to this rule, pre-WWII¹⁹, during WWII, and post WWII. ²⁰

Historical factors also contributed to the movement of some Jews toward the ranks of Communism during WWII. The fact that the Nazis, the arch-fascists, were hell-bent on destroying all Jews, meant that the Soviet Communists, were the “lesser of two evils”, when faced with the alternative, as Dr. Silberklang noted above.

Further, hundreds of thousands of Polish Jews returned to Polish soil with the conquering Russian army and after the conclusion of WWII. The Soviets, who did not trust the local Poles (they even murdered most of the local Polish Communist leadership) granted leadership positions to many of these returning Jews, who by virtue of their “outsider” status in Polish society could be more trusted (the Soviets felt). These leaders were Jewish in name only (they did not identify themselves as Jews), did not practice Judaism, did not come to Communism as Jews, or because of any Jewish beliefs, were actually anti-Jewish, and often persecuted Polish Jews themselves. To be sure, in fact, some, and perhaps most, were not even Communists at all, but rather, opportunists. Given their recent experience in the Holocaust, it is understandable (but not necessarily justifiable) why some Jews accepted positions within the Communist structure that might ensure their preservation or safety.

But again, here it must be restated: The vast majority of Jews who returned to post-war Poland were not Communists and never joined the Communist party. The tragedy is the visibility of Jews in positions of Communist leadership in Poland (by Jews who wanted, more than anything else, to hide from their Jewish identity) further reinforced Anti-Semitic stereotypes by the Poles who were suffering under the brutal, cynical and manipulative rule of the Soviets.

Further, the Jewish victims of attacks by Poles on Jews during the war (Jedwabne) or after the war (Kielce) were almost always certainly not Communists. When random Jews were dragged off a train and murdered, or intercepted and executed at the Polish border on their way to Palestine (as in the

case of Novy Targ) or murdered in the numerous other post-war cases where between 1500-3000 Jews lost their lives, it is doubtful that any of them went to their deaths shouting "Long live Stalin!"

Thus to summarize the response to the accusation that Jews were Communists:

Most Jews in Poland were not Communists.

Most Communists in Poland were not Jews.

Most Jewish victims of attacks by Poles were not Communists.

There was no "Jewish conspiracy" aligned with the Soviet Communists to undermine Poland.

There were Jews in positions of leadership in the Communist Party in Poland – but they were not practicing Jews, and did not come to those positions because of Jewish values or teachings. Poles had right to be angry at the Polish Communist representatives, of whom many were Jewish, but not to associate those Communist leaders (who were Jewish) with the vast majority of Jews who had no truck with the Communist movement and themselves, like the Poles, suffered greatly under their rule. (Communist leaders in Russia and Poland, Jewish or otherwise, were just as likely to murder Jews as any other category of people.)

In short, Polish Jewish Communist leaders "**had nothing Jewish about them except their anthropology**" as Shalmi Barmor has so aptly stated. True, to this a Polish patriot may argue that those Poles who attacked Jews, were also not expressing true "Polish" values. And to that point, there certainly were Poles who murdered Jews and/or plundered their homes, who were, indeed, simply 'bandits', with no ideological motives whatsoever. But the climate of Anti-Semitism in Poland did make it easier for such attacks to take place, and for these acts to go unpunished. Further, there were Anti-Semitic incidents where the perpetrators did connect their actions with their "Polish" patriotism (no doubt a gross distortion of true Polish values, the same Polish patriot would contend). In the case of Jewish leaders within the Communist structure, the acts of violence they perpetrated against the local Polish population were never associated with Jewish values.

The climate of the post WWII era must also be assessed in this context. The Poles had just suffered the tremendous devastation of WWII. First over-run by the Nazis and the Soviets, then completely crushed by the Nazis, and now once again, they were under the brutal rule of the Soviets. Their freedoms were yet again being curtailed, their religion under attack, private property threatened, relatives, friends and neighbors were being murdered or deported to Siberia – and now the Jews are returning.

Mix this atmosphere of fear and desperation, with age-old Anti-Semitic stereotypes, with hatred for the Soviets and their cruel policies, with some Jews in visible positions of power in the Soviet Communist hierarchy – and, in 1946, you have what Shalmi Barmor describes as the culmination of the highest point of Polish hostility to its Jewish population, perhaps during her entire history.

B) The Impact of Communism on Poland's View of the Treatment of its Jewish Citizens

Poland's victimization continued after WWII, with the Soviets ruling Poland with an iron fist for the next four decades, until the advent of the Gorbachev era. Poland's (valid) self-image as an innocent victim of Nazi and Soviet crimes, made it more difficult for her to realize that, at times, she has not just been a victim, but also an aggressor, when it came to her treatment of her Jews.

[An important psychological factor is that the Poles had to contend with a denial of their ordeal. The Soviets would not allow a memorial to the 1944 Warsaw Uprising, for example, or to Katyn or any other Soviet crimes; they would not recognize any of the Polish armed forces that fought on virtually every front with the allies (the fourth largest Allied army, incomparably larger than any other European country). And the Soviets accused them of being collaborators. This from a country that was a German ally by signed treaty from August 1939 until June 1941. A people who are fighting to preserve their own history were focused only on that. Any accusations to the contrary sounded too much like the Soviet line. IT]

Yet in contemporary Poland, some nationalist historians have a "problem" acknowledging that some of the heroes of the AK (the Polish Home Army) underground took part in murdering Jews. [HBS]

[In general on this point, Polish society was not as tightly controlled for all those years as Soviet society. The literature and historiography was staunchly nationalistic with a communist bent, but the nationalistic element was clearly there (e.g., 6 million Poles killed during the war), as were its antisemitic accoutrements. We cannot ignore the government-sponsored waves of Anti-Semitism in 1956 and 1968 that led to the emigration of tens of thousands of Polish Jews and brought about the final decimation of the community. [DS]

Today, Poland is only beginning to finally examine its own history in a profound manner and to ask critical and painful questions. Until the breakdown of the Communist rule in Poland, both the government and the Church treated history as sacred territory that could not be touched, unless it was mobilized for the “party” line.

The West boasts a long history of historiography, i.e. where not only is history studied, but the way we look at history, why and how history was written in a certain way, and the many different perspectives that inform the divergent viewpoints.

This process is only just beginning in Poland.[SBM]

11. Poland’s Record Before, During and After the Shoah: Fair and Unfair Criticism

Despite all that was written in the above points (1 through 10), there a number of critical statements that are valid concerning Poland and many other eastern European countries as well:

A) Before, during and after the war, there were high levels of Anti-Semitism throughout Eastern Europe. The Nazis did not overly worry about a popular uprising from the local populations over their murderous actions toward the Jews. **[Your point does not go quite far enough in spelling out prewar Polish Anti-Semitism. The government and society in the 1930s was openly Anti-Semitic, brutally discriminated against Jews, and openly sought the Jews' departure from the country. DS]** During WWII there were local citizens who actively collaborated with the murder of their Jewish neighbors. Lithuania had an especially high rate of murder of Jews by members of the local population. But examples exist in all eastern European countries, with Jedwabne being Poland's most infamous case. To Poland's credit, when the facts about Jedwabne came to light in recent years, the country faced the issue head on, and accepted

responsibility for what occurred. **[You correctly reflect the Polish government's handling of the Jedwabne story, but not the society's handling. The debate goes on, and there are many in Poland who advocate the right-nationalist position that either the massacre never happened, or else the Jews got their just desserts for their "collaboration" with the Soviet regime. In Poland almost any discussion of Jewish "collaboration" with the Soviets is a cover for such right-wing anti-semitic positions. DS. Reactions by some in Poland to Jan T. Gross' new book *Fear* validate this point. HBS]**

B) There were others among the local populations who were only too glad to see the Jews disappear from their midst.

C) After the war, thousands of Jews were murdered throughout Europe upon their return. In Poland, an estimated 1500 Jews or more were murdered during civil strife, in large part because they were Jews. **[In the large majority of the cases the cause was simply that the victims were Jews. One of the motivations for this violence was resentment at the possibility that Jews might reclaim property and belongings that had been taken over by Poles during the Nazi occupation. DS.]**

D) Anti-Semitism continued to exist in Eastern Europe and Europe for many years after the Holocaust and still exists today, as it does continue to exist throughout the world.

However, it is unwarranted to claim that items B,C & D may be applied to most of the people of Poland. It is fair for us to criticize Poles - and the world for that matter - for the high levels of Anti-Semitism that existed before, during and after the war and it is fair for us to be critical of the actions of a minority of Poland's citizens who acted dishonorably during this time period.²¹ **However, it is unfair for us to lay the blame for the Holocaust in Poland on the Polish people.** As already stated, this is confusing the Nazi inspired and implemented Holocaust with Polish Anti-Semitism.

We can neither whitewash Poland of her past history of Anti-Semitism nor can we forgive the actions of those Poles who actively collaborated with or supported the Nazi persecution of Poland's Jews. This would be a grave insult to the memory of those Jews who suffered at the hand of Polish anti-Semites and Nazi collaborators.

At the same time, we cannot convict all Poles for the sin of Anti-Semitism nor can we, in general, lay the blame for the Holocaust on the Polish people. This would be a tragic insult to the memory of the thousands of Polish "Righteous Among the Nations" and those who assisted them, who risked and sometimes sacrificed their lives to save their fellow Jews. And it would be unfair to the thousands of

other sympathetic Poles who were unable or simply too terrified to assist the Jews because of the Nazi reign of terror. It would also be a grave injustice to the millions of innocent Poles who themselves were victims of Nazi torture and murder.

We must also understand that opinions have changed. Many young Polish people today are eager to embrace Poland's Jewish past, and to meet their Jewish peers from around the world. Further, Poland is a staunch ally of the state of Israel and has made a commitment to facilitate the establishment of memorials throughout Poland which reflect and honor the Jewish nature of the Holocaust.²²

12. The “Uniqueness” of the Holocaust & Honoring all Victims of Genocide

Besides for the events of WWII, the 20th century has, sadly, seen no shortage of genocides - Armenia, Cambodia and Rwanda being the clearest examples. In addition, the Nazis committed genocide against a number of groups besides for the Jews, with the Poles and the Gypsies (Roma and Sinti) being the most often cited examples.²³

Yet, as many others have said, there is no point in comparing the suffering of the victims. Jews were murdered in gas chambers, Ukrainians were starved to death on their farms, Poles were executed in town squares, Rwandans were hacked to death with machetes in their homes, Cambodians were shot in the fields in the countryside, Africans were thrown overboard on slave-trader ships in the Atlantic during the Middle Passage from Africa to the Americas - but how can one possibly measure who suffered more, and for what purpose?²⁴

But surely there is merit in examining the many parallels and distinctions to be drawn between each act of genocide. These include the historical roots of each genocide, the motivations of those who carried out the genocide, the methods in which it was implemented, the proportion of those who perished that were intended for destruction, the trauma caused by the impact of the genocide, and the ways in which the trauma was dealt with in the aftermath of the genocide. For example, regarding the murder of Poles and Ukrainians in the first half of the last century - the factors that led to their persecution have largely disappeared. But the racist ideological prejudice against Jews - the very kind Hitler espoused - can still be found on Neo-Nazi websites, in extremist Islamist rhetoric, and in other subtler forms of anti-Semitism.

Still, despite the large number of genocides in recent history, there can be no doubt that, in the words of one expert, “the Holocaust has become the “master narrative” for suffering, shaping discussions about every present conflict over genocide and human rights”.

But is the Holocaust different in a substantial way from the above examples of genocide? Does the Holocaust warrant more recognition, study and commemoration than the other examples listed above? How does one account for the enormous visibility the Holocaust seems to have gained over the last number of decades? ²⁵

Certainly, at first glance, there are aspects that seem to make the Holocaust stand out, even though all genocides are unique in their own way. The Holocaust is “uniquely, unique” as some have described it, because the number of victims is staggering, as was the machinery of death created by the Nazis in pursuit of their goal. The sheer efficiency, the usage of modern technology to create assembly lines of death, where the “raw materials” were Jewish men, woman and children, and the “finished product” was ash (and the side products were plundered Jewish possessions and bodies (gold teeth, hair etc.), cannot help but cause one to shudder. Perhaps, these are the factors that have caused the Holocaust to symbolize the level of ultimate evil to which humanity can descend and to garner the attention it has received.²⁶

More importantly, one may argue, is that conceptually the Holocaust was different than all other genocides.

Here it is useful to draw upon differentiation I once heard from Professor Yehuda Bauer about the distinction between *mass murder*, *genocide* and *Holocaust*. *Mass murder* is when large numbers of people are killed by a government or other force. *Genocide* is when mass murder takes place on an ongoing basis, with the goal of destroying the culture and/or political existence of another people. *Holocaust*, unprecedented before in human history, is: mass murder, plus genocide.... plus the attempt to annihilate the existence of an entire group of people from the face of the earth. This is what the Jews faced at the hands of the Nazis, and this had never happened before in history.

Prof. Gordon Dueck perhaps put it best: “When I emphasize the Jewish victims of Nazism, it is not because a Jewish life is worth more than a non-Jewish life—it’s because, in the context of the Nazi worldview, a Jewish life was worth *less* than a non-Jewish life. Antisemitism wasn’t ancillary to Nazism. It was at the very heart of it.”

What makes the Holocaust “unique”, in Bauer’s words, is the combination of all three of these conditions:

- a) it was driven by ideological rather than pragmatic (land, resources etc.) reasons
 - b) it was global in reach
 - c) the intended target was the entire Jewish people (from infancy to old age).
- (The Nazis were looking for Jews, for all Jews.)^{27 28}

When one understands this, one comes face to face with the utter irrationality of the Holocaust. Most genocides involve a dispute over land, resources, or a desire to exploit or enslave another group or people for obvious material gain or to forcefully implement a specific political system. The Nazi genocide against the Jews was a pseudo scientific and quasi-religious belief, which maintained the very redemption of the world relied upon the “extermination” (and only “extermination”) of every last Jew, to finally and totally rid the world of this contemptible ‘virus’.

No course of action of any kind by the victim – supplication, conversion, bribery, slavery or exile – could ever suffice or placate the Nazi agenda. Nazi Anti-Semitism and its concomitant racial theories had only one ultimate solution to the Jewish problem: “The Final Solution” – mass death for the entire Jewish people.

No other mass murder or genocide was ever conceived or implemented on the basis of such an absolutist maniacal world view.

In light of all this, Yehuda Bauer argues that, on the continuum, the Holocaust is the most extreme form of genocide and should be the starting point of any attempt to understand genocide - not because Holocaust victims suffered more than others, but because of its unprecedented nature.

The Holocaust, perhaps more than any other genocide, teaches us - warns us - that absent of restraint, humanity’s potential for evil is without limit, beyond our worst fears and even beyond our wildest imagination.

Of course, the deaths of victims of *mass murder*, *genocide* and *Holocaust* are all unjust – and must be mourned by the world community.

But this does not obligate a Jewish person, or a Rwandan or a Cambodian or a Polish Catholic is obligated to give equal wait in their own personal memorial observances to other people’s respective genocides. If a child attends the funeral of his/her own grandparent – and not someone else’s grandparent – this does not mean the child is devaluing the worth of someone else’s relative. It is, after all, natural for someone to mourn the loss of a family member to a greater extent than it would be to mourn the loss of a stranger. So too is it expected for a people to mourn, in a more intense fashion, the loss of their co-religionists.

In other words, as members of our respective groups, we will naturally mourn more for the losses of our own group members. But, as members of the human family, we should also reserve emotional space to mourn the loss of life of innocent people of all races and backgrounds.

Children of Holocaust survivors, and the extended Jewish people, still deeply mourn the loss of six million of their ancestors, and do so in a very personal way. But, as citizens of the world, we must also commemorate the tragic losses of so many other innocent victims belonging to other peoples, during WWII, and during other periods of history.

When viewing the Holocaust, besides for the Jewish populations of eastern Europe, the different groups of people the Nazis victimized during the WWII were many and varied – the disabled, the Poles, the Roma, the Sinti, gays and lesbians, Jehovah's witnesses and countless other innocent civilians.

But Nazis made the elimination of the Jews their highest, most urgent priority.

Yet, even as we contend that the Holocaust, in its conception and implementation, was different from all other genocides, our tradition teaches us that "All humanity is created in the image of God". Or as Lieutenant-General Romeo Dallaire, French Canadian senator and humanitarian, reminds us: "*No human is more human than any other.*"

Here is the main point: The victims of the various genocides throughout history may have perished for different reasons and under different circumstances – and this indeed is worthy of examination - but their lives were equally, infinitely and immeasurably sacred.

Our study of genocide should lead to the understanding of the fundamental equality of all members of the human family, their right to justice, freedom, and dignity, and to a place of greater compassion and empathy for all humanity. This most difficult of subjects, in the words of Canadian writer Ruth Ozeki (spoken in another context but surely applicable here), should cause us to reflect on the impermanence and preciousness of life, the fragility of the world, the extraordinary beauty of all living things, and our interdependence and interconnectedness. Ultimately, it should lead us to opening our hearts to all people, to resolving to do our best to end suffering in the world and to live together in peace.

13. Psychological Factors Influencing the View of One's Own Historical Narrative

Those who are critical of Poles who try to minimize Polish Anti-Semitism, and focus on only the positive aspects of Jewish life in Poland, should realize this: The act of denial of Anti-Semitism is often rooted in psychological causes, the need to see one's own country and history in the best light possible. It is not necessarily based on Anti-Semitic foundations or a need to deny compassion to

the Jewish people. In other words, you can be Polish, love the Jews, and still insist (wrongly of course) that Poland was a veritable “heaven on earth” for the Jewish people.

In a recent conversation with a prominent Polish figure, the following nuance was added to this discussion. It is understandable why some Poles emphasize the role of the Righteous among the Nations and ignore the past misdeeds of their fellow compatriots. If one is a moral, upstanding person, he suggested, the natural tendency is to look for role models and inspirational examples of goodness in one’s own culture. Of course this does not justify turning a blind eye to the truths of history, he added. ^{29 30}

14. Pilgrimages to Poland

Since the late 1980s, well over 100,000 Jewish visitors, mostly in the younger age bracket, have traveled through Poland on organized educational trips, where the Holocaust is a central focus of the visit.

Yet, on many of these trips, other critically important subjects are unfortunately neglected.

These are:

- A) The Pre-War History of European Jewry**
- B) Poland: The World’s Largest Jewish Graveyard?**
- C) Contact with the local Polish Jewish Community**
- D) Dialogue with Polish (non-Jewish) peers.**

A) The History of European Jewry: “Not only the Shoah”

The late Mr. Dennis Mislser correctly stated that the vast majority of Jews, American in particular, lack any real knowledge of Polish/Jewish history. He often described them as thinking "Jews came to Poland in 1938".

The multi-century long history of Jews in Poland is among the richest and most vibrant of any country in all of Europe. Certainly all educational programs that teach the history of the Holocaust in Poland, must also teach about the richness and diversity of Jewish life that once existed there.

Viewing the sites of the destruction of European Jewry in Poland is rightly a central component of any Holocaust education trip to Poland.

Yet, in order to best honor the memory of the victims of the Shoah, the focus must not only be on the evil of the tragedy that befell the victims. Students should also be taught about Jewish life that flourished before the Shoah in all its diversity and vibrancy, and about the courage of those who resisted Nazi evil during WWII.

We best honor the memory of the victims of the Shoah by remembering not just their deaths, but also their lives, the values they stood for, and the culture amidst which they thrived.³¹

Learning about pre-Holocaust figures such as Rabbi Moshe Isserlis, the Baal Shem Tov, Moses Mendelsohn, Glueckel of Hamlin, Mauricy Gottlieb, Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch, Theodor Herzl, Rabbi Israel Salanter, Ludwig Zamenhof, Rosa Luxemborg, Sholom Aleichem, Franz Kafka, Y.L. Peretz, Sarah Shnerer, the Chafetz Chaim, Rabbi Meir Shapiro, Sigmund Freud... – barely touches upon the depths of the richness of pre-war European Jewish life. Learning about war time figures such as Janusz Korczak, Emmanuel Ringelblum, Mordechai Aneliewitz, Rabbi Ephraim Oshry, Chana Szenesh, Abba Kovner...- again barely skims the surface of the untold number of heroic figures whose courageous biographies are essential to any study of the Holocaust. Complex figures such as Mordechai Chaim Rumkowski and Rudolf Kastner are also part of the landscape of Holocaust education.

It has been said that six millions Jews were not murdered in the Holocaust, but one was murdered, followed by another one, then another one. One by one, until six million individuals were murdered. As important as it is to emphasize the six million individual deaths in the Shoah, it is as critical to study the individual six million lives that existed, that thrived, that laughed and cried, that experienced joy and sadness, in pre-war Europe.

We best honor the memory of the victims of the Shoah by remembering not just their deaths, but also their lives, and the values they stood for. We best fight against the legacy of Nazi tyranny, by remembering those – both Jewish and non-Jewish - who had the courage to oppose the Nazis, and by incorporating their heroic examples in our own often challenge filled world.

(The Museum of the History of Polish Jews currently being built in Warsaw will serve as an important educational resource for the purpose outlined above.)

B) Poland: The World's Largest Jewish Graveyard?

“Poland is the world's largest Jewish graveyard” is a statement often heard in certain circles.

The pronouncement can suggest the following negative inferences:

-Most of Polish Jewry and indeed Europe's Jews were murdered on Polish soil – which somehow singles out Poland (more than any other nation or people) with respect to this heinous historical fact.

-There is nothing else to see in Poland except for abandoned and desecrated graveyards and death camps.

-There is no Jewish life in Poland today to speak of, and it is both pointless and futile to attempt any renewal of Jewish life in the above mentioned 'graveyard.'"

All of the above inferences are, of course, offensive to both Jews living in Poland today as well as the general Polish community.

Yes, most of European Jewry was murdered on Polish soil, but that was not the fault of the local population, who should not be tarred by the crime of the Nazi Germans. Yes, there are many graveyards and sites of former death camps in Poland – but there are also many well preserved and restored sites of interest to Jewish people, many well maintained cemeteries of important historical and religious interest, large numbers of significant monuments and memorials, as well as a country with its own fascinating history, natural wonders, and vibrant cultural life. And, finally, there is a small but growing Jewish community in Poland, which has the right to exist and flourish as much as any other Jewish community in the world. (See next point.)

C) Jewish Life in Poland Today

Attention and respect must be paid to the revival of Jewish life in Poland today. Many Jews cannot imagine why other Jews would want to participate in a revival of Jewish life in Poland, after the tragedy of the Shoah, which took place on so much of its territory. Poland is an inherently Anti-Semitic country, they argue, so why don't they move to Israel, they reason, or at least to America? Looking at the evidence of history, however, Poland is no more (or less) inherently anti-Semitic than many other countries where Jews presently reside... But surely Jewish Poles have just as much right to build a vibrant Jewish community in Poland, as do Jews in, say, France, England or Hungary.

The Jewish community today in Poland is teeming with vibrant activity: Its population is made up of different religious groups, and includes rabbis, writers, intellectuals, academics, artists, and musicians, as well as students discovering their Jewish identity. New Jewish institutions and cultural programs continue to be established: Jewish schools, Jewish book fairs and musical

festivals, as well as new museums dedicated to the celebration of Jewish heritage in Poland, have all been established in the last few 20 years. These developments are a testament to a community that is growing in confidence and creativity.³²

The history of Jews in Communist post-war Poland is a fascinating and complex one – as is the present renewal of Jewish life and culture in Poland today. What does the future hold for the Jewish community of Poland? It is doubtful it will again rise to the heights of its pre-war glory – but it is up to the local Polish Jewish community to write the next chapters of their community's unfolding revival. The least we can do is support their efforts, as we would with any Jewish community in the world.

D) Dialogue with Polish Youth

It is especially important for Jewish groups traveling to Poland today meet with their peers during the time they are in the country. Only with face to face meetings can we hope to dispel the image of the "other", that so often, people who have never met, conjure up of each other.

Polish and Jewish scholars of good faith may have differences in opinion concerning the often difficult history of the relationship between Poland and her Jewish populations.

But there can be doubt that, whatever the challenges of the past may have been, the youth of today have an opportunity to create a new, harmonious and equitable relationship. We owe it to the next generation of both our cultures to allow this new relationship to be established, to grow, and to flourish.

One telling anecdote illustrates this point. On a recent trip to Poland, after engaging in dialogue with a group of eager Polish students, one Canadian Jewish university student rose to say, "I came to Poland not wanting to like the Poles – but, after meeting you, I can no longer feel this way."³³

Some quotes and thoughts to keep in mind and to share when you visit Poland with a group of young people:

"We did not bring you here to teach you to hate, but to teach you what evil can really do in the world". Gene Greenzweig, March of the Living Leader.

Rabbi Shlomo Carlebach visited Poland in 1989. When he arrived at the airport, he was asked what he hoped to do in the country. He said: *"I hope to shake the hand of every Polish man, woman and child."*

Rabbi Yitzchak of Vorky states: The Biblical verse reads, "And Joseph's brothers saw him from afar.. (**Genesis 37:18**)", before they plotted to kill him. Why do we need to know they saw Joseph from afar? Rabbi Yitzchak of Vorky explains that Joseph's brothers only sought to do evil to him, because "*they saw him from afar.*"

"You don't hate them?, asked one of the students (concerning an atrocity that took place against a group of Polish Jews during the Holocaust) to Nate Leipziger, a Holocaust survivor from Poland. He answered: "*There is a difference between holding them responsible and hating. I don't hate, because hate destroys the one who does the hating.*"

We often talk about the importance of *memory* on visits to Holocaust sites in Eastern Europe. *But how do we - who visit these sites - want to be remembered by those who live in the places we visit?*³⁴

"No human is more human than any other." Lieutenant-General Romeo Dallaire, French Canadian senator and humanitarian. As head of the UN peacekeeping force in Rwanda, he tried to prevent the genocide that took place there in 1994.

14. Final Thoughts

In the award-winning documentary, *Hiding and Seeking*, Menachem Daum, the main protagonist in the film, asks his survivor father what he has learned from the Holocaust. "Not to trust a gentile, even after he is dead," is his father's response (connecting that opinion with his experience with Poles during the Holocaust.) The son (whose own in-laws were saved by Polish Righteous Among the Nations) seeks to shield his own children from assimilating his father's harsh (and to his mind unjustified) views.

In the book, *Poland, What Do I Have to Do with Thee, Essays without Prejudice*, Rafael Sharf talks about Poles who were heard to have remarked after WWII, that at least Hitler did Poland the favor of ridding them of its Jews.

How do each of our own communities - Polish and Jewish - respond to those who harbor such extreme views from within our own ranks? And how we deal with others who hold perhaps less radical, but nonetheless, morally objectionable views about the "other"?

It is not the intention of this paper to lecture the Poles on how they are to deal with these issues, but the following developments are to be encouraged:

* an honest confrontation with their own history, which neither denies or excuses the less salutary elements of Poland's past³⁵

- * an analysis acknowledging but not overstating the positive aspects of Poland's relations with her Jewish population
- * an understanding that their own roles as victims did not preclude them from, at times, being persecutors themselves

On the Jewish side, we have our own work to do... as is evidenced by the survivor's views noted above, conceptions that are no doubt shared by others.

We may speculate that the survivor's life experiences with Poles - obviously bitter ones - have led him to such negative views, opinions which may have been reinforced by his cultural peer group. Because he is a survivor, should we grant him a measure of understanding for his bitterness? Perhaps. But, like the son in the film, we must educate our children in a different path, to teach them to understand that there are good and bad among all people, that our tradition teaches that all humanity was created *b'tzelem elohim* (in the image of God) and that all members of the human family have infinite value and potential for goodness and holiness.

And we must challenge our own people, our own community leaders and rabbis, students and teachers, when they move from rightful condemnation of Anti-Semitism to expressions of intolerance and prejudice against entire groups of people. Just because we have been victims or racism ourselves (perhaps the world's pre-eminent example), this does not justify - or inoculate us from - our own ability to slip into the all too familiar trap of generalizing about the other.³⁶

And how do we confront the real Anti-Semitism that still exists in the world - even today, even in countries like Poland, for example? By reaching out across communal lines, by establishing dialogue between the younger members of the Polish and Jewish communities, by rightfully combating expressions of Anti-Semitism, without descending into wholesale condemnation of the other.

In Jewish sources, from the times of the Talmud to the era of the Chasidic movement, we find a classic struggle between the values of 'peace' and 'truth'. Obviously both values are to be cultivated and cherished. But what happens if they come into conflict, if in order to achieve peace, you must avoid truth, and in order to be truthful you must give up peace?

What if the difficult 'truth' of our collective past is so harsh that encountering it can only put an end to any hope of 'peace'ful relations? Which do we sacrifice - the past or the present/future?

In looking at the issue of Polish-Jewish dialogue, it seems to me that if each community starts from the position of trying to make their side look as good as

possible, and the other side look as evil as possible - our efforts to find both truth and common ground - peace - will be doomed to failure.

On the other hand, if both the Jewish and Polish communities start from the premise of trying to build bridges, to usher in a new era of respect and recognition for each other, then perhaps we can overcome the past, even as we confront the often harsh truths of earlier times, no matter how difficult the history we both have shared.

In this way, both Poles and Jews will honor the past, and the present/future of our respective communities.

And in this way, perhaps we may achieve both "truth" and "peace".

Allow me to conclude with one final story, a story which, among other examples, actually caused the eminent historian Israel Gutman (himself a Holocaust survivor from Poland) to completely change the negative stereotypes he had maintained regarding Poland during the Holocaust. Professor Gutman came across this story when he was editing Yad Vashem's Encyclopedia of the Righteous. He was forced to re-examine his views after reading through the stories told by Jews who were saved by Poles during the Shoah.

In one story that took place in eastern Poland, Gutman tells us the following:

"A Jew.. knocked on the door of a poor farmer's cottage and asked for food. They let him in and discovered that he had been wandering about in the woods for several days with his wife and two children. The poor peasants took them all in. In time, the two families bonded so well that they became as one. One day, the farmer returned from a trip to a neighbouring village and told them that the Germans found a Jewish family sheltered there and murdered them all, both the Jews and the Polish family hiding them. They all lapsed into silence. The Jews realized that they couldn't keep endangering their Polish protectors so during the night, they packed up their belongings. In the morning, the Poles came to their room. "We've been talking about this. Stay. Whatever happens to you, will happen to us." And these people survived.

The story symbolizes the most noble in values that can be found among the Polish and Jewish peoples. The poor farmer and his wife first offer food to an even poorer, starving Jewish man, then they rescue him and his entire family. Then the Jewish family decide they cannot place the Polish family at risk, and resolve to leave - but the Polish man and woman insist they stay, telling them: "What happens to you, will happen to us." Are there any more beautiful words than these, that were ever spoken during the Holocaust?

In the face of unspeakable consequences, both parties exhibited a nobility of spirit, and a wholly unselfish care and concern for the other, at the very risk to their own beings.

It is in their footsteps, in the example of these heroic individuals, and in homage to their exceptional spirit, that I believe that Poles and Jews should begin to build their future together.³⁷

Endnotes

¹ Avraham Burg tells the story of Mr D., an Israeli businessman, who cancelled a meeting in in Poland with him because, he explained, after being on the Polish trains, “everything came back to me”. He had to leave Poland immediately. When they met some time later in Israel, Burg asked him where his parents were from (assuming somewhere in Poland). “From Iraq” he answered. (The Holocaust is Over, We Must Rise From Its Ashes. P 34-35). Burg’s understanding of how prejudice based on other people’s feelings and perceived experiences is so easily spread is similar to Rabbi Dow Marumur’s point.

(Burg’s understanding of the Holocaust, expressed in the same book, is far less sensible. He writes, “If I were a young Jew in the Shoah, I would have....finally chosen Mahatma Ghandi’s spiritual resources and tried to ferment non-violent civil disobedience throughout Europe. This is how I think and how I educate my children.” (P. 105). To suggest civil disobedience in the face of the Nazi genocidal attempt to exterminate every single Jew in existence, by whatever means necessary, betrays a complete ignorance of the methods, brutality and ultimate goals of the Nazis.)

² **People living so closely to each other had many images - some positive, some negative. That is only human. The Holocaust, it must be stressed, was an external event implanted in Poland by the German foreign occupier. [HBS]**

³ Global Dispatches: Poland—Jews in Poland, By Tom Ozimek. Epoch Times Staff, Sep. 20, 2010.

⁴ Or has it has been succinctly summarized, “Beatings no, boycotts, yes!”

⁵ **Part of the economic measures aimed against the Jews included demanding diplomas for certain traditionally Jewish professions and businesses. (For example a Jewish tailor who had been practicing his craft for 50 years would now half to re-qualify by taking an exam - in Polish). Other measures included legislating that all businesses must close on Sundays (which for Jewish businesses meant they were closed Saturdays and Sundays.) Poles might claim we are not Anti-Semitic, or anti-**

minority, we are simply Pro-Polish. We want to break the Jewish domination in certain professions (shoemakers, carpenters, tailors) in the urban centers to give other Polish citizens access to these trades... Jews, rightly, saw these measures as both anti-minority and Anti-Semitic. [SBM]

⁶ In 1938, Ze'ev Jabotinsky, the famous right-wing Revisionist Zionist leader, founder of the Irgun and fiery orator warned in a speech that Polish Jews *did not see the fiery "volcano" that was about to consume them* and predicted that a wave of pogroms would soon sweep over Poland. Jabotinsky urged all Jews in Europe to emigrate to Palestine as soon as possible.

כבר שלוש שנים ואני קורא לכם פאר כתר יהדות פולין ומתריע כי מתקרבת הקטסטרופה הגדולה. בשנים אלה זקנתי ושערות שיבה על ראשי כי לבי שותת דם היות ואתם אחיותיי ואחי היקרים, אינכם רואים את הוולקן שיציף באש השמדה אתכם ואני רואה תמונה זוועתית ונשאר רק זמן מועט כדי להינצל. אני יודע כי אינכם רואים באשר הנכם טרודים בדאגות היום יום, אך הפעם אני בא לבקש קרדיט מכם כיון שנוכחתם לדעת כי רוב אזהרותיי והתרעותיי נתאמתו. באם דעתם אחרת עליכם לגרשני מהרחוב היהודי, אבל באם הנכם מאמינים בי עליהם להאזין לאזהרותיי בשעה השתים עשרה. למען השם, כל אחת ואחד מכם חייב להימלט להינצל כל עוד ויש עדיין זמן אך נהיה קצר למדי.

| זאב ז'בוטינסקי, נאום בתשעה באב 1938 בוורשה, איר"ש, 06/344.

⁷ Reflecting the instability of the period, Ezra Mendelsohn says this: "I think we can say of Jewish history in interwar Poland that it was 'the best of times and the worst of times.'"

⁸ **The Soviets, in most cases didn't deliberately target Jews, except for the persecution of religious, nationalist (Zionist) and "capitalistic" Jews who were targeted for political and ideological reasons, not on racial grounds. The Soviet persecution of the Poles was also not on racial grounds. [DS]**

From the Polish point of view the two powers (Germany and Russian) were historical enemies which wanted to destroy the country and its political existence through harsh and cruel occupation. For the Jews the Germans were mass murderers, while the Soviets were "just" bad rulers. There was a joke among the Jews who were occupied by the Russians who express it very well. They said they exchanged (a German) death penalty with (a Russian) prison sentence for life. [HBS]

⁹ The term genocide was coined by Rafael Lemkin a Polish Jew who escaped Poland in 1940, and most of whose family was subsequently murdered during the Holocaust. In his younger years, Lemkin was troubled by the intentional mass murder of the Armenians by the Turks in 1915 and later the slaughter of Christian Assyrians by Iraqis in 1933. He was also moved by the accounts of barbarity in the Roman Empire during the reign of Nero which were described by Polish author Henryk Sienkiewicz in his novel Quo Vadis. Lemkin's first actual encounter with genocide was what he witnessed

in occupied Poland, when he viewed the Nazis' harsh treatment of Poles and Jews before his escape from Poland in 1940. Lemkin dedicated his life to the acceptance of the word genocide - and the need of the world community to ban its practice - after painstakingly documenting the brutal treatment of Nazi conquered countries and its populations throughout Europe in WWII. (Lemkin's definition of genocide derives more from the experience of the Poles than the Jews, who were subject to such extreme persecution, their plight even exceeded Lemkin's definition of genocide.)

¹⁰ **Indifference is not an easy accusation for a country so proud of its underground state. [HBS]**

¹¹ **That, after 1,000 years of Jewish life in Poland, Jews could still be considered by Poles as belonging to "another people", it itself perhaps a telling observation. Yet, the Jewish condition of "otherness" had both external causes (i.e. Polish hostility) and internal roots (i.e. Jewish hostility, fear of assimilation, loss of religious life and identity etc.) Poles, with some justification, could contend that Jews generally saw the nature of Poland much differently than the rest of Poland's population. That most Jews were not considered "Poles" by the Jews or by the Poles, in large measure because both parties wanted it that way, certainly was a contributing factor to the friction between the two groups and the development of Anti-Semitism in Poland.[SBM]**

¹² **Poland was the only conquered country in all of Eastern and Western Europe that did not have single faction or group that collaborated with the Nazis. Across the spectrum, from the far left, to the center, to the far right, every single faction in Poland considered the Nazis their sworn enemies. [SBM]**

¹³ A well-known folk tale illustrates the problem in dealing with hypotheticals. In the tale, a Jewish person in a mixed group was trying to prove how moral the Jewish people were in comparison with others. "For example", he said, "Jewish people would never hunt for sport. It runs against the fabric of our very being." A stranger responded, "It's true, I have never heard of Jews hunting for sport - but perhaps that's because Jews were never allowed to own guns..." This same idea is reflected in Dubno's contention that the Jews for millennia had been an innocent people, precisely because they never had sovereignty. Given their own government they would be no better than others. (Thus Dubno was a cultural, not political, Jew.)

¹⁴ Any truth taken to an extreme, of course, becomes absurd.

It has been suggested that, "to ask why the Poles did little to help the Jews is rather like asking why the Jews did nothing to assist the Poles..."

This comparison, of course, overreaches. Poles had far more opportunity to help Jews, than the reverse. That most Poles did not - considering the difficulty and life threatening consequences - is understandable. Thus, if one asks the question, "why the Poles did little to help the Jews?", the answer is clear for at least some of them: while it may have been **possible**, they were afraid for their lives. To ask the reverse question, "why the Jews did nothing to assist the Poles", the answer is: because it was **impossible**.

¹⁵ The impossible to answer hypothetical question of what others would have done under similar circumstances brings to mind the famous statement in Pirke Avot, “Do not judge your friend until you are in the same place.” (Avot 2:5). This axiom applies – to some extent - to so many situations during the Holocaust, whether it is the position of Jews in the ghettos and camps, or in response to those who criticize the Poles for not having saved more Jews.

Whether Jews would have been less indifferent if the tables were reversed (and they were called upon to save Poles) brings to mind a famous Chasidic story told about Rabbi Hayim of Tzanz. What would happen, he challenged his disciples, if one of them found a wallet with a large sum of money in the street, without any identification signs in it? The first disciple responded that without a doubt he would make every effort to find the owner, and if he did not succeed, he would donate the money to charity. He wouldn't even be tempted to keep the money. The rabbi chastised the first disciple for having such confidence that he would certainly do the right thing. The second disciple responded that since there was no obvious sign of ownership he would keep the wallet. The rabbi criticized the second disciple for his greed. The third disciple responded that in truth he wasn't sure what he would do. He would be tempted to keep the wallet, but he also knew that the right thing to do would be to look for the owner. He could only say that he hoped his good intentions would overcome his less noble side. But since he had never been in that situation, he could not be certain how he would react. The rabbi praised his third disciple for this honesty and true self-reflection.

How would the Jewish people react in the fact of the persecution of another minority? I can only say, like the third disciple in the story above, that I hope we would do the right thing.

I do not think we would rejoice at the suffering of other innocent civilians. (For instance, when blameless Palestinian civilians lose their lives during the Arab-Israeli conflict, there is no rejoicing in the Jewish world, which is not to say that there may be extremists who might do so, at least in private, or others who secretly feel that way. That there is public rejoicing in some parts of the Arab world over the loss of life of innocent Israel civilians following terrorist acts reveals an unfortunate degradation of moral values in these circles.)

Yet, in returning to the original question above, if the tables were reversed (and the Jews were called upon to save Poles), I do fear that most of us would be indifferent. Looking at the world's response and the reaction of the Jewish people to the genocides in Cambodia, Rwanda and Darfur, only a minority of our people (and the world community) raised their voices against these crimes against humanity. Unlike the Poles during WWII,

we are under no threat of death for protesting, and we are generally leading comfortable lives – and yet indifference generally rules the day.

Indifference, then, seems to be a human characteristic, regardless of the identity of the victims or the bystanders.

Whether the Jewish people would be indifferent if the genocide were closer to home, and happening to people they knew and lived with, is yet another question, and again reveals the inherent difficulty in speculating on such issues.

¹⁶ Reflecting the complexity of this issue, and the simultaneous feelings of pride and disappointment, Wladyslaw Bartoszewski, a founder of Zegota, and one of the "Righteous Among Nations," commented thus about Polish help to the Jews during the Warsaw ghetto uprising: "I am very proud as a Pole that there were some Poles who helped, but only a limited number, which is both a great deal and also very little." Perhaps the same could be said about the whole issue of the number of "Righteous" in Poland during the Shoah: "It was both a great deal and also very little."

¹⁷ These charges actually pre-date WWII. In the early 1920s, Jews were killed in massive pogroms in Poland in areas where Poles were fighting Russians, under the pretext the Jews had collaborated with the Red Army. (Some Jews did co-operate, others did not.) This, of course, bolstered the Zionist argument that Palestine was the only safe haven for the Jews of Eastern Europe.

¹⁸ On the surface, communism was a thoroughly internationalist ideology and movement, opposed to all kinds of ethnic and religious discrimination, including antisemitism. Indeed, many original adherents of the Polish communist movement found it attractive precisely because they saw in it the most consistent and principled response to the antisemitism that was rampant in Polish society in the 1920s and 1930s, openly preached by the Catholic Church and the right-wing Nationalists. (When 'Zionist' Meant 'Jew': Revisiting the 1968 Events in Poland, By Rafal Pankowski, Z Word, February 2008)

¹⁹ Rafal Pankowski writes, "According to some estimates in the 1920s and 1930s around 22-26 percent of the Polish Communist Party's membership was made up of Jews – Jews made up 9 per cent of the entire Polish population. At the same time, the Jewish communists were a marginal group within the wider Jewish community. (Werblan, Andrzej. "Przyczynek do genezy konfliktu," *Miesiecznik Literacki* 6/1968, p.66 cited in Eisler, Jerzy. *Marzec 1968. Geneza, przebieg, konsekwencje*, Panstwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, Warszawa, 1991, p. 126.)

The clandestine Communist Party remained relatively weak and was dissolved by order of Josef Stalin, the Soviet dictator, in 1937. Many of its leaders were subsequently called to Moscow, imprisoned and murdered by the Soviet political police during the mass purges. (When 'Zionist' Meant 'Jew': Revisiting the 1968 Events in Poland, By Rafal Pankowski).

Regardless of the actual numbers of Jewish membership in the KPP (The Polish Communist Party, 1918–1938) research on voting patterns in Poland's parliamentary elections in the

1920s reveals that Jewish support for the communists was proportionally less than their representation in the total population. (Robert Blobaum in *Antisemitism and Its Opponents In Modern Poland*. p. 97.) The 1928 elections data shows that only 5% of Poland's Jewish population actually voted for the KPP. (Tadeusz Piotrowski, *Poland's Holocaust: Ethnic Strife, Collaboration with Occupying Forces and Genocide* p. 36-37.)

Jeffrey Kopstein and Jason Wittenberg, in their study of the communist vote in interwar Poland, note simply this: *most Jews were not communists, and most communists were not Jews*. (Jeffrey S. Kopstein and Jason Wittenberg. *Who Voted Communist? Reconsidering the Social Bases of Radicalism in Interwar Poland*. *Slavic Review*, Vol. 62, No. 1, (Spring, 2003)PP. 87-109.)

²⁰ When the communists re-emerged as the ruling Polish Workers Party after World War II, the stereotype of "Jewish communists" became even stronger as part of the popular psyche.....

In fact, Jewish communists constituted a rather small part of the post-war leadership, and they usually hardly identified themselves as Jews at all. After the Holocaust, the Jewish community in Poland still numbered some 250-400,000. Many of them left the country in subsequent waves of emigration, for example after the Kielce pogrom in 1946 and in 1956, when the emigration regime was liberalized.

By 1968 only 25-30,000 Jews lived in Poland. Meanwhile, sinister currents of institutionalized antisemitism appeared across the communist bloc. Stalin ordered the execution of the leaders of the wartime Jewish Antifascist Committee in the late 1940s and his anti-Jewish obsession reached new heights with the alleged uncovering of a 'Doctors' Plot' in 1952. Such tendencies were in turn reflected by the other communist regimes, most famously during the trial of Rudolf Slansky in Czechoslovakia in 1952.

In a symbolic rapprochement in Poland, a group of activists of the pre-war fascist National Radical Camp (*Oboz Narodowo-Radykalny*, ONR) led by Boleslaw Piasecki was allowed to operate legally with their own representation in the Polish parliament in the 1950s. With assistance from the government, Piasecki created and led his new 'patriotic' organization, the PAX Association, which came to play an active role in 1968. Similar developments emerged in other communist states like Romania, where former members of the antisemitic Iron Guard were allowed to join the Romanian Communist Party. The Polish Nobel prize-winning poet Czeslaw Milosz wrote of such alliances: "*Let it be stated here clearly: the Party/Descends directly from the fascist Right.*"

State-sponsored communist antisemitism owed a great deal to Stalin's personal paranoia, but it also reflected deeper dynamics. The communist regimes were increasingly seeking their legitimacy in nationalist rather than revolutionary rhetoric. Over the years, they were trying to reach out to non-communist sections of society and to find some acceptance among a wider public, which, in some cases, meant turning a blind eye to antisemitism or even actively sponsoring it. Moreover, as the Soviet Union sought allies in the Arab world, anti-Zionist language became widespread. This encapsulates what happened in Poland in the late 1960s, when a growing wing in the Party expressed nationalistic sentiments,

combined with an anti-Jewish zeal. The eruption of anti-Semitism in 1968 has to be understood in this context. (When 'Zionist' Meant 'Jew': Revisiting the 1968 Events in Poland, By Rafal Pankowski.)

²¹ In a famous if controversial essay called **The Poor Poles Look At The Ghetto**, Jan Blonski, Professor of History at Jagiellonian University, wrote: "...especially in the twentieth century ... anti-semitism became particularly virulent [in Poland]. Did it lead us to participate in genocide? No. Yet, when one reads what was written about Jews before the war, when one discovers how much hatred there was in Polish society, one can only be surprised that words were not followed by deeds. But they were not (or very rarely). God held back our hand. Yes I do mean God, because if we did not take part in that crime, it was because we were still Christians, and at the last moment we came to realize what a satanic enterprise it was. This still does not free us from sharing responsibility. The desecration of Polish soil has taken place and we have not yet discharged our duty of seeking expiation. In this graveyard, the only way to achieve this is to face up to our duty of viewing our past truthfully."

²² Krzysztof Stanowski points out that it has become quite common for Polish NGOs as well as local Polish governments to conduct educational programs about Jewish life and tradition in Poland. Today the subjects of "holocaust", "history of Jews in Poland", "anti-Semitism" are obligatory parts of history and civic education courses in every Polish school. The Ministry of Education publishes several educational materials for teachers and students on these subjects. Additionally Polish students, their teachers and NGO leaders participate in a wide range of educational programs on tolerance, holocaust, history of Jews in Poland, & Polish-Israeli relations.

²³ The term genocide was coined by Rafael Lemkin, a Polish Jew. Most of his family was murdered during the Holocaust. In his younger years, Lemkin was troubled by the intentional mass murder of the Armenians by the Turks in 1915 and later the slaughter of Christian Assyrians by Iraqis in 1933. Lemkin dedicated his life to furthering the acceptance of the word genocide – and the need of the world community to ban its practice – after painstakingly documenting the brutal Nazi treatment of conquered populations throughout Europe in World War II

²⁴ "The very question seems to suggest that degrees of suffering can be measured and that styles of mourning can be judged. It risks robbing victims of their claim that their suffering was uniquely their own and that the specific history that caused their pain was unprecedented and unparalleled. Comparing suffering leads us to the judging of suffering--a distasteful, even obscene, thing to do." Alan Tansman, in *"Catastrophe, memory, and narrative: teaching Japanese and Jewish responses to twentieth-century atrocity."*

²⁵ "...the Holocaust has become what one expert here called the "master narrative" for suffering, shaping discussions about every present conflict over genocide and human rights even as comparisons distort history and can

serve the purposes of propaganda as often as the truth." Quoted in *The New York Times, The Holocaust, Viewed Not From Then but From the Here and Now*, By Michael Kimmelman, January 21, 2009

²⁶ Other contributing factors to the visibility of the Holocaust may include the following: The Jewish People are characterized by a highly literate history and culture which pays enormous attention and respect to the written word; Holocaust survivors are still telling their stories on radio, television, film and in memoirs.

Yehuda Bauer suggests that the Holocaust "has become a code in Western civilization, because of the position of the Jews in Western civilization, not only because of the uniqueness of the Holocaust, also because the Jews are Jews. Western civilization is based on Greeks and Jews; now the Greeks have gone, the Greeks are there but not the Greeks you know, and the Jews are the same. So it is very important for Western civilization what happens to the Jews, positively or negatively. And when, 1900 years after the coming of the Messiah, his people are murdered by baptized Gentiles that's a problem for Christianity. Just think of it, Jesus came to save the world, he was a Jew and 1900 years later people who were raised in his religion, or what people interpret his religion to be, baptized Gentiles murder his people. So there is a tremendous credibility crisis for Christianity, there is another credibility crisis for Judaism too, because where was God at Auschwitz? The usual question, but for both these monotheistic religions there are tremendous crises, out of this event, so the importance of the Jew in Western civilization is another reason why this has become a code, a code concept."

²⁷ Bauer 2001, 47-49

²⁸ "There have been other genocides, after all; and the number of the other victims of Nazism in World War II is much larger than that of the Jews. No one suffered more than the other; we must not compare suffering with suffering - it would be immoral to do so. But there is something unprecedented, frightening about the Holocaust of the Jewish people that should be taught: for the first time in the bloodstained history of the human race, a decision developed, in a modern state in the midst of a civilized continent, to track down, register, mark, isolate from their surroundings, dispossess, humiliate, concentrate, transport and murder every single person of an ethnic group as defined not by them, but by the perpetrators; not just in the country where the monster arose, not just on the continent the monster first wished to control, but ultimately everywhere on earth, and for purely ideological reasons. There is no precedent for that. And it happened to a people whose legacy is an important component of human civilization, whose traditions have influenced major religious and social movements, whose culture is thousands of years old. A people, too, who have borne the brunt of enmity towards them, basically because they dared to be different, and dared to insist on their difference. In times of crisis people sometimes - by no means always - develop hatred to those who are different. The Jews have been around a very long time, and the animosity towards them as the quintessential others became part of a long anti-Jewish tradition, especially but not exclusively in what is known as Christendom. That was the background, and the Holocaust sprang from a combination between that background and the crises of

societies and states in the last century or so, culminating in National Socialism. National Socialism was a truly revolutionary creed that tried to reorder the world according to a new principle: not, as in the past, by religion, or class, or even nation, but by so-called race, a pseudo-scientific concept that aimed at a new world hierarchy of superior and inferior peoples. According to that ideology, the Jews were not a race at all, but an anti-race, the translation into secular language of the image of the devil. But that ideology, my friends, did and does not endanger the Jews only. The concept of race and racial hierarchy endangers all peoples, endangers world peace, endangers decent relations between all humans. And what happened to the Jews can and does happen, though not in the same way, to others. The Holocaust happened because it could happen; if it could not have happened, it would not have done so; and because it happened once, it can happen again, not in the same form, not necessarily to the same people, not by the same people, but to anyone by anyone. It was unprecedented, but now the precedent is there.” Speech by Professor Yehuda Bauer, Stockholm International Forum, 2001.

²⁹ Jan Blonski writes: “Let us think calmly: the question will have to be asked. Everybody who is concerned with the Polish-Jewish past must ask these questions, regardless of what the answer might be. But we--consciously or unconsciously--do not want to confront these questions. We tend to dismiss them as impossible and unacceptable. After all, we did not stand by the side of the murderers. After all, we were next in line for the gas chambers. After all, even if not in the best way possible, we did live together with the Jews; if our relations were less than perfect, they themselves were also not entirely without blame. So do we have to remind ourselves of this all the time? What will others think of us? What about our self-respect? What about the 'good name' of our society? This concern about the 'good name' is ever-present in private and, even more so, in public discussion. To put it differently, when we consider the past, we want to derive moral advantages from it. Even when we condemn, we ourselves would like to be above--or beyond--condemnation. We want to be absolutely beyond any accusation, we want to be completely clean. We want to be also--and only--victims.We do not want to have anything to do with the horror. We feel, nevertheless, that it defiles us in some way. This is why we prefer not to speak of it all. Alternatively, we speak of it only in order to deny an accusation. The accusation is seldom articulated but is felt to hang in the air.”

³⁰ To further expand on this idea, we can observe somewhat similar phenomena in Jewish educational circles regarding the study of the Holocaust and pre-war European Jewish life. Much and perhaps even most of the material written and taught in this regard is salutary, celebrating Jewish life before the war, and honoring the courage of those who physically or spiritually resisted the Nazis.

Yet we know that not all Jews were morally perfect in either period of time. During the Holocaust, there were highly ambiguous figures such as Rumkowski and Kastner, and

many others who were caught up in the machinery of Nazi oppression, like members of the Judenrat, the Jewish Police and Jewish Kapos.

And, there were Jews who were, sad to say, unquestionably evil, such as informers and blackmailers in the ghettos and vicious kapos in the camps. Certainly, the latter group is not the usual subject of sermons, articles, and educational curricula or at the centre of personal memoirs about the Holocaust.

As a counter example, there is the book, *The Cap: The Price of A Life*, by Roman Frister, where the author describes, among other things, many decidedly unheroic actions taken by Jewish victims of the Holocaust. He recounts the heinous acts of one Hungarian Jewish prisoner in Auschwitz who raped other prisoners and then ensured their execution by stealing their caps. (Being without a cap in Auschwitz was a capital crime.) Frister, himself a rape victim of the same man, steals another prisoner's cap, thereby ensuring his survival and the other man's death. Frister also gives an unsympathetic account of his own feelings watching his father die of typhoid in the camp infirmary. He eagerly awaited his father's death – and slice of bread hidden beneath his father's cot.

Episodes from the book are not the ones typically used in educational resources concerning the Holocaust, in part because of the negative portrayal of many Jews (Frister included) during the Holocaust.

I recall meeting a woman in Israel who was exceptionally proud of her blind sister, who despite her disability, was a brilliant woman who had led a remarkable life. The cause of her sister's blindness, however was a different story. At a young age, her family had decided to move from their small shtetl in Poland or Belarus to America, and was preparing to move to Warsaw in advance of the long trip. An older (Jewish) man who was her suitor invited her to a good-bye party, on the night before she was supposed to leave. At this gathering, the man splashed a large amount of acid on her face, blinding and disfiguring her, since, he reasoned, if he could not have her, no one else should either. The man in the shocking story (who presumably perished in the Shoah) is not the typical image – nor should it be – of a Jew in Poland in pre-war Europe or a victim of the Shoah.

You are not likely to hear this type of story, even as an exception to the rule, in most educational settings because of the psychological factors mentioned above.

For purposes of clarity, I do not mean to draw a parallel between the reactions to Nazi persecution of the Jews in ghettos and death camps and that of the Poles. When a Jewish prisoner stole a piece of bread from another Jewish prisoner in a concentration camp (which of course happened), it is a morally objectionable act. Yet, given the severe conditions of the Nazi death camps, such moral failure is understandable – yet still wrong. However, this cannot be compared to the case of a Pole turning in a Jew to the Nazis. One is a moral failure caused by extenuating circumstance, the other (often) by malevolence and inherent anti-Semitic feeling.

By comparing the two phenomena (the way both Poles and Jews sometimes look at their own histories in the Holocaust), what I am trying to convey is a universal tendency to gravitate toward the more positive elements of one's historical narrative. In the case of some Poles this (sometimes unconscious) process, may prevent them from honestly confronting the moral failures of their fore-bearers.

In the case of the Jewish narrative, the same tendency might cause a portrait to be painted of every Jew going to his or death, with their faith intact, heads held up high, noble in spirit, living up to Emmanuel Ringelblum's exhortation: "To live with honor and to die with honor". No doubt many did. But no doubt others did not, and their deaths do not fit the heroic mold which is so often the subject of Holocaust memorials. That is not to say, these people deserve to be condemned. Hardly! But the tendency to want to find some source of consolation in the tragic fate of those who perished in the Holocaust, might cause us to shy away from sufficiently acknowledging the all too human and trembling manner in which so many were forced to go to their deaths.

This idea is eloquently expressed a poem by Aviva Goldberg, a 17 year old March of the Living student participant from Winnipeg:

To Each of Them

*And to each of them I will give a name and a monument
To every man, to every woman, to every child
And to each of them I will give a name and a monument
To those who fought
And to those who had no way to fight
To those who sang on the way to their deaths
And to those who were silent
To those who found a God in the camps
And to those who declared God dead
And to each of them I will give a name and a monument
To those who went hungry so their children could eat
And to those who stole their children's bread in the night
And those who displayed the strength of the human spirit
And to those who let the pain overtake them
To each of them I will give a name and a monument
To those who were there
When every bite of bread was a decision
When every step could cause more death
To the heroes, and the non-heroes
The strong and the weak
To those who were superhuman
And to those who, like you and I
Were merely, most importantly
Human*

³¹ ...When I first came to Israel after World War II, I would meet the country's young generation, and listen to their songs and the way they spoke as progenitors, as human beings; Jews, deeply aware that they were writing a new genealogy that began with them. And as I remembered the heritage that had gone up in smoke in Europe, I was doubly sorrowful — also for this excellent generation of young Israelis who may just grow up and grow old, without ever really knowing what they should weep for. (Abba Kovner, 1983)

³² Professor Marci Shore describes a metaphor for Polish-Jewish relations one can hear in Warsaw today: "Think of an old divorced couple arguing over a cemetery plot."

She also quotes Aleksander Smolar who says: "'The Jewish question' in Poland today exists principally as a Polish problem....The history of Polish-Jewish relations has come to an end. Jews in Poland are no more, and never will be again."

It is worth contrasting the above statements with the following ad that appeared in *Midrasz*, a Jewish monthly, published in Polish in Poland: "*Do you have Jewish roots? Is this a problem for you? Or a secret? Or perhaps your passion, your pride, your hope?*"

In a sense, each of the quotes contains an element of truth. The vast majority of the Poles and Jews who lived during the pivotal times of WWII are no longer with us. The Jewish civilization that once thrived in all its pre-war time diversity will never again exist in the same fashion. But a new Jewish community is growing again in Poland, with its own identity, its own challenges, strengths and weaknesses, providing a fresh opportunity for Poland and her Jews to create a renaissance in relations, nurtured by the present generation of Jews and Poles.

³³ Krzysztof Stanowski adds the following: In 2008 Poland and Israel signed an official agreement on youth exchanges, a program implemented through the cooperation between the Ministry of National Education of the Republic of Poland and the Israel Youth Exchange Council. These typical youth exchange programs are co-financed by Polish Government. (Another program is run by Museum of the History of Polish Jews.)

³⁴ I am grateful to Dr. Erica Lehrer for phrasing this question so articulately.

³⁵ The importance of this to many survivors cannot be underestimated.

I recall a moving exchange between two Polish Holocaust survivors who were about to embark on a trip to Germany and Poland, which I have reconstructed from memory below.

One of the survivors observed that he was far more anxious about the return to Poland than Germany, although he had visited countries before.

The other survivor was incredulous. "Forgive me," she said, "I don't mean to be rude, but why would you be more anxious about returning to Poland than Germany? It was Nazi Germany that was responsible for the Holocaust, not Poland, even with its Anti-

Semitism. How can you compare the two, and how could you say Poland was worse?"

The other survivor responded: "Of course, you are right," he said. "But I am talking about my trip on an emotional level. I did not grow up in Germany, and I did not grow up with any feelings toward the country. But I did grow up in Poland, speaking the language, playing on the streets of my town, listening to the local music. It was my culture. And yet, we were not accepted, and we suffered from Anti-Semitism, and then of course, the Shoah, which is mostly the fault of the Nazis of course....But the rejection of the Jews by Poland during those times is very personal to me, and it still hurts. And these feelings come up inside me whenever I return to Poland."

Jan Blonski writes: "I recall one moving speech...in which the speaker started by comparing the Jewish attitude to Poland to an unrequited love. Despite the suffering and all the problems which beset our mutual relations, he continued, the Jewish community had a genuine attachment to their adopted country. Here they found a home and a sense of security. There was, conscious or unconscious, an expectation that their fate would improve, the burden of humiliation would lighten, that the future would gradually become brighter. What actually happened was exactly the opposite. 'Nothing can ever change now', he concluded. 'Jews do not have and cannot have any future in Poland. Do tell us, though', he finally demanded, 'that what has happened to us was not our fault. We do not ask for anything else. But we do hope for such an acknowledgement.'

³⁶ According to some, this is precisely why the most often repeated commandment in the Torah is "Love the stranger, for you too were once strangers in the land of Egypt." It is only all too easy for victims of racism, once they throw off the shackles of their persecutors, to forget their own experience, and repeat the mistakes of those who once subdued them. Thus, considering our own difficult history, the Jewish people, rather than becoming embittered, must choose to be extra sensitive to those who are pushed to the margins of society, to those who are now deemed the "other", a designation we know only all too well.

³⁷ **Poles Can Be Proud of Sendlerowa**

Israel Gutman interviewed by Piotr Zychowicz, 13 May 2008

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