

Introduction

Several years ago I came across an obituary of Cyla Wiesenthal, the wife of acclaimed Nazi hunter, Simon Wiesenthal. I was struck by one passage in the description of Cyla’s harrowing story of survival in German-occupied Poland. Having escaped in 1942 from a labor camp, she went into hiding and survived for the next two years “with the help of the Polish underground.”¹ I paused and asked myself: which “Polish underground”? I assumed the reference was to the underground forces of the Polish communists because the Polish Home Army (*Armia Krajowa*, AK) – the largest clandestine fighting force in occupied Poland – had been portrayed in scholarly literature and in survivor testimonies as overwhelmingly hostile.

In such public forums as the *New York Times*, the renowned author and Holocaust survivor, Elie Wiesel, concluded that “the celebrated Armia Krajowa [Home Army], which led heroic assaults on the German occupation army, proudly indulged in Jew-hunting on the side.”² In the inaugural issue of *Yad Vashem Studies*, Holocaust survivor and Jewish partisan Moshe Kahanowitz (1909–1996) earlier commented that “one of [the Home Army’s] objectives was to exterminate the Jewish survivors who had sought refuge in the villages and in other hideouts.”³ Another Holocaust survivor maintained that “the members of the Armia Krajowa [Home Army] were very anti-Semitic, exhibiting the same attitudes they had held before the war. Now, however, they were armed and Jews were ‘fair game’ for their attacks.”⁴ Still others concurred. As one co-authored Holocaust memoir asserted, “the A.K. [Home Army] groups began to roam the forests and [they] proved just as dangerous to us as were the Germans.”⁵ Drawing upon survivor testimonies, Jewish historians came to the same conclusion, stating that “the Home Army, under the leadership of the Polish

¹ *New York Times*, November 12, 2003, p. C13.

² *New York Times*, September 6, 1964, p. 4.

³ Moshe Kahanowitz, “Why No Separate Jewish Partisan Movement Was Established during World War II,” *Yad Vashem Studies* 1 (1957): 165.

⁴ Harold Werner, *Fighting Back: A Memoir of Jewish Resistance in World War II* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), 155.

⁵ Norman Salsitz and Amalie Salsitz, *Against All Odds: A Tale of Two Survivors* (New York: Holocaust Library, 1990), 350–351.

government-in-exile in London, was permeated with anti-Semitism,”⁶ or that “the Polish underground Home Army [was] proud, patriotic and deeply prejudiced against Jews.”⁷

A few months after reading Cyla Wiesenthal’s obituary I stumbled upon a biography of Simon Wiesenthal at a bookstore in Hay-on-Wye entirely by chance. I opened the book in hopes that it would answer the question of which underground organization had saved Cyla Wiesenthal. And there it was on page 12. Author Hella Pick discussed a public lecture that Simon Wiesenthal gave in the early 1990s. An audience member asked Wiesenthal to comment on Polish behavior toward the Jews during World War II. Wiesenthal condemned those Poles who betrayed their Jewish neighbors, adding, “but neither do I forget that it was the Polish underground – Home Army units – who ensured my wife’s survival during the war.”⁸

The discovery of Cyla Wiesenthal’s story marked the beginning of a long and arduous inquiry into the Polish Underground’s attitude and behavior toward the Jews during World War II. Was her story a lone exception or did other individuals or groups within the Polish Underground aid Jews, I asked myself. What followed were a series of questions that began to command my attention: What was the attitude of the Polish Underground authorities – in Warsaw and in the provinces – toward the Jews? In the vast clandestine press of the Polish Underground during World War II, did the subject of the Jews appear and in what fashion? What role, if any, did the Polish Underground play in the dissemination of news about the Holocaust to the free world? When deportations began from ghettos to death camps in 1942, were the stockpiles of weapons and ammunition in the hands of the Polish Underground made available to Jews wishing to mount resistance? Finally, what was the Polish Underground’s attitude toward Jewish fugitives from the ghettos and camps wishing to join its ranks or to the groups of Jews who formed their own partisan formations? To answer these questions, I examined the existing body of published primary and secondary sources. When I discovered that – alongside those who committed crimes – there were individuals and subdivisions within the Polish Underground that worked tirelessly to aid Jews, I concluded that the topic needed a comprehensive re-examination spanning the entire period of World War II. The present volume is the outcome of that inquiry, one that not only required archival research in Poland, England, Israel, and the United States but also several years of sifting through, and making sense of, the records. Finding myself in the living rooms or, on the telephone with, former Home Army members and Holocaust survivors – whether in Switzerland, Israel, Poland England or New York – I was able to get valuable first-hand accounts that became unique sources.

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The Polish Underground’s military wing – the Home Army – was the largest resistance movement in German-occupied Poland. While numerous resistance organizations operated inside occupied Poland during the war, the Home Army

⁶ Yuri Suhl, introduction to *They Fought Back: the Story of the Jewish Resistance in Nazi Europe*, ed. Yuri Suhl (New York: Schocken Books, 1975), 6.

⁷ Deborah Dwork, *Holocaust: A History* (New York: Norton, 2002), 256.

⁸ Cited in Hella Pick, *Simon Wiesenthal: A Life in Search of Justice* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1996), 12.

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constituted three-fourths of underground fighters. Established by order of the Polish government-in-exile in November 1939, the Home Army (then called the Union of Armed Struggle, ZWZ) constituted part of the Allied war effort fighting Nazi Germany. Its commander in Warsaw swore allegiance to the Polish government-in-exile and to its commander-in-chief of the Polish Armed Forces. Through this chain of command, the legal representatives of Poland in exile theoretically directed military actions inside occupied Poland throughout the war.

By June 1944, the Home Army became the largest resistance movement in occupied Europe with an estimated 350,000 members.⁹ (See Table 6.) Due to its numerical strength, the secret army represented a cross-section of Polish society as a whole with members drawn from all social classes and from all regions of prewar Poland. During the bulk of the war, the Home Army consisted primarily of members loyal to the four main prewar political opposition parties: the Polish Socialist Party (PPS), the centrist Peasant Party (SL), the center-right Christian democratic Labor Party (SP), and the right-wing National Party (ND). The underground forces of the communist Polish Worker's Party (PPR) remained separate throughout the war, as did the extreme rightwing National Armed Forces (NSZ).¹⁰ In the Polish national narrative, the Home Army continues to be "one of the sacred icons of Polish memory," as one prominent writer maintained.¹¹

When the German occupying authorities launched the Final Solution to the Jewish Question in the spring and summer of 1942, the organizational initiative for responding to the genocide fell almost entirely upon the Polish Underground and its military wing. The response of the Polish Underground to the systematic annihilation of Polish and European Jewry is both complex and controversial. But until very recently, its response to the Holocaust was ignored in Polish historical literature on wartime resistance.

PROBLEMATICA

The subject of the Polish Underground and the Jews continues to touch a raw nerve in Polish-Jewish relations. For some sixty years after the war, Polish historians in Poland and in the West reconstructed its complex local and national organizations, its many subdivisions and departments, its policies and objectives, as well as the Home Army's heroic – although tragic – uprising in August–October 1944. These works, however, avoided the question of the Polish Underground's attitude and behavior toward the Jewish population during the Second World War.¹² The few attempts in scholarly

⁹ Tomasz Strzembosz, *Rzeczpospolita podziemna: Społeczeństwo polskie a państwo podziemne, 1939–1945* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Krupski i S-ka, 2000), 224.

¹⁰ In March 1944, however, a moderate wing of the NSZ broke with the party and joined the Home Army.

¹¹ Eva Hoffman, *After Such Knowledge: Memory, History, and the Legacy of the Holocaust* (New York: Public Affairs, 2004), 225.

¹² See Marek Ney-Krwawicz, *Komenda Główna Armii Krajowej 1939–1945* (Warsaw: Instytut Wydawniczy Pax, 1990); and Grzegorz Mazur, *Biuro Informacji i Propagandy SZP-ZWZ-AK, 1939–1945* (Warsaw: Instytut Wydawniczy Pax, 1987). Subsequent scholarly works that made important contributions to the study of the Polish Underground but are either uncritical of the underground's attitude and behavior toward the Jews or ignores the question altogether include Marek Ney-Krwawicz, *Armia Krajowa: Siły zbrojne Polskiego Państwa Podziemnego* (Warsaw: Oficyna Wydawnicza Rytm, 2009); Strzembosz, *Rzeczpospolita podziemna*; W. Grabowski, *Polska tajna administracja cywilna, 1940–1945* (Warsaw: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, 2003); Krzysztof Komorowski, ed. *Armia Krajowa:*

literature to address the issue prior to the twenty-first century were apologetic and often highly polemical.¹³

During the same period, Jewish historians presented the Polish Underground in an entirely different light. They were, and continue to be, sharply critical of the Polish Underground not only for its alleged reluctance to aid Jews, but also for what they claimed was its hostile attitude and actions toward Jewish resistance groups and Jewish fugitives from the camps and ghettos.¹⁴ Much of this debate has revolved around widely divergent interpretations of documents and policies. The subjects that have given rise to controversy include the Home Army's response to the Warsaw ghetto uprising as well as to other Jewish ghetto revolts; the tiny degree of Jewish representation in the Home Army and the consequent charge that Jews were systematically excluded from membership; the attitude of the Home Army High Command in Warsaw to Jews and the Jewish question in general; and the attitudes and policies toward the Jews at the local and regional levels.

HISTORIOGRAPHY

The historiography of the Polish Underground in general and the Home Army in particular has a long and contentious history. As a vehemently anti-Communist organization, the AK and its members were demonized in the early years of Communist Poland as “Nazi collaborators.” In such a climate, publications about the Home Army in the first decades after World War II were confined to the Polish émigré communities. These include memoirs by prominent figures,¹⁵ a 972-page narrative account published in 1950 that functioned for many years as a kind of official history of the Home Army,¹⁶ a massive, six-volume publication of documents on the Home Army totaling 3,312 pages published between 1970 and 1989,¹⁷ and Stefan Korbonski's study of the Polish Underground State.¹⁸ At the same time, treatment of

szkice z dziejów Sił Zbrojnych Polskiego Państwa Podziemnego (Warsaw: Oficyna Wydawnicza, 1999); Krzysztof Komorowski, ed. *Armia Krajowa: rozwój organizacyjny* (Warsaw: Bellona, 1996); and Stanisław Salmonowicz, *Polskie państwo podziemne: z dziejów walki cywilnej, 1939–1945* (Warsaw: Wydawn. Szkolne i Pedagogiczne, 1994).

¹³ See P. Matuszak, “Związek Walki Zbrojnej i Armia Krajowa w akcji pomocy Żydów,” in *Spółeczeństwo polskie wobec martyrologii i walki Żydów w w latach II wojnie światowej*, ed. K. Dunin-Wąsowicz (Warsaw, 1996) 95–129; Richard Lukas, *Forgotten Holocaust: The Poles under German Occupation, 1939–1944* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1986); Tomasz Strzembosz, “Pomoc zbrojna polskiego podziemia dla walczącego getta,” *Więź* 4 (April 1974): 93–112; and Władysław Bartoszewski, “Polska Podziemna a walka warszawskiego getta,” *Biuletyn ŻIH* 2–3 (1973): 45–66.

¹⁴ Examples of the Jewish historiographical school include S. Krakowski, “The Polish Underground and the Extermination of the Jews,” *Polin* 9 (1996): 138–147; Y. Gutman and S. Krakowski, *Unequal Victims: Poles and Jews during World War II* (New York: Holocaust Library, 1986), 100–134; and Reuben Ainsztajn, *Jewish Resistance in Nazi-Occupied Eastern Europe* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1974).

¹⁵ T. Bor-Komorowski, *The Secret Army* (New York: Macmillan, 1951); and Stefan Korbonski, *Fighting Warsaw: The Story of the Polish Underground State, 1939–1945* (New York: Macmillan, 1956).

¹⁶ *Polskie Siły Zbrojne w drugiej wojnie światowej*. Vol. 3: *Armia Krajowa* (London: Sikorski Institute, 1950).

¹⁷ *Armia Krajowa w dokumentach, 1939–1945* edited by Halina Czarnocka et al., 6 vols. (London: Studium Polski Podziemnej, 1970–1989).

¹⁸ Stefan Korbonski, *The Polish Underground State*, trans. Marta Erdman (New York: Hippocrene Books, 1978).

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the Home Army in general histories of modern Poland published in emigration have been uncritical and laudatory.¹⁹ A notable exception to the silence on the Home Army inside Communist Poland (before the 1980s) was a three-volume documentary history of the Home Army and its predecessor, the ZWZ, in the Lublin region.²⁰ The reaction of the Polish Underground to the annihilation of the Jews was either ignored or characterized as overwhelmingly compassionate. “The Home Army established contact with the Jewish Combat Organization (ŻOB),” the 1950 official history of the Home Army maintained, “and assisted it during the armed operation in Warsaw by supplying the ghetto with a certain quantity of arms and ammunition. Units of the Home Army also tried to break through the ring of walls encircling the ghetto to enable the Jews to escape. Despite the horrific situation of the Jews, the general conditions in occupied Poland did not permit us to undertake a premature armed operation in their defense.”²¹ In rare cases, mention was made in these historical works of Polish individuals who blackmailed and informed on Jews. An example is the distinguished historian of World War II, Czesław Łuczak (1923–2002), who served as director of the institute of history at Poznań University for many years. In his 1979 study of German occupation policy in wartime Poland, Łuczak argued that the Polish Underground responded properly and honorably toward the Jews during World War II:

The murder of Jews in Poland deeply shocked the Polish public, which condemned it in no uncertain terms. On this matter both the underground parties and individual persons expressed their feelings The Polish public was not satisfied with expressing its fury, but hastened, as much as its very modest opportunities allowed, to help the Jewish population in various ways, despite the danger involved. . . . Only a few individuals, from society’s dregs, agreed to collaborate, that is, only totally corrupt members of the underworld. The Polish public looked upon this with total abhorrence and disgust.²²

Historians of the Holocaust in general and of wartime Jewish resistance in particular have devoted some attention to the Polish Underground. The decidedly negative portrayal in the Jewish historical literature rests on four basic claims: (1) unlike the government-in-exile in London, which included Jewish representation in its National Council, no members of prewar Jewish political parties were present in the ministerial council of the Delegate’s Bureau (“Delegatura”) or in the underground parliament, the Council of National Unity.²³ The latter claim has led Jewish scholars to conclude that the Polish Underground regarded itself not as a government of Poland but rather as a government for ethnic Poles only. Thus, the fate of Polish Jews was considered by the

¹⁹ See, for example, Norman Davies, *God’s Playground: A History of Poland* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), vol. 2; and J. Garliński, *Poland in the Second World War* (New York: Hippocrene Books, 1985).

²⁰ Ireneusz Caban and Zygmunt Mańkowski, *Związek Walki Zbrojnej i Armia Krajowa w Okręgu Lubelskim, 1939–1944*. 2 vols. (Lublin: Wydawn, Lubelskie, 1971).

²¹ *Polskie Siły Zbrojne w drugiej wojnie światowej* (1950), 3: 47.

²² Czesław Łuczak, *Polityka ludnościowa i ekonomiczna hitlerowskich Niemiec w okupowanej Polsce* (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Poznańskie, 1979), 257, cited in Shmuel Krakowski, “Relations Between Jews and Poles during the Holocaust: New and Old Approaches in Polish Historiography,” in *Holocaust Literature*, ed. Saul S. Friedman (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1993), 205.

²³ As I demonstrate, this view should be qualified with regard to the Delegate’s Bureau. While it is true that no representatives of Jewish political parties sat in the ministerial office, the leaders of the Council for Aid to Jews (Żegota) – a subdivision within the Delegate’s Bureau – included representatives of the Zionists (Adolf Berman) and the Jewish Labor Bund (Leon Feiner) who communicated directly with the Polish government-in-exile through the office of the Government Delegate in the Homeland.

authoritative underground bodies to stand outside their sphere of moral responsibility; (2) the small number of Jews in the Home Army (estimated at not more than a few hundred) suggests a conscious policy of exclusion; (3) the perceived indifference or hostility of Home Army commanders, Gen. Stefan Rowecki (1940–1943) and Gen. Tadeusz Komorowski (1943–1944); (4) and allegations that documented cases of assault and murder by Home Army units on Jews in 1943–1944 were sanctioned by Home Army commander, Gen. Komorowski.²⁴

The negative portrayal of the Home Army among professional Jewish historians was made semi-official with the appearance in the early 1980s of *The War of the Doomed: Jewish Armed Resistance in Poland, 1942–1944* by the Israeli historian and Holocaust survivor, Shmuel Krakowski, as well as Krakowski's volume, *Unequal Victims*, co-authored with Israel Gutman.²⁵ The latter historians concluded in their 1986 study that

The over-all balance between the acts of crime and acts of help, as described in the available sources, is disproportionately negative. . . . To a significant extent, this negative balance is to be accounted for by the hostility towards the Jews on the part of large segments of the Polish Underground, and, even more importantly, by the involvement of some armed units of that underground in murders of Jews.²⁶

Some historians began to challenge the prevailing assumptions in Jewish historiography in the late 1980s. In particular, Shmuel Krakowski's assertion that Home Army commander, General Bór-Komorowski, sanctioned assaults against Jewish partisans came under close scrutiny.²⁷ The late Polish American historian, Stanislaus A. Blejwas, exposed errors in Krakowski's sources used to prove the Home Army commander's culpability. Blejwas cogently demonstrated that the actual document on combating banditry that was sent to local AK leaders – claimed by Krakowski to be an order to kill Jews – did not mention Jews at all.²⁸ John Armstrong concurred, writing that Bór-Komorowski's order to his district commanders to “liquidate” the heads of partisan units engaging in rural banditry – Organizational Report No 116 – was decidedly not a veiled approval of attacks on armed Jewish units and was “fully justified.”²⁹

²⁴ See Krakowski's arguments in Gutman and Krakowski, *Unequal Victims: Poles and Jews during the Second World War*, 100–134. Also see Israel Gutman's comments in “Polish-Jewish Relations during the Second World War: A Discussion,” *Polin* 2 (1987), 342, 350–351; as well as his “Some Issues in Jewish-Polish Relations during the Second World War,” in Zimmerman, ed., *Contested Memories*, 216.

²⁵ Shmuel Krakowski, *The War of the Doomed: Jewish Armed Resistance in Poland, 1942–1944* (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1984).

²⁶ Israel Gutman and Shmuel Krakowski, *Unequal Victims: Poles and Jews during the Second World War* (New York: Holocaust Publications, 1986), 246.

²⁷ Gutman and Krakowski, *Unequal Victims*, 123.

²⁸ Stanislaus A. Blejwas, “Polemic as History: Shmuel Krakowski, The War of the Doomed. Jewish Armed Resistance in Poland, 1942–1944,” *Polin* 4 (1989): 354–362. The document Krakowski cites – Organizational Report No 220 – indeed singles out Jewish partisans as particularly brutal toward Polish farmers in the countryside. But Organizational Report No 220 was sent up the chain of command to the Polish government-in-exile in London only. In the draft that the Home Army commander sent downward to his district commanders – Organizational Report No 116 – the reference to Jews was removed. See Chapter 9 for a detailed discussion.

²⁹ John Armstrong, “The Polish Underground and the Jews: A Reassessment of Home Army Commander Tadeusz Bor-Komorowski's Order 116 Against Banditry,” *Slavonic and East European Review* 72, no. 2 (April 1994): 272.

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Yet the narrow focus of Blejwas and Armstrong on a single document – one of thousands authored by Gen. Komorowski while serving as Home Army commander – reveals the apologetic and polemical nature of the critique. For while Blejwas and Armstrong were correct about the document in question – Organizational Report No 116 – they were wrong about the Home Army commander. For Organizational Report No 220 – the one prepared for London only – revealed a striking lack of sympathy on the part of the Home Army commander for the predicament of the Jewish fugitives desperately struggling for survival. Still, the publication of Shmuel Krakowski's work misidentifying the order on banditry sent to Home Army soldiers became the basis for serious false accusations leveled at Gen. Komorowski. In Oscar Pinkus's celebrated Holocaust memoir, for example, the first page of Gen. Komorowski's Organizational Report No 220 – the one sent to London – is reprinted. The erroneous and incendiary caption under the image reads: "The order from General Bór-Komorowski directing his troops to kill the Jews hiding in the countryside, whom he labeled as 'bandits'."³⁰ The fact is that no such order was ever given nor is there any evidence to suggest that Gen. Komorowski favored or approved of assaults on unarmed Jewish civilians. What the evidence demonstrates, however, is that the Home Army commander ordered two units in Nowogródek to attack "Soviet-Jewish bands" whom he believed to be fighting alongside Soviet partisans – partisans who were then battling the Home Army for control of the region.³¹ (See Chapter 10.)

Since 1989, a small group of Polish and Jewish scholars has transcended the two mutually exclusive lines of interpretation. In Poland, the camp of Polish historians devoted to defending wartime Poland's record has been openly challenged.³² Linked to the Polish Center for Holocaust Research, a division of the Polish Academy of Sciences in Warsaw, and to the Center's journal of Holocaust Studies, *Zagłada Żydów*, an annual appearing since 2005, these historians are committed to critical inquiry, scholarly rigor, and to a reassessment of all outstanding issues in wartime Polish-Jewish relations. They include, among others, Barbara Engelking, Jan Grabowski, Jacek Leociak, Dariusz Libionka, Jerzy Mazurek, Adam Puławski, Alina Skibińska, Joanna Tokarska-Bakir, Marcin Urynowicz, and Andrzej Żbikowski.³³ Libionka, in particular, departed radically from previous scholars in Poland when he argued that the attitude and behavior of the Polish Underground

³⁰ Oscar Pinkus, *The House of Ashes*, Rev. 2nd ed. (Schenectady, NY: Union College Press, 1990), 239.

³¹ Lawina [Gen. Komorowski], "Meldunek Organizacyjny Nr. 240 za okres od 1.IX.1943 do 29.II.1944," March 1, 1944, reprinted in *Armia Krajowa w dokumentach* 3: 343. In the commander's faulty logic, he allowed the Nowogródek District Home Army to exclude Jews and then condemned these Jews as "pro-Soviet elements" and "Bolshevik-Jewish bands" when they turned to Soviet partisans or formed their own partisan groups.

³² Representatives of this nationalist school include Marek Jan Chodakiewicz, Bogdan Musiał, Tomasz Strzembosz, and Marek Wierzbicki. For a discussion of the nationalist historians, see Joanna Michlic, "The Soviet Occupation of Poland, 1939–1941, and the Stereotype of the Anti-Polish and Pro-Soviet Jew," *Jewish Social Studies* 13, no. 3 (Spring–Summer 2007): 135–176.

³³ Examples of the new, critical scholarship among Polish scholars include, among others, Jan Grabowski, *Hunt for Jews: Betrayal and Murder in German-Occupied Poland* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013); Joanna Tokarska-Bakir, *Okrzyki pogromowe: szkice antropologii historycznej Polski lat 1939–1945* (Wołowiec: Wydawnictwo "Czerne," 2012); Alina Skibińska and Joanna Tokarska-Bakir, "Barabasz' i Żydzi. Z historii oddziału AK 'Wybraniec,'" *Zagłada Żydów* 7 (2011): 63–122; Alina Skibińska and Tadeusz Markiel, "Jakie to ma znaczenie, czy zrobili to z chciwości?": *zagłada domu Trynczerów* (Warsaw: Stowarzyszenie Centrum Badań nad Zagładą Żydów, 2011); Jerzy Mazurek, "Józek, co robisz? Zbrodnia na Żydach popełniona przez AK we wsi Kosowice,"

toward the Jews “is one of the key problems in Polish-Jewish relations.”³⁴ In a series of articles, including the publication of key documents, Libionka has offered a new, critical approach that exposes – for Polish-language readers – the negative, anti-Jewish elements in the Polish Underground’s historical record.³⁵ Like Libionka, many of these scholars, including Grabowski, Andrzej Krempa, Mazurek, Skibińska, and Tokarska-Bakir, have made use of postwar trial records that document crimes of Home Army members against the Jews.³⁶

In the United States, meanwhile, scholars have begun to challenge the dark, monolithic portrayal of the Polish Underground as wholly antisemitic. To be sure, such voices appeared already in the late 1980s. Nechama Tec, for example, reminded her readers that “the Home Army, like its political counterpart in London, was a conglomeration of many groups, also reflecting a wide range of political ideologies, each taking its cues from a different political segment in London.” The Home Army’s “specific reactions to Jews were varied and often unpredictable. Perhaps in part because of this variability the Home Army’s relationship to Jews remains a highly controversial topic.”³⁷ Iwona Irwin-Zarecka similarly described the Home Army’s ambivalent relationship to the Jews. “On the one hand,” she wrote, “it was thanks to the efforts of the [Home Army] that the world was first and then again and again informed about the atrocities committed against the Jews It was also thanks to a unique *organized* effort by a host of underground groups that many Jews, including many children, were able to survive on the ‘Aryan’ side As for the

Zagłada Żydów 7 (2011): 395–421; Barbara Engelking, *Jest taki piękny słoneczny dzień: losy Żydów szukających ratunku na wsi polskiej 1942–1945* (Warsaw: Stowarzyszenie Centrum Badań nad Zagładą Żydów, 2011); Engelking and Jan Grabowski, “Żydów łamiących prawo należy karać śmiercią”: “przestępczość” Żydów w Warszawie 1939–1942 (Warsaw: Stowarzyszenie Centrum Badań nad Zagładą Żydów, 2010); Grabowski, “‘I Wish to Add that I was not Aware and Carried out the Task as a Soldier of the Home Army.’ On the Murder of Jews Hidden near Raclawice by a Company of the Miechów Home Army,” *Holocaust: Studies and Materials* 2 (2010): 337–362; Adam Puławski, *W obliczu zagłady: Rząd RP na Uchodźstwie, Delegatura Rządu RP na Kraj, ZWZ-AK wobec deportacji Żydów do obozów zagłady 1941–1942* (Lublin: IPN, 2009); Alina Skibińska and Dariusz Libionka, “‘I swear to fight for a free and mighty Poland, carry out the orders of my superiors, so help me God.’ Jews in the Home Army: an Episode from Ostrowiec Świętokrzyski,” *Holocaust: Studies and Materials* 1 (2008): 235–269; and Dariusz Libionka, “ZWZ-AK i Delegatura Rządu wobec eksterminacji Żydów Polskich,” in *Polacy i Żydzi pod okupacją niemiecką 1939–1945: studia i materiały*, ed. Andrzej Żbikowski (Warsaw: IPN, 2006): 15–136.

³⁴ Libionka, “ZWZ-AK i Delegatura Rządu wobec eksterminacji Żydów Polskich,” p. 15.

³⁵ Dariusz Libionka, “Zagłada na wsi w optyce polskiej konspiracji (1942–1944),” in *Zarys Krajobrazu: wieś polska wobec zagłady Żydów 1942–1945*, edited by Barbara Engelking & Jan Granowski, 57–138 (Warsaw: Stowarzyszenie Centrum Badań nad Zagładą Żydów, 2011); Libionka, “ZWZ-AK i Delegatura Rządu wobec eksterminacji Żydów Polskich,” pp. 15–136; Libionka and Alina Skibińska, “‘I swear to fight for a free and mighty Poland, carry out the orders of my superior, so help me God.’ Jews in the Home Army – An Episode,” *Holocaust: Studies and Materials* 1 (2008): 235–269; Libionka, “Polska konspiracja wobec eksterminacji Żydów w dystrykcie warszawskim,” in *Prowincja Noc*, ed. Engelking, Leociak, and Libionka, 443–504 (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo IFiS PAN, 2007); and Libionka, “‘Kwestia Żydowska’ w Polsce w ocenie Delegatury Rządu RP i KC ZWZ-AK w latach 1942–1944,” in *Zagłada Żydów: pamięć narodowa a pisanie historii w Polsce i we Francji*, ed. B. Engelking et al. (Lublin: Wydawn. Uniwersytetu Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej 2006): 41–56.

³⁶ See Andrzej Krempa, *Zagłada Żydów mieleckich*, 2nd ed. (Mielec: Muzeum Regionalne w Mielcu, 2013), and the works of Skibińska, Tokarska-Bakir, Libionka, Grabowski, and Mazurek cited in note 33.

³⁷ Nechama Tec, *When Light Pierced the Darkness: Christian Rescue of Jews in Nazi-Occupied Poland* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986): 122–123.

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rank-and-file,” she continued, “there are records of cooperating with the Jewish partisans as well as records of the killing of Jews who were hiding in the forests.”³⁸

This more balanced approach among scholars in the United States gained new adherents after 1989. Antony Polonsky, for example, noted that the clandestine press of the Polish Underground was often sympathetic to the plight of Polish Jewry. “The tragic fate of the Jews,” he wrote, “did arouse considerable sympathy in the central bodies of the Underground. This was clearly expressed in the principal paper of the [Home Army], *Biuletyn Informacyjny*.”³⁹ The renowned author, Eva Hoffman, contended “the Home Army included a range of political sections, some of which actively helped Jews during the Holocaust and delivered arms to the Warsaw Ghetto during the uprising.”⁴⁰ Timothy Snyder similarly cautioned against wholly negative portrayals of the Home Army in the pages of the *New York Review of Books*. “Though the record of the Home Army towards Jews is ambivalent,” Snyder wrote, “the dark legend must be abandoned. Important as Jewish testimonial material is to the history of the Holocaust, the recollections of Jews who spent years in camps cannot serve as the basis for historical reckoning with the Home Army.”⁴¹

Renewed interest in the Polish Underground and the Jews has led scholars such as Libionka, Polonsky, and Dariusz Stola to conclude that the lack of a full-length scholarly monograph is a major gap in the historiography of Polish-Jewish relations.⁴² Unlike the response of the Polish government-in-exile to the tragedy of the Jews, which has been well documented by professional historians,⁴³ the Polish Underground’s policies and positions have been explored fragmentarily and requires more systematic examination.

This study revisits the historical evidence and changes our understanding of the Polish Underground during World War II by presenting a comprehensive treatment of different patterns of behavior toward the Jews at different times during the war and in various regions of occupied Poland. I argue that because the Home Army was an umbrella organization of disparate Polish organizations numbering more than 300,000, from all regions ranging from socialists to nationalists, its attitude and

³⁸ Iwona Irwin-Zarecka, *Neutralizing Memory: the Jew in Contemporary Poland* (New Brunswick and London: Transaction Publishers, 1989), 45–45.

³⁹ Antony Polonsky, Introduction to Florian Mayevsky, *Fire Without Smoke: Memoirs of a Polish Partisan* (London and Portland, OR: Vallentine Mitchell, 2003), 3.

⁴⁰ Hoffman, *After Such Knowledge*, 225.

⁴¹ Timothy Snyder, “Jews, Poles and Nazis: The Terrible History,” *New York Review of Books*, June 24, 2010, p. 3.

⁴² Libionka, “ZWZ-AK i Delegatura Rządu wobec eksterminacji Żydów Polskich,” 15; Antony Polonsky, Introduction to *Polin* 13 (2000): 26–28; and Dariusz Stola, “The Polish Government-in-Exile and the Final Solution: What Conditioned Its Actions and Inactions?” in *Contested Memories: Poles and Jews during the Holocaust and Its Aftermath*, ed. Joshua Zimmerman (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2003), 89.

⁴³ See Dariusz Stola, *Nadzieja i zagłada. Ignacy Schwarzbart -żydowski przedstawiciel w Radzie Narodowej RP, 1940–1945* (Warsaw, 1995); David Engel, *Facing a Holocaust: The Polish Government-in-Exile and the Jews, 1943–1945* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993); and David Engel, *In the Shadow of Auschwitz: The Polish Government-in-Exile and the Jews, 1939–1942* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1987); Libionka, “ZWZ-AK i Delegatura Rządu wobec eksterminacji Żydów Polskich,” 15.

behavior toward the Jews varied widely. I therefore go beyond monolithic stereotypes by using a wide body of sources, including official documents, testimonies, and memoirs.

Critical to this study is an absolute commitment to strive for impartiality, including the careful and critical evaluation of all sources. The latter include interviews, conducted with both Polish and Jewish members of the Home Army that further challenge stereotypes and add nuance to the present subject. Only then can we begin to reconstruct the complex relationship between the Polish Underground and the Jews during the Second World War.