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DISSEMINATING NEWS OF THE HOLOCAUST:
POLISH JEWISH REPRESENTATIVES
AND JOURNALISTS¹

INTRODUCTION

Polish Jewish representatives and journalists faced challenges in disseminating news in Britain and in the United States about the Holocaust. My analysis begins at the point at which these representatives and journalists received data that, in the most part, was being sent west by the Polish Underground. For the sake of brevity, I will not enter into the very important debate on how the Polish Underground handled information about German actions against Jews – that is, the manner in which data was sent west and the urgency (or lack of it) in conveying such information. I will also not discuss in detail the manner in which the Polish Government in Exile dealt with this information. Here it is sufficient to point out that the news from Poland was often marginalised, in line with the British policy.

¹ A version of this paper was presented at the international conference „Helping the Jews in Occupied Europe” held at the Institute of National Remembrance, Warsaw on 15 November 2014.

In focusing on Polish Jewish representatives and journalists I am not suggesting or implying that these individuals had particular responsibility for disseminating news of the Holocaust from Poland because of their religious/cultural background above or beyond that held by officials and politicians of the Polish Government in Exile (or of other governments whose Jewish citizens were being persecuted and murdered by the Germans). Rather, I wish to highlight the specific position that Polish Jewish representatives and journalists occupied as intermediaries in the flow of information about the Holocaust that came from Poland and reached Britain and the US. The role played by these representatives and journalists as gatekeepers of information about the Holocaust has not hitherto received due attention from scholars. The analysis of the activities of these individuals provides historians with insight into the difficulties in disseminating news of the Holocaust in Anglo-American contexts.

I explore the specific difficulties faced by Polish Jews in the West, especially those in Britain, in drawing attention to what was happening to Jews in occupied Poland. Polish Jewish representatives and journalists, in attempting to publicise news of the Holocaust in Britain and to affect an Allied response, had to come to terms with five key audiences or constituencies. These were: the Polish Government in Exile, the British state apparatus (notably the Foreign Office, the Political Warfare Executive and the Ministry of Information), British public opinion, the British press and British Jews. In the US, key constituencies included American Jews, the American press, American public opinion and various offices of the American state (including the State Department and Office of War Information).

These constituencies were, in turn, influenced, to different degrees, by the others. The British state apparatus enjoyed primacy and greatest freedom of movement in Britain during the crisis of war. The Polish Government in Exile, for instance, was sensitive to British policy in relation to publicising news about Jews and about atrocities. Since the British controlled the Polish Government's access to the airwaves (both the BBC's European Service and Radio Świt – a station which appeared to broadcast from Poland, but which transmitted from Britain), as well as the paper supply, the Polish policy towards publicising the Holocaust in the West operated within limits set by the British. These limits, in turn, influenced calculations within the Polish Government and the ability of different political groups (nationalists, socialists) to argue for or against publicity or action to aid Polish Jewish citizens.

Throughout the war, British public opinion was monitored by Home Intelligence reports gathered by the Ministry of Information. The reports repeatedly drew attention to domestic anti-Semitism². Domestic anti-Semitism, and fear of such anti-Semitism, was evoked by the British Home Secretary and the Ministry of Information as a reason to marginalise and frequently ignore the news of German atrocities against Jews. Indeed, as early as July 1941, the Ministry of Information issued instructions to limit dissemination of news of atrocities, and not to refer to atrocities against Jews³.

A further factor which inhibited the dissemination of news of the Holocaust in Britain was the policy position of the Foreign Office. The Foreign Office exerted a great deal of influence on how the war was narrated to audiences abroad, through the work of the Political Warfare Executive and the BBC's European Service, headed by Foreign Office high-flyer, Ivone Kirkpatrick. The domestic news output was also influenced, as questions of foreign policy (broadly understood) were referred to the Foreign Office. The PWE dealt with overseas news and propaganda, the Ministry of Information had responsibility for news and propaganda disseminated in Britain. The Minister for Information, from July 1941, was Churchill's good friend, Brendan Bracken. Bracken was, in turn, one of the triumvirate of ministers responsible for the PWE (the others being Anthony Eden (Foreign Office) and Lord Selborne (Ministry of Economic Warfare)).

On the issue of the Holocaust, the BBC's European Service disseminated more news on the Holocaust, especially on its German service, than the BBC's Home Service, highlighting the British view that news about Nazi actions against Jews could, occasionally, be used in propaganda to Europe, and to Germany in particular. Such news was more tightly regulated in Britain due to concerns about domestic anti-Semitism, for fear that such news could provoke civil society demands to provide refuge to persecuted Jews or stimulate demands for declarations or retaliation, as well as due to the Foreign Office's desire not to complicate the situation in the Middle East by privileging reports about Jews⁴. The Foreign Office sought to narrate the war in terms of the titular nationals of particular states, that is Poles, Dutch etc., and this militated against the focus on the Germans' specific anti-Jewish persecutions.

² The Home Intelligence Reports are available at the National Archives, Kew (hereafter: NA) INF 1/292. See the report of 31 December 1942.

³ *Combating the apathetic outlook of „What have I got to lose even if Germany wins“*, Ministry of Information, 25 July 1941; NA INF 1/251, p. 2.

⁴ See B. Wasserstein, *Britain and the Jews of Europe 1939–1945*, London, 1999, p. 14–18.

British Jewry was also an important constituency with which Polish Jews had to liaise in order to publicise news of the Holocaust. However, ever since the upsurge in British anti-Semitism, following the arrival of East European Jews to Britain in the late 19th century, and the passing of 1905 Aliens Act, significant British Jewish leaders understood the difficulties of communicating issues impacting on Jews specifically to various British audiences. Consequently, the leaders of the Board of Deputies took soundings from British officials on how to present Jews in the media. In April 1942, a delegation of British Jews, headed by Selig Brodetsky, met with BBC officials to discuss how stories about Jews should be presented. It was agreed that exhortative demands to stem (domestic) anti-Semitism had limited effect and that news about Jews should be largely restricted to reporting the credible achievements of Jews⁵. Even in publications directed to the Jewish community in Britain, such as the „Jewish Chronicle”, much information about the unfolding Holocaust was marginalised or omitted.

The information about German actions against Jews, that arrived in Britain from various sources, including from the Polish Underground, was subject to the British information management regime. This regime was in the most part voluntary. Newspaper editors sensitive to the anti-Semitism in Britain and the concerns and interests of their readers, frequently marginalised or ignored news about Jews. The PWE and the Foreign Office also worked to limit the news disseminated about Jews to foreign audiences and domestic audiences through their influence on the BBC. In short, Polish Jewish representatives and journalists faced formidable challenges in publicising news of the Holocaust in Britain (and in the US). The frequently restrained policy of the Polish Government in Exile towards disseminating news of the Holocaust did not make the task of Polish Jewish representatives easier.

POLISH JEWS IN BRITAIN AND THE US

Polish Jewish representatives and journalists occupied a unique gatekeeper role. Information from Poland was handed to the Jewish representatives on the National Council, who, in turn, passed it on to various journalists. By examining the records of the Polish Underground (both documents of the Home Army and the Delegation) available at the New Documents Archive, Warsaw,

⁵ See BBC Written Archives Centre (Caversham), C165, Document on Anti-Semitism, and Wiener Library (London), 1658/10/7/1/1 for details of the meeting on 28 April 1942 between A. E. Barker at the BBC and a delegation from the Board of Deputies.

the records held at the Polish Underground Movement (1939–1945) Study Trust and the Polish Institute and Sikorski Museum in London, it is possible to track the flow of information about the Holocaust from Warsaw to the Polish Government in Exile. The flow of information to Polish Jewish representatives on the Polish National Council can be determined by examining the papers of the various representatives, the papers of other Polish representatives, such as Adam Ciołkosz, and the materials and testimonies of couriers such as Jan Kar-ski, Napoleon Seigeda, Jerzy Lerski, among others. Walter Laqueur's view that the Polish Government did not conceal information from Szmuel Zygielbojm, for instance, seems to be, in the most part, correct⁶.

Tracing the information about the Holocaust from Poland to the British press or officials is somewhat more problematic. The British press failed to publish a great deal of information passed to it. This can be shown by exploring the releases of the Polish Telegraphic Agency (PAT), some of which are available on microfilm at the National Library in Warsaw⁷; by a careful review of Ignacy Schwarzbart's papers available at the Institute of National Remembrance (IPN) in Warsaw; through an examination of Schwarzbart's diary (available at Yad Vashem); through an analysis of the activities of various Polish Jewish representatives and journalists, including their speeches at various public fora; by a close reading of an English-language newspaper published in London from February 1942 – „The Polish Jewish Observer” and through an analysis of the reports released by the Jewish Telegraphic Agency which are available online⁸.

Below I present evidence of the problems faced by various Polish Jewish representatives and journalists in disseminating news of the Holocaust in Britain and the US. I focus on four individuals – Ignacy Schwarzbart, Szmuel Zygielbojm, Joel Cang and Jakob Apenszlak. The treatment of each of these individuals is necessarily summary, but I hope the sketch provided will indicate the profound difficulties in communicating the Holocaust within Anglo-American

⁶ See W. Laqueur, *The terrible secret. Suppression of the truth about Hitler's 'Final Solution'*, New York, 1980, p. 112. However, a message on the Warsaw ghetto that was decrypted on 25 August 1942 was not passed on; D. Stola, *Nadzieja i Zagłada. Ignacy Schwarzbart – żydowski przedstawiciel w Radzie Narodowej RP (1940–1945)*, Warszawa, 1995.

⁷ Reports released by PAT on German actions against Jews have not been investigated by scholars to the same degree as articles in „Dziennik Polski” and the „Polish Fortnightly Review”.

⁸ See website: Archive.jta.org.

environments and the failure of the „free press” to publish much of the news of German actions against Jews that was circulating among the press corps in Britain and the USA.

IGNACY SCHWARZBART

Through an examination of Schwarzbart’s papers and diary it is possible to reconstruct his efforts to disseminate news of the Holocaust⁹. In this task, Schwarzbart was tireless, but also strategic¹⁰. He attempted to inform different audiences of what was happening to Jews in Poland in a way that would elicit an appropriate response. In June 1942, following the receipt of the Bund Report, which stated that 700,000 Polish Jews had already perished, Schwarzbart wrote to all British parliamentarians¹¹. He also wrote to Churchill, spoke at various conferences, including the important 9 July conference held at the British Ministry of Information, and liaised with Jewish representatives in London¹². Schwarzbart continuously pressured the Polish Government to act, to disseminate the news and to demand some action from the Western Allies. He was partly responsible for encouraging the Polish Government to speak about Polish Jewish citizens in June/July 1942 and in November/December 1942.

Operating out of an office in Bayswater, Schwarzbart communicated the information he received from the Polish Government about the Holocaust to Jewish colleagues in the US and Palestine, as well as in the UK. Schwarzbart’s office was subsidised by the Jewish Colonization Office and, to a lesser extent, by the Joint Foreign Committee of the Board of Deputies of British Jews¹³.

⁹ For a detailed discussion on Schwarzbart see D. Stola, *Nadzieja i Zagłada...*

¹⁰ J. Nowak, *Courier from Warsaw*, Detroit, 1982, p. 274 records, that Schwarzbart asked him not to quote to the British the large number of Jews killed by the Germans as such figures would not be believed.

¹¹ See „Statement on German Crimes committed against the Jewish population in Poland”. Schwarzbart stated that, *only immediate reprisals could deter Hitler from carrying out his criminal acts. That is the only language he understands...* In total, Schwarzbart distributed 768 copies of this statement; IPN BU, 2835/42 (26).

¹² The note to Churchill can be found at NA, FO 371/31097, C7107 (final page of document).

¹³ London Metropolitan Archives (hereafter: LMA), ACC/3121/E/03/516. It is worth noting that, in July 1942, the Board of Deputies, under pressure from a variety of Jewish organisations including the Council of Polish Jews in Great Britain, initiated dialogue with the British Ministry of Economic Warfare to secure permission to export food parcels from Lisbon to the ghettos in Poland. This permission was granted

Schwarzbart issued a regular news bulletin with news from Poland. This bulletin was sent to a variety of leading Jewish and non-Jewish figures and institutions. At some point in the late spring or early summer of 1943, the Board of Deputies received a report from Schwarzbart that provided details of the Warsaw ghetto uprising¹⁴. This report also included the important news that 520,000 Jews had ‘died as a result of the most cruel tortures’ at Auschwitz¹⁵.

In addition to receiving reports from Poland, Schwarzbart was briefed by Polish couriers and emissaries, who arrived in London, about the situation of Jews in Poland. In December 1942, in March 1943 and in January 1944 Schwarzbart conversed with Jan Karski¹⁶. In April 1943 Schwarzbart was briefed by Jerzy Salski (Napoleon Segieda). Salski’s report included news about the gassing of Jews at Auschwitz¹⁷. Schwarzbart forwarded this report to various Jewish representatives in Britain, the US and Palestine¹⁸. Schwarzbart’s post was intercepted by British censorship and the information originating from Salski was disseminated to officials at the Foreign Office and the British intelligence community¹⁹. In November 1943, selected extracts from Salski’s report were published in

in the summer of 1942, but by late December no parcels had been sent. Since the Board wished no publicity be given to this endeavour, the task of gathering addresses to where parcels should be sent was undertaken with discretion. Schwarzbart played an important role in gathering addresses of potential parcel recipients. For details of the parcel programme see LMA, ACC/3121/C/11/012/92 (2) and (3).

¹⁴ From the Board of Deputies files, it is not clear when particular reports were received. However, since Schwarzbart regularly supplied timely information to the Board, it is fair to assume that it received this important news at some point in late spring/summer 1943.

¹⁵ LMA, ACC/3121/C/11/07/02/003. The report was sent from Warsaw by courier and was also radioed. The report was circulated both in Britain and in the US. For details of this circulation see: M. Fleming, *Auschwitz, the Allies and Censorship of the Holocaust*, Cambridge, 2014, p. 285.

¹⁶ See YVA, M2 771, Schwarzbart Diary (English), 15 March 1943, p. 89 / YVA, M2 752, p. 81 (Polish); YVA, M2 774, Schwarzbart Diary (English), 14 January 1944, p. 12; YVA, M2 754, p. 25 (Polish).

¹⁷ YVA, M2 261, Berl Locker of the Jewish Agency in London and Rabbi Irving Miller received the report from Schwarzbart.

¹⁸ IPN, BU 2835/56 (110); Hartley Library (Southampton), MS 238/2/52, Folder 4 (this is the copy sent to Alexander Easterman). Schwarzbart sent the report to British Section of the World Jewish Congress, the Jewish Agency’s Polish Jewish Department in Tel Aviv, and the World Jewish Congress in New York.

¹⁹ See NA, FO 371/34552, C5452, p. 160–166.

„Our Tribune” edited by Jakob Apenszlak in New York. In April 1944 Schwarzbart spoke with Jerzy Lerski and on 1 June 1944 Schwarzbart met a courier who stated that he had been in Auschwitz²⁰. Information from this courier was passed to the „New York Times” and published in the „Milwaukee Journal” on 5 June and by „The Polish Jewish Observer” on 16 June.

Schwarzbart circulated the information he received through his monthly English language newsletter – the precise circulation of which is not known, though the Board of Deputies of British Jews was a recipient; participated in meetings and conferences; passed on information to the press; liaised with various British activists, including Eleanor Rathbone and Josiah Wedgwood; and repeatedly petitioned the Polish Government to act on behalf of Poland’s Jewish citizens. Schwarzbart, despite his evident aversion, met with various anti-Semitic members of the National Democratic party in his efforts to stimulate a response to the plight faced by Jews in occupied Poland. After the Bermuda Conference of April 1943, Schwarzbart increasingly felt that the Polish Government needed to pressure the US Government if any action to help surviving Jews was to take place. He spoke with the Polish Interior Minister Stanisław Mikołajczyk to petition the American Government. Schwarzbart also communicated the news of the Holocaust directly to the US Ambassador to Allied Governments, Drexel Biddle, at meetings that took place on 30 June 1942 and on 8 March 1943²¹.

Schwarzbart’s attempts to publicise the Holocaust were not particularly successful outside the British-sanctioned news releases of June/July 1942 and November/December 1942²². Throughout the first half of 1944, much of Schwarzbart’s time was taken up with the scandal of anti-Semitism in the Polish Army. In opposition to views of British Jewish leaders, Schwarzbart wanted Polish Jewish soldiers who had deserted to return to their units. An editorial in the „Jewish Chronicle” on 14 April 1944 clearly demonstrates the limits of Schwarzbart’s influence and that of Polish Jewish representatives in Britain more generally: ‘As for the attitude of the so-called Polish Jewish leaders, their position

²⁰ See YVA, M2 773, Schwarzbart Diary (English), 27 April 1944, p. 104 / YVA, M2 754, p. 82 (Polish); YVA, M2 774, Schwarzbart Diary (English), 1 June 1944, p. 144 / YVA, M2 755, p. 1 (Polish).

²¹ YVA, M2 771, Schwarzbart Diary (English), 8 March 1943, p. 82.

²² Indeed, in his diary entry for 23 May 1943, Schwarzbart notes that „The News Chronicle” refused to publish *news of the gassing of Jews at Treblinka*; See YVA, M2 772, p. 169 (English).

as virtual employees of the Polish Government, expected, so to speak, to protest but not too much, must be embarrassing in the extreme and render them in this case objects for sympathy rather than reproof'. The arguments and perspectives of Polish Jewish representatives were often not accorded due weight by British Jews.

SZMUEL ZYGIELBOJM

Zygielbojm joined the Polish National Council as the Bund's representative in February 1942. The arrival of the Bund Report in London in May 1942, and Zygielbojm's view on it, seems to have played a role in the Polish Prime Minister's (Władysław Sikorski), decision to speak clearly about the German policy towards Jews. In June 1942, Sikorski became the first Allied leader to publicly identify the German intent to murder all Jews. Throughout June, Zygielbojm petitioned the British to facilitate publication of the news from Poland. Eventually, on 25 June, „The Daily Telegraph” published the news²³. This was followed by broadcasts on the BBC and a conference hosted by the Ministry of Information. The British, probably at the behest of Brendan Bracken, the Minister of Information, temporarily loosened the censorship regime and facilitated the dissemination of news about atrocities against Jews.

On 17 July, Zygielbojm addressed representatives of the British Labour Party and various European socialist parties at the regular meeting of the international group convened by the Labour Party's international sub-committee. The Labour Party later passed a resolution on 22 July and committed itself to host a protest meeting against German atrocities in Poland and Czechoslovakia²⁴. The Labour Party also published news from Poland, including the news of the gassing of Jews at Chełmno, in its 11 August circular to members of the Labour movement. On 26 July, Zygielbojm spoke on the situation of Jews in Poland at a public meeting at the Grand Palais (a Yiddish theatre) in Stepney, London²⁵.

²³ Ignacy Schwarzbart contends that Stefan Litauer of the Polish Telegraphic Agency provided Zygielbojm with a contact at „The Daily Telegraph”. See YVA, M2/167, Schwarzbart Diary (English), 27 June 1942, p. 180.

²⁴ However, the resolution adopted by the Labour Party and the Trade Union Congress did not mention Jews. It stated that *the organised and bestial atrocities committed by Germany in Poland and Czechoslovakia were without precedent in their naked and savage cruelty*.

²⁵ PUMST, AALC, Kol 133/277. Adam Ciołkosz of the Polish Socialist Party also spoke at that meeting.

Throughout the summer and autumn of 1942, Zygielbojm, like Schwarzbart, was also engaged with the scheme to send food parcels from Lisbon to the ghettos in Poland²⁶.

By August, much less information was being published by the British press or broadcast by the BBC. Zygielbojm, through his contact with Jerzy Szapiro, the director of the Polish Social Information Bureau (set up to facilitate Polish contacts with the British Left, and subsidised, to some extent, by the Ministry of Information and Documentation and the Polish Socialist Party) and Adam Ciołkosz of the Polish Socialist Party, was able to publish a booklet entitled *Stop Them Now: German mass-murder of Jews in Poland* with Liberty Publications²⁷. Its initial print run of 25,000 was ready for the 2 September 1942 protest meeting organised by the Labour Party at Caxton Hall, Westminster. A second print run of 25,000 took place on 25 September 1942 and a further 10,000 copies were printed in December 1942²⁸.

In September, Zygielbojm spoke at the protest meeting at Caxton Hall, and drew attention to the 700,000 Jews who had perished in Poland. Much of the national press ignored the protest meeting, and most of the newspapers that reported it („The News Chronicle”, „The Times”, „The Manchester Guardian”) did not mention Jews. Only „The Daily Telegraph” highlighted Zygielbojm’s speech and the gassing of Jews at Chełmno. This report was an anomaly in the British media and may signal that Zygielbojm had lobbied the paper through the summer of 1942²⁹. Liberty Publications later published all the speeches made at the conference³⁰.

In late November, with the arrival of a series of documents from Poland, Zygielbojm worked hard to circulate the news and petitioned the Polish Government for action. In December, Zygielbojm met with Jan Karski who reiterated much of the information Zygielbojm had already received. It is possible that Karski’s testimony prompted Zygielbojm to telegram Churchill and Roosevelt on 15 December 1942. The Polish Telegraphic Agency distributed to the press the demands that Zygielbojm made to the Western leaders.

²⁶ LMA, ACC/3121/C/11/012/091, (2) (90), Zygielbojm to Brotman (12 October 1942).

Zygielbojm agreed with the view that no publicity should be given to the scheme.

²⁷ For details on the Polish Social Information Bureau see PUMST, AALC, Kol 133/108.

²⁸ See PUMST, AALC, Kol 133/95.

²⁹ See M. Fleming, *The limits of solidarity. The 1942 protest meeting at Caxton Hall against German atrocities*, „Labour History Review”, 2017, 82 (1), p. 23–50.

³⁰ See A. J. Dobbs, *German Atrocities in Poland and Czechoslovakia. Labour’s Protest*, London, 1942.

Zygielbojm played an important role in keeping the British Left informed of the Holocaust in 1942 and the first part of 1943. He liaised with Joel Cang, the editor of „The Polish Jewish Observer”, with Jerzy Szapiro of the Polish Social Information Bureau and with Adam Ciołkosz of the Polish Socialist Party. The failure of the Bermuda Conference in April 1943 to offer any substantive hope for Polish Jews; the on-going destruction of Polish Jewry, and with it, the Bundist vision of Jewish life in Poland; his almost certain knowledge of the latest news about the mass gassing of Jews at Auschwitz; and the awareness that members of his family had perished are all likely to have contributed to Zygielbojm’s decision to take his own life³¹. Through his suicide Zygielbojm protested against the Allied failure to aid Europe’s Jews. Allied policy did not change and the marginalisation of the Holocaust in the western press continued.

JOEL CANG

Prior to the war, Cang was the „Manchester Guardian’s” correspondent in Warsaw. He also wrote articles for a number of other British newspapers³². Following the German invasion, Cang fled Poland and ultimately arrived in London where he had some family. Throughout the war he maintained contacts with the editor of the „Manchester Guardian”, offering the paper reports³³. In 1941, along with other Polish Jewish journalists, Cang established „Wiadomości Żydowskie” („The Jewish News”), a non-party weekly bulletin to highlight the problems faced by Polish Jews and to counteract the anti-Semitic content of various Polish publications. Published in Polish with an English summary, „Wiadomości Żydowskie” was run on a meagre budget – in June 1941 Cang requested a £20 subsidy from the Board of Deputies *to continue publication*³⁴.

³¹ Adam Ciołkosz discussed Zygielbojm’s suicide in a letter to the editor of „The Observer” on 21 May 1968. This letter went through multiple drafts. Ciołkosz records that *in conversations with me at the time* [Issac] *Deutscher derided his* [Zygielbojm’s] *indefatigable efforts to alert the British press about the German genocide of Jews in Poland*. See PUMST, AALC, Kol 133/277.

³² From the mid-1930s, the Polish Embassy in London monitored Cang’s reports in the British press. The embassy listed Cang as the Warsaw correspondent for „The Manchester Guardian”, „News Chronicle”, „Jewish Chronicle”, „Observer”, „The Star”, and deputy correspondent at „The Daily Herald”. He also provided copy to the Central News agency. See PISM, A12.327/3.

³³ See John Rylands Library, Manchester, B/C23 (Joel Cang).

³⁴ LMA, ACC/3121/E/03/516, Letter from Cang and Trockenheim to Secretary of Board of Deputies, 17 July 1941.

Later, in February 1942, Cang (with other Polish Jews) established „The Polish Jewish Observer” as a subscription-only supplement to the „City and East London Observer”. „The Polish Jewish Observer” was financed, at least to some degree, by the Polish Government³⁵. The newspaper was also financially supported by adverts³⁶. „The Polish Jewish Observer”, throughout its existence during the war, published English translations of Polish intelligence reports on the Holocaust, including ones about the mass gassing of Jews at Auschwitz³⁷. It presented to English-speaking readers the full details of the horror unfolding in Poland.

The subscription list of the paper probably no longer exists, but some indication of its circulation can be gathered by an analysis of its letters column. This suggests that the paper reached service men fighting in North Africa. The paper was also being assessed by British Intelligence – reference to the paper is made in an intelligence report on Stanisław Kot in March 1944, just a couple of weeks before the paper published another front page story on the gassing of Jews at Auschwitz³⁸. The paper was forwarded to socialists in the United States. Ignacy Schwarzbart also forwarded copies of the paper to Jewish colleagues in the US. Copies were also passed to the senior figures in the Labour Party. Editions of the newspaper can be found in the papers of William Gillies (secre-

³⁵ YVA, M2/767, Schwarzbart Diary, 18 June 1942, p. 171: *Cang [...] accepts subsidies from the governments [sic!] at the backstairs for his paper*. It is likely that the newspaper was also supported by Benzion Margulies, the chairman of the Council of Polish Jews in Great Britain. Cang liaised with the Polish Ministry of Information and Documentation to obtain material, including photographs. See PISM, A10.1.10., Letter from Cang to Anna Zajączkowska at the Ministry of Information, 24 November 1942.

³⁶ It is worth noting that Cang wrote to Selig Brodetsky of the Board of Deputies on 27 January 1943, complaining that the Board’s Defence Committee was not placing adverts with „The Polish Jewish Observer”. Cang pointed out that the newspaper had *quite a wide circulation amongst English, Polish and other continental Jews*. Evidently, Cang was of the view that the Board of Deputies was not sufficiently supporting the newspaper that was *endeavouring to bring to the notice of the English reading public, Jewish and non-Jewish, the tragedy of Polish Jewry*. See LMA, ACC/3121/C11/7/1/6.

³⁷ Copies of „The Polish Jewish Observer” can be found in various collections. Editions for 1943 and 1944 are held at the British Library, London. Some editions are held at the Polish Library, Hammersmith. Not all editions of the paper that were published have been located.

³⁸ NA, KV2/3429 (28a).

tary, International Department) and James Middleton (general secretary). The Board of Deputies received the paper³⁹.

The *exact* path of particular stories to Cang can rarely be established with accuracy. We can ascertain the source, but not always the intermediary. Cang maintained contact with Szmuel Zygielbojm, but, as a veteran journalist, he cultivated a wide range of contacts. In March 1943, the Polish Government in Exile received the devastating news that over half a million Jews had been killed at Auschwitz. This information was passed to Ignacy Schwarzbart by May 1943, as he referred to it in his English language summary of news from Poland (the circulation of which is unknown)⁴⁰. It is not certain whether Schwarzbart or Zygielbojm (prior to his suicide in May 1943) passed this information to Cang. In any case, „The Polish Jewish Observer” only published the news on 3 September 1943, after it had been distributed to Polish politicians on 18 August 1943⁴¹.

Given that the data about Auschwitz had been published in English in a paper published by the well-connected Joel Cang, it is almost certain that British journalists were informed. On 10 September, buried on page 8, a small paragraph in „The Jewish Chronicle” reported the news from Auschwitz. As far as it has been established, no national British paper reported the news. The same situation was repeated six months later. On 21 March 1944, the Polish Government in Exile, probably with a view to prove its utility to the US, prior to Roosevelt’s important 24 March statement condemning German actions against Jews, published a press release describing in some detail the gassing of half a million Jews at Auschwitz⁴². This information had been shared with the British Special Operations Executive in November 1943. Other than the „Aberdeen Press and Journal” and the „Liverpool Daily Post” which reported the news, the British press ignored the press release. The „Jewish Chronicle” did not report the scale of the Nazi murder. „The Polish Jewish Observer” revealed the full extent of the news from Poland. Elsewhere, the Polish press release was

³⁹ In a letter dated 12 January 1943 Adolph Brotman, the Board’s secretary, advised Cang that he had read his *paper with great interest since its first appearance*; LMA, ACC/3121/C/11/012/92 (3) (77).

⁴⁰ IPN, BU 2835/43, p. 185. This is the same data that Schwarzbart passed to the Board of Deputies in the late spring or early summer of 1943.

⁴¹ PUMST, MSW, Vol. III (1943), Sprawozdanie 4/43.

⁴² HIA Polish Information Center – Cable from London, Box 3.9. See M. Fleming, *Auschwitz, the Allies and Censorship...*, 209.

reported in full – it was referred to by the „Los Angeles Times” and the „Washington Post” in the United States, and in various newspapers in Australia. The creation of the War Refugee Board in the United States in January 1944 encouraged increased divergence between how the American and British press reported the Holocaust.

Cang, therefore, was unique in that he was able to publish full and clear details about the on-going destruction of European Jews. His paper, „The Polish Jewish Observer”, largely escaped the British information management regime and this can be explained by the fact that the paper had limited circulation, mainly among Jewish communities in Britain. The paper was not easily obtainable by the wider British general public and this restricted circulation may have eased British concerns (Ministry of Information) that the paper could stimulate domestic anti-Semitism. The ‘ghettoization’ of news about the Holocaust in an obscure east London paper both limited the impact of that news and influenced some people’s responses to it (reports in a non-prestige local newspaper could more easily be ignored than those in the prestigious national newspapers); it also demonstrates the hierarchical and flexible nature of the British information management regime.

Cang participated in numerous conferences and colloquia during the war, and maintained cordial relations with a wide range of journalists, politicians and civil society activists. He was a council member of the Rada Żydów Polskich w Wielkiej Brytanii (The Council of Polish Jews in Great Britain) and supported the advocacy role played by this organisation⁴³. Despite his reputation as a quality journalist – he would later briefly return to Poland as a correspondent for „The Manchester Guardian”, „The Times” and „The Jewish Chronicle” –, the reports on the Holocaust which were published in „The Polish Jewish Observer” more often than not failed to break into the national or indeed into the British Jewish press. The British „free” press marginalised and excluded information about the Holocaust that was available.

⁴³ In a letter dated 28 December 1942, Rabbi Babad of the Council of Polish Jews criticised the Board of Deputies’ handling of the scheme to send food parcels to ghettos in Poland. In a letter to Brotman dated 18 January 1943 Cang argues, that *there can be little excuse for the fact that these parcels were not sent to the ghettos*, but does not apportion blame. He does note, however, that the Chairman of the Council of Polish Jews, Benzion Margulies, held the Board of Deputies responsible. See LMA, ACC/3121/C/11/012/92 (3), p. 76a, 76b, 77.

JAKOB APENSZLAK

Prior to the war, Apenszlak was the editor of the Warsaw Polish Jewish daily „Nasz Przegląd” („Our Review”). He arrived in New York in 1939. In November 1940 he co-founded and subsequently co-edited the Polish language „Nasza Trybuna” alongside Aryeh Tartokower. „Nasza Trybuna” was accompanied by an English language supplement, „Our Tribune”. „Nasza Trybuna” had a distribution of 2000 copies and was generally published once a month. Apenszlak received information about the on-going Holocaust from Ignacy Schwarzbart and various other sources. In addition, his paper reproduced material that was first published in „The Polish Jewish Observer” in London. However, to date, a full assessment of „Nasza Trybuna” has not been possible as only some editions of the paper have been located – at the National Library in Warsaw and at the Polish Library in London. However, from the copies that have been located, it seems as though „Nasza Trybuna” was significantly more restrained in reporting the Holocaust than „The Polish Jewish Observer”. The available evidence suggests that this was not due to lack of information, but rather due to editorial decisions to frame and present news from Europe in a particular way.

The awareness of significant levels of anti-Semitic sentiment amongst Americans, together with the apparent desire not to antagonise US officialdom, in particular the Office of War Information, seems to have encouraged the limiting of news about atrocities against Jews in both „Nasza Trybuna” and „Our Tribune”. Nevertheless, Apenszlak played an important role in distributing important news about the Holocaust, both through the stories that were published in his newspaper and through his work on *The Black Book of Polish Jewry*.

The Black Book of Polish Jewry was put together over around six months in mid-1943. It was financed to some degree by a £3000 subvention from the Polish Government in Exile⁴⁴. Edited by Apenszlak, the book had several co-editors and an extensive list of advisors and sponsors, many of whom were significant public figures in the US, including the First Lady, Eleanor Roosevelt. Although it presents a detailed Polish report on Treblinka and mentions Bełżec, the book is especially curious for what it does not include. For instance, there is no mention of the gassing of Jews at Auschwitz, despite this fact being known to a number of contributors to the volume. Apenszlak was amongst Jewish representatives who met Jan Karski in August 1943⁴⁵.

⁴⁴ YVA, M2 772, Schwarzbart Diary, 19 June 1943, p. 220 (English).

⁴⁵ Polish Underground Movement (1939–1945), Study Trust 3.1.2.1.3.3.

By juxtaposing „Nasza Trybuna” / „Our Tribune” and *The Black Book of Polish Jewry* it seems as though Apenszlak was cautious in publishing news not publicly endorsed by the Western Allies. This can be explained by Apenszlak’s conformity to the Allied information management regime and the need to maintain working relations with a variety of American officials in a context marked by pervasive anti-Semitism. Speaking consistently clearly about the Holocaust was therefore problematic in the US context. Nevertheless, both *The Black Book of Polish Jewry* and „Nasza Trybuna” / „Our Tribune” provided US readers with some sense of the German extermination programme, though neither publication reached a mass-audience.

CONCLUSION

This examination of the activities of Polish Jewish representatives and journalists in the West clearly shows detailed news about the German programme of extermination reached British and American officials, policymakers and journalists. The lack of information was not the problem. Writing in the mid-1950s, Ignacy Schwarzbart suggested in the English version of his diary that Anthony Eden chose not to believe that Jews were being exterminated because *to believe he would be obliged to do something*⁴⁶. By failing to endorse or confirm much of the data about the Holocaust that they received from an ally (the Polish Government in Exile) that also supplied prized intelligence on other matters, the Western Allies limited the impact of the news that was in fact published. Without official endorsement, news of the Holocaust was marginalised in the press and was often met with scepticism.

Despite the strenuous efforts of different Polish Jewish representatives and journalists, the news of the Holocaust was marginalised in the mainstream press. The systematic marginalisation of this news outside the state-sanctioned choreographed reporting peaks of June/July 1942 and November/December 1942 meant that the British general public remained ill-informed about the German mass-killing of Jews. Overall, Polish Jewish representatives and journalists in Britain failed to achieve the objective of including the situation of Jews in the mainstream narrative of the war and encouraging the Allies to revise their policies in order to aid those suffering under the Nazi tyranny.

Ultimately, the impact of Polish Jewish representatives and journalists on the five key constituencies – the Polish Government, the Foreign Office, British public opinion, the British press and British Jews was limited. This was, in part,

⁴⁶ YVA, M2 773, Ignacy Schawarzbart Diary, entry 3 August 1943, p. 290.

due to the antipathy of the British (PWE, FO, Ministry of Information) to highlighting the news of atrocities and news about Jews. The situation in the US was somewhat similar, and warrants further analysis. British (PWE, FO, Ministry of Information) responses to the news of the Holocaust also had the inadvertent consequence of echoing those of nationalists in the Polish Government who were keen to remove Jews from the news agenda. British responses undermined the efforts of Jewish and occasionally socialist members of the Polish National Council to highlight German actions against Jews. It is therefore essential to place the responses of the Polish Government to the Holocaust within the specific British context.

The circulation of news about the Holocaust by Polish Jewish representatives and journalists kept key constituencies informed about what was happening to Jews in occupied Europe, though not the general public. Their work was necessary, but insufficient in giving the Holocaust publicity in Britain (and in the US). It was only when a variety of different constituencies acted in concert that the Holocaust received widespread attention, and the demands for refuge, for rescue and for retaliation were given some publicity. This suggests that further work exploring both the internal rationales and motivations of different constituencies in marginalising/publicising the Holocaust at different points in time, and the relations between different constituencies, will help sharpen our understanding of the choices made by various actors in the West, in response to the genocide of Europe's Jews.

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MICHAEL FLEMING

ROZPOWSZECHNIANIE WIADOMOŚCI O HOLOKAUŚCIE:
O DZIENNIKARZACH I REPREZENTANTACH
POLSKICH ŻYDÓW

STRESZCZENIE

Informacje dotyczące niemieckich działań przeciwko Żydom podejmowanych podczas II wojny światowej były zbierane i wysyłane przez Polskę Podziemną do polskiego rządu na uchodźstwie w Londynie. Informacje te rozpowszechniano w różnych kierunkach, w tym do reprezentantów polskich Żydów zasiadających w Polskiej Radzie Narodowej. Autor poniższego artykuł bada rolę, jaką odegrali na Zachodzie wybrani reprezentanci polskich Żydów i dziennikarze, którzy przekazywali wieści o Holokauście. Została poruszona również kwestia trudności, jakie napotykali, rozpowszechniając w Wielkiej Brytanii i USA informacje o niemieckich zbrodniach przeciwko Żydom.

Słowa kluczowe: Holokaust, II wojna światowa, informacja, polscy Żydzi, dziennikarze