Katharina Friedla
Research Fellow
Taube Family Curator for European Collections
Hoover Institution Library and Archives
Stanford University
friedla@stanford.edu
iD 0000-0003-0302-4772

# Primary sources on the trajectories of Polish-Jewish refugees during World War II at the Hoover Institution Library and Archives

**Abstract:** The Hoover Institution Library and Archives at Stanford University has become an international hub for research and documentation. With more than a million volumes and 6,000 archival collections on war, revolution, and peace, it serves as one of the biggest knowledge repository worldwide.

The holdings contain the most extensive and comprehensive documentation related to modern Polish history outside of Poland. Among them are rich and unique collections of primary diplomatic, philanthropic, memoiristic, visual, and other sources. The article outlines the most valuable sources and their collections on the trajectories of Polish Jewish refugees during World II. The very brief presentation of the up-to-date unexplored sources indicates that the growing research on Polish and Polish Jewish war refugees still has the potential to be expanded.

**Keywords:** Hoover Institution Library & Archives, Polish collections, Refugees, Polish Jewish Refugees – Karski Jan (1914–2000), Polish government-in-exile, Testimonies
**Słowa kluczowe:** Biblioteka i Archiwum Instytutu Hoovera, kolekcja polska, uchodźcy, uchodźcy polsko żydowscy, Karski Jan (1914–2000), Rząd Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej na uchodźstwie, świadectwa

# Introduction

Several years ago, when I was working on the fate of Polish Jews in the Soviet Union during World War II, I had the opportunity to conduct my research at the Hoover Institution Library and Archives[1]. Inspired by the studies of David Engel, Katherine Jolluck, Jan T. Gross, and Irena Grudzińska-Gross[2], among others, who did extensive research in the Hoover Archives, I already suspected that I would find here a treasure trove of documentation about Polish-Soviet relations and Polish and Polish-Jewish deportees, prisoners and refugees in the USSR during World War II[3]. Indeed, I was not disappointed and have found very rich and unique collections of primary diplomatic, philanthropic, memoiristic, visual, and other sources on this topic.

In recent years, the past and present of Jewish refugees from Nazi-occupied Europe have drawn a growing amount of scholarly work. Undoubtedly, the unique turn in Holocaust Studies, or what Atina Grossmann called the "remapping of the Holocaust"[4], has led to new research perspectives in the history of migration and refugee movements. Recent studies on refugee experiences in the Soviet Union, South America, India, Iran, Palestine, China, or Africa have broadened and deepened our understanding of the Holocaust and Holocaust survival in general[5]. In addition, the Holocaust refugee routs that led from Europe to all continents opened up new paths for chronicling and

---

1   See e.g., *Polish Jews in the Soviet Union (1939–1959). History and Memory of Deportation, Exile, and Survival*, eds. K. Friedla, M. Nesselrodt, Boston 2021; *Syberiada Żydów polskich. Losy uchodźców z Zagłady*, eds. L. Zessin-Jurek, K. Friedla, Warszawa 2020.

2   Two volumes by D. Engel give some insights into this topic: D. Engel, *In the Shadow of Auschwitz. The Polish Government-in-Exile and the Jews, 1939–1942*, Chapel Hill 1987; *Facing a Holocaust. The Polish Government-in-Exile and the Jews, 1943–1945*, Chapel Hill 1993; K. Jolluck, *Exile and Identity: Polish women in the Soviet Union during World War II*, Pittsburgh 2002; I. Grudzińska-Gross, J.T. Gross, *W czterdziestym nas matko na Sibir zesłali... Polska a Rosja 1939–1942*, London 1983, published earlier in English: *War Through Children's Eyes: The Soviet Occupation of Poland and the Deportations, 1939–1941*, Stanford, CA 1981.

3   An excellent article by my predecessor, Maciej Siekierski, Curator of European Collections emeritus at the Hoover Archives, introduces the historical context and content of Polish collections at the Hoover Institution Library and Archives, *Zarys historii polskich zbiorów Biblioteki i Archiwum Instytutu Hoovera w Kalifornii*, "Z Badań nad Książką i Księgozbiorami Historycznymi" 2017, special volume, pp. 547–556.

4   A. Grossmann, *Remapping Relief and Rescue: Flight, Displacement, and International Aid for Jewish Refugees during World War II*, "New German Critique" 2012, vol. 39 (3), pp. 61–79.

5   See e.g., E. Adler, *Survival on the Margins. Polish Jewish Refugees in the Wartime Soviet Union*, Cambridge, MA 2020; *Migrants, Refugees, and Asylum Seekers in Latin America*, eds. R. Raanan [et al.], Leiden-Boston 2020; M. Nesselrodt, *Dem Holocaust entkommen. Polnische Juden in der Sowjetunion, 1939–1946*, Berlin 2019; *Shelter from the Holocaust: Rethinking Jewish Survival in the Soviet Union*, eds. A. Grossmann [et al.], Detroit 2017; G.I. Eber, *Wartime Shanghai and the Jewish refugees from Central Europe: survival, co-existence, and identity in a multi-ethnic city*, Berlin 2012; *Jewish Exile in India, 1933–1945*, eds. A. Bhatti [et al.], New Delhi 1999.

writing a global and transnational history of Jewish and non-Jewish wartime experiences[6]. These new research trends have resulted in many outstanding studies on the wartime trajectories of Polish-Jewish refugees, with a special geographical and historical emphasis given to the Soviet Union. Despite the field's growth in scholarship, the Polish-Jewish refuge experience during World War II remains a topic with much unexplored ground. Some of these themes remain politically controversial. One of them is the way the Polish government-in-exile treated Jewish refugees not only in the USSR but also in other countries where Polish embassies and consulates operated and assisted refugees from Poland. It would also be worthwhile examining the humanitarian efforts and global responses of Jewish and non-Jewish organizations to Polish Jewish war refugees. There is still much to be written about the daily life in exile, the relations between Jewish and non-Jewish refugees, and the native population of the country of exile.

It is to be hoped that in the future, historians will draw more heavily from the extensive and rich collections held at the Hoover Archives. They, undoubtedly indicate the enormous potential of unexplored sources and validate that this field of research still has the potential to be expanded.

## Documentation on Diplomacy, Refuge, and Rescue during WWII

Near Bełżec (In the General Government, on the boundary of the territories occupied by the Bolsheviks) the Germans have created a camp for Jews. This camp includes for the most part those Jewish families who illegally wanted to cross over to the Bolsheviks or who waited for the reported and anticipated opening of the Bolshevik-German border for population exchanges. [...] I saw this camp at the beginning of December 1939. [...] An enormous proportion walked and slept under the open sky. Very many people (were) without proper clothing or other covering. While one group slept, the other waited its turn, so that outer garments could be lent one another. Those who waited jumped and ran around so as not to freeze. A few hundred people, among them children, women, and old people, run around for hours or jump in place for if they stand still, they will freeze. [...] All are frozen, in despair, unable to think, hungry. [They are] a herd of harassed beasts – not people. This has been

---

6   Just to mention a few recent publications: J. Lingelbach, *On the Edges of Whiteness: Polish Refugees in British Colonial Africa during and after the Second World War*, New York 2020; M. Kaplan, *Hitler's Jewish Refugees. Hope and Anxiety in Portugal*, New Haven 2020; J. Newman, *Nearly the New World. The British West Indies and the Flight from Nazism 1933–1945*, New York 2019; M. Kałczewiak, *We Hope to Find a Way Out from Our Unpleasant Situation: Polish-Jewish Refugees and the Escape from Nazi Europe to Latin America*, "American Jewish History" 2019, vol. 103 (1), pp. 25–49; D. Gleizer, *Unwelcome Exiles: Mexico and the Jewish refugees from Nazism, 1933–1945*, Leiden-Boston 2014.

going on for weeks. I watched this for a whole hour, riveted to the spot, frightened, confused. A nightmare–not real. Blue and red freaks–not people. I shall never forget it. Never in my life have I beheld anything more frightening[7].

This extremely moving witness account on the situation of Polish-Jewish refugees is a fragment of the report from December 1939, one of the first to reach the Polish government-in-exile in February 1940. The report described in detail the situation of Polish Jews in occupied Poland. This text was prepared by Jan Karski (1914–2000), a Polish liaison officer working for the Polish underground during World War II, who several years later became known for delivering evidence of the mass murder of European Jews to the Western Allies[8]. In July 1943, Karski reported to US President Franklin D. Roosevelt about the Nazi atrocities and crimes he had witnessed in occupied Poland. During his mission for the Polish government-in-exile, he probably couldn't imagine that as soon as World War II ended, he would again be responsible for collecting valuable material documenting the wartime, this time on behalf of the Hoover Institution.

In 1944, J. Karski was sent to the United States on a public relations mission; he didn't come back to London and decided to remain in the US. Herbert Hoover, aware of Karski's excellent connections with diplomatic circles, commissioned him in 1945 to collect documents of the Polish government-in-exile, which by that time had lost recognition of all western powers that accepted the Soviet-imposed government[9]. Karski embarked on a multi-continent journey to implore the former government officials to transfer all available records to Stanford and deposit them at the Hoover Archives. Karskis's collecting activities on behalf of the Hoover Archives, and his missions to the Polish government-in-exile during World War II are well documented in his own collection in the deposit of the Archives[10].

What is certain is that Herbert Hoover made a remarkably accurate decision by nominating J. Karski to collect Polish material. Karski's acquisition activities overlapped timely with the decision of Polish civil and military authorities in England to relocate some of their archives to a secure and neutral location

---

7   Hoover Institution Library and Archives (thereafter HIA), Stanisław Mikołajczyk papers, Box 36, Folder 11. Karski's report was published in English translation by D. Engel, *An Early Account of Polish Jewry under Nazi and Soviet Occupation Presented to the Polish Government-In-Exile, February 1940*, "Jewish Social Studies" Winter 1983, vol. 45 (1), pp. 1–16.

8   In the years 1944–1945 Karski's book, *Courier from Poland: The Story of a Secret State*, Boston 1944, turned out to be a bestseller on the American market.

9   HIA, Hoover Institutional Records, Box 37C; I. Czernichowska, Z.L. Stanczyk, Finding Aid, *Register of the Jan Karski papers*, [online] https://oac.cdlib.org/findaid/ark:/13030/tf187001bd/entire_text/?query=Jan%20Karski [accessed 01.02.2024].

10   HIA, Karski (Jan) papers 1939–2007, [online] https://oac.cdlib.org/findaid/ark:/13030/tf187001bd/entire_text/?query=Karski%20(Jan)%20papers [accessed 01.02.2024].

in the United States after the US and Great Britain abandoned their ally and withdrew recognition from the Polish government-in-exile. It was feared that the documentation could fall into the hands of the communist regime in Poland and the Soviets, could be destroyed or dispersed. During his travels the former courier met, among others, the Polish General Władysław Anders (1892–1970)[11]. This meeting resulted in the acquisition of the documentation of the Documents Bureau of the 2nd Polish Corps. The materials include, among others, some 20,000 accounts of Gulag prisoners and deportees from 1939–1941, among them many written by Polish-Jewish exiles[12]. Besides the precious Anders Collection, the bulk of archival documentation transferred to Hoover Archives after World War II consisted of two other very important deposits, in which we can find hundreds of documents depicting the fates of Polish Jewish refugees: namely the deposit of Ambassador Jan Ciechanowski (including the archives of several Polish embassies, such as Washington, London, and Moscow-Kuybyshev)[13], and Minister Aleksander Zawisza's deposit (consists of the archives of the Polish Ministry of Information and Documentation and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which until 1959 were stored in Dublin)[14]. Statistically, the latter two collections contain the most information on Polish Jewish refugees; especially relevant is the documentation of embassies and consulates dispersed from distant places like Kenya, Japan, Cuba and Mexico to Portugal, Canada, North Africa, or the Soviet Union.[15]

---

11    General W. Anders commanded the Polish Army in the Middle East and Italy during World War II. He was captured by the Soviets at the outbreak of WWII and imprisoned until the Polish-Soviet agreement of August 1941. After his release, he became commander of Polish fighting forces in the Soviet Union, from where he moved with his units through Iran to Palestine (1942). His units joined the British Army and fought in the Italian Campaign.

12    HIA, Anders (Władysław) collection, [online] https://oac.cdlib.org/findaid/ark:/13030/tf0p3000tg/entire_text/?query=anders%20collection [accessed 01.02.2024]. A digital copy of the entire collection is available at: http://szukajwarchiwach.pl/800/1/0/-/ [accessed 01.02.2024].

13    HIA, Poland. Ambasada (Soviet Union) records, [online] https://oac.cdlib.org/findaid/ark:/13030/tf300002cm/entire_text/?query=ambasada [accessed 01.02.2024]; HIA, Poland. Ambasada (Great Britain) records, [online] https://oac.cdlib.org/findaid/ark:/13030/tf6r29n86f/entire_text/?query=ambasada [accessed 01.02.2024]; HIA, Poland. Ambasada (U.S.) records, [online] https://oac.cdlib.org/findaid/ark:/13030/tf1489n4nr/entire_text/?query=ambasada [accessed 01.02.2024]. All available online: https://www.szukajwarchiwach.gov.pl/.

14    HIA, Poland. Ministerstwo Spraw Zagranicznych records, [online] https://oac.cdlib.org/findaid/ark:/13030/tf4v19n70w/entire_text/?query=Polish%20Ministry%20of%20Information [accessed 01.02.2024]; HIA, Poland. Ministerstwo Informacji i Dokumentacji records, [online] https://oac.cdlib.org/findaid/ark:/13030/tf5c60042m/entire_text/?query=ministerstwo%20informacji%20i%20dokumentacji [accessed 01.02.2024]. Available [online] https://www.szukajwarchiwach.gov.pl/.

15    Recently, a few new publications on Polish-Jewish refugees during WWII depict the richness of the documentation from the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, see e.g., A. Gontarek, *Polskie Przedstawicielstwo Konsularno-Dyplomatyczne w Hawanie a sprawa uchodźców żydowskich na Kubie podczas II Wojny Światowej*, "Polish Jewish Studies" 2020, vol. 1, pp. 41–76; O. Barbasiewicz, A. Pawnik, *The Issue of the Transfer of Financial Resources for Polish Jews – War Refugees*

In addition to the three extensive collections mentioned above, the archive contains separate documentation of Polish embassies and consulates, including the records of the Polish embassies in the United States, Great Britain, the Soviet Union, France, Portugal, and Polish consulate in New York[16]. Noteworthy are also the numerous collections of individual persons in which rich documentation on the fate of refugees from Poland can be found. Of particular importance in this context are the Tadeusz Romer (1894–1978) papers; one of the most important figures in the history of Polish diplomacy[17]. Romer was, among others, Ambassador of the Polish Republic to Japan from 1937–1941, High Commissioner for Refugees in Shanghai, Polish Ambassador to the Soviet Union (1942–1943), and Minister for Foreign Affairs in the Polish government-in-exile in London. In his capacity as the ambassador in Tokyo, Romer established Polish Aid Committee for War Refugees and Victims. His wife, Zofia Romer, become the head of this organization. During his mission in Tokyo, later Shanghai and the Soviet Union, Tadeusz Romer actively supported Polish and Polish-Jewish refugees, providing visas, organizing transfers to secure countries, and supporting exiles with financial sources[18].

The extraordinary source base mentioned above proofs how the Polish authorities, especially their diplomatic representatives around the globe, but also individuals and Jewish organizations were interconnected and interdependent when facing Jewish refugees during World War II. Last but not least, the witness accounts and testimonies, which can also be found in the Hoover Archive, provide valuable insight into the past while documenting emotions, feelings, thoughts, behavior, and actions of the protagonists.

---

*in Shanghai. The activity of the Polish government-in-exile*, "Totalitarian and 20th Century Studies" 2019, vol. 3, pp. 368–380; P. Długołęcki, *Confronting the Holocaust: Documents on the Polish-Government-in-Exile's Policy Concerning Jews 1939–1944*, Warsaw 2022.

16   HIA, Poland. Ambasada (U.S.) records 1918–1956, [online] https://oac.cdlib.org/findaid/ark:/13030/tf1489n4nr/entire_text/?query=ambasada%20United%20States [accessed 01.02.2024]; Poland. Ambasada (Great Britain) records 1918–1945, [online] https://oac.cdlib.org/findaid/ark:/13030/tf6r29n86f/entire_text/?query=ambasada%20great%20britain [accessed 01.02.2024]; Poland. Ambasada (Soviet Union) records 1941–1944, [online] https://oac.cdlib.org/findaid/ark:/13030/tf300002cm/entire_text/?query=ambasada%20soviet%20union [accessed 01.02.2024], available online: https://www.szukajwarchiwach.gov.pl/; Poland. Ambasada (France) records 1919–1945, [online] https://oac.cdlib.org/findaid/ark:/13030/tf4z09n74m/entire_text/?query=ambasada%20france [accessed 01.02.2024]; Poland. Poselstwo (Portugal) records 1919–1957, [online] https://oac.cdlib.org/findaid/ark:/13030/tf9w1007h9/entire_text/?query=konsulat [accessed 01.02.2024]; Poland. Konsulat Generalny (New York, N.Y.) records 1940–1948, [online] https://oac.cdlib.org/findaid/ark:/13030/kt2b69p9xq/entire_text/?query=konsulat [accessed 01.02.2024].

17   Romer (Tadeusz) papers 1913–1975, [online] https://oac.cdlib.org/findaid/ark:/13030/tf6h4nb1f4/entire_text/?query=tadeusz%20romer [accessed 01.02.2024]. The originals of his papers are deposited at the Public Archives of Canada.

18   See e.g., A. Jakubowicz, *Stopped in flight: Shanghai and the Polish Jewish refugees of 1941*, "Holocaust Studies" 2018, vol. 23, no. 3, pp. 287–304.

## Early testimonies and historical writing:
## the so-called Palestinian Protocols as a case study

"I was a refugee even before the war"[19] – with this sentence the 15-year-old Szloma Beglikter began describing his wartime experiences. Szloma's testimony was taken in 1943, after his evacuation from the Soviet Union via Iran to Palestine. Already at his young age, he was fully aware of the situation and his status as a refugee. Szloma had lived until 1938 with his family in Cologne, Germany. In October 1938, as Polish citizens, the Beglikter family was expelled to Poland[20]. They were forced to live in the refugee camp in Zbąszyń, where Szloma's father died. In the summer of 1939, the Begikters went to their relatives in Przeworsk, from where, by the end of September 1939 the Germans expelled all Jews, and then forced them to cross the San River, which was the border with the Soviet occupied zone. Among the expellees were Szloma with his mother and sister. The anti-Jewish measures and atrocities of the German Army prompted many people to escape and find shelter in the Soviet-occupied territories on their own. Others, like Beglikters, were forced to cross the border. Many others, like those imprisoned in the refugee camp by Bełżec described in the Karski report from December 1939, were trapped, got stuck under the German occupation, and did not survive the war.

The Beglikter family members were among the approximately 230,000 Polish Jews who survived the Shoah in the Soviet Union. Most had either fled from German-occupied Poland at the beginning of the war, having been denounced as "class enemies and political undesirables"[21], or were arrested in Soviet-occupied Poland between 1939 and 1941 and then deported to vast Siberian territories, Sub-Arctic in the north, or northern Kazakhstan. In other cases, some Polish Jewish refugees moved further into Soviet territory as they

---

19   HIA, Poland. Ministerstwo Informacji i Dokumentacji records, Box 124, Folder 1, Prot. No. 302, Zeznania Szlomy Begliktera.

20   Behind the expulsion was a law from March 31, 1938, issued by the Polish government to revoke Polish citizenship in case of citizens living abroad. Polish authorities intended to revoke the citizenship of non-ethnic Poles. The actions of the Polish government prompted Germany's response, demonstrating how quickly the authorities moved to begin the mass deportation of those Jews to the Polish border, see e.g. M. Frankl, *Citizenship of No Man's Land? Jewish Refugee Relief in Zbąszyń and East Central Europe, 1938–1939*, "S:I.M.O.N–Shoah: Intervention. Methods, Documentation" 2020, vol. 8, no. 2, pp. 37–49; A. Bothe, *Refugees or Deportees? The Semantics of the First "Polenaktion", Past and Present*, "S:I.M.O.N–Shoah: Intervention. Methods, Documentation" 2018, vol. 5, no. 2, pp. 104–115; J. Tomaszewski, *Wygnanie Żydów polskich z Niemiec w 1938 r.*, Warszawa 1998.

21   The NKVD arrested Polish citizens, Jewish and non-Jewish, who were categorized as "enemies of the people" or "class enemies": e.g. political activists, religious leaders, the so-called capitalists, or those, who fled east from the German-occupied Polish territory, and/or refused to sign up for Soviet citizenship.

fled from the eastward-advancing Wehrmacht. Whether they fled, were deported, or were evacuated, most of the Polish Jews who survived the Shoah and the horrors that followed the German invasion spent their wartime in the Soviet Union. Although many of the survivors describe the deportation of their families to Siberia as a stroke of good fortune, the experiences during their exile were harrowing.

Shortly after the outbreak of the German-Soviet war, the signing of the Polish-Soviet agreement and announcement of "amnesty" for Polish citizens in August 1941 marked a turning point in the lives of most of the deportees. S. Beglikter, together with his mother and sister rushed with thousands of former Polish exiles southward to the Central-Asian Soviet republics in hopes of finding better living conditions and food. Unfortunately, hunger, poverty, typhus, and malaria led to an extremely high mortality rate in those communities. After arriving in Bukhara, Szloma's mother had died of typhus. After the diplomatic relations between the Polish government-in-exile and the USSR were restored, Polish military units under General W. Anders started forming in the southern Soviet republics. In the spring and summer of 1942, the informally named Anders' Army, was evacuated from the Soviet Union to Palestine. Approximately 1,600 Polish Jewish civilians left the USSR with the Army for Palestine, where their statements were collected. Among the evacuees were around 800 children. Most of them had been forced to undergo a long, arduous, and painful journey across two continents. Some, like S. Beglikter, started in Germany and eventually went to Poland, Siberia, and then the Soviet republics in Asia, finally reaching Palestine in February 1943.

Szloma's testimony belongs to the so-called Palestinian Protocols Collection in the Ministry of Information and Documentation records. Even though the entire collection of testimonies had already been published in Polish in 2006[22], the very early sources were rarely included in the scholarly work[23]. And it was the testimony by S. Beglikter which prompted me to investigate the fates of Polish Jewish deportees from Germany to Poland in October 1938, who later on were deported or fled to the USSR. During my research on the experiences of this group of refugees, I was able to identify more than 50 families who survived the war in the Soviet hinterland[24]. The war trajectory of this group of survivors reflects the history of the Holocaust in a transnational and multidimensional

---

22  *Widziałem anioła śmierci: losy deportowanych Żydów polskich w ZSRR w latach II wojny światowej*, eds. M. Siekierski, F. Tych, Warszawa 2006.

23  One of the first research articles on the testimonies was delivered by Eliyana Adler: *Children in Exile: Wartime Journeys of Polish Jewish Youth*, [in] *Polish Jews in the Soviet Union...*, pp. 30–56.

24  K. Friedla, *From Nazi Inferno to Soviet Hell"– Polish-Jewish children and youth and their trajectories of survival during and after World War II*, "Journal of Modern European History" 2021, vol. 19, no. 3, pp. 274–191.

way. The story of these refugees represents various forms of exile and reveals the complexity of survival: winding paths, painful farewells, constant exposure to political ruptures, and transformations. As the biography of S. Beglikter shows, their painful journey started with the Nazi regime and its atrocities, followed by difficult live as refugees under Stalin's rule and later during his flight and emigration to Palestine, where he finally settled after the war.

Eliyana Adler, a renowned expert on the experiences of Polish Jews in the Soviet Union during World War II, offered in one of her articles an in-depth analysis of twelve children's testimonies from the abovementioned collection[25]. While exploring some methodological and analytical questions, Adler highlighted the enormous potential for research in this valuable and still underexploited corpus of sources.

In 2022, the Hoover Institution Library and Archives presented the first scholarly English translation of more than 170 testimonies from the so-called Palestinian Protocols Collection, thus making the precious sources available to scholars and the broader public[26]. In addition to the publication of sources, the Hoover Institution Library and Archives continues to digitize collections and make them available online[27]. Some of the collections cited in this piece are also accessible online via *National Digital Archives of Poland* and the *Chronicles of Terror* online testimony database[28].

## Conclusion

Three-quarters, or about 230 thousand surviving Polish Jews (3,3 million before the war)–endured the war in the Soviet Union. Besides, at least thirteen thousand Jewish war refugees from Poland had reported to Polish consular representations or Jewish organizations in the unoccupied parts of France, Portugal, North Africa, Palestine, and the Far East, but also in Romania, Hungary, or Yugoslavia. The situation of refugees in each of these countries differed and depended on the course of war events. For example, in neutral Switzerland and Portugal, refugees could count on the support of Polish diplomatic missions and numerous Jewish organizations. In the Soviet Union or Shanghai, their situation was far more complex and challenging, with minimal access to the assistance provided by Jewish organizations and Polish government representatives.

---

25    E. Adler, *Children in Exile...*, pp. 30–56.

26    *I Saw the Angel of Death: Experiences of Polish Jews Deported to the USSR during World War II*, eds. M. Siekierski, F. Tych, Stanford, CA 2022.

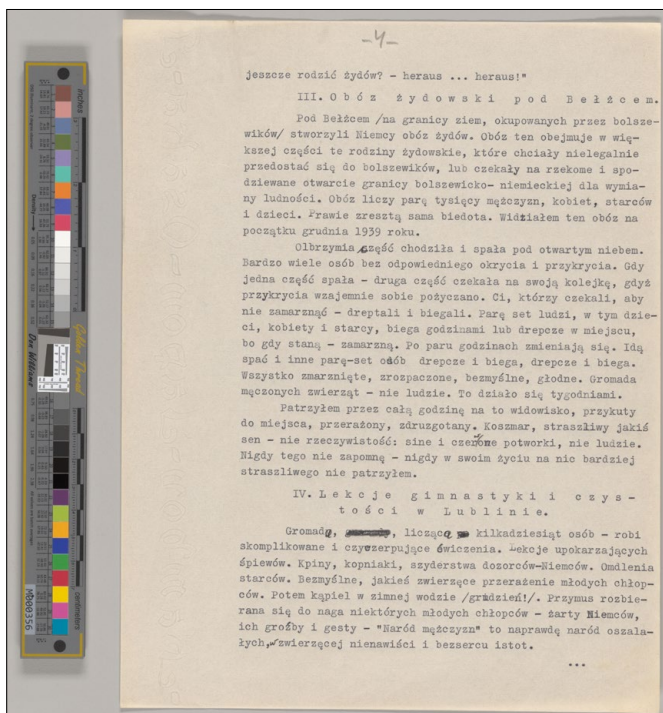27    *Digital Collecti*ons, [online]  https://www.hoover.org/library-archives/collections/digital-collections [accessed 01.02.2024].

28    Szukaj w Archiwach, [online] https://www.szukajwarchiwach.gov.pl/; https://www.zapisyterroru.pl/dlibra/text?id=records-of-the-terror [accessed 01.02.2024].

Over the past decades, the Hoover Institution has accumulated rich holdings from Polish diplomatic missions, the Polish government-in-exile, as well as private collections, which sheds light on different local, national and transnational actors who dealt with Jewish refugees during World War II. They give insights into the many support activities of relief organizations, the relationship between officials and refugees, between bureaucratic practices and the individual experience of forced migration, and the atrocities of the war.

The war trajectories of Polish Jewish refugees, still hidden in archival sources can and will hopefully be further explored by scholars. Some highlights of these materials presented above not only open a window into the past and help us better understand the plight of escape, refuge, exile, and survival but also allow us to reflect more deeply, thoughtfully, and comprehensively on the present-day issues of forced migration, displacement, and refugees' crises.
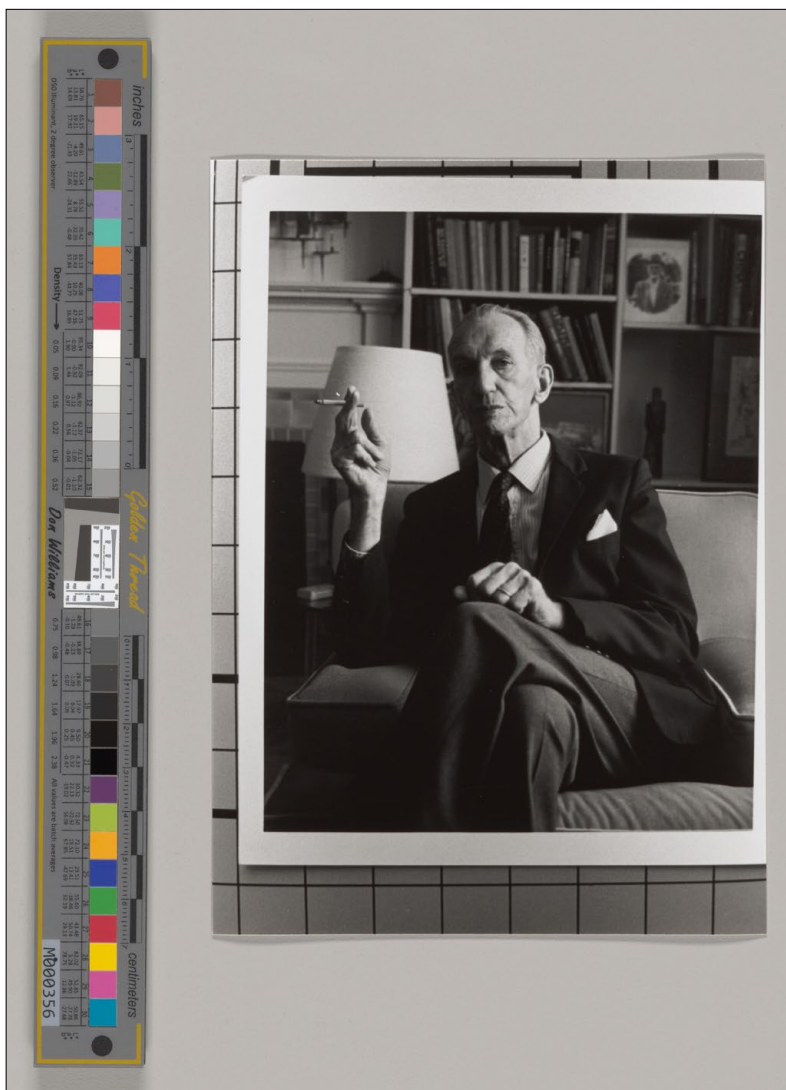
## Illustrations

1. Fragment of Jan Karski's report to the Polish government-in-exile, December 1939, Hoover Institution Library & Archives, Stanisław Mikołajczyk papers, Box 36, Folder 12.
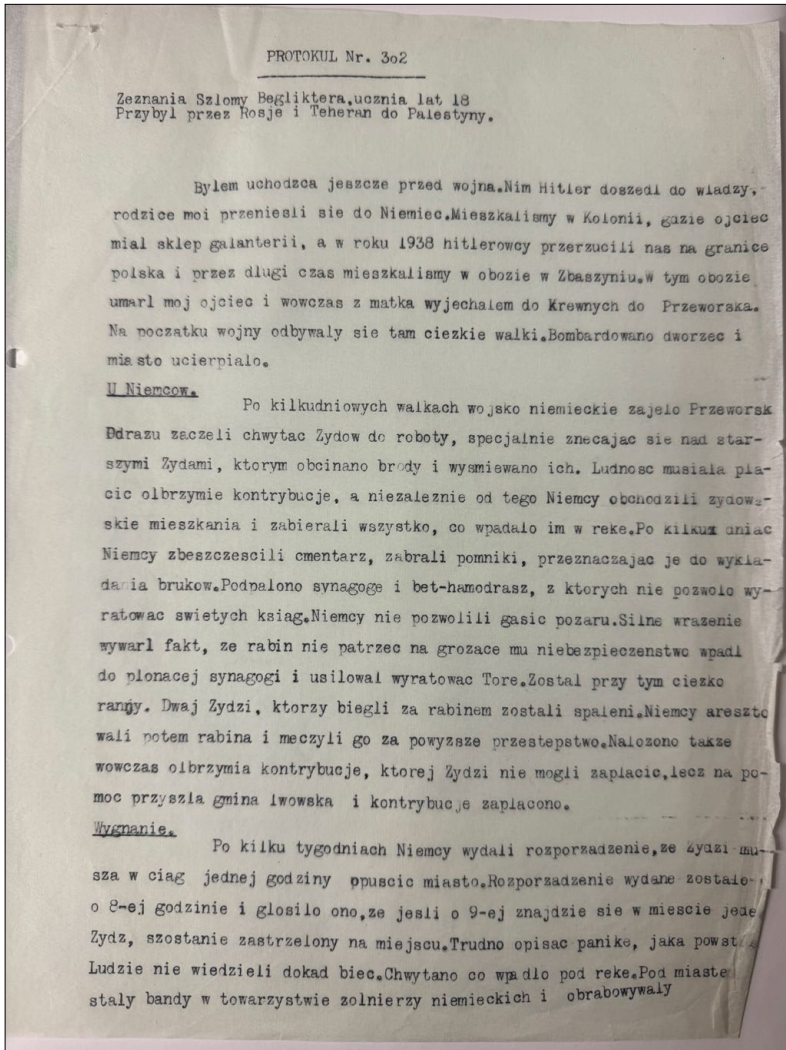


Photography: David Sun.

2. Jan Karski, Hoover Institution Library & Archives,
Jan Karski papers, Box 25, Folder 2.



Photography: David Sun.

3. Testimony of Szloma Beglikter, Hoover Institution Library & Archives, Poland.
Ministerstwo Informacji I Dokumentacji records, Box 124, Folder 1.

PROTOKUL Nr. 3o2

Zeznania Szlomy Begliktera, ucznia lat 18
Przybyl przez Rosje i Teheran do Palestyny.

Bylem uchodzca jeszcze przed wojna. Nim Hitler doszedl do wladzy,
rodzice moi przeniesli sie do Niemiec. Mieszkalismy w Kolonii, gdzie ojciec
mial sklep galanterii, a w roku 1938 hitlerowcy przerzucili nas na granice
polska i przez dlugi czas mieszkalismy w obozie w Zbaszyniu. W tym obozie
umarl moj ojciec i wowczas z matka wyjechalem do Krewnych do Przeworska.
Na poczatku wojny odbywaly sie tam ciezkie walki. Bombardowano dworzec i
miasto ucierpialo.

U Niemcow.

Po kilkudniowych walkach wojsko niemieckie zajelo Przeworsk
Ddrazu zaczeli chwytac Zydow do roboty, specjalnie znecajac sie nad star-
szymi Zydami, ktorym obcinano brody i wysmiewano ich. Ludnosc musiala pla-
cic olbrzymie kontrybucje, a niezaleznie od tego Niemcy obchodzili zydow-
skie mieszkania i zabierali wszystko, co wpadalo im w reke. Po kilku dniac
Niemcy zbeszczescili cmentarz, zabrali pomniki, przeznaczajac je do wykla-
dania brukow. Podpalono synagoge i bet-hamodrasz, z ktorych nie pozwolo wy-
ratowac swietych ksiag. Niemcy nie pozwolili gasic pozaru. Silne wrazenie
wywarl fakt, ze rabin nie patrzec na grozace mu niebezpieczenstwo wpadl
do plonacej synagogi i usilowal wyratowac Tore. Zostal przy tym ciezko
ranny. Dwaj Zydzi, ktorzy biegli za rabinem zostali spaleni. Niemcy areszto
wali potem rabina i meczyli go za powyzsze przestepstwo. Nalozono takze
wowczas olbrzymia kontrybucje, ktorej Zydzi nie mogli zaplacic, lecz na po-
moc przyszla gmina lwowska i kontrybucje zaplacono.

Wygnanie.

Po kilku tygodniach Niemcy wydali rozporzadzenie, ze Zydzi mu-
sza w ciag jednej godziny opuscic miasto. Rozporzadzenie wydane zostalo
o 8-ej godzinie i glosilo ono, ze jesli o 9-ej znajdzie sie w miescie jede
Zydz, szostanie zastrzelony na miejscu. Trudno opisac panike, jaka powsta
Ludzie nie wiedzieli dokad biec. Chwytano co wpadlo pod reke. Pod miast
staly bandy w towarzystwie zolnierzy niemieckich i obrabowywaly

Photography: Jan Karski.

# Bibliography

Hoover Institution Library and Archives:

Anders (Władysław) collection, [online] https://oac.cdlib.org/findaid/ark:/13030/tf0p3000tg/entire_text/?query=anders%20collection [accessed 01.02.2024],

Hoover Institutional Records, Box 37C,

Karski (Jan) papers 1939–2007, [online] https://oac.cdlib.org/findaid/ark:/13030/tf187001bd/entire_text/?query=Karski%20(Jan)%20papers [accessed 01.02.2024],

Poland. Ambasada (France) records 1919–1945, [online] https://oac.cdlib.org/findaid/ark:/13030/tf4z09n74m/entire_text/?query=ambasada%20france [accessed 01.02.2024],

Poland. Ambasada (Great Britain) records, [online] https://oac.cdlib.org/findaid/ark:/13030/tf6r29n86f/entire_text/?query=ambasada [accessed 01.02.2024],

Poland. Ambasada (Soviet Union) records, [online] https://oac.cdlib.org/findaid/ark:/13030/tf300002cm/entire_text/?query=ambasada [accessed 01.02.2024],

Poland. Ambasada (U.S.) records, [online] https://oac.cdlib.org/findaid/ark:/13030/tf1489n4nr/entire_text/?query=ambasada [accessed 01.02.2024],

Poland. Konsulat Generalny (New York, N.Y.) records 1940–1948, [online] https://oac.cdlib.org/findaid/ark:/13030/kt2b69p9xq/entire_text/?query=konsulat [accessed 01.02.2024],

Poland. Ministerstwo Informacji i Dokumentacji records, [online] https://oac.cdlib.org/findaid/ark:/13030/tf5c60042m/entire_text/?query=ministerstwo%20informacji%20i%20dokumentacji [accessed 01.02.2024],

Poland. Ministerstwo Informacji i Dokumentacji records, Box 124, Folder 1, Prot. No. 302, Zeznania Szlomy Begliktera,

Poland. Ministerstwo Spraw Zagranicznych records, [online] https://oac.cdlib.org/findaid/ark:/13030/tf4v19n70w/entire_text/?query=Polish%20Ministry%20of%20Information [accessed 01.02.2024],

Poland. Poselstwo (Portugal) records 1919–1957, [online] https://oac.cdlib.org/findaid/ark:/13030/tf9w1007h9/entire_text/?query=konsulat [accessed 01.02.2024],

Romer (Tadeusz) papers 1913–1975, [online] https://oac.cdlib.org/findaid/ark:/13030/tf6h4nb1f4/entire_text/?query=tadeusz%20romer [accessed 01.02.2024],

Stanisław Mikołajczyk papers, Box 36, Folder 11,

Publications:

Adler E., *Survival on the Margins. Polish Jewish Refugees in the Wartime Soviet Union*, Cambridge, Massachusetts 2020.

Adler E., *Children in Exile: Wartime Journeys of Polish Jewish Youth*, [in] *Polish Jews in the Soviet Union (1939–1959). History and Memory of Deportation, Exile, and Survival*, eds. K. Friedla, M. Nesselrodt, Boston 2021, pp. 30–56.

Barbasiewicz O., Pawnik A., *The Issue of the Transfer of Financial Resources for Polish Jews – War Refugees in Shanghai. The activity of the Polish government-in-exile*, "Totalitarian and 20th Century Studies" 2019, vol. 3, pp. 368–380.

Bothe A., *Refugees or Deportees? The Semantics of the First "Polenaktion", Past and Present*, "S:I.M.O.N–Shoah: Intervention. Methods, Documentation" 2018, vol. 5, no. 2, pp. 104–115.

Czernichowska I., Stanczyk Z.L., Finding Aid, *Register of the Jan Karski papers*, [online] https://oac.cdlib.org/findaid/ark:/13030/tf187001bd/entire_text/?query=Jan%20Karski [accessed 01.02.2024].

*Digital Collecti*ons, [online] https://www.hoover.org/library-archives/collections/digital--collections [accessed 01.02.2024].

Długołęcki P., *Confronting the Holocaust: Documents on the Polish-Government-in-Exile's Policy Concerning Jews 1939–1944*, Warsaw 2022.

Eber G.I., *Wartime Shanghai and the Jewish refugees from Central Europe: survival, co--existence, and identity in a multi-ethnic city*, Berlin 2012.

Engel D., *An Early Account of Polish Jewry under Nazi and Soviet Occupation Presented to the Polish Government-In-Exile, February 1940*, "Jewish Social Studies" Winter 1983, vol. 45, no.1, pp. 1–16.

Engel D., *Facing a Holocaust. The Polish Government-in-Exile and the Jews, 1943–1945*, Chapel Hill 1993.

Engel D., *In the Shadow of Auschwitz. The Polish Government-in-Exile and the Jews, 1939–1942*, Chapel Hill 1987.

Frankl M., *Citizenship of No Man's Land? Jewish Refugee Relief in Zbąszyń and East Central Europe, 1938–1939*, "S:I.M.O.N–Shoah: Intervention. Methods, Documentation" 2020, vol. 8, no. 2, pp. 37–49.

Friedla K., *"From Nazi Inferno to Soviet Hell"– Polish-Jewish children and youth and their trajectories of survival during and after World War II*, "Journal of Modern European History" 2021, vol. 19, no. 3, pp. 274–191.

Gleizer D., *Unwelcome Exiles: Mexico and the Jewish refugees from Nazism, 1933–1945*, Leiden–Boston 2014.

Gontarek A., *Polskie Przedstawicielstwo Konsularno-Dyplomatyczne w Hawanie a sprawa uchodźców żydowskich na Kubie podczas II Wojny Światowej*, "Polish Jewish Studies" 2020, vol. 1, pp. 41–76.

Grossmann A., *Remapping Relief and Rescue: Flight, Displacement, and International Aid for Jewish Refugees during World War II*, "New German Critique" 2012, vol. 39, no. 3, pp. 61–79.

Grudzińska-Gross I., Gross J.T., *W czterdziestym nas matko na Sibir zesłali... Polska a Rosja 1939–1942*, London 1983.

Grudzińska-Gross I., Gross J.T., *War Through Children's Eyes: The Soviet Occupation of Poland and the Deportations, 1939–1941*, Stanford, CA 1981.

*I Saw the Angel of Death: Experiences of Polish Jews Deported to the USSR during World War II*, eds. M. Siekierski, F. Tych, Stanford, CA 2022.

Jakubowicz A., *Stopped in flight: Shanghai and the Polish Jewish refugees of 1941*, "Holocaust Studies" 2018, vol. 23, no. 3, pp. 287–304.

*Jewish Exile in India, 1933–1945*, eds. A. Bhatti [et al.], New Delhi 1999.

Jolluck K., *Exile and Identity: Polish women in the Soviet Union during World War II*, Pittsburgh 2002.

Kałczewiak M., *We Hope to Find a Way Out from Our Unpleasant Situation: Polish-Jewish Refugees and the Escape from Nazi Europe to Latin America*, "American Jewish History" 2019, vol. 103, no. 1, pp. 25–49.

Kaplan M., *Hitler's Jewish Refugees. Hope and Anxiety in Portugal*, New Haven 2020.

Karski J., *Courier from Poland: The Story of a Secret State*, Boston 1944.

Lingelbach J., *On the Edges of Whiteness: Polish Refugees in British Colonial Africa during and after the Second World War*, New York 2020.

*Migrants, Refugees, and Asylum Seekers in Latin America*, eds. R. Raanan [et al.], Leiden-Boston 2020

Nesselrodt M., *Dem Holocaust entkommen. Polnische Juden in der Sowjetunion, 1939–1946*, Berlin 2019.

Newman J., *Nearly the New World. The British West Indies and the Flight from Nazism 1933–1945*, New York 2019.

*Polish Jews in the Soviet Union (1939–1959). History and Memory of Deportation, Exile, and Survival*, eds. K. Friedla, M. Nesselrodt, Boston 2021.

*Shelter from the Holocaust: Rethinking Jewish Survival in the Soviet Union*, eds. A. Grossmann, [et al.], Detroit 2017.

Siekierski M., *Zarys historii polskich zbiorów Biblioteki i Archiwum Instytutu Hoovera w Kalifornii*, "Z Badań nad Książką i Księgozbiorami Historycznymi" 2017, special volume, pp. 547–556.

*Syberiada Żydów polskich. Losy uchodźców z Zagłady*, eds. L. Zessin-Jurek, K. Friedla, Warszawa 2020.

Szukaj w Archiwach, [online] https://www.szukajwarchiwach.gov.pl/; https://www.zapisyterroru.pl/dlibra/text?id=records-of-the-terror [accessed 01.02.2024].

Tomaszewski J., *Wygnanie Żydów polskich z Niemiec w 1938 r.*, Warszawa 1998.

*Widziałem anioła śmierci: losy deportowanych Żydów polskich w ZSRR w latach II wojny światowej*, eds. M. Siekierski, F. Tych,Warszawa 2006.