POLISH CATHOLIC MAIDS AND NANNIES: FEMALE AID AND THE DOMESTIC REALM IN NAZI-OCCUPIED POLAND

By

Jennifer Lynn Marlow

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to
Michigan State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

History – Doctor of Philosophy

2014

ABSTRACT

POLISH CATHOLIC MAIDS AND NANNIES:
FEMALE AID AND THE DOMESTIC REALM IN NAZI-OCCUPIED POLAND

By

Jennifer Lynn Marlow

The dissertation examines the role of Polish Catholic domestic workers employed in middle-class Jewish households during the interwar period and the ways that the relationships that developed in the domestic realm influenced decisions to seek or provide aid during the Holocaust. It argues that the relationships that sometimes formed in the domestic realm caused Polish Catholic domestic workers to see their Jewish employers as belonging to their own community of obligation and to sometimes then aid them during the Nazi persecution. In addition, this work examines how middle-class Polish culture was transmitted to Jewish children by their acculturated parents, sometimes via the family's Polish Catholic maid and the ways this maid also familiarized her charges with Polish Catholic peasant culture. This dissertation asserts that this familiarity with Polish culture and the hybrid identities the children of these households sometimes formed was useful in later allowing them to pass as Catholic Poles on the so-called Aryan side if the opportunity was present during the Nazi Occupation period.

The dissertation is comprised of two parts. The first examines the prewar period to explore how Polish Catholic women from the countryside made their niches within urban Jewish households, how Polish middle class culture was transmitted to children in acculturated Jewish homes, and to examine how these children then further developed their hybridic Polish Jewish identities while in the public realm, away from the control of their parents and caregivers. The second part of the dissertation examines the initial responses of the domestic workers and their Jewish employers to the Nazi invasion of Poland and the ghettoization of the Jewish population,

how it was decided to place Jewish children and families into hiding outside the ghetto, and case studies of children hidden with their former Polish caregivers.

To Mackenzie, James & Chris,
for taking this journey along with me.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am deeply indebted to the individuals and institutions that offered the support I have received over the course of my graduate career that has made this dissertation possible. As a graduate student early in the process of developing this project I was awarded a Foreign Language Area Studies Grant that made my language acquisition possible and allowed me to focus on my course work. In addition, I was awarded a Frank and Adelaide Kussy Fellowship for the Study of the Holocaust that supported my pre-dissertation research. Later, my research was supported by an American Council of Learned Societies East European Studies Dissertation Research grant as well as a Robert Savitt Visiting Scholars Fund Fellowship from the Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (CAHS USHMM). My writing was also supported for two years by a Saul Kagan Claims Conference Academic Fellowship. This financial support was crucial in the completion of this dissertation.

As a Claims Conference Fellow I not only received material support, but I also had the opportunity to attend yearly workshops where I received insightful feedback from my colleagues and Holocaust scholars. No monetary value can be placed on this. In addition, as a fellow at the USHMM CAHS I was welcomed into a community of scholars and given all the support a researcher could dream of. The ability to access the incredible collection of sources housed at the facility was matched only by the expert staff and researchers who made a significant impact on the shape of my project. In particular, Vincent Slatt and Ron Coleman were incredibly helpful and a pleasure to work with. In addition, being part of a community of fellows during my stay allowed me to received feedback and mentoring that I will forever remain grateful for. I am especially indebted to Margaret Paxson and Emily Greble for their feedback, suggestions and wonderful advice.

I am also indebted to my graduate committee at MSU; Dr. Keely Stauter-Halsted, Dr. Kenneth Waltzer, Dr. Karrin Hanshew, Dr. Aminda Smith and Dr. Marcie Ray. Under their guidance I grew as a scholar and learned how to be a mentor to my own students. My dissertation would not have been possible without their guidance and support. A very special thank you must be reserved for Dr. Stauter-Halsted and Dr. Waltzer. As a graduate student, one could not wish for better mentors. I do not have the words to express my gratitude to the two of them for everything that they have done. Dr. Stauter-Halsted has been supportive and at the same time continuously pushed me to think in new ways. She has given me sound advice at every turn and tirelessly advocated for me. Dr. Waltzer has acted as a mentor in the truest sense of the word, challenging me in ways that have made me a better scholar (and person as well). I appreciate everything they have done for me and feel incredibly lucky that I had the opportunity to be trained by them.

I would like to acknowledge the appreciation that I have for the Holocaust survivors who provided the testimonies and memoirs that I have used in this project. They shared intensely personal recollections of their experiences and without access to their testimonies this project would not be possible. I accessed a great number of these testimonies through the USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archives. Without this collection, my project would look very different. I owe a special thank you to Crispin Brooks, curator of this collection, whose expertise allowed me to find testimonies I could not find on my own. I also had the privilege of conducting research at the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw, Poland and at Yad Vashem in Jerusalem, Israel. At both I enjoyed and benefitted from the knowledge, assistance, and suggestions from the staff. I would also like to thank Paul Zakrzewski for providing me with the testimony of Genia Olczak, his father's protector, along with the words of encouragement.

I also had the good fortune of becoming a member of an intellectual community of graduate students made up of my peers at MSU along with those I have become acquainted with at various workshops and conferences who have offered me both useful feedback and camaraderie. I am grateful for their suggestions and friendship. I would like to thank Devlin and Stephanie Scofield, Natalie Rose, Kitty Lam, and Brandon Miller. In addition, a very special note of appreciation should be made to Jordana de Bloeme who has provided me with thoughtful input on my project and most importantly, become my most wonderful friend. Finally, I would like to thank my doctor-sister, Melissa Hibbard. Melissa became family over the course of my graduate career in every sense of the word. I now have the sister I always wanted.

Finally, I would like to thank the rest of my family for all of the support they have provided over the course of this journey. First and foremost I would like to thank my children, Mackenzie and James. I packed them up and relocated them to pursue my Ph.D. and at times that was challenging for us all. They have grown up on campus, attended lectures, made countless trips to the library with me, and have even spent time in the archive as my research assistants. They spent weeks with their grandparents so I could travel and stayed in new places with me while I conducted research. It has certainly been an adventure and I am looking forward to our next journey together now as we move forward. I would also like to thank my partner, Chris Hopper for being steadfastly supportive and my best friend. Finally I would like to thank my parents, Nancy and James Proffer, who made my research and travel possible. I am deeply saddened that my father did not survive to see the completion of my dissertation and that everything worked out just fine. Knowing Mackenzie and James were in good hands with Grandma and Grandpa allowed me to focus on my research and make the most of my time away.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

Rachela Melezin gave birth to her daughter Sarah on November 20, 1938.[1] The family lived in Vilna when the Russians first occupied this region of Poland and was still living there when the Germans occupied the city on June 24, 1941. In August, Melezin, her daughter Sarah, and their nanny, Wictoria Rodziewicz, were evicted from the family's apartment.[2] Melezin was forced to take her young daughter to her mother's already overcrowded apartment. Shortly after the move, Sarah became gravely ill with dysentery. The child recovered but when the order was given to enter the ghetto in September 1941 the nanny asked Melezin not to take Sarah with her. Melezin recalls that the nanny told her, "Sarah is sick, you'd better not take her into the ghetto," and that she should leave the child with her.[3] Melezin said "of course" she agreed.[4]

When Melezin entered the ghetto, Rodziewicz, moved to the edge of the city and rented a room, living there for some time with the baby. German military were housed in the dormitory at the university and Melezin was employed as a cleaning woman there so she would leave the ghetto daily for work. The nanny would bring the baby into the city and would walk by with her in the carriage so her mother could look outside the window while she was working and see her daughter.[5] During one of these walks, a janitor from the house Melezin's mother lived in recognized the nanny and her charge and he took them to the Lithuanian authorities and reported

---

[1] Videotaped testimony of Rachela Melezin, File No. 03369-3, Tape 1, June 21, 1995, USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive.

[2] Melezin's husband Joseph Kryncki was taken in July, 1941 and murdered in Ponary forest.

[3] Ibid., 14:55.

[4] Ibid., 15:00.

[5] Videotaped testimony of Rachela Melezin, File No. 03369-3, Tape 2, June 21, 1995, USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive., 15:53. While this was a comfort to Melezin to see her daughter, it was incredibly dangerous.

that the baby was a Jew. These authorities were not sure what to do, according to Melezin, so they sent her home, ordering her to report the following day so they could consult with the Gestapo.[6]

A friend of Melezin's got news from the caregiver about the incident to Melezin. Melezin asked this person to convince Rodziewicz that if she reported she would be killed. This intermediary convinced Rodziewicz to not only flee the city, but also to return the baby to her mother in the ghetto. Rodziewicz finally agreed to leave the area alone after it was promised that Melezin would return Sarah to her when she came back.[7] After three or four weeks, the caregiver learned from some Lithuanians that the children were going to be removed from the ghetto so she immediately got in touch with Melezin and started making arrangements to take Sarah. A guard was bribed and Rodziewicz came to the ghetto and waited at the Church of All Saints just a half a block from the gate.[8] Later that evening, Melezin put the baby in a carriage and went to the gate with her brother-in-law and "without a word" she pushed the baby through the gate to Rodziewicz, "and that was that."[9] Rachela Melezin's former employee, Wictoria Rodziewicz took Sarah home to her family and passed her off as her illegitimate daughter.[10]

This caregiver took serious risks to protect this child, and even endangered her own family. While this story seems incredible, given what we know about the limited number of

---

[6] Ibid., 11:21.

[7] Ibid., 12:33. She left and stayed at her brother's farm in a village not far from the city.

[8] Ibid., 14:00.

[9] Ibid., 14:53. She would see her daughter only one other time before she was liberated in 1945.

[10] At first, Rodziewicz did not tell her family that the child was Jewish but she soon confided in them and they all accepted the dangers of the conspiracy. This family protected Sarah for the duration of the war and she was returned to her mother. Further discussion of this case in chapter six.

Polish Jews that survived the Holocaust, many such cases of aid provided by a former maids and nannies can be found. These cases of aid provided by former domestic servants beg a number of questions. How could these women of such limited means thwart the authorities to protect these children? Why would they take such risks? Was it an example of stereotypical female attachments to children or was it something more? Since many of these servants came from the working and peasant classes, how do their rescue activities square with the image of the peasants as especially anti-Semitic?[11] And finally, what did these cases of rescue mean for our current understandings of Polish-Jewish relations during the interwar and wartime periods?[12]

This dissertation focuses on rescuers, their charges, and the decisions they made day in and day out to defy Nazi-Occupation policy. Specifically, the dissertation examines Polish Catholic maids and nannies who took risks during the Holocaust to protect the lives of the Polish Jewish children and families they cared for as employees before the Second World War. Nazi-

[11] We see this image of the particularly anti-Semitic peasant in the Claude Lanzmann film, *Shoah* as well as discussion of this image in monographs by Michael Steinlauf and Eva Hoffman. See, *Shoah*, Directed by Claude Lanzmann (1985; New Yorker Films); Michael Steinlauf, *Bondage to the Dead* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1997); Eva Hoffman's *Shtetl:The Life and Death of a Small Town and the World of Polish Jews* (New York: Public Affairs, 1997).

[12] Surely cases such as these serve as examples of one type of relationship that allowed for Polish Jews to become members of the community of moral obligation for their former employers enhancing our understanding of Polish-Jewish relations. Much discussion has taken place over Polish reactions to the Nazi directed persecution of Jews during the Holocaust in Poland. Jan Błoński, in his January 11, 1987 article, "The Poor Poles Look at the Ghetto," published in *Tygodnik Powszechny* critiques what he (and others) see as the Polish gentile lack of aid to or concern for their Polish Jewish co-citizens. Essentially this lack of concern can be explained by the lack of inclusion of Polish Jews in what Helen Fein calls the, "universe of obligation" which she defines as, "that circle of persons towards whom obligations are owed, to whom rules apply and whose injuries call for expiation by the community." Her argument was originally published in Helen Fein, *Accounting for Genocide*. *National Responses and Jewish Victimization During the Holocaust* (New York: Free Press, 1979), 33 and discussed in the introduction of Antony Polonsky, ed., *My Brother's Keeper? Recent Polish Debates on the Holocaust* (London: Routledge, 1990), 15.

occupied Poland was especially treacherous for Jews attempting to flee their Nazi-orchestrated destruction by living on the so-called Aryan side. It was also extremely dangerous for anyone who aided Jews in any way because the occupying regime's policy dictated that the penalty for assisting a Jew was death for the helper and anyone associated with the aid.[13] This meant that anyone offering aid would need to first thwart the Nazi authorities to do so, and that was certainly no small task. Possibly even more daunting was the need to hide these activities from other Poles. This included neighbors, friends, landlords, even family members, because they were most likely to notice clandestine activities and could inform on a rescuer or just accidentally let something slip that would lead to their discovery. This meant rescue and aid efforts had to be absolutely secretive, often cutting aid providers off from their friends, families, and acquaintances.

Previous scholarship has explored the motivations of Holocaust rescuers who risked so much, often violated social norms, and alienated themselves from friends, family and society. Scholars have looked for personality traits, political influences, religious reasons, and moral

[13] On October 15, 1941 Hans Frank issued the decree stating that Jews leaving their designated districts without authorization would be subject to the death penalty, as would any non-Jew who gave such Jews a place to hide, that any instigators or accomplices would be punished in the same way as the perpetrator, and that any attempted act would be punished as if it was accomplished. This was followed by an order from Dr. Ludwig Fischer, Governor of the Warsaw District, on November 10, 1941, stating that this applied to "anyone who consciously gives help to such a Jew (who had left his designated district without authorization) and included activities such as, "making available a night's lodging, food, offering transportation of any kind." Gunnar Paulsson argues that this decree extension of the death penalty to a number of seemingly minor aid activities and had a two-fold effect on flight from the ghetto. In addition to making escape even more dangerous, it also meant seeking aid from someone was putting the aid provider directly in harm's way, which many Jews were not comfortable doing as long as they believed life in the ghetto was still possible. Excerpts of the decree from Hans Frank, along with that of Ludwig Fischer and analysis of the effect of this policy, can be found in Gunnar Paulsson, *Secret City: The Hidden Jews of Warsaw, 1940-1945* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2002), 67-68.

motivations that would drive a rescuer to take such risk.[14] This dissertation examines approximately one hundred twenty cases in which Polish Catholic maids and nannies made the decision to become dedicated caregivers and protect their former charges despite the risks.[15] The dissertation explores what led Polish Jews to trust their prewar maids and nannies to protect their children or to become involved in their clandestine survival activities. I argue that the pre-war relationships and experiences that formed in the domestic realm influenced decisions to seek or provide aid during the Holocaust. These were not decisions of a single moment. Rather they were reassessed and required reaffirmation continuously once the aid efforts were undertaken. The dissertation demonstrates that prewar experiences and bonds not only motivated but also enabled these rescue and survival activities.

---

[14] For examples, see Samuel P. Oliner and Pearl M. Oliner, *The Altruistic Personality: Rescuers of Jews in Nazi Europe* (New York: Macmillan, 1988); Eva Fogelman, *Conscience and Courage: Rescuers of Jews During the Holocaust* (New York: Doubleday, 1994); Patrick Henry, *We Only Know Men: The Rescue of Jews in France During the Holocaust* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2007); Nechama Tec, *When Light Pierced the Darkness: Christian Rescue of Jews in Nazi-Occupied Poland* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986); Malka Drucker, *Rescuers Portraits of Moral Courage in the Holocaust* (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1992). This will be discussed further in the review of literature.

[15] Joanna Beata Michlic, *Jewish Children in Nazi-Occupied Poland: Survival and Polish-Jewish Relations During the Holocaust as Reflected in Early Post-War Recollections* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2008), 71. Michlic places members of Polish society into three subgroups based on how they are described in the postwar testimonies of child survivors and rescuers. First are the long and short-term dedicated rescuers who actively supported the children and cared about their well-being. The second were "sudden helpers" and assistants to both their dedicated rescuers and the children who became actively involved in preserving the children's lives on a momentary basis. The final subgroup is the members of Polish society that "exhibited a mosaic of reactions ranging from total indifference to friendly/positive indifference, and from various shades from negative attitudes to outright hostility."

Contributions to the Literature

Until recently, scholars have approached the history of Polish-speaking Catholics and the history of Polish Jews as two distinct areas of inquiry.[16] Rescue, resistance, antisemitism, interwar culture, and the Holocaust are treated very differently in these separate narratives. Polish World War II histories tend to focus on Polish Catholic resistance, heroism, and suffering.[17] In this historiographical tradition, the Holocaust is examined through the window of aid efforts to support Polish Jews or reasons why aid was not possible.[18] Reasons include fear and the lack of ties between the two communities.[19] The Jewish-centered Holocaust narratives focus on Jewish suffering, resistance, and survival efforts, with little attention to the support activities of some in the Polish population.[20] The have tended to stress the failure of Polish assistance, Polish antisemitism, or Catholic involvement in activities harmful to Jews, such as blackmailing.[21]

---

[16] Michael Steinlauf, *Bondage to the Dead* treats the intersection of these narratives as they pertain to how the Holocaust and World War II are remembered and understood in Poland.

[17] See Wladyslaw Bartoszewski, *The Blood Shed Unites Us* (Warsaw, Poland: Interpress Publishers, 1970); and Wladyslaw Bartoszewski and Zofia Lewin, Eds. *Righteous Among Nations: How Poles Helped the Jews 1939-1945* (London: Earlscourt Publications Limited, 1969).

[18] See Anna Mieszkowska, *Mother of the Children; the Story of Irena Sendler* (Denver and Santa Barbara: Praeger, 2011); Ewa Kurek, *Your Life is Worth Mine: How Polish Nuns Saved Hundreds of Jewish Children in German-Occupied Poland, 1939-1945* (Krakow: Znak Publishers, 1997).

[19] For a discussion of how the Polish type narrative treats Poland's treatment of its minorities see Norman Davies, "Ethnic Diversity in Twentieth-Century Poland," in *From Shtetl to Socialism: Studies from Polin*, ed. Antony Polonsky (London and Washington: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 1993).

[20] This trend is found in post war authored Yizkor/ Memory books, as well as several monographs and collections such as Yisreal Gutman and Shmuel Krakowski, *Unequal Victims: Poles and Jews During WWII* (New York: Holocaust Library, 1986).

[21] Jan Grabowski, *Hunt for Jews* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2013) offers a case study of the activities of the *Judenjagd* (or the hunt for Jews who had escaped the ghettos by the

While distinctive narratives are necessary to accommodate the different experiences, this bifurcated approach has led to omissions and historical imbalances. The two research trajectories do occasionally intersect, producing valuable contributions to our understanding of Polish-Jewish relations.[22]

At moments when these two historical narratives come together, it has led to a proliferation of important literature on Polish-Jewish relations focusing on Polish responses and activities during the Holocaust. One such moment was the 1943 poem written by Czesław Miłosz, "A Poor Christian Looks at the Ghetto," which was taken up later by Jan Błoński in his article, "The Poor Poles Look at the Ghetto," published in the January 11, 1987 issue of *Tygodnik Powszechny.*[23] Miłosz's poem did not lead to an outpouring of literature or a large scale debate, but it would remain under the surface. The publication of Błoński's article, built upon on Milosz's poem would bring the discussion of Polish-Jewish relations to the fore for the Polish readership of *Tygodnik Powszechny.*[24] Later in 2000, Jan T. Gross released his book, *Neighbors: The Destruction of the Jewish Community in Jedwabne, Poland* first in Polish and

---

German police or gendarmes) in the rural county of Dąbrowa Tarnowska in southeastern Poland and the role of the Poles (and Ukrainians, Belorussian, and Balts) who lived there in either informing on or denouncing the Jewish refugees or in some cases aiding them in their flight.

[22] See Marci Shore, *Caviar and Ashes: A Warsaw Generation's Life and Death in Marxism, 1918-1968* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2006); Sean Martin's *Jewish Life in Cracow, 1918-1939* (Portland: Frank Cass Publishers, 2004); Eva Hoffman's *Shtetl*, and Michael Steinlauf's *Bondage to the Dead.*

[23] Błonński's article was republished in Antony Polonsky, ed., *My Brother's Keeper? Recent Polish Debates on the Holocaust*, 34-52.

[24] In 1990 Antony Polonsky would bring this debate to a larger, English speaking audience with his edited collection, *My Brother's Keeper? Recent Debates On the Holocaust.* This volume includes fifteen essays in addition to Polonsky's introduction that guides readers through the debate along with a reprinting of Błoński's article. The essays of this collection represent some of the most pressing concerns of Polish collective memory of the Holocaust and Polish antisemitism.

later in 2001 in English.[25] Gross's work, which is not without its problems, led to an explosion of both popular and academic literature addressing Polish Jewish relations during World War II and the Holocaust.[26]

While these moments of intersection in the historiographies are important, focusing on these relations during this time of intense conflict and devastation should not be used to characterize all of Polish-Jewish relations, which began long before the Holocaust and would continue during the occupation and its aftermath. The Holocaust, important as it is, is best viewed within the longer continuum of Polish-Jewish relations. Much of the historiography specifically treating Polish-Jewish relations is either viewed through the lens of the Holocaust or

---

[25] Jan T. Gross, *Sąsiedzi: Historia zagłady żydowskiego miasteczka* (Sejny, 2000) and then as Jan T. Gross, *Neighbors: The Destruction of the Jewish Community in Jedwabne, Poland* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2001). Because this book was initially published in Polish and later for English reading audiences it is clear that Gross was intending to start a conversation about Polish behavior during the Holocaust and to take to task the Polish myth of their behavior towards the Jews during the Occupation period and general wartime behavior. Public reactions to this work ranged from using the discussion as an opportunity for collective soul searching, to calling for more dialogue, all the way understanding the book as an attack on "Poland's good name." This view that Gross's work was intended to smear "Poland's good name" and pander to "the Holocaust industry," is exemplified in Richard Lukas's rather vitriolic response to this book in the May 2001 edition of the *Polish American Journal.* See Richard Lukas, "Jedwabne and the Selling of the Holocaust," in *Polish American Journal May 2001* reprinted in *The Neighbors Respond: The Controversy Over the Jedwabne Massacre in Poland*, Antony Polonsky and Joanna Michlic, eds. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 432.

[26] Antony Polonsky and Joanna Michlic published an edited collection of the swath of these responses in 2004, see Antony Polonsky and Joanna B. Michlic, eds., *The Neighbors Respond: The Controversy Over the Jedwabne Massacre in Poland* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004). Gross followed up with two additional books published first in Polish for a Polish - speaking audience and then in English for a larger audience with *Fear* in 2006 and Golden Harvest in 2012, Jan T. Gross, *Fear: Anti-Semtism in Poland After Auschwitz: An Essay in Historical Interpretation* (New York: Random House, 2006); Jan T. Gross with Irena Grudzinska Gross, *Golden Harvest: Events at the Periphery of the Holocaust* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2012).

tends to focus on the lack of cooperation and the pervasive presence of antisemitism.[27] Celia Heller's work for example, depicts Poles and Jews as sharing little meaningful social contact with one another outside of simple economic ties and public relations.[28] This absence of social relations was used in the formulations of the reasons why Poles did not include Jews in their "universe of obligation."[29] Other works focus directly on Polish antisemitism and the "Jewish Question" and its role in Polish-Jewish relations.[30] This dissertation is meant as a corrective for this trend and sets out to link the prewar, wartime and postwar periods, rather than looking at the Second World War and Holocaust as a sharp break in the narrative.

My work draws from other recent scholarship that highlights more varied relationships between Poles and Jews.[31] Works such as Marci Shore's *Caviar and Ashes*, Sean Martin's *Jewish Life in Cracow*, and Eva Hoffman's *Shtetl: The Life and Death of a Small Town and the*

---

[27] Celia Heller, *The Edge of Destruction* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1994); Celia Heller, "Poles of a Jewish Background-- The Case of Assimilation without Integration in Interwar Poland," in Joshua A. Fishman, ed. *Studies on Polish Jewry 1919-1939* (New York: YIVO, 1974).

[28] Ibid.

[29] Helen Fein, *Accounting for Genocide. National Responses and Jewish Victimization During the Holocaust*, 33.

[30] Theodore Weeks, *From Assimilation to Antisemitism: The Jewish Question in Poland, 1850-1914* (Dekalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2006); Joanna Beata Michlic, *Poland's Threatening Other: The Image of the Jew from 1880 to Present* (Lincoln and Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 2006); Brian Porter, *When Nationalism Began to Hate: Imagining Modern Politics in Nineteenth-Century Poland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000). Also see, Magdalena Opalski and Israel Bartal, *Poles and Jews: A Failed Brotherhood* (Hanover: 1992).

[31] In particular, see Marci Shore *Caviar and Ashes: A Warsaw Generation's Life and Death in Marxism, 1918-1968*; Sean Martin's *Jewish Life in Cracow, 1918-1939*; Eva Hoffman's *Shtetl:The Life and Death of a Small Town and the World of Polish Jews*; Robert Blobaum, ed., *Antisemitism and Its Opponents In Modern Poland* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005), and Judith Kalik "Christian Servants Employed by Jews in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries," in *Polin, Volume 14, Focusing on Jews in the Polish Borderlands* (London, 2001): 259-270.

World of Polish Jews illustrate the interconnectedness between Poles and Jews and emphasize the points of contention between the two groups. Other work addresses the complex economic and domestic relations among Jews and Christians in the private realm. Judith Kalik examines Christian domestic workers in Jewish households in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Emphasizing the complexity of relations between Christians and Jews, Kalik points to the economic necessity of their relationships and explores the employment of Christians in Jewish homes as one of the few ways in which Christians "obtained close and intimate contact with Jews, their way of life, language, religion, and culture."[32] Employment in the domestic realm facilitated, "interpersonal exchange, and even personal sympathy, well beyond business relations."[33] Though Kalik notes this arrangement created apprehension in both the Christian and Jewish communities, her work represents an important backdrop to my own.[34]

Similarly, the chapters in Robert Blobaum's collection *Antisemitism and Its Opponents in Modern Poland*, portrays relations between Poles and Jews along a spectrum of very antagonistic to relatively symbiotic. Keely Stauter-Halsted's chapter, "Jews as Middleman Minorities in Rural Poland," illustrates the way in which, prior to peasant emancipation and immediately

---

[32] Judith Kalik "Christian Servants Employed by Jews in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries," 259.

[33] Ibid.

[34] Ibid. Kalik is not specifically discussing Polish Catholic women working in Jewish homes as servants. She includes Poles, Ruthenians, and Germans who could be Catholic, Orthodox, Uniate, or Lutheran. She also found instances of Muslim Tartars working as servants. She notes that numerous references regarding the employment of Christian domestic servants in Jewish households can be found in secular Jewish and Polish sources as well as ecclesiastical sources, burghers' literature, Sejm resolutions and royal decrees. The Polish Church began publishing prohibitions on Christian women working in Jewish homes as early as 1267 as the church sought to segregate its congregation from the Jewish population, according to Kalik (261). The first legal restrictions on Jewish employment of Christian domestic servants would be passed by the Sejm in 1565 and were applied only to Jews and then extended to Tartars in 1678. (262-263) Kalik notes that these restrictions on employment in Tartar homes ended in 1775.

following, Jewish innkeepers acted as channels of information from outside the village for the peasants, "a go-between in peasant relations with the landlord, and a source of advice and assistance on issues ranging from medicine and familial relations to financial and legal affairs."[35] While this relationship obviously placed Jews in a difficult position, being the subject of economic envy from the peasant population and under the oversight of the Polish landlords, it does illustrate the opportunities for interaction that were not based purely on economic transactions.[36]

The dissertation also draws on a school of research on wartime examinations of Polish-Jewish relations that began with the works of Emmanuel Ringelblum.[37] Ringelblum's treatment of Polish-Jewish relations during the Occupation, *Polish-Jewish Relations during the Second World War*, looks at the impact of the Nazi policies on relations between the Poles and Jews, offering a tempered analysis. [38] He highlights Polish persecution of Jews but also points to the

---

[35] Keely Stauter-Halsted, "Jews as Middleman Minorities in Rural Poland: Understanding the Galician Pogroms on 1898," in *Antisemitism and Its Opponents in Modern Poland,* Robert Blobaum, ed. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press), 48.

[36] Anna Maria Orła-Bukowska, "Shtetl Communities: Another Image," in *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry*, Vol. 8, *Jews in Independent Poland, 1919-1939* (London, 1994), 89-113 also illustrates the reciprocal relationships of Poles and Jews in the countryside.

[37] Jan Grabowski's *Hunt for Jews* has already been mentioned above. His piece focuses on the role of Poles, and other gentiles, in the *Judenjagd*, or the hunt for Jews who had escaped the ghettos by the German police or gendarmes, in the rural county of Dąbrowa Tarnowska in southeastern Poland. This is obviously a contentious subject as it involves a close examination of Polish behavior under Nazi-Occupation and it does not in any way whitewash Polish persecution of their Jewish co-citizens.

[38] Emmanuel Ringelblum, *Polish-Jewish Relations during the Second World War*, (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1974). Also worth mentioning specifically is Emmanuel Ringelblum, *Notes from the Warsaw Ghetto: The Journal of Emmanuel Ringelblum*, Jacob Sloan, ed., (New York: Schoken, 1974) was not written as specific commentary on Polish-Jewish relations and is special because it is primary document written during the war, but it is nevertheless invaluable to understanding relations between Jews and Poles during the Nazi-Occupation.

role of Nazi propaganda and occupation conditions in heightening the levels of antisemitism and prewar anti-Jewish attitudes that were prevalent prior to the war. Ringelblum emphasizes that at the outbreak of the Second World War there was a moment of cooperation between Poles and Jews but notes that after the invasion there was "a revival of antisemitism in the full sense of the term."[39] This is of particular importance for my own examination of rescue activities because it illustrates not only the climate aid occurred within, but also the way that the behavior of the maids and nannies who did decide to protect their charges went against the larger trend in Polish society. Instead of being swept up in this increased antisemitism, they acted in opposition to it.

Holocaust memory provides a prism for addressing Polish-Jewish relations and historians have studied wartime relations from the perspective of postwar tensions over property rights, violence, and guilt.[40] Many Poles obtained formerly Jewish owned businesses or homes thus this was a point of contention when survivors returned home and led to unrest, fear, violence, and guilt for Poles. In addition to focusing on this aspect of the postwar, the literature also addresses memory of the Holocaust as well as memorialization.[41] This project takes very tentative steps

---

[39] Emmanuel Ringelblum, *Polish-Jewish Relations during the Second World War*, 37.

[40] For examples see Joanna Michlic, "The Holocaust and Its Aftermath a Perceived in Poland: Voices of Polish Intellectuals, 1945-1947," in *The Jews Are Coming Back: The Return of the Jews to Their Countries of Origin after WWII,* David Bankier, ed. (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2005), 206-230; Jan T. Gross, *Fear*; Adam Pankall "Poles and Jews in the Keilce Region and Radom, April 1945- February 1946," in *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry,* Vol. 13, *Focusing on the Holocaust and its Aftermath,* (Oxford: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2000) 236-252; Joanna Michlic, "Anti-Jewish Violence in Poland, 1918-1939 and 1945-1947," in *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry,* Vol. 13, *Focusing on the Holocaust and its Aftermath* (Oxford: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2000), 34-61. Much of the postwar literature focuses on the responses by Polish gentiles to the return of Jews.

[41] For discussion of memorialization see Genevieve Zubrzycki, *The Crosses of Auschwitz: Nationalism and Religion in Post-Communist Poland* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), and Jonathan Huener, *Auschwitz, Poland, and the Commemoration, 1945-1979* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2003). For discussion of Holocaust memory, see Michael Steinlauf,

into the immediate postwar period and Holocaust memory in the conclusion, arguing that maids and nannies who rescued their Jewish charges faced conflicts over who would care for the child at the war's end. Memory of wartime activities contributes to existing scholarly conversations on such issues.

This dissertation is also meant as contribution to our understanding of Holocaust rescue in Poland, a subfield that remains small to date.[42] I draw especially on studies such Lenore Weitzman's chapter, "Living on the Aryan Side in Poland," in which she explores Jewish survival efforts augmented by gentile helpers rather than characterizing Jewish subjects as mere passive recipients of aid.[43] In conversation with scholarship that highlights Jews self-agency, my own work stresses Jewish agency and self-help in rescue relationships.[44] Finally, Jan Grabowski

---

Bondage to the Dead: Poland and the Memory of the Holocaust (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1997);

[42] Gunnar Paulsson's 2002 was really the first to offer an in-depth analysis of rescue activities and networks in Warsaw and has pointed to avenues for new research, see Gunnar Paulsson, *Secret City: The Hidden Jews of Warsaw, 1940-1945* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002). In 2010 Irene Tomaszewski and Tecia Werbowski published their co-authored, Irene Tomaszewski and Tecia Werbowski, *Code Name Zegota, Rescuing Jews in Occupied Poland, 1942-1945: The Most Dangerous Conspiracy in Wartime Europe* (Santa Barbara: Paeger, 2010). This focuses on organizational aid and rescue efforts of Nazi-Occupied Poland in a rather even-handed manner and the most comprehensive piece on this particular organization in English. Ewa Kurek also looks at aid by focusing on rescue as it was carried out in convents and orphanages by Polish nuns. See, Ewa Kurek, *Your Life is Worth Mine: How Polish Nuns Saved Hundreds of Jewish Children in German-Occupied Poland, 1939-1945* (New York: Hippocrene, 1997). The aid carried out by the nuns of Kurek's study was not the result of a directive from higher in the church bureaucracy but rather was based on the decisions of the individual Mother Superiors and nuns of each convent, so it was more informal and diffuse than the aid provided by Żegota.

[43] Lenore Weitzman, "Living on the Aryan Side in Poland: Gender, Passing and the Nature of Resistance," in *Women in the Holocaust,* eds. Dalia Ofer and Lenore Weitzman (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1998), 187-222.

[44] See also the edited collection, Jacques Semelin, Claire Andrieu, and Sarah Gensburger, eds., *Resisting Genocide: The Multiple Forms of Rescue* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011) that highlights the agency of Jewish victims.

looks at rescue of Polish Jews by paid helpers in Poland to problematize how we think about rescue efforts by gentiles during the Holocaust.[45] Grabowski argues that rescuers asking for money, even significant amounts, should not be automatically branded as "immoral" and thus, "deserving of our contempt," because there was nothing normal about this situation and many Poles were facing hard economic times.[46] Grabowski normalizes rescue efforts, taking into account that these rescuers were real people with varied needs and motives and not heroic caricatures of people.

Literature focusing on the rescuers themselves can be divided into two main groups: one examining the motivations for rescue and another memorializing wartime aid efforts. Studies about motivation stress personality profiles, traits, or background that motivated rescuers to go against societal norms to aid Jews.[47] In the Polish case, Nechama Tec leads the field in examining the conditions under which rescue took place and considers what motivated Christian Poles to provide aid.[48] Case studies such as those compiled by Martin Gilbert and Mordecai Paldiel look at the motivations for and challenges of rescue.[49]

---

[45] Jan Grabowski, "Rescue for Money: Paid Helpers in Poland, 1939-1945," in *Search and Research: Lectures and Papers, 13* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2008).

[46] Jan Grabowski, "Rescue for Money," 9.

[47] Samuel P. Oliner and Pearl M. Oliner, *The Altruistic Personality: The Rescue of Jews in Nazi Europe* (New York and London: The Free Press and Collier Macmillian Publishers, 1988); Patrick Henry, *We Only Know Men: The Rescue of Jews in France During the Holocaust* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2007); Eva Fogelman, *Conscience and Courage: Rescuers of Jews During the Holocaust* (New York: Anchor Books, Doubleday, 1994); and Malka Drucker, *Rescuers : Portraits of Moral Courage in the Holocaust* (New York : Holmes & Meier, 1992).

[48] Nechama Tec, *When Light Pierced the Darkness: Christian Rescue of Jews in Nazi-Occupied Poland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986).

[49] Martin Gilbert, *The Righteous: The Unsung Heroes of the Holocaust* (New York: Holt, 2003); Mordecai Paldiel, *The Path of the Righteous: Gentile Rescuers of Jews During the Holocaust*

While in conversation with these other studies of rescue and rescuers, this dissertation seeks to place rescue efforts firmly within the Polish historical context. Rather than seeking a formulation of personality traits to explain rescue motivations for the subjects of my study, I argue that it was the prewar relationships they established with their charges in the domestic realm, their experience of leaving their families of origin to work, and the responsibilities of the roles they took on during their employment that were the major motivating factors behind their decisions to provide aid. This assertion points to avenues for new research into rescue motivations such as looking in other private spaces. In addition, while I have the utmost respect for the efforts of the rescuers of this study, I do not seek to make heroes of them. They did not understand themselves as heroes or see their activities as anything out of the ordinary, but rather an extension of prewar relationships and responsibilities.[50]

Finally, this dissertation contributes to the literature on gender roles and childhood experiences during moments of intense conflict. This literature can and should be examined in

---

(New Jersey: KTAV Publishing House, 1993). There is an ever increasing number of books which are merely edited collections of testimonies that serve to bring rescue efforts to light in part to help readers access some sort of understanding of the experience of the Holocaust and also to honor the rescuers for their efforts. See also, Carol Rittner and Sandra Myers, eds., *The Courage to Care: Rescuers of Jews During the Holocaust* (New York: New York University Press, 1986); Mark Klempner, *The Heart Has Reasons: Holocaust Rescuers and Their Stories of Courage* (Cleveland: The Pilgrim Press, 2006); and Ellen Land-Weber, *To Save a Life: Stories of Holocaust Rescue* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2000). In addition to these edited collections, Yad Vashem has also put out an extensive collection of encyclopedias of those who have been awarded status by their institution of Righteous Among the Nations. There are encyclopedias for each individual country, including Poland, which has two volumes due to the large number of Polish Righteous. This encyclopedia has brief entries for all Righteous Polish rescuers who were awarded the status prior to its publication. See Sara Bender and Shmuel Krakowski, eds., *The Encyclopedia of Righteous Among the Nations: Rescuers of Jews During the Holocaust, Poland. Vol. 1 and Vol. 2* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2004). While these edited volumes are useful for research they do not offer any analysis or much context for the rescue efforts.

[50] I will discuss this later in the dissertation. Evidence of this can specifically be seen in the case of Genia Olczak who did not feel she had any choice but to aid her former employers, she felt it was her moral obligation.

two distinct categories, gender roles and childhood. Much of this literature consists of case studies designed to insert the voices and experiences of these often marginalized groups, women and children, back into the larger historical narrative.[51] Gendered analysis has been little utilized in studies of twentieth-century war and conflict. Scholars have brought women into the narrative of the Holocaust, but they do not focus on the interactive experiences of both genders in their work.[52] Nechama Tec and Marion Kaplan have employed women's history methods to argue

[51] Several edited collections of testimonies from women and child survivors of conflict were compiled for the purpose of bringing their voices to a larger audiences and making readers aware of their gender or age specific experiences that are often not included in the larger narrative. For an example on women's experiences see Brana Gurewitsch, ed., *Mothers, Sisters, Resisters: Oral Histories of Women who Survived the Holocaust* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1998). There are several examples of collections of child survivors testimonies, some taken immediately after the war and some much later. For an immediate postwar example see Maria Hochberg-Mariańska and Noe Gruss, eds., *The Children Accuse* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 1996) For examples of collections of later testimonies see Wiktoria Śliwowska, ed., *The Last Eyewitnesses: Children of the Holocaust Speak, Vol. 1* (Evanston: Northwestern, 1998). This was also published in Poland, Wiktoria Śliwowska, ed., *Dzieci Holocaustu Mówią* (Association of Children of the Holocaust, 1993). In addition see Jakub Gutenbaum and Agnieszka Latała, eds., *The Last Eyewitness: Children of the Holocaust Speak, Vol. 2* (Evanston: Northwestern, 2005); Elaine Saphier Fox, ed., *Out of Chaos: Hidden Children Remember the Holocaust* (Evanston: Northwestern, 2013); and Kerry Blueglass, ed., *Hidden From the Holocaust: Stories of Resiliant Children who Survived and Thrived* (London: Praeger, 2003). This particular collection offers some brief analysis in a short chapter after the introduction and in a final section but the bulk of the work is made up of testimonies. Similar is Sarah Moskovitz, ed., *Love Despite Hate: Child Survivors of the Holocaust and Their Adult Lives* (New York: Schoken, 1983) in which the author provides some context in an early section and also reflections on survivor experiences in the end. A final and interesting example of an edited collection of child survivor accounts is Danielle Bailly, ed., *The Hidden Children of France, 1940-1945: Stories of Survival* (Albany: State University of New York, 2010) in which the survivors wrote their own contributions and focused on how their childhood in hiding would affect their adult lives. While many of these collections often little analysis they are useful in the classroom and for research, and useful for bringing the voices of the underrepresented back into the narrative.

[52] Elizabeth Harvey, *Women in the Nazi East: Agents and Witnesses of Germanization* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003); Wendy Lower, *Hitler's Furies: German Women in the Nazi Killing Fields* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2013); Katherine R. Jolluck, *Women in the Nazi East: Polish Women in the Soviet Union During World War II* (Pittsburg: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2002); Dalia Ofer and Lenore J. Weitzman, eds., *Women in the Holocaust* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1998); and Elizabeth R. Baer and Myrna

that Jewish women were better prepared to cope, provide assistance to one another, and survive the Holocaust than their male counterparts.[53] While such arguments are compelling, further study of male networks and relationships is needed to complete the picture. Recent edited collections have begun to include a more balanced gendered analysis.[54] Kenneth Waltzer's work on young boys hidden and protected in the Buchenwald camp has shown networks of assistance and protection established by older male inmates, and Joseph Zieman's memoir demonstrates similar patterns of aid among boys and men.[55] I intend to contribute in this field of research by including the entire family dynamic in my work rather than isolating the study of genders from one another.

Finally, this work contributes to the growing body of scholarship that treats the experiences of children during and immediately following European conflicts. Patricia Heberer edited a collection that is a reader of primary sources with context information that is useful for classrooms and researchers alike.[56] Several other collections of testimonies add the experiences

---

Goldenberg, eds., *Experience and Expression: Women, the Nazis, and the Holocaust* (Detroit: Wayne State University, 2003).

[53] See Nechama Tec, *Resilience and Courage* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2003), and Marion Kaplan, *Between Dignity and Despair* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).

[54] Kevin Passmore, ed., *Women, Gender and Fascism in Europe, 1919-1945* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2003); and Nancy M. Wingfield and Maria Bucur, eds., *Gender & War in Twentieth Century Eastern Europe* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006). Dagmar Herzog, ed., *Brutality and Desire: War and Sexuality in Europe's Twentieth-Century* (New York: Palgrave, 2009), focuses on gender and sexuality in analyzing twentieth century European conflicts. In Adam Jones, *Genocide: A Comprehensive Introduction* (London and New York: Routledge, 2011), Jones treats genocide in Europe, Africa and Asia and has a chapter on genocide that explores how regimes target members of gender categories for different reasons and through different means.

[55] Joseph Zieman, *Cigarette Sellers of Three Crosses Square* (New York: Avon, 1975).

[56] Patricia Heberer, ed., *Children During the Holocaust* (Maryland: AltaMira Press, 2011).

and voices of children to the narrative where they are often excluded.[57] In addition, a few recent scholarly monographs and articles addressing childhood experiences during and resulting from war and the Holocaust have also been published.[58] Many of these works rely heavily on the testimony of child survivors, which is a fairly new development as scholars increasingly began to utilize this important cache of experiences. My dissertation contributes to the trend of utilizing postwar testimonies given by child survivors of the Holocaust taken both immediately after the war and much later to recover their voices and incorporate them into the narrative.

Methodology

To construct my narrative and gain access to the domestic realm I utilized a variety of sources. In order to provide context for the study I read interwar period Polish language daily presses and women's journals searching for discourse on maids and nannies including their role in the households, reforms to their working conditions, and any other articles relating to them

---

[57] These have been mentioned above also. Maria Hochberg-Mariańska and Noe Gruss, eds., *The Children Accuse*; Wiktoria Śliwowska, ed., *The Last Eyewitnesses: Children of the Holocaust Speak, Vol. 1*; Jakub Gutenbaum and Agnieszka Latała, eds., *The Last Eyewitness: Children of the Holocaust Speak, Vol. 2*; Elaine Saphier Fox, ed., *Out of Chaos: Hidden Children Remember the Holocaust*; and Kerry Blueglass, ed., *Hidden From the Holocaust: Stories of Resilient Children who Survived and Thrived*.

[58] For postwar see Tahra Zahra, *The Lost Children: Reconstructing Europe's Families after World War II* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011); Emunah Nachmany Gafny, *Dividing Hearts: The Removal of Jewish Children from Gentile Families in Poland in the Immediate Postwar Years* (Yad Vashem: Jerusalem, 2009); Nahum Bogner, *At the Mercy of Strangers: The Rescue of Jewish Children with Assumed Identities in Poland* (Yad Vashem: Jerusalem, 2009); Joanna Michlic, "Rebuilding Shattered Lives: Some Vignettes of Jewish Children's Lives in *Early Postwar Poland, in Holocaust Survivors: Resettlement, Memories, Identities,* eds., Dalia Ofer, Francoise S. Ouzan, and Judy Tydor Baumel-Schwartz (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2012), 46-87; Joanna B. Michlic, "Who Am I? Jewish Children Search for Identity in Post-War Poland," in *Polin, Volume 20, Making Holocaust Memory,* eds. Gabriel Finder, Natalia Aleksiun, Antony Polonsky and Jan Schwarz (Oxford and Portland: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2008), 98-121. For wartime experiences, see Joanna Beata Michlic, *Jewish Children in Nazi-Occupied Poland: Survival and Polish-Jewish Relations During the Holocaust as Reflected in Early Postwar Recollections* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2008).

such as reports of crimes committed against or by them. I examined articles and classified advertisements from interwar period issues of *Kurjer codzienny*, *Nasz przegląd*, *Chwila*, *Gazeta warszawska*, and *Gazeta polska*. Here I found discourse on the need and activities surrounding efforts to reform the legal system to offer protections to servants. I also located articles about household servants that illustrate both the vulnerability and agency of domestic servants. The classified advertisements provided insight into pay, qualifications, and the job market for domestic servants. In addition, I read the journals *Dobra gospodyni*, *Dziecko i matka*, *Życie kobiece*, *Życie kobiet*, *Rodzina i dziecko*, and *Gazeta dla kobiet.* They contained articles regarding the role of the servant in the home, the relationships that developed between nannies and their charges, and middle-class culture. These contemporary documents were vital for providing the historical context for the first half of the dissertation that focuses on the interwar years.

I also used testimonies and memoirs from survivors of the Holocaust as well as their rescuers when I could locate them. Some of these testimonies were taken immediately after the war while others much later and were found in the University of Southern California's Shoah Foundation Visual History Archives, the Jewish Historical Institute's Holocaust Survivor Testimonies (RG 301), the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's Oral History collection as well as other testimonies housed at the USHMM and Yad Vashem in Israel. I accessed these testimonies searching for cases of rescue of Jewish children by their prewar domestic servants as well as testimonies that discussed the employment of gentile maids in the household, her role in the home and the relationships that developed between the servant and her employers in the domestic realm. In addition, I culled the Ringleblum Archives and the Jewish Historical

Institute's collection of Unpublished Memoirs (RG 302) for discussion of rescue or persecution by former domestic servants.

While initially I accessed the Holocaust survivor testimonies seeking out rescue cases I soon realized that they offered entry into the private life of the domestic realm. I listened to hundreds of testimonies that discussed prewar domestic life that have allowed me to access the experiences of middle-class Jewish childhood in interwar Poland; to characterize the middle-class Jewish household; to better understand how a Polish Catholic domestic fit into these households; and the attachments formed there. I listened to testimonies from survivors who had been rescued by their Polish maid, survivors whose families were persecuted by their Polish maids, and also that of survivors who had a maid before the war and she was not involved in their survival efforts during the war to find a more neutral depiction of the maid and her relationship with the employing family. These testimonies were vital to this project because they allowed me to learn about daily life and the relationships that developed in the household. I also, when possible, sought out testimonies and interviews of Polish Catholic maids who rescued their former charges to gain their perspective on their wartime activities and the ways they remembered their actions and their relationship with the child.

I recognize that there are several issues with the use of testimonies. One is that of memory. The testimonies from the Jewish Historical Institute (RG 301) were taken rather immediately to the liberation period so there is less time to affect the memory of the person providing testimony. These testimonies tend to focus on the trauma and loss suffered with less focus on aid providers. They are fairly brief and generally do not include much discussion of prewar life. The bulk of the testimonies I used for this dissertation were those held by the USC Shoah Foundaiton Visual History Archive. These testimonies include discussion of prewar life

and are usually substantial in length. These were largely recorded in the 1990s, so some forty-five or fifty years after the events. An obvious issue with these testimonies is the length of time that passed between the events and the retelling of the survivor's experiences. When possible I matched these testimonies up with other testimonies given either by the same person or another person who was involved in their survival efforts. Often this is not possible. In addition, I critically evaluate all testimonies with the understanding that a significant amount of time and life experience has shaped how the survivors remember the events of the past and their relationships. While there are potential pitfalls to using these later testimonies, without them the experiences of these survivors before the war, during the Nazi occupation, and later would be lost to us. There is no perfect source to get at intimate relationships and personal experiences but even with the complications of memory and time, these types of testimonies are the best source available for this project and proved to be quite rich.

Many of the domestic servants of this study were given status as Righteous Among the Nations by Yad Vashem in Jerusalem. In order to confer this status upon an aid provider, documentation has to be provided by the person or people who were given aid. This includes testimony in their native language but also other correspondence is included in the files that are forwarded to the committee that makes the decision. These files are held at Yad Vashem. I attempted to access these files on two occasions to provide additional evidence for several of my cases and while these files are used in publications by several scholars, I was denied access. When requests for Righteous status were made through the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw a copy of the materials was kept there, along with all correspondence with Yad Vashem regarding the case. I was able to access those files held in Warsaw but the majority of the cases I needed were not available there. Accessing more of these files would be beneficial to my project

and I can only hope that Yad Vashem begins to allow fair access to these materials sometime in the near future.

Chapters

The dissertation consists of six chapters and is divided into two halves. The first half focuses on the interwar period while the second treats the Nazi Occupation of Poland and the Holocaust. The conclusion also takes the project into the postwar period and I hope to develop this later when the dissertation is transitioned into a monograph. Chapter one, "A Girl for Everything," examines how Polish maids found employment in middle-class Jewish households, the ways they found their niche within the home, their working conditions, and how relationships formed between these domestic employees and their employers. When considering rescue by a household servant it seems extraordinary that someone of little means and power would take the risk and thwart occupation policies to participate in rescue activities. This chapter argues that as a result of the power they often wielded in the household and through the experience of leaving home and making their way in the city, domestic servants frequently developed a sense of agency and empowerment. This made their decisions to use this power gained in the domestic realm again under Nazi Occupation whether it was to help or harm their former employers, a natural choice and not a sharp break in behavior.

The second chapter, "The Blurred Boundaries of the Domestic Sphere: Jewish, Polish, and Bourgeois," explores the cultural exchange that took place within the households of this study. Polish middle-class Jews transmitted their own understanding of Polish middle-class culture to their children directly and indirectly through the Polish Catholic maids that they

employed to supervise the children.[59] In addition to acting as a conduit of this Polish Jewish middle-class culture, these household employees also exposed their charges to Polish Catholic working-class or peasant culture. The chapter highlights the relationships that often developed here in the domestic realm between the Polish Catholic caregiver and the employing family. Finally, it argues that it was the experience of growing up in this particular milieu that allowed these children to better pass as Polish Catholic children if they had the opportunity to do so during the Holocaust.

The third chapter, "The Children's Sphere," follows the children of these households out into the public realm and into Polish-language private schools, public schools, the schoolyard, the courtyard, and the streets. It examines how their interactions with gentiles outside of the home further acculturated them with Polish Catholic majority culture. The chapter suggests that these identities aided children in developing a particular skill set that was useful when they wanted to be perceived as primarily Polish or when they wished to be identified as Jewish. This skill set was honed by the experiences children had in private Polish-language schools or state-run public schools. Friendships with Polish gentile children also provided some additional socialization in Polish gentile norms and customs. The chapter examines the development of the ability to pass as "Polish" (meaning as Polish Catholics), which allowed children to avoid being singled out at school as Jewish and to be targeted by antisemitic classmates and also later when, under Nazi rule, survival depended on being identified as a Pole.

The second half of the dissertation shifts to the Nazi invasion and occupation with the fourth chapter, "Responses to War, Occupation, and Ghettoization." This chapter examines the

[59] Alternately the gentile servants became accustomed to middle-class Polish *Jewish* culture as they acted on the directives of their employers and participated in middle-class life through activities such as vacationing in the countryside, living in a middle-class home, etc.

immediate responses of both the Polish Jewish employers and their Polish Catholic employees to the war. This chapter argues that prewar relationships between gentile domestic servants and their Jewish employers affected the desire of these employees to stay with the family after the outset of the war. Sometimes this also involved later assisting the family when the maids were not able to continue to live with the families as Jews increasingly became special targets for German aggression, were separated from the general population, and confined in ghettos. Alternatively, these prewar relationships or even the lack of their formation could motivate former employees to harm their former employers for their own gain or personal satisfaction.

The fifth chapter, "Decisions," looks at survival efforts inside the ghettos during the period leading up to and during the deportations. It examines the ways prewar relationships influenced decisions to seek or provide shelter outside of the ghettos. This chapter argues that the offer to take a child or the request to take one's child from the ghetto was a continuation of the prewar relationships that developed in the domestic realm between the employers and their servant and was a natural extension of this role. These domestic servants were trusted to care for their charges before the war, so they were a logical choice when a gentile was needed to keep a Jewish child on the so-called Aryan side. This chapter also seeks to place Jewish survival efforts, including self-help and flight in the realm of resistance.

The final chapter, "Life in Hiding on the Aryan Side," examines cases in which prewar domestic servants took their former charges from the ghetto to hide them on the so-called Aryan side. This chapter argues that the conditions of the Nazi occupation changed the relationships between the caregiver and charge she rescued, her former employers, and often her own acquaintances, family, and friends. The rescue dynamic led to both a greater intimacy between the caregiver and charge as they became partners in conspiracy even while their clandestine

activity greatly narrowed their universe and altered the prewar pattern of authority between the former employers and employees. The new dynamic also changed the character of the relationship between the child and caregiver, complicating it, and adding new tensions as the level of intimacy increased. And finally, this chapter seeks to demonstrate how this new situation led to an alteration in the inter ethno-religious ties and relationships that existed during the interwar period.

Overall, it is my intention that these chapters will make two main points. First, prewar relationships did in fact influence decisions to seek or provide aid during the Holocaust. The domestic realm was one space in which Catholic Poles and Polish Jews could have intimate contact with one another and come to see each other as members of a community of moral obligation rather than as "others." This was a space in which boundaries such as ethnicity, confession, and social class were sometimes permeable. Secondly, I hope to illustrate that as the war upended life for everyone, altered the social structure and pulling families apart, it also changed the nature of Polish-Jewish relations, even between those who had formed intimate bonds. And finally, I hope to illustrate that the prewar and wartime experiences of the prewar domestic servants of this study would forever alter them, changing their expectations for the postwar.

CHAPTER ONE

A GIRL FOR EVERYTHING: POLISH CATHOLIC DOMESTICS IN MIDDLE-CLASS JEWISH HOUSEHOLDS IN INTERWAR POLAND

Introduction

During the interwar years in Poland, even amidst a depressed economy, employment of domestic help by middle-class families was reasonably attainable. If a family could afford to feed an extra mouth, spend 20 to 40 zloty monthly, and had a space in the kitchen for a cot, it could hire a *dziewczyna do wszystkiego*, or a "girl for everything" to help maintain the home. Such households would usually only employ one maid, but as Maury Adams states in his testimony, "every Jewish family had a maid, even the poor families, always had a maid, a non-Jewish maid….for doing laundry, or cleaning…for all this we had maids…"[1] This idea that "everybody" had a maid is mentioned in a multitude of oral interviews by Polish Jewish Holocaust survivors and probably was true for Polish middle class as well as Jewish middle class families.[2] Both middle-class and lower middle-class Polish and Jewish households quite often employed maids because they were inexpensive. The presence of these Polish Catholic maids

---

[1] Videotaped testimony of Maury Adams, File no. 08896-3, Nov. 17, 1995, Tape I, The USC Shoah Foundation Institute, 6:46.

[2] Self- identification or social identification as a "Pole" or a "Polish Jew" was often laden with meaning. Many Polish citizens were Ukrainian, Lithuanian, or German speaking and may not have necessarily identified themselves as "Poles"; thus I use the term Polish citizens. Jews living in Poland would have been Polish citizens but would not necessarily label themselves as Polish Jews; however, in many of the Holocaust survivor testimonies I drew from to gain access into prewar life in Poland, those survivors interviewed did feel themselves to be "Polish Jews." Poland was their home and they felt very patriotic. In order to be inclusive of those who did not specifically identify themselves as Polish I will not use the label "Polish Jew" but I do not mean to strip away the identity of those Polish Jews who did see themselves as such. During the interwar period and the Holocaust many non-Jewish Poles did not view their Jewish neighbors as their "own" or feel a mutual responsibility to them, which had life altering repercussions for them. I am in no way meaning to reify this, but am simply using the label Jew or Jewish rather than Polish Jew in order to include those Jews living in Poland who did not feel "Polish."

and nannies employed and living in Jewish households helps us not only to better understand their place in society as a whole, but also increases our understanding of one form of rescue and aid given to Jewish adults and children during the Holocaust.

This chapter argues that while these domestic servants were in many ways marginalized and lacked social power, their experiences of having left the control and shelter of their families of origin to make their own ways also fostered their empowerment. This empowerment is later evident in the actions of some former servants under Nazi occupation, especially in their reactions to the plight of former Jewish employers who found themselves in increasing danger. Leaving home and being responsible for important household functions gave these women a body of experience to draw on when they made the decisions to either aid or persecute their former employers under the changing conditions of occupation. Also, in many cases, decisions to persecute, assist, or abandon former Jewish employers were rooted in a continuity of the prewar relationships that formed between these employees and their employers and the relative empowerment these women gained in their positions as domestic servants. This chapter examines the germination and development of these relationships.

Daily Life in Interwar Poland

One only has to open an issue of *Kurjer codzienny*, *Nasz przegląd*, *Gazeta warszawska* or similar interwar daily Polish language presses to find evidence of the importance of Polish maids in daily life and the economy in these years. The classified advertisements were full of households seeking maids and maids seeking employment, specifying what the position entailed, the pay that was offered, and the qualities that the ideal candidate would possess. Other articles detailed the occasional suicide of maids, maids involved in various accidents, maids accused of stealing from or murdering their employers, or maids being beaten or even killed by their

employers. These types of articles were quite sensational because these women were part of the domestic realm and were involved in intimate family space and social relations. This made such crimes and scandals, no doubt, all the more shocking and exciting to the public. Articles regarding efforts to pass legislation to regulate the working conditions of maids and offer them some protections from exploitative employers can be easily found. While we have little documentation directly from these women themselves, in their own words, from which we can learn about their experiences, if a reader looks carefully, evidence of this social group and its experiences abounds throughout the presses.[3]

[3] "Służąca trucicielka," *Kurjer Codzienny,* July 3, 1938, 1; "Służąca otruła się gazem,"*Kurjer codzienny*, July 6, 1938, 1; "Tajemnica morderstwa przy ulicy opaczewskiej pracodawczyni zastrzeliła swą starą służącą," *Kurjer codzienny*, July 7, 1938, 1; "Dzielna pracownica domowa uratowała mienie pracodawoc," *Kurjer codzienny*, August 23, 1938, 3; "Urlopy: dla służby domowej," September 6, 1938, 4; "Unormowanie warunków płacy i pracy: służba domową nie będzie juz upośledzona," *Kurjer codzienny*, September 16, 1938, 3; "Chlebodawca: Zboczeniec uwiódł i znęcał 13- letnią dziewczynką," *Kurjer codzienny*, March 20, 1937, 3; "Dzielna służąca przepędziła bandytów," *Kurjer codzienny*, March 20, 1937, 3; "Potworni mordercy dwu kobiety: staną wkrótce przed sądem," *Kurjer codzienny*, March 28, 1937, 4; "Opłaty od służby domowej na rzecz ubezpieczeń społecznych- ustalone. Ale tylko tymczasowo," *Nasz przegląd*, February 10, 1934, 9; "Sprawa opłat ubezpieczeniowych od służby domowej," *Nasz Przegląd*, February 11, 1934, 10; "Opłata ubezpieczeniowa za służącą- 8 zł?" *Nasz przegląd*, February 13, 1934, 12; "Opłaty ubezpieczeniowe od służby domowej: Będą ustalone w tych dniach," *Nasz przegląd*, February 14, 1934, 8; "Ustalenie opłat ubezpieczeniowych za służące," *Nasz przegląd*, February 19, 1934, 7; "Nowy kłoput z opłatami ubezpieczeniowemi za służbę domową: za opóźnienie władz ma ją płacić pracodawcy!" *Nasz przegląd*, March 4, 1934, 10; "Składki trzeba płacić bez wezwan: Dlaczego Naraża się pracodawców na niepotrzebną stratę czasu?"*Nasz przegląd*, March 11, 1934, 8; "Usiłowanie zgwałcenia kobiety w pociągu fatalny skok napadnietej," *Nasz przegląd*, May 15, 1934, 8; "Studenci mordercami służącej," *Nasz przegląd*, May 23, 1934, 2; "Nagrody dla służby domowej: za wieloletnia nienaganna służbe,"*Gazeta warszawka*, January 8, 1934, 4; "Skladki ubezpieczeniowe za pracowników: zgłoszenia obowiązują kazdą rodzinę utrzymujacą służącą," *Gazeta warszawka*, January 10, 1934, 8; "Obowiązek zgłaszania służby domowej," *Gazeta warszawka*, January 30, 1934, 8; "Popłoch wśród służby Domowej: Zapowiedz wysokich składek grozi nowa fala bezrobocia," *Gazeta warszawka*, February 9, 1934, 9; "Absurd emerytur dla służących: solidarne stanowisko pan I służących," *Gazeta warszawka*, February 14, 1934, 8.

According to the 1931 population census, approximately 441,100 Polish citizens were employed in domestic service.[4] Roughly 22,500 of these domestic workers were Jewish, so the vast majority were gentiles. This 441,100 citizens is a significant segment of the population and domestic service was a very common source of income for many young Polish women. This sector of the economy employed greater numbers of Polish citizens than were employed in the categories of "Education & Culture" or "Health Services, Healing & Hygiene, etc."[5] While statistics are not available to determine how many Polish Catholic women were employed as servants in Jewish middle-class households, it can be assumed from the significantly larger number of Polish Catholic domestics in the field and also from discussion in testimonies by many Holocaust survivors, as well as from articles in the interwar period press, that it was a quite significant number. Polish Catholic maids employed in Jewish homes were common.

Women who worked as domestics generally came from the countryside nearby to a city and found work in more urban settings than the areas from which they came. Many Jewish families employed non-Jewish maids in their homes, where they often worked alongside the mistress of the house or presided in her absence because she was heavily involved in the family business. Even for women who were free from working in the family business, social commitments often kept them outside the home for much of their time. Domestics were often quite involved in raising their employer's children and became intimately knowledgeable about the families for whom they worked. Historical studies of interwar and occupied Poland do not tend to acknowledge the existence of such sustained, meaningful contacts between Catholic Poles and Jews, but Polish nannies and housemaids represent a key example of the ways intimate relationships

[4] Joseph Marcus, *The Social and Political History of the Jews in Poland, 1919-1939* (Berlin, New York and Amsterdam: Mouton Publishers, 1983), 438.
[5] Ibid.

developed in the domestic realm and affected action later during the war.[6] Scholarship by Marci Shore and Sean Martin highlight ways that Polish Christian and Polish Jewish communities operated within Polish society, characterizing their relations as ranging from symbiotic to antagonistic, but nonetheless, as interrelated.[7]

Young Polish Catholic women who came from the countryside to work in urban centers often suffered from feelings of isolation from their families and lacked good support networks within their new surroundings. Esther Avny, a Jewish survivor of the Holocaust, remembers the maid who worked for her family in Gniezo when she was a young girl.[8] She recalls that the family had a young Polish (non-Jewish) maid who came to work for the family from a village outside of Gniezo, and states that, "she was very young and always she was very, very like my mother's daughter. You know, they take

---

[6] See Norman Davies, "Ethnic Diversity in Twentieth-Century Poland," in *From Shtetl to Socialism: Studies from Polin*, ed. Antony Polonsky (London and Washington: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 1993) for treatment in Polish narrative of pre-World War II Polish- Jewish interactions. For discussion of the segregated treatment of Polish and Jewish communities in historical narratives see Michael Steinlauf, *Bondage to the Dead: Poland and the Memory of the Holocaust* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1997); Theodore Weeks "Assimilation, Nationalism, Modernization, Antisemitism: Notes on Polish-Jewish Relations, 1855-1905," in *Antisemitism and Its Opponents In Modern Poland* , ed. Robert Blobaum, (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2005), 20-38. Celia Heller, *Edge of Destruction* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1993) is a prime example of this treatment of Polish-Jewish relations that portrays Poles and Jews as separate communities with hostile relations. Also, in Eva Hoffman, *Shtetl: The Life and Death of a Small Town and the World of Polish Jews* she discusses the Bransk Memory Book and the absence of Polish- Jewish interactions found within.

[7] Marci Shore, *Caviar and Ashes: A Warsaw Generation's Life and Death in Marxism, 1918-1968;* Sean Martin, *Jewish Life in Cracow, 1918-1939*; Eva Hoffman, *Shtetl: The Life and Death of a Small Town and the World of Polish Jews*; Shimon Redlich, *Together and Apart in Brzezany: Poles, Jews, and Ukrainians, 1919-1945* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2002).

[8] I have listened to approximately 300 USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archives interviews of Holocaust survivors who lived in prewar Poland. This sample included both survivors who were children and adults, as well as survivors who were rescued by Catholic Poles and those who were not. A small number of these survivors were aided by their former domestics, but not so many as to skew the sample set. Friendly or familial relations are not remembered by the survivors through the window of aid; they existed separately.

care of her."[9] Avney continues, "She was very good for us because she helped out in the home because my mother, she was always busy in the store with father. So, she was doing everything, and taking care of us. She was very, very close to us."[10] She remembers the maid being happy with the family who treated her well. When the maid had time off she would take the children with her back to her village to stay there with her and her own parents. Avney enjoyed this time in the maid's village and said that the maid's family was very good to the children. Avney and her family grew attached to their young maid and became familiar with her family back in the village. For the maid, Avney's home became something more than a place of work. Avney recalls the maid even cried at the outbreak of the war when Avney's father was called up for service. She states that the maid "cried like one of the members in the family."[11] It was not unusual for Polish Catholic domestic servants to form familial-type bonds with their employing Jewish families such as the case of Aveny's family.

It is difficult to characterize the "Jewish home" in interwar Poland but for the purpose of this project my focus is primarily on urban middle-class acculturated Jewish households. Even amongst the Jewish urban middle -class, households varied according to income levels, language spoken in the home, levels of acculturation or assimilation, and religious observance. Based on approximately three hundred Holocaust survivor testimonies, it was not uncommon for Polish to be spoken in the home, even if the primary language was Yiddish. Many children were sent to Polish public schools and were educated in the Polish language, and so were comfortable using it, and many professional Jews used Polish as their first language in the work place. Many Jewish families kept kosher, at least at home, and

---

[9] Videotaped testimony of Esther Avney, File no. 13775-3, March 28, 1996, Tape 1, The USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive, 11:30.
[10] Ibid., 12:01.
[11] Ibid., 11:40.

went to synagogue at least on the holidays, while others were extremely observant, and some not observant at all.

Maids often had special bonds with the children of the family. Sometimes there was not a vast difference in age and the family's maid would become like a sister or a mother. Carmela Finkel grew up in Radziechów and while she does not recall the name of their maid, she states, "She raised us, she helped raise us so yeah, she probably loved us the same way she would love her own sisters."[12] June Feinsilver also recalls playing at her girlfriend Rusia's house where Rusia's maid entertained the girls. "We used to dress her up and color her cheeks…those are funny stories but that's part of my childhood."[13] Roman Englander also recounts that the maids who came to work for the family from the countryside were treated like a part of the family. It was a ritual in the house that while he shined his father's shoes he would also have to shine the shoes of their maid, Marysia.[14] Marysia's had Sundays off but since she liked the children she would take them to mass with her. "I had more holy water on me than any Catholic child in Poland," remarked Englander.[15] He celebrated Christmases with Marysia at the Polish building superintendent's apartment. Many Jewish children experienced Christmas as a result of their Polish servants. Genia Figlarz also recalls going to the home of the

[12] Videotaped testimony of Carmela Finkel, File no. 12543-4, February 25, 1996, Tape 1, The USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive, 13:26.
[13] Videotaped testimony of June Feinsilver, File no. 10031-5, December 13, 1995, Tape 1, The USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archie, 9:30.
[14] Videotaped testimony of Roman Englander, File no. 16533-3, June 26, 1996, Tape 1, The USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive, 14:43.
[15] Ibid., 15:30.

family's laundress to celebrate Christmas. She was excited to go but she ate only the doughnuts so as to try to adhere to the laws of *kashrut*.[16]

In many cases these maids did become part of the family, as expressed above by Englander. Edward Davis grew up in a kosher home in Drohobycz and the family always had a maid from one of the surrounding villages. He recalls that the women were very poor and did not have enough to eat at home, so they came to the city looking for work and "really became part of the family."[17] "They lived a life with us," "slept with us, and were a part of it (the family)," and usually stayed until they were in their early 20's and then they would marry or go back to the village, to be replaced by another Polish girl.[18] He recalls that the maids would have Sundays off but would still eat dinner with the family.

Aside from the closeness and familial bonds that sometimes developed between a servant and the children, many mothers developed a felt dependence on such employees. Often, in middle- class Jewish households the parents were heavily involved in the family business or the mothers had social commitments. This meant that a family's maid or nanny played a crucial role in the upbringing of the children, and often the children spent more time with these servants than their own mothers. Morris Feldman's family lived outside of Skarzysko, Poland. He describes the family as observant; his mother kept her hair covered, and she and his father were always busy with the family's hardware store. He says, "We had a Polish lady, young lady, who was taking care of us because they were quite involved in it, in the store, and I probably, I suppose I probably had more attention from that Polish woman who

---

[16] Videotaped testimonyof Genia Figlarz, File no. 35508-2, November 17, 1997, Tape 1, The USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive.

[17] Videotaped testimony of Edward Davis, File no. 28953-38, May 9, 1997, Tape 1, The USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive, 15:10.

[18] Ibid., 15:57.

worked for us."[19] Holocaust survivor Anna Degan remembers one maid in particular, named Valerka, who remained with her family a long time. Degan remembers Valerka dressing the children and taking them for walks, to their play dates, and to visit their grandmother. The interviewer asks Degan if her mother did any of that as well and Degan replies no, "Mother had an easy life," she attended concerts, events, and visited with friends and family. [20] She left the daily care of the children to their servant. Degan's mother was by no means unusual in her social activities and her reliance on domestic staff.

Finding a Niche in the Jewish Household

Polish Catholic women were in many cases able to form their own niche in Jewish households despite cultural, class, or religious differences. In part this was out of necessity. These domestic servants needed employment so they really had to try to fit into the rhythms of the families who employed them. As mentioned in the testimonies of Roman Englander and Genia Figlarz, Jewish children became acquainted with their maids' religious customs and practices and this was often reciprocal. Many Polish Catholic maids became intimately familiar with Jewish religious and cultural customs as well. When Deborah Herzog was born, her mother had to hire a wetnurse because she had a medical condition that made it difficult for her to breast feed her own child. This wetnurse stayed on as the family's housekeeper until the outbreak of the war. The maid, Jadzka, did all of the cooking and cleaning and cared for young Deborah. Deborah remembers that when she was a child she spent most of her time with the maid and even spent some time with Jadzka's family in the countryside.[21]

---

[19] Videotaped testimony of Morris Feldman, File no. 22863-5, November 17, 1996, Tape 1, The USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archives, 9:49.

[20] Videotaped testimony of Anna Degan, File no. 37007-40, October 15, 1997, Tape 1, The USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archives, 15:03.

[21] Videotaped testimony of Deborah Herzog, File no. 42124-40, March 14, 1998, Tape 2, The USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive 4:10.

Deborah's family spoke Polish at home and they were observant; she recalls they kept kosher and observed the Sabbath. Jadzka, a Pole, found her niche in the home and became a member of the family. She was responsible for all cooking and thus was trusted to observe the laws of *kashrut*. Deborah remembers Jadzka even made the challah. Her mother would come home from the shop when they were ready and she would say a prayer over the dough. When Deborah's grandmother came to visit, she, Jadzka, and Deborah would say prayers together, and Deborah assumes that her grandmother taught Jadzka the prayers. Holocaust survivor Dina Jackson also remembers the family's Polish Catholic maid teaching her Hebrew and prayers after learning them from Dina's older brothers and sisters.[22]

Jula Jurek came from the town of Brody in northern Eastern Galicia and found work at the Kohn household in nearby Lwów. They maintained a kosher kitchen, celebrated the Jewish holidays, and went to synagogue. Jurek was illiterate, Catholic, and nine years older than the Kohn's. In their home, Jurek learned to speak Yiddish and keep the laws of *kashrut*. She also, however, convinced the children's mother to allow her to feed the children pork because she believed it would make the children strong.[23]

In Kraków, Anita Lobel's nanny, Franciszka Ziemiańska, also managed to carve out her own niche within the household and assert her Catholic identity, despite her employer's displeasure. Lobel recalls that her parents argued with her nanny about "Christian things."[24] Ziemiańska was even fired and replaced but she recounts that she screamed and cried until her

---

[22] Videotaped testimony of Dina Jackson, File no. 46745-0, November 22, 1998, Tape 1, The USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive, 11:07.

[23] Ruda, Nava, *One Day This Will be a Film: Childhood Memories of a Girl from the Lvov Ghetto,* United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Acc. 2004.615, 7-8.

[24] Anita Lobel, *No Pretty Pictures: A Child of War* (New York: Greenwillow Books, 1998), 8-9.

parents rehired her nanny, saying, "My parents had to let Niana have her way."[25] After Ziemiańska returned she hung a picture of an angel over the child's bed, baked them gingerbread cookies for St Nicholas Day, showed them how to make garlands, and hung chocolates for Christmas morning. In this battle of wills, the nanny won out as she proved to be indispensable to maintaining the peace of the household.

These cases are illustrative of the manner in which Polish Catholic maids and nannies both shaped themselves to fit in as well as asserted themselves inside the homes of their employers. Mirka-Miki Berliner-Pear lived in Warsaw before the outbreak of the war. Honora, a Polish Catholic woman from the countryside, had worked for her family for years. First Honora worked for Berliner-Pear's grandparents, caring for her mother as the family's wetnurse turned maid where she "practically brought up" her mother and later she would occasionally care for Berliner-Pear.[26] When Berliner-Pear was young she became very ill and her grandfather brought in doctors and specialists from all over; when there was no improvement in her condition they thought she would surely die. Berliner-Pear says the family called on Honora, who although she was a Catholic woman, "she had lived so long with Jews she was conversant with our traditions and our fables," and she determined that Berliner-Pear was possessed by a *dybbuk*.[27] She informed the family that the child needed an exorcism of the spirit and in order to accomplish this they must fool the spirit by "selling" the child to another and giving her a different name. On Honora's suggestion they pretended to sell the child to her mother's brother for a "cap full of

---

[25] Ibid.

[26] Videotaped testimony of Mirka-Miki Berliner-Pear, File no. 48408-2, December 29, 1998, Tape 1, USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive,14:28.

[27] Videotaped testimony of Mirka-Miki Berliner-Pear, File no. 48408-2, December 29, 1998, Tape 2, USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive, 15:20.A *dybbuk* being the spirit of a dead person that can attach itself to a living person.

groszy" and he gave her a new name and the uncle forever acted as a second father to her.[28] Berliner-Pear recovered after this.

While the family initially sought to use modern medicine and relied on doctors and specialists to cure their ailing child, when that failed they resorted to traditional methods. They trusted Honora's judgment in a time of desperation and she in turn incorporated Jewish traditions and superstitions into her own world view and interpreted the situation accordingly. This exchange and flexibility can be found in all of the above examples. Jewish households and children were exposed to Catholic traditions and beliefs while Catholic maids and nannies incorporated Jewish religion and culture into their daily lives. Sometimes this caused friction between members of the household but somehow in many cases the employee and the employing family managed to operate symbiotically.

The Family's Reliance on Household Help

Closeness between the maid and the family members was by no means a given, however. David Borgenicht lived near Kraków as a boy and his family employed a Polish nanny. He remembers that she was "not exactly friendly to us."[29] He states, "She just did it as her job, but she was not loveable..."[30] Many Holocaust survivors remember having a Polish maid but do not recall anything special about them, not even their names. Often times these maids would remain under the family's roof only temporarily, leaving because of incompatibility, to marry, or to pursue other employment opportunities.

---

[28] Ibid., 15:32.

[29] Videotaped testimony of David Borgenicht, File no. 10797-2, January 10, 1996, Tape 1, The USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive, 6:25.

[30] Ibid., 6:30.

However, even when familial bonds or affection did not form between the employing families and their maids and nannies, they were nonetheless pivotal in the operations of the household. As mentioned above, these women often spent as much, if not more, time with the children of the household than their own parents did. Often times they were responsible for the daily running of the household, the shopping, the cooking, and the cleaning. In addition to the necessary service provided to their employers, these women often became intimately familiar with the family's private life and knew their employers' habits and quirks.

A 1936 issue of *Gazeta dla kobiet* addresses the difficulty faced when a family must find a new servant. The author writes that when the lady of the house changes servants it causes much confusion since the family was already accustomed to the previous servant.[31] The author continues: "she knew her work, times for activities and habits of the family members, when suddenly-- she fails."[32] The author muses that perhaps the maid has fallen ill, returned home to the countryside, began to fulfill her duties carelessly, or at worst, "she replied impudently to her mistress."[33] Whatever the reason, when a family and their servant had to part ways, it created a terrible inconvenience. The author laments that while inspecting potential replacements, "some of them are rural girls, ruddy and healthy but less polished and often without certificates" and seeing them was a reminder of "how much effort you put into familiarizing a girl to work in the home."[34] The author cautioned that one should go about choosing a new maid who will be with

[31] "Pani godzi służącą," *Gazeta dla kobiet*, nr. 11 (1936), 125-126.
[32] Ibid.
[33] Ibid.
[34] Ibid.

the family long term so as to not "expose oneself to frequent change and losses."[35] Maintaining continuity in household servants was important to ensuring that the home functioned effectively, thus freeing up the mistress of the house to focus on business or social activities.[36]

In addition to her significance in keeping the home running smoothly, it was also apparent in public discourse that the relationship between the children of the home and the servant was of great importance. In an issue of *Rodzina i dziecko* discussing this relationship, the author acknowledged that "the servant is a foreigner in the family, but she is available to do anything and is dependable."[37] The author advised readers that it is natural for children to feel comfortable with their maid or nanny because that child has become accustomed to and trusts her, and when it comes time for the child and caregiver to separate it is often "their first painful tragedy."[38] In both of these women's journals, *Gazeta dla kobiet* and *Rodzina i dziecko,* it is evident that the domestic servant is an important part of the household, particularly in the role as caregiver to the children.

Working Conditions and Vulnerabilities

Domestic servants in interwar Poland often faced harsh working conditions and very little legal recourse for abuses committed by their employers. On average a domestic in 1930 made 40 zl a month, not including their payments in kind which have been equated to 1.5 times the value

[35] Ibid.

[36] These concerns are common amongst middle-class Americans in the nineteenth century as well. See Faye E. Dudden, *Serving Women: Household Service in Nineteenth-Century America* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1983).

[37] "Służącą i Dziecko," *Rodzina i Dziecko,* nr. 4 (1935): 109-111.

[38] Ibid., 109.

of money wages.[39] Many positions advertised in *Nasz przegląd*, *Kurjer codzienny, and Gazeta warszawska* offered less. In most advertisements seeking servants, the pay offered ranged from 20zl to 40zl monthly depending on the level of skill required by the potential employer and the duties the job entailed. Advertisements seeking a "girl for everything" (*dziewczyna do wszystkiego*) or a general servant (*służącą*) seem to offer less than those seeking a nanny or governess (*wychowianki*). Those seeking a governess would often require a candidate to possess foreign language skills and a much higher level of education than someone who just wanted a servant to clean and mind the children. It was common knowledge amongst both middle-class European employers and servants that in a home with children some of the burden to care for them would fall on the maid regardless of whether she was hired specifically to care for them or not.[40] Steedman illustrates that often servants preferred homes without children because of the extra work of caring for and cleaning up after them.[41] The majority of poor uneducated women from the countryside found positions as general servants who performed multiple functions in the home, and many of these homes, like those of this study, contained children.

If a woman had references, knowledge of how to clean and maintain a home, and could display to a potential employer that she could follow directions, she could often find employment as a domestic servant, but the conditions were sometimes quite grim. This job involved hard physical labor, low pay, and if a servant was hurt on the job and unable to continue to work she had no real recourse other than returning home to the village. Most servants were "live-in" but it was very infrequent that they had their own quarters unless the family was very wealthy. In

---

[39] Joseph Marcus, *The Social and Political History of the Jews in Poland, 1919-1939*.
[40] Carolyn Steedman, *Labours Lost: Domestic Service and the Making of Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 228-29.
[41] Ibid., 229.

general, she would sleep on a fold-out cot in the kitchen. This meant that she had very little privacy and everyone had access to her, which made her vulnerable to the sexual advances of the men in the household and often resulted in her working additional hours for the family. For the Catholic domestics employed by Jewish families being required to work on Sunday interfered with their ability to attend church services. As a result it was not unusual for these servants to take their employers' children with them to worship services, which in some instances helped Jewish children later to pass as Catholic Poles under the Nazi occupation.

There were few social protections for domestic servants in interwar Poland. Public discourse regarding the attempts to regulate work and afford maids with state sponsored social insurances was prevalent in the daily presses *Nasz przegląd*, *Gazeta warszawska,* and *Kurjer codzienny.*[42] "Ustawy Scaleniowej" was a legislative measure that was intended in part to provide insurance for domestic workers but as the large quantity of discourse in the daily presses testifies to, it actually created a sharp decline in the quality of life for these women. In response to this measure an association of domestic workers in Łódź submitted a memorandum to the President criticizing the measures. This regulation required employers to pay premiums for their servants that employers claimed were unreasonable. As a result, in Łódź alone, some 9,000 of

[42] A few examples: "Opłaty od śluby domowej na rzecz ubezpieczen społecznych- ustalone, Ale tylko tymczasowo," *Nasz przegląd*, February 10, 1934, 9; "Sprawa opłat ubezpieczenie wych od służby domowej," *Nasz przegląd,* February 11, 1934, 10; "Opłata Ubezpieczeniowa Za Służącą- 8 zł," *Nasz przegląd*, February 13, 1934, 12 and throughout the rest of the year, particularly in March and April. This issue is also frequently discussed in *Gazeta warszawska.* For examples please see "Dziewięć tysięcy służcych na braku: Pierwsze skutki ustawy scaleniowej," *Gazeta warszawska*, February 27, 1934, 5; "Obowiązek Zgłaszania służby domowej," *Gazeta warszawska*, January 30, 1934, 8; "Nikt nie wie ile płacić za służaca: Stan Bezprzykladnego chaosu w stosowaniu nowych przepisów o ubezpieczeniach," *Gazeta warszawska,* February 9, 1934, 8; "Absurd Emerytur Dla Służacych: Solidarne Stanowisko Pan i Służacych," *Gazeta warszawska*, February 14, 1934, 8. This issue also frequently turns up in issues of *Kurjer codzienny* in 1938. For a few examples see: "Unormowanie warunków płacy i pracy: Służba domowa nie będzie już upośledzona," *Kurjer codzienny*, September 16, 1938, 3; "Urlopy dla służby domowej," *Kurjer codzienny*, September 6, 1938, 4.

the district's 35,000 household servants were let go.[43] Some employers decreased the servants' salaries to offset the cost. The article claimed that women who once averaged 25 zl. per month saw their wages reduced to 15 zl or even 10 zl. per month.[44] If a domestic servant became ill, even with this insurance, they were still responsible to pay for their doctor and any necessary medicine out of their meager wages.

In 1938, public discourse on legislation regulating domestic servants was still prominent in the daily presses. In April, *Nasz przegląd* reported that an association of household servants submitted a memorandum to the government in Warsaw regarding the excessive numbers of women and girls coming in from the countryside looking for employment and the difficulty this created for finding work.[45] In addition to there being more domestic servants than positions available, employees still had difficulty in being able to use the few protections that were afforded to them. Under the Act of May 16, 1922, domestic servants were entitled to a week of paid vacation after one year of service for the same family, and fifteen days after three consecutive years of service.[46] According to this particular article the terms of the vacation were set by the employer so they had the final say in when the employee could take their vacation. If the servant wanted to return home to her family for the holidays, it was at the pleasure of her employer, who may or may not have allowed it. In September *Kurjer codzienny* reported that

---

[43] "Dziewięć tysięcy służcych na braku: Pierwsze skutki ustawy scaleniowej," *Gazeta warszawska*, February 27, 1934, 5.

[44] Ibid.

[45] "Nowiny Dnia: Służba Ze Wsi," *Nasz przegląd*, April 4,1938, 14.

[46] "Urlopy dla służby domowej," *Kurjer codzienny*, September 6, 1938, 4.

reform was at hand even though they had been fought by employers at every turn.[47] The press reported that organizations of ladies of the house and employer's associations had "tried to paralyze all of the great efforts" to allow vacations, to normalize pay, to provide old age insurance, and generally to allow these women to be treated like other workers who did not live in.[48] In addition to marginalization by employers, in the legal system, and in the public sphere, these women faced difficulty in the private, domestic realm where they worked as well.

Many women employed as domestic servants were from families of lower socioeconomic standing and not well educated. They often did not possess the means to assert their own legal rights. As a result, these women suffered abuses at the hands of their employers and were not able to use the small legal protections they were afforded. Thirteen year old orphan Felicja Orzechowska found employment as a maid in the home of Mr. Jakowlew. One evening the neighbors heard yelling and crying coming from the apartment and alerted the authorities who, in response, broke in and found the man raping the young girl. It was reported that he began beating and raping her after her second day of employment but threatened to file a complaint against her for theft if she told anyone. Afraid of being charged with thievery, she submitted to his abuse.[49] His threat and her understanding of her disadvantage made this young servant extremely vulnerable to this abusive employer.

Daily presses also brought to light maids who, in desperation and despite the cultural and religious taboo, attempted to commit suicide because they could not cope. Twenty-three year old

---

[47] "Unormawanie warunków płacy i pracy: Służba domowej nie będzie już upośledzona," *Kurjer codzienny*, September 16, 1938, 3.
[48] Ibid.
[49] "Chlebowdawca- zboczenic: Uwiódł i znęcał sięnad 13-letnią dziewczynką," *Kurjer codzienny*, March 20, 1937, 1.

Maria Makulska attempted to asphyxiate herself with gas from the stove after her employers went to bed for the night. They caught her in time and she survived.[50] The Boren family of Warsaw also thwarted the attempt of their maid who decided to commit suicide in the same manner. Adam Boren's father awoke to the smell of gas and rushed into the kitchen to discover the maid, who was still alive. The family was very alarmed because they could have also asphyxiated or been killed by an explosion caused by the gas. Immediately after the incident Boren's father had the gas cut off to the flat and they switched to a coal stove and a primus burner.[51] While we cannot know what drove these young women to these attempts to take their own lives, we can consider that many of them were young, away from their families, and possibly felt isolated or unable to cope.

If an employer refused to pay a domestic or accused her of theft she would often have little recourse. Word of mouth and glowing recommendations were often crucial in finding a position in a household. If a domestic fell out of favor with her employer it could have much more serious consequences than her losing that particular position. A former employer could spread the word to all of her acquaintances that her former employee was lazy or a thief, thus hurting her chances for employment in that neighborhood again. Most positions advertised in the classified sections of daily papers required recommendations from former employers, so refusal to provide this was a real threat to a former employee's future livelihood.

Even with all of the potential pitfalls, working as a maid or a nanny in the city had its positive points. Economically, employment in the city was advantageous for these women and

---

[50] "Zamach samobójczy pracownicy domowej," *Kurjer Codzienny*, November 2, 1937, , 1.

[51] Videotaped testimony of Adam Boren, File no. 18575-3, 14 Aug 1996, Tape 1, The USC Shoah Foundation Institute, 17:35.

often their families as well. Some girls were sent to the city to work to help reduce the family's financial burden. Not only would this mean one less mouth for the family to feed, sometimes a maid would send some of her earnings back home to help supplement the family's income. Also, while life as a maid or a nanny often involved heavy manual labor, low pay, and irregular hours, life in the country was often harder, so sometimes her employment brought a better living standard. In addition to these advantages, some of these women found their way to the city because they wanted to get away from the supervision of their parents and find excitement or a husband. Genia Olczak was asked to move to Łódź and serve as a housekeeper and nanny for Roma Rozencwajg, whom she had known for years. She agreed even though her family did not want her to move so far away. She decided to go both because of her affection for Rozencwajg and because she always wanted to go to a "big town."[52] Perhaps Olczak was hoping to find freedom or adventure in the big city.

Freedom and Agency

While many of these domestic servants were quite vulnerable or at least at a disadvantage, it is also clear that they often wielded a surprising degree of power or influence in the household and exhibited a large degree of agency. As mentioned above, Jula Jurek learned some Yiddish and the laws of *kashrut,* but she also convinced her employer to break with dietary laws and feed the children pork. Anita Lobel's parents were unhappy with their nanny's attempts to inculcate their children with Catholicism and when she did not comply with their wishes they dismissed her. When it was apparent that the children would not give them any peace until she returned, they brought her back and she was allowed her way. Many Jewish children attended

[52] Interview of Genia Olczak, Warsaw, Poland, October 4, 2005, translated and transcribed by Bianka Kraszewski. Introduction to Interview, Bianka Kraszewski, February 1, 2006. Provided by Paul Zakrzewski.

mass with their Catholic maids, even at the displeasure of their parents, because the domestic's duties interfered with the domestic's attendance. In short, these domestic servants compromised but also sometimes used their power to shape their working situations to meet their needs. Households relied on these female employees and they were often given a large degree of leeway to raise the children and sometimes to run the home with limited supervision. While this was not always the case, as illustrated by the abuses heaped on the young orphaned servant Felicja Orzechowska, parents had businesses to run and social commitments and children relied upon and became attached to these maids and nannies. A family's heavy reliance often gave these maids and nannies an increased degree of power. In addition to the power that they gained from the family's reliance on them that they wielded in the household, some domestic servants went even further.

While the presses inundated readers with sensational tales of murdered and abused housemaids, maids dying alone in poverty, and desperate suicidal maids to sell their papers, they also contained tales of domestics lashing out at employers or in some cases possibly turning the tables on them. While the brief article does not give any indication of her motivations, it does relay that the housemaid Stanisława Terkak was accused by her employer, Jan Skolomkowski, of putting poison in the milk she served him at breakfast, and the police investigated his accusations.[53] Genowefa Millewska apparently parted ways with her previous employers on poor terms and later made the paper after she terrorized their new maid along with her companions.[54] Sometimes, in acts of retribution or spite maids would steal from their employers.

[53] "Służąca trucicielka," *Kurjer codzienny*, July 3, 1938, 1.

[54] "Służąca teroryzowana przez kompanów swej poprzedniczki," *Nasz przegląd,* April 10, 1938, 26.

Estera Liberman was hired to be a maid in the Mejhofer household.[55] On her very first day of service Mr. Mejhofer claimed to have caught her in the act of stealing from them. When the police were called they reported that she was wanted for numerous cases of theft. Terkak allegedly attempted to poison her employer, Liberman was accused of stealing from employers on multiple occasions and Millewska was apparently displeased with being replaced. Perhaps these women felt their behavior was justified as a result of the abuses they had endured or perhaps they were just ill-behaved women of low character; either way they were bucking the system, so to speak, and not merely weak and vulnerable women at the mercy of their middle-class employers or the society that marginalized them.

Additionally, a Polish Catholic domestic servant had another tool she could potentially use against a Jewish acquaintance or a Jewish employer. Due to her socio-economic status, a Polish Catholic servant stood on the lower rungs of the social ladder, making her vulnerable against her middle-class employers who held significantly more social capital than she. While a Jewish employer was socially superior to a Polish Catholic maid on many levels, the maid could potentially "other" her employer and harness prejudices and antisemitism to use as a weapon against them. During the interwar period, Poland was wrestling with its national identity in the newly reconstituted Second Republic. Catholicism was linked to Polishness. There was much conflict regarding the inclusion of national minorities, and antisemitism (of both racial and economic varieties) was increasing towards the end of the 1930s, as it was throughout Europe. While in many of the Holocaust survivor testimonies I examined for this study the subjects stated that they characterized themselves as Polish Jews, who felt patriotic towards Poland, and were quite acculturated, in general the Polish majority society would have viewed them as different

[55] "Służące- Złodziejki," *Nasz przegląd,* April 4, 1934, 8.

based on their status as non-Catholics. Bajla Goldwaser and her former maid, Helena Pariewska, had a "fierce argument" during which Pariewska claimed Goldwaser made defamatory remarks against the Polish nation.[56] Pariewska made a complaint with the police who were investigating the matter at the time of publication. In this instance, a claim that a Jewish former employer defamed the Polish nation could be a means of pointing out that the former employer was in fact a member of the group of "others" living in Poland. It may have been intended to play on anti-Semitic beliefs that Jews were disloyal citizens and were not vested members of the society. This was one way this former employee could attempt to place herself above her former employer based on her own identity as a Pole.

Concerns about Polish Catholic girls working in Jewish households were common long before the interwar period, by both Catholics and Jews. Complaints about this practice can be found in Church discourse as far back as 1267.[57] In the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, legal restrictions to prevent Christians from working for Jews were passed by the Sejm in 1565 and revoked in 1775.[58] This included all Christian employees, a large segment of which included female Christian domestic employees who worked within Jewish homes. While there was not legislation in place to prevent Christian women from working in Jewish homes again until September, 1940 during the Nazi Occupation, there were some who found the practice problematic during the interwar period.[59] It was also thought by some that Jewish men were

---

[56] "Służąca skarzy chlebodawczynie o obrazę narodu polskiego," *Nasz przegląd*, March 24, 1938, 14.

[57] Judith Kalik, "Christian Servants Employed by Jews," *Polin: Focusing on Jews in the Polish Borderlands* Vol. 14 (2001): 259-70.

[58] Ibid., 261-262.

[59] Karol Marian Posieszalski, *Hitlerowskie: "Prawo" Okupacyjne w Polsce, Wybór Dokumentów* (Poznan: Instytut Zachodni, 1958).

lustful by nature and therefore the Jewish men might seduce these Polish Catholic women who were so easily accessible in the household.[60] Tropes of Jewish men as sexualized and predatory were common in Poland.

In 1938, a rather sensational case was brought to the Polish courts. Janina Bednarska, the maid for the Wesolowski family, claimed that a Jewish glassworker hired to repair the windows in the employer's home attempted to sexually assault her.[61] She claimed that he attempted to rape her and intended to rob her employers. According to Bednarska, he pushed himself on her and when she fought him he choked and beat her. She stated that she pushed him off from herself and when she ran away the family dog attacked him. The glassworker provided a very different account of the events. He claimed that when he walked into the living area to present the girl with a receipt, the servant's male friend who was visiting while her employers were not present told him that he would not be paid because Poles should not employ Jews. The glassworker claimed he was then hit on the head and when he regained consciousness the maid commanded the family's dog to "Attack the Jew." The dog set upon him and after a scuffle with the maid, who tried to prevent him from leaving, he escaped. When the police investigated they found the maid's hair and dried blood all over the room. Upon seeing the evidence and finding that the glassworker had a criminal record, the police arrested the glassworker. During the hearing the defense reported that both parties were lying and that what actually happened was that she

[60] Judith Kalik, "Christian Servants Employed by Jews," 267.

[61] "Szklarz żydowski pod ciężkim oskarżeniem: Sąd uznał, że rzekomy napad był tylko imaginacja dziewczyny," *Nasz przegląd,* February 27, 1938, 10.

allowed him to "get close" to her but then became worried her employers would catch them and pushed him away, and then the fighting ensued. The court threw the case out.[62]

This is particularly interesting because both parties were using common tropes and stereotypes. The Jewish glassworker said that the servant had a "male friend" visiting when her employers were not home and that he was attacked based on economic antisemitism. This paints the servant as antisemitic, and possibly promiscuous, a common concern among the middle-class. She paints him as a Jew trying to steal from her Polish employers and attempting to rape her, drawing on the tropes of the sexualized and predatory Jewish male. This version also appears to be an attempt to harness antisemitic ideas about Jews stealing from the Poles. Both the accused and the accuser's stories seem much less likely than the explanation offered by the defense. Whether or not she initially consented to intimate physical contact with this glassworker, she was beaten and did not get justice. In this sense she was victimized by this man and again by the court system. This victimization fits into our conceptions of domestic servants as marginalized and rather downtrodden. If she constructed a story to cover her own behavior, she knew to use these tropes and antisemitic ideas about Jewish males, playing upon them in an attempt to "other" him, which illustrates a good deal of agency on her part.

Conclusions

While we cannot know what took place between the maid and the glassworker, it is clear that domestic servants did have an important role in their employer's homes and did exhibit agency. In addition, many of these female employees formed real, reciprocal bonds of affection and familial feelings for their charges. By examining prewar conditions and relationships within this subset of Polish society that was at particular risk for exploitation and abuse but also could

[62] Ibid.

use various methods to take control their own environment, we are able to understand the roles they played later in the aid or persecution of their former Jewish employers during the Holocaust.

These relationships and activities point to important continuities between the interwar and Nazi-Occupation periods. The agency and affection demonstrated by these former employees would in some cases carry over and result in domestic servants choosing to aid their Jewish employers when they experienced extreme persecution under the Nazi regime. Agency and animosity would also carry over, illustrated by incidences of former maids and nannies actively harming their former Jewish charges either for financial gain or out of spite and retribution. This chapter has sought to make two main points. First, that the bonds that did or did not form during the interwar period played a crucial role in how a Polish Catholic servant reacted towards her former employers in their time of need. These bonds affected whether or not the servant remained indifferent, decided to aid her former Jewish employers, or in some cases took advantage of the situation and sought to harm them. My second point is that as a result of their power in the household or leaving home and making their way in the city, domestic servants often developed a sense of agency and empowerment. This made domestic servants' decisions to use this power gained in the domestic realm again, under Nazi Occupation, whether it was to help or harm their former employers, a natural choice and not a sharp break in behavior. If a former servant was a marginalized, powerless victim of her lot in life, choosing to risk her life would be truly unexpected and new behavior. But, I assert that this power was not something new that arose out of the changed political and social situation brought about by the Nazi regime; it was in fact, present to some degree all along.

CHAPTER TWO

THE BLURRED BOUNDARIES OF THE DOMESTIC SPHERE: JEWISH, POLISH, AND BOURGEOIS

Introduction

The Polish Jewish writer Bruno Schulz offered a window into the prewar middle-class household and its bustling activity in *The Street of Crocodiles,* written in 1934. The fictional family in Schulz's tale was not wealthy, but they owned a shop where both parents worked and help was employed both in the shop and home. The story is narrated from the perspective of a child in the home, who describes the members of the household and daily life as he perceives it. He introduces the family's domestic servant, offering a gaze into the kitchen, "with its buckets and cloths full of complicated and intriguing smells, the clacking of Adela's [the maid] slippers and her noisy bustle." Outside the kitchen, Nimrod (the family dog) finds the "splashing of warm lye, flooding all the furniture and the loud scraping of Adela's brushes."[1] At the center of household activity, as described by the narrator, is the maid Adela.

> At one point Schulz's narrator tells the readers that their:
>
> apartment sank deeper and deeper into a state of neglect owing to the indolence of my mother who spent most of her time in the shop, and the carelessness of the slim-legged Adela, who, without anyone to supervise her, spent her days in front of a mirror, endlessly making up and leaving everywhere tufts of combed-out hair, brushes, odd slippers, and discarded corsets.[2]

Even though his mother's absence was necessary, the narrator blames the apartment's condition on her because she was not around to properly supervise Adela, and he blames Adela for shirking her duties and wasting time on frivolity. The narrator's father plays a very minimal role

---

[1] Bruno Schulz, *The Street of Crocodiles and Other Stories* (New York, Penguin, 1977), 43.
[2] Ibid., 11

in running the household. The real driving figures of this realm are the women, the mother and the maid.

While the image of the household presented here is fictional and meant to capture the imagination of readers, some aspects are also reflected in memoirs and testimonies of Polish Jewish survivors of the Holocaust. In both fictional and primary sources, Jewish households were female-dominated spheres. As in Schulz's tale, in testimonies and memoirs women ran the households and carried out daily tasks of childcare, cooking, shopping, and cleaning, while they also engaged in employment and social obligations and tended to their own spiritual and social needs.

Jewish children from acculturated households often managed to survive Nazi occupation because of their ability to adopt Catholic social norms. This affinity for Polish culture was the result both of the efforts of their own middle-class households to acculturate into the bourgeois society around them and from their daily exposure to the rural Catholic girls and women who were omnipresent as household servants in middle-class Jewish households during the 1920s and 30s. Their upbringing allowed these children to assume a Polish Catholic identity more readily than a child who did not have this body of experience to draw from.

Based on the memoirs and testimonies of survivors of the Holocaust as well as contemporary Polish language middle-class women's journals, this chapter looks at how middle-class values and hybrid Polish Jewish identities were transmitted to children in the private feminine domestic sphere and the role of the maid in this process. It also examines the benefits children gained by being raised in such households. The familiarity these Polish Jews had with Polish culture and the connections they formed within the domestic realm often aided them in their efforts to evade Nazi oppression.

First, in this female dominated realm, middle-class and affluent acculturated Jewish women transmitted bourgeois values and culture to their children as they demonstrated this culture in the home. Yet, at the same time, two other processes were unfolding. First, the Polish Catholic servants that they employed as a demonstration of their middle-class status served to transmit their own type of Catholic, lower-class Polish culture to the children in the household. The transmission of middle-class Polish culture and rural, Catholic-centered Polish culture to the children of these households aided in their ability to pass as Polish gentiles during the Holocaust.

Secondly, at the same time, these maids themselves became acculturated to middle-class behavior and activities. In Schulz's tale, Adela is applying make-up, fussing with her hair, trying on corsets, all activities associated much more with that of a bourgeois woman than a peasant from the country side or a working-class woman from the city. Behavior of this type by household servants is evident in the memoirs and testimonies as well. Many families took their household maid with them on vacation in the country or at the seaside. In her role as the family maid or nanny a woman of limited financial means was sometimes able to participate in a social class that would have been unattainable without her position in the household.

Often ignored by histories of Polish Jewry, a small middle class thrived within Polish Jewish society. The experiences of this stratum in many ways set them up to survive or pass during the Nazi occupation *if* the opportunity was available.[3] Most Jews during and before the interwar period were quite poor, but a small segment of Polish Jewry had ascended to the middle class

[3] Other social/ economic groups of Polish Jews also possessed certain skill sets that enabled them to pass on the so-called Aryan side when the opportunity could be found. For example, working-class Jews who worked side by side with Polish workers also were socialized to Polish working-class culture and made connections with Polish gentiles that could be useful when aid was needed. In many of these families women were not able to stay home and the family could not afford a maid to supervise the children so they had a degree of freedom that sometimes resulted in independence and street savvy.

and economic elite and remained there until the Second World War.[4] This group consisted of men who made their living as merchants, factory owners, shop owners, lawyers, doctors, and professors, and men involved in work with the Polish military.[5] Women also often played important roles working in the family business, as dress makers, and in philanthropic organizations such as orphanages, committees to aid the poor, or promote the arts. Middle-class Jews varied greatly in income level and social standing. A large number of families struggled to stay within this middle-class category and maintain their lifestyle as economic conditions became increasingly difficult.[6]

---

[4] Ezra Mendelsohn, *Jews of East Central Europe Between the Two World Wars* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983), 27. Mendelsohn described this group as "numerically small but important," consisting of a bourgeoisie numbering 100,000, and the professionals and intelligentsia at 300,000 people, which included dependents. The petty bourgeoisie was made up of approximately 2,000,000 and they would have ascribed to middle-class values and sensibilities.

[5] Joseph Marcus, *Social and Political History of the Jews in Poland: 1919-1939* (New York and Amsterdam: Mouton Publishers, 1983), uses 1931 Polish census numbers to sketch the social structure of the population during the interwar period. According to Marcus's interpretation of the census statistics he gathered from the *Statystka Polski,* 428,900 Jews were involved in commerce, banking, insurance; 38,000 in transport and communication; 19,900 in civil service, churches, legal professions; 33,000 in health services, healing, hygiene; and 45,000 were employers in Mining and Industry (including handicrafts) out of a total Jewish population of 3,113,900 (437-38). Out of those Jews who acted as head of household which were 1,046,300, approximately 3.4% or 35,815 fell into the category of Entrepreneurs. Of these Jewish entrepreneurs, 20.9% were involved in Industry, 65.7% in Business, and 13.4% in the Liberal Professions, p. 439. This data demonstrates that even with a large working class, Jews were heavily employed in commerce and the professions. Of those Jews considered to be working class, they were often craftsmen involved in light industry. Jewish workers were typically shoemakers, bakers, tailors, or other craftsmen who worked in small shops according to Ezra Mendelsohn, *The Jews of East Central Europe Between the World Wars*, 27.

[6] Mendelsohn, *The Jews of East Central Europe Between the World Wars*, 25. Census data from 1921 and 1931 illustrates that during the course of a decade more Jews came to derive their earning from Industry than Commerce in a way that was unparalleled in East Central Europe. While this process is described as "proletarization" Mendelsohn argue that it would realistic to say it was actually "pauperization" of the Jewish population. As economic conditions in Poland declined families often found themselves experiencing financial hardships.

Many Polish Jews felt an affinity to Poland and loved their home country; many embraced aspects of Polish culture, including the Polish language. Urban middle-class Jewish families and households were acculturated to varying degrees; many resembled their bourgeois Polish Catholic counterparts in their living standards, levels of education, and leisure activities while others held on more firmly to traditional religious and cultural customs in the home.[7] Geographic region, professional occupations, family history, personalities, religious beliefs, political leanings, and income all contributed to diversity within this relatively small subset of Polish Jewry. Many members of this group identified themselves as *Polish* Jews and felt a patriotic loyalty to their country, were attached to Polish middle-class culture, and yet also held on selectively to many of their Jewish traditions and customs. They formed hybrid identities that on one hand allowed them to participate in both the Jewish and gentile communities but on the other sometimes kept them from being fully accepted in either. The domestic realm was a place where bourgeois norms and values were practiced and perpetuated sometimes alongside traditional Jewish religious practices. Here, "Polishness," as it was understood by this segment of the population, was performed and transmitted to the next generation.

---

[7] Sean Martin, *Jewish Life in Cracow, 1918-1939* (London and Portland: Vallentine Mitchell, 2004). I will use the term "acculturation" throughout this chapter using Martin's working definition of acculturation, while also acknowledging that the subjects of this study were not merely shaping their own patterns to that of the majority culture, but were using those patterns to create their own, drawing from elements of both Polish middle-class culture and Jewish traditional and Jewish secular culture. Sean Martin draws on Milton Gordon and explains that the term "assimilated Jews" in interwar Poland would be used to described those Jews who had truly assimilated as in "exchanging an identification with the Jewish community for a home among the Poles and in Polish," 11. The term "acculturated Jews" would have been in line with Gordon's definition of cultural assimilation as in the adaptation to the cultural patterns of another group. Martin explains that "cultural assimilation went along with a process of increasing Jewish national identification" while at the same time in the early twentieth century actual assimilation of Jews into the Polish majority became untenable.

Inculcating Middle-Class Values in Jewish Homes

Domestic orderliness and serenity within the patriarchal family were main values of middle-class European culture.[8] Both Paula E. Hyman and Marion Kaplan point to Jewish middle-class families attempting to demonstrate their adherence to bourgeois norms and belonging through their efforts to shape their households according to middle-class standards in Germany.[9] It was in the household and family where "people tried to live decently- that the most marked embourgeoisment took place," and it was women who made sure their families, especially their children, adapted to middle-class speech, clothing, and education.[10] While in reality this was difficult to achieve, it was an integral component of bourgeois class consciousness that the family act as a haven from the stresses of modern urban life.[11] European middle-class women, including Jewish women in Poland, experienced the double burden of commitments outside of the house while also being responsible for transmission of middle-class culture and values to their children, displaying them through their household and family, and everyday maintenance of the home. Elements of middle-class culture included the running of an orderly household, which meant supervising the help and maintaining "a firm hand" at the helm of the household finances, engaging in the proper leisure time activities, dressing according to class stature, and displaying

---

[8] Paula E. Hymen, "The Modern Jewish Family: Image and Reality" in *The Jewish Family: Metaphor and Memory,* ed. David Kraemer (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 179.

[9] Hymen, "The Modern Jewish Family," in *The Making of the Jewish Middle Class: Women, Family, and Identity in Imperial Germany,* ed. Marion Kaplan (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991).

[10] Ibid., 3-4.

[11] Ibid., 16.

the proper amount of education and decorum.[12] The tenet of orderliness applied not only to the family budget and household, but also applied to childrearing. It was thought that a regimented schedule of feeding, sleep and activity from the start of a child's life would help them grow into a rational and healthy adult.[13] This chapter examines elements of these middle-class values and the ways that these values were demonstrated in Jewish households in Poland to understand how Jewish children internalized enough bourgeois practices to assimilate when they needed to. And this chapter asks which habits/rituals/patterns did they adopt and how were these practices transmitted to them.

While Jewish tradition promoted different roles for men and women, economic necessity and the social demands made upon middle-class women required them to spend a significant amount of time outside of the home. Even while these commitments kept women outside of the home, the functioning and orderliness of the home and rearing of the children remained nearly entirely their responsibility. The key to managing this double burden of sorts and thus maintaining these bourgeois cultural norms was the domestic servant.

Many Polish Catholic women worked in these Jewish homes as domestic servants, thus fulfilling this need. Despite differences in religion, class, culture and language, Polish Jews and Catholics exchanged ideas, explored social norms, and negotiated the boundaries that often separated them in public life. As I argue in the previous chapter, the domestic realm provided a

---

[12] Evidence of the value and necessity of maintaining a strict household budget can be found in many journal articles that were read by middle class women. For example, see "Jak notować wydatki?" *Życie kobiece,* Nr. 8 (1927), 11; instructs women on the important task of using a balance sheet to manage the household budget. With the use of the methods described in the article the author promises the reader will be able to "maintain a strong hand at the helm of the household finances."

[13] For examples see "Początek współżycia," *Dziecko i matka: dwu tygodnik poświęcony zdrowiu i wychowwaniu dziecka do lat siedmu,* Nr. 19, (1933), 7; and "O pawagę w stosunku do dziecka," *Dziecko i matka,* Nr. 19, (1933), 8.

space where a Polish Catholic maid could operate in such a way that allowed her to maintain her own beliefs while also blending into the household and becoming accustomed to some Jewish religious and cultural customs, sometimes adopting or incorporating them into her own world views and practices. These gentile domestic workers in turn also acted as transmitters of Polish *Catholic* culture to their employers and the children of their employers. Polish culture as it was experienced by Polish Catholic domestic and their Jewish employers would have also varied by class. Jewish employers would have been familiar with bourgeois culture whereas their employees would be more familiar with Polish peasant culture. In this domestic realm an exchange could occur.

These interactions happened as a result of a family deciding to employ a gentile maid rather than hiring Jewish help. This decision was often influenced by the sheer number of Polish Catholic domestic workers seeking employment. It was harder to find a Jewish maid, yet there was generally an overabundance of Polish Catholic women seeking employment as domestic servants. In addition to the ease of finding a gentile maid, there also must have been a level of tolerance for a family to make this decision. Employment of a Polish Catholic maid as opposed to a Jewish maid could be useful as a means of exposing children to Polish Catholic culture in a safe and controlled environment. This exposure was useful because it aided children in blending in with their peers in Polish state schools and in their daily travels outside the home. It is not a stretch to conclude that some families could have employed these women as a strategy to help their children learn to operate in the majority society later as adults. Dov Weissberg recalls that his family exclusively employed Polish Catholic maids and governesses because his parents were concerned about the "purity" of the children's Polish language and did not want the children

"exposed to Yiddish-tainted accents."[14] Speaking flawless Polish was one means of ensuring children would "fit in" with the majority population.

The Middle-Class, Urban, Jewish Household

Which families could afford a maid? Why would families of minimal economic standing consistently seek to employ household help even if it was a strain on the family budget? There was a great deal of difference between a lower middle-class home in which all the members "had enough" and that of a very "affluent" family, but both ascribed to middle-class values and sought to participate in bourgeois life.[15] Employing household help was part of this self-image and was not terribly costly, but could still strain some family budgets. Live-in help could be hired as little for 20 zł a month and the cost of feeding an extra mouth. Some interviewees lived in a flat in an apartment building or less often, a large, single family house. Their family sometimes owned the building in which they lived, renting out apartments to other families, and sometimes they rented their apartment. The number of rooms varied from one for a very modest apartment to four or even five in the case of more financially well off families. Typically the family members either all slept in one room or sometimes the parents in one room and the children in another, and in the case of more financially well off families the children may even have had their own bedrooms, although this was infrequent. These families often had help in the form of a live-in maid or nanny. It was very seldom that she would have her own quarters. Out of hundreds of testimonies, I only found the mention of a servant having her own quarters twice. She generally slept in the

[14] Dov Weissberg, *I Remember* (London: Freund Publishing House, 1998), 27.

[15] Interviewees describe their families' socioeconomic status either as "comfortable," as "having enough," "well off," "middle-class," "upper-middle class," "wealthy," or "affluent." They base these beliefs on how they remember their childhood before the war and the size of the family's dwelling, the condition of the home, the furnishings, the types of food they ate, their parents' jobs, and a variety of other factors.

kitchen, on a fold-out cot, or in a few instances she shared a bedroom with the children. Many of these middle-class families were not well off. Like their Polish gentile counterparts, Jews were struggling economically, and yet maintaining a maid gave them a bourgeois appearance. Employment of a maid was necessary to free a woman from some of her household burdens so she could work and socialize. As some families increasingly struggled to maintain their middle-class status even when economic conditions declined in the 1930s and made this very difficult, women had to improvise.[16] An author writing for *Gazeta dla Kobiet* informs readers of a household budget displayed at an exhibit detailing how a family of four could live on 250 zl per month.[17] Paying a maid between 20 and 40 zl a month was a sizeable investment of a 250 zl budget. The bourgeois home was expected to be stylish, clean, neat, and a reflection of the family's good taste. Tattered furnishings or dirty rugs would not reflect well on the family, particularly on the woman of the house who was responsible for its maintenance. In *Życie kobiece*, an author explains to her readers some tips to refresh the appearance of a home and maintain its cleanliness in a frugal manner.[18] The author suggests using items around the house

[16] Survivor testimonies and memoirs often touch on the "pauperization" of the Jewish population as families lost their businesses and faced tough economic conditions. For example see the Videotaped testimony of Sylvia Bell Asher, File no. 24511-3, January 1997, Tape 1, The USC Shoah Foundation Institute, Bell Asher recalls that her father went from earning a living manufacturing shoes to building houses because he "knew how to make money" and could adjust to the economic conditions as needed. In the videotaped testimony of Regina Blank, File no. 21412-3, October 29, 1996, The USC Shoah Foundation Institute, Blank recalls that her father lost the family business when the economic situation deteriorated. This resulted in the family moving and her father working as a tailor for the Polish military.

[17] Some families who employed household help struggled to maintain their middle-class status during the difficult economic times. One journal featured an article based on a booth put together by the women of the School of Commerce and Industry at the Poznan exhibition, "All for You." See "Budżet rodziny: 4 osoby- 250 zł," *Gazeta dla kobiet: miesięcznik ilustrowany*, nr. 11 (1935), 85-86.

[18] "Wizyta u parababki," *Życie kobiece: Tygodnik Illustrowany*, nr. 10, (1927), 11.

to make cleaning products but also employing modern conveniences such as a vacuum cleaner. This would allow her to maintain the standards of a clean and orderly home but also accommodate the family's financial situation as well.

The Female Dominated Realm of the Household

As the Bruno Schulz example suggests, the domestic realm was a highly feminized space. The male head was often away traveling for business, at work, or engaged in social commitments. Even when he returned home, the hands-on management of the home and the children were not his responsibility. Sylvia Bell Asher recalls both her own home and the two homes of her grandparents as being run by very strong women while the men played limited roles, as Asher's own father was always away for business. Her father first manufactured shoes and later began building houses, leaving the house around six o'clock in the morning to check on the workers at his construction sites, and only returning home at night.[19]

However, even though the wife/ mother of the house was also often times away from home for work, socializing, or philanthropic activities they were expected to maintain the home. Women were often volunteering their time for orphanages, distributing food for the poor, or even helping young, poor brides gather the trousseau and gift for her future husband that she was unable to attain on her own. Bell Asher remembers growing up in Warsaw under the supervision of her mother, her grandmother, and the family maid.[20] Her grandmother had twelve children and ran a steel business. Her grandparents owned a home outside of Warsaw that was always full of cousins and extended family as well as a home in the city at Ulica Nowolipki 14.[21] Her

[19] Videotaped testimony of Sylvia Bell Asher, Tape 1, 6:45.
[20] Videotaped testimony of Sylvia Bell Asher, Tape 1.
[21] Ibid., 28:10.

grandmother, with the help of the servants that she employed, managed both households while also running the family steel business. Asher states, "She knew what we'd have for dinner, the maid in one house and a maid in the other house, you would not believe it, [she was] like a general."[22] She remembers her mother's life as being "boring" because "she didn't do anything. She never went in the kitchen her whole life. She never knew how to cook."[23] Her mother was raised to appreciate bourgeois values and while the ability to run a household was important, it was expected that a woman would have a cook; therefore her desire to cook herself was quite unimportant. Asher remembers the family having two maids and a governess, along with the cook, who managed the household staff and made important decisions about the functioning of the home.[24] Asher's mother appeared to leave much of the running of the house to the cook while she was busy with her own sisters.[25]

Even though children spent a great deal of time with their caregivers, the parents, especially their mothers, were still responsible for their upbringing. While parenting was sometimes less "hands-on" in these instances, the caregivers were generally following instructions from the children's mother. Jan Imich, who lived in Kraków as a boy, remembers his daily life as being "regimented."[26] His mother spent her days frequenting coffee houses, visiting friends and playing cards, and at the same time she supervised the kitchen but the family maid

---

[22] Ibid., 28:15.

[23] Videotaped testimony of Sylvia Bell Asher, File no. 24511-3, January 1997, Tape 2, The USC Shoah Foundation Institute, 6:45.

[24] Asher's testimony specifies that the two maids were in fact Polish, but it appears that the cook who played such an important role in the household was likely Jewish.

[25] Videotaped testimony of Sylvia Bell Asher, Tape 1.

[26] Videotaped testimony of Jan Imich, File no. 35827-23, September 9, 1997, Tape 1, The USC Shoah Foundation Institute, 6:50.

and cook did all the shopping and cleaning of the house.[27] The family also employed a nanny to look after Imich. He recalls his nanny "used to carry out my parents orders exactly to the letter."[28] While he did have contact with his parents every day, he says he spent "quite a lot of time" with this nanny.[29] In the afternoons he was not allowed to play in the streets with the other children, but instead went for planned play dates at the home of friends where the children would "play under the watchful eyes of both nannies who were gossiping."[30] He remembers this nanny, Victoria, being very strict, but in retrospect he believes she was just attempting to follow his parents' directives as closely as she was able. The woman of the house needed a servant who could carry out her instructions fully and with care so the servant could act as a conduit for the parental values. Employment was not necessarily easy to find and a maid or nanny did not want to be dismissed. Carrying out the instructions of one or both parents was vital to maintaining a position. While the women who worked as maids and nannies were often from rural environments and the economic lower-classes, they still often acted as a transmitter of bourgeois values to the children they cared for. These were received by the domestic servant by watching the example of the lady of the house and through her implicit directives, were passed on to the children as she cared for them.

The woman of the house was involved to varying degrees in the cooking, shopping, and planning of activities. The young female children of the house had varying degrees of involvement as well. Rachel Birnbaum recalls that her mother baked but the girls did not help her when they were young. The family had an aunt who lived in their home and a servant, and

[27] Ibid.
[28] Ibid., 6:59.
[29] Ibid., 3:15.
[30] Ibid., 38:21.

both helped her mother. She remembers that as her sister grew older their mother began calling her into the kitchen more frequently to observe, saying, "I know you're going to have a maid, but if you have a maid and don't know what you are doing, the maid's not going to know either." [31] Lola Blady of Łódź also remembers her mother doing the cooking with the help of the maid and her mother taught the three girls how to cook.[32] Whether or not the mother of the family participated directly in the shopping and cooking, it was important that she have the knowledge to manage the home and direct the servant. As mentioned earlier, Bell Asher's mother never cooked and did not know how, but she was able to instruct the household servants. Young girls would have likely been taught to run a household or to cook, either by their mother or the family maid in preparation for their maintenance of their own home someday. Even though she may play a rather limited role in the actual activities other than supervision of the help who carried them out, a woman needed these skills.

Much as the type, size, and location of the home depended upon multiple factors, so did the daily functions of the households themselves. Level of acculturation, religious adherence, political leanings, and income levels influenced daily life and leisure activities for a typical middle-class family. Often, both parents were involved in the family business. Sometimes in more affluent households, the mother of the house was freed from business commitments but still spent a large amount of her time outside of the home engaging in social and philanthropic activities such as volunteering time at an orphanage or helping young brides unable to afford wedding gifts for their future husbands.

---

[31] Videotaped testimony of Rachel Birnbaum, File no. 06703-5, December 21, 1995, Tape 1, The USC Shoah Foundation Institute, 9:09.

[32] Videotaped testimony of Lola Blady, File no. 31248-3, July 17, 1997, Tape 1, The USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archives.

The level of religious observance and acculturation or assimilation in the family profoundly affected the daily rhythms of the household. In addition to dictating whether a child went to religious or state school and whether or not a child attended school on Saturdays, it determined whether a household kept kosher, the holidays they celebrated, whether they attended synagogue, if they held *shabbos* dinner, and so on. Polish gentile maids were found in homes that were very much observant as well as in highly acculturated homes. Sometimes in an observant home a family would prefer a Jewish domestic servant if her duties included the shopping or taking part in the cooking. Anna Balaban, who was born in Słomniki, near Kraków, recalls that while the family had a Polish maid, her own mother did all the cooking.[33] Her grandmother, however, chose to employ a very distant relative to work as a housekeeper in her home because she wanted to be certain that she would cook kosher.[34] Some observant families did employ gentiles to take part in the cooking and the domestic servants either learned to cook according to the laws of kashrut so they could prepare meals with little supervision or sometimes they cooked in the kitchen alongside the woman of the house. This happened for various reasons. Most interviewees point to the abundance of Polish gentile women seeking employment and the low wages they would accept.

Participating in Hybrid Middle-Class Identities

Better off Jewish households were often made up of parents who were less traditional than their own parents, and their children were influenced by both their parents' hybrid identities and that of the hired caregivers in their homes. Middle-class Jewish values would have been diverse and comprised of both secular middle-class ideals and a varied level of Jewish traditional

[33] Videotaped testimony of Anna Balaban, File no. 26141, February 26, 1997, Tape 1, The USC Shoah Foundation Institute, 6:40.
[34] Ibid., 6:49.

values. The maids would have also been experiencing this hybrid version of middle-class identity and transmitting it to children as they themselves acculturated.

Some acculturated households observed Polish customs. This could be as a demonstration of patriotism, an attempt to fit in, or because the family just felt compelled for personal reasons to participate. Jan Imich describes his parents as non-practicing and says that "Jewish life" in their home was "fairly non-existent."[35] The family celebrated both Jewish holidays and Polish Catholic holidays, and he recalls enjoying both Christmas and Passover foods.[36] Imich's family life reflects the blurring of religious lines in many acculturated families. These families managed to deftly weave Jewish traditions with Polish Catholic practices as they became more acculturated. Imich's family had a Christmas tree and entertained guests with a *szopka* (a birth of Christ show).[37] Lillian Goss, who lived in Warsaw and then moved to Lodz before the outbreak of the war, had an aunt who married a Pole.[38] Her family was not observant and they would celebrate Christmas with a tree and presents.[39] She describes this activity as patriotic rather than religious. And yet, the family also celebrated Passover at her grandparents' home. The pattern of observing some Polish Catholic cultural customs (that are religious in this case) and also at the same time celebrating traditional Jewish religious customs with their parents is a common theme and shows generational shifts in the Polish-Jewish community. Many of the interviewees

---

[35] Videotaped testimony of Jan Imich, File no. 35827-23, 20:57.

[36] Ibid., 22:18.

[37] Ibid., 22:25.

[38] Videotaped testimony of Lillian Goss, File no. 41069-3, April 2, 1998, Tape 1, The USC Shoah Foundation Institute. According to Goss's testimony her Polish uncle aided Goss. He kept her in his home outside the ghetto and after being blackmailed he placed her in Warsaw in the home of his own brother and sister-in-law.

[39] Ibid.

mention that their parents were very modern and less observant than their own parents.[40] This generational divide makes it appear that in some cases, these parents of the interviewees were the first generation to embrace fully this Polish middle class-culture and pass it on to their own children. These families were already acculturating, thus the presence of Polish Catholic maids in the household was part of this acculturation process in progress.

Acculturated, economically well off families engaged in leisure activities in line with their status as middle-class urban dwellers, which were mirrored by their gentile counterparts' activities as well. This would later help children "perform Polishness" when they needed to pass during the Nazi Occupation. These activities included walks in the parks or on the trendy streets in the city in which their families lived, taking in a show at the local theater or cinema, attending a concert, or visiting with friends and family. Halina Biderman, who was around seventeen at the outbreak of the war, recalls on Saturday evenings she went dancing and listened to records in private homes.[41] On Sunday morning they went walking near the park. Zofia Blitz, born in Warsaw, recalled that her mother had things to do outside of work but her father spent his free time with her and her two siblings.[42] He would often surprise the children with an impromptu

[40] In some cases the children's only interaction with religious practice occurred when their parents took them to visit their grandparents. This is mentioned in the videotaped testimony of Lillian Goss, File no. 41069-1, April 2, 1998, tape 1, The USC Shoah Foundation Institute, and in the videotaped testimony of Rosa Hochberg, File no. 38828-0, December 12, 1997, Tape 1, The USC Shoah Foundation Institute.

[41] Videotaped testimony of Halina Biderman, File no. 23694-1, November 29, 1996, Tape 1, USC Shoah Foundation Institute.

[42] Videotaped testimony of Zofia Blitz, File no. 40853-3, March 30, 1998, Tape 1, USC Shoah Foundation Institute.

walk, carriage ride, or trip to a movie or concert.[43] The weekend was a time for parents to socialize with friends or extended family and often for parents to spend time with their children.

Summer holiday was also an opportunity to demonstrate middle-class status and participate in bourgeois life. Jan Imich, mentioned above, spent six weeks in Zakopane most summers.[44] He and his mother would stay in a hotel and his father would come for two of those weeks. He would go for walks every day with his nanny while his mother played bridge and chatted with her friends. When his father arrived the nanny would get time off and Imich spent time with just his parents. Depending on individual families, sometimes the summer holiday was spent with extended family. Cousins spent the day playing, while their mothers played cards and enjoyed leisure activities. Going on summer holiday in the country or the seaside gave a family's maid the chance to experience a middle-class life that she would not have been exposed to back home in the village of her origin or as a poor single woman in the city. While Polish Catholic domestic servants acted as transmitters of Polish Catholic culture, they were also able to become acculturated to middle class Polish norms.

Acculturation as a Two-Way Street

In observant or more traditional homes, the rhythm of the household was shaped also by religious practice. The workweek still dictated the schedule to a large degree but the activities of these families were subjected to the rules of kashrut and other Jewish laws. These laws, along with prayer ritual and religious study, divided the sexes just like everything else in the Jewish household. Unlike many children of acculturated families, children from observant households who attended state public or secular private schools stayed home from school on Saturdays.

---

[43] Ibid., 10:10.

[44] Videotaped testimony of Jan Imich, File no. 35827-23, 15:00.

Mothers would often be home preparing the meals with or without the direct help of the family servant. David Geller was born in 1922 in Rzeszów. His family owned a grocery store which both parents worked in and he described them as "very observant."[45] The family had a Polish Catholic maid and he remembers that on every Thursday night his mother, along with the family's gentile maid, "cooked and baked practically the whole night."[46]

Jack Arnel was born in Vilna in 1929. His father was a furrier and his mother a dressmaker whose clientele were among the city's elite.[47] They maintained a kosher home, attending synagogue on Saturdays. The family employed a Polish Catholic maid and governess with whom they communicated in Polish even though they knew a lot of Yiddish. The gentile domestic servants were also able to "prepare certain meals and all that, they knew all about the Yiddish traditions."[48] Arnel recalls, "My mother used to light the candles on Friday and even our housemaid helped with this, she used to set it all up and we were all together including the housemaid and many times the governess would join us to celebrate Friday nights and the special Friday night dinner."[49] On these nights the home would often be filled with family and friends. Arnel's mother loved to entertain and frequently his mother's siblings and their families visited and they were together as "one big happy family."[50] In this environment, the family's maid was

[45] Videotaped testimony of David Geller, File no. 02193, April 27, 1997, Tape 1, USC Shoah Foundation Institute, 6:50.
[46] Ibid., 7:01.
[47] Videotaped testimony of Jack Arnel, File no. 19111-3, August 29, 1996, Tape 1, USC Shoah Foundation Institute, 15:25.
[48] Ibid., 12:08.
[49] Ibid., 22:28.
[50] Ibid., 23:08.

able to teach the child she cared for about Polish Catholic culture while at the same time learning Jewish traditions.

The summer months brought a change in the rhythm of the household. The children did not attend school during the summer and it was believed that it was better for children and adults to leave the city during the summer months whenever possible. The city was hot and dirty and it was thought that the clean country air and activity was good for health and well-being. As a result, middle-class families often took extended trips to the countryside where they would rent a house, stay at a spa, or in some cases they owned a country manor. Their ability to spend an extended time in a resort town or retire to a villa in the countryside for holiday was an important marker of middle-class status.

Parents still had business obligations during the summer months, so it was very rare that both could stay with the children the entire stay. Sometimes this meant that the domestic servant would go along and the parents would spend the week in the city, traveling to the countryside for the weekends, or they would stay for a few weeks rather than the entire month. Sylvia Bell Asher, mentioned above, recalls that the family would rent a house in a resort town and would go with the maid, cook, and governess while her mother and father were working.[51] Her mother would come part of the time and her father would sometimes come on the weekends when he was able. Zofia Blitz testified that when she was a girl the family would rent a villa outside of Warsaw.[52] The family packed up their belongings and she and her siblings went with the housekeeper and governess because her parents were working. She explains, "First the baggage went, and then the children with the housekeeper and the governess. We were not far from

[51] Videotaped testimony of Sylvia Bell Asher, Tape 1, 16:29.

[52] Videotaped testimony of Zofia Blitz, File no. 40853-3, March 30, 1998, Tape 1, USC Shoah Foundation Institute, 11:00.

Warsaw and we stayed there the whole summer and my parents used to come on the weekends always bringing us new toys and playing with us, different games."[53] As the children grew older they started going to a spa instead. Albert Graj, who lived in Kraków, also describes a similar situation.[54] He would go first with the maid, Irena, and stay in the countryside for two months. His mother spent about three weeks in the countryside with him and his father only used to come for a weekend. He explains that during this time in the country the maid would run the household in his mother's absence until his older sister was able to do so.[55]

Family Roles and Relationships

The housekeeper as conduit for middle-class identity

Children often developed relationships with, and feelings for, their household servant that were similar to that of a mother, a sibling, or a close friend. [56] Many domestic servants were

[53] Ibid., 11:42.

[54] Videotaped testimony of Albert Graj, File no. 35469-40, August 19. 1997, Tape 1, USC Shoah Foundation Institute.

[55] Ibid., 17:00.

[56] Intra-household relationships were varied and complex and based on many factors. Relationships between parents, siblings, parents and their children, and the domestic servants and each family member played out in this female dominated domestic realm. The relationship I am able most readily to access using my base of sources is that between children and their parents and the family domestic servants, but also relationships between the adults in the household as they were perceived by the children. One caveat of using sources that were written after the experience of living through the Holocaust and the passage of time and experiences of adulthood is that the ways these relationships are remembered does influence the picture I am able to paint with the sources. This does not however, make these sources any less useful and in many cases these are the only sources available to reconstruct this lost domestic world. While many survivors may have chosen to focus on the fond memories from their childhood or shy away from speaking ill of people who they loved very deeply and were murdered, overall I found that these testimonies are not overly idealized if the person providing the testimony is allowed to talk extensively about their prewar childhood. Frequently a survivor will say childhood was "wonderful" or focus on how loved they felt in the beginning, but given time to elaborate they do give normalized versions of life. Such realities as generational gaps, parents being away for work

quite young when they began their careers so sometimes they were not so much older than the children they cared for. Irene Frisch's caregiver Frania, mentioned above, was only a teen when she started to work for the family. Klara Halbuech, born in Kraków in 1923, recalls that the family had a housemaid who insisted her sister take over her position when she married and left the family.[57] Halbuech, who was too young to remember this, was told that when the girl came she was only fourteen years old and initially cried constantly. Halbuech's mother instructed the family's former maid to take her sister back home but the former maid insisted her sister should stay and would be happy there with the family. The sister adjusted and stayed with the family until the outbreak of the war. For many young women, this was their first time away from home. These women were in a new place, living with strangers, shouldering a large amount of responsibility, and needed to please their employers in order to keep their position. Often domestic servants were closer in age to their charges than their employers, and sometimes their charges would have a relationship with them that was more that of an older sister than a parent or real authority figure. Thus, we occasionally see evidence of young girls confiding in their caregivers, offering advice, and growing quite attached to them.

Domestic help also often developed relationships similar to that of a mother with the children they cared for. In cases where a mother died a caregiver sometimes became a surrogate in a sense. Stanley Freed, born in 1929 in Lodz, suffered the loss of his mother when he was quite young.[58] His father hired a Polish Catholic woman to help in the house and he recalls, "she

---

frequently, favoring of one parent, and so on do enter into the narratives. Thus, even with the passage of time and trauma, these accounts of everyday life are an invaluable resource.

[57] Videotaped testimony of Klara Halbeuch, File no. 03582-6, June 28, 1995, Tape 1, USC Shoah Foundation Institute, 8:57.

[58] Videotaped testimony of Stanley Freed, File No. 18557-3, August 14, 1996, Tape 1, USC Shoah Foundation Institute.

really raised me, her name was Stasia, and she was many years with us. She was very good."[59] Even though Freed's Jewish name was Israel, she called him Staszek or Stanislaw because of her name, as if he was her own. He explains that she was trying to replace his mother and after the war he found her again and helped provide for her.

Relationships between the mother of the house and the caregiver were also deeply complex. In some cases, friendship and a sense of intimacy developed between these women but in other cases these relationships were very much defined by the employer/ employee power dynamic. The majority of relationships feel somewhere in between. Irene Frisch, mentioned above, recalls that just a few years after getting married her mother was in the park one day with her brother when she was approached by a teen from the countryside who commented on how beautiful the baby was and asked to play with him.[60] She made faces at the baby and Frisch's mother immediately liked the girl. She asked her what she was doing in the city and the girl replied she had come from the village looking for a job, so Frisch's mother hired her on the spot and took her home.[61] Frisch says that this girl, Frania, came to work for the family and "became the most important person in our lives."[62] It was an amiable relationship between this household employee, the children, and the mother of the house, who liked her immediately. Frania worked for the family until 1939 when Frisch's mother "pushed her" to get married even though Frisch claims she did not want to.[63] Frisch's mother implored Frania by saying "Look, one day the kids

[59] Ibid., 4:00.
[60] Videotaped testimony of Irene Frisch, File no. 21825-3, October 28, 1996, Tape 2, USC Shoah Foundation Institute, 28:00.
[61] Videotaped testimony of Irene Frisch, Tape 3, 1:10.
[62] Ibid., 1:30.
[63] Ibid., 3:00.

will leave the house and what is going to happen to you? You need to have a family of your own."[64] Frania left on the condition that her younger sister, Marysia, take over her position and she continued to visit and check on the children almost every day until the war broke out.[65] Frania continued to care for the family even throughout the war, hiding young Irene, her sister, and her mother eventually. I will discuss this in more detail in a later chapter. The relationship between Frania and Frisch's mother is obviously one that was more than employer and employee. The attachment that Frisch felt for this household employee before the war was then deepened by her efforts to sustain them during the Nazi occupation.

Dov Weissberg's memoir also highlights the complex nature of the relationship between the lady of the house and her domestic servants. When Stasia, the children's governess of several years, became pregnant out of wedlock, the family could continue to employ her. Weissberg explains, "An unmarried girl becoming pregnant was a serious scandal. A self-respecting family could not let such an 'immoral' girl stay with them and raise their children."[66] Rather than just letting her go though, Weissberg's mother finds employment for this governess with a family friend, a doctor, in Zbaraz, where no one will know of her "amorous past," and she could continue "to raise Jewish children." [67] This is interesting because it not only shows the sense of attachment that his mother felt to this woman and her empathy for her, it illustrates the importance of upholding the image of being a proper middle-class family. His mother obviously does not have a problem with this "immoral" woman caring for Jewish children or more specifically her friend's children, so long as everyone does not know her past. It is more people

[64] Ibid., 3:04.
[65] Ibid., 3:30.
[66] Weissburg, *I Remember*, 27.
[67] Ibid.

knowing about the governess's indiscretion that is troubling than the behavior itself, otherwise she would not set up this new employment situation for her.

Transmission of bourgeois values from parents to children

Understanding relationships between parents, their children, and their hired caregivers is essential to understanding some of the motivations in aid cases where former employees gave assistance to their former charges when they became targets of Nazi persecution. Aside from creating the bonds that made women risk their lives to save former employers or made former employers entrust their children with a former employee, these relationships also acted as a means of transmission of bourgeois customs and values to Jewish children in the home. The customs, manners, and values children learned in the domestic realm that were delivered to them by interactions with their parents and their family's domestic servants sometimes became an important set of tools later when a child had to blend in to the Polish Catholic population to hide.

The children of middling and well off, urban, Jewish households almost always note that their parents were very busy with work and social commitments. Survivors of the Holocaust who were children during the interwar period acknowledge that their parents' commitments limited their time together, but they also point out that most parents spent a great deal of time outside the home. George Hoffman says that his parents were both busy, father with his work and mother with her social life.[68] As a result, he considered himself to have been raised by the family's maid Maria, whom he describes as a part of the family. When discussing his mother's absence he explains, "That's not to say she was a bad mother, in those days I don't think it was unusual to

[68] Videotaped testimony of George Hofman, File no. 17554-5, July 17, 1996, Tape 1, USC Shoah Foundation Institute, 16:00.

have children brought up by help, during the day. And I saw my parents evenings and weekends."[69]

Many testimonies mentioned parents, particularly mothers, who spent leisure time in cafes socializing. Rosa Hochberg, born in Brzezany, describes interwar middle-class urban Polish Jewish society as a "café society."[70] Women who did participate in the family business also spent time at cafes, working for philanthropic groups, and attending lectures, concerts, plays, and films. As a result parents spent a large amount of time away from their children. Halina Mitchley's mother did not work.[71] Mitchley's father had been married and his first wife died. After her death, he served in Russia as an army doctor. While there he met Mitchley's mother, eighteen years his junior, and she returned to Warsaw with him. Mitchley was born shortly after that. Her mother was a Russian Jew and spoke very poor Polish. She did not work but spent a great deal of time with her husband's sister-in-law. Every day the two women met and went to socialize at the Ziemniańska Café, which was frequented by artists and literary notables such as the Skamanderites. Mitchley's mother, despite her difficulty with the Polish language and her status as a Russian Jew, still participated in this middle-class activity. In many ways Mitchley's mother did not fit into the middle-class norm because she was not as educated and as genteel as Mitchley's father, and she was not steeped in Polish culture and knowledgeable of Polish literary classics. She was in other ways attempting to participate in bourgeois culture and pass this along to her daughter. Mitchley notes that the family at first employed a French

---

[69] Ibid., 17:50.

[70] Videotaped testimony of Rosa Hochberg, File no. 38828-0, December 12, 1997, Tape 1, USC Shoah Foundation Institute, 7:00.

[71] Videotaped testimony of Halina Mitchley, File no. 40467, February 20, 1998, Tape 1, USC Shoah Foundation Institute.

governess so she would learn the language and that she was forbidden to use Russian because it would taint her Polish. So while her mother lacked Polishness, she nonetheless attempted to ensure her daughter would not.

Dov Weissberg's mother was employed teaching French and German until she married, at which time she left her job outside the home. As a proper middle-class woman it was not necessary for her to work, but she was still very active outside of the home. She was convinced, much to the displeasure of her own parents, that "children should be raised by a professional governess, not by their parents" so she employed a maid for the cleaning and household maintenance and a nanny and later a governess for the care of the children, because they were financially able to employ both.[72] The governess had to have at minimum a high school education and to know foreign languages, preferably German and French. The governess was with the children "at all times" and even slept in the boys' bedroom so that they "could get the necessary attention (education) around the clock."[73] Employment of domestic servants allowed Mrs. Weissberg to spend her time engaging in philanthropic activities such as raising funds for the Zionist organization, Keren Kayemet and the Jewish Orphans Home in Lwów. She was also quite active in the Parent-Teacher Association at St. Ann's School for Boys where Dov and his brother attended.

Extended family relationships and generational divisions

Some families were separated from their extended families by geographical distance or differences in lifestyle and religious adherence, while others maintained much closer bonds. As I mentioned earlier, there was often a generational divide in traditional practices and religious

[72] Weissberg, *I Remember*, 22.
[73] Ibid.

observance. In the case of Halina Mitchley, mentioned above, her mother came from Russia and therefore Mitchley did not have contact with her maternal extended family. Mitchley's paternal grandparents lived in Warsaw's Jewish quarter. Her own family lived near the Saxon Garden in a mixed, upper middle-class area of the city, not far from the Jewish Quarter. She would go to the Jewish Quarter a few times a year to visit her father's parents. Mitchley's parents were not religious, but her paternal grandparents were. Her grandfather was a math and religious instructor and her grandmother had a business printing religious and Hebrew books. On Sundays the family would have lunch with Mitchley's father's extended family, alternatively hosting it between their home and her aunt's home. The home would be full of family. Even her aunt's mother came, bringing her own dishes because she kept kosher. It is difficult to know if there was tension between family members regarding religious observance but since this family made the effort to spend time together so frequently, we can assume that the bonds were strong despite differences in religious observation. Hosting such a large group on a bi-weekly basis was a big commitment of time and resources, indicating its importance.

Dov Weissberg's mother took the children very regularly to see her own parents even though they had disagreements over how to maintain their Jewishness and how to raise children. Weissberg recalls that while his mother felt that children should be raised by professional governesses, her own parents did not believe this, which led to arguments. Later, when the children had a Ukrainian governess whom no one likes, Weissberg's grandmother had the opportunity for an "I told you so." Weissberg also remembers the joy of visiting his maternal grandparents for Shabbat or the Passover holiday and noticed the differences in how his mother and her own parents practiced their religion. His grandparents pampered the children with gifts

and he states "even the food (strictly kosher) seemed tastier than the food we ate at home."[74] His mother would take him and the boys by taxicab or carriage to the home of the grandparents but if they traveled during Shabbat they would take a tram. He explains, "Saturdays we would take a tram, in order to not make the taxicab driver or coachman work on the Sabbath. In her interpretation of Halacha trams on Saturday ran anyway, so boarding one would not make a difference as far as the Sabbath was concerned."[75] For Passover, Weissberg would be allowed the special treat as the eldest child of staying overnight at his grandparent's house and after a breakfast of fried matzo and sweet wine his grandfather would return him to his mother and father. Weissberg notes that he was, however, delivered "by foot," because "Grandfather never accepted my mother's interpretation of Halacha, which permitted a tram ride on a Sabbath or holiday."[76] Tensions between parents and the maternal or paternal grandparents regarding how to incorporate the values they were brought up in and those they maintained in their own homes highlighted the perceived difference between traditional and acculturated Jews for some children.

Extended families spent time together participating in middle-class leisure activities such as frequenting coffee houses and spending the summer holiday together. Halina Mitchley remembers as a girl that she and her mother would go on holiday for two months during the summer.[77] Her father would join them for three or four weeks, but he could not be away from work longer than that. The family would often go to the seaside, near Gdansk on the Baltic. He remembers that her aunt and cousins would often join them. During the summer holiday, Jack Arnel's parents, the extended family, and his parents' friends would often rent accommodations

[74] Ibid., 31.
[75] Ibid., 31-33.
[76] Ibid., 33.
[77] Videotaped interview of Halina Mitchley, Tape 2.

near one another for a month.[78] His father would only come for the weekends due to business obligations, but he and his mother spent the month there. As a result women and children were the primary inhabitants of the holiday domestic realm, with the men coming for shorter periods. Thus, this was a time for adult women to enjoy leisure time with their children, their adult sisters, and their nieces and nephews, and a time for children to bond with their mothers, aunts and cousins.

The bonds between extended family members sometimes played an extremely important role later under the Nazi occupation. When the Germans invaded, many Jews fled the major cities and sought refuge in the countryside with extended family members. This initial flight was often followed by a return to the city, and internment in the ghetto. The Jews in the ghettos who were part of a large, close-knit extended family sometimes were able to use this to their advantage when family members could provide gentile contacts and economic resources that were not available directly to them.

Symbiosis and Tensions

The previous chapter examined the ways Polish Catholic domestics carved their own niches within the household. The domestic realm did provide the environment in which barriers between ethnic and religious groups could be much more permeable than in public life and thus, the gentile women working in these households often became quite acculturated to Jewish culture and religion. Conversely, the children of the households also became more acculturated to Polish Catholic peasant culture and working-class culture though these interactions. Independent from the influence of a gentile living in the household, many Polish Jewish families clearly already felt an affinity to Polish culture. Parents sought to transmit their own felt Polish

[78] Videotaped interview of Jack Arnel, Tape 1.

identities and affinity to Polish culture to their children and sometimes encouraged their children to display their Polish identities in public to minimize any negative reactions caused by markers of Jewish identity.

Jewish middle-class urban families spoke Polish in the home and generally had regular contact with Polish gentiles in the public realm: in professional settings, in the market place, on the streets. Some families had extensive contact and socialized with gentiles and felt very comfortable in these social circles, whereas many others less so. Feeling comfortable amongst the Polish Catholic population and the ability to participate in Polish Catholic culture would later become a highly desirable skill when a Jewish family would need to make a decision regarding whether or not to attempt to hide or pass on the so-called Aryan side. A family that employed a Polish Catholic domestic brought this contact into the intimacy of their own home. As discussed in the previous chapter, within the domestic realm members of different ethnoreligious groups became familiar with one another, and the "other" in many instances became "one's own." Some families, such as Halina Biderman's family who lived in Warsaw, would have a Christmas tree for their Polish Catholic maid.[79] Sometimes Jewish children went to church with their Catholic caregivers. On Sunday businesses were closed because Poland a very Catholic country. Some parents still needed to work or had social commitments and children still spent the day with their caregivers. As a result, many children attended church with their caregivers because they wanted to attend mass but still had to care for the children who were home from school. It is vital to understand that relationships between Polish Catholic caregivers and Jewish children happened and this familiarity developed between caregiver and children, because the parents, the employers, allowed it. Children celebrated Christmas, went to the countryside to spend time with

[79] Videotaped testimony of Halina Biderman, File no. 23694-1, November 29, 1996, Tape 1, The USC Shoah Foundation Institute.

their caregiver's family during the holidays, because their parents permitted it. In some cases maids took their Jewish charges to mass with then without the knowledge of their parents, but quite often when it happened it was because the child's parents allowed it out of practical reasons.[80]

Conclusions

Middle-class Polish Jews in the urban centers were quite unlike their working-class or rural dwelling counterparts. In the cities, middle-class and more affluent Polish Jews found their own niche, traversing both traditional Jewish communities as well as Polish gentile communities. These Polish Jews often retained elements of traditional Jewish culture and blended them with middle-class culture in a way that worked for them. Parents transmitted this culture along with its traditions and values to their children. As a result of their upbringing the children spoke Polish, were versed in Polish secular traditions, and often identified as Polish. Importantly, a family's employment of a gentile maid also meant that children experienced Polish Catholic peasant or working-class culture. As a result, children often grew up understanding the differences and similarities between bourgeois culture and lower class culture and often were familiar with rural, Catholic culture. Children would have witnessed their parents drawing on

[80] See the following testimonies for examples of children who went to church with the family's domestic servant with the permission of their parents; videotaped testimony of Roman Englander, File no. 16533-3, June 26, 1996, The USC Shoah Foundation Institute; Videotaped testimony of Lola Fontak, File no. 09038-2, November 20, 1995, The USC Shoah Foundation Institute; Videotaped testimony of Irene Frisch, File no. 21825-3, October 28, 1996; Videotaped testimony of Gerda Klein, File no. 09725-1, December 7, 1995, The USC Shoah Foundation Institute; Videotaped testimony of Zora Alberts, File no. 39770-3, March 25, 1998, The USC Shoah Foundation Institute, and Videotaped testimony of Jack Arnel, File no. 19111-3, August 29, 1996, The USC Shoah Foundation Institute. Some maids took their charges to church without the permission of their employers. In the videotaped testimony of Rachel Mutterperl Goldfarb, File No. RG 50.030 0082, September 16, 1991, USHMM, Goldfarb recalled "my parents from what my mother tells me, had forbidden her to take us to church, but she wanted to go to church and in order to fulfill her duties of taking care of us, my brother and I, they (the two domestic servants employed by the family) would steal off to church and take us with her," 2.

their own hybrid identities in their everyday lives, in the ways they interacted with their Polish gentile colleagues and friends and how that differed from the ways they behaved in a setting with more Jewish friends, acquaintances, and family. They may have witnessed their parents using Polish in public and possibly using Yiddish or slipping in a Yiddish phrase in the privacy of their own home. Children learned to use their own hybrid identities to fit in while they were at school and out in public. In the public sphere their hybrid identities would be shaped further by their daily interactions with peers, friends, and adults, which will be discussed in the following chapter.

As a result of their upbringing, some Jewish children were able to use their flexible identities to pass as Catholic Poles when they went into hiding during Nazi persecution. In cases where children were hidden in the open with a former Polish gentile caregiver, these children had the advantage of being familiar with that person and possessed a body of knowledge to draw upon to try to avoid being detected as a Jew.

CHAPTER THREE

THE CHILDREN'S SPHERE

Introduction

Renata Zajdman grew up between two households: her father's home on the outskirts of Warsaw in Sochaczew and her mother's home located in Warsaw. Zajdman was raised an affluent Polish Jewish child of the upper bourgeoisie. Her mother was a businesswoman, her father a passionate lawyer. She spoke beautiful Polish, was educated in the classics, and went to school with Polish Catholic and Jewish children. She recalls that before the war, "I was moving freely among the Catholics. I guess the seeds for my survival were already planted in my childhood because I was able to take on a Catholic identity without any problems."[1] Children such as Zajdman were the members of the first generation to be born and spend their formative years or come of age in the newly independent Poland and were often first generation *Polish* Jews who grew up in acculturated, Polish language-speaking households.

This chapter argues that many such children developed hybrid identities as a result of their upbringing, influenced by both their mother who instilled middle-class Polish values and the family's gentile household servants who came from peasant or working class families. The chapter further suggests that these identities aided children in developing a particular skill set that was useful when they wanted to be perceived as Polish primarily or when they wished to be identified as Jewish. This skill set was honed by the experiences children had in private Polish language schools or state run public schools. Friendships with Polish gentile children also provided some additional socialization in Polish gentile norms and customs. The chapter examines the development of the ability to pass as "Polish," meaning as Polish Catholics, which

[1] Videotaped testimony of Renata Skotnicka- Zajdman, File no. 37068-4, The USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive, 11:20.

allowed children, such as Zajdman, to avoid being singled out at school as Jewish and being targeted by anti-Semitic classmates and also later when, under Nazi rule, survival depended on being identified as a Pole.

The Intimate Realm

In the intimacy of the domestic realm middle-class values were transmitted from mother to child. At the beginning of the twentieth century, Poland, like the rest of Europe, was modernizing, which meant the reduction in the number of births and focus on using scientific methods to raise children to be healthy and productive citizens.[2] While many middle-class women were involved in pursuits outside of the house, either working in the family business, socializing, or taking part in philanthropic activities, it was still expected that women prepare for motherhood, her primary duty. This preparation included the study of psychology and new methods of child education.[3] Journals suggested mothers "learn psychology, pedology, hygiene" and subscribe to appropriate child-rearing magazines.[4] A good middle-class mother was expected to be educated in and observe sanitary and hygiene requirements and ensure that children had adequate time to play in the fresh air along with regular exercise. Mothers were instructed that day-by-day they raise a child to lead a rational and normal life and that this begins the moment the child arrives on earth.[5] In addition to tending to a child's physical and educational development, a mother was responsible for the development of the child spiritually

---

[2] An example of an article espousing the need for scientific motherhood: "Poczętek Współżycia," *Dziecko i matka: dwytygodnik poświęcony zdrowiu i wychowaniu dziecka do lat siedmiu*, Nr. 19 (1933), 17.

[3] Katarzyna Sierakowska, "Maternity in Inter-war Poland: visions and realities," *Women's History Review*, 14, no. 1, (1994): 123.

[4] Ibid., 124.

[5] "Poczętek Współżycia," *Dziecko i matka: dwytygodnik poświęcony zdrowiu i wychowaniu dziecka do lat siedmiu*, Nr. 19 (1933), 17.

and for the development of the child's relationship with the father.[6] The mother was also responsible for ensuring that her children received a proper, well-rounded education that included the standard academic subjects, foreign languages, and often mastery of a musical instrument.

This was quite a heavy load for a woman who also had a household to run and was needed outside of the home in the family business or for various philanthropic commitments. The employment of household help was vital in her aims. The employment of a maid, nanny, or governess to aid in the childcare was very common and an important marker of middle-class values. In some cases, particularly for wealthy acculturated families, it was thought that the hands-on child rearing was best left to a professional so a trained child nurse or governess would be employed.

As discussed in Chapter 2, relationships with gentile caregivers transmitted Polish Catholic culture to children, exposing them to church, peasant culture, and the countryside. Children lived in Polish-speaking homes and learned Polish middle-class culture from their mothers directly, and these cultural traits were transmitted through the domestic servant who acted on the directives of her employer. The time they spent with their Polish Catholic maids and nannies also exposed children to peasant beliefs and traditions, and peasant Catholicism. Many children attended church with their household servants. Gerda Klein remembers that her nanny was "very Catholic," in that she went to church every day and used to take Klein with her.[7] She felt that there was "great respect" for the nanny's Catholic religion by Klein's parents and her

[6] Zarnowska, 125.

[7] Videotaped testimony of Gerda Klein, File no. 09725-1, December 7, 1995, Tape 1, The USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive, 13:50.

family's Judaism by her nanny.[8] Many children, such as Klein, were exposed to Catholicism and attended mass at least once or twice with their maid.

Exposure to Catholic practices and beliefs sometimes went further than just a familiarity with prayers or the mass service. When Halina Nelken had scarlet fever as a young girl, the family's Polish maid Józka, without the knowledge of the girl's parents, brought the neighbor Mrs. Heller, to help her attend to the child, whom she apparently believed was suffering from a curse of the evil eye.[9] The two women, one Polish and one Jewish, attempted to "ward off the evil eye" using a ritual that involved a piece of bread, a burned out match, and a glass of water.[10] They rubbed her forehead, chest, and wrists, and then, "Józka crossed herself and prayed to the Virgin Mary; Mrs. Heller gibbered something in Yiddish."[11] They placed the glass of water under her bed where it was to sit for twenty-four hours. They believed the performance of this ritual would determine the gender of the person who placed the curse on Nelken. Nelken's father found this glass and to avoid letting these women "make a fool" of his daughter, dumped the water out.[12] In this particular moment, these two women of different religions came together, both believing in the ability of this ritual to determine (or at least narrow down the suspects) who meant to harm Nelken. The father obviously did not see any value in this activity, and did not want his daughter participating in what he likely perceived as silliness or a backwards practice.

The element of mysticism exhibited in this practice is important in understanding the particular character of Catholicism that housekeepers often brought from the countryside.

---

[8] Ibid., 13:50.
[9] Halina Nelken, *And Yet! I am Still Here* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1999), 4.
[10] Ibid.
[11] Ibid.
[12] Ibid.

Peasant or rural Catholicism was imbued with pagan rituals that related to the agricultural cycle and originated in the countryside prior to the predominance of Catholicism in the Polish lands. Women, both urban and rural, likely also identified with the Virgin Mary, who was often prayed to for guidance and comfort.[13] Jewish children who spent an extended amount of time with Catholic caregivers were exposed to these rural beliefs and rituals. Attending church services with a caregiver taught children about how Catholics practice in public, but the religious stories and rituals the children were exposed to in the private realm gave them additional knowledge about being Catholic that could later be used to pass as a child from the countryside. This would be valuable for children if later they needed to appear from a peasant background, and knowledge of such rural beliefs and practices could be more convincing than just the ability to pass as a child who grew up attending mass.

Integration with Polish culture

---

[13] One example of the identification with the Virgin can be seen in "Aniela Salawa," *Pracownica Polska*, nr. 2, (1933), 1-5. Born in 1880, Salawa lived outside of Kraków with her family like her older sister who had a position with a nice family; she left the countryside to work as a maid in the city when she was old enough. Unlike her sister, Aniela found employment with a family who treated her poorly and she was unhappy so she left. Her second placement was also unsatisfactory. Finally, "God [] pointed Aniela in the direction of a third home and there she worked for a very long time." In this home she "tied" herself to the woman of the house "like a mother" and this employer trusted Aniela with all issues of the home. Aniela was content with her employers and felt "happy in the kitchen among all things domestic," and while she cleaned she imagined the Mother Mary in her home in Nazareth and felt very much connected to her in her labor, "drowning in the spirit of the Lord," (2). For an example of the desire to seek the guidance or protection of the Virgin see the videotaped testimony of Elizabeth Grotch, File no. 26284, Tape 3, The USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive. Grotch explains that she was hidden by the family's nanny Janina even though Janina' mother was intensely anti-Semitic. The mother believed the "Jews got what they deserved" because they killed Christ (3:51). At one point Janina's mother threw her out and she went to a convent and she was refused help there. Finally, Grotch's nanny said they would go to the church and stand in front of the Holy Virgin and "if she nods her head that I should give you away I will have to. If she doesn't I'll stay with you." (7:14). Elizabeth was terrified, but Mary did not nod. This caregiver was facing danger and despair and her reaction is to go seek the "advice" so to speak, of the Virgin.

Certainly many Polish Jewish parents felt and transmitted a very real feeling of patriotism and love of country to their children. Many of the children remember their parents' passion for Polish literature. Halina Mitchley and her father enjoyed discussing Polish literature together. She attended the Catholic religion classes at her private school not so she would not be singled out as a Jewish girl, but because it would help her to better understand the allusions made to Biblical tales found in the classics.[14] Tola Haptman, born in 1924 Warsaw, says of Poland, "It was my country and I loved it," and still remembers crying when she heard in 1935 that Joseph Piłsudski died.[15] This feeling of Poland as their own country and love of that country is quite common in postwar testimonies. Interviewees were aware of and felt the effects of antisemitism to varying degrees, but they still identified Poland as their home.[16] Feelings of political patriotism and this sense of Poland as their homeland indicates that attempting to integrate into Polish society and teaching Polish culture to their children was done not merely to avoid antisemitism but also because these parents felt it was important to their children's sense of belonging and citizenship.

Dov Weissberg, mentioned in a previous chapter, came from a very affluent Lwów family. During the early 1930's his father's textile business was still thriving and even expanding. As a result, his father built an apartment building at 56 and 56a Jankowska Street. His father also wanted to invest some money in Palestine, perhaps even build a house in Tel Aviv. He recalls

---

[14] Videotaped testimony of Halina Mitchley, Tape 2, 17:35.

[15] Videotaped testimony of Tola Hauptman, File no. 23498-40, November 26, 1996, Tape 1, USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive, 23:12.

[16] When asked if her family felt themselves to be Polish in this period she replied, "Yes, Polish Jews, but we were very patriotic in a way, this was our fatherland, "in the videotaped testimony of Ruth Bestman, File no. 30004-3, April 23, 1997, Tape 1, The USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive.

that his father did not want to move there but just wanted to keep some financial reserves there.[17] Weissberg's mother suspected her husband of having "Zionist inclinations" and was afraid of him having a "remote idea" that that he might want to move there so she prevented this investment.[18] Mrs. Weissberg was a "Polish patriot, a great admirer and supporter of Marshal Jozef Piłsudksi," and she cried "bitterly" when he died. [19] Weissberg postulates that "the idea of leaving Poland was far from her mind," and he recalls her saying of their country, "here we were born, here we shall die."[20] Mrs. Weissberg did not eschew her Jewish identity but also found ways to express that along with her own love of country and home. Polish patriotism, integration into Polish society, feelings about citizenship and civics, and familiarization with Polish culture and language certainly started at home but in many cases it was further accelerated when children left their homes and entered the classroom.

The private realm was an important site where Jewish children were brought up with middle-class values and varied ideas of what it meant to be Jewish and Polish. These ideas and values were transmitted from the mothers and through the gentile domestic servants of the house. The employment of the gentile domestics in the household further influenced how these children understood Polishness and their own identities. The particular upbringing that they received in the domestic realm was then often further augmented in the public realm, particularly through their school attendance and leisure activities.

---

[17] This is interesting because it may indicate his father's concern for the political situation and increased hostility towards Polish Jews. The author is not clear exactly when this occurs so this is speculative.

[18] Weissberg, *I Remember*, 37.

[19] Ibid.

[20] Ibid.

The Public Realm

Polish public schools and Jewish private schools

After the close of World War I, the newly reborn Polish state needed to unify three regions that had been under very different empires for over a century and build a strong state full of loyal citizens from an ethnically and religiously diverse population. Many of these minority groups had their own goals and aims within the new Second Republic and this created a real challenge for the state, which needed to meet the educational needs of its citizens and at the same time "impose any level of cultural uniformity" on them in order to build a modern, stable state.[21] A majority of Jewish children attended Polish public schools because they were no cost to the family and paying tuition for private school was often a hardship. In the 1930s there were at least half a million school-aged Jewish children in Poland, and according to Joint Distribution Committee data, whose numbers were higher than official state statistics, 64% attended public schools, which were taught in Polish or sometimes in Ukrainian.[22] For the families who could afford to send their children to Jewish (or any) private schools, these too were regulated by the state and therefore were required to meet the mandated guidelines for the number of hours of instruction in Polish subjects.[23] As a result, the school was a point of interaction for Jewish children and the state and quite frequently, the majority culture. This was a space in which Jewish children could be further inculcated in Polish language, culture, and customs.[24]

---

[21] Martin, *The Jews of Cracow, 1918-1939,* 121.

[22] Chone Shmeruk, "Hebrew-Yiddish-Polish: A Trilingual Jewish Culture," in *The Jews of Poland Between Two World Wars,* 285-311, eds. (Hanover and London: University Press of New England, 1989), 291-92.

[23] Martin, *The Jews of Cracow, 1918-1939,* 125.

[24] This was not viewed as a negative by many Polish Jews, which I will discuss further.

School as a site of integration and acculturation. Socialization to Polish ways was a focus of the state's educational mandate, and the influence of attending Polish schools often led children to identify with Polish culture sometimes more than their parents.[25] In this new era of Polish independence, Jewish children inhabited a "significantly different educational environment from that of their parents," because it was part of an effort to cultivate new Polish citizens.[26] Polish history, lessons in citizenship, and instruction in Polish language were newly stressed in public and private schools alike.[27]

In interwar Poland, speaking Polish and fitting into the majority society was economically and socially beneficial and important for career advancement. Middle-class and affluent Jewish children aspired to attend gymnasium and university, making preparation for classes in Polish essential.[28] Because many parents believed Jewish elementary schools were ineffective in teaching the Polish language, they insisted on sending their children to state schools to prepare them for Polish language gymnasium.[29] In the professions, the ability to speak Polish with Polish colleagues and clientele was advantageous.

Sean Martin argues, in his study of Jews living in Kraków during the interwar period, that the Jewish population used Polish language and culture in part to reach out and identify with the

---

[25] After all, parents made the decisions to use Polish language in the home, what patriotic holidays to observe, their choice to employ a Polish domestic, their own attitudes and speech about the state and Polish majority society, etc. These choices all influenced children's attitudes towards Polish culture in ways that cannot be measured.

[26] Martin, *The Jews of Cracow, 1918-1939,* 125.

[27] Ibid.

[28] Prospects for attending Polish universities for Jewish students became increasing grim towards the latter half of the 1930s with the practice of *numerous clausus* and the institution of ghetto benches and increase in anti-Jewish sentiment. Many families realized that in order for their children to attend university or medical school they would have to study abroad.

[29] Chone Shmeruk, "Hebrew-Yiddish-Polish: A Trilingual Jewish Culture," 293.

Polish community.[30] While he focuses on Kraków specifically, a similar strategy appears to have been employed among families living in other urban spaces throughout Poland. This did not mean that these families were attempting to give up their own Jewish identities or to assimilate, but rather to assert their own separate national identity while integrating into the majority culture.[31] For example, in the above mentioned case of Dov Weissberg, his mother felt a deep love of country and political loyalty but also wanted her son to learn Hebrew, which illustrates her desire for her son to integrate into Polish majority society but also to preserve his Jewish identity as she understood it. As Martin notes, "minority children were learning how to function in two overlapping national environments" while outside of the intimate realm of the home and engaged in their studies.[32]

In addition to the further exposure to majority culture and practices through their lessons, Jewish children also sometimes were able to interact with gentile peers and teachers. Some Jewish children attended private Jewish schools or even public schools that were primarily full of Jewish students, but a large number of children attended mixed public schools where they had extended contact with gentiles. This school experience was sometimes the primary exposure that Jewish had to their gentile peers who lived in other neighborhoods and on other city streets.

The classroom. A child's educational experience depended greatly on the type of school he or she attended. The state mandated that certain subjects were taught but there was a fair amount of leeway in some of the private schools. In most schools children worked on their Polish language skills, learned Polish history, math, sciences, and religion. In some private Jewish schools

---

[30] Martin, *The Jews of Cracow*, 1918-1939, 15.
[31] Ibid., 14.
[32] Ibid., 126.

children might also learn Hebrew or even Yiddish as a subject. In schools that were taught primarily in a language other than Polish, the Polish language was an academic subject. Ann Celnik attended a private Jewish girls' school and was instructed in Polish and also learned Hebrew, Jewish history, French and Latin.[33] In Holocaust survivor testimonies, when discussing school most remember being very busy. School was six days a week, unless they were exempted from school on Saturdays, and students spent the afternoons doing homework.

Dov Weissberg attended the private St. Ann School for Boys in Lwów, which had Polish Catholic and Jewish students. Their mandatory religion classes were held twice a week and the Jewish and Catholic students were separated. The Catholic students went with a Roman-Catholic priest and the Jewish students were sent with a teacher. The teacher taught them stories from the Bible and "did not demand anything" so the Jewish students all received very good grades, but he deduced that the Catholic students must have had to take their religion lessons more seriously based on the harsh marks they received.[34] While the state-mandated portion of the curriculum at mixed schools was intended to bring children together as Polish citizens, religion class, which was also mandated, actively separated the children and pointed out their differences. Some survivors mention the negative effect of separating the children during religious instruction. Samuel Grundman, who attended public school in Łódź, said that the Jewish children sat outside of the classroom during the religious lessons.[35] The period during the day when students were separated for their religious study was often not the only time when Jewish children felt

---

[33] Videotaped testimony of Ann Celnik, File no. 07750-3, October 19, 1995, Tape 1, The USC Shoah Foundation Institute Visual History Archives.

[34] Weissberg, *I Remember*, 29.

[35] Videotaped testimony of Samuel Grundman, File no. 02855-3, May 24, 1995, Tape 1, The USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archives.

ostracized at school. Sometimes this occurred when a student's Jewishness was pointed out by a teacher or another student.

Daniel Bardach moved from the small town of Jeleśnia to Rzeszów and in his new school felt, for the first time, like a minority.[36] He remembers that "it was embarrassing to feel different."[37] Sven Sonnenberg was born in 1931 and started school the year before the Nazi invasion.[38] He recalls that at the end of the school year, his teacher asked the children what they had on the wall over their beds. Their variety of their reply "was not great," and included "mostly crucifixes and the Virgin Mary."[39] The teacher then asked Sonnenberg directly and he replied the Marshal Śmigły-Rydz; his teacher commented, "Look children, a little Jew, and what a patriot!'[40] At that point, Sonnenberg realized that he was different and no matter what he did he would be viewed as such. Being viewed as different was often hard for children, and would be further exacerbated if it invited bullying or ostracization by classmates. They were being told they were Polish citizens even as they were being shown that they were different from their Catholic peers and outside the real community.

---

[36] Videotaped testimony of Daniel Jerzy Bardach (Ludwik Kowalczyk), File no. 48875-57, December 14, 1998, Tape 1, The USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive.
[37] Ibid., 6:03.
[38] Sven Sonnenberg, "Journey to Hell: Under Fascism," in *The Last Eyewitness: Children of the Holocaust Speak, Vol 2,* ed. Jakub Gutenbaum and Agnieszka Latała (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2005), 235-71.
[39] Ibid., 236.
[40] Ibid., 236.

The schoolyard. The education of children outside of the classroom at school was also of great importance to them. This was a small window of time in their day when children were able to socialize with their peers in a less controlled environment. In this space, children were free from the watchful eyes of their mothers or caregivers, the teachers were distracted, and they were able to interact with each other as a microcosm of Polish society. On the playground Jewish and gentile children could interact in a neutral environment, or could choose to limit their interaction with one another; to a degree they were in control. In the classroom the teacher directed who worked together but in the schoolyard this was not the case. Many Jewish children played primarily with other Jewish children for various reasons, or if they did play with them at school they often would not play with them after school. Plenty of Jewish children played in mixed groups or sometimes associated almost exclusively with gentile children because they identified more closely with them or just because those were the children they happened to become friends with. In schools where there were very few Jewish children, there may have been a stronger need to make friends with gentile students.

Leisure time and the courtyard

For many middle-class and more affluent children, leisure time included camps, exercise classes, sports, music lessons, or dance classes. This was another means to teach children skills that were appropriate for members of their social class and also a time when children were free from the direct supervision of someone from their household. Structured leisure activities were an important component of a middle-class upbringing, and children often had little unstructured, free time between school, homework, and various after school scheduled activities.

Depending on the diligence of the supervising caregiver and the ages of the children, play-dates and get-togethers were opportunities for youths to be free from their mothers and

caregivers. Dov Weissberg remembers spending a majority of his time being supervised by his nanny but he recalls his exploits with his friends as well. His best friend, Ludwik Tott, was of a background similar to Weissberg's. He recalls that Tott and he frequented each other's homes and that Tott was a "great expert on sex" and his "primary sex education" was all provided by the tales his friend told him.[41] In this free time, these boys were able to talk about whatever interested them, including girls and sex. Children learned all kinds of things from each other, independent of what their parents wanted them to. These moments with friends were vital in establishing a child's autonomy and sense of his or her own identity.

Danka Cyngler was born in 1920 and both she and her older brother attended private Catholic school in Lwów. Cyngler remembers that they had a big yard growing up and there were lots of boys in the neighborhood for her older brother to play with. She said their yard had a few Catholic boys, some Jewish boys, and some Ukrainians, and they were "so nice, really lovely, like a family."[42] Her brother loved soccer and played without the knowledge of their parents. She remembers watching him play frequently and she recalls that sometimes some boys from the area would want to fight with him because they knew he was Jewish. Cyngler and her brother had entire aspects of their lives, like all youths, that were separate from their relationships with their parents. During this time, Cyngler watched her brother play with Jewish and gentile children and saw how he was accepted by some and rejected or even persecuted by others based on his Jewishness. When a fight would break out between one of these boys and her brothers, she would sometimes attempt to join in the brawl as if she would defend her older sibling. In the neighborhood, these children were free from the supervision and protection of

---

[41] Weissberg, *I Remember*, 29.

[42] Videotaped testimony of Danka Cyngler, File no. 225110-40, November 14, 1996, Tape 1, The USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive, 5:54.

their parents and caregivers and learned to navigate interethnic relations and disputes in their own ways.

Halina Mitchley, a teen at the outbreak of the war attended a private, mixed, girls' school and had both Jewish and Catholic girlfriends. She remembers that her friends would take turns hosting parties at their homes. When she had everyone over to her family's home they moved all the furniture to make a dance floor, played American records, and provided a buffet supper. Both boys and girls would attend. Her parents put in a "discreet appearance" but would slip out at some point in the evening.[43] Her parents felt safe having both boys and girls there since there was a large group and her father thought there was "safety in numbers."[44] Mitchley also dated both Polish and Jewish boys. For fun, aside from dance parties, youths took long walks on Sunday mornings (to see and be seen), attended concerts and the cinema, and went to the theater. All of these were fairly typical middle-class activities. This was a time when a young person was able to embrace his or her autonomy and develop his or her own sense of self and decide how to fit into the world around them.

While Jewish parents often sent their children to public schools or mixed private schools that did not mean all parents wanted their children playing with gentile children or they did not have concerns about how they would deal with incidents of antisemtism. Cecile Gertel, born in 1924 in Przemyśl, went to a Polish elementary school that was attended by many Jewish children. She recalls that most of her girlfriends were Jewish. She did have some gentile friends, but she was only allowed to play after school with two girls whose parents were close friends

[43] Videotaped testimony of Halina Mitchley, File no. 40467-23, February 20, 1998, Tape 3, The USC Shoah Foundation Institute Visual History Archives, 8:31.
[44] Ibid., 10:08.

with her mother.[45] As a child she did encounter antisemitism and was unable to join certain clubs, like the Girl Scouts, because she was Jewish. Elias Kleiner, born in Kraków in 1930, was the only Jewish child in his Polish public school.[46] He was never allowed to play with the Polish children after school and was only able to play with Jewish children.[47] Parents likely wanted their children to benefit from integration, but also sought to protect them from teasing or even violence.

Whether on the schoolyard, participating in organized activities, or playing in the park with a friend, this less structured time allowed young people to develop a tacit knowledge of social reality and to create a sense of autonomy and self-related to that. Middle-class and Polish culture originated in the domestic realm, but was shaped further in the public realm, sometimes

---

[45] Videotaped testimony of Cecile Gertel, File no. 02287-0, April 25, 1997, Tape 1, The USC Shoah Foundation Institute Visual History Archives.

[46] Videotaped testimony of Elias Kleiner, File no. 00476-2, Tape 1, January 5, 1995, The USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archives.

[47] Similar sentiments are also echoed in the Videotaped testimony of Irene Barkan, File no. 02039, April 13, 1995, Tape 1, The USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archives, 20:52. Barkan lived in a mixed neighborhood, but it was mostly Catholics. She did not play with the neighborhood children but rather played mostly indoors. She was beat up by some other children once so she was always supervised outside to keep her safe from the Polish kids. Someone walked her to and from school every day. Cecile Gertel also recalls her parents limiting her friendships with Polish gentile children. See videotaped testimony of Cecile Gertel, File no. 02287-0, 25 April 1995, Tape 1, USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive. Born 1924, in Przemysł, Gertel attended Polish public elementary school. She recalls many of the students were Jews but all the teachers were Christian, with the exception of the religion teacher for the girls. Most of her friends were Jewish but she was also friends with some non-Jewish students. However, her mother did not allow her to go play after school other than with two girls whose parents were friends of her mother's. She does recall that she experienced some antisemitism from other children. See also the Videotaped testimony of Milla Tenenbaum, File no. 33627-5, September 16, 1997, Tape 1, The USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive, 21:31. Milla Tenenbaum of Będzin also did not play with non-Jews. She felt the parents of the gentile children would not have allowed that. She also recalls being beaten up by gentile children and could not attend public school and was instead sent to Beit Yaakov. She says, "The Jews were not wanted, not accepted, not even in school," (21:31).

with far less input from parents and caregivers. In school and the courtyard, children further developed their own ideas of what it meant to be Jewish, what it meant to be Polish, and how they felt they belonged in the world around them. Most of these children were aware that no matter how they identified themselves, they needed to be wary of the gentile children because there was always the potential for exclusion, harassment, or violence. It was also here, even in this often uncertain environment, that children sometimes honed their ability to be perceived as Polish first, to mask their Jewish identity, and to blend in with their peers.

Encounters with antisemitism

Even though the families discussed here felt themselves to be Polish, or Polish Jews, or occasionally even Poles of a Mosaic Faith, they still experienced antisemitism. Parents were eager to shield their children from its sting and many children also actively sought to avoid being singled out as Jewish to avoid being stigmatized or even physically harmed. Regardless of how Polish Jews identified themselves, they could still be singled out as Jewish and subject to harassment. Children often experienced this first hand as the victims or witnesses.[48] Jan Imich attended a Polish public school in Kraków where there were very few Jewish children.[49] Even though his family was non-practicing and highly acculturated, he was singled out at school for being Jewish. Renata Skotnicka-Zajdman came from an affluent home and lived in the fashionable Warsaw district around Krolewska Street during the week with her mother, while she

[48] Many testimonies touch on this. In the videotaped testimony of Marie Lubowski Winkelman, File no. 18554-2, Tape 1, August 14, 1996, Tape 1, The USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive, Winkelman says she attended Catholic private school and had very little religious upbringing at home but at school she still felt singled out.

[49] Videotaped testimony of Jan Imich, Tape 1.

spent the weekends with her father in Sochaczew.[50] Neither of her homes was religious and both homes were acculturated. She had Catholic nannies in both homes and had Polish Catholic and Jewish friends. She regularly attended Catholic services with her friend Irena and describes herself as "moving freely among the Catholics."[51] She felt that Jews were "people who were different, had different types of traditions."[52] Skotnicka-Zajdman attended school six days a week, while the other Jewish children did not go on Saturdays and she stayed in class during the religion lessons, reinforcing her feelings of being different from them. Since she was not singled out as Jewish in school she believes no one probably identified her as Jewish in school but she did remember some Jewish children who were tormented by their Polish classmates.[53]

Halina Mitchley was also from a very acculturated and affluent family.[54] She did not recall any antisemitism directed towards her in the mixed girls' school she attended, yet recalled vividly the experience of dancing with a friend's cousin at a school sanctioned event and listening mutely as he commented that, "I think there are Jewish girls here dancing with us."[55] She later states that she could never forgive herself for not telling him she was Jewish herself, and "being such a coward" and "ashamed" of her Jewish identity.[56] So while Mitchley was not harassed for her Jewish identity she knew that being identified as Jewish could be negative in certain situations and sometimes avoided it. Mitchley reflects upon her identity and situation

---

[50] Videotaped testimony of Renata Skotnicka-Zajdman, File no. 37068-4, October 23, 1997, Tape 1, USC Shoah Foundation Institute.
[51] Ibid., 11:20.
[52] Ibid., 11:52.
[53] Ibid., 21:02.
[54] Videotaped testimony of Halina Mitchley, Tape 2.
[55] Ibid., 15:09.
[56] Ibid., 15:54.

saying that, "we were so-called Poles of mosaic persuasion," but felt their identity was in a sort of "limbo."[57] She explains, "We were so-called patriotic Poles and in a way the Poles didn't want us and Jews we weren't quite."[58] This state was a form of hybrid identity, one that did not neatly fit into either community comfortably.[59] Children with backgrounds and upbringing similar to Zajdman and Mitchley often had a deep affinity for Polish culture, but also the acute awareness that being labeled a Jew in certain circumstances brought undesired attention.

Even for children who were acculturated and had many gentile friends, antisemitic incidents were always a risk. For some parents, sending one's child out into the schoolyard, the courtyard, or the park where they could potentially experience being teased, harassed, or even physically harmed was an alarming prospect. Many parents tried to isolate their children from these events as much as possible for as long as they could. As previously mentioned, some children were not allowed to play with gentile children. Most interviewees suffered at least occasional incidents, ranging from the uncomfortable to the alarming. June Feinsilver, born in Łódź in 1921, had many gentile friends but recalls one particularly painful and traumatic incident of antisemitism that was directed towards her. She was attacked by a group of children, who threw tar on her head, while walking home from school one day in the first or second grade.[60]

---

[57] Videotaped testimony of Halina Mitchley, Tape 3, 13:18-13:41.

[58] Ibid., 13:41.

[59] Many highly acculturated Polish Jews would face great difficulty in the ghettos and DP camps when they were placed in a newly constructed social situation where they would not fit in with the concentrated population of Jews. This is evident in the testimony of Renata Skotnicka-Zajdman and the memoir of Isabelle Choco and I will address this at a later point.

[60] Videotaped testimony of June Feinsilver, File no. 10031-5, December 13, 1995, Tape 1, USC Shoah Foundation Institute, 16:39.

Jewish children saw other Jewish children singled out and teased or sometimes there were regular fights between the Jewish boys and their Polish peers.[61]

Parents of course wanted to protect their children from being singled out and harassed. Mitchley's mother came from Russia, and her parents were very strict about not using Russian in the household because they did not want to take the chance of her developing a Russian accent in her Polish speech. Zofia Blitz, born in Warsaw, recalls that her parents attempted to help their children fit in. Blitz explains that her parents used Polish names, spoke Polish in the house, and tried to give their children an education like other Polish children because they did not want to be segregated; they wanted their kids to fit in and be happy.[62] Her parents knew if she and her siblings were perceived as different they would be subject to being teased and harassed. Blitz believes that they wanted to protect the children and teach them to be comfortable in the environment in which they would live [63]

Dov Weissberg's parents only employed gentile maids and nannies because they did not want their children around Yiddish language speakers for fear it would give them a Yiddish accent. However, the children were taught French and German and later even Hebrew. Language learning was a part of the well-rounded education that was thought to be vital for middle-class

---

[61] These fights were evident in the above case of Danka Cyngler's brother. Also, Karl Bell remembers being chased by the Polish boys in the neighborhood and having rocks thrown at him in the videotaped testimony of Karl Bell, File no. 01438-1, March 20, 1994, Tape 1, USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive. Bell came from a poor, religiously observant family and attended Polish public school in Piotrków up until the Nazi Occupation of Poland. Adam Boren who grew up in Warsaw comments in the videotaped testimony of Adam Boren, File no. 18575-3, August 14, 1996, Tape 1, The USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive that he had many fights with the Polish boys in his neighborhood. Mentions of physical altercations with Polish gentile children are fairly common in survivor testimonies.

[62] Videotaped testimony of Zofia Blitz, File no. 40853-3, March 30, 1998, Tape 1.

[63] Ibid., 7:42.

children. Weissberg recalls that, "boys from a good Jewish home had to know some Hebrew although Yiddish was forbidden."[64] Weissberg's parents came from traditional households yet they sought to distance their children from the Yiddish language and ensure that there would be no trace of Yiddish accent in their speech. Hebrew, however was acceptable, and could be an indicator of the way the Weissberg family expressed their Jewish identity. [65]

The employment of a Polish Catholic domestic servant was one means by which a parent could further familiarize their children with Polish Catholic culture. In theory this could be useful when children left the safety of the home and went out into the streets, public schools, the courtyard, and eventually when they left the home entirely to be on their own as adults. Regina Hamery was quite close to Jawka, her family's live-in maid. She recalls that Jawka was the only

---

[64] Weissberg, *I Remember,* 30.

[65] The Hebrew language is often associated with religious use or as an indicator of Zionist inclinations, however in some cases for acculturated Jewish families it was a means by which they could have their children learn a Jewish language and connect with their Jewishness but avoid Yiddish and all the negative connotations that Yiddish sometimes held for them. Hebrew was seen as prestigious and rooted in long Jewish tradition while Yiddish was seen by many acculturated and modern Jews as folksy or the language of the traditional *shtetl* Jew. This is discussed in Kalman Weiser, *Jewish People, Yiddish Nation: Noah Prylucki and the Folkists in Poland* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011). On page xv, Weiser explains that in the battle between Hebraists and Yiddishists, the Yiddishist movement attempted to ask Jews of all social classes to choose Yiddish as their vernacular over Hebrew as a way of identifying their Jewish national identity even though Yiddish was "commonly denigrated as a mongrel jargon" while Hebrew was liturgical and viewed as scholarly. Weiser states that prior to the Second Republic, for Jews in Congress Poland the first generation of *maskilim,* viewed polonization as showing support for the state authorities and access to European culture, and for the second generation of these Polish *maskilim* the use of Polish reflected a "much more personal bond" because they "identified profoundly with Polish culture and the Polish national cause," 19. In 1815 a small group of self- proclaimed Jewish Poles petitioned to be distinguished by the authorities as different from their Yiddish speaking counterparts so as to be recognized as "superior" culturally, (19). So, the idea that Yiddish was an inferior or "mishmash" language had deep roots with many educated, upper-class, acculturated Polish Jews. Hebrew however, had a long history as a liturgical and scholarly language; one that was not identified with the religious, traditional Jews that many middle-class, acculturated Jews sought to separate themselves from or just did not identify strongly with.

real non-Jewish attachment that she had growing up.[66] While many acculturated parents spoke Polish impeccably and were well versed in Polish literary classics and all of the other markers of Polish middle-class culture, they could not really impart Polish *Catholic* customs, traditions, and norms on their children. Familiarity with these customs was useful when children wanted to blend in with their peers in public and then for some children later when appearing to be a Catholic Pole would be a matter of life and death. In addition to the ready supply of inexpensive labor in the form of Polish Catholic domestic servants, this could have been a potential draw for some families who wanted to help their children be able to blend in when it would benefit them. Many survivors mention that the time spent with their former caregiver helped prepare them to pass as Polish gentiles, especially Polish peasants and working-class persons, under the Nazi occupation. It is important to note however that even in peace time, Jewish children experienced intentional and sometimes unintentional benefits of their socialization in Catholic culture by a Polish Catholic caregiver in their daily lives. Knowledge of Catholic prayers, practices, or special biblical scriptures could help a Jewish child understand literary allusions that are common in the Polish classics they read in school, to pick up on references made in classes, or to simply fit in with their peers

Polish Catholic caregivers were certainly aware of the antisemitism their charges faced outside of the home. Some parents were more restrictive than others in their attempts to shield children from potential harassment or harm, which sometimes resulted in not allowing children to play with gentile children or limiting their ability to roam about the neighborhood. These directives were often carried out by the family's gentile caregiver. Some maids themselves had

[66] Videotaped testimony of Regina Hamery, File no. 28042-40, February 19, 1997, Tape 1, USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive.

been socialized with anti-Jewish beliefs of their own and would have had to square those beliefs that remained even as these maids came to see their own charges as more than Jews.

Ramifications

For all city dwelling children, time in school and the courtyard or neighborhood is usually the beginning of their independent foray into the public realm, away from the supervision and protection of their parents and other caregivers. In the haven of the domestic realm, parents sought to arm their children with their values, beliefs, and rules of behavior and send them out into the public realm where their ability to monitor and protect them becomes increasingly limited as the children grow closer to adulthood. Away from their parents, children experimented and shaped their own identities and beliefs, building on the basis that they developed in their homes. The classrooms of state and private, religious and non-religious schools were also places where the state could access youth in order to develop good Polish citizens and integrate minority students. This contact with the state and peers furthered the ability of Polish Jewish children to "straddle two nations," or even, "move freely among Catholics."[67] This need or desire to integrate and sometimes just avoid standing out was sometimes consciously employed, but it was also natural for many children. They felt themselves to be Polish and Jewish, in their own ways and behaved according to the situation they were in. This was a result of their desire to integrate, for that moment at least, the milieu they were a part of, and often regardless of their parents responses.

They forged identities that incorporated their experiences and upbringing but they also developed an awareness of the differences between traditional and modern Jews and knew the ways that they were often perceived among gentile society. Many of these children had parents

[67] Referring back to the aforementioned comments of Sean Martin and Renata Zajdman.

were less traditional than their grandparents. Their parents for the most part spoke Polish at home and dressed like the majority culture, forgoing the style of dress that made traditional Jews very visible. Frequent contact with gentiles would have likely resulted in an awareness of some of the attitudes towards these traditional Jews by the majority culture as well. This perceptiveness and understanding of Polish Catholic behavioral norms gave some of these Polish Jewish children the ability to blend in. They also saw children get treated a certain way because they were identified as Jewish or sometimes they were the subject of harassing themselves.[68] Many children learned to blend or emphasize particular parts of their identity when they did not want to be risk harassment, and many children chose to fight back.[69]

The skills to emphasize or mask particular attributes of their own identities that aided in integrating with Polish gentile peers would later become useful during the Nazi occupation as it became increasingly dangerous to be identified as Jewish. For children who were able to be placed in hiding in the open by passing as a Polish Catholic this ability to appear Polish could mean the difference between life and death. Even the smallest slip could lead to catastrophe so familiarity with not only Polish culture and social norms was vital, but also being able to play with a group of gentile children as one of them was advantageous. When passing as the child of

---

[68] Renata Zajdman fit in well in her school but also said, "I'm sure there were problems, I remember there were some Jewish kids and they were tormented by their Polish schoolmates." See videotaped testimony of Renata Skotnicka-Zajdman, 21:02.

[69] Videotaped testimony of Adam Boren, File no. 18575-3, August 14, 1996, Tape 1, The USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive. Boren, who grew up in Warsaw recalled, "I myself was very much Polish" (28:29). His family had lived there there since the 14th century and to Poles he was "still a Jew" but he articulated "I was a Pole. I spoke only the Polish language, I loved the literature, I was a sort of a patriot," (29:01). Regardless of how he felt, he believes most of the children at Catholic parochial school he attended believed Jews to be "Christ killers" and Boren says their "antisemitism was almost inbred" (29:23). Boren remembers getting into much mischief as a boy and found himself in many fights with the Polish (Catholic) boys in his neighborhood.

a Polish Catholic woman from the countryside, the ability to appear natural at mass or during prayers was important, but some knowledge of rural religious rituals and rural speech was valuable. The knowledge children picked up in the domestic realm from their parents and gentile caregivers was incredibly important and built upon by their experiences in the public realm. Obviously history cannot be written backwards and this subset of Polish Jewry would not have known that the ability to pass as Polish Catholics would become a means of survival, but they did understand the benefits of integration into Polish society and the potential usefulness of accentuating certain aspects of their identity in public.

The hybrid identities and skills of these Polish Jews and their connections with Polish gentiles became a potential avenue for survival during the Nazi Occupation and persecution, which is the subject of the next chapter. I will now shift gears to examine how their identities and the attachments that formed between Polish Jewish employers and their Polish Catholic household servants influenced decisions and activities at the onset of Nazi occupation and the creation of the ghettos.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESPONSES TO WAR, NAZI OCCUPATION AND GHETTOIZATION

Chaos and Movement: The Nazi Invasion

For Polish and Polish Jewish children from urban areas, summers often meant trips to the countryside and visits with family and friends as everyone sought to escape the heat of the bustling cities. During the summer of 1939 however, the threat of war loomed as German aggression became more prominently reflected in articles in the press and talk on the street, as well as in conversations in the privacy of homes.[1] Even as children wrapped up their summer holidays and prepared to head back to school, or to enroll in school for the first time, they heard their parents discussing the political situation and some noticed a change in the atmosphere.

During the later interwar period, antisemitism ran high in Poland and anti-Jewish measures were ramped up in both the official and unofficial realms. Under Joseph Piłsudski, Poland had a fairly liberal political stance towards its ethnic minorities, and many Jews felt positively about his regime. Economic woe and the concern over rise of Nazism in Germany led to increasing instability. The Treaty of Non-Aggression was signed with German in 1934, but Russia was still seen as a major threat to Polish sovereignty. After the death of Piłsudski in 1935, his cabinet was unable to maintain power, and the Endeks gained control. With Roman Dmowski in power, the Polish government took a turn to the abrupt right wing, and government sanctioned antisemitism was coupled with an increase in violence. In 1936, with the struggle for

[1] In many testimonies survivors say they were aware of the political situation even though they were children and teens. Some recall an atmosphere of uneasiness, their parents talking about the news, or some reading the news themselves. Evidence can also be found in the Polish language Jewish daily press, *Nasz Przegląd*, where news articles frequently chronicled German aggression and the conditions of Jews in Germany and throughout Europe. Also, videotaped testimony of Lola Fontak, File no. 09038-2 5, Nov 20 1995, Tape 1, The USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive.

power, all parties with the exception of the Polska Partia Socjalistyczna (PPS) used anti-Jewish campaigns to appeal to the masses.[2] The Jewish question had, at this point, become a national obsession. The attitude of the Polish government became clear, and in 1937 the Jewish policy was defined by "Polish self-sufficiency," meaning that it had given its, "official sanction to unbridled economic antisemitism."[3]

With the government under right wing control after 1935 and, as the economy faltered, the Jews of Poland were increasingly blamed for the ills of the nation.[4] The population in the cities and small towns struggled as young workers could not find employment, and economic boycott of Jewish businesses in this period was sanctioned by the state.[5] Student riots broke out at universities in support of the institution of *numerous nullus* for Jews, with violence directed at Jewish students and professors as well as at liberal Polish professors.[6] In addition to supporting the economic boycott and the reduction of Jewish students at Polish universities, the state also pushed for restrictions on ritual slaughter practices that were vital for the maintenance of *kashrut* by Jewish butchers. Parties such as the Bund gained immense popularity as they offered measures to improve the situation of Jews in Poland and were visibly agitating to protect Jews from violence and discrimination. After this surge of anti-Jewish sentiment, the 1938 Sejm

---

[2] Ibid., 70.
[3] Ibid., *71*.
[4] Emmanuel Ringelblum, *Polish-Jewish Relations During the Second World War* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1974), 13.
[5] Ibid.
[6] Ibid., 16.

elections it appeared the Polish government, "reversed itself somewhat when the democratic opposition, including several Jewish parties, showed substantial gains in local elections."[7]

With the threat of war looming, the Polish population was growing anxious. However, Emmanuel Ringelblum noted that in this immediate period before the invasion, amidst the growing concern, it seemed as if "Poland had come to its senses."[8] The anti-Semitic presses backed off printing stories meant to whip up animosity towards the Jewish population and the "Jewish question" became less prominent in the political sphere.[9] As German aggression ramped up it became increasingly apparent that Catholic Poles and Polish Jews had a common enemy in Germany. According to Ringelblum, "The easing of tension could be felt at every step: in the streets, trams, and offices…"[10] This moment of potential for Poles and Jews to band together in the face of Nazi aggression was soon shattered and altered irrevocably by the start of the war.

On September 1, 1939 just as children prepared to head back to school, Germany invaded Poland. Some children never had their first day of school that year and for others their academic year was soon cut short or delayed by months. For many this invasion resulted in immediate and dramatic upheaval when the invasion brought bombing, German soldiers, and mass movement of Poles and Jews headed to safer territory, and the breakdown of law and order that would become increasingly dangerous and tragic. The outbreak of the war was a moment of movement, chaos, anxiety, and violence that Polish Jew and gentile experienced alike. Fathers and brothers who

---

[7] Michael Grynberg, *Words to Outlive Us: Eyewitness Accounts from the Warsaw Ghetto* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2003), 8.
[8] Ringelblum, 24.
[9] Ibid.
[10] Ibid.

were members of the Polish army left immediately for wartime duty, reservists were quickly called up, and families had to decide how to try to stay safe during the crisis.[11]

In her diary-memoir, Miriam Wattenberg writes, "When the word came that the Germans had broken through the Polish front lines and were nearing Łódź, panic seized the whole population. At eleven o'clock at night crowds began to stream out of the city in different directions."[12] Many city dwellers felt they would be safer in the countryside and many in the western regions believed they would be safer in the east, so people streamed from the cities taking what they could carry headed to stay with relatives in the countryside or towards the Soviet lands. The Soviet invasion of Poland on September 17, 1939 would make travel and movement even more dangerous and cause some to flee Soviet occupation. The roads were filled with people carrying whatever possessions they could, headed to the destinations they believed might be the safest. It was thought military aged men would be special targets of aggression by the German invaders so many families were immediately feminized as the men not in military service fled east leaving their wives, children, mothers, sisters, and younger brothers. For families on the move, often without their adult men, there was the very real risk of being molested on the road or having their empty homes looted. This was a time of chaos and

---

[11] Many of the survivors of the Holocaust whose interviews I accessed mention that their fathers were in the Polish military and had to leave at the outbreak of the war. For example, Issac Gordon's father was an army supplier who bought food for the regiments stationed in Vilna before the war. Gordon was only ten at the outbreak of the war and remembers that his father had to go with the army as a part of his work. See videotaped testimony of Issac Gordon, file no. 51445-3, Tape 1, February 28, 2001, The USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive. Samuel Grundman formerly of Łódź recalls his father was a banker but was also in the Polish army as a reservist and had to leave at the outbreak of the war. He sent a man to take his wife and son to his grandparents because he was unable to return to take them himself. See videotaped testimony of Samuel Grundman, File no. 02855-3, Tape 1, May 24, 1995, The USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive.

[12] Alexandra Garbarini, *Jewish Responses to Persecution, Volume II, 1938-1940* (Lanham, Maryland: AltaMira Press, 2011), 120.

uncertainty and Jews and gentiles alike were left to make decisions based on the limited information that they could gather.[13]

At the outset of the German invasion, families had to make important decisions as did their household employees. For domestic workers this was a time of anxiety, great upheaval, and decision making as well. Leaving their employing family, willingly or unwillingly, meant a loss of income and housing so they either had to find new employment in the city quickly or return to their family of origin. Some maids and nannies continued on with their employers, either staying with them in their residence or traveling with them if they decided to flee. These women had to weigh their economic realities, their own personal situations, and a myriad of external factors when deciding how to respond to the chaos and turmoil.

Contributing to the current scholarship exploring Polish-Jewish relations and placing it on a spectrum from symbiotic to antagonistic, this chapter argues that prewar relationships between gentile domestic servants and their Jewish employers affected responses during the Nazi invasion of Poland.[14] It seeks to illustrate that the desire of these employees to stay with the family after the outset of the war or to even later assist them when they were not able to continue to live with them as Jews increasingly became targets for German aggression and were separated

---

[13] Where a family was geographically located greatly affected their experience of the Nazi invasion and early occupation period. For families in the Eastern lands it took longer for the German invaders to arrive and they experienced German occupation initially, followed by Soviet occupation after the Red Army invaded Poland on September 16, 1939. In these eastern regions they experiences the Germans coming in, the vacuum created when they left, followed by Soviet occupation. See Jan T. Gross, *Neighbors: The Destruction of the Jewish Community in Jedwabne, Poland*.

[14] See Marci Shore *Caviar and Ashes: A Warsaw Generation's Life and Death in Marxism, 1918-1968*; Sean Martin's *Jewish Life in Cracow, 1918-1939*; Eva Hoffman's *Shtetl: The Life and Death of a Small Town and the World of Polish Jews* for examples of scholarship that illustrates the wide range of relations that existed between Poles and Jews in the Second Republic.

from the general population was the result of these prewar relationships. Alternatively, these prewar relationships or even the lack of their formation could also lend to motivating former employees to harm their former employers for their own gain or personal satisfaction. In cases where bonds formed, those bonds encouraged caregivers to aid their Jewish charges during the invasion, the immediate occupation period, and after they were interned in ghettoes. This aid provided by the employee was valuable in the survival efforts of persecuted Jews. Aside from immediate assistance in the ghetto, this aid kept the connections open between these parties. This connection would become increasingly important -- a valued resource -- once conditions led many Jews to conclude that survival could only be achieved on the outside and they needed to flee.

As mentioned above, the outbreak of the war required many men to leave quickly for military service. Reserves were called up and active duty members were sent to their posts. Alexander Rozencwajg, a Polish Jew, was a lieutenant in the reserves, and was actually exempt from being called up because he had a heart condition. But, feeling it was his patriotic duty to protect his country, he offered his service. As he was departing, his wife Roma Rozencwajg was understandably fearful and he explained to her, "Look, I feel alright and I have to go, because they don't have enough officers."[15] The couple had a young son, Gabriel, who was four years old at the outbreak of the war and he was looked after by the family's nanny, Genia Olczak. Olczak's family had worked on the estate of Roma Rozencwajg's family. After Roma married and gave birth to her son Gabriel she came back from her home in Łódź to her father's estate in Kobyla Łąka to visit and while she was there she asked Olczak to move to Łódź and care for her new son. Olczak felt a great fondness for her employers, particularly Mrs. Rozencwajg. Olczak

[15] Interview of Genowefa Olczak, October 4, 2005, conducted and transcribed by Bianka Kraszewski, 4.

reflects, "My family did not want me to go, but I said yes, because (Roma) was a dear person. I liked her so much, because she was such a kind person."[16] During her employment she came to love young Gabriel and had great respect and warm feelings for Mr. Rozencwajg.

As a result of her attachment to the Rozencwajg family, Olczak elected to stay with them after the initial invasion. It was decided that Mrs. Rozencwajg and young Gabriel should go stay with her father, Aleksander Zakrzewski and his third wife in Warsaw during Mr. Rozencwajg's absence. Olczak decided to travel with them, stating "when Pani Roma was left alone, I would never have left her of course."[17] Olczak felt obligated to stay with the family, as if there was no other reasonable choice. This was not a totally unusual reaction, especially at the early stages of the war. The Herzog family maid also did not wish to leave her employers at the outset of the invasion. Deborah Herzog, a Kraków native who was only seven at the outbreak of the war, remembers her father and his brothers fleeing to Russia and when Kraków was taken, she and her mother had to leave their apartment and go live with their aunt and cousin. Her aunt's husband had also left the city with Herzog's father and she was alone with a child as well.[18] These domestic servants decided to travel with their employers because they experienced the natural reaction of wishing to stay with people familiar to them and that they had attachments to during a time of crisis. They had no idea what the invasion would bring and made this decision based on the limited information that they had and their own needs and desires.

---

[16] Ibid., 3.

[17] Ibid., 4.

[18] Videotaped testimony of Deborah Herzog, File no. 42124-40, Tape 2, March 14, 1998, The USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive. The Herzog family's maid, Jazda, who had worked for the family since Herzog was born, stayed with the family in their living situation as long as she was legally able.

In some cases, war did not compel men to leave their families, but instead prevented their ability to return to them. Gertruda Babilińska grew up in the small town of Starograd near Gdańsk. She moved to Warsaw and found employment with the Stolowicki family where she worked as a nanny for their daughter who later died. Babilińska stayed on to care for the mother, Lidia Stolowicki, who was not well and then, in 1936, when she had another child, Michael, she became his nanny. When the Germans invaded Mr. Stolowicki was away in France on business and he was unable to return to Warsaw. On September 4, 1939 Mr. Stolowicki sent a telegram saying that he was returning to Poland. Babilińska stated that he was not allowed to cross the border and instead was forced to return to France. He then tried to go to Switzerland, but again was returned to France. Babilińska did not want to leave Lidia and Michael to fend for themselves with Mr. Stolowicki away and stayed with them. She felt she had no other choice.[19] Babilińska traveled east with Lidia Stolowicki and young Michael to Vilna.[20] This reaction of Babilińska, Olczak, and the other rescuers of this study contributes to the growing body of scholarship on rescue motivations.[21] Babilińska and Olczak both stayed with their employers

[19] United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Record Group 50, Oral History, Christian Rescuers Project, Interview with Gertruda Babilinska, 50.012*0001. Also see Yad Vashem Archives, RG 0.3/2714 Testimony of Gertruda Babilinska, November 1964.

[20] Mr. Stolowicki was eventually deported to Auschwitz under the Vichy regime, where he perished. In Vilna the boy's mother became ill and asked Babilinska to promise to protect her child if she died. Lidia Stolowicki instructed Babilinska that if she could not return him to his father, to take him to Palestine and raise him. The mother died of this illness and her husband did not survive the Holocaust so Babilinska and Michael immigrated to the new state of Israel as soon as they were able after the war ended. Bablinska refused to leave Michael with extended family there, but instead stayed with him as his mother for the rest of her life.

[21] Samuel P. Oliner and Pearl M. Oliner, *The Altruistic Personality: The Rescue of Jews in Nazi Europe*; Patrick Henry, *We Only Know Men: The Rescue of Jews in France During the Holocaust*; Eva Fogelman, *Conscience and Courage: Rescuers of Jews During the Holocaust*; Malka Drucker, *Rescuers: Portraits of Moral Courage in the Holocaust*; Nechama Tec, *When Light Pierced the Darkness: Christian Rescue of Jews in Nazi-Occupied Poland;* Martin Gilbert,

because they felt they really had no other choice; they both felt it was the natural decision given the circumstances rather than a heroic deed. Most of the women of this study aided their prewar employers because they felt obligated to them in some capacity.

Travel was extremely dangerous during this moment of chaos and instability. The Polish state was dealing with the invasion and this compromised its ability to maintain order. Many household servants traveled with their employers during this time of intense upheaval and uncertainty, and their presence could be advantageous when dealing with soldiers and other Catholic Poles on the road. Samuel Grundman's father was a banker and an army reservist. He left to serve the army and Grundman and his mother traveled from their home in Łódź to his grandparent's home with a man sent by Grundman's father to accompany them in his absence. The family maid traveled with them, carrying all the money and jewelry on her person because it was thought she would be less likely to be accosted on the road.[22] Marie Lubowski Winkleman was an adolescent at the onset of the German invasion. Her family traveled from Włocławek where she was born to Warsaw and their maid, who had been with the family for many years, offered to take whatever she could of theirs on the train to Warsaw for the family.[23] This maid actually stayed with her employers and later would enter the ghetto with them, until forced to leave. Beno Lowi, born in Kraków, was a young man of nineteen at the outset of the Nazi

---

The Righteous: The Unsung Heroes of the Holocaust; Mordecai Paldiel, *The Path of the Righteous: Gentile Rescuers of Jews During the Holocaust.* While the existing scholarship points to personality profiles, traits or background as the factors that motivated rescuers to go against societal norms to aid Jews, my study argues that in the case of prewar domestic employees at least, rescue was just a natural extension of prewar relationships and behavior. These women did not see their efforts as heroic, but just as the natural choice.

[22] Videotaped testimony of Samuel Grundman, File no. 02855-3, Tape 1.

[23] Videotaped testimony of Marie Lubowski Winkelman, File no. 18554-2, Tape 1, August 14, 1996, The USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive.

onslaught.[24] Lowi's family fled Kraków for Lwów and took their maid, Krysia with them as they headed east. The family was able to leave the city with a horse and carriage for their belongings, which was a great advantage but also attracted unwanted attention. Lowi recalls that when they met a Polish soldier on the road he wanted to take their horse and carriage. The maid begged him and was able to talk "Pole to Pole" with him, convincing the soldier to let them pass and keep their horse and carriage.[25]

During this time of upheaval there was very little protection from bandits and the like and the Polish authorities were not able to maintain order. Jewish families, especially those traveling without males, carrying valuables could find themselves a target. Having a Polish Catholic maid was certainly no guarantee of safety and did not thwart all bandits, and these families were still susceptible to theft and violence. Sometimes however, the Polish Catholic woman could be more convincing when she threatened to involve the authorities. This notion that these women could speak "Pole to Pole" with Polish bandits or even soldiers is key. These families followed in this project were acculturated and Polish speaking, many felt themselves to be Polish however they defined that label, or to be Polish Jewish, but they could not control how other perceived them. To many Polish Catholics, no matter how Polish they felt themselves, they were still considered *Jews* therefore not one of the collective Polish "us".[26] Ethno-religious status was not the sole advantage these domestic servants held. Often their socioeconomic background made them more effective in dealing with opportunistic bandits and soldiers looking to requisition or steal items from travelers. Leaving the city and traveling to the countryside meant that often that travelers

[24] Videotaped testimony of Beno Lowi, File no. 35591-4, Tape 1, November 17, 1997, The USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive.
[25] Ibid.
[26] As in "others" or not "real" Poles.

were accosted by men of peasant or working-class background and the family maid would often be able to speak to them as a member of their own social class. While a person may have no qualms about taking from someone he viewed as better off, or an "other" these maids could be viewed as one of "them."

Even in incidents where the family maid did not travel with the family, sometimes she would be left behind to prevent the home from being occupied or looted in the family's absence. This could be a win-win scenario as the maid continued to have a roof over her head as she sought to support herself through other means pending the family's return and kept the family's belongings safer than had they been left unattended. Cecile Gertel, born in Przemyśl, was a teenager when the war began. When the bombing began her employing family decided to leave its own home and go stay with her uncle so they packed up some valuables and fled.[27] The family's maid had worked for them since Gertel was about five and Gertel says this woman "brought up" her brother and was "almost a member of the family."[28] As the family was preparing to leave the maid said to them, "It's war no? And if people see the house is empty it will be robbed," and she offered to stay there.[29] The maid stayed, but the family never returned to their home. Left unattended many homes were quickly looted and eventually became occupied.

Household servants could also help in ways other than occupying an employer's home or traveling on the road with them. While these women were often of low education and socio-

---

[27] Videotaped testimony of Cecile Gertel, File no. 02287-0, Tape 1, April 25, 1995, The USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive.
[28] Videotaped testimony of Cecile Gertel, File no. 02287-0, Tape 2, April 25, 1995, The USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive, 7:08.
[29] Ibid.

economic status, some of them were extremely resourceful. At the outbreak of the war Rosa Baruch's family lived in Łopatyn, a small town outside of Lwów. She was a teen at the time and her family had to contend first with Russian invaders in 1939 and then later, in 1941, the Nazis. Because her family was financially comfortable and owned two shops they were targeted by the Russians and then their status as Jews and their material wealth brought them the attention of the later German occupiers. The family's maid was an asset under both occupying regimes. Baruch remembers that this maid, Marina, who came to work for the family when she was fourteen or fifteen year old was "loyal" and they "treated her like family."[30] Baruch describes her as very attractive, "a blond Marilyn Monroe type."[31] When the Russians came, Marina immediately "became friends" with them.[32] Baruch explains, Marina was "a beautiful girl, and when the Russians came she was immediately tied in with a lot of soldiers."[33] This domestic servant used her relationships with the Russian soldiers to arrange for them stay in the family home and for Baruch's mother to cook for them. Baruch says life under the Russians was difficult at first because the Russians seized the businesses but at least they were not hungry because of the arrangement Marina worked out.[34] The family was able to live better than many of their neighbors as a result.[35]

---

[30] Videotaped testimony of Rose Baruch, File no. 23808-1, Tape 2, May 1, 1997, The USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive, 11:34.
[31] Ibid., 12:10.
[32] Ibid., 22:20.
[33] Ibid., 12:00.
[34] Ibid., 12:43.
[35] Ibid., 12:03.

When the Germans came Marina did the same thing. She made friends with the soldiers and they moved into their home taking up the whole four rooms upstairs. Baruch says, "Again Marina came in very helpful, it was the same situation. She brought us flour and potatoes and bread and arranged for my mother to cook for them (the German soldiers)."[36] Baruch recalls that Marina was "very worried" about what would happen to the family of which she felt a part. Baruch and her sister shined the German soldiers' boots, cleaned their clothes, did their ironing, and whatever else they asked for. While this young maid's actions may have been frowned upon by some as fraternization with the occupier, she was able to provide a measure of security not only for herself, but also for her former employers for a time as well. While Marina did not have material wealth or education to aid in her efforts, she was able to use what she had to improve their situation. A woman of few means, she nonetheless made do.

Certainly not all domestic servants felt obligated to offer assistance to their former employers at the outset of the war. They had their own concerns such as families, their livelihoods, and their own personal safety. Some domestics also took advantage of this moment of chaos to profit. Leah Binstock, of Lwów, left with her father for her mother's hometown of Krakowiec while her mother and sister stayed in the family's home in order to pack up their belongings before setting out to join them there.[37] The family's maid, who had worked for them for a few years prior to the war, offered to help Binstock's mother pack and take everything down the stairs while she ran errands that she needed to do before leaving the city. While Binstock's mother was away, the maid packed and took the family's belongings down, but stole the items so her mother was left with nothing. This was not an unusual occurrence for a family's

[36] Ibid., 25:55.

[37] Videotaped testimony of Leah Binstock, File no. 21767-5, Tape 1, October 27, 1996, The USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Foundation Archive.

employee to take advantage of the situation. This was a moment of upheaval and the authorities had more pressing matters to attend to, so it was far easier to get away with these actions.

The Brutality of Occupation

The Nazi occupation of Poland was ruthless. This endeavor was "underpinned by racialized notions of space characteristic of the Nazi ideology and radicalized by the massive application of force."[38] Germany's invasion September 1, 1939 was followed by a Soviet invasion from the east on September 17. On September 28, 1939, after a bombardment, the city of Warsaw capitulated to the Nazis and the German armies flooded into the city. By October 6, 1939 all of Poland was annexed and the country was carved up. The USSR took the eastern half, Germany the western, with a tiny piece ceded to Lithuania.[39] The German territory would be further divided into the Western territories and the *Generalgouvernment*. The German administration had very different aims for each of these regions. The western territories were incorporated into the Reich and used for expansion and war production. This area was designated to be "cleansed" of "racially inferior stock in favor of Germans."[40] The *Generalgouvernment* was to act as a source of labor and resources as the administration pursued a policy of "unlimited exploitation."[41] This region, administered by Hans Frank, would act as a "dumping ground" for members of the groups that the Nazi leadership wished removed from Germany proper and the western territories, including Jews.[42] The *Generalgouvernment* included about a third of the

---

[38] Alexandra Garbarini, *Jewish Responses to Persecution, Volume II, 1938-1940*, 109.

[39] Jan T. Gross, *Polish Society Under German Occupation*, 45. The USSR received 50%, Germany 48.4%, Lithuania 1.6%.

[40] Alexandra Garbarini, *Jewish Responses to Persecution, Volume II, 1938-1940*, 110.

[41] Gross, *Polish Society Under German Occupation*, 45.

[42] Alexandra Garbarini, *Jewish Responses to Persecution, Volume II, 1938-1940*, 110.

former Polish lands yet was a home to forty-five percent of the Polish population.[43] In 1941 when hostilities broke out between Germany and the Soviet Union this area expanded and also came to include Galicia.

The Polish government and almost all voluntary associations were disbanded. Polish law remained in place to provide stability in cases where it did not directly conflict with the German aims and ability to take control of its administration. On October 20, 1939, just prior to the imposition of the *Generalgouvernment*, a conference was held between Wehrmacht high command and Adolf Hitler and the bases for German policies towards Poland were laid out here. It was determined that the *Generalgouvernment* would not be incorporated into the Reich but instead would remain a separate entity.[44] The local authorities would be able to take whatever actions deemed necessary even if it conflicted with Reich regulations because they would obviously be dealing with "nationality struggles."[45] In addition, there were two goals laid out. First, actions were to be taken to ensure that the Polish intelligentsia would be unable to serve in leadership roles in the future. The second was communication lines were to be preserved in good condition so the occupied territory could be used for mobilization of armed forces in further conquests in the future.[46] The *Generalgouvernment* was also to aid in the project of "cleansing" the Reich of Poles and Jews.[47]

To attain these specified goals it was decided that it would be vital to "prevent the rebirth of any forms of national life, avoid rebuilding the economy or finances, and make sure the

---

[43] Gross, *Polish Society Under German Occupation*, 45.
[44] Ibid., 46.
[45] Ibid., 46.
[46] Gross, 47.
[47] Ibid.

standard of living remained low."[48] If the population was occupied with feeding itself and surviving, that would keep the focus off resistance efforts. The result of the harsh German economic policies was a "pauperization" of the population. Poles were to serve as nothing more than a source of labor to for the Reich. In order to accomplish this, the occupiers instituted extremely harsh economic measures. First, the *Generalgouvenment* was required to cover the entire cost of its own occupation and it was not a profitable acquisition.[49] Eighty percent of Polish industry was located in Western Poland and the industry that did remain in the Warsaw area and Central Industrial Region was cut off from its sources of raw materials.[50] All state businesses were under control of the *Generalgouvernment* which enabled them to call in all debts and void any monies owed to lenders. Many private owned businesses were targeted as well--forced to make compulsory deliveries of goods and foodstuffs to the administration and closed because the occupiers deemed them "inefficient."[51] Historian Jan Gross calls the German economic policy the "suspension of property rights."[52]

In addition, the German mark was overvalued in the *Generalgouvernment* by thirty-three percent in its official exchange rate with the Polish złoty.[53] Later, the currency would be changed in order to stop Polish bank notes from entering the region. The loss for the Polish population as a result of this measure was approximately 800 million zł.[54] By 1942, in the

---

[48] Ibid.
[49] Ibid., 45 and 92.
[50] Ibid., 92.
[51] Ibid., 96.
[52] Ibid., 97.
[53] Ibid., 97.
[54] Ibid.

Generalgouvernment taxes, excises, and monopoly fees were double what they had been in 1939 prior to the Nazi invasion.[55] Inflation shot up prices through the roof. According to Gross, the Polish Underground estimated that the net income of Poles in 1940 was less than forty percent of what it had been in 1938.[56] As a result of these repressive economic policies, the majority of the Polish population was immiserated, hungry, and poor.[57]

In addition to economic actions intended to pauperize the population and keep them busy trying to scratch out a living, the occupiers also sought to divide the population. German occupiers sought to divide the Poles and Jews through both anti-Jewish propaganda and policies. While the occupiers first sought to separate Poles and Jews in the mind by destroying their social bonds, they would soon separate them physically as well. The authorities introduced regulations to govern the everyday life of the population, including curfews. Food rationing was imposed in December 1939. Many policies targeted both Jews and gentiles alike but there were also laws directly aimed at Polish Jews meant to separate them from their Polish co-citizens. Jewish communities were ordered to form a Council of Elders and in Warsaw on October 28, 1939 they

---

[55] Ibid.

[56] Ibid., 98.

[57] Gross argues that economic exploitation followed a different map in the countryside. He asserts that during the first year of the German occupation material conditions of life "improved markedly" as peasant debts to Jewish creditors were cancelled, other debts reduced due to inflation, taxes were not being collected, and few quotas for delivery of foodstuffs and goods were collected (103). Also, the cost of food increased faster than those of non-agricultural products, so they also benefitted from this economic turn of events (103). Because of high food prices and skyrocketing inflation, workers in the cities were finding their paychecks worth less and less and started selling items in order to feed themselves and peasants were able to buy items that they would not have been able to afford before the occupation (104). Gross states that they purchased machinery and items like "never before" (194). This actually brought a great improvement to their standard of living and they were eating better than ever before (103-104). However, this reprieve did not last. Life in the countryside would feel the negative effects of occupation, just later than their urban dwelling counterparts.

were ordered to compile lists of all of the city's Jews.[58] This was a first step towards ghettoization. All Jewish bank accounts and deposit accounts were blocked that month and Jews were allowed to keep no more than 2,000 złoty in cash.[59] On December 1, 1939 it was ordered that all Warsaw Jews would wear a white armband displaying a Star of David under threat of severe punishment. As of November 30, 1939 all Jewish shops were to be marked as Jewish and by December 18, 1939 all Jewish property was to be registered. In early December Jewish primary schools were officially closed and by early winter 1940 Jews were no longer legally able to travel by rail, be employed in cafes and restaurants, or even to enter them.[60] By mid-1940 Jews were banned from sitting on park benches, Jewish doctors could no longer treat gentile patients, Jewish lawyers could not practice law, and no Jews could use public libraries.[61] The Nazi occupiers were stripping away the bonds of Polish society as they further removed Jews from public life, limited contact between Poles and Jews, and pushed Jews out of the community of moral obligation further and further.

During the early moments of the siege of Warsaw, many Poles and Jews cooperated against a common enemy but contemporary historian Emmanuel Ringelblum, wrote that "even before Warsaw fell, the hydra of antisemitism began raising her head again."[62] As conditions declined and Nazi policies continually pushed Jews from public spaces, this exacerbated the

---

[58] Barbara Engelking, *Holocaust and Memory: The Experience of the Holocaust and Its Consequences, An Investigation Based on Personal Narratives* (London and New York: Leicester University Press, 2001).
[59] Ibid., 21.
[60] Ibid., 22.
[61] Ibid.
[62] Emmanuel Ringelblum, *Polish-Jewish Relations During the Second World War* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1974), 35.

already existing cracks in Polish society. In homogenous Polish blocks of apartments Jews were not allowed into bomb shelters during air raids and conflicts broke out in lines for bakeries and grocery stores, where foodstuffs were increasingly hard to come by.[63] Jews were attacked by angry Polish mobs while waiting in soup lines with their hungry co-citizens. Ringelblum argues that "from the moment the Polish anti-Semites helped the Germans drive the hungry Jews away from the soup vats, the streets became a link between the Polish anti-Semites and the Nazis."[64] This separation of Poles and Jews and linkage of Poles and their occupiers would further solidify over time.

Ringelblum argues that these links based in antisemitism were forged between the Nazi occupiers and certain elements of Polish society. As Germans sought to target Jews for work and humiliations they sometimes were unable to distinguish between Catholic Pole and Polish Jew and he says that the "anti-Semitic scum thus came to their aid and obligingly pointed out the Jews to the Germans."[65] Renata Zajdman, who was approximately eleven years of age and living in Warsaw when the occupation began, says the "first thing they (the Poles) learned to say was *Jude*, all of a sudden I became a *Jude*."[66] She was from an acculturated family and did not identify herself as primarily Jewish; she spoke impeccable Polish, and she dressed like her Polish Catholic peers yet she still had to fear being identified as a *Jude* out on the streets. Mass pillaging of Jewish shops and homes began and during the winter of 1939-1940 Jews were

---

[63] Ibid., 36-37.
[64] Ibid., 42.
[65] Ibid., 38.
[66] Videotaped testimony of Renata Skotnicka- Zajdman, File no. 37068-4, Tape 2, The USC Shoah Foundation Institute, 26:13.

attacked all over the streets of Warsaw.[67] The period from October 1939 until November 1940 when the Warsaw ghetto was created was a period of "constant anti-Jewish agitation," which continued to increase.[68] The violence started with random attacks on individual Jews on the streets that ended up with "uncontrollable pillage of Jewish wealth and recurrent pogroms in different parts of Warsaw."[69] This whipping up of anti-Jewish sentiment and encouragement of the blossoming of antisemitism into violence and depravity served German purposes in a two-fold manner. In addition to driving an even larger wedge between Polish Catholics and Jews, it provided useful propaganda for the outside world as it also encouraged a weakening of Polish society and norms of behavior.

This fostered the environment that allowed German occupiers to portray themselves in propaganda as the "protectors" needed to keep Jews safe from the "rabidly anti-Semitic Poles" and to install law and order where they claimed there was none. Photos and films of German gendarmes stepping in to prevent Polish led violence perpetrated against Jewish victims were spread to the western world. Concurrently, within Poland, as elsewhere, in film, on posters, and in text, the image of the Jews as a threat, spreaders of disease and social decay fed the German propaganda machine. The Nazi overlords would increasingly target Jews, claiming it was for the good of the Polish population. While Poles were certainly against their occupation, this propaganda tapped into existing antisemitic undercurrents in existence before the invasion. The Nazi propaganda mill simultaneously cast the Germans as protectors of both Poles and Jews.

---

[67] Ringelblum, *Polish-Jewish Relations During the Second World War*, 47.
[68] Ibid., 52.
[69] Ibid., 53.

Emanuel Elbinger, who was about eight years old at the outbreak of the war remembers, "the Polish population was incessantly under the pressure of anti-Jewish propaganda."[70] Elbinger was shocked by the posters he saw. He recalls one in particular that read, "Stop and read, dear onlooker, how Jews beset you. Instead of meat, chopped rats, dirty water added to milk, and dough with worms, kneaded by foot."[71] The images on the poster were that of a "repulsive, unshaven crooked-nose Jewish butcher" holding a rat by the tail as he lowered it into a meat grinder and beside that a milkman pouring water from the washtub into a can of milk.[72] This communicated the message to Poles that the Germans were in fact aiding them by attempting to protect them from the harmful Jewish population.

As Poles increasingly witnessed or were subjected to violence, suffered the economic repercussions of the occupation, they witnessed many of their peers engaging in anti-Semitic activities that aided the enemy; it caused an ever increasing weakening of the social fabric. Many Poles spoke out against behavior of their fellow citizens and even those who were not supporters of the Jewish population prewar did not support the use of violence against them, the blackmailing, or other deviant behavior that began during the war.[73] Ringelblum, a

---

[70] Wictoria Sliwowska, ed., *The Last Eyewitness: Children of the Holocaust Speak* (Evanson: Northwestern University Press, 1993), 31.

[71] Ibid.

[72] Ibid.

[73] This would become an increasing problem that would be addressed by the Polish Underground and intellectuals alike. By May of 1942 the conservative Catholic writer Zofia Kossack-Szczucka, who herself harbored antisemitic beliefs, wrote a scathing commentary on the degradation of Polish Catholic society that was a result of its treatment of Poland's Jewish population in her essay "Prophecies Are Being Fulfilled," in *Prawda: Pismo Frontu Odrodzenia Polski*, May of 1942. Her essay was reprinted in Antony Polonsky and Joanna B. Michlic, eds., *The Neighbors Respond: The Controversy Over the Jedwabne Massacre in Poland* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 72-74. In her essay Kossack-Szczucka affirms that the fate of the Jews has brought upon themselves as a result of their own actions writing, "No one has

contemporary eyewitness struggling to chronicle the events of the occupation, using his training as a professional historian, was not completely damning of the Polish population even though the circumstances might lend to our sympathies if he were. He wrote that "the significant majority of the nation, its enlightened working class and the working intelligentsia, undoubtedly condemned these excesses, seeing in them a German instrument for weakening the unity of the Polish community."[74] The weakening of social bonds and an increasing tolerance for violence occurred in Poland but this was not a phenomenon unique to Poland.[75] In the Polish case, the occupation would lead to "social disorganization."[76] Increased alcoholism, a "gradual loss of a sense of private and public property," and corruption were all "symptoms" of this new disorganization that would take place in the *Generalgouvernment*.[77] Violence became endemic and this was not

---

hindered Christianity in conquering the world as they have, and it is they who are perishing first as a result of the fact that Europe is not Christian. Driven by Talmudic hate, they accepted no one outside their race as close to them, and they are now being wiped out because there is a nation that took their slogans to heart and did not accept them as close" (73). While she does believe that the Jewish people brought this terrible fate upon themselves, she also points at her fellow Poles, Christians, who have allowed the Jews to "remain as they are" that they receive "such terrible punishment" (73). She then states that if there is a Christian who is able to say that the Jews "got what was coming to them" and that the "Germans murdering them are rendering the Poles a service, them such a person would be unworthy of the name of Catholic" (73). She argues that what was occurring then, local Polish populations participating in the massacres of Jews, would affect Polish society gravely in the future and calls for Poles to "oppose such disgraceful behavior with all means available" (74). She calls for stigmatizing those who participate in the underground presses, boycotting the executioners, threatening them, and then punishing them harshly when the war is over and independence is restored (74). She saw "evil" "spreading like an epidemic" and crime "turning into an addiction" and these social ills would plague Poland after the war (74). She saw the effects of the violence and those Poles who acted to harm Jews as a sickness that would do irreparable damage to the Polish nation.

[74] Ringelblum, *Polish-Jewish Relations During the Second World War*, 53.

[75] Jan T. Gross, *Polish Society Under German Occupation: The Generalgouvernement, 1939 - 1944*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979).

[76] Ibid, 160.

[77] Ibid.

only that which was perpetrated by Germans. There was a marked increase in the number of armed assaults in general and this brutalization would continue as the occupation progressed.[78]

The Nazi Occupation of Poland altered the bonds of Polish society as well as the social structure. As discussed in chapter one, before the war, while domestic servants were very low in social status due to their lack of education and socioeconomic status, they could sometimes use their status as Polish Catholics to "other" their Jewish employers before the war if the conditions were right. The Nazi occupation further altered the power dynamic as race became the new mode of social order. Poles, classified by German race laws as Slavs, were considered to be subhuman, but were still higher on the social ladder than the Jews. Laws and policies increasingly targeted Jews and sometimes this worked in favor of former Polish employees and domestics were sometimes able to claim status as *volksdeutch*. This change could be useful for a Polish Catholic domestic worker to target her Jewish employers or former employers in order to benefit economically or to seek retribution for perceived maltreatment.

In many cases, domestic servants developed feelings of fondness or loyalty to their Jewish employers but quite often an employee simply did not. In other cases, just like in any job, a domestic servant could harbor resentment for her employers for any number of reasons-- the way they talked to her, feelings of envy, feeling that the gave her too much work for the amount of pay, and so on. In this case, not only did the employee have little incentive to go out of her way to aid her employer during the invasion, she also could feel quite justified in using this moment to get a little satisfaction and economic gain.

Alta Cytrynowski was seventeen and living in Łódź when the Germans invaded. She says before the war there were many *volksdeutsch* in the city but their maid, Stasia was a poor

[78] Ibid.

Catholic Polish woman "from our backyard."[79] As the Germans occupied the city, the Cytrynowski family did not flee, but their maid decided to terminate her employment with the family. Furthermore, she approached Cytrynowski's mother and said to her, "Tobela, you know what? I want your drapes and I want your covers, the bed covers,…" and continued to list items she wanted from the household.[80] She claimed her husband was a *volksdeutsch,* in order to compel her former employer to meet her demands. Cytrynowski testified that the maid's husband was not in fact a *volksdeutsch,* and nothing more than a Polish drunk, but this was enough to scare her mother into compliance. Cytrynowski remembers her mother asking Stasia how she could do this to her and that this maid "called her mother Tobela" just like her father had which was disrespectful, saying "we felt already, this grudge from the war."[81]

The occupation brought a change in the atmosphere that emboldened the maid, Stasia, to use the claim that her husband was a *volksdeutsch* to not only take from them, but to speak to her in a way she would not have before the war. It can be inferred that Stasia the maid realized the tables had turned and she was no longer at the bottom of the social scale even though she was a Pole from the lower classes. Her husband was or could be passed off as *volksdeutsch* or she suspected the mere threat would be enough to make her former employer not want to risk trouble with the new German occupiers.

Esther Goldstein's family had a woman who came to the house on Saturday to do the cooking. After the occupation Goldstein recalls noticing that she became a little distant, and

---

[79] Videotaped testimony of Alta Cytrynowski, File no. 42792-3, Tape 1, June 29, 1998, The USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive, 26:08.
[80] Videotaped testimony of Alta Cytrynowski. File no. 42792-3, Tape 1, 26:50.
[81] Ibid., 26:58.

relations between this woman and her mother changed.[82] The woman soon stopped coming to cook for the family. She finally appeared at their home demanding a fur coat, some gold bracelets, and other belongings of Goldstein's mother. Her mother asked this woman why she would do such a thing to the family and this cook replied, "This is life. You had it good enough, now it's my time."[83]

The Nazi occupiers created a situation in which goods and resources were limited and this pitted everyone against each other as they sought to provide for their families and scratch out a living. Karl Diamond of Tarnów, a teen at the outbreak of the war, remembers their maid who had worked for the family for years felt compelled to make trouble for the family. Diamond testifies that after the war started one day the maid brought an SS officer to the home and showed him where the family was hiding coffee, tea, soap and other goods that were scarce and in demand. He states, "And my mom was so upset, she told her, for fourteen years, I fed you, treated you like a child in this house. You did everything you wanted, and this is what you are doing to me?"[84] He remembers the maid laughing in response. During the occupation material goods became scarce and there was often a tangible sense of envy amongst those who thought others had it better than themselves. Diamond's memory of this incident is one in which the betrayal by a former household employee seems especially cruel.

Many scenes like this would play out as the occupation solidified, the social structure was transformed, and the Jewish population was sent to the ghettos. After the initial occupation, as

---

[82] Videotaped testimony of Esther Goldstein, File no. 11341-2, Tape 2, January 22, 1996, The USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive.
[83] Ibid., 1:15.
[84] Videotaped testimony of Karl Diamond, File no. 160392-2, Tape 1, June 6, 1996, The USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive, 18:15.

the Nazi regime solidified control of the Polish lands, Polish society experienced a significant reordering. Society was ordered according to Nazi racial ideology which privileged those Polish citizens that could claim Germen ethnicity and placed all ethnic Poles above Polish Jews, allowing race and ethnicity to trump economic status. This is evident in the above mentioned cases of the Cytrynowkis, the Goldsteins, and the Diamonds. Their former employees, however they justified their actions, felt that they were now able to take advantage of the situation and demand valuables from their former Jewish employers.

Certainly not all household employees turned on their former Jewish employers. Most moved on for economic reasons, some used the opportunity to harm them, but yet others attempted to do what they could to continue caring for their former charges even if their employment ended. These household servants were not women of means and were in rather precarious situations themselves but in some cases their particular backgrounds or skills could prove useful. Betty Dickman, born in Vilna, was a young woman during the initial occupation period and recalls that before the ghetto her former maid would come to get her and the two women dressed as Polish peasants and would go out trading for food.[85] The former servant taught her the Hail Mary in Polish and stayed with them until just shortly before they entered the ghetto when it would become too dangerous for her to stay.[86] The assistance of a former servant could be quite useful even in the early occupation period. It would become increasingly dangerous for these women to continue to associate and aid their Jewish charges and the Nazis made it increasingly difficult for Poles and Jews even to remain in contact. The formation and

[85] Videotaped testimony of Betty Dickman, File no. 28331-2, Tape 2, April 14, 1997, The USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive.

[86] Even after the formation of the ghetto, Dickman would sneak out of the ghetto and go to this former maid who would feed her and give her a little something for the kids.

subsequent sealing of the ghettos would sever the ties between many Poles and Jews and prevent many Jews from seeking the assistance of their former Polish acquaintances, employees, and friends once they realized how vital this aid would be in their survival.

Restructuring Polish Life: The Ghettos and the So-Called Aryan Side

The formation and sealing of the ghettoes in Poland took place with varied chronology and the situation inside each ghetto had its own context but for the purpose of this study there is the need to talk generally. Many of the case studies I examined are from the ghettos of Warsaw and Kraków but they are not limited to these two. During a September 21, 1939 meeting Reinhard Heydrich was recorded as saying that the Jews in the cities should be held in ghettos to permit better control and within a period of three to four weeks he wanted the Jewish population pushed into cities where possible and the Jews in the Reich transferred into Poland along with their remaining 30,000 gypsies.[87] A form of ghettos already existed in Poland; Jews had been living in concentrated neighborhoods in Polish cities, and historically this idea was not new in Europe, so the idea of a Jewish ghetto was certainly no German creation.[88] Drawing from Phillip Friedman, Dan Michman argues that since these ghettos were already present on Polish lands the goal then became to "demarcate the boundaries and force the Jews who had left them to infect the rest of the city, to return to their "natural environment."[89] Discussions between various German officials went on for a period of a few months to plan the implementation of the ghettos in particular cities and regions but the justifications for their perpetuation and forcing Jews to

---

[87] Guy Miron and Sholomit Shulhani, co-ed., *The Yad Vashem Encyclopedia of the Ghettos During the Holocaust* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2009), xxi.

[88] Dan Michman, "The Jewish Ghettos under the Nazis and their Allies: The Reason Behind their Emergence," in Guy Miron, Ed. And Sholomit Shulhani, Co-ed. *The Yad Vashem Encyclopedia of the Ghettos During the Holocaust,* xiii-xxxix (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2009).

[89] Ibid., xxiii.

move into the German designated ghettos was the supposed danger that Jews posed as carriers of disease.[90] In Warsaw, near the heavily Jewish populated districts the Nazis posted signs warning of epidemics.[91] Grynberg argues that they sought to associate the Jewish population with the often deadly louse-born typhus and quarantined areas in order to further stigmatize and alienate the Jewish population.[92]According to racial ideology, the isolation of the Jews was considered to be of great moral and political importance.

The ghettos were formed at varied rates and means in Poland. The first official ghetto, Piotrków Trybunalski, was set up in October of 1939 in the Kielce province. The Jews were directed to move into an area labeled the "Jewish residential quarter," but the order was not strictly enforced.[93] Poles lived and operated businesses in the ghetto until as last as the spring of 1942. Here, it took months for Jews to be resettled and a small number of Jews continued to live outside the area right up until its liquidation.[94] After the initial formation of the Piotrków ghetto another ghetto was formed in Radomsko in December 1939, with seven more in other mid-sized towns created in the first few months of 1940.[95]

The first ghetto in a major city was implemented in Łódź in February 1940 and it was not sealed off until April of that year. It was estimated that the Jewish population of the city was approximately 320,000 so moving them was less realistic than containing them in a ghetto there.

---

[90] Ibid., xxiv.
[91] Grynberg, *Words to Outlive Us, 15.*
[92] Ibid., 15.
[93] Dan Michman, "The Jewish Ghettos under the Nazis and their Allies: The Reason Behind their Emergence," xxiv.
[94] Ibid.
[95] Ibid.

Michman writes that once the ghetto was functioning successfully it was considered to be prototype and symbol for the other ghettos, and even a sort of tourist attraction, "that never failed to excited the most lively interest of visitors from the Old Reich."[96] Preparations for other ghettos were being made and carried out throughout Nazi-occupied Poland. The concentration of the Jews in ghettos was a "practical initiative" taken on the ground as a result of the particular context.[97] The everyday aspects of the larger initiative and problems were dealt with by local leaders.

Prior to the Second World War and the Holocaust, Warsaw had the largest Jewish population of any city aside from New York City. The Warsaw ghetto, which was established on a small portion of the land of the city, like that of Łódź, would come to be heavily populated and crowded, which meant that conditions would be especially deadly. The Warsaw Jews were informed that they would be forced to move into a ghetto in their city on Yom Kippur, October 12, 1940. Most of the area designated as the Warsaw ghetto was comprised of working and lower-middle class neighborhoods in the Muranów district with a smaller area around the Mirowski marketplace.[98] The occupiers required that the Warsaw Jewish community build a wall surrounding the ghetto with Jewish labor and funds.[99] This area also happened to have been heavily bombed out during the invasion.

In order to construct the Jewish ghetto in Warsaw, some 80,000 Poles living in the newly designated ghetto areas had to leave their homes and some 140,000 Jews were moved in and replaced

---

[96] Ibid, xxv. Michman is quoting the remarks from an undated chronicle of the Łódź District Court.
[97] Ibid, xxvi.
[98] Grynberg, *Words to Outlive Us*, 9-10.
[99] Ibid., 15.

them. With much damage to the city as a result of the invasion and a lack of resources, it was often difficult for both Poles and Jews to relocate. For Jews who lived in the area that was designated as the ghetto, this usually meant adding more residents to their flat as acquaintances and family members joined them. For Jews who had to leave their home and move into the district, without any connections finding housing was especially difficult. Sometimes, a trade could be worked out between a Polish and Jewish family who were both forced to move.

In the Ringelblum archive there is an account of some of the difficulty one unnamed family faced in trying to move into the ghetto area.[100] The author wrote that the family maid, Emilia Denkiewicz, accused the husband of the house of possessing "foreign" newspapers shortly after the occupation. After some maneuvering on the part of the lady of the house the maid's mother, who worked for a Jewish doctor, was able to convince her daughter to recant the charges. The family was forced to continue to employ her, living in fear, until they were ordered into the ghetto. When news of the order came, the family arranged to trade flats with a Polish gentile family who lived in area designated to become the Warsaw ghetto. The maid, meanwhile, managed to make a deal with some local officials that gave her claim to the family's flat so that when they did move they were unable to trade flats with a Polish family that needed to move out of the area designated to be the ghetto. This put the family in an even graver situation as it no longer had means to bargain for housing in the ghetto. Difficulty finding a place to live in the ghetto was commonplace, especially for Jews without means or connections.

Max Hilfstein, born in 1920, recalls that when his family had to move into the Kraków ghetto family members were initially lucky, so to speak, because his father's business was located inside the

[100] United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, RG15.079M, Underground Archives of the Warsaw Ghetto: The Emmanuel Ringelblum Archives, "A Maid, A Spy," Ring. I/ 442.

boundaries of what was to be the Jewish ghetto.[101] While he was not able to retain control of his business he was able to at least keep working for a period. They also managed to find a Pole who had to move from the ghetto so they were able to work out a trade. These were all advantages that most Jews did not have. Employment and housing were at a premium and life depended on the ability to procure both.

By January of 1941, as Jews were brought in from surrounding areas, the population of the Warsaw ghetto, which was a mere 1.3 square miles, would reach some 400,000 Jews.[102] This meant extreme overcrowding, unsanitary conditions, and lack of food. The average flat housed seven residents per room.[103] Refugees were placed in public shelters which were subject to frequent outbreaks of infectious diseases such as typhus. According to Grynberg, "German policy thus unleashed the very epidemic that had been invoked as the rationale for sealing off the Jewish district in the first place."[104]

The Struggle to Adapt to Life in the Ghettos

While Warsaw and Łódź were special cases for their size and situation, in general, the ghettos were set up to become increasingly deadly. It was initially thought that England and France would come to the rescue and push the Germans back out of Poland but-- by the spring of 1940 --this hope was dying.[105] By the end of 1940 the war and occupation led most European

[101] Videotaped testimony of Max Hilfstein, Interview no. 09989-3, Tape 2, December 12, 1995, The USC Shoah Visual History Archive.
[102] Grynberg, *Words to Outlive Us*, 10.
[103] Ibid.
[104] Ibid., 11.
[105] Ibid., 20.

Jews to believe that "their lives would never be the same."[106] Most Polish Jews believed by this point even the end of the German occupation would not return their lives to the way they were before the war. While many Jews responded in the early period by attempting to flee Poland, to live as "Aryans" outside of the ghettos, or even committing suicide, they also attempted to continue or recreate a new form of Jewish life inside the ghettos. Some of these activities and organizations were official, while others were unsanctioned or even clandestine.[107] Religious Jews often sought solace and refuge in their practice and families frequently attempted to "carve out private spaces amid the crammed apartments of the ghettos."[108] Families sought to educate their children and attempts to continue Jewish cultural events were sometimes made. Life, although dramatically altered, lurched on in this alien and brutal environment.

Conditions in the ghettos went from materially hard to deadly in merely a matter of weeks. For Jews who survived the initial invasion and occupation, "the continually multiplying hardships led to the emergence of new living patterns and coping strategies."[109]Jewish communities responded with efforts to preserve and cultivate Jewish life. As I have previously stated, Polish Jewry was a large and diverse segment of Polish society. The families of this study who employed Polish Catholic household servants were often fairly acculturated. Many of them had been moving rather freely among Catholics in Polish society and the creation of the ghettos resulted in the formulation of an artificially homogenous and bounded Jewish society. For the

---

[106] Garbarini, *Jewish Responses to Persecution, Volume II, 1938-1940*, 437. She also states, "the Third Reich's assault in Poland, had destroyed the feeble basis on which Jews and Poles and coexisted for centuries and introduced in its place an ideology-driven system of subjugation in which Jews were resolutely expelled from common society."

[107] Ibid., 438.

[108] Ibid.

[109] Nechama Tec, *Resilience and Courage: Women, Men, and the Holocaust* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2003).

children of this study who heavily identified themselves as *Polish* Jews and spoke Polish this new environment was even more disconcerting.[110]

One such child, Isabelle Choco, grew up in an acculturated Jewish family that attended synagogue on occasion. They lit the Sabbath candles every Friday evening and ate traditional meals for the Jewish holidays but she says, "on the whole, however, we led assimilated lives and the difference between the Jews and the Catholics completely escaped me."[111] When her family was interned in the Łódź ghetto she was sent to school and started to learn Hebrew. She "encountered contempt" from many of the other Jews imprisoned there because she did not speak Yiddish.[112] Choco remembers standing in line at the food store and overhearing, "What a little princess, she only speaks Polish," to which she would reply that she spoke Hebrew, "the first language of the Jews."[113] Bianka Kraszewski who only spoke Polish before the war also learned some Yiddish in the Warsaw ghetto by playing and singing with other Jewish

---

[110] For further discussion of the effects of war and occupation on children, see Joseph Zieman, *Cigarette Sellers of Three Crosses Square*; Patricia Heberer, ed., *Children During the Holocaust;* Joanna Beata Michlic, *Jewish Children in Nazi-Occupied Poland: Survival and Polish-Jewish Relations During the Holocaust as Reflected in Early Postwar Recollections.*

[111] Isabelle Choco, "My First Life," in *Stolen Youth: Five Women's Survival in the Holocaust,"* 1-72, David Silberklang and Danielle Zaidman-Maurer, eds. (New York and Jerusalem: Yad Vashem and the Holocaust Survivor's Memoirs Project, 2005), 19.

[112] Ibid., 31.

[113] Ibid. This was also a problem for highly acculturated Jewish survivors in the DP camps. In the videotaped testimony of Renata Skotnicka-Zajdman, File no. 37068-4, Tape 6, The USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive, Zajdman notes that after the war when she was living in the camp she encountered hostility from other Jews because she spoke no Yiddish and was as she describes herself, assimilated. She was treated with great suspicion and as an outsider.

children.[114] For children who had grown up mixing with Polish Catholics and in acculturated households this newly homogenous environment was very much unfamiliar territory.

Jewish responses to their internment in the ghettos were as varied as the diverse population. This was a time of fear and uncertainty, material deprivation, and a complete reordering of society. In the past, Jews had been persecuted, subjected to violence and exile so there was no reason given their long history in Europe to believe during the early occupation period that this was situation would be so different or extraordinarily deadly. Families sought to carry on as best they could under the harsh conditions, anticipating that these conditions had a limit, and that the war would end at some point. Parents often made attempts to continue to educate their children, to bring any semblance of normalcy to life that they could, and to continue cultural life. No one knew how long the war would last and no one could have suspected that war would turn to genocide. The decisions to comply with orders to enter the ghettos and to make lives there were made using the information available.

Polish Catholic domestic workers who continued to work for their Jewish employers after the initial invasion also responded to the conditions based upon the information available. They also had no idea what was ultimately in store for either themselves or their employers. They were often concerned about their own economic situation and for their families of origin. When the Nazi occupiers issued the decree that ordered Jews to move into the ghetto this presented a problem and a challenge for them as well and yet another clear instance where they were forced to decide whether to stay with their employer or leave. Most domestic servants did not move into the ghettos with their former Jewish employers. Some however, remarkably, did. In the above mentioned case of Genia Olczak and the Rozencwajg family, Olczak not only stayed with the

[114] Videotaped testimony of Bianka Kraszewski, File no. 13723-4, Tape 2, USC Shoah Visual History Archive.

family when they traveled to Warsaw, she also moved into the ghetto with them. When Roma Rozencwajg and her young son Gabriel had to move, Olczak moved into the ghetto with them. Olczak lived with the Rozencwajg family at the Zamenhof residence inside the Warsaw ghetto and she took items from friends and acquaintances of the family over to the so-called Aryan side to sell, exiting and returning with a pass, bringing back much needed food and supplies, until she was no longer permitted legally to stay in the ghetto.[115]

Lola Fontak, born in Będzin, had a maid before the war who had lived with the family for twelve or thirteen years before the war. Fontak said that this family maid stayed with them after the invasion and also moved into the ghetto with them when they were ordered to do so. Inside the ghetto she was "an asset" because she could "go places" and buy items for the family that they were not allowed to buy.[116] The maid stayed with them even after non-Jews were no longer allowed to live in the ghetto. She was denounced as a Pole and sent to labor, Fontak believes in Gdynia. Fontak recalls that the family was "heartbroken," as she was so loyal and an "asset."[117] Marie Lubowski Winkelman also had a family maid who followed them into the ghetto after she traveled from their home in Włocławek to Warsaw with the family.[118] When the ghetto was closed off in October, 1940, she was forced to leave.

---

[115] The September 19, 1940 Verordnung über die Beschaftigung weiblicher Personen in judischen Haushalten, "Decree regarding the employment of female persons in Jewish households," forbade gentiles from working in Jewish households. The Warsaw ghetto itself was sealed on November 15, 1940.

[116] Videotaped testimony of Lola Fontak, File no. 09038-2, Tape 2, November 20, 1995, The USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive, 12:58.

[117] Ibid., 13:00.

[118] Videotape testimony of Marie Lubowski Winkelman, File no. 18554-2, Tape 1, August 14, 1996, The USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive, 14:30.

Emunah Nachmany Gafney discusses Jewish families who had Polish live-in nannies that maintained relations with their former employers even after Jews were forced to move into the ghetto. She asserts that while this was not common, in some instances nannies moved to the ghettos together with their employers and continued to care for the children, leaving only over time as the situation deteriorated. Gafney states that "it was natural that the family and the nanny would continue their relationship."[119] In this instance the obvious manner of continuation would be the nanny taking the child or the child and other members of the family out of the ghetto, which was in some cases initiated by the former employer and in other cases by the former employee.[120] This behavior is evident in Olczak's case as well as the examples of the Fontak and Winkelman testimonies.

While most maids did not move into the ghetto with their former employers, the cessation of their cohabitation did not end their feeling of obligation to their former charges. Many of these maids continued to aid their Jewish families by helping them sell their possessions, smuggling food in to them, or doing errands for them on the so-called Aryan side. For those domestic servants that did continue to live with their former employers in the ghettos, the September 19, 1940 *Verordnung über die Beschaftigung weiblicher Personen in judischen Haushalten*, or Decree Regarding the Employment of Female Persons in Jewish Households made employment of gentile servants in Jewish homes illegal. Those maids who did go to the ghettos with their

[119] Emunah Nachmany Gafny, *Dividing Hearts: The Removal of Jewish Children from Gentile Families in Poland in the Immediate Post Holocaust Years* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2009).
[120] Ibid.

employers were then legally compelled to separate with them.[121] This decree stated that a Jewish household was any home in which the head of the home was Jewish, so it included any mixed marriages as well. Once Jewish families were no longer allowed legally to employ Polish gentile maids and they were no longer able to stay in the ghettos without employment, this drove a further wedge between these Poles and Polish Jews, and was another means of separating these individuals, and others like them. The final blow came when non-Jews were no longer allowed to pass freely into the ghettos or reside there at all. In many instances the internment of the Jews in ghettos or the restrictions of non-Jews passing freely in and out of the ghetto were not enough to sever the ties between these domestic servants and their former charges as the occupiers would have wished; but these final laws hindered maintaining these ties by separating the parties and making communication difficult.

New Relations: Domestic Servants' Responses to the New Social Order

When Jews initially moved into the ghettos and they were subsequently sealed, it was still unknown what the Nazi aims for the Jewish population was. However, based on the levels of terror, deprivation, and squalor inside the ghettos, it was soon apparent that the conditions were potentially deadly at best. Contact with Polish gentiles on the outside of the ghetto was vital in obtaining food, medicine, information, and goods necessary to survival. Nazi occupiers sought to separate the Jews from the outside world and to end the contact with the outside world that was needed for survival. For families who had a Polish gentile contact on the outside that was willing to help them out, this could tip the scales slightly more in their favor than those without. A

[121] Karol Marian Pospieszalski, *Hitlerowski "Prawo" Okupacyjne w Polsce: Csęść II Generalna Gubernia, Wybór Dokumentów i Proba Syntezy* (Poznan: Instytut Zachodni, 1958), 579.

former maid on the outside could sell items for the family, help them communicate with the outside world, and sometimes prove invaluable.

Emmanuel Ringelblum called the formation of the Warsaw ghetto the "crowning achievement, the completion of the process of segregation." It was intended that, "Jews would be able to communicate with the Aryan world only with the approval of the authorities, who would control and supervise all economic contacts."[122] Smuggling both for profit and aid was a continued point of contact between Jew and gentile that was a constant problem to the occupiers who sought to separate Poles and Jews and to keep goods and foodstuffs out of the ghettos.

In the Warsaw ghetto, Jews were allowed food rations of 184 calories per day.[123] The smuggling in of additional food was the only means that Jews could avoid starvation. Adam Czernikow, head of the *Judenrat* in the Warsaw ghetto, estimated that eighty percent of the food entering the ghetto was the result of this illegal activity.[124] For many Poles, smuggling was an economic endeavor more than a humanitarian effort, but not only did it provide an important sustained means of contact between Poles and Jews in spite of Nazi efforts to separate these groups, it also provided means for a former household servant to help her former employers. Some former domestic workers relied on smuggling to replace their lost income as servants and some of these women used a portion of their smuggling income to help support their former employers who were interned in the ghetto.

---

[122] Ringelblum, *Polish-Jewish Relations During the Second World War*, 59.

[123] Abraham Lewin, *A Cup of Tears: A Warsaw Ghetto Diary*, Ed. Antony Polonsky, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989), 21.

[124] Ibid. Polonsky cites the diary of S. Szymkowicz, (90) in the Yad Vashem Archives for this assertion.

Former domestic servants engaged in smuggling both to support themselves and to aid their former charges who were trapped inside the ghetto. Servants who lost their employment as a result of the war had limited opportunities for employment. Some turned to smuggling for income. Renata Zajdman's former maid, Janina Wojcicka, became a smuggler and supported herself that way, along with Zajdman and her half-brother Aleksander and her half-sister Ana. During the occupation she became their "sole supporter."[125] Zajdman became separated from her half-siblings in Baiłystok and the former maid came to get her from the ghetto there and return her to her siblings in the Warsaw ghetto where she could provide aid to them. Wojcicka found Zajdman working in a labor battalion and was already equipped with documents from a relative's child who was the same age as Zajdman. She had some money and helped her walk away from the work battalion. They walked some two hundred kilometers back to Warsaw passing as two smugglers and she helped Zajdman sneak into the ghetto there.

In Warsaw Wojcicka smuggled Jewish goods out of the ghetto and sold them on the so-called Aryan side for the Jews who gave them to her. Zajdman recalls, "Janka was not afraid of anybody. She would come by and bring food, not every day, whenever she could, whatever she could buy or sell, otherwise we would have gone down completely if it wasn't for her."[126] Wojcicka also used her connections with friends of her former employers to help get medicine and information. Wojcicka was killed trying to sneak into the ghetto to get to Zajdman's brother Aleksander. Smuggling was dangerous for Jew and gentile alike. Jack Kliman's former maid

[125] Videotaped testimony of Renata Skotnicka-Zajdman, File no. 37068-4, Tape 3, The USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive, 3:54.
[126] Videotaped testimony of Renata Skotnicka-Zajdman, File no. 37068-4, Tape 5, The USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive, 2:29.

also smuggled food into the ghetto for his family.[127] She used to come to the wall at night and throw food over the wall to Kliman's mother until a German guard saw her and killed her on the spot.

Despite the danger, smuggling was the only way to get the necessary additional food into the ghettos and provided money for the Jews who had items to sell so that they could purchase food to eat on the black market. Genia Olczak, the Rozencwajg's former domestic servant found employment at a pen factory and office supply as the result of a Rozencwajg family connection.[128] She lived with the family and helped support them in the ghetto until she was required to move out. After that her employment allowed her to get an apartment on the so-called Aryan side. In addition, Olczak sold items for friends and acquaintances of her former employers. She remarked that people gave her all sorts of things to sell for them because there was not much money. She would take them out of the ghetto and sell them on Kercelak (flea market). She explained that friends used to come to Roma Zamenhof, the best friend of Roma Rozencwajg, whom the family lived with and ask her if she could sell things for them, buy them food, and bring it back into the ghetto. Olczak said, "I was so sorry for them and their children--It is impossible to say what was happening there--and right away I exchanged the things for food, because there was no delivery to ghetto."[129] She explained, "Although some (food) was thrown over the wall, not many people could get it. So I did my best. Sometimes twice a day I would go and bring basketfuls, whatever was needed, because there was such a need, I would

[127] Videotaped testimony of Jack Kliman, File no. 11879-1, Tape 2, February 23, 1996, The USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archives, 11:49.
[128] Oral interview of Genowefa Olczak.
[129] Ibid., 5.

bring potatoes, bread, and other things."[130] This middle-man activity provided important money and supplies for the residents of the ghettos.

Max Hilfstein's former domestic servant, Bronia, also continued to care for her former charge by providing him with food while he was in the Kraków ghetto and when he was sent to work at Plaszów, a camp in Kraków.[131] He says he was "watching the wires every day" and whenever she saw him, she made contact. She would always have food in her hands when she came and she would throw it over to him. When he would walk from the ghetto to Plaszów she would appear and start walking next to him, handing him some kielbasa. He explains, "You have to remember, this was life she gave me. She could be very easily killed."[132] The Dickman family, mentioned above, also received aid from their former laundress while they were interned in the ghetto.[133] Their maid did not do laundry, so they had a woman who came in to do the washing. Once the family moved into the ghetto, Dickman, who was in her late teens, would sneak out of the ghetto and go to this laundress who would feed her and give her a little something for the other kids. She recalls it was very difficult to bring anything in but she tried. Many child survivors remember being aided in the form of food and goods smuggled into the ghettos by former caregivers.[134]

---

[130] Ibid.

[131] Videotaped testimony of Max Hilfstein, File no. 09989-3, Tape 2, December 12, 1995, The USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive.

[132] Ibid., 27:11.

[133] Videotaped testimony of Betty Dickman, Interview no. 28331-2, Tape 2, April 14, 1997, The USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive, 11:40.

[134] Videotaped testimony of Yaacov Halperin, File no. 08789-2, Tape 1, November 15, 1995, The USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive. Yaacov Halperin was a teen living in Kraków at the onset of the war. His family maid left their service when gentiles were no longer permitted to work for Jews and she married a lieutenant in the Polish Army. She was able to

Conclusions

While the Nazi invasion and occupation brought the end of employment and extended daily contact between these domestic servants and their charges, in those many cases where contact and aid continued it was of great value to Jewish families interred in the ghettos. This contact and aid would become increasingly important as conditions became more and more deadly. Residents of the ghettos were subjected to starvation, exposure to the elements, disease, and murder. As it became apparent that remaining in the ghetto would likely result in death many families started to consider action, including attempting to leave the ghettos and live clandestinely on the so-called Aryan side. Or, in many cases, to send their children out of the ghettos because they were targeted for death since they were not considered productive or useful to German aims. In many cases, as former domestic servants who remained in contact with their former charges saw or heard about ghetto conditions they also became progressively more fearful for the children and adults they had grown attached to. The deportation period brought increased impetus to the need to make a decision for how to best attempt to survive the Nazi onslaught. For families who had a former domestic employee willing to help them, this could

---

bring food from his farm and for a year and a half and ensure that they were fed while they were living in the ghetto. Once she could no longer get into the ghetto the family had to manage to purchase food themselves on the black market. Videotaped testimony of Debora Herzog, File no. 42124-40, Tape 2, March 14, 1998, The USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive. The Herzog's family and their maid Jazdka all found themselves living in the Bochnia ghetto. After she could no longer live in the ghetto with the family she would sneak in and spend a few hours with the family. She helped the family pack as they left Kraków and Kalwarnia and then when they were being deported from Bochnia she came to help them pack up again. This time they were being sent to Bergen Belson. As they packed she told them, "You can't go any further because I won't be able to pack you." In the videotaped testimony of Frederyka Cassidy, File no. 34645-40, Tape 2, July 29, 1997, The USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archives, Cassidy recalls that the family fled their hometown of Jezierna to Lwów at the outbreak of the war. She remembers their former maid traveling 200 km with four "big loaves of bread" in order to get the family from Lwów and bring them back with her, which she did.

sometimes involve the decision to send their child away with this woman where he or she may at least have a chance of surviving.

CHAPTER FIVE

DECISIONS

Introduction

Often we consider Jews the recipients of gentile aid and rescue efforts. Upon examining life under increasingly deadly conditions and delving into how decisions to leave the ghettos were made, it becomes increasingly clear that aid and rescue, at least by former domestic servants, were often collaborative Jewish-gentile efforts. We know that in urban environments, it generally took multiple people to hide or protect one person on the so-called Aryan side, but even to provide aid inside the ghettos it often took multiple gentile helpers to meet the needs of a ghetto internee. Typically we look at the actions of the rescuer to protect the rescued and do not focus on Jewish self-help as a part of these efforts; nor do we contemplate the ways that Jews aided one another or worked in collaboration with their gentile helpers. There is the assumption that family members were morally obligated to aid each other, or that members of a "community" should do what they could for each other. To illustrate this point, Yad Vashem has created the designation of Righteous Among the Nations for gentiles who provided aid to Jews during the Holocaust. In the description of this program, Yad Vashem declares that, "In a world of total moral collapse there was a small minority who mustered extraordinary courage to uphold human values."[1] Yad Vashem gives members of this minority the honor of the status of Righteous Among the Nations arguing that these gentiles stood, "in stark contrast to the mainstream indifference and hostility that prevailed during the Holocaust."[2] In addition Yad Vashem declares that, "Contrary to the general trend, these rescuers regarded the Jews as fellow

[1] The Righteous Among the Nations: About the Righteous Among the Nations, Yad Vashem, http://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/righteous/about.asp.
[2] Ibid.

human beings who came within the bounds of their universe of obligation."[3] There is no equivalent designation for Jews who assisted Jews. While it is accurate that gentiles who aided Jews, particularly in Nazi occupied states were risking essentially everything to help, Jews who took additional risks to aid other Jews were often lessening their own chances for survival.[4]

This assumption that Jews were obligated to aid each other is problematic and leads to a devaluation of Jewish aid and the risks some Jews took to provide relief and assistance to other Jews. Nechama Tec argues, "the more deprived people are, the more their lives depend on cooperative efforts."[5] She posits that the ability and willingness of people to help one another was dependent on the deprivation they themselves were enduring and "how their past conditioned them for compassion and cooperation."[6] Every Jewish person living in Nazi-occupied Poland was struggling to survive. To help another meant additional risk and sharing of resources, sacrifices that should not be overlooked. In many cases, a gentile helper could not have successfully acted to protect his or her Jewish charge without the aid received from the Jewish charge or the charge's family.

This chapter looks at survival efforts inside the ghettos during the period leading up to and during the deportations. It examines the ways prewar relationships influenced decisions to

---

[3] Ibid.

[4] For further discussion of Jewish rescue see Holocaust Rescuers, Jewish, Virtual Jewish Library: A Division of the American-Israeli Cooperative Enterprise, https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/judaica/ejud_0002_0009_0_09149.html; The Holocaust: Rescue by Jews, Yad Vashem, http://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/holocaust/about/08/jewish_rescue.asp; Chana Arnon, "Jews Rescuing Jews During the Holocaust," Yad Vashem, http://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/education/conference/2004/39.pdf.

[5] Nechama Tec, *Resilience and Courage: Women, Men, and the Holocaust* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2003), 50.

[6] Ibid.

seek or provide shelter outside of the ghettos. While the literature generally points to the Nazi occupation and internment of the Jews to the ghettos as a sharp break from prewar life, the aid and rescue sometimes provided by former household domestic servants offers one continuity with prewar life. This chapter argues that the offer to take a child or the request to take one's child from the ghetto was a continuation of the prewar relationships that developed in the domestic realm between the employers and their servant and was a natural extension of this role. These domestic servants were trusted to care for their charges before the war, so they were a logical choice when a gentile was needed to keep a Jewish child on the so-called Aryan side. This chapter also seeks to place Jewish survival efforts, including self-help and flight, in the realm of resistance.

Conditions varied by ghetto, but in general, children were consistently viewed by the Nazi occupiers not as a potential source of labor like some of their able-bodied adult counterparts, but rather as a drain on resources, therefore not worthy of life. Children, the elderly, and anyone who did not appear able to provide labor or was unable to procure employment were targets. In addition, disease and starvation raged through the ghettos threatening all of the residents. For the purpose of this chapter, I will give a brief comparison of the Łódź, Warsaw, and Kraków ghettos to provide context for the decisions and actions of the subjects of this study. However, all of the cases discussed within this chapter do not come from these ghettos. The purpose of comparing these ghettos is to enhance the readers understanding of the spectrum of conditions within the ghettos. This activity also allows us to consider the variance in the levels of permeability of the boundaries keeping information, goods, and people in and out, the speed of the deterioration of the living conditions, and the active organizations

able to help rescuers and potential escapees. This is intended to provide some of the context in which the decision to leave the ghettos were made.

Escalating Danger

The Warsaw and Łódź ghettos were the largest in occupied Poland, however the Łódź ghetto was as close to hermetically sealed as the occupiers could manage. While smuggling was a means of obtaining vital food for Jews interned in most of the ghettos, this was not possible in the Łódź ghetto because its perimeters were much less porous.[7] Workers did not pass in and out of the ghetto to perform labor and special currency was used. As a result the inhabitants had to rely on the food that was made available by the official agencies. This relative isolation from Aryan influences also meant a lack of information regarding what was happening in the other ghettos for the average inhabitants.

The frequency of *aktions* and deportations increased and Jews were dying at alarming rates from disease and starvation in addition to being killed on site during 1941-42. As a result, it became apparent at varied rates in the ghettos that something must be done if there was to be any surviving remnant. An understanding of the Nazi aims for the Jewish population was dependent on the ghetto and also what the human mind was capable of accepting. Israel Gutman has argued that it was "clear that information did not reach the Łódź ghetto in the way and time it reached the other ghettos."[8] While reports detailing mass murder in the German-occupied territories from June of 1941 were printed in clandestine presses and reached many of the ghettos, he maintains that Łódź was hermetically sealed and therefore this information was not

---

[7] Israel Gutman, "Introduction: The Distinctiveness of the Łódź Ghetto" in *Łódź Ghetto: A History*, xxix-lvii, Isaiah Trunk, ed. (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2008), xxxii.

[8] Ibid., xlvii.

widely available.[9] On the other hand, in the Warsaw ghetto Jews knew "fairly early," in January or February 1942 about Chełmno and what took place there.[10] Gutman says that while the Jews of the Łódź ghetto "did not deduce that total and methodical murder was being perpetrated against Jews," the September 1942 deportations of children did push many towards believing murder was being committed.[11]

While the contexts of what encouraged Jews to consider the risk of fleeing the ghettos differed greatly depending on where they were interned, as conditions deteriorated and more Jews were deported Jews began to believe that survival inside the ghetto was impossible. For families, this decision was particularly painful. Parents were ever fearful for their children inside the ghettos, but moving from the ghettos was extremely dangerous. Finding a hiding place on the so-called Aryan side was a monumental task and hiding an entire family together, even more so. For Jews caught outside of the ghetto walls, the punishment was death for them as well as for their aid provider. There were many incentives for the local populations to inform or threaten to inform on Jews attempting to live clandestinely. The choice to leave the ghetto was one made under duress and offered no certainty. Ghetto inhabitants knew conditions were deadly in the ghettos but leaving the ghetto could just as easily result in death.

Sometimes this decision to leave the ghetto was made in an instant, when a moment suddenly presented itself and one had to make a fast choice to take a chance or remain.[12]

---

[9] Ibid.

[10] Ibid., l.

[11] Ibid., iii.

[12] See Second Generation of Long Island Collection Interview of Helen Foxman, One Tape, July 6, 1983, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, RG 50.205*0028; Videotaped testimony of Milla Tenenbaum, File no. 33627-4, September 16, 1997, Tape 1, The USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive.

Oftentimes, this decision was one that required much planning and resources.[13] A gentile contact person willing to aid was an invaluable asset. The specific challenges for escape from the ghetto were dependent on when a Jew decided to take flight.[14]

During the initial ghettoization period, the majority of Jews complied with the order and moved into the ghetto.[15] Those who did not were either highly acculturated, converts who wanted to remain with the Polish majority, and those who were having difficulty finding housing inside the designated ghetto area.[16] Paulsson points out that the Warsaw ghetto area, unlike the hermetically sealed Łódź ghetto, was not easily isolated from the rest of the city and that the wall dividing the ghetto and the so-called Aryan side was actually rather porous. Smuggling and other contacts with gentiles continued through shared tram lines, sneaking aboard other vehicles such as fire or garbage trucks allowed to enter the ghetto, or through the use of legally obtained passes. In addition, places where the ghetto boundary was formed by internal walls in adjacent

---

[13] Interview of Genia Olczak; "Karolina Sapetowa," Maria Hochberg-Marianska and Noe Gruss, eds., in *The Children Accuse*, (London and Portland: Vallentine Mitchell, 1996), 277-79. Also see videotaped testimony of Elizabeth Grotch, File no. 26284, Tape 2, The USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive. Elizabeth Grotch's nanny tried to come into the Warsaw ghetto three times but could not get in. Grotch's mother sent postcards asking the nanny to come. The nanny finally entered the ghetto as a laundry woman. She stayed a few days and slept there. Grotch's aunt "begged her to take daughter too and she said she couldn't take one sister's child and not the other's" (Tape 2, 8:24). Grotch's mother also asked the nanny to take her out of the ghetto but said she could not hide a grown up. The nanny smuggled Grotch out of the ghetto in a bundle and her cousin Lillian Trilling was sent out in a cart.

[14] Gunnar S. Paulsson, *Secret City: The Hidden Jews of Warsaw 1940-1945* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press), 2002. There are some problematic issues with this book, in particular the author's calculation of number of Jews in hiding and also his argument that more Jews could have possibly survived had they reached out to Poles for assistance is inflammatory but this is the most comprehensive study of rescue and hiding in Nazi-occupied Poland to date and is valuable for many reasons.

[15] This period can be defined as the closing of the ghetto from the October 12, 1940 decree ordering ghettoization through the November 15, 1940 deadline for resettlement. See Paulsson, *The Secret City*, 55-56.

[16] Ibid., 57-58.

buildings such as the courthouse or municipal offices on Długa street, or in various *mety*, (hideouts) allowed goods, people and information to pass in and out of the ghetto.[17] In these spaces holes could be knocked out through the walls and items or messages passed through or people could jump rooftop to rooftop to enter and exit the ghetto. The Gęsia street market, which remained open until the first deportations in July 1942, was a space where Jews and gentiles traded openly. Gentiles were allowed to enter this market to purchase used clothing and goods sold by the Jewish ghetto residents.

Goods, messages, and people also passed "over, under and through the wall" of the ghetto.[18] Abraham Lewin's May 18, 1942 *Warsaw Ghetto Diary* entry notes that smuggling continued on all day through a gap in the wall that divided the Warsaw ghetto and Przejazd Street. He wrote, "Flour, potatoes, milk, butter, meat and other produce are brought into the ghetto. And out of the ghetto pours a continual stream of Jewish possessions to the Aryan side."[19] He continued writing, "Lately a certain distinct type of smuggler has come to my attention. These are Christian women, young and older." The women appeared at dusk loaded down with household goods, kitchen items in particular, they acquired from Jewish families in the ghetto that they took out through this hole in the wall.[20] Lewin noted that this was a new development and that the Christian women had become "specialists in this area: they are buying out the Jewish kitchen."[21] Jews, of course, were selling off their possessions in order to survive.

---

[17] Ibid., 62-63.
[18] Ibid., 63.
[19] Abraham Lewin, *A Cup of Tears: A Warsaw Ghetto Diary* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989), 78.
[20] Ibid.
[21] Ibid.

They started with clothing, "furniture, then linen, covers, next pillows, and now it is the turn of the pot and wash-tub." In the end, he projected; this trend would soon leave the poor with nothing to "cook a meal with" or "wash his last remaining shirt."[22] While this was certainly exploitation of the ghetto population, the black market allowed Jews to obtain food and supplies from the outside and maintain contacts with the outside world.

Christian women entered through holes in the ghetto walls, leaving at nightfall. Throughout the day Jewish children did the opposite, creeping out through holes in the walls to trade on the Aryan side. Children were notoriously adept at using gaps in the ghetto walls, cramming their small figures to the Aryan side, often unnoticed by the Gestapo. At the ghetto gates policemen could be compelled through bribery or far less often, out of the kindness of their hearts, to let people and goods in and out through the gate.[23] Finally, work parties, sewers and tunnels were used to carry on smuggling of goods and people in and out of the ghetto. While all of these avenues provided contact with the outside world and allowed for vital goods to reach the ghetto, they were all fraught with danger. The ability to enter and exit the ghettos through all of these means would imperative for former domestic servants to both bring food and goods in to their former employers and later when they brought children out of the ghetto to shelter them.

Smuggling was vital to the inhabitants of most of the ghettos. Milla Tenenbaum's former servant, Cecelia Krzeminska would enter the Będzin ghetto wearing a heavy shawl to conceal her smuggling activities. Rather than bringing goods into the ghetto to sell, she smuggled in

[22] Ibid.

[23] Paulsson, *Secret City: The Hidden Jews of Warsaw 1940-1945*, 63.

bread, candies, flour, potatoes, anything she could get her hands on.[24] The Nazis tried to thwart smugglers through a number of means. In the Warsaw ghetto they changed ghetto boundaries, eliminated certain types of passes and reduced the number of gates. Nazi occupiers also increased the number of raids on known smuggling points, eliminated most phone lines, and then forced all non-Jews to move out from the ghetto unless they were running German businesses.[25] On October 15, 1941 Hans Frank issued the decree stating that Jews leaving their designated districts without authorization would be subject to the death penalty, as would any non-Jew who gave such Jews a place to hide.[26] This decree also dictated that any instigators or accomplices would be punished in the same way as the perpetrator and that any attempted act would be punished as if it was accomplished.[27] This decree was followed by an order from Dr. Ludwig Fischer, Governor of the Warsaw District, stating that this applied to anyone who provided help to Jew who left the ghetto without authorization.[28] According to Fischer's order, this aid included activities such as, "making available a night's lodging, food, offering transportation of any kind."[29] This decree, according to Paulsson thus "extends the death penalty to various minor

[24] Videotaped testimony of Milla Tenenbaum, File no. 33627-4, Tape 2, September 16, 1997, The USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive, 5:59-6:35. Tenenbaum was living on ration cards and cleaning houses to support herself. When she cleaned houses she would be paid in part with food which she would divide up, eating some herself and brining the rest to the ghetto for Milla, "her little girl."

[25] Paulsson, *Secret City: The Hidden Jews of Warsaw 1940-1945*, 66-67.

[26] Ibid., 67.

[27] Ibid., 67.

[28] Ibid.

[29] Ibid. Paulsson is quoting from Fischer's decree reproduced in Wladysław Bartoszewski and Zofia Lewin, *Ten jest z ojczyzny mojej* (Krakow: Znak, 1969), 892.

acts," and had a two-fold effect on flight from the ghetto.[30] In addition to making flight even more dangerous, it also meant putting the aid provider directly in harm's way, which many Jews were not comfortable doing as long as they believed life in the ghetto was still possible.[31]

In comparison, less than two hundred miles to the south of Warsaw, the Kraków ghetto was much more separated from the Aryan parts of the city.[32] There were five entrances and a tram ran through but did not stop inside the Kraków ghetto. In the early period Jews were able to enter and exit the ghetto fairly freely, but within a matter of weeks after the March opening of the ghetto, its gates were closed and permits required for entrance and exit. [33] Roughly sixty percent of the population worked outside of the ghetto and these workers needed permits.[34] While these workers needed permits, the routine traffic they established into and out of the ghetto gates allowed a prime opportunity to pass goods and communication between the ghetto and the outside world. Household domestics played a key role in supplying goods to ghetto inhabitants. Max Hilfstein's former domestic servant, Bronia, provided him with food while he was in the Kraków ghetto and was able to gain access to him when he went back and forth to work at Plaszów.[35] Bronia would appear and start walking next to him, handing him some

---

[30] Ibid., 67.

[31] Ibid.

[32] The Kraków ghetto was formed on March 3, 1941 in the suburb or Podgórze. Jews were given two weeks to relocate, which was then later extended until the end of April.

[33] Martin Dean, ed., *The Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos, 1933-1945, Volume II, Ghettos in German-Occupied Eastern Europe, Part A* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2012), 528.

[34] Ibid., 529.

[35] Videotaped testimony of Max Hilfstein, File no 09989-3, Tape 2, December 12, 1995, The USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive.

kielbasa.[36] He explains, "You have to remember, this was life she gave me. She could be very easily killed."[37] This "commute" to the work camp and other assigned workplaces was an important moment of possible contact. This type of contact was important in the Warsaw ghetto as well. Renata Zajdman recalls that every day her former maid Janina Wojcicka took the tram that went through the Warsaw ghetto and jumped off to bring her charges food, money, and medicine.[38] Then she had to smuggle herself back out again.

In October and November 1941, 5,000 Jews from surrounding cities were forced to move into the Kraków ghetto in Podgorze, exacerbating the overcrowding.[39] By December that year it was decreed that packages could no longer be sent from or received in the ghetto and in January furs had to be surrendered or destroyed.[40] From 1941 through the first half of 1942 Jews were frequently arrested and rounded-up, often killed or deported to the Lublin district.[41] The first major deportation occurred in early June 1942, as ghetto inhabitants were sent to Bełżec. Jews were registered and those with trades were permitted to stay while those who were unemployed

---

[36] This kielbasa would have contained pork. I do not know if Hilfstein adhered to dietary laws before the war but if so he would have had to break with dietary custom to consume the kielbasa.
[37] Ibid., 27:11.
[38] As mentioned in the previous chapter, Renata Zajdman's helper and former maid, Janina Wojcicka, supported herself and aided Zajdman and her siblings through her smuggling activity. See Zadman's testimony in Irene Tomaszewski and Tecia Werbowski, *Code Name: Żegota: Rescuing Jews in Occupied Poland, 1942-1945, The Most Dangerous Conspiracy in Wartime Europe*, 111-13 or videotaped testimony of Renata Skotnicka- Zajdman, File no. 37068-4, Tape 2, The USC Shoah Foundation Institute.
[39] Martin Dean, ed., *The Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos, 1933-1945, Volume II, Ghettos in German-Occupied Eastern Europe, Part A*, 529.
[40] Ibid.
[41] Ibid.

or white-collar professionals were deported to Bełżec.[42] After the final June *aktion* the Gestapo ordered the Kraków ghettos reduced in size. The second major deportation *aktion* occurred in October 1942, when 600 Jews were killed during the round-up and 6,000 were deported. This left a remnant that was divided into two camps, the able-bodied, and the unable to work with the able-bodied sent to work in Plaszów and the rest murdered. These deportations were particularly dangerous for children and often acted as an impetus for the decision to send a child away.

Like the Warsaw ghetto, and in contrast to the situation in Łódź, the Kraków ghetto was rather permeable and allowed for smuggling and a strong black-market economy. The ability to use the black market to contain to obtain food and medical supplies was an important resource for inhabitants of the ghettos. Those ghettos with more permeable borders such as Kraków and Warsaw were able to both generate and receive clandestine reports and presses that helped inform residents of what was happening throughout the ghetto and outside. Both Kraków and Warsaw had organized resistance movements, which were able to varying degrees to help with the process of obtaining illegal papers and movement of people and supplies. No comprehensive comparison of the rate of escape from the ghettos is currently available and numbers are subject to much interpretation and speculation.

Jewish Survival Efforts Inside the Ghettos

While decisions to flee the ghetto were less likely during the early ghetto formation period they increased as survival came to feel impossible. Most ghetto residents initially just tried to hang on and survive within the confines of the ghettos. Many Jewish prewar members of the middle and upper-classes resisted leaving until they were running out of resources and goods to sell. As long as it seemed possible to survive in the ghetto, there was less motivation to leave

[42] Ibid.

it for the unknown. Organizations, both official and unofficial attempted to aid in Jewish survival efforts inside the ghetto and in efforts to maintain some level of normalcy, if that was possible.

Indeed, in the Warsaw ghetto, social welfare "fulfilled many functions, sometimes going far beyond the classic forms of this type of activity."[43] While the *Judenrat* pushed for control of social welfare in the ghetto, grass roots groups and housing based committees continued to operate and maintain autonomy. These charitable organizations were supported by money and food from the Joint Distribution Committee through 1941, by institutions with concessions from the occupiers, and by the independent community self-help movement.[44] These community self-help organizations were powered by volunteers and required the activity of thousands in their attempts to offset some of the suffering of the ghettos. In addition to organizations, both official and grass-roots, that strove to alleviate some of the suffering of the ghetto residents; education in clandestine schools and other institutions was continued also.

---

[43] Barbara Engelking and Jacek Leociak, ed., *The Warsaw Ghetto: A Guide to the Perished City* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2009), 294-96. In addition to standard welfare services, Jewish community self-help groups also provided cultural and educational activities, including clandestine teaching. In the Warsaw ghetto alone there were 1,108 house committees in the sealed district where thousands of volunteers provided aid to their fellow internees. Economic, entertainment, welfare allowances, child care, and clothing commissions were under the umbrella of these committees. These committees operated women's circles, youth circles, refugee and deportee centers, orphanages and soup kitchens. While the *Judenrat* pushed for control of social welfare on the ghetto, grass roots groups and housing based committees continued to operate and maintain autonomy.

[44] Ibid., 301. Because the bank accounts of prewar welfare agencies were frozen at the outset of the Nazi occupation, the Joint became the most important financial base for these programs. The Joint was operating legally until the end of December 1941. The Joint was able to operate legally until the United States officially entered the war in December 1941 and after this they continued efforts clandestinely via channels within the community self-help organization not affiliated with the Warsaw *Judenrat*.

In the Łódź ghetto, the *Judenrat* was given control of the Jewish elementary schools and given the power to collect taxes on the Jewish population to fund them.[45] The ghetto had thirty-five elementary schools, two religious schools, a secondary school and a vocational school as of May, 1940.[46] Additional food was offered for children attending school initially but the constantly changing ghetto conditions made it difficult to run the schools. Initially schools used the Polish model of curriculum, but by the 1940-1941 school year Rumkowski initiated a switch and "a rich program of Jewish studies (Yiddish, Hebrew, Bible, Jewish history) was introduced, with Yiddish as the language of instruction."[47]

Within the ghettos, Jews were still attempting to care for children and preserve (or sometimes even create a new) Jewish identity. Isabelle Choco grew up in Łódź and she was about ten years old when the war broke out. Her family was acculturated and economically comfortable. Polish was the primary language spoken in their home. During her confinement in the ghetto she felt alienated from other Jewish ghetto residents because she did not speak any Yiddish.[48] When she was sent to school she learned Hebrew, which she said "strengthened her defenses against the contempt."[49] The ghettos forced Jews from all stratum of Polish society as well as foreign Jews into a concentrated and alien social space. This was an entirely new

---

[45] Isaiah Trunk, *Lodz Ghetto: A History* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2006), 54.
[46] Ibid.
[47] Ibid., 55. Since many of the teachers were formerly employed in the Polish state schools they were not prepared to teach in Yiddish and for that first year had to continue to teach in Polish as they themselves learned Yiddish.
[48] Isabelle Choco, "My First Life" in *Stolen Youth: Five Women's Survival in the Holocaust*, 1-72, David Silberklang and Danielle Zaidman-Maurer, eds. (New York and Jerusalem: Yad Vashem and the Holocaust Survivors Memoirs Project, 2005), 31.
[49] Ibid.

configuration of Jewish life that was faced with upheaval, deadly conditions, and total uncertainty about the future. In the case of Choco, attendance at a clandestine school aided her in continuing her education but also helped her feel in some way a part of this new hyper-Jewish community and gave her a sense of purpose and future. The continuation of education in the ghettos even under increasingly deadly conditions testifies to the commitment of the Jewish community to not only survive, but to maintain their culture and ensure their future through continuing to educate children.

In addition to clandestine schools, soup kitchens, orphanages, hospitals and myriad other resources were operated in ghettos across Nazi-occupied Poland. Aside from community efforts to educate children and help the poorest of the poor, the starving, elderly, and the children, there were also efforts to maintain Jewish cultural pursuits. This is evident in the curriculum change of the Łódź ghetto but also in the cultural productions held in the Warsaw ghetto. Jews fought to carve out life in the hostile ghettos and to defy the occupiers by continuing to provide for as many people as they could. The maintenance of Jewish self-help not only provided valuable services, they provided hope. To educate children is an activity that presumes a future for these children, even if it was unclear what that future would look like. But even with these efforts to maintain life, Jewish culture, and efforts to prepare young Jews for the future, it became increasingly evident that these efforts were not enough to offset the deadly conditions, violence, death, and subsequently, deportations that were or also became a part of daily life in the ghettos.

Fighting for Survival

While social welfare programs, cultural activities, and clandestine education were some way that Jews resisted the deadly conditions placed upon them by the Nazi occupiers, they were by no means the only forms. Active, more militant resistance within the ghettos and the act of

leaving the ghettos and taking a chance on the so-called Aryan side were more radical measures taken to thwart German aims. Some Jews responded to this growing awareness of the diminishing chances for survival by joining resistance groups. This was a particularly attractive choice for youths and people whose families had perished leaving them with few social ties and little to lose. Others determined that based on their own personal situation and the ghetto conditions they, or their loved ones, would be better off to try to survive outside of the ghetto.

Resistance movements, including armed resistance, varied according to ghetto based on the conditions specific to each. Underground groups organized in the Kraków ghettos as early as 1941, made primarily of Jewish youth movement and political group members.[50] At the end of May 1942 a mass deportation took place in the ghettos sending some 5,000 Jews to Bełżec which lasted over a week.[51] After this mass deportation, the majority of the underground groups came together and attempted to obtain arms from the Polish underground organizations that were functioning on the Aryan side.[52]

The Warsaw ghetto had a well-documented, militant resistance movement that arose as a response to Nazi persecution. Many Jews fled Poland for the Soviet Union at the outbreak of the war and by the spring of 1940 a group of youth leaders decided to send representatives back to Warsaw to assess the situation and to continue clandestinely with some of their prewar

---

[50] Guy Miron and Shlomit Shulhani, *The Yad Vashem Encyclopedia of the Ghettos During the Holocaust, Vol I A-M* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2009), 127.

[51] Ibid., 126.

[52] Ibid., 127-28. Members of both the Jewish and Polish underground engaged in acts of sabotage until the mass killing operation of October 1942 and arrest of many Jewish underground members by the Jewish police. At this point, the Jewish underground left the ghettos and engaged in activities on the Aryan side, including attacks on German soldiers and police on December 22, 1942. Hashomir Hatzair did not join and continued to operate on its own. Most members of the Jewish underground were eventually captured after the attack but the remaining members continued to carry out partisan activity.

activities.[53] They began to "reconstruct and strengthen the organizational structures and to set up a network of contacts between the ghettos throughout occupied Poland," effectively making Warsaw the center for these organizations, Dror and Haszomer Hacair, for all of occupied-Poland.[54] These youth organizations offered a sense of community to young people in the ghetto who tended to become more radical than the older generation of activists living within the confines of the ghetto and charged with the responsibilities of adults.

In the spring of 1942, information about Operation Reinhard started to trickle into Warsaw. Engelking asserts that, "scattered information about mass murders did not yet add up to awareness of the approaching Holocaust. It was not easy to believe the news and still more difficult to understand what it meant."[55] As news of liquidation of Jewish communities continued to reach the Warsaw ghetto some began to consider new forms of resistance, going beyond clandestine organizations and self-help. Over the night of April 17-18, 1942 Germans picked up some fifty individuals and murdered them outright, increasing the level of fear and foreboding within the ghetto. Sporadic acts of terror targeting small groups and individuals occurred regularly. The three month period between this night and the beginning of mass deportation saw a dramatic increase in activity in the underground presses, leaders of underground activity stopped holding regular meetings and changed residences, and these organizations ceased their semi-legal cultural activities as they changed focus.[56]

---

[53] Barbara Engelking and Jacek Leociak, *The Warsaw Ghetto: A Guide to the Perished City*, 674.
[54] Ibid.
[55] Ibid., 680.
[56] Ibid., 685.

The mass deportation of the Warsaw ghetto's inhabitants to Treblinka began on July 22, 1942 and lasted approximately two months. Over this summer Latvian and Ukrainian auxiliary forces, along with the Jewish Police aided the Germans in sectioning off the ghetto and area by area subjecting the residents to selections.[57] During the early deportation period employment exempted residents from deportation. Early on in the summer people struggled to find placement in one of the "shops" because employment there was the only legal means to avoid deportation. Even placement in a shop was no guarantee against deportation later. Within weeks, the workshops inside the ghetto were targeted for round ups.[58] By early September the population of the Warsaw ghetto was a mere ten percent of its original size and the area was reduced to only a few blocks.[59]At this point it became painfully obvious for many that they needed to get out of the ghetto. A job in a shop was not an option for elderly and children who had managed to survive this long and families who had the means to go into hiding on the so-called Aryan side or to send a child who had no hope of being saved by employment in the shops often became motivated to send their children out at this time.

This was the impetus for the Rozencwajg family, who has been mentioned in previous chapters. Several members of the family were interned in the Warsaw ghetto and had been in contact with the former nanny, Genia Olczak, who continued to smuggle goods in to them whenever she could. Olczak was employed by Roma and Aleksander Rozencwajg before the war to care for their young boy, Gabryś and she loved him as her own child. Olczak helped several members of the family, including Gabryś's older cousin Bianka. Bianka recalls, "One day in late

[57] Michał Grynberg, *Who Will Write Our History: Eyewitness Accounts from the Warsaw Ghetto* (New York: Picador, 1988), 101.
[58] Grynberg, *Words to Outlive Us*, 101.
[59] Ibid.

July or August 1942 the Germans took us all away from the shop".[60] My mother put my hair up so I would look older, rouged my cheeks to look healthy, but Roma and Gabryś had to stay behind, because he was a young child."[61] The only option was to hide Gabryś so they used some bricks from the "shop" wall and made a niche and put them (Roma and Gabryś, as he was too small to stay alone) there with some food and water, and bricked them in. Bianka continues, "We did not know if we would come back!"[62] She says they were taken to another street, kept there overnight with other shop workers, and then after they separated the older people and children to send them to their death, they marched Bianka, her mother, and other workers back to the shop. When they returned they removed the bricks to free Roma and Gabryś and discovered one little child had been left behind in a stroller and she had a gunshot through her head. Bianka states, "So then Genia took Gabryś away to the Aryan side."[63] The details of Gabryś escape from the ghetto with his caretaker Genia will be addressed later in this chapter, but it is very clear from this testimony that this family believed the best chance for survival, at least for a child, was not in the ghetto. Many families who had resisted sending their children away or they stayed in the ghetto started reconsider if they had the resources available to try to live clandestinely on the outside.

A series of deportations in the Łódź ghetto also led many of the residents to believe life in the ghetto was not sustainable. The first deportation phase would last from January 16 to May

---

[60] According to the testimony of Genia Olczak, the Germans had a "shop," Schultz's "shop" at Ogrodowa Street #50 [This was the Aryan entrance] where they were repairing German uniforms coming from the front.

[61] Testimony of Genowefa Olczak, October 4, 2005, conducted and transcribed, with commentary by Bianka Kraszewski.

[62] Ibid.

[63] Interview of Genowefa Olczak.

15, 1942. On January 5, 1942 the Outsettlement Commission began operation and set about the task of designating 10,000 persons for deportation. According to Trunk those selected were, "with few exceptions, the very poorest and socially weakest part of the ghetto population."[64] Transports of 1,000 people were supposed to be dispatched from the ghetto daily.[65] When residents received their summons, "turmoil broke out in the ghetto."[66] It was decreed that Jews caught hiding those designated for deportation would be punished with deportation themselves to prevent those who were selected from finding refuge. Trunk notes that, "the desperation that caught up the ghettos inhabitants was beyond measure," as the delivery of supplies were minimal leaving frequent periods of extreme hunger coupled with "intense frosts" that made conditions even worse.[67] On January 29, 1942 the situation settled down for a short time as this wave of deportations seemed to come to an end, but on February 22, 1942 they would resume.[68] This wave would continue until the first day of Passover, April 2, 1942, claiming 34,073 Jews.[69] After this round, Jews from Western Europe were specifically targeted for deportation in May. Each round of deportations made it increasingly clear that life inside the ghetto was impossible.

Around the same time of the deportation in the Kraków ghetto that led the Rozencwajg family to seek shelter outside of the ghetto, the Łódź ghetto residents were struck with a catastrophe that was utterly unbearable. A month after the May deportation, rumors started to circulate that children up to ten years of age were to be deported.[70] These rumors were reported

[64] Isaiah Trunk, *Lodz Ghetto: A History*, 230.
[65] Ibid.
[66] Ibid.
[67] Ibid., 231.
[68] Ibid., 232.
[69] Ibid.
[70] Ibid., 238.

on in the June 23 and 24, 1942 issues of the *Chronicle.*[71] This publication assured the public that these rumors were "unfounded" and reported that high ranking ghetto officials denied them "categorically."[72] However, in September 1942 children would in fact be targeted, along with the elderly and others. It began on September 1, 1942 when Germans seized the patients from the ghetto hospitals causing a great deal of panic among the inhabitants of the ghetto. The following day the order was issued by ghetto authorities to the *Judenrat* that they were to prepare 20,000 residents of the ghetto, the elderly, sick, and the children, for deportation. On September 4, 1942, head of the *Judenrat*, Mordechai Chaim Rumkowski made his now infamous speech asking Jews to give up their children to save the rest of the ghetto. Rumkowski stood before the crowd and said, "They are asking us to give the best we possess—the children and old people."[73] Framing this action as a way to save the majority, he continued, telling residents that he, "had the premonition that something was descending upon us," and that he had "stood constantly on alert like a guard in order to avoid that 'something."[74] The next day a general curfew was ordered that kept Jews confined to their houses for a period of eight days during which the Germans assisted by the Jewish Police and axillaries went door to door in search of the elderly, sick, and children under the age of ten. People tried to hide themselves and their loved ones. Over five hundred Jews were shot during the course of these searches that captured some 15,000 people, including 6,000 children.[75] This was a heavy blow to the psyche of the residents of the ghetto and radically changed the social make-up of ghetto society.

[71] Ibid.
[72] Ibid.
[73] Ibid., 272.
[74] Ibid.
[75] Ibid.

After the Deportations

Those who did to stay in the Warsaw ghetto because they avoided deportation and either lacked the means to leave or chose not to, occupied a very different space than the pre-deportation period ghetto. As of October 1942 the ghetto became "more like a labor camp than a housing district."[76] Many flats were left empty, a vast difference from the severe overcrowding that had been the norm. "After the action, a sense of guilt and loneliness developed in the ghetto. The inhabitants felt abandoned, despairing and desperate. It was not obvious that the deportation meant death and that the break in the deportations was only temporary," according to Engelking.[77] Under these conditions, many felt they had nothing left to lose and armed resistance and escape, which would have been much less appealing when there seemed to be more alternatives, now likely seemed much more appealing. Self-help, armed resistance, and escape from the ghettos to hide on the Aryan side varied according to the contexts of each ghetto. The above discussion focused first on Kraków and then on Warsaw, and while these activities occurred within the specific context of each ghetto, we can draw some conclusions about these activities in general. When these activities occurred, regardless of the scale or the timing, they are evidence that the Jewish communities within the confines of the ghettos were attempting to maintain some degree of agency and control over their lives in spite of the extreme persecution and brutality they faced.

Just as the scope of self-help and resistance movements varied by ghetto so did the awareness of some individual ghetto residents that perhaps leaving the ghetto presented the only or best possibility for survival. Escape is arguably an alternative form of physical resistance or

---

[76] Barbara Engelking and Jacek Leociak, *The Warsaw Ghetto: A Guide to the Perished City*,, 749.
[77] Ibid., 751.

evasion. For many the decision to take a chance at escape and hiding was the result of a loss of ties to the ghetto. Sometimes this came in the form of the death or deportation of one's parents, a spouse, or children. Milla Tenenbaum's mother was deported right away when her family was imprisoned in the Będzin ghetto.[78] She continued living in the ghetto with her father, paternal grandparents and her sister Sala and brother Edek. The family maid, Cecelia Krzeminska, did not want to be separated from Milla, asking to move into the ghetto with the family. Tenenbaum's father refused the offer because she was more help to the family if she remained outside. She also repeatedly asked to take Tenenbaum out of the ghetto, and again was refused by Tenenbaum's father. The child's older siblings also wanted her to leave with the former caretaker as well.[79] Tenenbaum's father became very angry at the suggestion replying that, "if it's the ghetto or the concentration camp, we all go together."[80] Tenenbaum's father knew it was especially dangerous for those considered unable to work and knew his daughter and elderly parents fell into this category and he was gravely worried for them. To protect the three of them he built a small basement with a secret closet for them to hide in while he and the older children were away at work. He did not want to separate the family and "did not believe it would come to that."[81] Tenenbaum's father was taken from work and deported so the elder siblings decided to send the young girl to Krzeminska. Tenenbaum remembers her grandfather crying, saying "this is against my son's wishes," while her grandmother was obviously unhappy but said nothing.[82]

---

[78] Videotaped testimony of Milla Tenenbaum, File no. 33627-4, Tape 2, September 16, 1997, The USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive.

[79] Tenenbaum was born in 1932, so he was too young to be considered useful for work.

[80] Ibid., 8:51.

[81] Ibid., 10:55.

[82] Ibid., 15:12.

The elder siblings saw the deteriorating conditions of the ghetto and made the decision that they had to take this risk in order to save their little sister, even if it meant going against their father's wishes. As people came to feel they had less and less to leave behind in the ghetto, the idea of escaping seemed more and more appealing. Some who had experienced great loss and felt they had nothing to lose anymore chose to join resistance movements while other chose to resist murder by escape.

Life Outside the Ghetto?

Conditions for hiding outside the ghettos were not favorable for Jews. The costs of living (rent, food) were exorbitant due to inflation and the additional costs of paying off blackmailers and extra high rents due to the risk the person providing the housing was taking, and the ever present threat of denunciation by the non-Jewish population. One or more gentile contacts were generally needed to aid in escape, placement, and other activities on the ground. Ghetto conditions were absolutely deplorable and deadly, but some impetus was necessary to compel a resident of the ghetto to attempt escape from one hostile environment and take a chance on life in hiding in an environment that was hostile for other reasons.

The options for life outside the ghetto depended on a great many factors. If one had "good looks" meaning he or she could pass for an ethnic Pole, could speak Polish without an accent, and was socialized in some Polish Catholic customs life in hiding passing as a Pole was a possibility. For Jews who did not "look Polish," and did not have impeccable Polish, passing was too great a risk and the person needed a clandestine hiding place, or *melina,* that also required total reliance on a gentile because they could not move freely at all. They would need to rely on someone for absolutely everything. This would involve being hidden inside someone's home or out in a barn, a cellar, or an outdoor bunker. A forest bunker was another option for someone

who could not pass as a Pole and did not have a gentile to rely on, but this still required some gentile assistance or a remote location that would allow one to sneak into a village or farms under the cover of darkness to steal food and supplies which came with incredible risks. In addition to blackmailers, informants, and various authorities, these Jews were often hated by the local population because of the theft. While some rural dwellers would give food and supplies to these Jews hiding out in bunkers, many saw them as thieves.

Sometimes Jews would flee the ghetto when an opportunity arose but they had no plan in place so needed to improvise. Often this meant finding a gentile contact from prewar life that they thought may be willing or able to aid them. For adults the natural choice would be a prewar colleague, friend, former schoolmate, or anyone who they had some sort of positive social connection with that may warrant that gentile feeling compelled to taking a risk to help. For children who were cared for by a domestic servant that they developed feelings for, this was a natural choice. In many instances these domestic household employees in many ways acted as surrogate mothers for these children before the war, showing them love and affection, and treating them as their own children or as a sibling. In cases where this bond existed, it made sense for children to seek these women out when they were in danger and needed aid and comfort. In times of extreme duress, it is a natural reaction to seek safety with someone who is familiar.

On the Fly

Most families did not stay in touch with their former domestic servants during their internment in the ghetto. When the situation became such that Jews decided flight was the best chance for survival but did not have a regular contact to make arrangements with or found themselves with an unexpected opportunity to escape the ghetto, decisions had to be made on the

fly. Once on the so-called Aryan side of the wall, an escapee would need to find shelter immediately. Often this meant contacting gentile acquaintances and asking for assistance, which was met with varying responses.

Having a Jew show up at one's door, even someone who one cared about could be rather alarming for a gentile living under Nazi occupation as it put them in immediate danger. Sabrina Hersch was fifteen when she escaped the ghetto near Kopyczynce with her family and headed towards Husiatyn where they had lived before the war. Hirsch had a nanny growing up and she decided to go to her for help. She remembers that before the war, "I loved her. She loved me. She used to play with me, she took me places…..so I thought I am going to go to her and she's going to take me in."[83] Hirsch found her and said after she knocked on the door and this woman answered she immediately exclaimed, "You dirty Jewess! What are you doing here? Get the hell out of here! If you're not going to leave I am going to go immediately to the Gestapo and they are going to shoot you. Get out!" as she kicked Hirsch.[84] Hirsch remembers a loving prewar relationship with her nanny so we cannot ever know what actually caused the caregiver's hurtful reaction. She may have been fearful or perhaps Hirsch overestimated their prewar bonds, but in any event this relationship did not compel this woman to aid her former charge.

Sometimes seeking out a former domestic had a better result. Adam Landesberg left the ghetto at Żółkiew when he was twelve to hide out in a bunker with his father. After being separated from his father, Adam sought out the family's former maid, in Lwów, a Polish woman, whom he said loved him like a little brother. She took him in and hid him. The woman's own brother-in-law began to blackmail her but she continued to hide him for another two months.

---

[83] Videotaped testimony of Sabrina Hirsch, File no 27272-4, Tape 3, March 19, 1997, The USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive, 19:24.
[84] Ibid.

Finally, when she could no longer keep him, young Landesburg then turned to the Polish maid who had been employed by his uncle before the Nazi Occupation, who was already hiding his cousin. Adam was then sheltered by this Polish woman.[85] In his time of need, Landesberg needed an adult to protect him and in lieu of his parents, he went to this former caretaker.

Irene Faitlowicz was older than Hirsch or Landesberg, a young woman at the outbreak of the war; she was born in Warsaw in 1915. Without advance discussion, Faitlowicz's mother pushed her to walk out of the ghetto with some workers and she said she was not sure where to go once she got out. Her first instinct was to go to the woman who came and stayed with the family to do their laundry. When she came she stayed for three days at a time because it was an extensive process of soaking, boiling, and then hanging it up on the fifth floor of their apartment building. She went to this woman, who took her in and hid her in her small apartment. After a few days passed, Faitlowicz's aunt and uncle showed up and soon this old washerwoman had three Jews to hide in her small flat. After a short time a blackmailers appeared so this hiding place was "burned" so she took to the streets until she found a new place.

Sometimes contacting a former domestic employee was successful, and sometimes not. In cases where the family had remained in contact with the former employee during their imprisonment in the ghetto these household servants were often much more involved in the decision and planning of a ghetto escape and for hiding on the outside. The act of showing up on the doorstep of a former domestic was incredibly risky but for many seeking to escape, any possible resource had to be explored.

[85] Testimony of Adam Landesberg, RG 301/ 199, Archives of the Jewish Historical Institute (ZIH), May 19, 1945.

The Most Difficult Decision

Whole families were in an especially difficult position because finding a hiding place for a single person was hard enough, but for an entire group was even more problematic. As in the case of Rozencwajg family, it was not until the danger could no longer be mitigated that the family decided to try to send members into hiding on the Aryan side. The incident in the shop was the tipping point that convinced Roma Rozencwajg to send her young son out of the ghetto. Genia Olczak had been helping the family during their imprisonment already and been in close contact with them so it was only natural that Gabryś should be taken by her. Olczak recalls, as his mother said goodbye to her son she turned to Olczak and said, "Genia, I give you my greatest treasure."[86] To this Olczak replied, "You know that I love him like my own."[87] Little Gabryś was used to walking with Olczak even before she took him from the Warsaw ghetto, because his mother Roma was forced to wear an armband indicating she was a Jew and therefore did not want to take the child out with her because she felt it was unsafe. Olczak states, "it was frightening, because the gendarmes were watching the Jews who were going to work outside, but sometimes you could slip out," so she took a chance and the child walked out with her.[88]

Genia Olczak did not stop with just hiding this child. Roma Rozencwajg did not have any money, but her brother Karol and his wife Estka were living in Lwów and Olczak made a few trips there to get jewelry from them to sell to support Roma and the rest of the family in the ghetto.[89] Olczak found employment through a Rozencwajg family connection. Frank Puncuh, a Yugoslavian consul was married to Roma's cousin and he found her a job at a pen factory and

[86] Testimony of Genowefa Olczak, 6.
[87] Ibid.
[88] Ibid.
[89] Karol and Estka Zakrzewski would then leave Lwów and join the family.

office supply at 21 Plocka Street and this employment also enabled her to have a formerly Jewish owned apartment on 3 Ciepla Street where she would keep Gabryś, who passed as her illegitimate son. She would also hide Roma and Estka there. Inside the apartment Olczak says there was a niche behind an armoire. She remembers that there was a door behind the armoire and Roma and Estka would go through that door and lock it from their side. Olczak speculates that before the war, there must have been an entrance to another apartment and only the niche remained after they made two apartments out of one. Olczak says of this hiding spot, "they could look for them all day and they would not have found them."[90] Little Gabryś was there at the apartment seemingly alone all day while Olczak was at work and the two women were hiding. He did not hide when they were hiding. Olczak also coordinated efforts for hiding and assisting other members of the family that will be elaborated upon in the next chapter.

The decision to send Gabryś out of the ghetto with Olczak and for Roma and Estka to hide with her were a result of the prewar relations these individuals had with one another. Olczak grew up on the farm owned by Roma's father and knew Estka because she was a member of Roma's family. She cared for Gabryś the majority of his young life and loved him as if he was her own child, just as she loved Roma just like a sister.[91] Olczak became a part of this family before the war and so when they needed gentile assistance she was the obvious choice.

When Janina Brandwajn decided it was necessary for her and her family to flee the Warsaw ghetto she chose to seek aid from Leokadia Krzeminska because she had known her for

[90] Testimony of Genowefa Olczak, 7.
[91] Ibid., 4.

years. Krzeminska worked as a nanny for her relatives, including her cousin Krysia.[92] Of Brandwajn's few Christian acquaintances this woman seemed the most suitable because she had known her since she was a child and was connected with her family. Krzeminska secured shelter for Brandwajn and other family members and helped smuggle Krysia, who had been her prewar charge along with Brandwajn's younger sister Ola. Smuggling these girls out was especially dangerous because they both had features associated with being Jewish. Krzeminska aided members of this family throughout the occupation, even while facing threats from a blackmailer and took no money in return for her efforts. This woman had prewar connections with many members of Brandwajn's family before the war that were strong enough to motivate her to take great risks to aid them and to make her seem like the natural choice for Brandwajn to approach during her time of need.[93]

After outbreak of the war Elizabeth Grotch's father was deported, leaving her with her mother and the nanny – Janina Zillow. The family fled Białystok for Lwów and stayed a year and a half, before they finally traveled to Warsaw. Grotch's mother and the nanny supported themselves by knitting in Lwów and then they parted when Grotch and her mother entered the Warsaw ghetto.[94] Zilow has been with the family since Elizabeth came home from the hospital. Grotch recalls, "She was literally the mother I knew. My mother was, well before the war she never took care of the children. I was just taken to say hello and goodnight.….My mother was

---

[92] Testimony of Janina Brandwajn, Jewish Historical Institute, ZIH RG 301/ 5150, September 11, 1947, and testimony of Janina Branwajn, Yad Vashem, YVA RG 0.3/ 2359, December 1963. This case is discussed in Joanna Michlic, *Jewish Children in Nazi-Occupied Poland* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2008), 30-31.

[93] Leokadia Krzeminska was declared Righteous Among the Nations in 1978.

[94] Videotaped testimony of Elizabeth Grotch, File no. 26284, Tape 1, DATE, The USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive.

like her oldest child."[95] Grotch's mother was having a very difficult time dealing with the loss of her husband and her new living conditions. Grotch was not used to spending so much time with her mother without the nanny's presence and the ghetto was a "very bad place to start bonding with one's mother."[96] In the ghetto Grotch says she was constantly waiting to see her nanny.

When conditions declined Grotch's mother decided they must try to escape. As mentioned above, some ghettos were more permeable than others and that had an important effect on the ability of Jews to escape. Elizabeth Grotch's mother sent postcards asking Zillow to come and she tried to enter the ghetto three times but could not get in. Zillow finally managed to enter the ghetto disguised as a laundry woman. Zillow stayed a few days. Grotch's aunt "begged her to take her daughter too and she said she couldn't take one sister's child and not the other's."[97] Grotch's mother asked Janina to take her as well but the nanny said she could not hide an adult. Grotch was smuggled out in a bundle and her cousin in a cart and Zillow kept the girls.

Zillow entered the ghetto intending only to take Grotch but could not refuse to take her young cousin. It was already a real hardship to hide two girls and she was simply not able to take an adult woman from the ghetto and protect her as well. Grotch noted earlier in her testimony that Zillow treated Grotch's mother like her own child so this must have been an extremely painful decision for her to make. Grotch's mother was already distressed at the loss of her husband and to send her only child away would have likely compounded her state of despair.

---

[95] Ibid., 9:14.
[96] Ibid., 17:19.
[97] Videotaped testimony of Elizabeth Grotch, File no. 26284, Tape 2, The USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive, 8:24.

Irene Frisch's family contacted their own former domestic servant to ask for her assistance. Frisch was eight when the Soviets invaded her prewar home of Drohobycz, near Lwów, and her family had been quite well off up until that time. The family had a housemaid, Frania, who came to work for them as a young girl when her mother hired her right off the street.[98] After the 1941 Nazi invasion, the family fled their home and headed to Borysław. They stayed with a Ukrainian woman for a time and then ended up in the ghetto. Frisch says that her parents escaped the deportation *aktions* but were especially worried about her safety because she was young and for her grandmother who was quite elderly. They could not get papers for Frisch and in desperation sent for Frania to ask her to take Irene from the ghetto. Frania had married in 1939 but her husband had been drafted to the army and never returned so she was very poor. Nevertheless, she came to the family on Christmas night because they thought that the soldiers would be drunk so it would be easier to get out of the ghetto with a child. Frisch recalls her mother saying to Frania, "If we don't make it through the war, take care of her," to which Frania replied, "Don't worry, I will convert her, she will be like my own child," then bundled her up and walked her out of the ghetto and to her home.[99] Frania found employment at the same brick factory that Frisch's father was employed and she was gone all day long, leaving Frisch to hide silently in the apartment at the edge of Drohobycz. Frania smuggled letters back and forth between the family and their daughter and sometimes Frania would go get Frisch's mother from

---

[98] Videotaped testimony of Irene Frisch, File no. 21824-3, Tape 2, October 28, 1996, The USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive, 28:10. Frisch's mother was pushing her brother in his carriage to the park when a, "young country girl" stopped her commented on how beautiful he was, and started making silly faces to entertain him. Frisch's mother liked the girl right away and asked her about herself to find that she had come from the country looking for work so she brought her home. Frisch says after Frania came home with her mother she became, "the most important person in our lives" (2:13).

[99] Ibid., 5:39.

the ghetto to come and see her child. Frisch's sister was still in the ghetto so her mother and father could not leave.

During the liquidation of the ghetto Frisch's mother, father, and sister escaped and made their way to Frania's apartment. Her home was not big enough to hide a family of four. In addition, Frisch's father had been a heavy smoker and his cough put them all at risk since the apartment had to be silent as if it was empty all day while Frania was at work. Frisch's father left voluntarily to avoid compromising their safety and found shelter elsewhere. Frania hid Irene for a total of two years and the mother and sister for approximately one year. To only send one child out of the ghetto must have been a difficult decision for this family. Frania was described by Frisch as a "staunch Catholic," who never missed mass.[100] Frisch described her family as being "traditional but not orthodox," before the war so they also were aware that their daughter would be raised as a Catholic if they did not survive, which was a real possibility. Frisch's parents desire to give her a chance at life outweighed any factors that might have caused them to keep her with them in the ghetto.

Jula Jurek also took her Jewish prewar charge out of the ghetto and sheltered her, but not without a preliminary false start. Until the outbreak of the war in 1939, Sheindel Charlotte Kohn's family owned a household goods store on Serbska Street in Lwów.[101] Kohn wrote, "Our

[100] Ibid., 4:24. While Frisch says her family was "traditional" she also notes that she probably "knew more about the Catholic religion than her own," since she went to mass with Frania regularly so she would not have to attend alone (4:24).

[101] Nava Ruda, "One Day This Will Be a Film: Childhood Memories of a Girl from the Lvov Ghetto," United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Accession Number 2004.615, 8. Kohn was four years old when the Germans invaded Poland and she describes her family as very religious, although not strictly observant. In her memoir the author recalls that when she was two, Jula Jurek came to work at their home as a nursemaid. Jurek was single, Polish, Catholic, illiterate, and a native of Brody. Jurek was nine years older than Kohn's parents and "was devoted" loving

Holocaust began on June 30, 1941," when the Germans took Lwów and they were then forced to move into the ghetto while Jurek remained in their home.[102] Jurek remained in contact with the family and visited them inside the Lwów ghetto. Prior to the 1941 Passover action, Kohn and her cousin Lusia, were told to go to the city center to avoid the danger and they fled to the family's former home that was occupied by Jurek.[103] Jurek was not home but her niece, Stasza was there and she let the girls in and kept them overnight. They returned to the ghetto when the situation settled down.

The family prepared a hiding place in their ghetto home down in the basement and Jurek aided by smuggling food to the family while they attempted to scratch out a living in the ghetto. During a February 1943 *aktion* this hiding place was discovered and the family was sent to a detention house overnight.[104] They were sent from the detention house to the knitwear shop at which her father worked at the next day. Kohn recalls that her parents were continuously looking for ways to get her out of the ghetto. In spite of the risk, it was decided that Kohn and her mother should try to escape by joining one of the groups that walk out of the ghetto to their work detail, and successfully made it through the gate.[105]

By the time of Kohn and her mother's escape, Jula Jurek was no longer living in the family's flat. She had moved in with her brother-in-law while her sister was living in a mental

---

Kohn and "practically raising" her like she was her mother (8). Jurek even learned Yiddish and how to keep kosher.

[102] Ibid., 10.

[103] Kohn and her family lived with her cousin's family in the ghetto.

[104] Ibid., 15.

[105] Ibid., 19.

hospital. Kohn writes, "Her brother-in-law, named Szczepanowski, was a terrifying man."[106] Jurek was working as a laundress so Kohn and her mother asked the janitor, a Polish woman, if they could wait for her and she let them wait in her apartment. When Jurek returned from work she was surprised to see them but took them in. When her brother-in-law returned home Kohn wrote, "He firmly objected to our presences and shouted, 'Why do you bring Jewish women into our house? Do you want to put all of us in danger?'"[107] He yelled for them to get out and Kohn and her mother went back to the ghetto. Kohn's father did not give up and remained in contact with Jurek who saw him at his place of work.

Her father planned another escape and this time he got Kohn out of the ghetto before Passover in 1943. Kohn met Jurek at the fence and since she was a small girl of eight years, she squeezed through the ghetto wall where a board was missing.[108] Three months later the ghetto was liquidated and Kohn's parents were sent to Janowska. This time, Jurek managed to keep Kohn for the duration of the war. Kohn's parents persisted in their efforts to get their daughter out of the ghetto and place her with Jurek and Jurek finally was able to accommodate their wishes.

The desire to take a child was obviously not the only factor in whether a former employee would take a child from the ghetto. This is evident in the case of Jula Jurek and Sheindel Charlotte. Without a proper hiding place, Jurek could not accommodate the child. In addition, it was a great financial burden to take on for women who had very little means. It put them in grave danger, and often meant the caregiver had to relocate or avoid the people in their lives that

---

[106] Ibid.

[107] Ibid.

[108] Ibid., 19-20. Again, this points to the importance of the permeability of the ghetto in escape and smuggling efforts.

might notice a change in her behavior or situation. Carmela Finkel, was born in Radziechów and grew up with a maid in the home. The maid stayed with the family until it was decreed by the Germans that Jewish families could no longer keep gentile household employees. The maid went back home to her family and when the situation declined in the ghetto; they contacted her and asked her to take their two daughters. Finkel remembers, "We dressed as farmer's daughters and we would go out in the field with the maid and just stay there watching the cattle graze."[109] After about two weeks, Finkel's father somehow heard there was gossip about these two girls that suddenly appeared with this maid's family.[110] He became afraid they would be denounced so he asked the maid to return the girls, which she did.[111] Her father took the girls to a new hiding place after this. Finkel speculates that this maid probably loved them as she would have her own sisters since she had raised them. She was willing to risk her own well-being as well as that of her own family to protect these girls but it was too dangerous for Finkel's father to trust that they all could be safe there.

An Offer of Aid

Sometimes efforts to hide a child were initiated by parents as illustrated above but in other instances the offer was made by a former employee who was aware of what was happening in the ghetto. It was not unusual that these women wanted to take a child or another member of the family they cared for out of the ghetto because they feared for them. Hanna Gotfryd, born in Brzeziny, lived with her parents at her maternal grandparents. Her maternal aunt and cousin Leonek also lived in the family home, along with his nanny Hela. Gotfryd was ten when the

---

[109] Videotaped testimony of Carmela Finkel, File no. 12543-4, Tape One, February 25, 1996, The USC Shoah Visual History Archives, 12:58.

[110] Videotaped testimony of Carmela Finkel, File no. 12543-4, Tape One.

[111] Ibid.

Nazis invaded Poland and her family was sent into the ghetto at Brzeziny. Leonek's nanny did not leave them until she was no longer allowed to stay in the ghetto with them.[112] Gotfryd recalled that the nanny loved little Leonek. Gotfryd was told after the war that the pregnant nanny came to Leonek's mother and grandparents in the ghetto and said she wished to take him out of the ghetto, but that she would have to move to another town where they would not be recognized.[113] She promised that if his mother survived she would return the child. Gotfryd explains, "Ida (Leonek's mother) could not make up her mind and she didn't give him away and then he was taken away with the other little kids."[114] This was a monumental decision and asked parents to place their precious children in someone else's care, trusting them to keep them alive. The nanny was willing to take this risk that would put her and her unborn child in grave danger but Leonek's mother just could not make a decision like this on the spot.

Chana Hemd was an adolescent at the outbreak of the war. Her family had a maid who came and did work and minded the children but she was not live-in. This woman, Mikotajowa, lost her husband early in the war as soon as the Germans made it to Częstochowa. Hemd remembers Mikotajowa was a "lonely woman."[115] She says, "She wanted even to save us from the little ghetto and my mother would never give up her children because she used to say they're not going to raise them like goyim."[116] Sending a child with a gentile caregiver might allow the

---

[112] Videotaped testimony of Hanna Gotfryd, File no. 24543-99, Tape Two, January 7, 1997, The USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive.

[113] Ibid.

[114] Ibid., 19:49. Gotfryd's cousin survived and in 1988 returned to Brzeziny and found his former nanny and took her to Israel to visit.

[115] Videotaped testimony of Chana Hemd, File no. 38978-1, Tape 1, March 4, 1998, The USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive, 21:16.

[116] Ibid., 21:40.

child to survive, but there were also concerns about what this would mean. The child would be raised as a Polish Catholic and lose their Jewish identity which was a grave concern for some religious families.

Deborah Herzog's mother also was unable to come to terms with sending her child away. The family had a much beloved maid, Jazdka, discussed in previous chapters, who was Herzog's wet-nurse initially and then stayed on as the maid when the child was too old to need a wet-nurse. This maid came to the family in the Bochnia ghetto and brought them what she could. When the family found they were going to be deported Herzog's mother contacted Jazdka and asked her to take her daughter. Herzog remembers, "she took me with her…it must have been very hard for her because first of all if she would have been caught with me both of us would have been shot."[117] Herzog also says that while Jazdka looked very Polish, she herself looked very Jewish which made traveling with the child exceptionally dangerous.

The former employee had a difficult time finding a safe refuge for herself and the child. Finally, Herzog took her to Kraków to stay with some friends. The maid left her charge with her friends there and went back to Bochnia to check on the family. The family was supposed to report to be deported but did not. They were then denounced for failing to report and the police took them along with Herzog's aunt and uncle. They escaped but at that point Herzog says, "Mother then decided what happened to them should happen to me because a child shouldn't be left without parents."[118] So Herzog returned to her parents and never left with her former

[117] Videotaped testimony of Deborah Herzog, File no. 42124-40, Tape 3, March 14, 1998, The USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive, 6:40.
[118] Ibid., 13:03.

caregiver again.[119] Some families decided that whatever their fate, they should remain together.[120]

The Foxman family, Helen, Joseph and Abraham, all survived the war. Joseph Foxman attributes the efforts of Abraham's nanny, Bronisława Kurpi, for their survival. Helen Foxman was born in Warsaw in 1910.[121] She was married and pregnant when the war broke out and her husband was away working in Baronowice. She joined him there and gave birth to their son, Abraham. Conditions were very poor in Baronowice so she and her family traveled to Vilna where she started to work at a book-binding factory and hired a Polish Catholic maid, Bronisława Kurpi, to care for the baby while she was working. Foxman says that while she was away the girl took care of everything, the cleaning, and caring for the baby. When it was ordered that Jews move into the ghetto the maid approached them and asked what they would do with the baby and Foxman replied that the baby would go with them. Kurpi proposed that the family allow her to take little Abraham instead. The couple then gave Kurpi all their possessions so she could sell them to support herself and the child and Mr. Foxman assured her he would continue to support them from the ghetto. This woman did not have a long-standing relationship with the

---

[119] Herzog and her parents survived and were reunited with Jazdka in Poland after the war. Herzog described seeing Jazdka again as "unbelievable" and they spent some days together. While in Poland Herzog's mother had a heart attack (1947) and died. At the funeral it was just Deborah, her father, and Jazdka, Herzog remembers Jazdka saying, "Now my lady's gone, I have nobody left," pointing to the depth of affection that she felt for her former employer. Deborah was fifteen years of age at this time. Her father would remarry a year later and they would leave for Australia. See Videotaped testimony of Deborah Herzog, File no. 42124-40, Tape 7, March 14, 1998, The USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive, 6:05.

[120] This is also evident in the above mentioned case of Milla Tenenbaum. She was only sent with her prewar caregiver after her father was deported and unable to dissent. He did not want the family to be separated.

[121] Second Generation of Long Island Collection Interview of Helen Foxman, One Tape, July 6, 1983, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, RG 50.205*0028.

family and would later come to have a very complicated relationship with the couple, particularly Helen Foxman.[122] However, she sheltered the baby and for his mother Helen Foxman for an extended period of time. This allowed them a measure of protection and allowed Joseph Foxman to focus on his own survival.[123]

Sometimes a family went to a former employee and asked them to take a member of the family or the entire family, and sometimes the maid initiated the action. This was a complicated decision for everyone involved and came with some dire consequences even when it was successful. A child may survive but could lose their Jewish identity or their parents, if they survived, could become like strangers to them. Being separated from one another caused an addition layer of distress under already unthinkable conditions. And these are the cases when a maid takes a child and does as promised.

Refusals, Misgivings, and Deceit

A prior relationship was certainly no guarantee that a former maid would be receptive to aiding her former employers during the war. This is evident above in the case of Sabrina Hersch's escape from the ghetto. She was met with harsh words and a kick when she showed up unannounced on the doorstep of her former caregiver. Some former caregivers made attempts to protect their former charges and gave up when it was too difficult. Jula Jurek tried multiple times to help the Kohn family before meeting with success but many aid givers were not so persistent. Jan Klapper-Karpinski's caregiver and the former maid for the Kryszak family both illustrate cases in which the former caregiver had good intentions and wanted to protect their former charges, but just were not in the position to do so.

---

[122] This case will be discussed in more detail in chapter six.

[123] This case is discussed further in the following chapter.

Klapper-Karpińksi was born in Kraków and was around nine years old at the outbreak of the war.[124] When the Germans came, the family, with the exception of his father who had to stay at his post, fled to Lwów and stayed there until the outbreak of the German-Soviet war. In July 1941 his mother and one of his older brothers disappeared during a round-up, leaving him and his oldest brother alone.[125] When the ghetto was formed they moved to Janowska Street, within its borders until Christmas 1941 when Klapper-Karpiński's brother decided to send him back to Kraków to his father. Once he returned to Kraków he was placed on the so-called Aryan side with his prewar nanny, Katarzyna Żołna, where he stayed until September 1942. Klapper-Karpiński's father was caught in an *aktion* in May 1942 and his older brother in an *aktion* in the Lwów ghetto. Żołna was supporting herself and the child with her pension and the situation became increasingly dangerous as the people renting them their room were afraid to have a Jew in their home. Żołna was no longer able to keep him with her and Klapper-Karpiński was sent back into the ghetto until its liquidation. During the chaos he was able to escape and ran to Żołna for help but she had no place to keep the child. He left for Warsaw in search of other family members survived the war moving from place to place. His former nanny wanted to shelter the boy but lacked the resources to do so.

Sabina Kryszak made arrangements to place her son Staś with her sister's former household employee, Genia. Kryszak's sister took the child out of the ghetto and brought him to Genia who had kind feelings towards the child. When her boyfriend arrived later and realized the child was Jewish he was angry and told her that she must get rid of the "Jewish bastard" or he

---

[124] Jan Klapper-Karpiński, "My Nanny,", *The Last Eyewitness: Children of the Holocaust Speak, Volume 2*, Jakub Gutenbaum and Agnieszka Latała, ed. (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 2005), 107-109

[125] Ibid.

would.[126] Unable to keep the child, Genia provided him with some money when she left him. Sometimes these women did not feel it was possible to keep these children. There was a great amount of stigma and danger surrounding providing aid to Jews and it created much tension when a Jewish child was brought into the home because everyone assumed the risk and potential consequences.[127] Neighbors and other Poles were the most tangible threat to a Polish helper and denunciation could come from former friends, family members, or acquaintances one had known for years.

Sometimes a former domestic servant was motivated to take a former charge not out of love or feelings of obligation, but instead for financial benefit.[128] Cases of rescue that involve the exchange of money have been under discussed in the scholarship on rescue. Some of these cases were purely for financial reasons and sometimes for other reasons combined with financial motivators. Alfred Mazo was placed with a prewar domestic servant and all of their possessions were given to this maid in return for his safe-keeping. According to the testimony of Jadwiga Borkowska, after a few months this former domestic servant left the boy alone, without any money, in the streets in Warsaw and told him to go to a shop owned by a relative of Borkowska's as they had been in contact with his parents who were interned in the ghetto.[129] At first, Mazo desperately searched for the maid who left him but he finally gave up and went to the shop as she

---

[126] Testimony of Sabina Kryszek and Staś Kryszek, Jewish Historical Institute, RG 301/ 1424, 2. This case is also discussed in Joanna Michlic, *Jewish Children in Nazi-Occupied Poland*, (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2008).

[127] See also Joanna Michlic, "The Stigmatization of Dedicated Polish Women Rescuers During the Second World War and Its Aftermath," *East European Memory Studies,* no. 13 (2013): 1-6 for further discussion.

[128] See also Jan Grabowski, *Rescue for Money: Paid Helpers in Poland, 1939-1945* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2008) for further discussion.

[129] Testimony of Jadwiga Borkowska, Jewish Historical Institute, RG 301/ 5115, August 6, 1946. This case is also discussed in Joanna Michlic, *Jewish Children in Nazi-Occupied Poland*.

instructed him. Borkowska and her husband happened to be at the shop when Mazo arrived and she and her husband took him out of pity. This maid would also later denounce this family who owned the shop for their aid to the Mazo family. This maid not only took the all of the Mazo's parents remaining possessions and betrayed them, she actively sought to harm Borkowska's family that she knew through her connections with her prewar employers. In other cases money was exchanged but the rescuer had additional reasons for taking a child as well. This is evident in the above mentioned case of the Foxman family and their helper Bronisława Kurpi, that is explored further in the following chapter.

Leaving the Ghetto

Motivation to leave the ghetto or send a child from a ghetto often came when a family or individual felt that this was the only or best option for survival. This was only a viable option for those who had someone who they thought to be a reliable connection of the so-called Aryan side. It was extremely useful to have a gentile who could make arrangements, convey information, and act as proxy in the outside world for someone who was inside the ghetto. A former household employee was often someone who was often intimately familiar with a family and already had served in the capacity as caretaker so she was often a natural choice. These were however women of little financial means who had to find new housing and employment as a result of losing their position with the family as a result of the war. This meant that even if the desire to aid was felt, the ability was dependent to a large degree on her resources.

A family who could give an aid provider something she could sell to raise funds for them or had connections with other gentiles or Jews that were in the position to help with their survival efforts was in a better position than a family without. In the case of Genia Olczak, she used her former employer's connections to gain employment and housing in addition to her own

connections with a member of Żegota to get papers for Gabryś which in turn made it possible for her to help out several members of Rozencwag/ Zakrzewski family. Alternatively, Jula Jurek wanted to aid her former employers but it took a couple of false starts before she could help them stay out of the ghetto because she did not have the resources herself and the family did not have an abundance of connections for her to use. This was important not only in aiding a family inside the ghetto and with their escape, it was also of great importance once a care giver was aiding a former charge who was living clandestinely outside of the ghetto. Any resources and connections the Jewish family needing assistance had could make a rescuer or aid provider's efforts more successful. This will become more evident in the following chapter which addresses how rescue played out on the ground for caregivers and their charges but it is also abundantly clear in examining the aid they provided while the families were interned in the ghettos and in getting individuals out and placed in hiding on the so-called Aryan side.

CHAPTER SIX

LIFE IN HIDING ON THE ARYAN SIDE

Elizabeth Grotch, born in 1938, referred to her nanny Janina Zillow as the mother "she knew" before the war.[1] Zillow was present in the home providing the daily, hands-on child-rearing tasks, making sure she was dressed, bathed, and looked after. After Janina Zillow removed Grotch, along with her cousin Lillian Trilling, from the Warsaw ghetto, the trio went to the former nanny's sister's home but they could only stay a few days because Zillow's sister, a laundress, was afraid to keep them any longer. The nanny told people the girls were her nieces and that she was caring for them because her brother had been killed. The girls called her aunt in public but sometimes mixed up details, adding to the danger. Zillow obtained papers for Grotch and Trilling and the three of them traveled by train to Lwów, where Zillow had been living.[2] To avoid scrutiny, Zillow kept the girls inside the apartment all day while she worked, but they were denounced by the landlord. During her encounter with the Germans, Zillow was thrown against the wall and feared that she would be sent to work in Germany so she and the two girls had to leave the area. The three of them parted ways; Trilling was provided with papers to work in Warsaw, and Grotch and Zillow went to stay with the nanny's family in Lublin.

---

[1] Videotaped testimony of Elizabeth Grotch, File no. 26284, Tape 1, The USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive, 9:14. Her own mother was very involved outside of the household so she spent a great deal of her time with her nanny. Grotch would get to know her own mother better once they were confined in the ghetto and she became her primary caregiver, which was also difficult due to the stress of the situation.

[2] Lwów was invaded by the Soviets in 1939 under the terms of the Nazi-Soviet pact. The Germans would invade the Soviet Union and take Lwów in June 1941.

Life with Zillow's family, who she described as "pro-Nazi" was difficult for both Grotch and her caregiver.[3] While the rest of Zillow's family treated her well, the mother was openly hostile towards her. Upon their arrival, the mother said to Zillow, "Well when you were a child you used to bring stray cats, now you bring stray Jews."[4] Grotch lived in a formerly Jewish owned apartment with her caregiver, her caregiver's mother, brother, and sister. The family was also running a formerly Jewish-owned business and hiding a Jewish child in this home leading to a great deal of conflict. Grotch was generally kept concealed because the family was afraid people would see her and recognize her typically Jewish features. Zillow's family denounced people, looted their belongings, and directly benefitted from the persecution of the Jewish population by receiving both an apartment and a business. Grotch describes the mother as fiercely anti-Semitic. Yet, this family was willing to risk its members' lives to hide a Jewish child in their home which seems contradictory in the face of their other behavior. Grotch suggests that Zillow's mother was desperate to have Zillow there and the former maid wanted a child of her own.[5] Zillow had kept a Jewish baby in her Lwów apartment while she was hiding Trilling and Grotch but when they were denounced the baby had to be sent away and Grotch recalls she would frequently comment that it was a shame about that other baby.[6] So while Zillow's mother may have had ambivalent or negative feelings about Grotch, Zillow was, "her daughter, her youngest child, so it was better to have her even if she had to put up with that (a

[3] Videotaped testimony of Elizabeth Grotch, File no. 26284, Tape 2, The USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive.
[4] Ibid., 25:12.
[5] Videotaped testimony of Elizabeth Grotch, File no. 26284, Tape 3, The USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive, 2:17.
[6] The testimony does not indicate where the baby is sent to.

Jewish child in their home)."[7] And for Zillow, the desire to have a child and her feelings of attachment to her prewar charge were enough to motivate Zillow to take an enormous risk and suffer her mother's displeasure.[8]

Despite the animosity of the mother, Grotch was in many ways treated as part of this family. They celebrated the holidays together and she was even taken to church sometimes even though that was quite risky. Grotch believes she stayed with the family in Lublin at least one and a half years and she stayed with Zillow until she left Poland in 1946. This was a very uncomfortable and sometimes hostile environment for the child, and yet she was with the one person she felt safest with, Janina Zillow. Her maid was willing to deal with her mother's disapproval and risk not only her own life, but the lives of all of her immediate family to keep this child.

Zillow's age, the nanny's role as the child's primary caregiver before the war, and this time they spent together in hiding allowed their bond to become even stronger during the Nazi occupation while staying briefly in Lwów and then in Lublin. When Grotch was approximately four or five years old, Zillow told her that her mother had been killed. She replied to her, "Thank God it wasn't you," and her caregiver replied by yelling at her for saying such a thing and asking

---

[7] Ibid., 2:52.

[8] Complicated relations between Catholic Poles and Polish Jews such as this contribute to our current understanding of Polish-Jewish relations during times of conflict and is in conversation with the current body of scholarship on the subject. For further discussion, see Joanna Beata Michlic, *Poland's Threatening Other: The Image of the Jew from 1880 to Present*; Magdalena Opalski and Israel Bartal, *Poles and Jews: A Failed Brotherhood;* Jan T. Gross, *Neighbors: The Destruction of the Jewish Community in Jedwabne, Poland*; Yisreal Gutman and Shmuel Krakowski, *Unequal Victims: Poles and Jews During WWII*; Jan Grabowski, *Hunt for Jews*; Emmanuel Ringelblum, *Polish-Jewish Relations during the Second World War.*

her if she was ashamed of herself.[9] Grotch cried into her soup after this conversation. Zillow was quite attached to Grotch's mother, acting very nurturing and protectively towards her employer before the war and was likely upset at the news of her death. Jarring as it may have been to hear the child express her lack of attachment to her mother, her reaction perhaps was not completely unexpected. Grotch was so young at the outbreak of the war and says that by the end of the war she thought this woman was her mother. The memory her own mother was so vague by then that she did not even want to think about her or about being Jewish.[10] Her age, the time spent with the caregiver and the need to pretend and live as if she was Zillow's child certainly reinforced this forgetting.

Grotch survived the war with Zillow and was claimed by her extended family whose members were living in the United States. Zillow traveled with the child to Sweden and Cuba for two years until they finally reached the family in the United States. [11] This woman left her family and home in Poland rather than be separated from her charge. Many of these women who protected Jewish children loved their charges even before the war but the time spent together living in fear as part of a conspiracy formed a new and deeper bond. Some of these women risked everything to keep these children, not just discovery by the authorities which could result in death, but loss of their family of origin, loved ones, acquaintances, and friends. The children themselves sometimes were old enough to be aware of the situation or sometimes were so young, as in the case of Grotch, that the identity they took while passing became their primary identity.

---

[9] Videotaped testimony of Elizabeth Grotch, File no. 26284, Tape 2, 27:48. The death of Grotch's mother was likely quite upsetting for Zillow as she had assumed a mothering role towards her employer before the war.

[10] Videotaped testimony of Elizabeth Grotch, File no. 26284, Tape 3, 3:25.

[11] Further discussion of this case can be found in the conclusion.

They did not always realize how abnormal the situation was. The moving, the tension in the home, the adoption of an entirely new identity-- for some children this was the only childhood they would remember. Thus it was not until later that they would understand exactly what was happening. Even for older children, the lines were also not so clear. They may have had very clear memories of their parents and missed them very much but they also became increasingly attached to their caregivers and to their new identity. As we can see in the case of Elizabeth Grotch and her nanny Janina Zillow, while caring for a prewar charge or being cared for by a prewar maid or nanny was in fact an extension of prewar life and provided a degree of normalcy, the situation also distorted and complicated every aspect of life for those involved in these conspiracies.

Contributing to the current scholarship of the effects of passing and hiding on Jewish children and their protectors, this chapter argues that the conditions of the Nazi occupation changed the relationships between the caregiver and the child she rescued, her former employers, and often her own acquaintances, family, and friends.[12] The rescue dynamic led to both a greater intimacy between the caregiver and charge as they became partners in conspiracy even while their clandestine activity greatly narrowed their universe and altered the prewar pattern of

[12] See also Maria Hochberg-Mariańska and Noe Gruss, eds., *The Children Accuse*; Wiktoria Śliwowska, ed., *The Last Eyewitnesses: Children of the Holocaust Speak, Vol. 1*; Jakub Gutenbaum and Agnieszka Latała, eds., *The Last Eyewitness: Children of the Holocaust Speak, Vol. 2*; Elaine Saphier Fox, ed., *Out of Chaos: Hidden Children Remember the Holocaust*; Kerry Blueglass, ed., *Hidden From the Holocaust: Stories of Resiliant Children who Survived and Thrived* ; Emunah Nachmany Gafny, *Dividing Hearts: The Removal of Jewish Children from Gentile Families in Poland in the Immediate Postwar Years*; Nahum Bogner, *At the Mercy of Strangers: The Rescue of Jewish Children with Assumed Identities in Poland*; Joanna Michlic, "Rebuilding Shattered Lives: Some Vignettes of Jewish Children's Lives in Early Postwar Poland; Joanna B. Michlic, "Who Am I? Jewish Children Search for Identity in Post-War Poland," and her, *Jewish Children in Nazi-Occupied Poland: Survival and Polish-Jewish Relations During the Holocaust as Reflected in Early Postwar Recollections.*

authority between the former employers and employees. The new dynamic also changed the character of the relationship between the child and caregiver, complicating it, and adding new tensions as the level of intimacy increased. Finally, I seek to demonstrate how this new situation led to an alteration in the inter ethno-religious ties and relationships that existed during the interwar period.

An Ever Shrinking Universe

Nazi policy was intended to sever ties between Polish Jews and gentiles and in many cases this policy was overwhelmingly effective. However, in many cases where rescue by a former household servant occurred, Nazi policy had exactly the opposite effect. Rather than cutting ties and ignoring the fate of their Jewish employers these women who engaged in clandestine rescue and aid activities bound their own fate to that of the Jews they were aiding. Aid provider and recipient became linked in these illegal activities and in many cases the aid providers were even forced to sever ties from their own families, friends, and acquaintances in order to protect their charges. So, in essence, sometimes these gentile women would chose to cut themselves off from their former world with the exception of their Jewish attachments, doing exactly the opposite of what was intended by the occupying regime. Sometimes these women relied on the assistance of their own families and friends in their aim to protect a child. In these cases the entire group was able to share the burdens of the clandestine activity but this activity cut them off from their own friends and family members outside of the circle of secrecy.

In order to protect a Jewish child, it was necessary to either pass that child off as a gentile or to conceal his or her existence completely. As these women had ties to these children from before the war, even in urban areas, they ran the risk that the child would be recognized as their prewar Jewish charge. As a result, when a former caregiver took a child from the ghetto they

either had to conceal the child completely from anyone who may recognize them, or to relocate them to where they would not be recognized. To relocate was no small feat under Nazi occupation and required finding new housing and employment in a city where they could become anonymous. It also required taking the risk of traveling there with a Jewish child. When This often meant travel by train which was incredibly risky. Milla Tenenbaum remembers traveling by train with her protector, Cecelia Krzeminska from her hiding place in Będzin to a temporary hiding place in the countryside the woman tried to keep the little girl covered with a blanket the entire time to keep the other passengers from seeing her face.[13] These caregivers were typically members of the peasant or working class and economic times were difficult so they typically had few resources. Not relocating and opting to conceal the child was also challenging. Any change in behavioral patterns, such as increased grocery purchases or spending less time with friends could signal that something was amiss. A surprise visit from a neighbor or landlord or the child making noise in the apartment while the caregiver was away could have disastrous consequences. These women generally had to work to support themselves and the Jewish child so often this required young children to stay home unsupervised and often hidden.

In the case of Zillow and Grotch, Zillow could not stay in the city and needed to take the child someplace else, so she returned to her family of origin in Lubin. This created conflict in the family but also required a cover story for the appearance of this child. In a small town or village people were familiar with one another and the appearance of someone who had been away with a child they had never heard about before and no husband roused suspicion and demanded a cover story. Some women passed their charges off as their own offspring. It was of course much easier to explain the presence of a child without a husband to strangers than to one's own family and

[13] Videotaped testimony of Milla Tenenbaum, File no. 33627-4, Tape 3, September 16, 1997, The USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive.

friends requiring women to either relocate to someplace that would provide them anonymity or have an alternative cover story. As mentioned in the introduction, former nanny, Wictoria Rodziewiecz, removed Sarah Wall from the Vilna ghetto and initially stayed in the city so the child could continue to have contact with her mother.[14] In June 1941, after Wall and Rodziewiecz were recognized by a former neighbor, Rodziewiecz was called in for questioning by the Gestapo. She was released but this incident made it apparent that they would have to leave the city so she took Wall, then twenty months old, to see her mother one last time before they fled.[15] In preparation, Rodziewiecz went to her priest to ask for papers for her charge but since she told the clergy that the child was Jewish he would not oblige her request and suggested she ask another priest she did not know. She took his advice, told another priest that Wall was her illegitimate child and had her baptized as Irena to obtain legal documents.

Rodziewiecz then returned to her family of origin in Grauzyszki with a baby, unmarried. In the beginning, Wall says her caretaker did not know who she could trust so she did not initially tell her family this secret. Wall says, "You can well imagine this devout Catholic women…." had to bear this shame.[16] Soon it was apparent her family could be trusted and even after the child's identity was revealed the family continued to treat her well. Just to be safe, however, anytime people came around they would start admonishing the child, yelling at her, "you bastard," for good measure. [17] Genia Olczak also passed off her charge, Gabriel as her illegitimate child as did Franceszka Ziemiańska who has been mentioned in previous chapters

[14] Videotaped Interview of Sarah Wall, File no. 42189-1, June 14, 1998, Tape 1, The USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive.

[15] Ibid. Rodziewiecz offered to take the child's mother with her but her mother believed that the more people Rodziewiecz had to hide the greater the danger so she declined this offer.

[16] Ibid., 18:30.

[17] Videotaped Interview of Sarah Wall, File no. 42189-1, June 14, 1998, Tape 1.

and will be mentioned again shortly. This was a common means of concealing the identity of a Jewish child even though it was certainly not without its problems and there was a stigma attached to this mode of deception for the caretaker.

Increased Intimacy

The conspiracy that Wall and Rodziewiecz participated in, just like in the above mentioned case of Zillow and Grotch, firmly cemented the relationship between caregiver and charge as one of mother and child. Like Grotch, Wall was very young when she was placed in Rodziewiecz's care and eventually this woman would be the only mother she remembered. Wall slept with Rodziewiecz every night. She remembers these wartime years as hard for everyone but she recalls feeling fairly secure and being treated with love.[18] She always felt like she was the most important person in Rodziewiecz's life.[19] The nanny would bleach Wall's hair blond to ensure she looked Polish (Wall would not realize until later that this was not a normal action), they celebrated all the Catholic holidays, and she describes herself as just like all the other (gentile) children, meaning anti-Semitic.[20] One night Rodziewiecz and Wall had to leave in the middle of the night because people seemed to be suspicious and she made it into a game, "like everyone just leaves in the middle of the night."[21] These abnormal activities that were necessary to conceal the true identity of a child often did not even seem abnormal to the children at the time. Depending on their age or the situation, they did not know the difference or they became

[18] Ibid., 22:49.

[19] Ibid., 27:40. She actually says, "never was there a time when I felt like I wasn't treated like I was the most important person both in my nanny's life and my mother's life" when recollecting her childhood and the bonds she would feel all her life with both of these women.

[20] Ibid., 27:58. She clarifies, she did not learn these ideas from the family or her caregiver, but rather the neighborhood kids she played with.

[21] Videotaped Interview of Sarah Wall, File no. 42189-1, June 14, 1998, Tape 2, 26:10.

accustomed to this. Wall for example, did not have any idea at the end of the war that this woman who had raised her was not her biological mother. After she was reunited with her own mother, who survived the war, she continued to miss her caregiver all the time but she did not ever share this sadness with her mother because she knew it would be hurtful to her to hear.[22]

Rodziewiecz and Wall developed this strong mother-daughter relationship that was strengthened by the absence of the child's mother and by the conspiracy in which they engaged. The family treated Wall as if she was a member and behaved as if Rodziewiecz was the child's mother. While these familial feelings were rooted in real affection and attachment, their public performance were also essential to survival. Everyone's lives depended on this conspiracy. Acting as a family and everyone treating the child as if this was her identity was part of the conspiracy but also in turn further cemented the bond between the former household employee and her charge and reinforced the identity. Furthermore, Wall did not know any of this was abnormal. She did not realize that having her hair bleached regularly was to conceal her Jewish identity; it was just something she did. The family closed ranks and all became responsible for this secret and all bore the risks. They pretended that the child was a "bastard" and it stands to reason that this would have been the cause of gossip and shame for the family as a whole but especially for Rodziewiecz. So while Rodziewiecz was able to maintain her connections with her family of origin she did have to leave her home and acquaintances in Vilna and bear the shame of having a child out of wedlock, thus restricting her social life and connections. Rather than her universe shrinking, this conspiracy restricted the universe of the entire family unit.

Most caregivers were not fortunate enough to have the support of their families in their rescue activities and even when they did have some assistance from their own family or friends

[22] Ibid. The reunification of Wall and her mother and resolution with her protector will be further discussed in the conclusion.

they still had to conceal their activities from everyone else. This included neighbors, landlords, co-workers, shopkeepers, and even priests. Nothing could appear out of the ordinary. Karolina Sapetowa was employed as a nanny for the Hochweiser children, Samuś, Salusia, and Iziu before the war and after they were confined in the Kraków ghetto with their parents she continued to have contact with the family taking food and needed items to them. The youngest child came to stay with her at her home in Witanowice and she would take the older children from the ghetto temporarily whenever the situation became especially unstable. She worried and missed the children when they were confined and thought of them as her own.[23] In March, 1943 when the ghetto was liquidated Sapetowa and her aunt went to the ghetto and caught sight of the older children, Iziu and Salusia, with their mother and the as soon as their mother caught sight of Sapetowa, she urged the children to "Go to Karolcia."[24] Salusia "slipped like a mouse between the heavy boots of the Ukrainians" who did not notice the child.[25] The little girl ran to Sapetowa with her "hands stretched out imploringly."[26] Iziu stayed with his mother and they were both loaded aboard a transport and Sapetowa never saw them again.

Sapetowa took Salusia back home to Witanowice where she was already keeping her little brother Samuś. At first, the children were able to play outdoors and her neighbors did not harass her much but this did not last long. When relations grew difficult with the other villagers she began keeping the children indoors but the threats from her neighbors increased rapidly. Her neighbors implored and threatened her to turn the children in to the Gestapo before they all were

---

[23] "Karolina Sapetowa," Maria Hochberg-Marianska and Noe Gruss, eds., in *The Children Accuse* (London and Portland: Vallentine Mitchell, 1996), 277-79.
[24] Ibid.
[25] Ibid., 278.
[26] Ibid.

punished for harboring Jewish children. The village administrator was friendly to Sapetowa but there was only so much he could do to mitigate the situation. She responded to their demands by "telling them off" or bribing them until one day in 1944 shortly before the Soviets liberated Witanowice the local farmers came to her and told her that they must "get rid of the children."[27] Their plan to do so involved taking the children to the barn and cutting their heads off while they slept.[28]

Sapetowa lived with her elderly father and he was of course alarmed at this turn of events and the children were aware of what was happening. She remembers, "The poor children knew everything and before they went to bed they would say to us, 'Karolcia, do not kill us just today!'"[29] These children knew that their caretaker who loved them as her own was being pressured not just to send them away but to take them into the barn and let the neighbors execute them. Sapetowa at that point felt herself "go numb" and resolved that she would "not hand over the children at any price."[30] Instead, she put the children on a cart and paraded them around the village telling everyone she was taking them outside of the village to drown them. She then took them out into the surrounding countryside and hid them until she could smuggle them back into town that evening and hide them in a neighbor's attic. The children suffered there, concealed from the other neighbors in a hot, filthy attic while Sapetowa worked to earn enough money to pay for food and to pay the neighbor for this hiding place until she could not make the payments and they were in turn evicted from this hiding place. Sapetowa then, with no other choices available, brought the children back to her home and hid them in a shed with the cattle until they

[27] Ibid., 278.
[28] Ibid.
[29] Ibid.
[30] Ibid.

were liberated by the Red Army. The children remained with Sapetowa after the war; she became their sole guardian. She wrote, "I shall never part from them again, and even if they were to go to the ends of the earth, I would go with them. They are like my children; I love them more than anything in the world, and I would do anything for them."[31] Sapetowa never re-married (she was a widow) and she stayed with the children, leaving Poland with the children for Denmark and later in life she cared for Salusia's children.[32]

While Sapetowa had the support of her family, her father at least, she was surrounded by hostile neighbors who believed she was putting all of them in danger. She was threatened and harassed regularly until she concealed the children completely to appease them. Neighbors and other residents she had likely known for years became openly hostile towards her demanding she murder or at least consent to the murder of the children that she loved as her own. She also must have been cognizant of the danger she was placing upon her elderly father. In addition, the children's world shrank as they were protected by Sapetowa. "Normal" changed from confinement in the ghetto to staying for short periods with Sapetowa where they "felt at home," to then staying full-time and being allowed to play outdoors. Soon however, the children realized that every single person living in that town did not want them there, and some of those people wanted to harm them physically.[33] They went from playing outside to total concealment. Their father was shot, their mother and older brother disappeared on a transport, and they became fearful that the one person they loved and who cared for them might take them into the barn and

---

[31] Ibid.

[32] Joanna Beata Michlic, *Jewish Children in Nazi Occupied Poland: Survival and Polish-Jewish Relations During the Holocaust as Reflected in Early Postwar Recollection*, 89-91. Sepetowa was declared Righteous Among the Nations by Yad Vashem.

[33] "Karolina Sapetowa," 277.

cut off their heads. For these children, and others living in hiding, the outside world not only became smaller, it became unimaginably hostile.

Fear was ever present for caregivers and children who were old enough to know what was going on. Born in 1932, Milla Tenenbaum spent the war protected by her nanny, Cecelia Krzeminska, and felt loved by this woman.[34] Despite this, Tenenbaum was constantly afraid. She lived with "such anxiety and fear that it was almost impossible."[35] Two neighbor women were suspicious and would always knock on the door to their flat in the evening so the young girl would have to hide under the bed or in the closet.[36] The nanny had to work at night, leaving Tenenbaum home alone listening to the noises on the streets. Tenenbaum and her caregiver lived in an attic apartment that shared space with several pickle barrels. One evening the SS came upstairs, conducting random searches and the little girl had to hide in an empty pickle barrel. The officers searched several barrels and just happened to skip over the barrel containing the child. The officers asked Krzeminska if she had anything else in her apartment and she replied, "Why would I risk my life to save a Jewish person?"[37] The officer reminder the nanny of the death penalty for aiding a Jew and she replied that she would never do such a thing. Shortly after this incident Krzeminska moved the child to the countryside, placing her with a peasant family who abused her. Her caregiver would come and check on her every Sunday. The husband of the peasant family was very cruel to Tenenbaum, making her work very hard and sometimes at night when he was intoxicated he would come to the barn where she slept and beat her and threaten

[34] Videotaped testimony of Milla Tenebaum, File no. 33627-4, Tape 2, September 16, 1997, The USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive.
[35] Ibid., 28:29.
[36] Ibid., 26:00.
[37] Videotaped testimony of Milla Tenebaum, File no. 33627-4, Tape 3, September 16, 1997, The USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive, 3:47.

her.[38] The man's wife did not intervene on her behalf and when the situation was too much for the girl to stand she ran away, back to her caregiver in Będzin. She hid her in her home, in a pickle barrel again until Krzeminska transferred Tenenbaum to the care of a friend of Tenenbaum's father in Czeladz. He kept her concealed from his entire family for a few days before bringing her back to Krzeminska's home.

When Tenenbaum was again hiding in her caregiver's apartment it was late 1944 and Będzin was being bombarded. When the sirens would go off Krzeminska had to go down to the bomb shelter but could not take her charge with her. There was too great a risk that the neighbors would recognize the little girl who used to run after her nanny when she left to go to mass.[39] It was hard for the caregiver to leave the child alone in the apartment during the bombings, but to not take shelter herself would have been dangerous and would have aroused suspicion. Being left alone during the bombardment was frightening for Tenenbaum, who would hide, scared, under the bed.

Tenebaum and her caregiver became incredibly close during their time together. Tenebaum knew that their fates were linked as a result of Krzeminska's decision to hide her saying, "I didn't worry about her (caregiver)."[40] She continued, "Since I was little, I trusted her. I could depend on her."[41] She also explained that it was not easy and sometimes she wanted to be with her family or wished she was not there. She was constantly afraid, even after the war. For years she cried at night, had stomach issues, and nightmares. The intimacy between

[38] Ibid.
[39] Ibid.
[40] Ibid., 4:50.
[41] Ibid., 4:55.

caregiver and charge by no means inoculated children to the very real fear of hiding and passing that was at times debilitating.

Altered Caregiver-Charge Relationships

While rescue brought increased intimacy to the relationship between caregiver and charge, further cementing familial bonds and emotional attachment, the situation also brought new anxieties and pressures to the relationship. As mentioned above, Salusia and Samuś Hochwieser started to fear that their beloved caregiver, Karolina Sapetowa would succumb to the pressure of her neighbors and actually murder them. Elizabeth Grotch also acknowledges the love that she felt for her caregiver and she felt very much loved by Zillow, but recalls that there were also tense moments that made her fearful. At one point Janina Zillow's mother threw her and the child out of her home. Zillow went to a convent seeking shelter and aid for her and the child but they were refused help. Zillow was upset and did not know where to turn so she told Grotch they would go to the church and stand in front of the Holy Virgin and "if she nods her head that I should give you away I will have to. Is she doesn't I'll stay with you."[42] Grotch remembers feeling terrified standing there, an unwilling player in a game of Christian roulette. Mary, of course, did not nod. It was not uncommon for caregivers, who were under extreme stress to lash out at the children they cared for or exhibit abnormal behavior during these periods of extreme pressure.

As mentioned in previous chapters, Bernhard Kempler and his sister Anita spent the war passing as the daughters of their former caregiver, Franciszka Ziemiańska.[43] Bernhard had to

[42] Videotaped testimony of Elizabeth Grotch, File no. 26284, Tape 3, The USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archives, 7:14.

[43] Videotaped testimony of Bernhard Kempler, File no. 33193, September 12, 1997, USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archives.

act, convincingly, like a little girl, Bernadette, as it was especially dangerous for male Jews because their circumcision could easily confirm their Jewish identities. Kempler was very young during the war, born in May 1936, but he recalls he had to make his voice sound like that of a girl, he remembers having his hair braided and he recalls wearing a dress. He passed as a little girl for at least four years. He also became Catholic; learning all the prayers, attending mass, and performing the rituals very naturally with his caregiver. His whole identity, gender, as well as religion and ethnicity had to be given up to pass as his nanny's child.

Separated from his parents and living a new identity as a Catholic girl was an extreme hardship for the young boy and the relationship between Kempler, his sister and his caregiver whom he relied on for stability and protection was also fraught with tension yet he recalls kindness and he felt that she loved the children. Kempler explained:

> "Of course we had been with her before the war as well so it wasn't that big a change, but there were times when she was frightened, she had terrible headaches and sometimes if we didn't do something exactly the way she wanted she would be very upset. She would threaten to leave us, asking 'What did she need this for?' It was dangerous for her to be taking care of us and hiding us like that. And I remember that it was frightening to me that she would leave us.[44]

In order to please his caregiver, who was a devout Catholic, Kempler acted "very religious as a Catholic" and would get her water and headache powders when she was not feeling well.[45] He explains that felt close to her but was also aware that she did not have to keep him and his sister so he behaved as good, obedient and as helpful as possible.[46] This child, before the war, was

---

[44] Videotaped testimony of Bernhard Kempler, File no. 33193, Tape 2, September 12, 1997, USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archives, 8:32-9:00.

[45] Ibid., 9:09. Kempler's caregiver was actually suffering from cancer at this time.

[46] Ibid., 9:39.

looked after by his nanny but this relationship became distorted under Nazi occupation policy. Now, under this new circumstance he faced insecurity and fear that the woman who loved him might leave him at any moment. This compelled him to constantly attempt to please her as he concealed his entire identity.

The relationship between Ziemiańska and Kempler's sister was also newly complicated by this precarious situation. His sister was "temperamental" and "more of a problem" for their caregiver, so Kempler felt a need to compensate for her behavior by being especially obedient and doing everything precisely the way he thought Ziemiańska wanted him to do.[47] This created, according to Kempler, conflict between the three of them, placing them in a situation where he always wanted his sister to behave better, but she did not. So, he would behave better as he was afraid they would be abandoned. This created what he describes as a sort of psychological triangle among them.[48] In her biography, Kempler's older sister, Anita Lobel, writes that when the nanny's mother became ill she resented that she was unable to leave the children to go and be with her before she died and sometimes she had to miss mass because of the children.[49] The constant threat of discovery altered the dynamic between caregiver and charge, and in this case also between the siblings. Unimaginable stress and resentment are often left out of the narrative of rescue because it does not fit the image of a heroic rescuer who is usually portrayed as selfless and brave. This understanding of rescuers as more human and less heroic is in conversation with

[47] Ibid., 9:55-10:00.
[48] Ibid., 10:07-10:28.
[49] Anita Lobel, *No Pretty Pictures: A Child of War* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1998).

the current scholarship on Holocaust rescuers.[50] In reality, we know that caregivers were humans, with human emotions who sometimes snapped at their charges, threatened to leave them, and at times resented the burden of their commitment to them.

Even with the continuity of a prewar caretaker, life for these children was forever altered; often more than children even necessarily understood while it was happening. Relationships between caregivers and children were distorted and complicated under the pressure and circumstances of the Nazi occupation. Sarah Wall recalls that after the war when she realized what had really happened, "nothing was the same."[51] Her whole life was, in her words, fractured. Elizabeth Grotch became a part of her caretaker's family and was socialized in anti-Semitic attitudes and accustomed to living with a woman who openly disliked her presence and believed that the Jews were "getting what they deserved."[52] Bernhard Kempler went from just being a little boy living in a middle-class home being cared for by his nanny to the keeper of the peace between his sister and their nanny as he also took on the identity of Catholic girl. For children who were not completely concealed and had to assume a new identity, this meant that one's life depended on convincingly taking on the role of Catholic, working class child and often

---

[50] This work contributes to the existing scholarship on Holocaust rescuers by not only shedding light on motivations, but also by depicting these rescuers in a much more human and less heroic fashion. For further reading on rescuers also see Martin Gilbert, *The Righteous: The Unsung Heroes of the Holocaust*; Mordecai Paldiel, *The Path of the Righteous: Gentile Rescuers of Jews During the Holocaust*; Carol Rittner and Sandra Myers, eds., *The Courage to Care: Rescuers of Jews During the Holocaust*; Mark Klempner, *The Heart Has Reasons: Holocaust Rescuers and Their Stories of Courage* ; Ellen Land-Weber, *To Save a Life: Stories of Holocaust Rescue*; Nechama Tec, *When Light Pierced the Darkness: Christian Rescue of Jews in Nazi-Occupied Poland*; Samuel P. Oliner and Pearl M. Oliner, *The Altruistic Personality: The Rescue of Jews in Nazi Europe*; Patrick Henry, *We Only Know Men: The Rescue of Jews in France During the Holocaust*; Eva Fogelman, *Conscience and Courage: Rescuers of Jews During the Holocaust*; and Malka Drucker, *Rescuers : Portraits of Moral Courage in the Holocaust*.

[51] Videotaped Interview of Sarah Wall, File no. 42189-1, June 14, 1998, Tape 2.

[52] Videotaped testimony of Elizabeth Grotch, File no. 26284, Tape 3, 3:51.

this meant losing parts of their own prewar self in the process. Kempler hid with his nanny as a little girl but also went through the camp system as a girl to stay with his sister.[53] While a prewar caregiver did most certainly provide a measure of comfort and continuity, there was only so much protection from the damage inflicted upon these children that she could provide. The stress of the situation, changed relationships, and the act of masking one's identity was extremely taxing even on the most resilient of these children.

New Patterns of Authority

It seems natural to consider the ways that rescue would alter the relationship between the caregiver and charge but this new activity also dramatically altered the relationship between the former employer and employee. In their prewar lives, household domestic servants were vulnerable to abuse and poor working conditions but often they did have a fair degree of autonomy to make decisions as to how they would carry out the orders of their employers. Households relied on these female employees. They were often given a large degree of leeway to raise the children and sometimes to run the household with limited supervision because the parents were busy outside the home. Maids and nannies spent many hours with their charges and the parents were not always aware of how they spent all of their time together. For example, when Catholic household servants were required to work on Sundays they sometimes took their charges to mass with them because it was the only way they could attend and still care for the children. Sometimes parents knew of this activity and other times it remained a secret between the child and caregiver.

Anita Lobel recalls that her parents were unhappy with their nanny's attempts to inculcate their children with Catholicism. She recalls that her parents argued with her nanny

[53] The children were first imprisoned in Montelupich and then sent to Plaszów where they were protected by their aunt and uncle and later were transported to Ravenbruck and then Auschwitz.

about "Christian things."[54] The nanny was fired and replaced but Lobel recounts that she screamed and cried until her parents brought her nanny back, saying "My parents had to let Niana have her way."[55] After she returned she was allowed to take certain liberties. She hung a picture of an angel in the children's bedroom, baked cookies for St. Nicholas Day, showed the children how to make garlands, and hung chocolates for Christmas morning.[56] Certainly this was a greater degree of power than most household servants wielded within the home, but in most cases at a minimum it was a serious inconvenience to replace a domestic employee.[57] These maids were sometimes able to get away with performing their duties with less care than they should, not following instructions exactly, or taking children to mass without the permission of their parents because they were performing a service the family valued.

In many of the cases previously discussed it is apparent that household servants often earned the trust or even affections of their employers. The importance of their role was understood by household members and they were sometimes treated as if they were a member of the family. Many child survivors of the Holocaust recall the central role in their lives played by their maids and nannies and the mutual affections between themselves and their caregivers. However, at the end of the day, even when these women were trusted and treated in a familial manner, they were employees and there was a power dynamic associated with that employer/ employee relationship. If a maid was no longer able to perform her duties or a nanny was no

---

[54] Anita Lobel, *No Pretty Pictures,* 8-9.

[55] Ibid. In videotaped testimony of Bernhard Kempler, File no. 33193, Tape 2, September 12, 1997, USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archives, 11:10, he also recounts that the nanny was fired although he does not state the reason for her dismissal. He recalls that his sister had such a tantrum that their parents asked her to come back.

[56] Ibid.

[57] See chapter one.

longer needed due to the age of children she would be let go. The family might have remained in contact with her, but the primary purpose of their relationship was based ultimately on an economic arrangement and this shaped the basic power dynamic.

Under the Nazi occupation this power dynamic shifted.[58] Gentile household employees found themselves higher on the social ladder than their former employers based on their status as non-Jews.[59] While under the Nazi racial hierarchy Slavic peoples were still considered inferior they were above Jews who were considered the lowest of the low and unworthy of life. Not only did the power dynamic between lower-class Poles and middle-class or affluent Jews change in the public realm, it also changed dramatically in the intimate realm in cases where former domestic employees protected their former charges. Their role changed from servant to potential savior. These women were entrusted to become the primary decision makers by their former employers in a new role in which their decisions ultimately had life or death consequences. These former employers were completely at the mercy of their former employee. A domestic servant had the power to attempt to protect their child, to refuse, and to betray the family at any moment once she became a part of their conspiracy. Sometimes a former domestic servant was the natural choice for this role based on the prewar relationship she had with her former employers and sometimes she was just the only choice.

In the case of Abraham Foxman's protection by his former nanny, Bronisława Kurpi, this

[58] See Chapter One.

[59] See Chapter Four.

household employee did not begin working for the family until after the outbreak of the war.[60] When it was ordered that Jews move into the Vilna ghetto the maid approached the couple and asked what they would do with the baby. His mother, Helen Foxman, replied that the baby, then thirteen months old, would go with them into the ghetto and what happened to them would happen to the child. Kurpi proposed that the family allow her to take little Abraham instead. Helen Foxman said that when Kurpi offered there was no time to think about it, or discuss it with her husband.[61] With no time for discussion, Mrs. Foxman looked to her husband, who replied, "okay, take him," and she accepted under the assumption that he knew better than her and the decision was for the best.[62] The couple gave Kurpi all their possessions with the exception of 180 rubles so she could sell them to support herself and the child and promised that Abraham's father, Joseph Foxman, would continue to support them from the ghetto.[63] At Kurpi's request, the couple gave her a statement saying that they were giving her the child as her own and Kurpi had the child baptized as Czesław Henryk Kurpi, registering him as her own offspring.[64] Both parents continued to earn money while confined in the ghetto and continued to pass funds along to Kurpi to care for their child. Once a week Helen Foxman would slip away from the ghetto to go check on the child in Kurpi's home in Vilna and Kurpi would continually pressure Mr.

---

[60] Second Generation of Long Island Collection Interview of Helen Foxman, One Tape, July 6, 1983, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, RG 50.205*0028. See Chapter 5.

[61] "Helen Foxman," *Mothers, Sisters, Resisters: Oral Histories of Women Who Survived the Holocaust,* ed., Brana Gurewitsch (Tuscaloosa and London: University of Alabama Press, 1998), 35.

[62] Ibid.

[63] Second Generation of Long Island Collection Interview of Helen Foxman, One Tape, July 6, 1983, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, RG 50.205*0028.

[64] Joseph Foxman, *In the Shadow of Death* (New York and Jerusalem: Yad Vashem and the Holocaust Survivor's Project, 2011), 17.

Foxman for money. The child recognized Mrs. Foxman but thought she was his aunt. The baby knew Kurpi as his mother and Mrs. Foxman was not allowed to hold or kiss him when she visited.[65]

Kurpi, when employed by the Foxmans, acted as the child's caregiver on their directives but now in this new situation, she held all the power and dictated the terms of when they couple could see their child, how they were to behave around him, and how the child should understand who they were. When Kurpi requested that they sign the document stating they gave her their child, they complied. The Foxmans were a religious family before the war and now under this new social situation and time of need they felt they had to comply with Kurpi. This meant allowing their child to be baptized and raised as a Catholic; giving up control of their child's spiritual life along with all other decisions about his upbringing and health to their former employee.[66] This is a powerful example of how the power dynamic changed under this new situation. This maid, marginalized through her sex and class status, now dictated the new terms of this relationship with her former employers.

In testimony given to the Jewish Historical Institute, Mrs. Foxman stated that Kurpi threatened her husband telling him if he refused to pay she would go to the Gestapo and turn in the circumcised child.[67] Given her attachment to the child this may have been merely an attempt to secure more money from the couple. The couple at one time also demanded the child be

---

[65] Ibid., 18-19.

[66] Many wartime protectors obtained baptismal certificates for their charges because it was necessary. This allowed the children to pass as Polish Catholics. Sometimes these hidden children were raised Catholic but knew of their Jewish identity but often with younger children they came to identify with the Catholic religion, which was ultimately often safer for them.

[67] Translation of Testimony of Helen and Joseph Foxman, RG 301/ File no. 3605, March 17, 1947, Jewish Historical Institute (Yiddish) in Joseph Foxman, *In the Shadow of Death* (New York and Jerusalem: Yad Vashem and the Holocaust Survivor's Project, 2011), 72.

returned but Kurpi refused. Joseph Foxman testified that he realized then that the nanny who was raising their baby was, in fact, blackmailing them.[68] This former employee, rather than acting as a conduit of the parents' values, became responsible for all the decisions regarding the upbringing of the child and controlled all access to the child. The parents had no say in these matters anymore and the child's survival was left in the hands of this woman. Furthermore, the parents' own health and well-being were at the mercy of the caregiver who also dictated the terms of their relationship with their own child.

When the couple felt they must leave the ghetto in order to survive Mr. Foxman went to stay with a Polish family and Mrs. Foxman stayed with Kurpi. She was initially, "afraid to go to the goya," since she was already sheltering the child and she did not want to upset the situation there and was not even sure if Kurpi would agree to take her.[69] According to Mrs. Foxman, the two women got along fairly well while Mr. Foxman was away before the war but once he returned there was conflict in the household.[70] Kurpi agreed to shelter Mrs. Foxman and helped her obtain papers so she could work and Mrs. Foxman in turn passed as a gentile working to pay for her upkeep. Kurpi found a place for the two women and the child to live in on the outskirts of Vilna. Mrs. Foxman states that Kurpi held ill feelings of some sort towards Mr. Foxman so while she initially gave Helen Foxman food to take to him and was washing his clothes, she later started to refuse.[71] To defuse the situation Helen told Kurpi that Mr. Foxman went away. Joseph Foxman wrote, "Even while Helen stayed with Bronia she suffered from her outbursts," and

---

[68] Ibid.

[69] Second Generation of Long Island Collection Interview of Helen Foxman, One Tape, July 6, 1983, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, RG 50.205*0028.

[70] The source of this conflict is not readily apparent in any of the sources but Mrs. Foxman attributes it to Kurpi being a lesbian in her testimony.

[71] Second Generation of Long Island Collection Interview of Helen Foxman.

every so often Kurpi would force Mrs. Foxman to leave, occasionally along with the baby.[72] Mr. Foxman states that "On the whole, Bronia treated the child well. She fed him and kept him clean, but if he made any sign of even leaning toward Helen, Bronia would spank him."[73] Despite this, the child was very close to his caregiver and displayed his affection towards her with hugs and kisses.

The relationships between the Foxmans and Kurpi were complicated. Both Helen and Joseph Foxman recognize that without her efforts their child would have not survived and likely neither would they as her care for the child freed them to focus on their own survival initially. Kurpi also sheltered Helen Foxman when she left the ghetto herself and this relationship was extremely tenuous. Helen Foxman stated that Kurpi did "plenty of harm" to her during the time she sheltered her.[74] She described Kurpi as "a sick, vicious woman."[75] Helen had to work at 6:00am and Kurpi would keep her awake at night, would not allow her to so much as touch her own child even though he slept in the bed with Kurpi right next to her own bed, and frequently threw her out of the house. Helen Foxman had to deal with being relegated to her own child's aunt and lived in constant fear that their protector would betray them. We do not have access to Kurpi's version of events or her motivations for her actions. After the war she did not want to surrender Abraham to Helen and Joseph Foxman. This is evident in her attempts to obtain legal custody of the child and her attempted kidnapping of the child when legal means failed her. Kurpi wanted to continue in her role as the boy's mother after the war so it can be assumed that

---

[72] Joseph Foxman, *In the Shadow of Death,* 20.
[73] Ibid.
[74] "Helen Foxman," *Mothers, Sisters, Resisters: Oral Histories of Women Who Survived the Holocaust,* ed., Brana Gurewitsch, 41.
[75] Ibid.

this conflict over her desires to be Abraham's mother complicated her feelings towards Helen Foxman. However, she also did extend aid to this woman even if her behavior was sometimes erratic and cruel.[76]

It is apparent that the relationship with between the Foxmans and Kurpi was incredibly complex. Helen Foxman lived with her for a period of time and her testimony focuses a lot on Kurpi's animosity towards Mr. Foxman and she attributes that to Kurpi being a lesbian.[77] Helen Foxman states that her husband told her this after the war and this was why Kurpi disliked Joseph Foxman so much; she disliked men.[78] Mrs. Foxman speaks in much more negative terms about Kurpi than Joseph Foxman does, but she also was living with her for over a year and had to deal with her in a much more frequent and intimate way that her husband did. She was essentially, at the mercy of Kurpi, for much of the war. She relied on her to keep her child and to later shelter her.

This case is illustrative of the extreme shift in power that took place when a former household employee took on the role of rescuer, even when it is not as pronounced as it was in this particular case. In the interwar period domestic employees were clearly subordinated to their

---

[76] There was very little housing available so when Joseph found an apartment the entire family lived there with Kurpi. Joseph wrote in his memoir, "After having saved the child, she was regarded as a part of the family" (21). See Joseph Foxman, *In the Shadow of Death* (New York and Jerusalem: Yad Vashem and the Holocaust Survivors' Memoir Project, 2011). While they were all living under one roof, Kurpi was actively seeking legal custody of the child in the courts. The parents ultimately won and Kurpi responded by kidnapping the child and keeping him until his parents acquaintances kidnapped the boy back. Kurpi would continue to use means necessary to harass the family, usually filing claims of various illegal activity with the authorities until the family immigrated to the United States. The family would, even after all that, continued to send her packages and letters until she died in 1958.

[77] "Helen Foxman," *Mothers, Sisters, Resisters: Oral Histories of Women Who Survived the Holocaust*, ed., Brana Gurewitsch, 41.

[78] I find this argument to be questionable but have no evidence to refute the explanation.

employers but in the new social order of the Nazi era and in this new role of rescuer, these women had an unprecedented level of power over their former employers. Many caregivers took the children because they felt an attached to them, but some did take the children for other reasons such as financial gain. Relationships between parents and domestics/ rescuers were as diverse as relationships between caregivers and charges. Sometimes the former employee had fond or even familial feelings towards the parents of the charges they took but this was not always the case as we see evidenced in the Foxman/ Kurpi case. Even when relations between the parents and caregiver were strained, their collaboration was nevertheless often vital for the success of the rescue. Kurpi received financial support from the Foxmans easing the financial burden of caring for a small child during extremely difficult economic times. This collaboration between Kurpi and the Foxmans was strained but it did nonetheless have them all laboring towards a common cause-- to keep this young child alive and safe during a time when his very existence was outlawed by the ruling regime.

Polish-Jewish Cooperation

The universe became increasingly constricted for the prewar caregiver because clandestine rescue and aid activities often required Polish gentile helpers to sever ties with their family and friends in order to conceal their charge and activities. While this cut rescuers off from many former acquaintances and loved ones sometimes a rescuer might actually come to rely more heavily upon the connections of her Jewish charges to protect her charge.

While the most basic of cooperative efforts involved financial support as we saw with the case of the Foxmans/ Kurpi, some Polish-Jewish cooperation involved much more than financial aid. Over the course of the last several chapters, the case of Genia Olczak and the Zakzrewski/

Rozencwajg family has been referenced numerous times.[79] In this case the former nanny loved the child she cared for before the war, Gabriel, and felt a deep attachment towards the couple she worked for and their extended family members. As discussed in the previous two chapters, Olczak aided many other family members while they were interned in the Warsaw ghetto and she then assisted them in their efforts to escape and survive outside the ghetto walls. She took Gabriel, passing him off as her illegitimate child. She also hid several of Roma Rozencwajg's extended family members in her flat and aided Bianka, Rozencwajg's niece, who was hidden elsewhere. Olczak secured a job through a man named Frank Puncuh.[80] He was a Yugoslavian consul and his wife, Janka Glocer, was a cousin of Roma Rozencwajg's. Olczak says, "I used to go there often for help, and he gave me this job at 21 Plocka Street."[81] Olczak was employed there at a pen and office supply factory. Through this employment she also managed to get a formerly Jewish owned apartment with two rooms, including a kitchen, on Ciepla Street. The income from her employment and an apartment of her own were not only important for Olczak to survive on her own now that she was no longer living with her family of origin or her employers and being paid by them for her services, these were vital resources that allowed her to aid her former employers. This connection with the extended family members of the Zakrzewski/ Rozencwajg family were vital to allowing Olczak to carry out her rescue efforts.

Renia Rozanman would not stay with Olczak long because she was able to obtain false documents to pass as a gentile under the name of Helena Siekierska. After a close call, the adults

---

[79] See Chapters One, Four, and Five.

[80] In videotaped testimony of Bianka Kraszewski, File no. 13723-4, Tape 4, USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archives, Bianka explains that the Germans did not realize that his wife, and thus, their child, were Jewish.

[81] Testimony of Genowefa Olczak, 6.

that had been hidden in Rozencwajg's apartment all left for fear that they were endangering Roma's child, Gabriel. The Germans came through the building searching for arms but they did not discover that there were Jews instead of arms hidden in Olczak's apartment. After this incident everyone was frightened. Olczak recalls, "I am running here and there to acquaintances looking for a place to hide them."[82] She says, "*We* had a German woman acquaintance, married to a Jew. She knew all about us. So I went to her and asked her, 'what am I to do?'"[83] The woman replied that Olczak could bring them to her. Olczak clarified, "'there are *three* people!' and this women replied 'Bring them over, I'll manage.'"[84] This woman's home was on Kochmalna Street, not far from Olczak's apartment so in the evening she ferried them (Roma, Estka and Karol) to their new hiding place, leaving her with only Gabriel in her apartment. Despite the danger, Olczak took Gabriel to this hiding place several times so that he could see his mother.

Olczak says "*we* had a German woman acquaintance," above. She clearly felt the Zakrzewski/ Rozencwajg family to be her own and she connected her own fate to theirs. She used the family's connections to aid them while they were living in the ghetto as well as when she was assisting them in hiding outside of the ghetto. She went to a mutual acquaintance of the family's when she was in desperate need of help to protect them. This pattern of using the resources of the former employers, the human as well as financial resources, was a common measure taken by rescuers like Olczak.

---

[82] Ibid., 7.
[83] Ibid., 7. Emphasis added by me.
[84] Ibid.

Roma Rozencwajg's niece, Bianka Kraszewski, stayed with her parents for a time but when it was too dangerous Olczak placed her elsewhere.[85] Initially, she moved Kraszewska to a small apartment with a mother, her teenage daughter and the daughter's friend. She only stayed there for one night because the janitor of the building immediately started harassing the mother.[86] The woman gave the blackmailers some money, but the next day Olczak had to move Kraszewska so she went to Janka Puncuh (Glocer), Roma Rozencwajg's cousin, who was married to the Yugoslavian consul. Kraszewska stayed with them in the city for a couple of days and they then took her to their villa in Konstancin where she stayed with their housekeeper, passing as her niece. Bianka became ill while staying with the housekeeper and the woman had to bring a doctor out to treat her. As a result, Kraszewska had to be moved again. Bianka Kraszewski believes that it was Olczak who found a young couple, Karol and Niusia Zubrzycki, to take her into their home. They lived in a ground floor apartment and worked all day so it was imperative that Kraszewska remain silent so that it would appear that no one was home. Olczak brought her books to read to occupy the long days when she had to sit still and silent.

Olczak became an important intersection point in this web of aid that was compromised of her own contacts, the extended family members of her employers, and the connections these family members had from prewar life. When she took Gabriel from the ghetto, Olczak obtained papers through the help of Mr. Karol Pedowski, an acquaintance she had who was working in an informal network that later became part of Żegota.[87] The papers stated that Gabriel was her

---

[85] She was initially in a room rented from Mrs. Sobelewska, a member of Żegota.

[86] Videotaped interview of Bianka Kraszewski, File no. 13723-4, Tape 4.

[87] For more on Żegota, see Irene Tomaszewski and Tecia Werbowski published their co-authored, IreneTomaszewski and Tecia Werbowski, *Code Name Zegota, Rescuing Jews in Occupied Poland, 1942-1945: The Most Dangerous Conspiracy in Wartime Europe.*

illegitimate son, Ryszard. Roma Rozencwajg's sister, Regina, passed under the name Helena Siekierska using false papers that she procured through another Żegota contact, Mrs. Sobelewska, who also rented her a room as well. When Bianka Kraszewski first was smuggled from the ghetto she stayed as well there until Olczak moved her because it was too dangerous for the girl to stay there given the woman's underground activities. The web of aid of which Olczak was a part was rather extensive but even with a considerable number of participants and all their efforts only Bianka Kraszewski and Gabriel survived the war.

Often these prewar domestic servants became a part of their employer's world; they lived in their home, cared for the children, and became familiar with the family and acquaintances that came to their employer's home. Just as sending a child with a maid was a natural solution to the need to get a child from the ghetto for some but a mode of last resort for others, so too was the decision to seek out resources from among the prewar employers contacts. Approaching the extended family members and friends of her prewar employers was a logical solution for Olczak. She knew the family, knew she could trust them, and needed them to augment her own gentile acquaintances. Sometimes, there was a real lack of any resources for a rescuer and they had no other good options. If a woman could not go home and take her charges to her family of origin such as Sapetowa or Zillow, she might just be going through a list of potential resources.

When she was in need of shelter for Bernhard and Anita, Franczeska Ziemiańska also had to use her employer's family and acquaintances to care for her charges. The children's aunt and uncle, the Gruenburgs, had their own domestic, Rozalia Natkaniec, who worked for them before the war. During the Nazi occupation, Natkaniec actively attempted to provide assistance for her former employers and brought them food and information when they were imprisoned in Płaszów. When Ziemiańska was forced to leave her village for fear of denunciation she brought

the children back to Kraków where she immediately sought the assistance of the Gruenburg's former maid, Natkaniec. There is no indication that these women were in any way close, but they were acquainted through their work for these family members. Natkaniec allowed the children to stay the night in her apartment and helped Ziemiańska decide how to best protect the children at that point.[88] The children would end up in a convent for a time before they were denounced and imprisoned at Montelupich and then sent to Plaszów where they were protected by that same aunt and uncle. Ziemiańska was able to let the Gruenberg's know the children were being sent to the camp through Natkaniec and could sometimes obtain news of the children through her. There is no sense in the testimony that Ziemiańska had the same time of familial relationship with her employers extended family as Olczak did, but these family members and their maid were one potential resource she used while trying to protect her charges. The interwar household was a place where Polish gentiles could become acquainted with Polish Jews and where meaningful, such as those of Olczak and the Rozencwajg family, as well as very less meaningful connections were made, as in the case of Ziemiańska. During moments of crisis and desperation, any connection that could help a rescuer protect her charge and not get caught and killed in the process was one to potentially be explored and exploited.

Polish-Jewish Relations

The Nazi occupation of Poland completely upended the social structure placing working-class women of low education in a new position of power over their former employers. Given what we understand about Nazi racial laws, this is not terribly surprising. In this new position of increased power, a considerable number of these former servants used their new social positions to persecute their former employers and gain financially from their persecution. However, many

[88] Anita Lobel, *No Pretty Pictures,* 49.

others, such as those in this chapter, directly defied the Nazi directives and the pervading social norms of the period and placed themselves, and sometimes their own families, in danger as they linked their own fates with that of their former employers. For these women, the policies, propaganda and threats designed to separate Poles and Jews, could not sever the ties that were firmly rooted in prewar life. In addition, some middle-class Jewish parents turn to their former servants, sometimes because she was the only option and they were desperate, but often because she was the *best* option when they were desperate. She loved their child, she could be trusted, and she had already proven herself a capable caregiver. As parents, they could not guarantee the survival of their child themselves because they were targeted by the regime for destruction themselves, so they had to find the next best person to protect their children if they chose to send them away as a means of survival.

Emmanuel Ringelblum, a Polish Jewish historian of the interwar period, wrote that at the outbreak of the Second World War there was a moment of cooperation between Poles and Jews but after the invasion there was "a revival of antisemitism in the full sense of the term."[89] Ringelblum observed that it was difficult for the Nazi occupiers to, "distinguish between Jews and non-Jews," and it was anti-Semitic Poles that "came to their aid and obligingly pointed out the Jews to the Germans."[90] This was what he calls, the "first bond sealed between the Polish Anti-Semites and the Nazis" and by early October of 1939 there were, what he described as "a considerable number of anti-Semitic elements who collaborated with the Germans in waging war

[89] Emmanuel Ringelblum, *Polish-Jewish Relations during the Second World War* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1974), 37.
[90] Ibid.

on the Jews."[91] So, on the one hand we can see the actions of these maids and nannies who engaged in rescue activities and did come to the aid of their prewar employers as acting in defiance of this trend of escalating antisemitism and on the other we can also understand their actions *in spite of this increasing trend* to be even more dangerous.

Ringelblum points to instances where Nazi policy and existing anti-Semitic attitudes separated Poles and Jews. However, we can view the webs of aid that joined Poles and Jews in the protection of Jewish children as one challenge to Nazi policy and the social pressure to conform by either participation in anti-Jewish activities or at least not oppose the persecution and murder of Jews. Polish-Jewish collaboration was often not only vital in the efforts to protect Jews from Nazi persecution, sometimes it was a natural extension of Polish-Jewish relations during the interwar period for many of those involved in these efforts. It was natural for Olczak to reach out to her employers' family members and acquaintances when she needed assistance with her rescue efforts just as it was natural for the family members themselves to reach out to one another. It made sense for Gabriel's family to work with his gentile protector to try to preserve his life while they were all fighting to keep themselves alive.

In Conclusion

The war had changed relations and relationships between caregivers and charges, former employers and employees, and Polish Catholics and Polish Jews. Abnormal became normal; safety was turned into insecurity. The end of the war did not bring an end to these changes or to the connections between these particular groups of Poles and Jews. Aid providers and recipients were forever changed by their experiences. Children and their caregivers became closer through their participation in their mutual conspiracies, although their relationships became far more

[91] Ibid., 37-38.

complicated. Caregivers suffered consequences for their decision to shelter children and had to reaffirm their decision day after day as new difficulties arose. Children lost track of their prewar identities, aspects of their identities, and suffered emotional damage even when they were in the care of someone who loved them so much she was willing to risk her own life to try to keep them alive. When the Nazis were pushed out of Poland, the happy endings still did not come. Children were emotionally scarred and their protectors were reluctant to have their wartime secrets exposed. Many of the children they risked their lives to keep were reclaimed either by family members or Jewish organizations leaving the caregivers grieving.[92] Even in cases when the children were reclaimed by a parent, with the blessing of the protector, such as was the case of Sarah Wall, children and their protectors were left damaged. Wall recalls:

> If your whole life is fractured….everything you were, you're not, there wasn't anything me, (that was) the same. Because my nanny would bleach my hair, she wanted me to look Aryan, and blond, I had a different hair color, I had a different mother, I had a different name, a different religion, a different family, everything was different. So when I found out later, that everything I was, I wasn't, it was like everything became crystalized, like you know a camera that, you stop, and it's frozen.[93]

Wall's caregiver had remained in contact with the girl's mother throughout the war and even sent her a few letters telling her about "the flower" growing in the garden to let her know that the

---

[92] For postwar plight of children, see Emunah Nachmany Gafny, *Dividing Hearts: The Removal of Jewish Children from Gentile Families in Poland in the Immediate Postwar Years*; Nahum Bogner, *At the Mercy of Strangers: The Rescue of Jewish Children with Assumed Identities in Poland*; Joanna Michlic, "Rebuilding Shattered Lives: Some Vignettes of Jewish Children's Lives," in *Early Postwar Poland, in Holocaust Survivors: Resettlement, Memories, Identities*; Joanna B. Michlic, "Who Am I? Jewish Children Search for Identity in Post-War Poland;" For postwar plight of rescuers see Joanna Michlic, "The Stigmatization of Dedicated Polish Women Rescuers During the Second World War and Its Aftermath," *East European Memory Studies,* no. 13 (2013), 1-6.

[93] Videotaped Interview of Sarah Wall, File no. 42189-1, June 14, 1998, Tape 2, 24:05.

child was doing well.[94] After the war, Rodziewiecz traveled with the child to meet her mother in Łódź, knowing that she was going to give her over to her mother. The two women, both of Wall's mothers, lived in a small apartment together with some other ladies (they were actually Wall's mother's relatives), with no one explaining to Wall that this woman was her real mother. Wall was six years old and this woman was a stranger to her. This went on for two months until one day she was playing with some children who said to her, "you must really be stupid, you don't even know your own mother," and she says, all of a sudden, "things cleared but it became muddled in other areas."[95] She felt disbelief when she was told and when it was confirmed by her mother and Rodziewiecz but at the same time she says it was as if "the two had come together," and everything finally made sense.[96]

While this brought Rodziewiecz, Wall and her mother back full circle, again placing everyone in their prewar roles, these roles were altered by Nazi-occupation policy were forever changed. The relationships between caregiver and charge, between the child and her mother, and between the caregiver and her mother were altered by their wartime experiences of conspiracy to save the life of a child.

[94] Ibid., 8:09.
[95] Ibid., 16:37.
[96] Ibid., 21:58.

CONCLUSION

Before the Nazi Occupation and Holocaust, domestic servants were without a great deal of formal power or social standing. Often they were poorly paid, uneducated, and had very little recourse for the abuses they suffered at the hands of their employers. However, the war and occupation turned the world upside down. People were just trying to survive; subverting the law became socially acceptable, and in some cases these women who had been on the very bottom rungs of the social ladder found themselves enjoying a new status with the occupying authorities. Still members of the working class, they suddenly found that their status as gentiles, while still viewed by the Nazi Occupation forces as lowly Slavic peoples, was still significantly better than that of the Jewish population. Their ethnicity now trumped class in every way that mattered. For those domestic servants who had been employed in Jewish households before the war, this was particularly important.

Irene Faitlowicz escaped from the Warsaw ghetto and stayed briefly with the family's former washerwoman and she worked in a photography studio to earn money until her hiding place was burned.[1] Forced to leave, she went to another studio in Włochy that she heard was run by a young woman who did not have any experience with photography and might need help. Before the war, it was owned by a Jew who was taken away and now a young Pole, Ola, was running it. It is likely that this Ola was probably cleaning the shop before the war and managed to convince someone to leave her with it, either the owners or the authorities. Ola was beautiful and blond and she took Irene in and she protected her and her identity for two years. People started coming to the studio and Irene helped Ola by working in the lab and with the retouching. Ola did everything for her, washed clothes, cleaned, and just wanted Irene to do the professional

[1] Taped interview of Irene Faitlowicz, File no. 12272-3, February 20, 1996, Tape 3 of 4, USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive.

work to keep up the façade that she was running the business. After the Warsaw Ghetto Rising some Germans came and told Ola they wanted the women to take pictures of a block that was destroyed. Ola was so bold, that even though she was not even sure exactly what they wanted from her she agreed because they promised her photo supplies if the women came and they were getting low. Irene did not want to go because it was dangerous, but Ola threatened her into compliance. The Germans gave them a large stock of supplies for their work.

Ola knew nothing about photography and was merely the cleaning lady for the studio before the war, but somehow the beautiful blond convinced someone to leave her in charge. This moment of upheaval turned a lowly maid into a businesswoman, even if she did need to find someone to actually do all of the professional work. This happened as a result of the changed social landscape. Many prewar domestic servants lost their positions as a result of the occupation and had to engage in other activities to support themselves. For many this would mean engaging in illegal trade in the black market that developed as a result of the occupation.[2] These women did not get rich as a result of this activity by any means, but it did demonstrate a willingness to take risks, to be assertive and took them outside of the domestic realm. Some of these women would use this altered social situation and new status to betray their former Jewish employers and benefit economically or to just stick it to a former Jewish employer that they felt deserved it. Others would use this new situation to subvert Nazi authority not to just secure their own economic security, but sometimes to save a Jewish child or aid a Jewish family that they had worked for before the war.

[2] Perhaps the term "second economy" rather than black market would be more appropriate here. Black market implies illicit activity and in reality this trade was made illegal by an occupying power. This term was proposed by Dalia Ofer in 2013 at the annual Saul Kagan Claims Conference Academic Scholars workshop at the USHMM.

These women took great risks when they participated in rescue and aid activities. Entering the ghettos, passing goods into the ghettos, ferrying children and adults out of the ghettos, obtaining housing, legal documents, or employment for Jews living clandestinely outside the ghetto walls, or concealing or passing off a Jewish child as their own were tremendously risky endeavors. These activities required a great deal of knowledge, the ability to seek out and take advantage of resources, and the ability to exploit a situation when needed. Sometimes when these women were essentially caught, their brazenness and quick thinking was all they had to rely on. This could mean feigning outrage or becoming aggressive when confronted by someone suspicious of their activity, being able to stick to a story and tell it over and over under extreme stress, or knowing who to contact when they needed emergency aid. The women who engaged in this behavior had already become empowered to some degree as a result of leaving their families of origin and assuming responsibility in their employers' home but this new situation pushed them even further.

The act of rescue and protecting a Jewish charge built on this newfound independence, empowering former domestic servants even further. This would result in a new set of expectations for their lives postwar. Many of these maids would come to believe they earned the right to raise the children they protected independently and that the extended families of these children should be grateful to them for their efforts, but often this did not happen. Former maids who had been working in other capacities may have also felt like they had transcended the social barriers that kept them in the lower class before the war but when they went abroad they were expected to become maids again. We can readily see these disappointments in the postwar experiences of rescuer, Janina Zillow.

Elizabeth Grotch lived as Janina Zillow's daughter until liberation. After liberation, Zillow's entire family was arrested for their pro-Nazi activity during the war. Zillow tried to get them out of jail by saying they helped save a Jewish child and implored her young charge to testify on their behalf. Zillow was extremely upset that the girl could not or did not convince the prosecutor that the family protected her. Upset, Zillow accused, "After all I did for you, you couldn't do this for me?"[3] Elizabeth remembers being very sorry and upset with herself for not being persuasive enough to convince the prosecutor of the family's good deeds. This was extremely difficult for Zillow yet she continued to care for Grotch while attending the trials and dealing with the stressful situation. Both of Grotch's parents died during the war so she stayed in Lublin, Poland until 1946 with Zillow.

Soon, Grotch's aunt found her name on a World Jewish Congress survivor list and contacted Zillow, asking that the child come to live with them in the United States. The family did not wish to separate Grotch from her caregiver or to have the child travel alone so they also requested that Zillow come with her. In 1946 Grotch traveled to Sweden with her caregiver but it was difficult to get Zillow admittance into the United States due to the immigration quotas. The family was adamant about not separating the two so the child and caregiver waited in Sweden for two years. During this time Grotch attended school while they lived in a boarding house for other refugees. Zillow and Grotch then traveled from Sweden to Cuba, where they stayed for almost another two years before arriving in the United States at the very end of 1949.

When Zillow and her charge finally reached the United States, all was not well between the caregiver and Grotch's extended family that brought her and the child there. The family anticipated that Zillow would resume her prewar occupation as a domestic servant working for

[3] Videotaped testimony of Elizabeth Grotch, File no. 26284, Tape 3, The USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archives, 14:20.

them and caring for Grotch. Before the war Zillow was very close to both of Grotch's parents and for many years remained very upset that the couple died. She was angry that the child's parents who she, "was close to," died while Elizabeth's grandparents survived someplace else.[4] Zillow blamed Grotch's grandfather for the death of Grotch's father because he sent him back to Poland and she talked frequently about the ordeal which exacerbated tensions. Spending years under Zillow's care, Grotch also became a devout Catholic. The two of them talked at length about the fear of the uncertainty that they were left with after their wartime experiences. Zillow was religious and superstitious, steeped in what Grotch described as peasant Polish Catholicism, meaning she did not attend church regularly but she saw signs.[5] Zillow also remained anti-Semitic all of her life. These factors would all further complicate relations between Zillow and the child's family.

These issues were compounded by the new living arrangements. As a Polish Catholic woman she had a hard time fitting into this new world. She left her home country with the child that she loved and found herself in an alien landscape and this was likely quite difficult. At first they lived with the child's aunt and uncle but the arrangement did not work well because Grotch says the former nanny did not get along with them. Zillow felt like those "well-to-do people didn't seem to have much use for her."[6] They then moved to New York and lived with Grotch's mother's sister. Grotch explained, this was still very hard for nanny, *who had been very free and*

[4] Videotaped testimony of Elizabeth Grotch, File no. 26284, Tape 3, The USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archives, 20:02.
[5] Ibid., 22:00.
[6] Ibid., 19:49.

used to making decisions to go back to being the domestic."[7] This woman had cared for Elizabeth from the time she took her from the ghetto until 1949. She had been independent and the primary decision maker during this period, and had successfully protected her charge. They tried for some years to make arrangements that work but it just did not so Elizabeth and Zillow parted company when Elizabeth was thirteen. Grotch stayed with her aunt and Zillow moved to Long Island but they kept in touch, until Zillow died five years later.[8]

Zillow had moved from the home of her family of origin and found work with Grotch's family. She may have worked in other households prior to working for this one. Grotch recalls of their prewar life, "She was literally the mother I knew. My mother was, well, before the war she never took care of the children. I was just taken to say hello and goodnight."[9] In her position as a nanny this woman was trusted to care for her employers' child, following the directives of her employers and charged with making the decisions involved in the day-to-day hands-on care of them while their parents were away. Grotch recalls that her nanny also behaved in a motherly fashion toward her employer, "My nanny was actually taking care of my mother and me. My mother was like her oldest child."[10] When the war broke out and Grotch's father was deported, Zillow stayed with her former employer and charge traveling with them to Lwów, earning money alongside her former employer by knitting items and selling them to benefit them all.

---

[7] Videotaped testimony of Elizabeth Grotch, File no. 26284, Tape 3, The USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archives, 24:30. Emphasis mine.

[8] Lillian Trilling, Elizabeth Grotch's cousin that Zillow removed from the ghetto and sent to Warsaw also survived the war and was reunited with the women in New York.

[9] Videotaped testimony of Elizabeth Grotch, File no. 26284, Tape 1, The USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archives, 9:10.

[10] Ibid., 9:14.

When the Jews were ordered into the ghetto, Grotch and her mother traveled to Warsaw to join her extended family in that ghetto and the nanny still continued to try to look after them, eventually taking Grotch and her cousin from the ghetto. Grotch had her own apartment and was prepared to attempt to support these girls, along with a Jewish baby until they were denounced and the plan had to change. Zillow then, despite the tension and discord it caused between her and her mother, brought a Jewish child into her family or origin and stood her ground to keep this child. After she had to leave, she continued to keep the child even after the war, continuing to be responsible for this child emotionally and financially.

I argue that this increasing responsibility that began when they left their families of origin helped prepare Zillow, and rescuers like her to assume the role of protector.[11] She had left home and been independent, finding employment and assuming an important role in the household of her employers. In this home she became attached not only to the child she was caring for, but also to her employers. Socialized in an anti-Semitic household growing up, this woman still came to see this Jewish family as her "own." She grieved for their deaths and risked her own life, as well as the lives of her entire family to protect her prewar charge. She loved her charge as a mother loves their child. They became like family to her, no longer "others" but rather members of her community of moral obligation. The independence and confidence she gained through her employment coupled with these feelings of attachment to her charge made her decision to attempt to rescue the child a natural choice. While we can certainly see her activities as heroic and risky, they also seem to be a normal extension of her prewar behavior.

When Zillow arrived with her charge in the United States she had not only had the experience of employment and developed an intimate relationship, and taken incredible risks to

[11] It also prepared women to display their agency through the persecution of their former employers as discussed in chapter four.

protect this child; she had successfully supported herself and the child for an extended period of time. She had become Elizabeth Grotch's mother in the absence of her deceased mother. Now, after leaving her entire former life behind to bring this child through Sweden and Cuba to the United States, this family expected that she would again take her place as "the help." The change in the social and political situation under Nazi-occupation in a way let this woman, and other domestic servants turned rescuers like her, out of the box so to speak and this family was asking her to squeeze herself back in. And she just did not fit there anymore.

Former domestic servants who saved their charges were also disappointed when after the war they were often not allowed to keep the children they had protected. In the case of the Foxmans and their nanny, Bronisława Kurpi from the previous chapter, both parents survived so they had a natural claim to the child they placed in her care even though she felt justified in keeping him. In cases where a child's immediate family was murdered during the Holocaust, many Jewish children were still removed from their wartime rescuers even though she was the only parent figure they had left. Sometimes they would be sent to extended family members but other times they were removed from the care of their rescuers to be placed in an institution either in Europe, Palestine, or the United States. Prior to the Holocaust there were roughly a million Jewish children under the age of four in Poland.[12] According to a Report of the Central Jewish Committee of Poland only about 3 percent of those children survived. Polish Jews were amongst the hardest hit of all of the victims of Nazi persecution with only about ten percent of the once thriving community surviving.[13] All Jews who found themselves within the reach of Nazi racial policies were targeted for persecution and death, and children were especially vulnerable in all

[12] Nachum Bogner, *At The Mercy of Strangers: The Rescue of Jewish Children with Assumed Identities in Poland*, (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2009), 15.
[13] Ibid.

these countries. The Holocaust devastated the Jewish population and the restoration of the remnant was very important to many Jewish organizations after the war. Children were especially hard hit and so the recovery of these children to the Jewish community was a top priority for many groups. The wishes of the children and the efforts of their wartime protectors was not however taken into account by organizations such as Jewish organization such as the Zionist Koordynacja for the Redemption of Jewish Children and often their efforts stood in direct opposition of the wishes of the caregivers and their charges.

Jose Lefkovich traveled around the Polish countryside after the war seeking out surviving Jewish children. "Poles didn't want to part with them, but we had tremendous powers," he recalls.[14] He removed the Jewish children from the Polish homes where they were hidden during the war not to reunite them with their families, but rather for authorities, meaning Jewish organizations. He characterizes his activity as an effort to "save Jewish little children that were thrown away in the moment of anguish, in the moment when the parents were taken to the gas chambers."[15] Sometimes he and his colleagues faced difficulty retrieving the children because "the Polaks didn't want to give them up. They wanted to have free servants," so they used all sorts of methods to take the children.[16] Mala Orbach was involved in the efforts to recover Jewish children from Polish homes and she said she once used gold and vodka to reclaim a set of twins from a peasant woman who had them.[17]

---

[14] Videotaped testimony of Jose Lefkovich, File no. 27260-4, March 19, 1997, Tape 5, The USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive, 28:23.

[15] Videotaped testimony of Jose Lefkovich, File no. 27260-4, March 19, 1997, Tape 6, The USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive, 0:35.

[16] Ibid., 1:16.

[17] Videotaped testimony of Mala Orbach, File no. 29242-40, May 4, 1997, The USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive.

The women of my study knew their charges from before the war and then expended a great deal of energy protecting them from harm during the Nazi Occupation and Holocaust. They risked their own lives, sometimes the lives of their friends and family, they sometimes had to cut ties with people they cared about and lived with the stress of knowing they could be caught at any moment. Often, the bond between the caregivers and their charges grew even stronger as a result of their participation in this conspiracy. It was, after all this hard for many of these women to return children to their a parent when they survived but must have been harder still to surrender children to extended family the children may not have been familiar with and even more difficult to give them over to total strangers who were planning to send them to an institution. Many of these women felt like mothers to these children and their separation was heartbreaking. Genia Olczak, who appears frequently in this dissertation willingly sent her young charge with his extended family and would never have biological children of her own. Young Gabriel was the only son she would ever love and she would think of his son, Paul as her grandson.

And finally, rescuers received no recognition for their efforts if they remained in Poland because people were not discussing rescue in the postwar period and saving Jews was certainly not looked up as favorable wartime activity. These women who went to great lengths to thwart the Nazi authorities and hide their activities from potential denouncers, could not freely talk about their experiences after the war and they received no real praises for their efforts. Joanna Michlic argues that in the post-war period dedicated female rescuers were unable to reveal their wartime activities because it would result in stigmatization for their efforts.[18] During the

[18] Joanna B. Michlic, "The Stigmatization of Dedicated Polish Women Rescuers During the Second World War and Its Aftermath," in *East European Memory Studies* No. 13, March 2013, 1-6.

interwar period ethno-nationalistic press labeled ethnic Poles who defended the rights of the Jewish minority against anti-Semitic violence or persecution as "Jews," "Jewish uncles and aunts" or "Jewish protectors and Jewish saviors."[19] These people were, according to Michlic, perceived and treated like traitors to the Polish collective by ethno-nationalists and were thought to have violated cultural codes.[20] She argues that during the war, aid to Jews was perceived in the same fashion. By choosing to assist and thus violating the cultural code, Polish helpers were stigmatized as not belonging to the national body as a result of their association with Jews and their transgression.

After the war, there was also still this stigmatization for rescuers for their attachments to Jews. Rescuer accounts of their activity also served as a reminder that rescue was a minority activity among ethnic Poles and a reminder of Polish persecution of their Jewish population (and their Polish helpers) by many while under Nazi occupation.[21] Violent acts of antisemitism occurred regularly in Poland *after* the war, such as the Kielce pogrom that was perpetrated on July 4, 1946. As a result, rescuers would have likely perceived that it could be been dangerous to talk openly about their activities during the war which meant that they had to continue keeping secrets from people and continue to mask their wartime lives and suffering. More practically, hiding a Jewish charge during the occupation put others at risk including members of a household. Sometimes these household members were a part of the conspiracy and sometimes

---

[19] Ibid., 2.

[20] Ibid.

[21] In Jan T. Gross, *Fear: Antisemitism in Poland After Auschwitz. An Essay in Historical Interpretation* (New York: Random House, 2007), Gross argues that the guilt and shame of Polish behavior towards their Jewish co-citizens was manifested by acts of violence towards the Jews who survived the Holocaust and remained in Poland immediately after the war. He credits these feeling of guilt and shame as the real root cause of the Kielce pogrom on July 4, 1946.

they did not know they were actually hiding someone. The idea that a Pole would knowingly put their own family at risk to save a Jew was seen as questionable behavior by many. Furthermore, putting others at risk without their consent could have been viewed in very negative ways. In addition, it was believed by some, that hiding a Jewish charge in a building or a village could put all the residents at risk for retribution even if they were unaware of the activity. Regardless of whether this would have actually come to pass, the idea that it was possible could have been enough to make those who felt they had placed at risk feel resentment against the aid provider if they found out later about their wartime activities. In short, rescue and aid activities, while they did serve to thwart the aims of the occupiers, were not viewed in the same way as other clandestine resistance because it was associated with the protection of Jews, not ethnic Poles.

Many rescuers would be disappointed with their treatment after the war. Either because they were expected to resume their lives as domestic servants like nothing had changed, or because they were separated from their charges after the war, or because after the war they had to continue to carry the burden of their clandestine activities for years to come, often without their co-conspirator. These women made great sacrifices to engage in rescue activities and after the war were often left without their charge in a country that was devastated by war, and facing stark economic conditions. Later, the situation in Poland would improve and discussions about rescue and wartime activities would begin to open up, but this was a slow process.

So, at the end of the day what does this all mean and why are these rescue efforts so important? First of all, because they bear witness to the fact that rescue of Jews by their Polish co-citizens did occur. And, it occurred not only among social equals like neighbors, professional colleagues, prewar schoolmates and so on, but also among the lower classes. The Polish peasants and working class are often viewed as particularly anti-Semitic but the maids and nannies of my

study were all from either peasant or working class backgrounds and they not only crossed the ethno-religious boundaries that existed in Polish society, they also managed to overlook class distinctions that separated them.

Jan T. Gross argues that antisemitism was a constant in Polish society that can be traced back well before the outbreak of the Second World War and just as easily found after the war. He uses the example of the Kielce pogrom and the peasants who after the war went searching the mass Jewish graves in search of "post-Jewish gold" as examples of this.[22] I cannot argue that against this assertion generally. One can readily find examples of antisemitism throughout Polish history. The reluctance to disclose their rescue activities of the domestic servants in this study are evidence of this. Many of the children that remained in the care of their rescuers, either for good or for an extended period until they were reclaimed by family after the war, kept their Polish Catholic identities while they were in Poland because it seemed safer.[23] However, this study illustrates that assumptions about Polish anti-Jewish attitudes does need to be nuanced and problematized. The overwhelming majority women of this study who did rescue and aid their former charges did not with no expectation of compensation for their activities. They most often supported these children out of their own meager wages or with some support from the families

---

[22] Jan T. Gross, *Fear: Antisemitism in Poland After Auschwitz. An Essay in Historical Interpretation* (New York: Random House, 2007); and Jan T. Gross with Irena Grudzińska Gross, *Golden Harvest: Events at the Periphery of the Holocaust* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

[23] For example, in videotaped interview of Milla Tenenbaum, File no. 33627-4, September 16, 1997, Tape 3, The USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive, Tenenbaum is hidden by her prewar maid and takes on her last name going by Milla Krzeminska while passing as her daughter during the war. When the war was over she was afraid to admit she was Jewish and she just wanted to be able to do the same things the other children were doing. Her caregiver enrolled her in the third grade under the last name of Krzeminska as her daughter and Milla did not admit to the other students that she was Jewish.

when it was available.[24] For the most part, these rescuers did not even see their activities as anything heroic or out of the ordinary. When asked about her motivations for her rescue activities and why she demonstrated such loyalty to the family she aided, Genia Olczak replies, "How could one leave a family to the cruel fate, leave a weak woman with a small child, while the father went to war to defend his country? There were many people like me."[25] She did not see her activities as heroic, she felt like she was just doing what was necessary to take care of the people she cared about. This behavior was absolutely rooted in and an extension of the prewar relationships that had developed in the intimate zone of the household before the war. This Jewish family had become part of Genia's community of moral obligation and they were not seen as "others" or as merely members of a flattened category of "Jews," they were her own; her family. While out on the streets and in public, Polish society often was made up of "Poles" and "Jews" that may not have felt attachments or obligations to one another, in cases like this where rescue or attempted rescue was carried out by a prewar domestic servant, in the intimate zone of the family and the household, Poland was often a coherent community where mutual aid happened.

[24] This can be seen in the case of the Foxman family. Mr. and Mrs. Foxman paid Mrs. Kurpi to care for their child, Abraham and she regularly asked them for more money, threatening to turn the child in if they did not pay. While we do not know her motivations for her behavior, we do know that she went had the child baptized as her own and went to great lengths to try to retain custody of him after the war. So, while she did to a large degree extort money from her former employers, she also offered to take the child and clearly wanted to keep him as her own, so this is not a simple case of rescue for payment. We can also look at the case of Genia Olczak and her protection of the Rozencwajg family. She did not accept payment for her efforts but the family did contribute financially to her efforts in order to make them possible. This was absolutely not a case of rescue for payment in any way, shape, or form.

[25] Testimony of Genowefa Olczak, October 4, 2005, conducted and transcribed, with commentary by Bianka Kraszewski, 5.

The Second World War meant harsh occupation and devastation in Poland. The end of the war, that moment when the German army retreated, the Soviets arrived and the fighting ended is referred to as The Zero Hour.[26] This is the moment that most historians designate as the beginning of the communist control of Eastern Europe.[27] Anne Applebaum writes, "To those who lived through this change of power, zero hour felt like a turning point: something very concrete came to an end, and something very new began. From now on, many people said to themselves, everything would be different. And it was."[28] For the subjects of this study, the end of the war was the zero hour. Nothing was the same. The Nazi threat was removed but replaced with new uncertainties rather than happy endings. Hidden Jewish children found out the truth about their prewar identities, found out that their mothers were not really their mothers, learned that they had not always been Polish Catholics, and most soon realized that they would not spend the rest of their childhood with this caregiver in Poland.

For the rescuers themselves, everything would change as well. Most would lose their charges, either voluntarily relinquishing them to surviving parents or family members, giving them up because they could not afford to care for them, or through the forced removal of the children as they were reclaimed by the surviving Jewish community. Family life and friendships and relationships had to start over, often without full disclosure of the rescuers wartime experiences. Often new housing or employment had to be sought. Many of these rescuers had been independent and relied on their own wits, street savvy, and sometime outright brashness to not only survive, but also to protect their charges. Many had engaged in illegal activities and

---

[26] Anne Applebaum, *Iron Curtain: The Crushing of Eastern Europe, 1944-1956* (New York: Doubleday, 2012), 2.
[27] Ibid.
[28] Ibid.

trade and worked in new professions to support themselves and had transgressed from their prewar social status. The shifting status of these lower class women in many cases would lead to higher expectation in the postwar period. They had been independent and left the domestic realm, and some of them may not have wanted to go back. This desire to have more that was a result of their wartime experiences may have also been experienced by other Poles. During this Zero Hour, amidst the devastation and disappointment there was also possibility for change and for new lives. It was during this moment of potential that the communists came in and sought to come to power and dictate how that change would occur.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

BIBLIOGRAPHY

PRIMARY SOURCES

Archives

Jewish Historical Institute, Warsaw, Poland

Yad Vashem Archives, Jerusalem, Israel

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives, Washington, D.C.

University of Southern California Visual History Archives, accessed at the USHMM

Jewish Historical Institute, Warsaw, Poland

Record Group 301, Testimonies of Jewish Survivors of the Holocaust

RG 301/199, Testimony of Adam Landesberg, May 19, 1945

RG 301/5150 Testimony of Janina Brandwajn, September 11, 1947

RG 301/1424 Testimony of Sabina Kryszek and Staś Kryszek, Date Unreadable

RG 301/3605 Testimony of Helen and Joseph Foxman, March 17, 1947

Record Group 302, Memoirs of Jewish Survivors of the Holocaust

Record Group 349 Righteous Among the Nations Files

RG 349/707 Rozalia Natkaniec

Yad Vashem Archives

Record Group 0.3 Yad Vashem Testimonies

RG 0.3/2714 Testimony of Gertruda Babilinska, November 1964
Yad Vashem, YVA RG 0.3/ 2359, December 1963

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives, Washington, D.C.

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, RG15.079M, Underground Archives of the Warsaw Ghetto: The Emmanuel Ringelblum Archives, "A Maid, A Spy," Ring. I/ 442.

Oral Testimonies

RG 50, Oral History, Christian Rescuers Project, Interview with Gertruda Babilinksa, 50.012*0001

RG 50, Oral History, Second Generation of Long Island Collection Interview of Helen Foxman, RG 50.205*0028

USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive Testimonies

Adams, Maury, File no. 08896-3, Nov. 17, 1995

Alberts, Zora, File no. 39770-3, March 25, 1998

Arnel, Jack, File no. 19111-3, August 29, 1996

Asher, Sylvia Bell, File no. 24511-3, January 1997

Avny, Esther, File no. 13775-3, March 28, 1996

Balaban, Anna, File no. 26141, February 26, 1997

Bardach, Daniel Jerzy (Ludwik Kowalczyk), File no. 48875-57, December 14, 1998

Baruch, Rose, File no. 23808-1, Tape 2, May 1, 1997

Berliner-Pear, Mirja-Miki, File no. 48408-2, December 29, 1998

Bestman, Ruth, File no. 30004-3, April 23, 1997

Biderman, Halina, File no. 23694-1, November 29, 1996

Birnbaum, Rachel, File no. 06703-5, December 21, 1995

Binstock, Leah, File no. 21767-5, Tape 1, October 27, 1996

Blank, Regina, File no. 21412-3, October 29, 1996

Blitz, Zofia, File no. 40853-3, March 30, 1998

Boren, Adam, File no. 18575-3, August 14, 1996

Borgenicht, David, File no. 10797-2, January 10, 1996

Cassidy, Frederyka, File no. 34645-40, Tape 2, July 29, 1997

Celnik, Anna, File no. 07750-3, October 19, 1995

Cyngler, Danka, File no. 225110-40, November 14, 1996

Cytrynowski, Alta, File no. 42792-3, Tape 1, June 29, 1998

Davis, Edward, File no. 28953-38, May 9, 1997

Degan, Anna, File no. 37007-40, October 15, 1997

Diamond, Karl, File no. 160392-2, Tape 1, June 6, 1996

Dickman, Betty, File no. 28331-2, Tape 2, April 14, 1997

Englander, Roman, File no.16533-3, June 26, 1996

Feldman, Morris, File no. 22863-5, November 17, 1996

Feinsilver, June, File no. 10031-5, December 13, 1995

Figlarz, Genia, File no.35508-2, November 17, 1997

Finkel, Carmela, Interview no. 12543-4, February 25, 1996

Fontak, Lola, File no. 09038-2, November 20, 1995

Freed, Stanley, File no. 18557-3, August 14, 1996

Frisch, Irene, File no. 21825-3, October 28, 1996

Geller, David, File no. 02193, April 27, 1997

Gertel, Cecile, File no. 02287-0, April 25, 1997

Goldstein, Esther, File no. 11341-2, Tape 2, January 22, 1996

Gordon, Isaac, File no. 51445-3, Tape 1, February 28, 2001

Goss, Lillian, File no. 41069-3, April 2, 1998

Gotfryd, Hanna, File no. 24543-99, January 7, 1997

Graj, Albert, File no. 35469-40, August 19. 1997

Grotch, Elizabeth, File no. 26284, February 21, 1997

Grundman, Samuel, File no. 02855-3, May 24, 1995

Halbeuch, Klara, File no. 03582-6, June 28, 1995

Halperin, Yaacov, File no. 08789-2, Tape 1, November 15, 1995

Hamery, Regina, File no. 28042-40, February 19, 1997

Hauptman, Tola, File no. 23498-40, November 26, 1996

Hemd, Chana, File no. 38978-1, Tape 1, March 4, 1998

Herzog, Deborah, File no. 42124-40, March 14, 1998

Hilfstein, Max, File no. 09989-3, Tape 2, December 12, 1995

Hirsch, Sabrina, File no. 27272-4, Tape 3, March 19, 1997

Hochberg, Rosa, File no. 38828-0, December 12, 1997

Hofman, George, File no. 17554-5, July 17, 1996

Imich, Jan, File no. 35827-23, September 9, 1997

Jackson, Dina, File no. 46745-0, November 22, 1998

Klein, Gerda, File no. 09725-1, December 7, 1995

Kleiner, Elias, File no. 00476-2, Tape 1, January 5, 1995

Kliman, Jack, File no.11879-1, Tape 2, February 23, 1996

Kraszewski, Bianka, File no.13723-4, March 29, 1996

Melezin, Rachela, File No. 03369-3, Tape 1, June 21, 1995

Lowi, Beno, File no. 35591-4, Tape 1, November 17, 1997

Mitchley, Halina, File no. 40467, February 20, 1998

Skotnicka- Zajdman, Renata, File no. 37068-4, October 23, 1997

Tenenbaum, Milla, File no. 36627-4, September 16, 1997

Winkelman, Marie Lubowski, File no. 18554-2, Tape 1, August 14, 1996

Wall, Sarah, File no. 42189-1, June 14, 1998

Presses and Journals

Chwila

Kurjer Codzienny 1934, 1937, 1938

Nasz Przegląd 1925, 1931, 1934

Pracownica Polska

Chwila. Lwow, 1931

Dobra Godspodyni. 1925

Dziecko i matka. 1933

Gazeta dla kobiet. 1930, 1931, 1933, 1934, 1935, 1936, 1937

Gazeta warszawska. Warsaw, 1934

Glos kobiet. 1920-1921

Kurjer codzienny. Warsaw, 1932, 1934, 1937, 1938

Kurjer warszawski. Warsaw, 1937

Nasz przegląd. 1925, 1934, 1938

Pracownica polska. 1921-1939

Rodzina i dziecko. 1935, 1936, 1937, 1938

Zycie kobiece. 1927

Zycie kobiet. 1937

Unpublished Memoirs and Interviews

Olczak, Genia, Testimony of, Warsaw, Poland, October 4, 2005, translated and transcribed by Bianka Kraszewski. Introduction to Interview, Bianka Kraszewski, February 1, 2006, Provided by Paul Zakrzewski.

Ruda, Nava. *One Day This Will be a Film: Childhood Memories of a Girl from the Lvov Ghetto.* United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Acc. 2004.615.

Published Memoirs

Choco, Isabelle."My First Life." In *Stolen Youth: Five Women's Survival in the Holocaust,* "edited by David Silberklang and Danielle Zaidman-Maurer, 1-72. New York and Jerusalem: Yad Vashem and the Holocaust Survivor's Memoirs Project, 2005.

Foxman, Joseph. *In the Shadow of Death.* New York and Jerusalem: Yad Vashem and the Holocaust Survivor's Project, 2011.

"Testimony of Helen Foxman." In *Mothers Sisters, Resisters: Oral Histories of Women Who Survived the Holocaust,* edited by Gurewitsch, Brana, 33-46. Tuscaloosa and London: University of Alabama Press, 1998.

Klapper-Karpiński, Jan. "My Nanny." In *The Last Eyewitness: Children of the Holocaust Speak, Volume 2,* edited by Jakub Gutenbaum and Agnieszka Latała, 107-109. Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 2005.

Lobel, Anita. *No Pretty Pictures: A Child of War.* New York: Greenwillow Books, 1998.

Nelken, Halina. *And Yet! I am Still Here.* University of Massachusetts Press, 1999.

Ringelblum, Emmanuel. *Notes from the Warsaw Ghetto: The Journal of Emmanuel Ringelblum.* New York: Shocken Books, 1974.

Ringelblum, Emmanuel. *Polish-Jewish Relations During the Second World War.* Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1974.

Sonnenberg, Sven. "Journey to Hell: Under Fascism." In *The Last Eyewitness: Children of the Holocaust Speak, Vol. 2,* edited by Jakub Gutenbaum and Agnieszka Latała, 235-271. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2005.

Weissberg, Dov. *I Remember.* London and Tel Aviv: Freund Publishing House, 1998.

SECONDARY SOURCES

Baer, Elizabeth R. and Myrna Goldenberg, eds. *Experience and Expression: Women, the Nazis, and the Holocaust.* Detroit: Wayne State University, 2003.

Bailly, Danielle, ed. *The Hidden Children of France, 1940-1945: Stories of Survival.* Albany: State University of New York, 2010.

Bartoszewski, Wladyslaw. *The Blood Shed Unites Us.* Warsaw, Poland: Interpress Publishers, 1970.

Bartoszewski, Wladyslaw and Zofia Lewin, Eds. *Righteous Among Nations: How Poles Helped*

the Jews 1939-1945. London: Earlscourt Publications Limited, 1969.

Bender, Sara and Shmuel Krakowski, eds. *The Encyclopedia of Righteous Among the Nations: Rescuers of Jews During the Holocaust, Poland. Vol. 1 and Vol. 2*. Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2004.

Blobaum, Robert, ed. *Antisemitism and Its Opponents In Modern Poland*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005.

Blueglass, Kerry, ed. *Hidden From the Holocaust: Stories of Resiliant Children who Survived and Thrived.* London: Praeger, 2003.

Bogner, Nahum. *At the Mercy of Strangers: The Rescue of Jewish Children with Assumed Identities in Poland.* Yad Vashem: Jerusalem, 2009.

Davies, Norman. "Ethnic Diversity in Twentieth-Century Poland." In *From Shtetl to Socialism: Studies from Polin*, edited by Antony Polonsky, pg-pg. London, Washington: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 1993.

Dean, Martin, ed. *The Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos, 1933-1945, Volume II, Ghettos in German-Occupied Eastern Europe, Part A.* Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2012.

Drucker, Malka. *Rescuers: Portraits of Moral Courage in the Holocaust.* New York: Holmes and Meier, 1992.

Engelking, Barbara. *Holocaust and Memory: The Experience of the Holocaust and Its Consequences, An Investigation Based on Personal Narratives*. London and New York: Leicester University Press, 2001.

Engelking Barbara and Jacek Leociak. *The Warsaw Ghetto: A Guide to the Perished City.* New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2009.

Fein, Helen. *Accounting for Genocide. National Responses and Jewish Victimization During the Holocaust.* New York: Free Press, 1979.

Fogelman, Eva. *Conscience and Courage: Rescuers of Jews During the Holocaust.* New York: Doubleday, 1994.

Fox, Elaine Saphier, ed. *Out of Chaos: Hidden Children Remember the Holocaust.* Evanston: Northwestern, 2013.

Gilbert, Martin. *The Righteous: The Unsung Heroes of the Holocaust.* New York: Holt, 2003.

Gross, Jan T. *Fear: Anti-Semtism in Poland After Auschwitz: An Essay in Historical Interpretation.* New York: Random House, 2006.

_____. *Polish Society Under German Occupation: The Generalgouvernement, 1939-1944.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979.

_____. *Neighbors: The Destruction of the Jewish Community in Jedwabne, Poland.* Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2001.

Gross, Jan T., and Irena Grudzinska Gross. *Golden Harvest: Events at the Periphery of the Holocaust.* Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2012.

Garbarini, Alexandra. *Jewish Responses to Persecution, Volume II, 1938-1940.* Maryland: AltaMira Press, 2011.

Grabowski, Jan. *Hunt for Jews.* Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2013.

_____. *Rescue for Money: Paid Helpers in Poland, 1939-1945.* Search and Research: Lectures and Papers, 13. Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2008.

Grynberg, Michał. *Words to Outlive Us: Eyewitness Accounts from the Warsaw Ghetto.* New York: Picador, 2002.

Gurewitsch, Brana, ed. *Mothers, Sisters, Resisters: Oral Histories of Women who Survived the Holocaust.* Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1998.

Gutenbaum, Jakub and Agnieszka Latała, eds. *The Last Eyewitness: Children of the Holocaust Speak, Vol. 2.* Evanston: Northwestern, 2005.

Gutman, Israel. "Introduction: The Distinctiveness of the Łódź Ghetto," In *Łódź Ghetto: A History,* edited by Isaiah Trunk, xxix-lvii. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2008.

Gutman, Yisreal, and Shmuel Krakowski. *Unequal Victims: Poles and Jews During WWII.* Holocaust Library, 1986.

Harvey, Elizabeth. *Women in the Nazi East: Agents and Witnesses of Germanization.* New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003.

Heberer, Patricia, ed. *Children During the Holocaust.* Maryland: AltaMira Press, 2011.

Heller, Celia. *Edge of Destruction.* Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1993.

Celia Heller. "Poles of a Jewish Background- The Case of Assimilation without Integration in Interwar Poland," in *Studies on Polish Jewry 1919-1939,*edited by Joshua A. Fishman. New York: YIVO, 1974.

Henry, Patrick. *We Only Know Men: The Rescue of Jews in France During the Holocaust.*

Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2007.

Herzog, Dagmar, ed. *Brutality and Desire: War and Sexuality in Europe's Twentieth Century*. New York: Palgrave, 2009.

Hochberg-Mariańska, Maria and Noe Gruss, eds. *The Children Accuse.* London: Vallentine Mitchell, 1996.

Hoffman, Eva. *Shtetl: The Life and Death of a Small Town and the World of Polish Jews.* New York: Mariner Books, 1997.

Huener, Johnathan. *Auschwitz, Poland, and the Commemoration, 1945-1979.* Athens: Ohio University Press, 2003.

Hymen, Paula E. "The Modern Jewish Family: Image and Reality" in *The Jewish Family: Metaphor and Memory,* edited by David Kraemer, pg-pg. New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989.

Jolluck, Katherine R. *Women in the Nazi East: Polish Women in the Soviet Union During World War II.* Pittsburg: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2002.

Jones, Adam. *Genocide: A Comprehensive Introduction.* London, New York: Routledge, 2011.

Kalik, Judith. "Christian Servants Employed by Jews." In *Polin: Focusing on Jews in the Polish Borderlands,* Vol. 14, edited by Antony Polonsky, 259-270. London: Littman Libraries of Jewish Civilization, 2001.

Kaplan, Marion. *Between Dignity and Despair*. New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998.

Kaplan, Marion. *The Making of the Jewish Middle Class: Women, Family, and Identity in Imperial Germany.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994.

Klempner, Mark, ed. *The Heart Has Reasons: Holocaust Rescuers and Their Stories of Courage.* Cleveland: The Pilgrim Press, 2006.

Kossack-Szczucka, Zofia. "Prophecies Are Being Fulfilled," *Prawda: Pismo Frontu Odrodzenia Polski*, May, 1942. Reprinted in *The Neighbors Respond: The Controversy Over the Jedwabne Massacre in Poland*, edited by Antony Polonsky and Joanna B. Michlic, 72-74. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004.

Kurek, Ewa. *Your Life is Worth Mine: How Polish Nuns Saved Hundreds of Jewish Children in German-Occupied Poland, 1939-1945.* Krakow: Znak Publishers, 1997.

Land-Weber, Ellen, ed. *To Save a Life: Stories of Holocaust Rescue*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2000.

Lewin, Abraham. *A Cup of Tears: A Warsaw Ghetto Diary.* Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989.

Lower, Wendy. *Hitler's Furies: German Women in the Nazi Killing Fields.* Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2013.

Lukas, Richard. "Jedwabne and the Selling of the Holocaust," in *The Neighbors Respond: The Controversy Over the Jedwabne Massacre in Poland,* edited by Antony Polonsky and Joanna Michlic, pg-pg. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004.

Majer, Diemut. *"Non Germans" Under the Third Reich: The Nazi Judicial and Administrative System in Germany and Occupied Eastern Europe, with Special Regard to Poland, 1939-1945*. Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University Press, 2003

Marcus, Joseph. *The Social and Political History of the Jews in Poland, 1919-1939.* Berlin, New York and Amsterdam: Mouton Publishers, 1983.

Martin, Sean. *Jewish Life in Cracow, 1918-1939.* London and Portland: Vallentine Mitchell, 2004.

Mendelsohn, Ezra. *Jews of East Central Europe Between the Two World Wars*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983.

Michlic, Joanna. "Anti-Jewish Violence in Poland, 1918-1939 and 1945-1947." In *Polin,Vol. 13, Focusing on the Holocaust and its Aftermath,* edited by Antony Polonsky, 34-61. London: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2000.

_____. "The Holocaust and Its Aftermath a Perceived in Poland: Voices of Polish Intellectuals, 1945-1947" In *The Jews Are Coming Back: The Return of the Jews to Their Countries of Origin after WWII,* edited by David Bankier, 206-230. Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2005.

_____. *Jewish Children in Nazi-Occupied Poland: Survival and Polish Jewish Relations During the Holocaust as Reflected in Early Postwar Recollections.* Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2008.

_____. *Poland's Threatening Other: The Image of the Jew from 1880 to Present.* Lincoln and Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 2006.

_____. "Rebuilding Shattered Lives: Some Vignettes of Jewish Children's Lives in Early Postwar Poland*."* In *Holocaust Survivors: Resettlement, Memories, Identities,* edited by Dalia Ofer, Francoise S. Ouzan, and Judy Tydor Baumel-Schwartz, 46-87. New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2012.

_____. "The Stigmatization of Dedicated Polish Women Rescuers During the Second World War and Its Aftermath." *East European Memory Studies,* no. 13 (2013) : 1-6.

_____. "Who Am I? Jewish Children Search for Identity in Post-War Poland." In *Polin, Volume Twenty, Making Holocaust Memory,* edited by Gabriel Finder, Natalia Aleksiun, Antony Polonsky and Jan Schwarz, 98-121. Oxford and Portland: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2008.

Michman, Dan. "The Jewish Ghettos under the Nazis and their Allies: The Reason Behind their Emergence." In *The Yad Vashem Encyclopedia of the Ghettos During the Holocaust,* edited by Guy Miron and Sholomit Shulhani, xiii-xxxix. Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2009.

Mieszkowska, Anna. *Mother of the Children; the Story of Irena Sendler.* Santa Barbara and Denver: Preager, 2011.

Miron, Guy and Sholomit Shulhani,eds. *The Yad Vashem Encyclopedia of the Ghettos During the Holocaust.* Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2009.

Moskovitz, Sarah, ed. *Love Despite Hate: Child Survivors of the Holocaust and Their Adult Lives.* New York: Schoken, 1983.

Gafny, Emunah Nachmany. *Dividing Hearts: The Removal of Jewish Children from Gentile Families in Poland in the Immediate Post Holocaust Years.* Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2009.

Ofer, Dalia and Lenore J. Weitzman, eds. *Women in the Holocaust.* New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1998.

Oliner, Samuel P. and Pearl M. Oliner. *The Altruistic Personality: Rescuers of Jews in Nazi Europe.* New York: Macmillan, 1988.

Opalski, Magdalena and Israel Bartal. *Poles and Jews: A Failed Brotherhood.* Hanover: 1992.

Orła-Bukowska, Anna Maria. "Shtetl Communities: Another Image." In *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry, Vol. 8, Jews in Independent Poland, 1919-1939,* edited by Antony Polonsky, Ezra Mendelsohn and Jerzy Tomaszewski, 89-113. London: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 1994.

Paldiel, Mordecai. *The Path of the Righteous: Gentile Rescuers of Jews During the Holocaust.* New Jersey: KTAV Publishing House, 1993.

Pankall Adam, "Poles and Jews in the Keilce Region and Radom, April 1945- February 1946." In *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry, Vol. 13, Focusing on the Holocaust and its Aftermath,* edited by Antony Polonsky, 236-252. London: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2000.

Passmore, Kevin, ed. *Women, Gender and Fascism in Europe, 1919-1945.* New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2003.

Paulsson, Gunnar S. *Secret City: The Hidden Jews of Warsaw 1940-1945.* New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2002.

Polonsky, Antony, ed. *My Brother's Keeper? Recent Polish Debates on the Holocaust.* London: Routledge, 1990.

Posieszalski, Karol Marian. *Hitlerowskie: "Prawo" Okupacyjne w Polsce, Wybór Dokumentów.*, Poznan: Instytut Zachodni, 1958.

Porter, Brian. *When Nationalism Began to Hate: Imagining Modern Politics in Nineteenth-Century Poland.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.

Redlich, Shimon. *Together and Apart in Brzezany: Poles, Jews, and Ukrainians, 1919-1945*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2002.

Rittner, Carol and Sandra Myers, eds. *The Courage to Care: Rescuers of Jews During the Holocaust.* New York: New York University Press, 1986.

Semelin, Jacques, Claire Andrieu, and Sarah Gensburger, eds. *Resisting Genocide: The Multiple Forms of Rescue.* New York: Columbia University Press, 2011.

Sierakowska, Katarzyna, "Maternity in Inter-war Poland: visions and realities," *Women's History Review 14 (1),* 119-130. 1994.

Schulz, Bruno. *The Street of Crocodiles and Other Stories.* New York: Penguin, 1977.

Shmeruk, Chone. "Hebrew-Yiddish-Polish: A Trilingual Jewish Culture." In *The Jews of Poland Between Two World Wars,* edited by Yisreal Gutman, Ezra Mendelsohn, Jehuda Reinharz and Chone Scmeruk, 285-311. Hanover and London: University Press of New England, 1989.

Shore, Marci. *Caviar and Ashes: A Warsaw Generation's Life and Death in Marxism, 1918-1968.* New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2006.

Sliwowska, Wictoria, ed. *The Last Eyewitness: Children of the Holocaust Speak.* Evanson: Northwestern University Press, 1993.

Stauter-Halsted, Keely. "Jews as Middleman Minorities in Rural Poland: Understanding the Galician Pogroms of 1898." In *Antisemitism and Its Opponents in Modern Poland,* edited by Robert Blobaum, 39-59. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Steinlauf, Michael. *Bondage to the Dead: Poland and the Memory of the Holocaust.* New York: Syracuse University Press, 1997.

Tec, Nechama. *Resilience and Courage: Women, Men and the Holocaust.* New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2003.

Tec, Nechama. *When Light Pierced the Darkness: Christian Rescue of Jews in Nazi-Occupied Poland.* New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986.

Tomaszewski, Irene and Tecia Werbowski. *Code Name Zegota, Rescuing Jews in Occupied Poland, 1942-1945: The Most Dangerous Conspiracy in Wartime Europe.* Santa Barbara: Paeger, 2010.

Trunk, Isaiah. *Łódź Ghetto: A History*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: University of Indiana Press, 2006.

Weeks, Theodore. "Assimilation, Nationalism, Modernization, Antisemitism: Notes on Polish-Jewish Relations, 1855-1905." In *Antisemitism and Its Opponents In Modern Poland,* edited by Robert Blobaum, 20-38. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2005.

Weeks, Theodore. *From Assimilation to Antisemitism: The Jewish Question in Poland, 1850-1914.* Dekalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2006.

Weiser, Kalman. *Jewish People, Yiddish Nation: Noah Prylucki and the Folklorists in Poland.* Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto Press, 2011.

Weitzman, Lenore. "Living on the Aryan Side in Poland: Gender, Passing and the Nature of Resistance" In *Women in the Holocaust,* edited by Dalia Ofer and Lenore Weitzman, 187-222. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1998.

Wingfield, Nancy M. and Maria Bucur, eds. *Gender & War in Twentieth Century Eastern Europe.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006.

Zahra, Tara. *The Lost Children: Reconstructing Europe's Families after World War II.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011.

Żarnowska, Anna. "Family and Public Life: Barriers and Interpenetration." *Women's History Review 5* no. 4, (1994): 469-486.

Zieman, Joseph. *Cigarette Sellers of Three Crosses Square*. New York: Avon, 1975.

Zubrzycki, Genevieve. *The Crosses of Auschwitz: Nationalism and Religion in Post-Communist Poland.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006.